Chapter 20
Mid-City
Area Element

16th Street Heights
ROCK CREEK EAST
Fort Totten
Crestwood North
Petworth
Crestwood
Pleasant Hill
Park View
Univers Heights
Georgia Ave|Petworth
Mount Pleasant
BEACH DR
Pleasant Plains
UPPER NORTHEAST
Columbia Heights
Columbia Heights
16TH ST
Lanier Heights
Stronghold
Edgew
Howard University
NORTH CAPITOL ST
Adams Morgan
Bloomingdale
Kalorama Heights
NEW HAMPSHIRE AVE
U ST
Cardozo/Shaw
Le Droit Park
RHODE ISLAND AVE
U St/African-Amer Civil War Memorial/Cardozo
7TH ST
Eckington
NEAR NORTHWEST
Dupont Circle
FLORIDA AVE
Logan Circle/ Shaw
Shaw East
Mount Vernon Square
Connecticut Avenue/ K Street
CENTRAL WASHINGTON
Downtown
N
Miles
0
0.5
1
1.5

Mid-City Area Element

Overview 2000

The Mid-City Planning Area encompasses the 3.1 square miles located in the geographic center of the District of Columbia. It extends from Rock Creek Park on the west to the CSX rail corridor on the east. Its southern edge is formed by Florida Avenue and U Street NW, and its northern edge is formed by Spring Road and Rock Creek Church Road. The boundaries are shown in the Map at left. Most of this area has historically been Ward 1 although the easternmost portion is currently part of Ward 5 and the southernmost portion is currently in Ward 2. 2000.1

Mid-City is one of the most diverse parts of the city. Although it is one of the smallest of the ten planning areas geographically, it is the most populous and most dense. Much of the area was developed during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, giving it a rich and historic urban character. The area includes row house neighborhoods such as Adams Morgan, Columbia Heights, Eckington, Le Droit Park, Park View, and Mount Pleasant. It includes large apartment communities along streets such as 14th Street, 16th Street, and Columbia Road. It is also home to several large institutions, such as Howard University and Howard University Hospital. 2000.2

The Mid-City Planning Area is a cultural melting pot, with a strong international flavor. It is the heart of the city's Latino community, the home of some of Washington's most important African American landmarks and cultural resources, and a gateway for immigrants from across the globe. It includes the vibrant nightlife and ethnic restaurants of 18th Street and the "New U" Street, and other walkable neighborhood centers that embody the best qualities of urban living. The area is well-served by the District's transportation system, including the Metro Green Line, numerous bus lines, and several crosstown arterials. 2000.3

Many of the neighborhoods of Mid-City have a strong sense of identity. There are several historic districts, including Greater U Street, Mount Pleasant, Le Droit Park, and Striver's Section—along with historic landmarks such as the True Reformer Building, Meridian Hill Park, the Lincoln and Howard Theaters, and the Prince Hall Masonic Temple. Activities like Adams Morgan Day and the Georgia Avenue Caribbean Festival celebrate local culture and build community pride. 2000.4

The area also has a tradition of neighborhood activism, embodied by groups such as the Kalorama Citizens Association and the Cardozo-Shaw Neighborhood Association. Non-profits like the Latino Economic Development Corporation and the Columbia Heights Development Corporation are also active in community affairs, as are cultural organizations like the Gala Hispanic Theater and the African American Civil War Memorial Freedom Foundation. 2000.5

Mid-City neighborhoods like Adams Morgan have a strong sense of identity.

Parts of the Mid-City have changed rapidly during the last ten years. Some 2,000 housing units were added between 2000 and 2005, and about 1,500 units are in some stage of construction today. While this change has been welcomed by some, it has also created concerns about a loss of community identity and the displacement of residents. Homeowners have faced sharp increases in property taxes, and many renters have faced soaring rents and low vacancies. The median sales price of a home in the Columbia Heights ZIP code rose a staggering 63 percent between 2004 and 2005 alone. Clearly, these kinds of increases are not sustainable and over the long run will threaten the diversity that makes the Mid-City neighborhoods so unique. 2000.6

The area's economic diversity is threatened not only by rising housing costs, but also by the loss of subsidized rental housing. Mid-City includes many subsidized and lower cost units, including project-based Section 8 apartments that are at risk of conversion to market rents or condos. Over the last eight years, the District successfully conserved more than 1,000 units of at-risk affordable housing on the 14th Street corridor alone. The District has also assisted tenants in their efforts to renovate and purchase apartment properties throughout the community, particularly in Columbia Heights. Millions of dollars have been invested to create new affordable housing opportunities for current and future Mid-City residents. This investment must be sustained in the future. 2000.7

Mid-City neighborhoods still struggle with urban problems such as violent crime, homelessness, drug abuse, vagrancy, and blight. Despite the real estate boom, buildings continue to lie vacant along commercial corridors such as lower Georgia Avenue, Florida Avenue, and North Capitol Street. Public facilities like Cardozo High School and Bruce Monroe Elementary are in desperate need of modernization. The area also has a severe shortage of parkland. As the densest part of the city, and one with many young children, recreational needs are among the highest in the city. Most of the area's parks lack the land and amenities to meet these needs. 2000.8

A different set of urban tensions is present along the area's rapidly developing corridors such as 14th Street and U Street. Revitalization has brought traffic and parking pressures, caused construction-related street disruptions, and has burdened small businesses trying to keep up with rising costs. There are also visible threats to the historic integrity of many of the area's residential structures, particularly in areas like Adams Morgan, Columbia Heights, Bloomingdale, and Eckington, which are outside of designated historic districts. In some instances, row houses are being converted to multi-family flats; in others, demolitions and poorly designed alterations are diminishing an important part of Washington's architectural heritage. 2000.9

As the Mid-City area moves into the 21st century, the issues described above must be addressed to protect the quality of life, balance growth and conservation, and provide economic opportunity and stability for all members of the community. 2000.10

Context

In the 1930s and 40s, U Street thrived as the city's "Black Broadway" and a cultural legacy of music, art, and theater was born.

History 2001

Urban development in the Mid-City area began in the early 19th century. Some of the city's earliest mansions were constructed on the high ground above the L'Enfant city, including the Porter Mansion (later to become Meridian Hill Park) and the Holmead Estate (later subdivided as Mount Pleasant). The Columbian College, which would eventually become George Washington University, was founded on Meridian Hill in 1822. Howard University was established 45 years later, in 1867. Still, much of the area remained rural until the late 19th century. Stagecoaches ran up and down what is now 14th Street, connecting the area's small hamlets, estates, and farms to the center city. 2001.1

The Mid-City's development boom was tied to the growth of the city's transportation system. Several streetcar lines were extended north from the city center in the 1880s, including lines along 7th Street and 14th Street. Commercial uses developed along these routes, a pattern that persists to this day. By the turn of the century, streetcars had been extended along Florida Avenue, U Street, 11th Street, 18th Street, Calvert Street, 11th Street, and out to LeDroit Park and beyond. Residential development was extensive, and neighborhoods like Adams Morgan, Columbia Heights, Kalorama, Bloomingdale, and Eckington emerged as the city's first generation suburbs. 2001.2

Many of the Mid-City neighborhoods were quite prestigious. Located above the Potomac escarpment, places like Mount Pleasant and Columbia Heights were felt to have healthier air and cooler summertime weather than the old city below. Elegant apartment buildings and embassies were developed along 16th Street, where commercial uses were not permitted in order to preserve the street's character as the formal gateway to the White House. To the east, neighborhoods like LeDroit Park became home to a growing community of upwardly mobile African-Americans. Howard University emerged as one of the country's leading African-American colleges and a seat of learning for black scholars and professors. U Street thrived as the city's "Black Broadway" and a cultural legacy of music, art, and theater was born. 2001.3

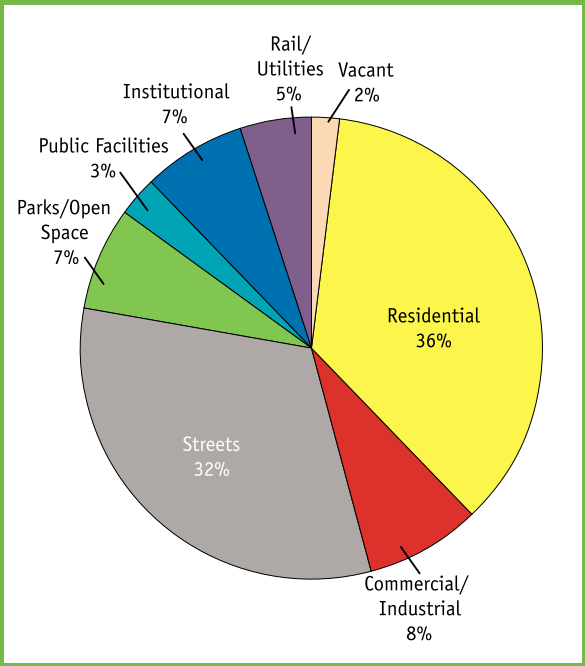
By 1930, the area's initial development was essentially complete. Population continued to grow, and the area continued to develop with apartment buildings and denser housing. Residents were encouraged to take in boarders during the war years, and some of the larger row houses were converted into multi-family buildings and rooming houses. 2001.4

With the end of World War II in 1945 and desegregation of schools in 1954, conditions in the Mid-City neighborhoods began to change. Racial change accelerated in the 1950s and urban renewal created disruption in neighborhoods like Shaw and Eckington. Middle class black and white households began to leave the area, leaving behind a growing population of lower income households. The area's future was further jeopardized by the proposed Inner Loop Freeway in the 1950s. Had the Freeway been built, much of the Adams Morgan and U Street neighborhoods would have been destroyed. 2001.5

Mid-City was particularly hard hit by the 1968 riots. Many buildings along 14th and U Streets were burned and the psyche of the community was devastated. Reinvestment and recovery were slow. Urban renewal plans for Shaw and 14th Streets brought large numbers of subsidized apartments in the 1970s, but many of the commercial businesses never reopened. 2001.6

While parts of the area continued to decline during the 1980s and 90s, other areas began experiencing a renaissance. By the 1990s, Adams Morgan had gained a reputation as one of the city's most colorful neighborhoods and many of its homes were restored and upgraded. Loft and condominium construction and residential rehabilitation continues in the neighborhood today. 2001.7

Figure 20.1:
Land Use Composition in Mid-City 2002.2



Source: DC Office of Planning, 2006

During the 1980s and 90s, an influx of residents from Latin America began to transform communities like Columbia Heights and Mount Pleasant. The transformation continued during the early 2000s following the opening of the Columbia Heights Metro Station. A 500,000 square foot commercial center—the largest retail construction project in the city—will soon rise beside the station. Projects like Harrison Square, the Lincoln Condominiums, and Ellington Plaza have brought hundreds of new residents to U Street. Elsewhere in the Mid-City, vacant homes are being rehabbed throughout Shaw, LeDroit Park, Eckington, Bloomingdale, Park View, and Pleasant Plains. 2001.8

Land Use 2002

Land use statistics for this Planning Area appear in Figure 20.1. Mid-City comprises about 1,970 acres, or about five percent of the city's land area. 2002.1

The area is primarily residential, with row houses being the predominant house type. Only about two percent of the residential area contains single family detached housing, whereas more than 70 percent

contains row houses. The remainder of the residential land, totaling almost 200 acres, consists of apartments. Parts of the Mid-City Planning Area contain row houses, flats, and high-rise apartments on the same block. This pattern has been perpetuated in part by high-density zoning, a vestige of a time when the older housing in the area was thought to be obsolete and in need of replacement. 2002.3

U Street NW

The commercial areas of Mid-City tend to be laid out along neighborhood shopping streets and are frequently intermixed with housing. Major commercial areas include 18th Street, Columbia Road, 14th Street, Mount Pleasant Street, U Street, 7th Street/Georgia Avenue, and North Capitol Street. There is little space for parking or loading in these business districts, and residential neighborhoods often lie immediately adjacent. Commercial land uses amount to seven percent of the total land area, which is a larger percentage than is found in most of the city's Planning Areas. About one percent of the land is used for industry, most on the area's eastern edge along the CSX tracks. While the area is generally well served by commercial uses, neighborhoods on the east side lack the variety of services available on the west side. 2002.4

Parks and open spaces occupy just seven percent of the land area in Mid-City, and most of this acreage is associated with Rock Creek Park. The remaining parks in the area are small and are very heavily used. Other public uses in the Planning Area include schools, libraries, community centers, and fire stations. These represent about three percent of the total area. Institutional uses consist primarily of Howard University and Howard Hospital and comprise seven percent of the land area. 2002.5

About two percent of the Mid-City Planning Area, or about 36 acres, consists of vacant land. Much of this land is committed to future development projects, such as the DC-USA development and the Howard Town Center. Although there are scattered vacant lots, the area is almost completely built-out. 2002.6

Demographics 2003

Basic demographic data for Mid-City is shown in Table 20.1. In 2000, the area had a population of 81,375 or about 14 percent of the city's total. Population declined slightly between 1990 and 2000, although change was uneven across the Planning Area. The western part of the Planning Area added residents, but the increase was offset by decline in neighborhoods on the eastern side. 2003.1

Population is estimated to have increased to 83,100 as of 2005, largely due to new housing construction. Opposing trends are affecting household size; on the one hand, most of the new construction has consisted of one and two bedroom apartments and condominiums, with small households. On the

Table 20.1:

Mid-City at a Glance 2003.2

Basic Statistics	
Land Area (square miles)	3.1
Population	
1990	81,941
2000	81,375
2005 (estimated)*	83,100
2025 (projected)*	96,500
Households (2005)*	35,200
Household Population (2005)* (excludes group quarters)	77,600
Persons Per Household (2005)*	2.20
Jobs (2005)*	28,300
Density (persons per sq mile) (2005)*	26,800

Year 2000 Census Data Profile			
	Mid-City Planning Area**		Citywide
	Total	% of Total	% of Total
Age			
Under 18	15,228	18.7%	20.0%
18-65	59,430	73.0%	67.8%
Over 65	6,717	8.3%	12.2%
Residents Below Poverty Level	18,146	22.3%	20.2%
Racial Composition			
White	22,224	27.3%	30.4%
Black	42,385	52.1%	60.3%
Native American	402	0.5%	0.3%
Asian/Pacific Islander	2,358	2.9%	2.6%
Other	9,891	12.2%	2.8%
Multi-Racial	4,115	5.1%	5.2%
Hispanic Origin	18,246	22.4%	7.8%
Foreign-Born Residents	21,166	26.0%	12.8%
Tenure			
Owner Households	10,671	31.3%	40.7%
Renter Households	23,462	68.7%	59.3%
Population 5+ yrs in same house in 2000 as in 1995	33,793	44.0%	46.9%
Housing Occupancy			
Occupied Units	34,132	89.7%	90.4%
Vacant Units	3,929	10.3%	9.6%
Housing by Unit Type			
1-unit detached	1,053	2.8%	13.1%
1-unit attached	10,798	28.4%	26.4%
2-4 units	3,620	9.5%	11.0%
5-9 units	2,203	5.8%	8.0%
10-19 units	3,585	9.4%	10.3%
20-49 units	5,794	15.2%	7.4%
50+ units	10,988	28.9%	23.3%
Mobile/other	21	0.1%	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.*

other hand, the influx of immigrants has brought larger families to the area, often crowding into existing housing units. Current household size is 2.20, which is higher than the citywide average of 2.14. This is likely to drop in the future, as the percentage of multi-family units increases. 2003.3

African-Americans are the predominant racial group in the Planning Area, at approximately 52 percent. A growing Latino population stands at 22 percent, approximately three times the City's average. Between 1990 and 2000, the Latino population increased by about 30 percent. More than one-quarter of the Mid-City's residents are foreign-born, double the citywide average of 12.8 percent. About 27 percent of the population is non-Hispanic white, and about three percent are Asian or Pacific Islander. 2003.4

Relative to the city as a whole, the area has lower percentages of children and seniors. About 18 percent of the residents are under 18, compared to a citywide average of 20 percent. About eight percent are over 65, compared to the citywide average of 12 percent. 2003.5

Housing Characteristics 2004

The 2000 Census reported that 28 percent of the area's housing stock consisted of single family attached homes (row houses and townhouses), while 44 percent consisted of apartments in multi-family buildings of 20 units or more. These are higher than the percentages for the city as a whole. Less than three percent of the homes in Mid-City were single family detached homes, significantly lower than the 13 percent for the city as a whole. In 2000, 10 percent of the housing units in Mid-City were vacant. 2004.1

The 2000 Census reported that 31 percent of the households in the Planning Area were homeowners and 69 percent were renters. The ownership rate is lower than the 41 percent rate for the city as a whole. 2004.2

Income and Employment 2005

Data from the Department of Employment Services and the Office of Planning indicates there were about 28,300 jobs in Mid-City in 2005. Major employers included Howard University and Howard Hospital, District government and public schools, and numerous retail businesses and services. District residents fill only about 44 percent of the area's jobs. Based on 2000 Census journey-to-work data, 40 percent of the jobs in the Planning Area are filled by residents of Maryland, and about 14 percent by residents of Virginia. 2005.1

There were approximately 38,000 employed residents in the Mid-City area in 2000. As of the 2000 Census, median household income in the Planning Area was $36,777, compared to a citywide median of $45,927. About nine percent of the Mid-City's employed residents worked within the Planning

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The communities of the Mid-City welcome community reinvestment, but are worried that the rapid pace of redevelopment may be changing the fabric of the community too quickly. The loss of neighborhood diversity was the greatest concern expressed at almost every Comp Plan meeting in the Mid-City area.

Area, 36 percent commuted to Central Washington, 30 percent commuted elsewhere in Washington, and 25 percent commuted to jobs outside of the District. More than 40 percent of the area's residents used transit to get to work, and about 17 percent walked or bicycled. 2005.2

Projections 2006

Based on approved development projects, local planning policies, and regional growth trends, Mid-City is projected to add 6,400 households during the next 20 years. Population is expected to increase by 16 percent, reaching about 96,500 in 2025. Much of the growth in the Mid-City area is expected to consist of moderate to medium-density housing, particularly along 14th Street and Georgia Avenue, on land west of Howard University, and around the Metro stations at Shaw and Columbia Heights. Growth is also expected on the far eastern edge of the Planning Area, along Florida Avenue and North Capitol Streets. 2006.1

The number of jobs is expected to increase by about 5,000, to about 33,000 in 2025. Most of the increase is associated with development around the Columbia Heights Metro station, the Howard Town Center on Georgia Avenue, and the New York Avenue Metro station on the area's southeastern edge. 2006.2

Planning and Development Priorities 2007

Three Comprehensive Plan workshops took place in Mid-City during 2005 and 2006. These meetings provided an opportunity for residents to discuss both citywide and neighborhood planning issues. The Advisory Neighborhood Commissions provided an important voice in this discussion, particularly on the Future Land Use Map. There have also been many meetings in the community not directly connected to the Comprehensive Plan, but relating to other planning topics. These meetings have covered topics such as public realm and transportation improvements in Columbia Heights, revitalization of Georgia Avenue, redevelopment of McMillan Reservoir, parking and traffic issues in Adams Morgan, and the arts districts along U Street and in the greater Shaw area. 2007.1

The community delivered several key messages during these meetings, summarized below: 2007.2

a. The distinct and eclectic character that defines Mid-City neighborhoods should be protected as infill development takes place. The communities of the Mid-City welcome community reinvestment, but are worried that the rapid pace of redevelopment may be changing the fabric of the community too quickly. The loss of neighborhood diversity was the greatest concern expressed at

almost every Comp Plan meeting in the Mid-City area, and was raised in many different contexts—from the need for affordable housing to concerns about the influx of chain stores and decline of neighborhood businesses.

Row houses in Adams Morgan

b. Housing opportunities should be increased for people at all income levels so that Mid-City can remain a diverse neighborhood. The citywide run-up in housing prices has particularly impacted Mid-City, as costs have soared beyond what many local residents can afford. Working families and lower income residents are being priced out of the area, and there are concerns that the community is becoming affordable only to upper income professionals. Preserving the existing stock of affordable units is important, either through rehabilitation or replacement of subsidized housing projects with new affordable units. The type of new housing being built in the area should be more varied. In particular, more three- and four-bedroom units are needed to attract and retain families.

c. New condos, apartments and commercial development should be directed to the areas that are best able to handle increased density, namely areas immediately adjacent to Metrorail stations or along high volume transit corridors. These areas are generally located around 14th and Park, along the 14th Street corridor, along U Street—especially around the Metro station, along 7th Street and Georgia Avenue—especially west of Howard University, and in the southeastern corner of the Planning Area near the New York Avenue Metro station. Mixed use development, with multi-story housing above retail shops and services, is desirable in these locations and would reinforce the Mid-City's character as a vital, pedestrian-oriented neighborhood.

d. The row house fabric that defines neighborhoods like Adams Morgan, Columbia Heights, Pleasant Plains, Eckington, and Bloomingdale should be conserved. Although Mid-City includes six historic districts (Greater U Street, LeDroit Park, Mount Pleasant, Strivers' Section, Washington Heights and Kalorama Triangle), most of the row houses in Mid-City are not protected by historic district designations. Some are even zoned for high-density apartments. A variety of problems have resulted, including demolition and replacement with much larger buildings, the subdivision of row houses into multi-unit flats, and top story additions that disrupt architectural balance. Intact blocks of well-kept row houses should be zoned for row houses, and not for tall apartment buildings, and additional historic districts and/or conservation districts should be considered to protect architectural character.

The community is in dire need of additional parkland.

e. The community is in dire need of additional parkland. Mid-City is the densest part of the city, but the ratio of park acreage per resident is among the lowest in the city. Rock Creek Park is a great resource, but is a long way from the eastern part of the Planning Area and is primarily a passive open space. The Area has a shortage of active play fields and recreational facilities, especially east of 16th Street. In many cases, schools are the only open spaces in the neighborhood, but access to school grounds may be restricted, and the school facilities themselves are suboptimal. Sites like the McMillan Reservoir Sand Filtration site offer the promise for additional neighborhood open space. New development there and elsewhere should set aside land for parks, while development along the area's commercial streets and around Metro stations should include pocket parks and plazas. Throughout the community, innovative approaches such as land trusts and easements should be considered to improve open space access.

f. Language barriers should be broken so that more foreign-born residents can get a proper education, find suitable housing, find a decent job, and participate in community life and civic affairs. With a growing population of immigrants and non-English speaking residents, the Planning Area needs alternative education options and better access to literacy and language programs. If residents are to fill the good quality jobs to be created in the new economy, better vocational training and bilingual services are needed. Local public schools, charter schools, universities, and non-profits should be integral partners in these efforts.

g. The arts should be recognized as an essential part of community life. While this is true in all parts of Washington, it is especially true in the multi-cultural neighborhoods of the Mid-City. The Planning Area has been the home of many ethnic and racial groups for more than 100 years, and has long been a center of creative expression and cultural diversity. The area should celebrate its past through heritage trails and historic exhibits, and celebrate its present through indoor and outdoor performance, art, and music. New cultural facilities must also be part of the area's future.

h. Better economic balance should be achieved in the neighborhood. The neighborhood centers on the west side of the Mid-City Planning Area are generally successful, with strong demand for commercial space. Neighborhood business districts on the east side, particularly along Georgia Avenue and North Capitol Street, are still struggling. There are numerous vacant and boarded up properties, along with concerns

about fire safety, blight, and crime. Commercial gentrification is also an issue. Small corner stores and other businesses that are unique to the neighborhood are having a harder time getting by. The area's restaurants, ethnic establishments, and iconic neighborhood businesses are an important part of what defines this community. They should be strongly supported in the future.

i. Pedestrian safety, improved traffic operations, and parking management are all high priorities. Increased density within this already dense Planning Area creates busier streets—both for cars and for people. Despite its proximity to Metro, Columbia Heights will become more congested as 700 new housing units and 500,000 square feet of new retail space come on line. Parking demand will continue to exceed supply in Adams Morgan and Mount Pleasant. Commuter traffic along North Capitol Street and Florida Avenue will continue to burden side streets in Eckington and Bloomingdale. New solutions and strategies to traffic management are needed. Increasing transit service and improving pedestrian safety are important parts of the equation, but they must not be the only parts.

j. Public facilities in Mid-City need improvement. Many of the area's schools, libraries, and recreation centers are outdated and do not meet the needs of the community. At the same time, residents are concerned about proposals to use private development to leverage public facility replacement. A key concern is that public facilities are not rebuilt at the expense of neighborhood open space, which is already in very short supply. While Mid-City has several outstanding new facilities, including the Girard Street Playground, the Columbia Heights Community Center, and Bell-Lincoln Multicultural Middle/High School, there are still unmet needs.

k. Mid-City needs "greening." This Planning Area has a very high percentage of impervious surface coverage and lost much of its tree cover during the 1970s, 80s, and 90s. Tree planting is needed to reduce urban runoff, create shade, remove air pollutants, and create beauty in the neighborhoods. Future development should incorporate green roofs and other methods to reduce resource consumption, conserve energy and water, and be more environmentally-friendly.

Pedestrian safety, improved traffic operations, and parking management are all high priorities. Increased density within this already dense Planning Area creates busier streets—both for cars and for people.

African-American Civil War Memorial

Policies and Actions

MC-1 General Policies

MC-1.1 Guiding Growth and Neighborhood Conservation 2008

The following general policies and actions should guide growth and neighborhood conservation decisions in the Mid-City Planning Area. These policies and actions should be considered in tandem with those in the citywide elements of the Comprehensive Plan. Policies from existing Small Area Plans and Revitalization Studies (Georgia Avenue, Columbia Heights, Uptown, etc.) are referenced in Section MC-2 2008.1

Policy MC-1.1.1: Neighborhood Conservation

Retain and reinforce the historic character of Mid-City neighborhoods, particularly its row houses, older apartment houses, historic districts, and walkable neighborhood shopping districts. The area's rich architectural heritage and cultural history should be protected and enhanced. 2008.2

Policy MC-1.1.2: Directing Growth

Stimulate high-quality transit-oriented development around the Columbia Heights, Shaw/Howard University, and U St./African American Civil War Memorial/Cardozo Metrorail station areas, as well as along the Georgia Avenue corridor and the North Capitol Street/Florida Avenue business district. Opportunities for new mixed income housing, neighborhood retail, local-serving offices, and community services should be supported in these areas, as shown on the Comprehensive Plan Policy Map and Future Land Use Map. 2008.3

Policy MC-1.1.3: Infill and Rehabilitation

Encourage redevelopment of vacant lots and the rehabilitation of abandoned structures within the community, particularly along Georgia Avenue, Florida Avenue, 11th Street, and North Capitol Street, and in the Shaw, Bloomingdale, and Eckington communities. Infill development should be compatible in scale and character with adjacent uses. 2008.4

Policy MC-1.1.4: Local Services and Small Businesses

Protect the small businesses and essential local services that serve Mid-City. Encourage the establishment of new businesses that provide these services in areas where they are lacking, especially on the east side of the Planning Area. 2008.5

Policy MC-1.1.5: Conservation of Row House Neighborhoods

Recognize the value and importance of Mid-City's row house neighborhoods as an essential part of the fabric of the local community.

Ensure that the Comprehensive Plan and zoning designations for these neighborhoods reflect the desire to retain the row house pattern. Land use controls should discourage the subdivision of single family row houses into multi-unit apartment buildings but should encourage the use of English basements as separate dwelling units, in order to retain and increase the rental housing supply. 2008.6

Policy MC-1.1.6: Mixed Use Districts

Encourage preservation of the housing located within Mid-City's commercially zoned areas. Within mixed use (commercial/residential) areas, such as Mount Pleasant Street and Columbia Road, encourage commercial uses that do not adversely impact the established residential uses. 2008.7

Policy MC-1.1.7: Protection of Affordable Housing

Strive to retain the character of Mid-City as a mixed income community by protecting the area's existing stock of affordable housing units and promoting the construction of new affordable units. 2008.8

Policy MC-1.1.8: Traffic and Parking Management

Improve traffic circulation along major Mid-City arterial streets, with a priority on 14th Street, Georgia Avenue, U Street, 18th Street, Columbia Road, and Connecticut Avenue. Implement programs in these areas to improve bus circulation, improve pedestrian and bicyclist safety and ease of travel, and mitigate the effects of increased traffic on residential streets. Consistent with the Transportation Element of the Comprehensive Plan, provide alternatives to automobile use—including improved transit and innovative personal transportation options—for existing and new residents to reduce the necessity of auto ownership, particularly where parking and traffic problems exist. 2008.9

See the Transportation Element for additional policies on reducing auto dependence.

Policy MC-1.1.9: Transit Improvements

Improve public transit throughout the Mid-City Planning Area, with an emphasis on shorter headways on the north-south bus routes, additional east-west and cross-park bus routes, and more frequent and extended Metrorail service. Continue assistance programs for the area's transit-dependent groups, including the elderly, students, and disabled. 2008.10

Action MC-1.1.A: Rezoning Of Row House Blocks

Selectively rezone well-established residential areas where the current zoning allows densities that are well beyond the existing development pattern. The emphasis should be on row house neighborhoods that are presently zoned R-5-B or higher, which include the areas between 14th and 16th Streets NW, parts of Adams Morgan, areas between S and U Streets NW, and sections of Florida Avenue, Calvert Street, and 16th Street. 2008.11

The City should recognize the value and importance of Mid-City's row house neighborhoods as an essential part of the fabric of the local community.

Action MC-1.1.B: Overconcentration of Liquor-Licensed Establishments

Identify the potential for regulatory controls to address the problem of excessive concentrations of liquor-licensed establishments within the neighborhood commercial districts, particularly on 18th Street and Columbia Road. 2008.12

Action MC-1.1.C: Transit Improvements

Support the development of a fully integrated bus, streetcar, subway, bicycle, and pedestrian system within the Planning Area by moving forward with plans for expanded service on the Metro Green Line, extension of the Metrorail Yellow Line, and bus rapid transit on Georgia Avenue. 2008.13

Action MC-1.1.D: Off-Street Parking

Support the development of off-street parking facilities in the Columbia Heights, Adams Morgan, and U Street commercial districts, and the implementation of parking management programs that maximize the use of existing parking resources (such as the Reeves Center garage), minimize traffic associated with "circling" for spaces, and reduce conflicts between users. 2008.14

See the Transportation and Land Use Elements for additional policies on off-street parking standards.

MC-1.2 Conserving and Enhancing Community Resources 2009

Policy MC-1.2.1: Cultural Diversity

Maintain the cultural diversity of Mid-City by encouraging housing and business opportunities for all residents, sustaining a strong network of social services for immigrant groups, and retaining affordable housing within the Planning Area. 2009.1

Policy MC-1.2.2: English Language Programs and Vocational Training

Work with established institutions such as public schools, charter schools, and Howard University to support alternative education and vocational training options for non-English speaking residents. 2009.2

Policy MC-1.2.3: Rock Creek Park

Improve community access from the Mid-City area to Rock Creek Park. Work with the National Park Service to explore opportunities for new recreational amenities in the park that reduce the deficit of open space and recreational facilities in the Mid-City. 2009.3

Policy MC-1.2.4: New Parks

Explore the possibility for new neighborhood parks within the Mid-City area, particularly in the area around the proposed Howard Town Center, and on the McMillan Reservoir site. Additionally, pocket parks and plazas such as those planned for the Columbia Heights Metro station area should be encouraged elsewhere in the Planning Area, particularly near higher density development. The dearth of parks in the Mid-City area is a serious problem that must be addressed as its population grows—all recreation areas must be retained and new recreation areas must be provided wherever possible. 2009.4

Policy MC-1.2.5: Neighborhood Greening

Undertake neighborhood greening and planting projects throughout the Mid-City Area, particularly on median strips, public triangles, and along sidewalk planting strips. 2009.5

Policy MC-1.2.6: Mid-City Historic Resources

Protect the historic resources of the Mid-City area, with particular attention to neighborhoods that are currently not protected by historic district designation. Historic resources to be protected also include the Taft and Ellington Bridges, Meridian Hill Park, the First Church Christ Scientist, and the historic Holt House. The design integrity of the bridges shall be preserved, and Meridian Hill/Malcolm X Park and the area around it shall be managed to preserve historic vistas and view corridors, as well as historic park features. 2009.6

Action MC-1.2.A: Conservation Districts

Consider the designation of Columbia Heights, Eckington, Bloomingdale, and other Mid-City neighborhoods as "Conservation Districts." Design standards and review procedures for such districts would be less rigorous than those used in Historic Districts, but would strive for more compatible infill development and maintenance of historic building scale, mass, and height conditions. 2009.7

Action MC-1.2.B: Library Expansion

Modernize and upgrade the Mount Pleasant Branch Library, including expansion of library services. As funding allows, consider development of a new library in the eastern portion of Columbia Heights. 2009.8

Action MC-1.2.C: Recreation Center

Pursue development of a new recreation center in the eastern part of the Planning Area, serving the Bloomingdale/Eckington/LeDroit Park community. This area was recognized to be particularly deficient for such uses in the 2006 Parks Master Plan. 2009.9

"The Comprehensive Plan cannot begin to express the pride the community feels in its diversity and how important it is to the fabric of many Mid-City neighborhoods. Any future action and programs must honor and respect this diversity of culture, economics, race, and ethnicity."

— ANC1A, October 2006 Hearing Testimony.

MC-2 Policy Focus Areas 2010

The Comprehensive Plan has identified seven areas in Mid-City as "policy focus areas," indicating that they require a level of direction and guidance above that provided by the prior sections of this Area Element and in the citywide elements (see Map 20.1 and Table 20.2). These areas are:

- Georgia Avenue Corridor
- 14th Street Corridor/Columbia Heights
- U Street/Uptown
- 18th Street and Columbia Road
- Mount Pleasant Street
- McMillan Sand Filtration Site
- North Capitol Street/Florida Av/New York Avenue. 2010.1

20

Table 20.2:
Policy Focus Areas Within and Adjacent to Mid-City 2010.3

Within Mid-City	
2.1	Georgia Avenue Corridor (see p. 20-16)
2.2	14th Street Corridor/Columbia Hts. (see p. 20-20)
2.3	U Street/Uptown (see p. 20-22)
2.4	18th Street and Columbia Road (see p. 20-25)
2.5	Mount Pleasant Street (see p. 20-27)
2.6	McMillan Sand Filitration Site (see p. 20-29)
2.7	North Capitol/Florida/New York Av (see p. 20-31)
Adjacent to Mid-City	
1	Connecticut Avenue Corridor (see p.23-22)
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	NoMA/Northwest One (see p. 16-41)
6	Northeast Gateway (see p. 24-18)
7	Armed Forces Retirement Home/Irving Street Hospital Campus (see p. 22-27)
8	Georgia Av/Petworth Metro Station (see p. 22-22)

The Rock Creek East Element (Chapter 22) should be consulted for policies and actions on the reuse of the Armed Forces Retirement Home. The site adjoins the Mid-City Planning Area and its reuse will affect transportation, infrastructure, and services in the Mid-City area. 2010.2

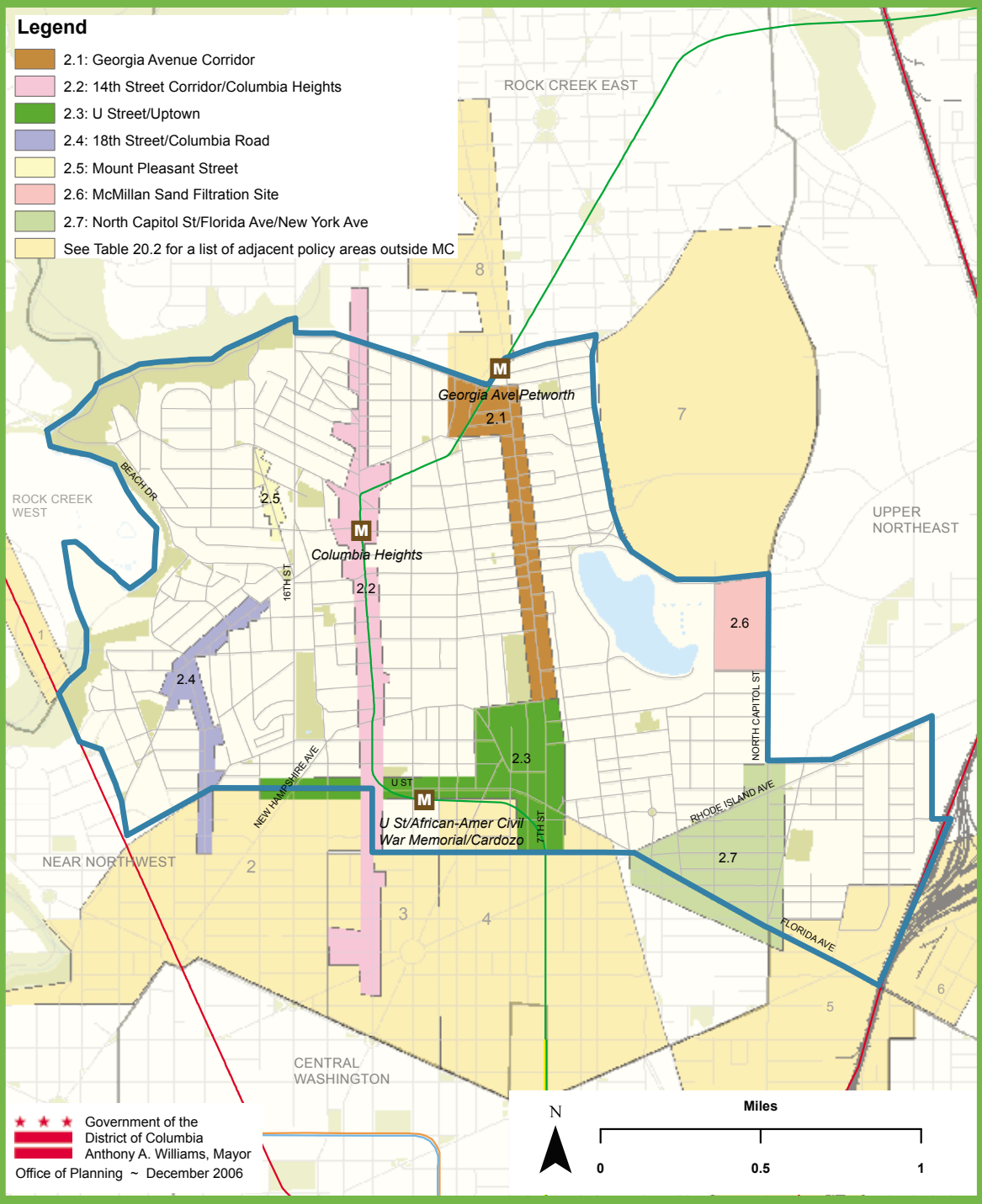
MC-2.1 Georgia Avenue Corridor 2011

Georgia Avenue is one of the city's most significant and historic avenues. As a traffic artery, it carries thousands of commuters in and out of the city daily. As a commercial corridor, it provides goods and services to residents in neighborhoods like LeDroit Park, Pleasant Plains, and Park View. Yet today, the avenue is in need of revival. Despite its distinctive building stock and the strong housing market around it, the avenue still has pockets of crime, deteriorating commercial and residential properties, a steady increase of automobile-oriented businesses, and declining infrastructure and public space. 2011.1

Several planning initiatives have been launched for the Georgia Avenue corridor during the past five years. In 2005, the Office of Planning completed a Revitalization Strategy for the portion of the corridor extending from Euclid Street on the south to Decatur Street on the north. Below Euclid, much of the street frontage is controlled by Howard University and is addressed in the Howard Campus Plan. The University's plans include joint development of Howard Town Center, a large mixed use residential

Map 20.1:

Mid-City Policy Focus Areas 2010.4



and retail project. The University also has launched the "LeDroit Park Initiative" to spur improvement and reinvestment in the surrounding neighborhood. South of Barry Place, Georgia Avenue/7th Street is contained within the Strategic Development Plan for the Uptown Destination District. The entire corridor is also one of the city's designated "Great Streets." 2011.2

Although these initiatives cover different sections of the corridor, they share common goals. These include revitalization through strategic growth and development, preservation of historic assets and unique architecture, improvement of the streetscape and public space, creation of new housing and job opportunities, and upgrading of public transit. Such initiatives are bolstered through efforts by local faith-based institutions to provide family support and job training services in the community. 2011.3

Plans for Georgia Avenue seek to attract quality neighborhood-serving retail businesses and services, reduce vacancies, and explore shared parking strategies to meet parking demand. A number of specific actions have been recommended, including creation of an overlay zone to encourage redevelopment, market incentives such as tax increment financing, façade improvement programs, and targeted improvements on blocks with high vacancies. New parking lots or structures are suggested on specific sites along the corridor, and pedestrian safety measures such as more visible crosswalks and improved lighting have been proposed. The Georgia Avenue Revitalization Strategy includes an "Action Plan" to initiate and monitor these measures. 2011.4

Policy MC-2.1.1: Revitalization of Lower Georgia Avenue

Encourage continued revitalization of the Lower Georgia Avenue corridor. Georgia Avenue should be an attractive, pedestrian-oriented "Main Street" with retail uses, local-serving offices, mixed income housing, civic and cultural facilities, and well-maintained public space. 2011.5

Policy MC-2.1.2: Segmenting the Corridor

Develop distinct identities for different segments of the Georgia Avenue Corridor. Within the Mid-City area, these should include a ParkView/Park Morton section (Otis to Irving), a Pleasant Plains section (Irving to Euclid), a Howard University section (Euclid to Barry Place), and the Uptown Arts District (Barry Place southward). 2011.6

Policy MC-2.1.3: Georgia Avenue Design Improvements

Upgrade the visual quality of the Georgia Avenue corridor through urban design and public space improvements, including tree planting, new parks and plazas, upgrading of triangle parks, and façade improvements that establish a stronger identity and improved image. 2011.7

Policy MC-2.1.4: Howard University

Encourage and strongly support continued relationship-building between Howard University and the adjacent residential neighborhoods. Work with Howard University in the abatement of any outstanding community issues such as the redevelopment of vacant property, façade/building enhancements, and buffering issues associated with campus expansion. Stimulate joint development opportunities with the University that benefit students and surrounding residents. 2011.8

Lower Georgia Avenue

Action MC-2.1.A: Georgia Avenue Revitalization Strategy

Implement the recommendations of the 2004 Revitalization Strategy for the Georgia Avenue and Petworth Metro Station Area and Corridor. 2011.9

Action MC-2.1.B: Howard Town Center

Develop a new mixed use neighborhood center on land to the west of Howard University Campus. This should include not only the planned Howard Town Center site (with housing, retail, and structured parking), but additional medium-density housing development, civic space, cultural facilities, and public open space on surrounding sites. Appropriate transitions in scale should be established between this center and the lower density row house neighborhoods to the west. 2011.10

Action MC-2.1.C: Great Streets Improvements

Implement the Great Streets initiative recommendations for Georgia Avenue, including transit improvements, façade improvements, upgraded infrastructure, blight abatement, and incentives for housing and business development along the avenue. 2011.11

Action MC-2.1.D: Park Morton New Community

Pursue redevelopment of Park Morton as a "new community", replacing the existing public housing development with an equivalent number of new public housing units, plus new market-rate and "workforce" housing units, to create a new mixed income community. Consider implementing this recommendation in tandem with plans for the reuse of public land on Spring Road. Ensure that every effort possible is made to avoid permanent displacement of residents if this action is followed. 2011.12

Action MC-2.1.E: Reuse of Bruce School

Encourage the reuse of the vacant Bruce School (Kenyon Street) as a neighborhood-serving public facility, such as a library, recreation facility, education center for youth and adults, or vocational training center, rather than using the site for private purposes. Open space on the site should be retained for community use. 2011.13

14th Street is in the midst of an urban renaissance, with hundreds of new housing units under construction and new ground floor retail businesses opening on almost every block between Rhode Island Avenue and Park Road. Once a major commercial thoroughfare, the corridor was hard hit by the 1968 riots, and many of its buildings sat vacant for more than 30 years.

Action MC-2.1.F: Senior Wellness Center

Develop a Senior Wellness Center on the Lower Georgia Avenue corridor to meet the current and future needs of area residents. 2011.14

MC-2.2 14th Street Corridor/Columbia Heights 2012

14th Street is in the midst of an urban renaissance, with hundreds of new housing units under construction and new ground floor retail businesses opening on almost every block between Rhode Island Avenue and Park Road. Once a major commercial thoroughfare, the corridor was hard hit by the 1968 riots, and many of its buildings sat vacant for more than 30 years. 2012.1

Much of the recent activity has focused on the Columbia Heights Metro Station area. The commercial district around 14th and Park Streets was initially developed in the early 1900s as a transit-oriented commercial center, anchored by the now-historic Riggs Bank (now PNC) and Tivoli Theater on the northwest and northeast corners. In 1997, a series of community workshops was held to create a redevelopment strategy for the area, ultimately targeting several major parcels owned by the Redevelopment Land Agency (RLA) around the Metro station. 2012.2

The 1997 effort led to another initiative several years later, which culminated in the 2004 Columbia Heights Public Realm Framework Plan. The Framework Plan was developed to enhance public space in the Metro station vicinity. The Plan was coordinated with plans for private development on adjacent properties which when completed will add over 600 new housing units, approximately 650,000 square feet of retail space, 30,000 square feet of office space, and 2,000 parking spaces. The Framework Plan also incorporated connections to the new 800-student Bell Lincoln Middle and High School and Multi-Cultural Center, as well as other cultural and civic uses nearby. 2012.3

The goal of the Columbia Heights Public Realm Framework is to make the neighborhood more pedestrian friendly, coordinate infrastructure improvements, and create a stronger civic identity for Columbia Heights. Its recommendations include a new civic plaza, paving and streetscape improvements, tree planting, public art, and reconfiguration of streets and intersections to improve pedestrian and vehicle safety. 2012.4

South of Columbia Heights, medium-density mixed use development is proposed on many blocks extending south from Irving Street to U Street. Redevelopment over the next ten years will reshape the corridor from auto-oriented commercial uses, including several "strip" shopping centers and warehouses, to an attractive urban residential street. Special efforts should be made to refurbish and preserve subsidized housing along the corridor, and to establish appropriate transitions in scale and density between the corridor and the less dense residential areas on the west and east.

Strengthening of the 11th Street neighborhood commercial district, located several blocks east of Columbia Heights, also should be encouraged. With the opening of the DC-USA project and other large-scale retail development near the Columbia Heights Metrorail station, programs to assist the existing small businesses in this area may be needed. 2012.5

Columbia Heights Metrorail Station

The construction of hundreds of new housing units and one of the largest retail complexes in the city will have significant traffic impacts on Columbia Heights during the coming years. East-west traffic flow through the area is particularly problematic, since many of the east-west streets are residential in character and are already congested. Blocked travel lanes, double-parking, poorly marked lanes, angled intersections and poorly timed traffic signals contribute to the problem. Although DDOT completed a traffic study for the area in 2003 and identified potential transportation improvements, there is a need for additional traffic analysis to evaluate the impacts of planned development and develop appropriate mitigation measures. The goal of these measures should not be to increase vehicle speed on the east-west streets, but rather to improve mobility through the area and reduce the adverse effects of traffic on residents and businesses. 2012.6

Policy MC-2.2.1: Columbia Heights Metro Station Area Development

Develop the Columbia Heights Metro Station area as a thriving mixed use community center, anchored by mixed income housing, community-serving retail, offices, civic uses, and public plazas. Strive to retain the neighborhood's extraordinary cultural diversity as development takes place, and place a priority on development and services that meet the needs of local residents. 2012.7

Policy MC-2.2.2: Public Realm Improvements

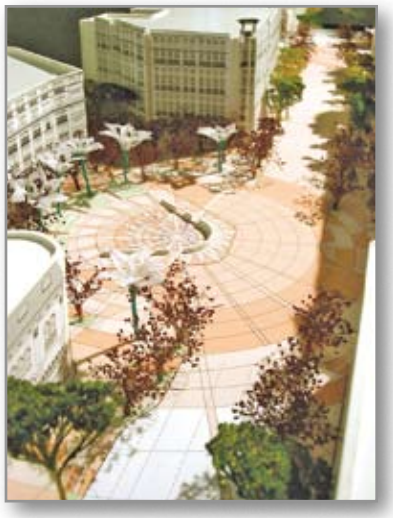
Improve the streets, sidewalks, and public rights-of-way in the 14th/Park vicinity to improve pedestrian safety and create a more attractive public environment. 2012.8

Policy MC-2.2.3: Pocket Parks

Pursue opportunities to create new publicly-accessible open space in Columbia Heights and to increase community access to public school open space during non-school hours. 2012.9

Policy MC-2.2.4: Traffic and Parking Management

Improve bus, pedestrian, bicycle, and vehicular movement; parking management; and pedestrian safety along the 14th Street corridor while balancing the transportation and traffic needs of adjacent cross-streets. Undertake transportation improvement programs to sustain the additional residential, retail and institutional development that is now under construction or planned around the Columbia Heights Metro station. These improvements should achieve a balanced multi-modal system that meets the needs of pedestrians, bicyclists, transit users, and motorists. 2012.10



Proposed civic plaza at 14th Street and Park Road NW in Columbia Heights (illustrative)

Policy MC-2.2.5: 11th Street Commercial District

Retain the 11th Street corridor between Kenyon and Monroe Streets as a neighborhood shopping district. Preserve the mixed use character of the corridor and encourage new local-serving retail businesses and housing. 2012.11

Policy MC-2.2.6: Mid-14th Street Commercial District

Support ongoing efforts to strengthen the small businesses on Park Road and businesses on 14th Street between Newton Street and Shepherd Street through façade improvements, technical assistance, enhanced public infrastructure, and other measures to sustain a thriving business community that serves the surrounding neighborhood. 2012.12

Action MC-2.2.A: Columbia Heights Public Realm Framework Plan

Implement the Columbia Heights Public Realm Framework Plan, including the installation of unique lighting and street furniture, improvement of sidewalks, tree planting, public art, and construction of a civic plaza along 14th Street at Park Road and Kenyon Street. Streetscape improvements should include not only the 14th Street corridor, but gateway points throughout Columbia Heights. 2012.13

Action MC-2.2.B: Park Improvements

Upgrade and re-design small neighborhood pocket parks within Columbia Heights, especially at Monroe and 11th Street, and at Oak/Ogden/14th Streets. 2012.14

Action MC-2.2.C: Mount Pleasant/Columbia Heights Transportation Improvements

Implement the recommendations of the Mount Pleasant/Columbia Heights Transportation Study, including traffic calming measures for the Columbia Heights community. Update the Study recommendations as needed based on follow-up analysis of projected traffic conditions in the area. The updated study should address alternative routing of east-west traffic to reduce impacts on residential streets. 2012.15

MC-2.3 U Street/Uptown 2013

U Street and the adjacent Cardozo and Shaw neighborhoods are an important part of the city's African-American cultural history. African Americans first settled in the neighborhood in the 1880s, capitalizing on new streetcar lines and the absence of residential segregation rules. By the 1920s, the neighborhood had become the center of African American life in Washington. Black-owned theaters, restaurants, night clubs, billiard parlors, and dance halls extended along U Street from 7th Street to 14th Street. During its heyday, legendary jazz greats like Duke Ellington, Louis Armstrong, Dizzy Gillespie, and Pearl Bailey performed at U Street venues. Today, the

neighborhood is home to the African-American Civil War Memorial and Museum, and an African-American Heritage Trail that commemorates important historic landmarks in black history. 2013.1

U Street has been in transition for the past decade. Some of the area's historic venues have been restored, and a new generation of restaurants and nightclubs is emerging. Hundreds of new housing units have been added, particularly west of 12th Street. The neighborhood has become more socially, culturally and economically mixed. The downside of U Street's success is that many of the long-time businesses, including basic services like barber shops and bookstores, are having difficulty paying the higher rents and taxes that have come with gentrification. Efforts to retain the street's character must do more than just preserve its buildings; measures to retain and assist existing businesses are needed. 2013.2

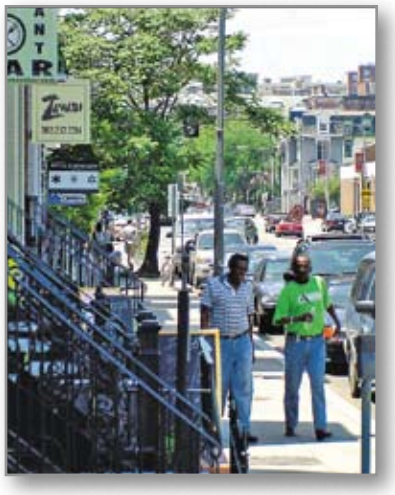
In 2004, the District completed a Strategic Development Plan for the Uptown Destination District (called "DUKE"), focusing on the area along U Street between 6th Street and 13th Street and along 7th Street/Georgia Avenue between Rhode Island Avenue and Barry Place. The Plan proposes revival of these blocks as a cultural destination, anchored by a restored Howard Theater, new retail and entertainment uses along 7th and U Streets, outdoor performance space, and up to 800 new housing units on vacant and/or underutilized sites. Office and hotel uses also are discussed as possible uses, capitalizing on the proximity to Howard University. 2013.3

The confluence of a strong real estate market, an excellent location near Metro and Howard University, and the desire of several government agencies to develop their vacant properties, will catalyze this area's redevelopment during the next decade. The DUKE Plan focuses on 16 publicly-owned sites, including sites owned by the District, WMATA, the Housing Finance Agency, and the Redevelopment Land Agency. It also addresses sites owned by Howard University and the private sector within the study area. As development takes place, continued efforts to improve the streetscape and public space, provide affordable housing, preserve historic buildings, and mitigate development impacts (particularly those associated with the increased concentration of restaurants, night clubs and entertainment uses) should be included. 2013.4

The confluence of a strong real estate market, an excellent location near Metro and Howard University, and the desire of several government agencies to develop their vacant properties, will catalyze this area's redevelopment during the next decade.

Policy MC-2.3.1: Uptown Destination District

Encourage the redevelopment of U Street between 6th Street and 12th Street NW, and Georgia Avenue/7th Street between Rhode Island Avenue and Barry Place NW as a mixed use residential/commercial center, with restored theaters, arts and jazz establishments, restaurants, and shops, as well as housing serving a range of incomes and household types. 2013.5



U Street NW

Policy MC-2.3.2: Uptown Subareas

Create a distinct and memorable identity for different sub-areas in the Uptown District, based on existing assets such as the Lincoln Theater, Howard University, the African-American Civil War Memorial, and the Howard Theater. 2013.6

Policy MC-2.3.3: Uptown Design Considerations

Ensure that development in the Uptown Area is designed to make the most of its proximity to the Metro Stations at Shaw and 13th Street, to respect the integrity of historic resources, and to transition as seamlessly as possible to the residential neighborhoods nearby. 2013.7

Policy MC-2.3.4: Cultural Tourism

Promote cultural tourism initiatives, public art, signage, and other improvements that recognize the African-American historical and cultural heritage of the Uptown area. Such initiatives should bring economic development opportunities to local residents and businesses, and establish a stronger identity for the area as a nationally significant African-American landmark. 2013.8

Policy MC-2.3.5: Parking and Traffic Management

Encourage the development of shared parking facilities in the Uptown area, better management of existing parking resources, and improved surface transit to manage the increased parking demand that will be generated by new development. 2013.9

Policy MC-2.3.6: Small Business Retention

Incorporate small business retention and assistance programs in the Uptown District's revitalization, possibly including zoning regulations, tax relief, and other measures which assist small businesses as redevelopment along U Street, 9th Street, and 7th Street takes place. 2013.10

Action MC-2.3.A: Duke Development Framework Small Area Plan

Implement the DUKE Strategic Development Framework Plan to establish a destination-oriented mixed use development program for key vacant and existing historic sites between the historic Lincoln and Howard Theatres. 2013.11

Action MC-2.3.B: U Street/Shaw/Howard University Multi-Modal Transportation and Parking Study

Implement the recommendations of the U Street/Shaw/Howard University Multi-Modal Transportation and Parking Study to provided improved parking management, traffic safety and mobility, transit accessibility, pedestrian and bicycle safety, and streetscape design. 2013.12

See the Near Northwest Area Element for a discussion of the Shaw/ Convention Center Area Plan.

MC-2.4 18th Street/Columbia Road 2014

Adams Morgan commercial district

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Adams Morgan was a fashionable suburb of row houses and elegant apartments. During World War II, many of its homes were divided into apartments (or used as rooming houses), changing the character of the neighborhood. A large number of young adults and immigrants settled in the neighborhood in the post-war years. A new name for the community was coined by community activists, combining the names of two neighborhood schools—the predominantly white Adams and the predominantly black Morgan. 2014.1

In the 1950s and early 1960s, the neighborhood saw an influx of Cubans and Puerto Ricans. In the 1980s, waves of immigrants from Central America arrived, many seeking refuge from political and economic turmoil. Today, Adams Morgan has the second largest Salvadoran population in the United States. The neighborhood's colorful street murals, first painted by Latinos in the 1970s, are now a Washington tradition and are emulated throughout the city. The commercial district along 18th Street and Columbia Road has become a center of Washington nightlife, with an array of ethnic restaurants, coffee houses, bars, and funky shops that attract people from across the region, as well as visitors to the city. 2014.2

The neighborhood continues to experience growing pains as it grapples with strong demand for housing and the popularity of its entertainment scene. To the east of 18th Street, a zoning overlay was created for the Reed-Cooke area in 1989 to protect existing housing and ensure compatible infill development on a number of large properties. Several large low-rise condominium projects were developed in the 1990s and early 2000s, and today there are plans for a new grocery store in the former Citadel skating rink. 2014.3

Elsewhere in the neighborhood, there are still concerns about the conversion of row houses to apartments, over concentration of bars, the loss of affordable housing units, and inadequate buffering between residential and commercial uses. Public-private redevelopment of the Marie Reed School campus is currently under consideration. The project provides an opportunity for a new school and community facility—and possibly new affordable housing, but has raised concerns about additional density, congestion, and the loss of open space. The continued strong involvement of the Advisory Neighborhood Commission, local community organizations, and individual residents will be important as these conflicts and challenges are addressed. 2014.4

Policy MC-2.4.1: Protecting the Character of Adams Morgan

Protect the historic character of the Adams Morgan community through historic landmark and district designations, and by ensuring that new construction is consistent with the prevailing heights and densities in the neighborhood. 2014.5

The neighborhood continues to experience growing pains as it grapples with strong demand for housing and the popularity of its entertainment scene.

Policy MC-2.4.2: Preference for Local-Serving Businesses

Enhance the local-serving, multi-cultural character of the 18th Street/ Columbia Road business district. Encourage small businesses that meet the needs of local residents, rather than convenience stores, large-scale commercial uses, and concentrations of liquor-licensed establishments. Consistent with this policy, the conversion of restaurants to night clubs or taverns and the expansion of existing night clubs or taverns into adjacent buildings should be discouraged. 2014.6

Policy MC-2.4.3: Mixed Use Character

Encourage retention of the older mixed use buildings along 18th Street and Columbia Road and facilitate infill projects which complement them in height, scale, and design. Discourage conversion of existing apartment buildings in the commercial area to non-residential uses, and ensure that the long-term viability of these uses is not threatened by the encroachment of incompatible uses. 2014.7

Policy MC-2.4.4: Transportation Improvements

Improve traffic movement, accessibility, and the flow of people along key arterial streets, particularly along 18th Street and Columbia Road and residential connector streets such as Kalorama Road and Euclid Street. Implement new measures to address parking problems on residential streets near the Adams Morgan business district. These measures could include extension of the residential permit parking program to a "24/7" timeframe, with appropriate consideration given to the needs of residents, businesses, and visitors. 2014.8

Policy MC-2.4.5: Reed-Cooke Area

Protect existing housing within the Reed Cooke neighborhood, maintaining heights and densities at appropriate levels and encouraging small-scale business development that does not adversely affect the residential community. 2014.9

Policy MC-2.4.6: Adams Morgan Public and Institutional Facilities

Encourage the retention and adaptive reuse of existing public facilities in Adams Morgan, including the use of schools for public purposes such as education, clinics, libraries, and recreational facilities. In addition, encourage the constructive, adaptive and suitable reuse of historic churches with new uses such as housing in the event such facilities cease to operate as churches. 2014.10

Action MC-2.4.A: 18th Street/Adams Morgan Transportation and Parking Study

Work closely with the Advisory Neighborhood Commission and community to implement appropriate recommendations of the 18th Street/ Adams Morgan Transportation and Parking Study, which was prepared to

better manage vehicle traffic, pedestrian and bicycle movement, on-street and off-street parking, and streetscape improvements along 18th Street and in the surrounding area of Adams Morgan. Appropriate recommendations are those on which a consensus can be developed, and those on which consensus may not be achieved but where the views and comments of all stakeholders have been duly considered and discussed. 2014.11

Action MC-2.4.B: Washington Heights and Lanier Heights

Support the designation of the Washington Heights area as a National Register Historic District. Conduct additional historical surveys and consider historic district designations for other areas around Adams Morgan, including Lanier Heights, portions of Reed-Cooke, the 16th Street area, and Walter Pierce Community Park. 2014.12

Action MC-2.4.C: Marie H. Reed Community Learning Center

Continue the community dialogue on the reuse of the Marie H. Reed Community Learning Center to determine the feasibility of modernizing the school, improving the playing fields and recreational facilities, and providing enhanced space for the health clinic and other community services. This dialogue should be undertaken in the context of addressing present and future local public facility needs, open space needs, school enrollment and program needs, and the community's priorities for the site. 2014.13

Action MC-2.4.D: Local Business Assistance

Explore the feasibility of amending tax laws or developing tax abatement and credit programs to retain neighborhood services and encourage small local-serving businesses space along 18th Street and Columbia Road. 2014.14

See also Action MC-1.1.A regarding the rezoning of row house blocks.

MC-2.5 Mount Pleasant Street 2015

The Mount Pleasant Street shopping district was developed around the end of a streetcar line and has served the surrounding community for more than a century. Mount Pleasant has been a designated National Register Historic District since 1987 and is one of 12 DC "Main Streets." Today, the commercial district includes a variety of small businesses and services, many oriented toward the large Latino population in the area. The area between Mount Pleasant Street and 16th Street is one of the densest in the city, with numerous large apartment complexes. 2015.1

There is broad agreement that Mount Pleasant Street should remain a culturally diverse, pedestrian-oriented local-serving shopping street in the future, and that the local flavor of the business mix should be protected. As in other Mid-City neighborhoods, there are concerns about rising rents and the loss of business diversity. There is strong interest in attracting new arts

There is broad agreement that Mount Pleasant Street should remain a culturally diverse, pedestrian-oriented local-serving shopping street in the future, and that the local flavor of the business mix should be protected.

establishments and locally-owned restaurants to the neighborhood, and promoting multi-culturalism through outdoor fairs, public art, and street performances. There is also strong interest in protecting the architectural integrity and historic proportions of Mount Pleasant's residential streets, and in acquiring additional open space for public access and community use. 2015.2

Opinions on the extent of new development that should be accommodated along Mount Pleasant Street itself are mixed. Some residents strongly desire denser mixed-use development, with new affordable and market rate housing above retail space. Others remain concerned about the impacts of additional density on traffic, parking, and historic character, and the effects of retail and restaurant growth on nearby residential uses. A continued dialogue on growth and development issues will be necessary to find the right balance. 2015.3

Policy MC-2.5.1: Mount Pleasant Street's Character

Maintain and preserve the local neighborhood shopping character of Mount Pleasant Street to better serve the surrounding neighborhood. Support creative cultural design while protecting historic landmarks. 2015.4

Policy MC-2.5.2: Involving the International Community

Promote bilingual outreach and communication with local merchants and residents to more effectively address business impacts and create a better match between neighborhood businesses and the needs of the community. 2015.5

Policy MC-2.5.3: Mount Pleasant As a Creative Economic Enclave

Support creative and multi-cultural expression in Mount Pleasant through display, performance, festivals, and economic development strategies. The neighborhood should be a creative economic enclave, where incubators and small businesses that combine cultural and small-scale technological initiatives are supported. Cultural arts should be more fully integrated into the landscape of Mount Pleasant Street and should be part of the experience of living or shopping there. Additional arts, crafts, galleries, licensed market vendors, and space for business incubators and consulting services in the creative professions should be encouraged. 2015.6

Policy MC-2.5.4: Open Space Access

Pursue improvements to existing open space in the Mount Pleasant community, including better connections to Rock Creek Park, enhancements to pocket parks and plazas, and encouraging the joint use of school facilities to meet local recreational needs. 2015.7

Policy MC-2.5.5: Promoting Affordable Housing in Mount Pleasant

Protect existing affordable housing in Mount Pleasant and support opportunities for new affordable housing as a component of mixed use infill development along Mount Pleasant Street and in the area between Mount Pleasant Street and 16th Street. 2015.8

Action MC-2.5.A: Incentives for Mixed Use Development and Affordable Housing

Consider planning and zoning tools in Mount Pleasant to create incentives for ground floor retail and upper story residential uses along Mount Pleasant Street, with performance standards that ensure the compatibility of adjacent uses. Provide the necessary flexibility to encourage innovation and creative economic development, possibly including ground floor small businesses on alleys and walkways in the area between 16th and 17th Streets. 2015.9

Action MC-2.5.B: Expanding Mount Pleasant Open Space

Restore access to the Bell Lincoln recreational facilities and ensure continued public access to (and restoration of) the Department of Parks and Recreation Headquarters property and playground on 16th Street for the benefit of residents of the surrounding community, including Mount Pleasant and Columbia Heights. Access for pedestrians, wheelchairs, and bicycles between Mount Pleasant and Columbia Heights should be provided through this area. Consideration should also be given to combining Asbury and Rabeau Parks (at 16th , Harvard, and Columbia Road) into a single park. 2015.10

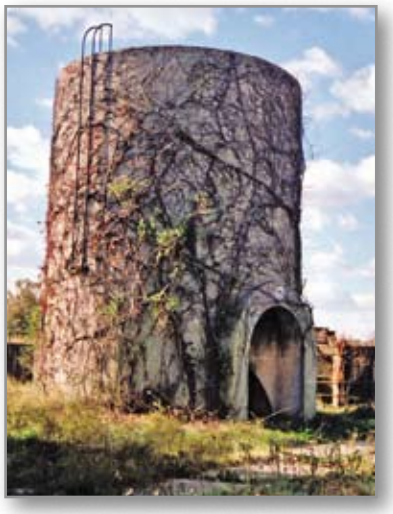
Action MC-2.5.C: Mount Pleasant Street Façade Improvements

Encourage urban design and façade improvements in the established commercial district along Mount Pleasant Street. 2015.11

MC-2.6 McMillan Sand Filtration Site 2016

The McMillan Sand Filtration site occupies 25 acres at the corner of North Capitol Street and Michigan Avenue NW. Once used to filter drinking water from the Potomac River, the plant was closed and sold by the federal government to the District of Columbia for "community development purposes" in 1987. The site currently appears as an open area of grass and trees with two rows of enigmatic concrete towers covered with ivy. Beneath the surface are 20 unreinforced concrete filter cells, each one acre in size and in various states of disrepair. The entire site is considered historically significant. When the filtration system was created in 1905, it was considered an engineering marvel and a model for other plants nationwide. 2016.1

The McMillan site has been the subject of community forums for nearly 20 years. Many residents have advocated for a park on the site, noting its historic significance. In fact, the filtration site and the adjacent McMillan reservoir were part of the Emerald Necklace of parks conceived in the 1901



McMillan Reservoir Sand Filtration Site

McMillan Plan, and the site itself was originally designed by Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr. Past proposals for the site have been the subject of lawsuits, and the former Comprehensive Plan designation of the site for mixed use development was itself the subject of a lawsuit in 1989-92. 2016.2

The District conducted planning workshops for the site in 2000 to explore potential new uses. Several options were considered, including a community park, a retail-hotel complex, and a mixed use residential-retail scenario. Each of the options dedicated a substantial portion of the site as parkland. In 2004, an unsolicited proposal to build 1,200 units of housing on the site was made by a private developer. In 2005, the site was transferred from the District to the National Capital Revitalization Corporation (NCRC). NCRC is currently developing plans for the property. 2016.3

Whatever the outcome, several basic objectives should be pursued in the re-use of the McMillan Sand Filtration site. These are outlined in the policies below. 2016.4

Policy MC-2.6.1: Open Space on McMillan Reservoir Sand Filtration Site

Require that reuse plans for the McMillan Reservoir Sand Filtration site dedicate a substantial contiguous portion of the site for recreation and open space. The open space should provide for both active and passive recreational uses, and should adhere to high standards of landscape design, accessibility, and security. Consistent with the 1901 McMillan Plan, connectivity to nearby open spaces such as the Armed Forces Retirement Home, should be achieved through site design. 2016.5

Policy MC-2.6.2: Historic Preservation at McMillan Reservoir

Restore key above-ground elements of the site in a manner that is compatible with the original plan, and explore the adaptive reuse of some of the underground "cells" as part of the historic record of the site. The cultural significance of this site, and its importance to the history of the District of Columbia must be recognized as it is reused. Consideration should be given to monuments, memorials, and museums as part of the site design. 2016.6

Policy MC-2.6.3: Mitigating Reuse Impacts

Ensure that any development on the site is designed to reduce parking, traffic, and noise impacts on the community; be architecturally compatible with the surrounding community; and improve transportation options to the site and surrounding neighborhood. Any change in use on the site should increase connectivity between Northwest and Northeast neighborhoods as well as the hospital complex to the north. 2016.7

Policy MC-2.6.4: Community Involvement in Reuse Planning

Be responsive to community needs and concerns in reuse planning for the site. Amenities which are accessible to the community and which respond to neighborhood needs should be included. 2016.8

Policy MC-2.6.5: Scale and Mix of New Uses

Recognize that development on portions of the McMillan Sand Filtration site may be necessary to stabilize the site and provide the desired open space and amenities. Where development takes place, it should consist of moderate- to medium-density housing, retail, and other compatible uses. Any development on the site should maintain viewsheds and vistas and be situated in a way that minimizes impacts on historic resources and adjacent development. 2016.9

Action MC-2.6.A: McMillan Reservoir Development

Continue working with the National Capital Revitalization Corporation and adjacent communities in the development and implementation of reuse plans for the McMillan Reservoir Sand Filtration site. 2016.10

MC-2.7 North Capitol Street/Florida/New York Avenue Business District 2017

The area around the North Capitol Street, New York Avenue, and Florida Avenue intersections provides the commercial center for the surrounding Bloomingdale, Eckington, and Truxton Circle neighborhoods. The neighborhoods themselves are diverse in age, income, and ethnicity. They consist of a mix of row houses and small apartment buildings. Home prices in the neighborhood have tripled since 2000, and many long-time residents are feeling the pressure of gentrification. 2017.1

The commercial district itself is in need of revitalization. Although it was designated a DC Main Street in 2000, it suffers from a lack of neighborhood-serving businesses, high vacancies, crime, and inadequate access and parking. The North Capitol frontage is particularly challenged by a myriad of confusing and often congested intersections, and crisscrossing diagonal streets and triangles making pedestrian movement difficult. The District addressed these issues in a transportation study in 2004-2005, with the goal of improving vehicle flow and improving safety. The Study explored the feasibility of reconstructing Truxton Circle (at North Capitol and Florida), and identified specific short-term and long-term transportation, streetscape, and infrastructure improvements. 2017.2

The North Capitol commercial district is just a few blocks west of the New York Avenue Metro station and lies on the northern edge of the North-of-Massachusetts-Avenue (NOMA) district. Conditions on the corridor are likely to change dramatically as NOMA is redeveloped with offices and

Home prices in the Bloomingdale, Eckington, and Truxton Circle neighborhoods have tripled since 2000, and many long-time residents are feeling the pressure of gentrification.

high-density housing. The commercial district is well situated to benefit from these changes, but first needs a strategy to address the needs of the residential community, manage traffic, upgrade the public realm, and improve public safety. 2017.3

Policy MC-2.7.1: North Capitol/Florida Business District

Upgrade the commercial district at Florida Avenue/North Capitol/New York Avenue, restoring vacant storefronts to active use and accommodating compatible neighborhood-serving infill development. 2017.4

Policy MC-2.7.2: Eckington/Bloomingdale

Protect the architectural integrity of the Eckington/Bloomingdale neighborhood, and encourage the continued restoration and improvement of the area's row houses. 2017.5

Action MC-2.7.A: North Capitol Revitalization Strategy

Prepare a Small Area Plan/Revitalization Strategy for the North Capitol/Florida Avenue business district, including recommendations for streetscape improvements, land use and zoning changes, parking management and pedestrian safety improvements, retail development, and opportunities for new housing and public services. 2017.6

Action MC-2.7.B: Conservation District

Consider the designation of the Eckington/Bloomingdale/Truxton Circle neighborhood as a Conservation District, recognizing that most of its structures are 80-100 years old and may require additional design guidance to ensure the compatibility of alterations and infill development. 2017.7

Action MC-2.7.C: North Capitol Transportation Study

Implement the recommendations of the North Capitol Street/Truxton Circle Transportation Study. 2017.8