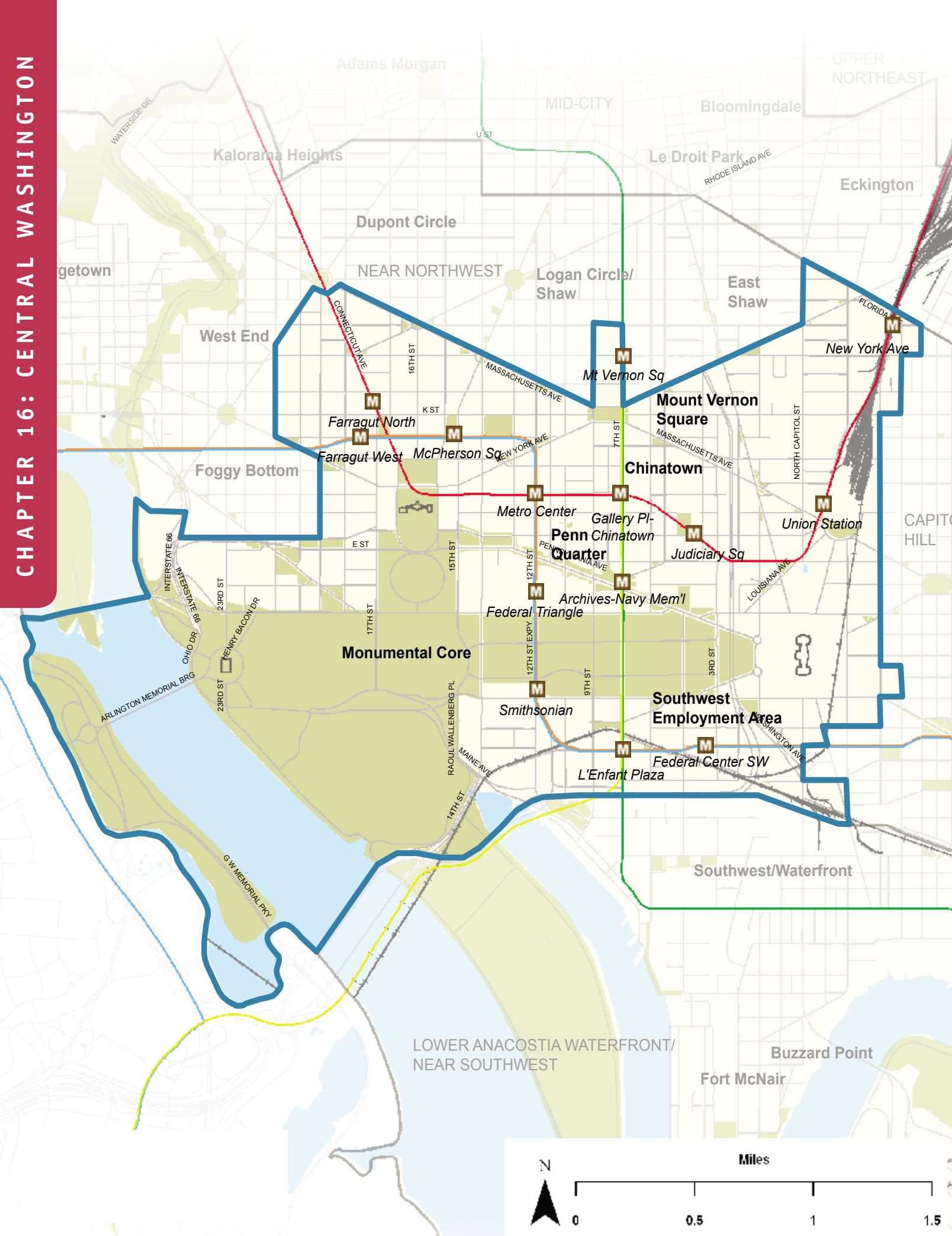
Chapter 16 Central Washington Area Element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16TH ST
MASSACHUSETTS AVE
New York Ave
Mt Vernon Sq
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K ST
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McPherson Sq
NEW YORK AVE
7TH ST
MASSACHUSETTS AVE
NORTH CAPITOL ST
Foggy Bottom
Chinatown
Metro Center
Gallery Pl-Chinatown
Union Station
CAPITOL HILL
Penn Quarter
PENNSYLVANIA AVE
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INTERSTATE 66
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OHIO DR
17TH ST
Archives-Navy Mem'l
Federal Triangle
LOUISIANA AVE
Monumental Core
12TH ST EXPY
9TH ST
3RD ST
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Smithsonian
Southwest Employment Area
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MAINE AVE
WASHINGTON AVE
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Central Washington Area Element

16

Overview 1600

The Central Washington Planning Area is the heart of the District of Columbia. Its 6.8 square miles include the "monumental core" of the city, with such landmarks as the U.S. Capitol and White House, the Washington Monument and Lincoln Memorial, and the Federal Triangle and Smithsonian Museums. Central Washington also includes the city's traditional Downtown and other employment centers such as the Near Southwest and East End. It includes Gallery Place and Penn Quarter, the region's entertainment and cultural center. Finally, Central Washington includes emerging urban neighborhoods like Mount Vernon Triangle and North of Massachusetts Avenue (NoMA). 1600.1

The area's boundaries are shown in the map at left. A majority of the area is within Ward 2, with portions also in Ward 6. All of Central Washington is within the boundary of the 1791 L'Enfant Plan and its streets, land uses, and design reflect this legacy. The area's grand buildings, boulevards, and celebrated open spaces—particularly the monuments, museums, and federal buildings on the National Mall—define Washington's image as an international capital. Planning for this area is done collaboratively with the federal government, with the National Capital Planning Commission having land use authority over federal lands. 1600.2

Central Washington is of great importance to the District, the region, and the nation. It is the seat of the federal government, and the economic, cultural, and historic core of the region. It contains the third largest concentration of office space in the United States, trailing only New York City and Chicago. The DC Department of Employment Services reports that over 400,000 persons are employed within its boundaries. The area's preeminence is underscored by its land use patterns; it includes more than 100 million square feet of office space (almost 25 percent of the region's total), 2 million square feet of retail floor space, over 11,000 hotel rooms, major entertainment venues, and the second largest theater district in the country. It is also the center of the region's transportation network, with one of the best underground mass transit systems in the world. 1600.3

This Area Element takes a broader view of the city center than has been taken in past plans. Historically, city plans for "Downtown" have covered the area east of 16th Street NW, north of the National Mall/US Capitol complex, and south of Massachusetts Avenue. However, most residents, workers, and visitors think of Downtown in a broader sense—including areas as far north as Dupont Circle, as far west as Foggy Bottom, and as far east as Capitol Hill. Only about half of the central city workforce is located within the city's "traditional" Downtown. "Traditional" Downtown is also almost completely built out. Most of the District's future employment growth will take place

Washington Convention Center

beyond its boundaries, in areas like NoMA and Near Southeast (in the adjacent Anacostia Watefront Planning Area). 1600.4

Washington's "traditional" Downtown includes Chinatown, the arts district around Gallery Place, the retail core near Metro Center, the mixed use Penn Quarter and Mount Vernon Square areas, and concentrations of government office buildings at Federal Triangle and Judiciary Square. While these areas are distinct from one another, they all offer a blend of historic and contemporary development, a mix of uses, and largely pedestrian-friendly environments. Private office buildings, many built to the 12- to 14-story limit allowed by the Height Act, extend across much of the area. Traditional Downtown also contains many exceptional historic buildings and public spaces, including many National Register landmarks. 1600.5

Moving from "traditional" Downtown to the West End, the transition is seamless. The pattern of 12- to 14-story office buildings, hotels, ground floor retail space and restaurants, and historic landmarks continues almost as far as Washington Circle. There are concentrations of retail space along Connecticut Avenue, and a cluster of global financial and banking institutions (including the World Bank and International Monetary Fund) on the area's western edge. 1600.6

Most of the area just north of the National Mall is federal land. This includes the "Northwest Rectangle" of government and institutional buildings between 17th and 23rd Streets, the Federal Triangle, the White House and Executive Office Building, Old Naval Observatory Hill (site of the proposed US Institute of Peace) and the Corcoran College of Art+Design. Another major concentration of office space lies on the south side of the National Mall in the Near Southwest Federal District. This area includes the headquarters of several federal agencies as well as private office and hotel complexes like L'Enfant Plaza and the Portals. 1600.7

On the eastern and northeastern flank of Downtown, the pattern of intense office development gives way to more varied land uses. The new Washington Convention Center occupies six square blocks north of Mount Vernon Square. A high-density residential area is emerging to the east in the Mount Vernon Triangle on land formerly used for surface parking and small businesses. After 20 years of planning, the Triangle and adjacent Massachusetts Avenue corridor between Mount Vernon Square and Union Station has become one of the densest neighborhoods in the City. Some 1,300 new units were built between 2000 and 2005 and 1,700 units are now under construction. Density on many of these sites is between 200 and 400 units per acre. 1600.8

NoMA lies north and east of the Massachusetts Avenue corridor. It includes an emerging office area along North Capitol Street and a light industrial

area between the CSX railroad tracks and the row house neighborhoods of Capitol Hill. Office development has moved eastward into NoMA as developable land in the West End, Central Business District, East End, and Capitol Hill has become more scarce. The opening of the New York Avenue Metro station in late 2004 has made the area more attractive for investment, and many residential and office projects are now under consideration in this area. 1600.9

While the office market in Central Washington has remained consistently strong, the area has only recently begun to reverse a decades-long decline in its role as a retail and entertainment destination. Likewise, the 30-year old goal of creating a "living downtown" with high-density housing is finally being realized. Billions of dollars in private investment, coupled with public incentives and plans to attract that investment, have had a transformative impact since the late 1990s. The area has suddenly become "the" place to be in the region, and its first-rate restaurants, boutique hotels, and entertainment venues are attracting national attention. The promise of thousands more new residents, workers, and visitors during the next decade suggests that the best may be yet to come. 1600.10

The 30-year old goal of creating a "living downtown" with high-density housing is finally being realized. Billions of dollars in private investment, coupled with public incentives and plans to attract that investment, have had a transformative impact since the late 1990s.

Context

History 1601

Prior to 1791, Central Washington consisted of open fields, pastureland, groves of trees, and meandering creeks and wetlands. This landscape was reshaped as work began on the new national capital in the 1790s. Grand municipal buildings rose along the avenues, a canal was constructed (on what later would become Constitution Avenue), and homes and businesses were erected along the side streets. During the early 1800s, the government built the White House, the Capitol, City Hall, and other public buildings. 1601.1

Throughout the 19th and early 20th Century, the area extending from the Capitol to the White House and from Pennsylvania Avenue north served as the commercial heart of a growing urban area. In the mid 1860s, the city's first street car line opened between the Capitol and the Willard Hotel at 14th Street and Pennsylvania Avenue. A streetcar line was later constructed along F Street, NW, which eventually became the city's primary shopping corridor. 1601.2

As the federal government expanded through the late 19th Century, government buildings and related offices slowly displaced Downtown's residences and small businesses. By 1891, there were nearly 21,000 federal employees in the central city, and federal bureaus spilled into many

Atlantic Building, Downtown

buildings originally designed for other functions. Residential growth shifted to new neighborhoods to the north, east, and south. 1601.3

By the end of the 19th century, the National Mall and Smithsonian museums had taken on increased importance as an American gathering place and cultural center. This role was recognized and elevated by the McMillan Commission in 1901. The Commission's grand plan for the National Mall and its environs reshaped the city for the 20th Century, bringing a unified vision for Central Washington oriented around parks, fine architecture, and "city beautiful" design principles. Central Washington's physical form was further shaped by the 1899 and 1910 Height Acts, enacted just as other major American cities were discovering the modern skyscraper. 1601.4

The area continued to grow for the next 50 years. Two world wars and the New Deal swelled the federal workforce, creating the demand for yet more Downtown office space. Downtown's retail core thrived as the city's population grew to more than 800,000 residents by 1950. Conversely, the shrinking number of residential areas in Central Washington began to deteriorate. They were among the first parts of the city targeted for urban renewal in the 1950s. 1601.5

As the metropolitan area decentralized in the 1950s, Downtown's role became more one-dimensional. Its retail function waned as interstate highways were constructed and the customer base shifted to the suburbs. Office development moved from the traditional Downtown to K Street and to the redevelopment area south of the National Mall. Plans to revitalize Pennsylvania Avenue and other "special streets and places" were developed in response, and a variety of redevelopment concepts were explored for the West End, South Capitol Street, and the near Southeast. 1601.6

These plans did little to stem Downtown's decline. The center of office activity continued to shift north and west and many of Downtown's historic landmarks, department stores, and office buildings were demolished or vacated. The 1968 riots also took a toll. 1601.7

Creation of the Pennsylvania Avenue Development Corporation (PADC) in 1972 set the stage for Downtown's revival. From 1972 to 1994, the PADC was responsible for bringing the first large scale modern buildings to the traditional Downtown. Despite these efforts, the area still lacked street activity and urban vitality. 1601.8

In 1982, the Mayor's Downtown Committee with support from the Office of Planning produced "Downtown DC: Recommendations for the Downtown Plan." The proposed objectives and policies in that document were later placed into legislative format and adopted almost intact as the Downtown Element of the District's 1984 Comprehensive Plan. The recommendations addressed the area's decline and called for more diverse uses, with a strong emphasis on housing. The Plan envisioned a city center with retail uses focused on F Street,

Gallery Place and Chinatown; new arts uses along 7th Street; and significant residential development at Penn Quarter and Mount Vernon Square. Quantified targets for new housing units, hotel rooms, office space, and arts space were established. 1601.9

Downtown revitalization initiatives continued through the 1980s and 1990s. In the early 1990s, the Zoning Commission created the Downtown Development District (DDD) which required a greater mix of uses, such as housing, arts, and retail space. In 1996, the 100-member Interactive Downtown Task Force developed a "Vision and Action Plan," including recommendations for new retail and entertainment venues, visual and performing arts facilities, an intermodal transportation center, a Downtown Arts Committee, and international communication and trade facilities. The Plan led to the formation of the Downtown Business Improvement District in 1997 and tax increment financing legislation in 1998. 1601.10

By 2000, the targets set in the early 1980s were finally becoming approachable realities. The Downtown Action Agenda of 2000 provided an updated framework for decisions, established a new vision, and set new goals for the traditional Downtown. An update of the Agenda was launched in July 2006, providing an opportunity to develop new goals and strategies for the coming years. 1601.11

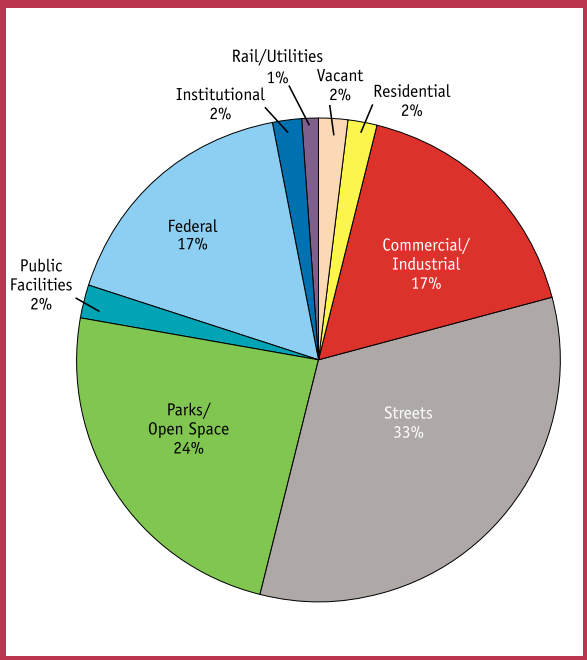
Land Use 1602

Land use statistics for the Planning Area appear in Figure 16.1. Central Washington comprises about 3,285 acres, or about 7.5 percent of the city. About 510 acres of the total area consists of water. 1602.1

Compared to the other nine Planning Areas in the city, Central Washington contains much higher percentages of commercial and federal land. Commercial land represents 17 percent of the total, with about two-thirds of the acreage developed with private office buildings. Non-park federal land also represents 17 percent of the total. Much of this land is also developed with offices, but in this case the owner and occupant is the federal government. 1602.3

Almost one-third of the Planning Area consists of street rights-of-way, a slightly higher percentage than for the city as a whole. Almont one-quarter of the land area is open space, which is also higher than the average for the city as a whole. Much of the open space is contained within the National Mall and almost all of the remainder is comprised of federal

Figure 16.1:
Land Use Composition in Central Washington 1602.2



Source: DC Office of Planning, 2006

Most land in Central Washington is publicly owned. Government uses, including parks, federal land, streets, and public facilities, represent 76 percent of the area's acreage. When institutions are added in, the figure approaches 80 percent.

"reservations" managed by the National Park Service. The federal open space has significant programming restrictions, limiting its use for local purposes and District activities. 1602.4

Residential land comprises just 1.6 percent of the Planning Area. Almost of all of this acreage consists of mid- to high-rise apartments, with average densities exceeding 100 units per acre. Most of the residential development is located in the northern part of the Planning Area, near Dupont Circle, along the Massachusetts Avenue corridor, and in the Northwest One Urban Renewal Area. Another concentration is located in the Penn Quarter, around 7th and D Streets NW. There is no residential development south of the National Mall and north of I-395. 1602.5

The percentages of land area in other uses, such as institutions, public facilities, and utilities, are all relatively small. Only about 2.1 percent of the Planning Area consists of vacant, unimproved private land. 1602.6

Most land in Central Washington is publicly owned. Government uses, including parks, federal land, streets, and public facilities, represent 76 percent of the area's acreage. When institutions are added in, the figure approaches 80 percent. 1602.7

Demographics 1603

Basic demographic data for Central Washington is shown in Table 16.1. In 2000, the area had a population of 10,665, or about 1.8 percent of the city's total. By 2005, population had increased to about 15,700, as more than a dozen large apartment or condominium complexes were added. Household size is estimated at about 1.75, which is well below the citywide average of 2.12. 1603.1

Relative to the city as a whole, Central Washington has a higher percentage of seniors and a lower percentage of children. About 42 percent of the area's residents lived in the same house in 2000 as they did in 1995. This is below the citywide average and is indicative of a relatively mobile population. 1603.2

Approximately 60 percent of the area's residents are African-American, which is on par with the citywide average. About 26 percent of the area's residents are white, which is just slightly below the citywide average. The area includes a higher percentage of foreign-born residents than the city as a whole, and a lower percentage of residents of Hispanic origin. Almost nine percent of Central Washington's residents are Asian, which is three times the citywide average. 1603.3

Housing Characteristics 1604

The 2000 Census reported that 90 percent of Central Washington's 5,880 housing units were in multi-family buildings; 75 percent were in buildings with more than 50 units each. These percentages have increased in the last

Table 16.1:

Central Washington at a Glance 1603.4

Basic Statistics	
Land Area (square miles)	4.3
Population	
1990	10,525
2000	10,665
2005 (estimated)*	15,700
2025 (projected)*	30,000
Households (2005)*	8,000
Household Population (2005)* (excludes group quarters)	13,800
Persons Per Household (2005)*	1.73
Jobs (2005)*	423,000
Density (persons per sq mile) (2005)*	3,700

Year 2000 Census Data Profile	Central Washington Planning Area**		Citywide
	Total	% of Total	% of Total
Age			
Under 18	1,895	17.8%	20.0%
18-65	7,219	67.7%	67.8%
Over 65	1,551	14.5%	12.3%
Residents Below Poverty Level	3,257	30.5%	20.2%
Racial Composition			
White	2,757	25.9%	30.4%
Black	6,450	60.5%	60.3%
Native American	28	0.3%	0.3%
Asian/Pacific Islander	952	8.9%	2.6%
Other	247	2.3%	3.8%
Multi-Racial	231	2.2%	5.2%
Hispanic Origin	588	5.5%	7.9%
Foreign-Born Residents	1,788	16.7%	12.9%
Tenure			
Owner Households	571	11.0%	40.7%
Renter Households	4,611	89.0%	59.3%
Population 5+ yrs in same house in 2000 as in 1995	4,327	42.6%	46.9%
Housing Occupancy			
Occupied Units	5,182	88.1%	90.4%
Vacant Units	698	11.9%	9.6%
Housing by Unit Type			
1-unit detached	93	1.6%	13.1%
1-unit attached	380	6.5%	26.4%
2-4 units	125	2.1%	11.0%
5-9 units	166	2.8%	8.0%
10-19 units	340	5.8%	10.3%
20-49 units	379	6.4%	7.4%
50+ units	4,398	74.8%	23.3%
Mobile/other	0	0%	0.2%

**Figures noted with an asterisk are estimates developed by the Office of Planning and the Department of Employment Services based on a variety of data sources.*

***Total population of subcategories may not match 2000 Census totals due to sampling errors.*

Data from the Department of Employment Services and the Office of Planning indicates there were approximately 423,000 jobs in Central Washington in 2005, primarily in the government, professional, and non-profit sectors. This represents about 57 percent of the city's job base.

five years as almost all new housing in the Planning Area has consisted of large multi-unit buildings. The area contains fewer than 100 single family detached homes. 1604.1

The 2000 Census reported that 89 percent of the households in the Planning Area were renters and only 11 percent were homeowners. This balance is shifting as a growing share of new construction consists of owner-occupied condominiums. Based on projects under construction today, the percentage of renter-occupied units is likely to decline to between 60 and 70 percent by the next Census. 1604.2

In 2000, nearly 12 percent of the housing units in Central Washington were vacant. This is slightly higher than the citywide average of 9.6 percent. 1604.3

Income and Employment 1605

Data from the Department of Employment Services and the Office of Planning indicates there were approximately 423,000 jobs in Central Washington in 2005, primarily in the government, professional, and non-profit sectors. This represents about 57 percent of the city's job base. Year 2000 Census "journey to work" data states that 150,000 Maryland commuters and 115,000 Virginia commuters traveled into Central Washington every day to work. Another 90,000 residents from the other nine planning areas of the District of Columbia also commute into Central Washington each day.[1] 1605.1

About 39 percent of the inbound commuters drive alone to work and about 38 percent take public transit. Some 18 percent carpool or vanpool and five percent walk or bicycle. The high volume of commuter traffic strains the area's road network on a daily basis, and places a premium on convenient, high-quality transit. 1605.2

In 2000, the Census indicated the median household income in the Planning Area was $27,879. This is substantially below the citywide average of $45,927. More than 30 percent of the area's residents lived below the federal poverty level in 2000. However, the addition of thousands of market-rate condominiums and apartments since 2000 has undoubtedly brought a sharp rise in median household income since then. 1605.3

Census data indicates that about 47 percent of the area's employed residents hold jobs within Central Washington. About 30 percent work elsewhere in the District, and the remaining 23 percent reverse commute to suburban jobs. 1605.4

[1] *These figures add to less than 423,000 due to the growth in employment (about 32,000 jobs) since 2000, and the fact that only workers with regular daily commutes in and out of Central Washington are counted.*

Projections 1606

Based on projects that are under construction, approved, or proposed; regional growth trends; and the planning policies articulated by the Comprehensive Plan, significant growth is expected in Central Washington during the next 20 years. The Planning Area is expected to grow from 8,000 households in 2005 to 16,400 households in 2025. Population will nearly double from about 15,700 residents today to about 30,000 residents by 2025. Most of the growth in Central Washington is expected to consist of new high-density housing, particularly in the Mount Vernon Triangle and NoMA areas. Medium and moderate density housing is also anticipated, as communities like Sursum Corda/Northwest One are redeveloped. 1606.1

New development on the east side of Downtown.

The number of jobs is expected to increase from about 423,000 today to 490,000 in 2025. This represents just over half of the total increase in employment projected for the District of Columbia between 2005 and 2025. Most of the increase will take place in NoMA and on the eastern side of the traditional Downtown. Major development sites such as the Old Convention Center also will generate a significant number of new jobs. Replacement of some of the aging building stock in the traditional Downtown, Near Southwest, and Golden Triangle areas also can be expected. 1606.2

Planning and Development Priorities 1607

Priorities for Central Washington were discussed at Comprehensive Plan community workshops throughout 2005 and 2006. Several meetings with the Advisory Neighborhood Commissions that include Central Washington were conducted. Briefings to business and trade organizations with a stake in Downtown's future also took place. The revision process also included a Small Group Discussion on Downtown in October 2005. About 25 participants representing an array of Central Washington neighborhoods and interests were present. 1607.1

The following priorities for Central Washington were expressed through this process: 1607.2

a. The vision of a mixed use "living downtown" remains even more applicable today than it was 30 years ago when it was conceived. A priority should continue to be placed on diversifying the mix of Downtown land uses to strengthen its role as the heart of the city. The area is already the center of one of the largest urban office markets in the world. Strengthening Central Washington as a creative, vibrant urban center will require more housing, retail, and arts and entertainment venues. It will also require facilitating the expansion of the traditional Downtown to the east and southeast. Capital projects, financial and development incentives, and

H Street NW, Chinatown

continued strong leadership will be needed to create the desired mix of uses.

b. The Central Area should be a diverse place and its diversity should be reflected on many levels. Not only should it feature a mix of uses, but it should serve a variety of users, including Downtown and city residents, workers and visitors from across the region, as well as those from the rest of the country and the world. Downtown retailers should serve customers with a variety of income levels, and retailers themselves should include small, locally grown businesses as well as national chains. Non-profits and those who cannot afford Class A office rents also provide desirable diversity. Participants in Comp Plan discussions stated that further efforts should be made to nurture Downtown's developing mix of fine restaurants, theaters, galleries, clubs, and retail shops—and to complement these uses with attractive public spaces to achieve the eclectic, organic, high-energy character that defines cities like London and New York.

c. In addition to being diverse, Downtown should be authentic. This should be expressed through its appreciation and celebration of its history, culture and heritage. Thus, a priority should be placed on the preservation of buildings, places and uses which express these qualities. Recent efforts to restore the former Carnegie Library Building, create farmers markets, and improve the Central Library to provide space for cultural celebrations are examples of actions which contribute to the feeling of authenticity. Chinatown presents an interesting case. While on the one hand, preserving Chinatown's authenticity has to be about more than just preserving facades or using Chinese characters on street signs, on the other hand, there has been a marked reduction in the number of Chinese businesses. It remains to be seen if Chinatown can maintain an authentic role as the center of a dispersed Asian community. Historic preservation should be strongly promoted Downtown where the historic fabric is still largely intact, but contemporary architecture also should flourish in places where new construction is appropriate.

d. One issue raised during the Comprehensive Plan revision was the question of who Downtown Washington "belongs" to. The Mall may be a national gathering place, but many District residents do not perceive it as "theirs." Downtown should function as the city's "Commons", a place where residents can come, feel welcome, celebrate good times and, when necessary, even protest about District issues. The former Convention Center site should provide a great physical site for the expression of the Commons. There is a need for other public gathering places, events, and activities that reinforce Central Washington's role as the great melting pot that serves all of the city's neighborhoods.

e. Central Washington's design is unique among American cities. Its distinguishing qualities, including its diagonal avenues, monumental buildings, low building heights, and open spaces, are viewed as some of the District of Columbia's greatest assets. It is essential that new buildings reflect this character and add to the sense of place. In particular, attention must be paid to how buildings meet the street. Curb cuts, blank walls, and inactive ground floor uses should be minimized. Loading and parking entrances should be off of alleys as much as possible. As noted in the Urban Design Element of the Comprehensive Plan, the identity of Central Washington's multiple centers needs to be more clearly defined, and the connections between them need to be improved.

f. While recognizing Central Washington's national and international role, the area should also play a special role for our own citizens. It should serve the multiple needs of all its citizens, without regard to age, class or ethnic background. Many activities serving very low-income persons and those with special needs—including social services, low cost housing, and emergency shelter—have faced displacement as land values and rents have increased. Given the area's location, urban character, and accessibility, a significant number of special needs housing units and human service facilities should be retained in the future. This should be achieved by preserving the affordable housing units left, preserving (or replacing) emergency shelter space, and creating new forms of affordable housing that work best in a Downtown setting such as Single Room Occupancy hotels. Other social service facilities, such as day care centers and job training facilities, are needed to sustain Downtown as a community hub.

g. Central Washington is the hub of the metropolitan transportation system with 15 Metrorail stations, commuter and interstate rail terminals, and major bridges, freeway, and surface street infrastructure. However, to retain its central role, it must overcome transportation challenges including:

- Some Metrorail stations that are nearing capacity
- Recent security-related street closures that have constricted traffic
- Conflicts between street activities, such as truck deliveries, bus stops, taxi stands, and parking
- Conflicts between building perimeter security and pedestrian circulation
- An inadequate supply of parking to meet shopper and visitor needs
- Confusing signage and a lack of information about routes and transportation services.

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The "federal" city and "domestic" city should be connected as one, as they are in other great national capital cities.

The DC Circulator has been an important step to connect Central Washington destinations to one another, but additional improvements are needed. Improving east-west and north-south circulation, and improving parking management continue to be high priorities. Supporting Metro's efforts to increase capacity—especially at Metro Center—also should be a priority.

h. The "federal" city and "domestic" city should be connected as one, as they are in other great national capital cities. The Mall's museums and attractions are ringed by imposing federal office buildings that offer few amenities or opportunities for visitors—or even their own employees—and little indication of what lies a few blocks beyond. The expansion of development and redevelopment around the Mall should begin to diminish these distinctions, and provide more amenities closer to the all. There will need to be special efforts to draw tourists into Downtown, such as signage and streetscape improvements, new transportation modes (like the Circulator), and the development of new attractions like the Newseum and Spy Museum in the heart of Downtown. In addition to the urban design benefits of unifying the Mall and Downtown, there are other obvious benefits as more visitors choose to dine, shop, and stay in the District. Waterfront park improvements provide another way to tie the city together; developing a continuous 11-mile band of waterfront open space from Georgetown to the Arboretum was an important theme of the NCPC Legacy Plan and will continue to be a priority in the future.

i. Downtown's growth and success should continue to benefit residents of the District of Columbia. Downtown already plays a pre-eminent role in the economic health of the city, producing a net benefit of $600 million per year in tax revenues. In addition, the growth of retail trade, hotels, restaurants, and other services will create many entry-level jobs. The continued development of office space will create new clerical, professional, mid-level, and management jobs in emerging and growing professions. Job placement, apprenticeships, and training programs are needed to ensure that District residents can take advantage of these opportunities.

j. While Downtown has been among the top office markets in the world since the beginning of the decade, the health of that market should not be taken for granted. Changes in security policies on the part of the Defense Department will result in the abandonment of over four million square feet of office space in Arlington alone, most of it proximate to Metro stations, and already less costly per square foot than Downtown office space. This situation will require achieving a delicate balance between using the strength of the Downtown office economy to leverage public benefits without hindering its ability to compete with other jurisdictions for office tenants.

k. Central Washington should continue to lead the way in the city's overall efforts toward environmental sustainability. While Downtown's density of uses, and its extensive reliance on public transportation help it to score high on any index of sustainability, more can be done, both to influence transportation choices and the development of "green buildings."

Seventh Street NW

Policies and Actions

CW-1 General Policies

CW-1.1 Guiding Growth and Neighborhood Conservation 1608

The following general policies and actions should guide growth and neighborhood conservation decisions in Central Washington. These policies and actions should be considered in tandem with those in the citywide elements of the Comprehensive Plan. 1608.1

Policy CW-1.1.1: Promoting Mixed Use Development

Expand the mix of land uses in Central Washington to attract a broader variety of activities and sustain the area as the hub of the metropolitan area. Central Washington should be strengthened as a dynamic employment center, a high-quality regional retail center, an internationally-renowned cultural center, a world-class visitor and convention destination, a vibrant urban neighborhood, and the focus of the regional transportation network. New office and retail space, hotels, arts and entertainment uses, housing, and open space should be encouraged through strategic incentives so that the area remains attractive, exciting, and economically productive. 1608.2

See also the Urban Design and Land Use Elements for additional policies related to Downtown growth.

Policy CW-1.1.2: Central Washington Office Growth

Retain Central Washington as the premier office location in the Greater Washington region. Office development should generally be guided eastward from its current area of concentration, filling in the gap between 3rd Street NW and North Capitol Street (south of Massachusetts Avenue), and capitalizing on the growing demand for office space along North and South Capitol Streets and in the vicinity of the New York Avenue Metro station. A range of office space should be planned to meet the needs of high-end, mid-range, and low-end office space users. 1608.3

See also the Economic Development Element for additional policies related to growth of the office economy.

Market Square, Penn Quarter

Policy CW-1.1.3: Incentives for Non-Office Uses

Because market forces tend to favor office development over other land uses in Central Washington, take action to attract the other desired land uses within the area. For example, the District's zoning regulations should include incentives for mixed use development, including housing, ground floor retail, educational uses, and arts facilities, in locations consistent with the Comprehensive Plan. 1608.4

Policy CW-1.1.4: New Housing Development in Central Washington

Encourage the development of new high-density housing in Central Washington, particularly in the area north of Massachusetts Avenue and east of Mount Vernon Square. This area includes Mount Vernon Triangle, Northwest One, and NoMA. Ground floor retail space and similar uses should be strongly encouraged within these areas to create street-life and provide neighborhood services for residents. A strong Downtown residential community can create pedestrian traffic, meet local housing needs, support local businesses in the evenings and on weekends, and increase neighborhood safety and security. 1608.5

See also the Housing Element for additional policies relating to Downtown housing production.

Policy CW-1.1.5: Central Washington Housing Diversity

Preserve Central Washington's existing low- to moderate-income housing, including public housing, Section 8 housing—both contracts and vouchers—and other subsidized units. While this will be expensive, it is important to keep Central Washington a mixed income community and avoid the displacement of lower income residents. 1608.6

Policy CW-1.1.6: Capturing Visitor and Employee Spending

Capture a greater share of the demand for goods and services generated by the more than 400,000 persons working in Central Washington, and the millions of tourists who visit the area each year by supporting additional retail and restaurant development. This will generate substantial jobs, tax revenues, and social and economic benefits for the city. 1608.7

Policy CW-1.1.7: Central Washington Arts and Entertainment Uses

Retain, enhance, and expand Central Washington's arts and entertainment uses, including theaters, cinemas, galleries, studios, museums, and related services. Cultural uses should be actively encouraged in the area along 7th Street NW (between the National Mall and the Convention Center), and along the E Street corridor (between 5th and 15th Streets NW). The clustering of arts uses in these areas should complement the significant cultural institutions already present or planned, such as the Smithsonian museums (including the renovated National Portrait Gallery and Smithsonian

American Art Museum), the Corcoran Gallery of Art, the Newseum, and the numerous Downtown theaters. 1608.8

See also the Economic Development Element for further policies relating to growth of the tourism and hospitality economy, and policies in the Arts and Culture Element on the promotion of Downtown arts and live-work housing for artists.

Gallup Building at 9th and F Streets

Policy CW-1.1.8: Promote Central Washington Retail

Develop and promote Central Washington as a regional retail destination. Particular emphasis should be placed on sustaining a concentrated regional shopping area at:

a. The F and G Street corridors between 7th and 15th Streets NW;

b. Seventh Street NW in the Gallery Place and Penn Quarter neighborhoods; and

c. The Old Convention Center site.

The design of streets and facades in these areas should be conducive to pedestrian-oriented shopping, with wide sidewalks, window displays, well managed on-street vending activities, outdoor seating areas, and other shopper amenities. A mix of traditional large-format retail anchors and specialty shops should be encouraged. In particular, support should be provided to attract one or two additional boutique department stores to these areas. 1608.9

See also the Economic Development and Urban Design Elements for additional policies relating to the retail sector.

Policy CW-1.1.9: Neighborhood-Serving Retail in Central Washington

Ensure that Central Washington's retail uses serve not only the regional market, but also the local neighborhood market created by residential development within the area. This should include basic consumer goods like drug stores, hardware stores, and grocery stores, to supplement the major anchors and specialty shops. 1608.10

Policy CW-1.1.10: Central Washington Hotels and Hospitality Services

Encourage the development of additional hotels in Central Washington, especially in the areas around the new Convention Center and Gallery Place, along Pennsylvania Avenue NW and Massachusetts Avenue NW, in the Thomas Circle area, and in the area east of Third Street NW. A range of hotel types, including moderately priced hotels, and hotels oriented to family travelers as well as business travelers, should be encouraged. Hotels generate jobs for District residents and revenues for the general fund and should be granted incentives when necessary. Retain existing hotel uses by allowing and encouraging the expansion of those uses, including the addition of one

Recent Downtown construction

floor, approximately 16 feet in height subject to coordination with federal security needs, to the Hay-Adams Hotel. 1608.11

Policy CW-1.1.11: Leveraging Public Development Sites

Use publicly-owned development sites, such as urban renewal sites, WMATA joint development sites, and the former Washington Convention Center site to implement key objectives and policies of the Central Washington Area Element, especially with respect to land use and urban design. These sites should be viewed as a portfolio of assets that must be strategically managed to meet the long term needs of the District. 1608.12

Policy CW-1.1.12: Reinforcing Central Washington's Characteristic Design Features

Reinforce the physical qualities that set Central Washington apart from all other major American city centers, including the L'Enfant framework of diagonal avenues and park reservations, relatively low building heights, the great open spaces of the National Mall and Tidal Basin, the large number of historic and/or monumental buildings, and the blending of historic and contemporary architecture. 1608.13

Policy CW-1.1.13: Creating Active Street Life and Public Spaces

Promote active street life throughout Central Washington through the design of buildings, streets, and public spaces. This should include:

a. Discouraging second-level pedestrian bridges or underground walkways that drain activity from Central Washington streets;

b. Encouraging multiple entrances in large projects to increase street-level activity;

c. Managing certain streets so they can be easily closed to traffic on special occasions for use by pedestrians;

d. Providing streetscape improvements that make Downtown streets more comfortable and attractive;

e. Encouraging active ground floor uses, and discouraging wide building entrances, large internal lobbies, and street-facing garage entrances and loading areas;

f. Creating and managing well designed public spaces that provide space for spontaneous performances, programmed entertainment, and social interaction;

g. Supporting collaboration with the National Park Service on measures to allow for recreation space as well as local and federal monuments and national memorials on federally-owned parks in the heart of the central business district such as Pershing Park, and Franklin, McPherson, and Farragut Squares; and

h. Continuing the effort started more than 45 years ago to revitalize Pennsylvania Avenue through measures such as improved lighting, landscaping, and better use of Freedom Plaza. 1608.14

See also the Urban Design Element for additional policies relating to improving the public realm and creating active Downtown street environments.

L Street NW, Golden Triangle

Policy CW-1.1.14: Central Washington Multi-modal Transportation System

Develop and maintain a balanced multi-modal transportation system for Central Washington which makes optimal use of the existing street network, the Metrorail and commuter rail networks, the bus system, and public spaces including sidewalks and alleys. Mass transit should be supported as the dominant form of transportation to, from, and around the area. 1608.15

Policy CW-1.1.15: Increasing Central Washington's Transit Mode Share

Improve public transit and other means of non-automobile access to Central Washington to the point where 70 percent of all peak hour trips into the area are made by a mode other than a single occupant vehicle. Based on 2000 Census data, the split for the Central Washington Planning Area was 60/40, with 40 percent of all commuters driving to work alone. Public transit should be emphasized as the preferred means of access to and around Central Washington by:

a. Giving priority to public transit vehicles on the area's streets;

b. Promoting the use of public transit for commuting;

c. Encouraging direct connections from Metrorail stations to adjacent development;

d. Improving the availability of information and signage about public transit service;

e. Developing new forms of transit such as circulators and trolleys; and

f. Improving public transit service, particularly during off peak hours. 1608.16

Policy CW-1.1.16: Central Washington Parking Management

Develop creative, effective solutions to manage Downtown parking demand. These solutions should be responsive to the needs of local retailers and businesses without inducing excessive auto traffic or discouraging transit use. Incentives for short-term parking within private garages, the sharing of parking by multiple uses with different demand characteristics, and better parking signage are all strongly encouraged. 1608.17

See also the Transportation Element for additional policies on shared parking and parking management.

Street vendor, North Capitol Street

Policy CW-1.1.17: Making Central Washington's Streets More Pedestrian-Friendly

Enhance Central Washington's pedestrian network and improve pedestrian safety. This should be achieved through such measures as:

a. Improving certain streets for pedestrian use;

b. Providing safe and accessible pedestrian waiting space on the widest thoroughfares;

c. Maintaining sufficiently wide sidewalks and regulating sidewalk obstructions;

d. Restricting curb cuts and parking garage access along major streets;

e. Providing safe and accessible pedestrian detours at construction sites;

f. Encouraging sidewalk widening within private development; and

g. Enforcement of traffic and parking laws, such as no parking zones. 1608.18

Policy CW-1.1.18: Cross-town Circulation

Strengthen transportation connections between Central Washington and the rest of the city by improving east-west connections such as F Street NW and north-south connections such as 7th and 9th Streets. 1608.19

See also policies in the Land Use, Urban Design, and Transportation Elements discouraging street closures in and around the District.

Policy CW-1.1.19: Goods Movement and Service Delivery within Central Washington

Strongly discourage the obstruction of public rights-of-way by goods and service delivery activities. Provide for the efficient and convenient movement of goods and delivery of services within Central Washington by:

a. Maintaining and improving interior alleys where needed to provide for off street loading facilities and minimize curb cuts on streets;

b. Encouraging the consolidation of loading areas within new development and limiting on-street service deliveries;

c. Requiring adequate off-street or below grade loading and service parking areas;

d. Converting on-street loading facilities to off-street facilities whenever possible; and

e. Managing goods and service delivery times. 1608.20

See the Transportation Element for additional policies on goods delivery.

Policy CW-1.1.20: Wayfinding Signage

Maintain, upgrade, and manage pedestrian, bicycle, and vehicular signage within Central Washington to improve connections within the area, and between the area and the rest of the city. Street signs, directional signs, and maps should provide clear information on travel routes, emergency routes and procedures, parking, and transit operations. 1608.21

See the Urban Design Element for additional policies on signage.

Freedom Plaza

Policy CW-1.1.21: Central Washington Capital Improvements

Invest in capital projects that improve the quality of Central Washington's environment, stimulate private investment, accommodate projected growth, and set the stage for the area to achieve its full economic and quality of life potential. To create the necessary revenue stream for these improvements, a significant share of the tax revenues generated by development in Central Washington should be reinvested within the area. No less than three percent of Central Washington's real property tax revenues should be directed to capital improvements in this area annually. 1608.22

Action CW-1.1.A: Downtown Action Agenda Update

Update the 2000 Downtown Action Agenda as a "Center City Action Agenda." The updated agenda should include a five-year list of actions to ensure development of the center city into a dynamic mixed use area. Study area boundaries should extend from Georgetown to Capitol Hill on the west and east and Dupont Circle to Buzzard Point on the north and south, with a particular focus on NoMA and the areas south of I-395. The Action Agenda should include updated land use "targets" to guide future development and marketing strategies. It should also address the relationship between the Central Employment Area and the "ring" of residential neighborhoods on its perimeter. 1608.23

Action CW-1.1.B: Land Use and Transportation Planning for Central Washington

Conduct ongoing land use and transportation research and planning for Central Washington, including the collection and analysis of data on the area's employment, population, housing, visitor, land use, development, travel pattern, and economic characteristics. This research and planning is necessary to monitor Central Washington's competitive position in the nation and region and to make policy recommendations to maintain its health. This activity should be done in concert with the National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC), the DC Economic Partnership, and the local Business Improvement Districts. 1608.24

Action CW-1.1.C: Central Washington Urban Design Planning

Continue to develop plans and guidelines for the design of buildings, streets, and public spaces in Central Washington. Design guidelines should help

Design guidelines should help implement the Comprehensive Plan by reinforcing the unique identity of Central Washington's sub-areas and neighborhoods, improving connections to the National Mall, encouraging pedestrian movement, creating active street life, preserving historic resources, promoting green roofs and other sustainable design principles, and achieving high quality architectural design.

implement the Comprehensive Plan by reinforcing the unique identity of Central Washington's sub-areas and neighborhoods, improving connections to the National Mall, encouraging pedestrian movement, creating active street life, preserving historic resources, promoting green roofs and other sustainable design principles, and achieving high quality architectural design. 1608.25

Action CW-1.1.D: Focused Planning for "Catalytic" Sites

Develop detailed plans for "catalytic" sites with the potential to significantly shape the future of Central Washington. These sites include but are not limited to the Old Convention Center site, the I-395 air rights between D Street and Massachusetts Avenue NW, the Northwest One neighborhood, the air rights north of Union Station, and the former Carnegie Library on Mount Vernon Square. Encourage the federal government to prepare plans for similar sites under their jurisdiction such as Freedom Plaza, the old Post Office on Pennsylvania Avenue NW, Old Naval Observatory Hill, and the area around the Kennedy Center. 1608.26

Action CW-1.1.E: Public Space Regulations

Simplify public space regulations for Downtown to avoid duplicative or inconsistent standards and overly complex permitting requirements. 1608.27

Action CW-1.1.F: Residential Development Incentives

Develop incentives for the conversion of lower-performing retail/office buildings into new housing or mixed use development throughout Central Washington. 1608.28

Action CW-1.1.G: Tax and Financial Incentives for "Preferred" Land Uses and Infrastructure Investments

Apply a range of tax and financial incentives to assist in achieving the land use objectives for Central Washington. These incentives could include such measures as reduced taxes and financial assistance for preferred land uses, tax increment financing, PILOTs (payments in lieu of taxes), the use of special tax districts, and the involvement of the Housing Finance Agency and other entities that produce affordable housing or provide other public benefits. 1608.29

Action CW-1.1.H: Congestion Task Force Report Recommendations

Implement the recommendations of the Mayor's 2005 Downtown Congestion Task Force. 1608.30

CW-1.2 Conserving and Enhancing Community Resources 1609

Policy CW-1.2.1: Enhancing the Identity of Central Washington Neighborhoods

Enhance the sense of identity of the different neighborhoods within Central Washington based on their history and natural features, their ethnic and cultural heritage, the design and scale of their buildings, and the types of activities and uses they support. Unique identities should be established in the emerging areas around Washington's traditional Downtown, rather than replicating existing development patterns. 1609.1

Policy CW-1.2.2: Preservation of Central Washington's Historic Resources

Protect and enhance Central Washington's historic resources by continuing the current practices of:

a. Preserving the area's historic buildings and districts;

b. Requiring that renovation and new construction is sensitive to the character of historic buildings and districts;

c. Applying design incentives and requirements to encourage preservation, adaptive reuse, and appropriate relationships between historic development and new construction;

d. Encouraging the adaptive reuse of historic and architecturally significant buildings; and

e. Preserving the original L'Enfant Plan pattern of streets and alleys, especially alleys that provide for off-street loading, deliveries, and garage access.

Historic resources should be recognized as essential to Downtown's economic vitality and competitive edge, particularly for retail, tourist, and entertainment activities. 1609.2

See also the Historic Preservation Element for additional policies related to historic resources.

Policy CW-1.2.3: Central Washington Open Space

Provide high quality outdoor public spaces throughout Central Washington. This should include the development of new open spaces, such as a civic plaza on the site of the Old Convention Center. It should also include enhancements to existing open spaces such as Judiciary Square (in accordance with the approved Judiciary Square Master Plan). In addition, the area's triangle parks should be enhanced as an important element of the L'Enfant Plan. Parks and open spaces in Central Washington should be well-maintained, well-designed, and appropriately programmed based on their location, context, historic significance, and design features. 1609.3

Franklin Square

Art gallery on E Street NW

Policy CW-1.2.4: Recreation for New Downtown Residents and Workers

Ensure that emerging residential and employment centers such as Northwest One, NoMA and Mount Vernon Triangle include adequate parks, open spaces, and recreational facilities for residents, workers and other users. The use of payment-in-lieu-of-taxes (PILOTs) to fund such improvements should be explored. 1609.4

See also Parks, Recreation and Open Space for policies regarding new parks.

Policy CW-1.2.5: Central Washington Economic Opportunity

Develop programs to maximize the economic benefits of development in Central Washington for District residents. A priority should be placed on programs which link District residents to jobs in the area; programs that retain, assist, and expand small and minority businesses; and programs that avoid the displacement of small or locally-owned businesses. 1609.5

See also the Economic Development Element for policies relating to small businesses and commercial gentrification.

Policy CW-1.2.6: Central Washington Social Services

Continue the important role that Central Washington plays in the District's social service delivery system, particularly in the provision of health care and medical services, and services for the homeless, elderly, disabled, and others with special needs. Ensure that centrally located facilities providing these services are retained or added as the city's population and employment base expand. 1609.6

Policy CW-1.2.7: Central Washington Leadership and Management

Achieve Central Washington planning objectives through leadership and management strategies as well as land use, transportation, and design strategies. Support the activities of local Business or Community Improvement Districts to coordinate special events, marketing, planning and design, business development, maintenance and security, transportation, and joint development activities. 1609.7

Policy CW-1.2.8: Building a Sense of Community in Central Washington

Encourage the involvement of Central Washington residents in planning and community development decisions. Given the expected influx of new residents into the area and the historically transient character of its population, this will be important to create a stronger sense of community ownership and neighborhood pride. 1609.8

Action CW-1.2.A: Business and Community Improvement Districts

Support the activities of the Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) and Community Improvement Districts (CIDs) within Central Washington.

Encourage partnerships between these entities and District government to achieve local job training, job placement, and business assistance goals. 1609.9

See also the Economic Development Element for additional policies related to economic and business development.

Action CW-1.2.B: Central Washington Open Space Planning

Work with the National Capital Planning Commission and the National Park Service in the planning and programming of Central Washington's major open spaces, including participation in the National Capital Framework Plan and the National Mall Comprehensive Management Plan. In addition, work with the federal government to develop unique management policies and procedures for the smaller (non-Mall) Central Washington federal parks. 1609.10

More specific actions relating to community resources are contained in the Policy Focus area discussions below. 1609.11

CW-2 Policy Focus Areas 1610

The Comprehensive Plan identifies eight areas in Central Washington as "policy focus areas," indicating that they require a level of direction and guidance beyond that provided in the prior section of this Area Element and in the citywide elements. These eight areas are:

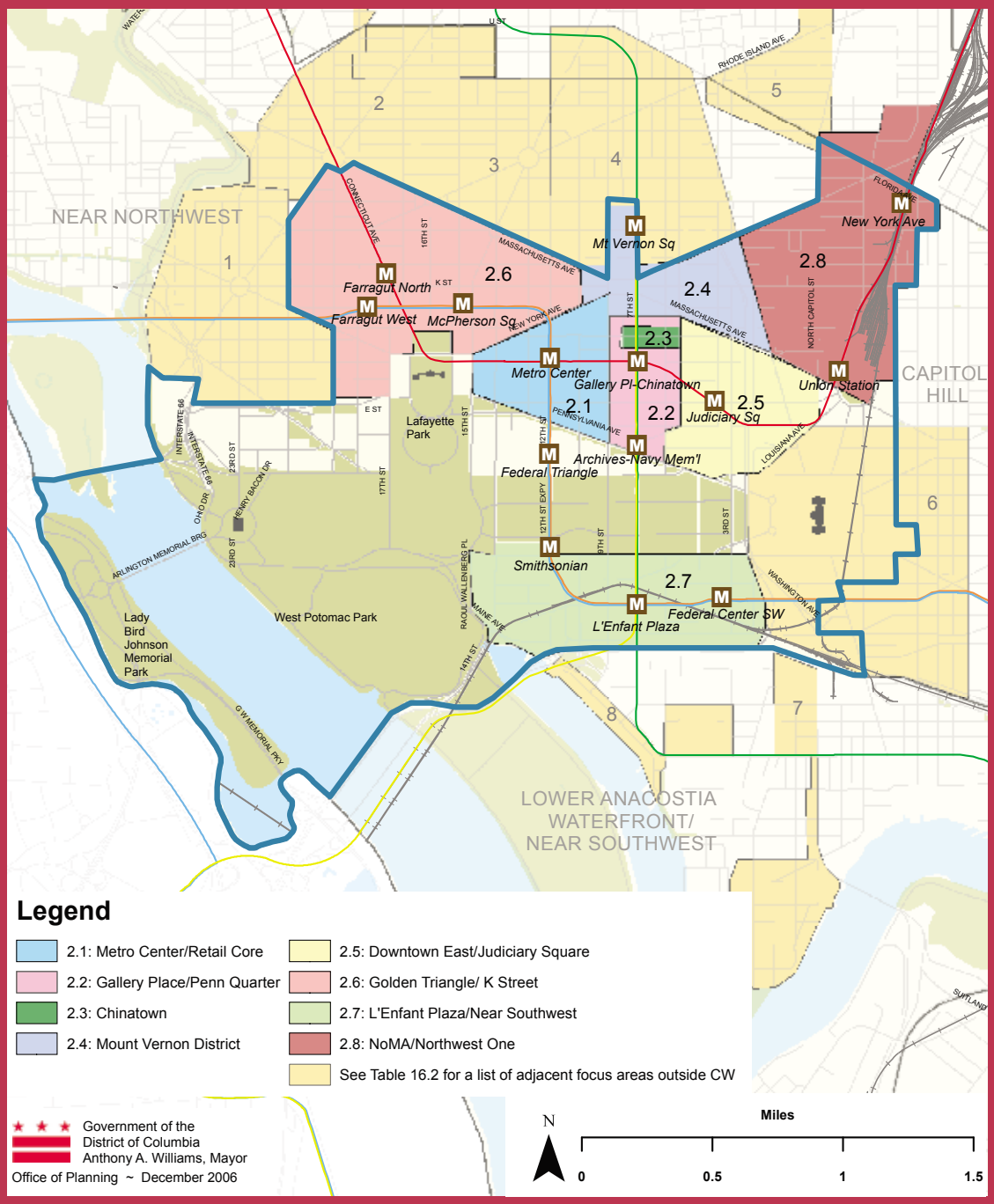
- Metro Center/Retail Core
- Gallery Place/Penn Quarter
- Chinatown
- Mount Vernon District
- Downtown East/Judiciary Square
- Golden Triangle/K Street
- L'Enfant Plaza/Near Southwest
- NoMA/Northwest One. 1610.1

With a few exceptions, these areas exclude what is commonly thought of as the "federal city", in other words the portions of Central Washington under federal jurisdiction. Planning for these areas, which include the Kennedy Center, the Federal Triangle, the Northwest Rectangle, the Southwest Federal Center, and East Potomac Park is the responsibility of the National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC). NCPC recently launched its "National Capital Framework Plan" to address the future of these areas. NCPC and the National Park Service are also engaged in planning for the National Mall. Similarly, the Architect of the Capitol is engaged in an update of the U.S. Capitol Master Plan. The discussions below are complementary to federal policy initiatives and result in a unified vision for the future of the central city. 1610.2

16

Map 16.1:

Central Washington Policy Focus Areas 1610.3



CW-2.1 Metro Center/Retail Core 1611

For the purposes of the Comprehensive Plan, the Metro Center/Retail Core area includes the traditional "Downtown Retail Core" along F and G Streets NW, as well as other city blocks in the area roughly bordered by 15th Street on the west, 9th Street on the east, New York Avenue on the north, and Pennsylvania Avenue on the south. (Note: the retail core also extends east to 6th Street NW, but the eastern blocks are addressed in the next section on Gallery Place/Penn Quarter.) 1611.1

This area includes the 11-acre site of the former Washington Convention Center, which is planned for approximately 300,000 square feet of retail space in the District's redevelopment vision. The area also includes Downtown's largest department store, other major retailers, many large office buildings, hotels, theaters, and restaurants. At the heart of this area, the Metro Center subway station is one of the busiest stations in the Metrorail system and is a major transfer point between intersecting Metro lines. 1611.2

While the Retail Core has enjoyed a comeback since 2000, it is not robust. Many retail spaces remain underutilized or have been converted to office space. Some of the retail energy has shifted eastward toward Gallery Place, with many of the blocks around Metro Center now perceived as an office district rather than the region's premier shopping area. The renovation of Hecht's and the opening of new retailers like H&M (in the former Woodward and Lothrop Department Store) have been positive signs. On the other hand, the Shops at National Place—designed to revitalize Downtown shopping in the 1980s—has been converted to non-destination retail use. Downtown workers still have limited shopping options, and potential tourist and visitor spending is still being lost. In addition, with only one major department store, Downtown Washington does not offer the range and quality of goods to be expected in a major city's downtown, much less the capital of the United States. 1611.3

The retail core of the city must be strengthened in the coming years. Retail "leakage" or loss of sales has been estimated to be as high as $1.2 billion per year (or approximately $70 million in tax revenue in 2005). Retail strategies

Table 16.2:
Policy Focus Areas Within and Adjacent to Central Washington 1610.4

Within Central Washington	
2.1	Metro Center/Retail Core (see p. 16-25)
2.2	Gallery Place/Penn Quarter (see p. 16-28)
2.3	Chinatown (see p. 16-30)
2.4	Mount Vernon District (see p. 16-32)
2.5	Downtown East/Judiciary Square (see p. 16-35)
2.6	Golden Triangle/K Street (see p. 16-37)
2.7	L'Enfant Plaza/Near Southwest (see p. 16-39)
2.8	NoMA/Northwest One (see p. 16-41)
Adjacent to Central Washington	
1	Foggy Bottom/West End (see p. 21-28)
2	Dupont Circle (see p. 21-24)
3	14th Street/Logan Circle (see p. 21-26)
4	Shaw/Convention Center Area (see p. 21-20)
5	N. Capitol St/Florida Av/New York Avenue (see p. 20-31)
6	U.S. Capitol Perimeter (see p. 15-26)
7	South Capitol Corridor/Buzzard Point (see p. 19-18)
8	Southwest Waterfront (see p. 19-15)

With only one major department store, Downtown Washington does not offer the range and quality of goods to be expected in a major city's downtown, much less the capital of the United States.

should build off the success of nearby Gallery Place and the Verizon Center, increasing the synergy between these areas and the historic F Street shopping district. The old Convention Center site offers an opportunity to improve the connection between the two areas and create an expanded Central Washington shopping district for the region. New boutique department stores, major national retailers, and smaller independent specialty shops should be strongly encouraged as redevelopment plans for the old Convention Center site proceed. 1611.4

Including ground level retail space within new and renovated office space in the Metro Center area can also help create the critical mass necessary to make Central Washington a more vibrant shopping hub. Strategies to address parking needs, improve public transit links, and create a more comfortable and attractive street environment can support the goal of increasing the area's prominence as a retail center. 1611.5

Policy CW-2.1.1: Strengthening the Retail Core

Strengthen the traditional retail core along F and G Streets between 9th and 15th Street NW. Encourage the extension of the retail core eastward to 6th Street NW to create greater synergy between this area and Gallery Place. Large scale retail and entertainment uses should continue to be strongly encouraged as buildings in the Downtown Retail Core are adaptively reused, and as new infill development takes place. 1611.6

Policy CW-2.1.2: Promoting Central Washington Shopping

Facilitate District and private sector efforts to market the Central Washington Retail Core as a shopping destination for District residents as well as for tourists and suburban residents, and to promote Central Washington as a preferred alternative to suburban shopping malls. Retail strategies for this area should be structured to avoid damaging the successful and strong regional retail economies in Georgetown and Friendship Heights. 1611.7

Policy CW-2.1.3: Creating a Critical Mass of Retail Choices

Improve Downtown's viability as a shopping destination by encouraging additional small retailers to locate around existing retail anchors, adding new major retail anchors, and requiring continuous ground floor retail space wherever appropriate. Encourage the greatest possible variety of goods, services, and pricing so that the Retail Core meets the needs of a diverse range of residents, employees, and visitors. 1611.8

Policy CW-2.1.4: Establishing a Unique Identity for Downtown Shopping

Enhance the identity of the Downtown Retail Core as a unique shopping area. Design attention should be focused on the lower levels of buildings, with at grade retail frontages and frequent street-level store entrances.

Special features such as canopies, signs, and lighting should be used to create a vibrant shopping environment. Streetscape and landscape design, street lighting, and signage should contribute to the area's unique sense of place. 1611.9

Illustrative Rendering of Possible Old Convention Center Site Reuse (2004)

Policy CW-2.1.5: Pedestrian Movement in the Retail Core

Emphasize and encourage pedestrian movement in the Downtown Retail Core, particularly along F, G, and H Streets NW. Future development in this area should create and support street-level activity. Interior or underground pedestrian arcades or passageways should be discouraged. 1611.10

Policy CW-2.1.6: Connections to Adjacent Areas

Improve pedestrian connections within the Downtown Retail Core, with a particular emphasis on improving the north-south connections along 6th, 8th, 9th, 10th, 11th, 12th, and 13th Streets NW to better connect the area to the Federal Triangle and National Mall on the south and the Convention Center and Franklin Square areas on the north. Use strategies such as improved signage and streetscape design to draw visitors from the National Mall. 1611.11

Policy CW-2.1.7: Complementary Activities

Encourage new activities in the Downtown Retail Core that complement and support its primary function as a shopping district, including hotels, restaurants, and entertainment activities. 1611.12

Policy CW-2.1.8: Parking in the Retail Core

Encourage the provision of sufficient parking and loading areas in and adjacent to the Downtown Retail Core, with an emphasis on short term parking for shoppers. Wherever feasible, access to parking should be from E and H Streets NW and from the north-south streets, rather than from F and G Streets NW. 1611.13

Policy CW-2.1.9: Old Convention Center Redevelopment

Support the redevelopment of the Old Washington Convention Center as a mixed use development with residential, office, institutional, community, open space, and recreational uses. Promote the site as a regional retail destination that links Gallery Place to the traditional Retail Core. The reuse plan should include restoration of the I Street and 10th Street rights of way and the Reservation 174 "triangle", and should be oriented around a major new civic plaza. 1611.14

Action CW-2.1.A: Downtown Retail District Streetscape Planning

Review land use, zoning, and urban design regulations for the Downtown retail district to ensure that they are producing the desired results, including continuous ground floor retail space, pedestrian-friendly streetscapes, adaptive reuse of historic buildings, and increased patronage by visitors and workers. 1611.15

The opening of the International Spy Museum in 2002, the re-opening of the National Portrait Gallery in 2006, the soon-to-open Newseum, and the presence of major art galleries and theaters has made the area the city's preeminent center for arts and culture.

Action CW-2.1.B: Retail Revitalization Programs

Continue to use retail revitalization programs such as tax increment financing, grants and loans for façade improvements, and small business development loans to boost Downtown retail development. Periodically assess whether programs are achieving desired outcomes. 1611.16

CW-2.2 Gallery Place/Penn Quarter 1612

This Policy Focus area is located east of Metro Center and the Retail Core. It is roughly bounded by 9th Street NW on the west, 5th Street NW on the east, Pennsylvania Avenue NW on the south, and I Street NW on the north. The area includes the Gallery Place-Chinatown Metrorail station and the Archives-Navy Memorial Metrorail station. Its character is more diverse than the Metro Center area, with a large number of housing units, galleries, theaters, museums, and hospitality uses as well as offices and retail shops. 1612.1

The Gallery Place and Penn Quarter area has made an astounding comeback in the last ten years. Since opening in 1997, the 20,000 seat Verizon Center (formerly the MCI Center) has brought millions of sports and concert patrons to the area. The arena has brought about a boom in restaurants, bars, night clubs, and entertainment-oriented retailing. The opening of the 250,000 square foot Gallery Place mixed use complex in 2005 has further boosted the area's reputation as the center of Washington's night-life and entertainment scene. 1612.2

At the same time, the opening of the International Spy Museum in 2002, the reopening of the National Portrait Gallery/Smithsonian Museum of American Art in 2006, the soon-to-open Newseum, and the presence of major art galleries and theaters has made the area the city's preeminent center for arts and culture. The Woolly Mammoth Theater, E Street Cinemas, and expanded Shakespeare Theater are bringing additional evening foot-traffic to the area, and further supporting the restaurant and gallery scene. 1612.3

The area is also Downtown's premier residential neighborhood. Penn Quarter buildings like the Lansburgh and the Pennsylvania have become some of the city's most desirable addresses. 1612.4

The continued development of this area as an arts and entertainment district should be supported. As thousands of new housing units come on line in Mount Vernon Triangle and along Massachusetts Avenue, the area's resident customer base will expand. Its location as the city's top location for arts and entertainment should be sustained by encouraging additional venues, providing new amenities, and strengthening connections to the National Mall, Retail Core, and emerging Mount Vernon District. 1612.5

7th Street NW shopping

Policy CW-2.2.1: Art and Entertainment District

Promote the development of the Gallery Place and 7th Street area as a pedestrian-oriented arts and entertainment district, with nightlife and restaurants, theaters, galleries, and independent and national retailers. Continuous ground floor retail, arts, and entertainment uses should be encouraged along 7th Street between Mount Vernon Square and Pennsylvania Avenue. 1612.6

Policy CW-2.2.2: East End Theater District

Promote the area bounded by 6th Street, 14th Street, F Street, and Pennsylvania Avenue as an internationally recognized theater district, capitalizing on the presence of existing theaters like the National, Warner, Ford's, Woolly Mammoth, and the Shakespeare's Lansburgh Theater—- and new theaters such as the Sidney Harmon Center and the Washington Stage Guild. Marketing, promotion, signage, and special programs should be used to "brand" the area as the region's top performing arts center. Complementary evening uses such as restaurants should be encouraged in this area. 1612.7

See also the Economic Development Element and the Arts and Culture Element for policies relating to promotion of the arts, tourism and hospitality industries, including the development of a cultural corridor between Union Station and the White House.

Policy CW-2.2.3: Penn Quarter Neighborhood

Continue to develop the Penn Quarter as a mixed use urban neighborhood. Residential uses should be complemented by additional arts, cultural, retail, and office use, as well as open space. 1612.8

Policy CW-2.2.4: Urban Design in the Arts and Entertainment District

Retain and adaptively reuse historic buildings within the Penn Quarter/ Gallery Place area. The area's historic features are an essential part of the Quarter's success and ambiance as an arts district and must be preserved. New construction in the area should respect the historically low scale building features along 7th Street, stepping down as appropriate to protect the scale and context of important historic buildings. 1612.9

See also Urban Design and Historic Preservation Elements for additional policies relating to historic resources and design.

Policy CW-2.2.5: Links to Adjacent Areas

Improve the linkages from the Gallery Place/Penn Quarter area to the National Mall on the south, the Retail Core on the west, and the Mount Vernon Square and Triangle area on the north. The north-south linkages along 7th, 8th, and 9th Streets are particularly important. Given the low traffic volumes along 8th Street NW between F Street and Pennsylvania Avenue,

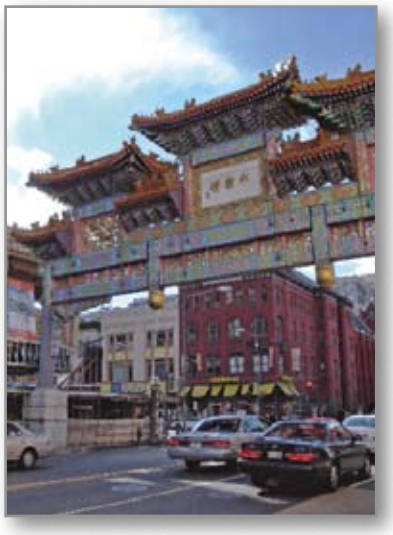
Penn Quarter Housing

the street's role as a pedestrian-oriented space linking the National Archives and National Portrait Gallery should be emphasized. Its potential as a large, flexible, programmable open space should be recognized. 1612.10

Action CW-2.2.A: Gallery Place/Penn Quarter Streetscape Improvements

Prepare streetscape improvement plans for 7th, 8th, and 9th Streets NW that physically reinforce the desired character of the area as the city's "Arts Walk" and provide space for performance, street theater, public art and exhibitions, and other activities that reinforce its role as an entertainment district. Streetscape improvements should be consistent with the approved Pennsylvania Avenue Development Corporation (PADC) Plan for this area. 1612.11

CW-2.3 Chinatown 1613



Friendship Arch

The distinctive "Friendship Arch" at the intersection of 7th and H Streets NW is the center of Washington's Chinatown. Decorative metal lattice work and railings, Chinese signs, and Chinese façade and roof details greet visitors to the blocks of H Street between 5th Street and 8th Street NW. The area has been a center of Chinese culture since the 1930s, when the city's original Chinatown along Pennsylvania Avenue was displaced by development of the Federal Triangle. 1613.1

Today, Chinatown is struggling to retain its identity as the area around it booms with new retail, office, entertainment, and housing development. The Chinese population in the area now numbers fewer than 600 residents, and many of the Chinese businesses are having a difficult time keeping pace with rising rents and land costs. National chains have moved in, leading to curious street scenes as businesses like Hooters and Starbucks display signs with Chinese characters. 1613.2

Keeping Chinatown a viable ethnic commercial district and neighborhood will require proactive measures to assist its businesses, attract new Chinese enterprises and cultural activities to the area, and support the institutions and services that sustain the Chinese community today. The area can capitalize on its proximity to the Convention Center and Gallery Place without losing its special character. Although the Chinese population in the neighborhood itself is small, it serves as a cultural and symbolic hub for a metropolitan area with almost 100,000 Chinese-American residents. It is also a destination for tourists (including visitors from Asia) and most recently, the home of the new Chinese community cultural center at Gallery Place. 1613.3

Policy CW-2.3.1: Sustaining Chinatown

Retain and enhance Chinatown as a thriving Downtown community including housing, community and cultural facilities, ethnically-oriented street-level retail, related wholesale operations, office and professional uses, and hotels. 1613.4

Policy CW-2.3.2: Protection Chinatown as a Viable Community

Protect and conserve Chinatown, not only through Chinese-themed building facades and street signs, but by supporting the cultural traditions of the local Chinese community, assisting Chinese-owned businesses within Chinatown, sustaining the social services that serve the Chinese population, and attracting new activities which expand the area's role as a regional center for Chinese culture and education. 1613.5

Today Chinatown is struggling to retain its identity as the area around it booms with new retail, office, entertainment, and housing development.

Policy CW-2.3.3: Chinatown's Architectural Character

Support architectural, streetscape, and landscape design criteria for new and renovated buildings that reinforce the identity of Chinatown as a special cultural district. These criteria should provide for the use of Chinese design features in a way that does not harm the historic character or structural integrity of Chinatown's landmark buildings. 1613.6

Policy CW-2.3.4: Chinatown Wholesaling

Support the retention of small food wholesalers and other small non-retail businesses that contribute to the success of Chinatown and help sustain its economic vitality. 1613.7

Policy CW-2.3.5: Chinatown as a Destination

Continue to enhance Chinatown's role as a destination for residents and workers from the District and surrounding jurisdictions, as well as for leisure and business visitors. This can help strengthen the vitality of Chinese-owned businesses, and support the development of new enterprises. Focus in particular on pedestrian connections along 7th Street between H Street NW and the Convention Center. 1613.8

Action CW-2.3.A: Chinatown Design Review

Continue to implement design review procedures that support the authentic expression of Chinese culture in new and rehabilitated development, including, as appropriate, building design, signage, streetscape and open space criteria. Periodically review the procedures and update them as necessary. 1613.9

Action CW-2.3.B: Chinatown Best Practices Study

Conduct a "best practices" study that analyzes what other cities have done to conserve ethnic business districts (particularly central city "Chinatowns"),

through land use and urban design decisions, regulatory controls, business development and economic assistance, and tourist promotion. 1613.10

Action CW-2.3.C: Chinese Park at 5th Street and Massachusetts Avenue

Support redesign of the park reservation at 5th Street NW and Massachusetts Avenue NW with a Chinese landscape theme, providing a symbolic gateway to Chinatown from Massachusetts Avenue NW. 1613.11

CW-2.4 Mount Vernon District 1614

The Mount Vernon District includes the blocks adjacent to and including historic Mount Vernon Square and the newly developing Mount Vernon Triangle area on its east. Located at the crossroads of New York and Massachusetts Avenues, the Mount Vernon District provides a transition between the lower-scale residences of Shaw on the north and the high-density commercial areas of Downtown on the south. The area suffered from disinvestment and blight during the late 20th Century. Much of its building stock was abandoned or demolished, and large areas were converted to parking or became vacant. The area has undergone a turnaround since 2000 and is currently one of the city's most active development areas. 1614.1

Mount Vernon Square itself was designed to be a focal point in Washington's ensemble of great civic landmarks. Its focus is the 1902 former Carnegie Library building, an elegant historic structure that is now in use by the Washington Historical Society. Facing the north edge of the Square is the 2.3 million square foot Washington Convention Center, completed in 2003. To the southwest, the now vacant site of the former Convention Center is awaiting redevelopment. Immediately northwest of the Square, a major convention hotel is planned. Large-scale office buildings occupy other sides of the Square, framing it as a potentially great public space. 1614.2

In 2004, the Office of Planning prepared a design workbook for Mount Vernon Square to enhance the Square's identity as the heart of a new urban neighborhood. The workbook explored alternatives to make the Square more accessible to pedestrians, more active and animated, and more visually dramatic. Its recommendations include enhancing the L'Enfant Plan "bow-tie" parks along Massachusetts and New York Avenues, improving access to the square, using placards to formalize the identity of Mount Vernon Square as an urban center, and re-inventing the Square itself as a 21st Century landmark. 1614.3

East of Mount Vernon Square, the 30-acre Mount Vernon Triangle is bordered by Massachusetts Avenue, New Jersey Avenue, and New York Avenue. An "Action Agenda" for this area was developed in 2003 to guide its transformation to a new mixed use neighborhood. Since that time, projects like Sovereign Square, the Meridian, and 555 Massachusetts have redefined the area and generated momentum for additional development on the

remaining vacant sites. A 55,000 square foot grocery store and more than 600 housing units are currently under construction in the City Vista project at 5th and I Streets NW, and more than 1,000 more new units are in the construction or planning stages nearby. A limited number of office buildings are also planned, but the emphasis is on housing with supporting retail and cultural uses. 1614.4

The Mount Vernon District provides an important opportunity to draw residents from outside the city as well as to attract residents looking for a unique urban experience not available in other Washington neighborhoods. The expected population growth will require the improvement of public facilities, parks, streets, transit, infrastructure, and community services. It will require ongoing planning to protect historic resources, respect the fabric of adjacent communities, and ensure that new uses are compatible with and connected to their surroundings. As Mount Vernon Triangle and Mount Vernon Square evolve into Downtown's newest neighborhood, coordinated public and private investment will be needed to create economic value, and to ensure that a quality environment for new residents, workers and visitors is created. 1614.5

Policy CW-2.4.1: Re-envisioning Mount Vernon Square

Improve Mount Vernon Square as a center of cultural activity, a memorable civic landmark, and a crossroads between Downtown on the south and the historic Shaw neighborhood on the north. The Square's function should be reinforced by encouraging active ground floor uses and prominent entries on the blocks that front it, and promoting high quality architecture and streetscape design on its perimeter. Redesign of the Square itself should be explored, retaining it is as an important civic open space but modifying pathways, landscapes, paving patterns, street furniture, lighting, and access points to make it more usable and inviting. 1614.6

Policy CW-2.4.2: Emphasizing the Avenues and Visual Axes

Emphasize and reinforce the historic elements of the L'Enfant Plan in the planning and design of the Mount Vernon District. This should include the creation of more dramatic and well-lit gateways along Massachusetts and New York Avenues, capitalizing on the 8th Street NW view corridor (mitigating the effects of the TechWorld "bridge"), creating a park-like promenade along the K Street axis (on both sides of the Square), and reinforcing the continuity of 7th and 9th Streets as access points to the Square. 1614.7

Policy CW-2.4.3: Convention Center Area Land Uses

Encourage land uses around Mount Vernon Square which capitalize on the presence of the Washington Convention Center. Such uses include hotels, restaurants, retail, and entertainment uses. Convention-related hotel construction should be focused on vacant or underutilized land immediately

In 2004, the Office of Planning prepared a design workbook for Mount Vernon Square to enhance the Square's identity as the heart of a new urban neighborhood. The workbook explored alternatives to make the Square more accessible to pedestrians, more active and animated, and more visually dramatic.

View corridor from Mt. Vernon Square south to National Portrait Gallery

adjacent to the Convention Center to minimize impacts on the surrounding neighborhood. 1614.8

Policy CW-2.4.4: Mount Vernon Triangle Residential Development

Develop the Mount Vernon Triangle (east of Mount Vernon Square) as a high-density residential neighborhood. Zoning incentives for this area should encourage the production of housing, as well as local-serving ground floor retail, arts, and small office uses. Public and private sector improvements to parking, infrastructure, transit, and other community services and facilities should be provided as development takes place. 1614.9

Policy CW-2.4.5: Creating a Sense of Community in Mount Vernon Triangle

Foster a stronger sense of community in Mount Vernon Triangle by including affordable housing as well as market rate housing, providing family-oriented amenities such as larger housing units and parks, encouraging small-scale cultural uses and small businesses, and preserving historic landmarks within the area. The 5th and K Street area should be emphasized as the area's "neighborhood center" and the 3rd and K Street area should be emphasized as its "residential core." 1614.10

See also the Near Northwest Area Element, and the Urban Design Element for additional policies regarding development along the edges of Central Washington.

Policy CW-2.4.6: Mount Vernon District Parks

Improve the network of public open spaces in the Mount Vernon Square and Triangle area to meet the needs of residents, workers, and visitors. Special attention should be given to enhancing the "bow-tie" shaped park reservations on Massachusetts and New York Avenues, and providing more active, programmed uses in Mount Vernon Square itself. This will require coordination with the National Park Service and the National Capital Planning Commission. Eventual transfer of park management responsibilities to the District should be pursued for these spaces. 1614.11

Policy CW-2.4.7: Creating Pedestrian-Oriented Streets in the Mount Vernon District

Promote active, pedestrian-friendly streets throughout the Mount Vernon District. Place a particular emphasis on improving K Streets as a major east-west pedestrian route, with wide sidewalks and abundant street trees and landscaping. Pedestrian amenities should also be provided along 5th, 7th, 8th, and 9th Streets to improve the connections between the Mount Vernon District and the Gallery Place and Chinatown areas to the south. 1614.12

Action CW-2.4.A: Mount Vernon Square Design Vision and Mount Vernon Triangle Action Agenda

Implement the recommendations of the Mount Vernon Square Design Workbook and the Mount Vernon Triangle Action Agenda, particularly as they relate to zoning, urban design, streetscape improvements, capital improvements, and development of priority sites. 1614.13

Action CW-2.4.B: Convention Center Hotel

Develop a major convention center hotel in close proximity to the Washington Convention Center. The hotel should be sited and designed to complement adjacent uses and add activity and aesthetic value to the Mount Vernon Square neighborhood. 1614.14

Action CW-2.4.C: Parking Management Program

Develop and implement parking management programs to protect residential areas from spillover parking associated with the Convention Center, Downtown office and retail growth, and new attractions on the Old Convention Center site and elsewhere on the northern edge of Downtown. 1614.15

New housing along Massachusetts Avenue NW

CW-2.5 Downtown East/Judiciary Square 1615

The Downtown East/Judiciary Square Focus Area is roughly bounded by Massachusetts Avenue NW on the north, North Capitol Street and Louisiana Avenue NW on the east, Pennsylvania Avenue on the south, and 5th Street NW on the west. The area is dominated by government and institutional uses, including the US Department of Labor, General Accounting Office, and Federal Courthouse; the District Municipal Building and Superior Court; Georgetown Law School; and the National Building Museum. The area also includes new housing development along Massachusetts Avenue, private office buildings like the award-winning National Association of Realtors building, and several large hotels. 1615.1

The Downtown East/Judiciary Square area currently suffers from a weak sense of identity—even its hotels are advertised as being on Capitol Hill rather than Downtown. East-west circulation is interrupted by I-395, which effectively carves a wide channel through the area between 2nd and 3rd Streets NW. Massive government buildings further block circulation and in some instances obstruct historic sight lines. The area also contains a large number of parking lots, curb cuts, and buildings that are devoid of ground level activity. 1615.2

Downtown East has the potential to be much more than it is today. It could be much better integrated with the booming Gallery Place/Penn Quarter area on its west, the emerging Mount Vernon Triangle and NoMA neighborhoods on its north, and the Capitol complex and Union Station

Downtown East has the potential to be much more than it is today. It could be much better integrated with the booming Gallery Place/Penn Quarter area on its west, the emerging Mount Vernon Triangle and NoMA neighborhoods on its north, and the Capitol complex and Union Station area on its east.

area on its east. The area is substantially larger than Gallery Place/Penn Quarter but lacks its animated quality, fine-grain architecture, and active street life. Key to its future success is the development of the air rights over I-395 and the restoration of E and F Streets NW as east-west through streets. The improvement of Judiciary Square as a great public space also should be encouraged to create a stronger focal point for the area. Mixed use infill development should be strongly encouraged throughout Downtown East. The design of new buildings in this area should be less monolithic than they have has been in the past, with active ground floor uses and more varied facades. 1615.3

Policy CW-2.5.1: Judiciary Square Improvements

Maintain the primary function of the Judiciary Square area as a judicial center, and enhance the area's appearance as a great pedestrian-oriented civic space with a strong sense of identity. Consistent with the 2005 Master Plan for the site, buildings in the area should be better related to one another and to the Square itself. 1615.4

Policy CW-2.5.2: Judiciary Square Parking Relocation

Pursue the long-term relocation of surface parking lots south of Judiciary Square (on E Street) and east of the Square (along 4th Street) to underground garages as a way to improve aesthetics, enhance the Square's role as a formal open space, and provide a green connection to the National Mall. Consider special paving, traffic and parking restrictions, and other design changes on F Street NW to improve connectivity between the National Building Museum and the Square. 1615.5

Policy CW-2.5.3: Connecting Judiciary Square to Gallery Place/ Penn Quarter

Improve pedestrian connections between Judiciary Square and the Gallery Place/Penn Quarter area by encouraging active ground floor uses along E and F Streets NW, improving signage, upgrading surface transit, and supporting compatible infill development. 1615.6

Policy CW-2.5.4: Enhancing the Identity of "Downtown East"

Strengthen Downtown East as a geographically distinct mixed use area of hotel, commercial, retail, and residential development, taking advantage of its strategic location between Capitol Hill, Downtown, and Union Station. Undertake streetscape improvements, well-designed infill development, and branding and marketing strategies to give the area a stronger identity and sense of place. 1615.7

Policy CW-2.5.5: Using the Avenues as a Design Framework

Take advantage of the L'Enfant Plan avenues that cross Downtown East, including New Jersey, Massachusetts and Louisiana Avenues NW, and North Capitol Street to create a framework for the area's future development. The

avenues should be enhanced as pedestrian-friendly streets, with buildings designed to frame important views and landmarks. 1615.8

National Building Museum

Policy CW-2.5.6: I-395 Air Rights Development

Pursue development of the air rights over I-395 between E Street NW and Massachusetts Avenue NW, including the restoration of the street rights-of-way along F and G Streets. Mixed land uses, including housing, offices, ground floor retail, and parkland, should be encouraged in this area. Air rights development should be sensitive to adjacent areas and should preserve important views. 1615.9

Action CW-2.5.A: Downtown East Design Plans

Conduct more detailed urban design planning for the Downtown East areas similar to the plans completed for the Mount Vernon Square and Mount Vernon Triangle areas. 1615.10

Action CW-2.5.B: Judiciary Square Transportation Improvements

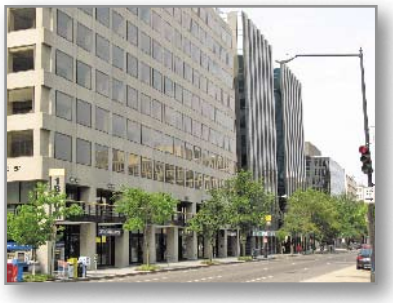
Implement the recommendations of the 2004 DDOT Judiciary Square Transportation and Security Study, including the narrowing of E Street and Indiana Avenue, restoration of two-way traffic on C Street, provision of new bus stops and bicycle amenities, and better organization of parking to reduce conflicts in the area. 1615.11

CW-2.6 Golden Triangle/K Street 1616

The Golden Triangle/K Street Policy Focus Area includes the Golden Triangle Business Improvement District and the area to the east around Franklin Square. The area is roughly bounded by Massachusetts Avenue on the north, New Hampshire Avenue on the west, and Pennsylvania (west of the White House) and New York Avenues (east of the White House) on the south. 1616.1

This is the largest concentration of office space in Central Washington, encompassing more than 60 square blocks almost completely developed with office buildings. The area also includes complementary land uses that support the office market, such as hotels, retail stores and restaurants. It also contains important open spaces such as Farragut and McPherson Squares. Golden Triangle/K Street shares its southern edge with major institutional and federal neighbors, including the White House, the Corcoran Gallery, and the Executive Office Building. The area around 19th and G Streets NW has emerged as the District's international financial center, with global banking and monetary institutions like the IMF and World Bank. 1616.2

On the eastern side of this Focus Area, Lower 16th Street has a unique and historic character that sets it apart from the area around it. The five blocks between H Street NW and Scott Circle are the ceremonial gateway to the White House and provide significant vistas of the White House and Washington Memorial. The street's green space and exceptionally



Over the next 20 years, housing and retail uses should be considered in this area to balance the office concentration and create after-hours street life. The area has some of the best transit access in the city, with four Metrorail stations.

wide right-of-way (40 feet between the sidewalks and property lines) are a defining element of its character. In addition, the corridor includes notable architecture and a mix of uses, including high-density housing. It is currently under consideration for historic district designation. 1616.3

The Golden Triangle/K Street area was Central Washington's major development area from 1950 through the early 1980s. Today, the area is almost completely built out and almost no vacant land remains. Some of the area's buildings are likely to be replaced or overhauled during the coming years, however. This is especially true for its 1950s and 1960s vintage office buildings, many of which lack modern "Class A" amenities. As infill and renovation take place, there will be opportunities to introduce new uses such as housing, and to improve architectural quality and street-level activity. 1616.4

Because the area has been so heavily dominated by a single use (office) in the past, its streets are often empty at night and on the weekends. The lack of residents forces many of the retailers to limit hours of operation. The area's architecture is also repetitive, with many buildings almost identical in height and width and similar in exterior design. This should change in the future, as the area takes on a more mixed use character and high-quality architecture becomes more valued as an amenity. 1616.5

Over the next 20 years, housing and retail uses should be considered in this area to balance the office concentration and create after-hours street life. The area has some of the best transit access in the city, with four Metrorail stations. A proposed redesign of K Street to create an exclusive busway will improve connectivity between this area and the rest of Downtown, as well as the emerging Mount Vernon District and NoMA area. 1616.6

Policy CW-2.6.1: Golden Triangle/Franklin Square as a Prestige Employment Center

Sustain the Golden Triangle/Franklin Square area as a prestige employment center, strongly supporting reinvestment in its office buildings to meet market demand. Continue to develop programs to meet the transportation needs of the local workforce, manage congestion on area streets, address security needs, and improve access for transit users, pedestrians, and bicyclists. 1616.7

Policy CW-2.6.2: Diversification of Land Use

Encourage the gradual diversification of land uses in Golden Triangle, capitalizing on opportunities for housing and ground floor retail use as the aging building stock is replaced. 1616.8

Policy CW-2.6.3: Golden Triangle/K Street Amenities

Retain and enhance the unique characteristics of the Golden Triangle/K Street area. Specifically, Franklin Square, McPherson Square, and Farragut Square parks, should be retained as attractive, high quality open spaces,

with programmed activities that encourage their use and enjoyment. Historic buildings throughout the area should be restored, protected, and adaptively reused. As the area is renovated and older buildings are refurbished and replaced, the streetscape and public realm also should be improved. 1616.9

World Bank at 18th and H Streets NW

Policy CW-2.6.4: Connecticut Avenue Corridor

Support the continued concentration of active ground-floor retail uses along the Connecticut Avenue corridor between K Street and Dupont Circle. 1616.10

Policy CW-2.6.5: East-West Circulation Improvements

Improve east-west circulation through the Golden Triangle to better connect the area to the Retail Core, Gallery Place, and Mount Vernon areas on the east, and the West End and Georgetown business districts on the west. These improvements should reinforce K Street's role as the area's "Main Street." 1616.11

Policy CW-2.6.6: Lower 16th Street

Protect and enhance the special character of Lower 16th Street NW between H Street and Scott Circle. The street's historic, ceremonial role as the approach to the White House and Lafayette Park should be recognized and conserved. Future development shall be compatible with the street's established architectural character and scale. Uses and activities that are appropriate to maintain the street's appearance and historic significance, particularly its open space and greenery, should be encouraged. 1616.12

Action CW-2.6.A: K Street Busway

Implement the K Street Busway project, including exclusive bus lanes from 9th Street to 22nd Street NW. 1616.13

CW-2.7 L'Enfant Plaza/Near Southwest 1617

The L'Enfant Plaza/Near Southwest Policy Focus Area is bounded by 15th Street NW on the west, 2nd Street NW on the East, Independence Avenue on the north, and I-395 on the south. The area includes a mix of private commercial development and numerous federal office buildings, including the U.S. Departments of Agriculture, Energy, Education, and Housing and Urban Development. With a workforce of 65,000 employees, the Near Southwest is one of the major employment hubs of Central Washington. 1617.1

The Near Southwest reflects the Modernist design philosophies of the 1950s and 1960s. Although some of its buildings were constructed in the late 1930s, the area's character was largely defined by the urban renewal projects of the post-war era. Many of its mid-century buildings are set back from the street by vast plazas and are accessed by raised roadways like the 10th Street promenade. The vision for the area as a coherent set of futuristic buildings was never realized, and today the area has a disjointed quality. 1617.2

Enhance 10th St SW as a major point of access between the National Mall, L'Enfant Plaza, and the Southwest Waterfront. Encourage a major cultural attraction at Banneker Overlook that provides a clear connection between the Near Southwest, the Washington Channel, and East Potomac Park.

In addition, Near Southwest's former role as a federal industrial district is evident in a number of places. Elevated railroad tracks bisect the area, and there are still active heating plants, warehouses, and even quasi-manufacturing activities like the Bureau of Printing and Engraving. Navigating the area on foot can be confusing and the relationships between buildings, streets, and the area's larger context is often unclear. 1617.3

Some of the Near Southwest's private complexes, including the Portals and L'Enfant Plaza, are zoned in a way that allows additional development on their plazas and open spaces. Design measures are needed to guide this development so that it can help resolve the harsh pedestrian conditions within the area and humanize the streetscape. Streetscape improvements are also needed to better connect the Near Southwest with the Southwest Waterfront (via the Banneker Overlook at the end of 10th Street), and the National Mall. Planning for the area should be done collaboratively with the National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC), which has jurisdiction over much of this area. NCPC's Urban Design and Security Plan contained extensive recommendations for improving circulation and streetscape in this area while also addressing security concerns for major federal tenants. In addition, the area will be addressed by NCPC in its National Capital Framework Plan. 1617.4

Policy CW-2.7.1: Enhancing the Near Southwest

Work collaboratively with the National Capital Planning Commission to improve the aesthetic quality, identity, and pedestrian character of the Near Southwest. Plans for the area should identify streetscape and signage improvements, pedestrian circulation changes, measures to mitigate the scale of the area's monolithic buildings, and guidelines for new (or replacement) buildings within the area. 1617.5

Policy CW-2.7.2: 10th Street Promenade and Banneker Overlook

Enhance 10th St SW as a major point of access between the National Mall, L'Enfant Plaza, and the Southwest Waterfront. Encourage a nationally significant cultural attraction at Banneker Overlook that provides a clear connection between the Near Southwest, the Washington Channel, and East Potomac Park. Planning for this area should be coordinated with DDOT's plans to develop an intermodal transportation center in the vicinity. 1617.6

Policy CW-2.7.3: Restoring Maryland and Virginia Avenues

Support the long-term relocation or undergrounding of the Near Southwest's elevated railroad tracks, allowing Maryland and Virginia Avenues to be restored as connecting diagonal streets and important corridors that respect reciprocal views and pedestrian movement. 1617.7

Action CW-2.7.A: Design Planning for the Near Southwest

Work collaboratively with the National Capital Planning Commission to develop urban design and streetscape plans for the Near Southwest. These plans should consider the build out potential of the area's urban renewal sites. They should also consider the need for zoning changes, design guidelines, or other measures that encourage the development of nationally important destinations while limiting over-development of existing open spaces and plazas. 1617.8

CW-2.8 NoMA and Northwest One 1618

The North of Massachusetts Avenue (NoMA) and Northwest One Policy Focus Area includes the area roughly bounded by New Jersey Avenue on the west, Massachusetts Avenue on the south, New York Avenue on the north, and 2nd and 3rd Streets NE on the east. This 350-acre area includes the Union Station and New York Avenue Metrorail stations. 1618.1

For much of the past century, NoMA has been an industrial and warehousing area and a "back office" district supplementing Downtown. Its proximity to the CSX railroad and the established concentration of industry along New York Avenue attracted light manufacturers, wholesalers, and distributors throughout the mid to late 1900s. During the 1990s, the area was viewed as the city's best prospect for high-technology uses and plans were developed to attract new media and biotech enterprises, as well as "telecom hotels," to the area. 1618.2

NoMA's proximity to the U.S. Capitol has also made it a desirable location for government office space. During the 1980s and 1990s, office development moved steadily northward along North Capitol Street and by 2000 was also moving eastward toward Capitol Hill. This trend accelerated after 2000 with the opening of Metrorail's first "infill" station at New York Avenue, the renovation of a historic printing plant in Eckington as the new headquarters of XM Satellite Radio, the leasing of more than one million square feet at Station Place (1st and F Streets NE) to the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission, and the development of a new headquarters facility for the Bureau of Alcohol Tobacco and Firearms at 1st Street NE and New York Avenue. 1618.3

Large areas of NoMA remain vacant or underutilized today—although that is rapidly changing. The strong demand for Downtown housing has shifted the vision for NoMA's future, and it is now regarded as an exceptional site for future mixed use development, rather than just technology and back office uses. While the area is far from a blank canvass, its parking lots, open storage yards, and vacant sites present the opportunity for thousands of new

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homes, millions of square feet of office space, and great new parks and public buildings. Much of the land in NoMA has been acquired by investors during the last ten years, and concept plans are pending on many of its 50 or so blocks. 1618.4

Given the extraordinary level of development interest, it is important that measures be taken to coordinate development and address the need for infrastructure, street improvements, landscaping, parks, and other public necessities in the area. There is also an urgent need for design guidelines and standards to ensure that the area develops in an attractive and cohesive manner, create a pedestrian-friendly and vibrant street environment, and provide appropriate transitions to less dense development areas nearby. 1618.5

Planning for NoMA must also accommodate established uses. The area includes important historic buildings like the Government Printing Office and the U-Line Arena. It also includes active light manufacturing and wholesale uses north of Florida Avenue and east of the CSX tracks. These uses should not be driven out by rising land values and speculation, but should be retained and ultimately assisted in relocating to suitable sites elsewhere in the city when market conditions support a change in land use. 1618.6

The District is currently completing a Vision Plan and Development Strategy for NoMA to establish more detailed policies for the area. The Draft Strategy envisions an area of high-density commercial and mixed use development between North Capitol Street and the CSX railroad tracks, and a less intense and primarily residential area east of the tracks, stepping down to the moderate density residential areas of Capitol Hill. A similar transition is envisioned on the north, with vacant land and industrial uses north of Florida Avenue and west of the railroad gradually giving way to housing over the next 20 years. The strategy also envisions air rights development over the CSX tracks (adjacent to the H Street overpass), helping bridge the railroad barrier and support the revival of the H Street commercial district to the east. 1618.7

West of NoMA, the Northwest One neighborhood is roughly bordered by North Capitol and K Streets, and New Jersey and New York Avenues. The area includes several subsidized housing developments, including Sursum Corda Cooperative, Temple Court Apartments, Tyler House, Sibley Plaza, and Golden Rule Center. More than 35 percent of the area's 2,000 residents live below the federal poverty line, and the area has suffered from high crime and distressed housing for years. In 2004, Northwest One was selected as the pilot site for the city's New Communities Initiative. Plans are currently underway to rebuild the Sursum Corda Cooperative as a mixed income community, providing one-for-one replacement of subsidized housing while adding market rate housing and new community anchors that help residents become more self-sufficient. 1618.8

Policy CW-2.8.1: NoMA Land Use Mix

Promote NoMA's development as an active mixed use neighborhood that includes residential, office, hotel, commercial, and ground floor retail uses. A diverse mix of housing, serving a range of household types and incomes, should be accommodated. 1618.9

Policy CW-2.8.2: East of the Tracks and Eckington Place Transition Areas

Create a production/arts and live-work, mixed-use area east of the CSX railroad tracks between H Street NE and Florida Avenue NE, and in the area east of Eckington Place and north of New York Avenue. Some of this area is shown as "Mixed Use Production Distribution Repair/Residential" on the Future Land Use Map. The intent of this designation is not to blend industrial uses with housing, but rather to retain viable industrial activities until market conditions support their conversion to live-work space, housing, artists studios, and similar uses. These two areas should generally not be developed with large-scale commercial office buildings. Mixed use development, including housing, should be encouraged in both locations. 1618.10

Policy CW-2.8.3: NoMA Transportation Improvements

Design NoMA to accommodate a wide array of transportation options, with a particular emphasis on walking, bicycling, and improved transit connections. Improve the accessibility, functionality, and safety of the area's street grid, introducing new streets as needed to improve circulation through the area. This should include the redesign of the New York/Florida Avenue intersection to improve pedestrian safety, enhance access to the New York Avenue metro station, and create a landscaped neighborhood gateway, possibly including a new national memorial. 1618.11

Policy CW-2.8.4: Protecting Neighborhoods Abutting NoMA

Provide appropriate scale transitions between NoMA and existing adjacent residential neighborhoods in Eckington and Capitol Hill to conserve the fine-grained row house fabric of these communities. Service facilities, loading docks, and other potentially objectionable features should be located away from sensitive uses such as housing. 1618.12

See also the Urban Design Element and the Capitol Hill Area Element for policies on scale transitions.

Policy CW-2.8.5: NoMA Architectural Design

Establish a unique architectural and design identity for NoMA, based in part on the area's heritage as an industrial area. This identity should preserve, renovate, and adaptively reuse NoMA's important historic buildings. 1618.13

Plans are currently underway to rebuild the Sursum Corda Cooperative as a mixed income community, providing one-for-one replacement of subsidized housing while adding market rate housing and new community anchors that help residents become more self-sufficient.

View to U.S. Capitol along CSX tracks

Action CW-2.8.A: Implement the NoMA Vision Plan

Implement the NoMA Vision Plan and Development Strategy, including its recommendations for land use, infrastructure, transportation, environmental improvements, streetscape, open space, identity, and neighborhood quality. 1618.14

See the Mid-City Area Element for a discussion of the proposed Eckington Small Area Plan, including the North Capitol Street area between Florida and New York Avenues.

Action CW-2.8.B: NoMA Infrastructure

Complete an assessment of infrastructure and utility needs for NoMA and identify the most appropriate means to finance and build needed improvements. 1618.15

Action CW- 2.8-C: Development incentives for NoMA

Consider a range of development incentives, including tax-increment financing, payment in lieu of taxes, and tax abatement for preferred development, to achieve the desired land use mix within NoMA. 1618.16

Action CW-2.8.D: Northwest One New Community

Redevelop Northwest One as a mixed income community, including new market rate and subsidized housing, a new school and recreation center, a library and health clinic, and neighborhood-serving retail space. Redevelopment of Northwest One should:

a. Restore the city street grid through Sursum Corda;

b. Emphasize K Street NW as a "main street" that connects the area to NoMA and the Mount Vernon District; and

c. Maximize private sector participation. 1618.17