

SOUTHWEST NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN



Government of the
District of Columbia

Muriel Bowser, Mayor

DC Office of Planning

Council Approved R21-0128

July 14, 2015





CONTENTS

	Page
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	1
01 INTRODUCTION	9
02 EXISTING CONDITIONS ANALYSIS	21
03 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROCESS TO VISION	53
04 CONCEPT MODEL COMMUNITY	69
05 CONCEPT MODERNIST GEM	77
06 CONCEPT GREEN OASIS	85
07 CONCEPT ARTS & CULTURAL DESTINATION	93
08 CONCEPT THRIVING TOWN CENTER	99
09 CONCEPT OPTIMIZED DISTRICT PARCELS	105
10 CONCEPT VIBRANT CONNECTIONS	111
11 IMPLEMENTATION	119
12 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	141

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



ILLUSTRATIVE OF 4TH STREET SW AS TOWN CENTER

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: A VIBRANT, ATTRACTIVE, AND CONNECTED PLACE

For nearly 50 years, the Southwest neighborhood has been a quiet, tucked-away, stable neighborhood to almost 12,000 residents. The product of Urban Renewal interventions of the 1950s and 1960s, this predominantly residential enclave is quite unlike any other neighborhood in the District of Columbia. Reflective of Modernist architecture, large swaths of green open space, and a variety of residential development including market rate and public housing, the neighborhood’s unique built environment is a source of pride for many Southwest residents. Southwest’s people are its other great asset, celebrating a rich diversity of residents in terms of income, race, ethnicity, and age.

However, as the District of Columbia experiences historic population growth and development pressures surrounding Southwest continue to mount, neighborhood residents are adamant that Southwest be a place that retains its integrity while positioning the neighborhood to be a vibrant, attractive, and connected place with a shared vision to guide growth. Southwest today is the product of successive waves of change building on what existed to create new forms and new communities. Preservation and growth can be compatible as exemplified in the stunning Arena Stage Theater. This nationally recognized theater created a magnificent expanded facility by transforming the existing structure. It is the perfect mix of historic and new construction to better accommodate growth and demand. The community can play a critical role in shaping how development occurs and what amenities it can bring to balance growth with livability – achieving an even stronger Southwest neighborhood.

The Plan

The Southwest Neighborhood Plan (the Plan) is a Small Area Plan to shape the future of the neighborhood. It focuses on a Planning Area that extends from South Capitol Street, west to Maine Avenue SW; from P Street SW, north to the I-395 Freeway. It reflects community aspirations, District-wide goals and market opportunities. It is a community-based plan to enhance parks, pedestrian and street connections, bolster retail, integrate community amenities, enhance transportation choices, and accommodate and guide the direction of future growth in the Southwest neighborhood. The Plan aims to provide residents and property owners with assurances of what future development may look like, including recommendations to preserve and enhance existing assets and ensure that Southwest retains social and economic diversity.

Pressures for Change

In the past 10 years, the Southwest neighborhood has been undergoing significant change. Beginning with the Anacostia Waterfront Initiative in 2002, renewed interest in Washington, DC’s waterfront communities along the Southwest Channel and the Anacostia River began to grow quickly. Since then, major changes have already taken shape in Southwest such as the removal of the Waterside Mall to allow for the reopening of 4th Street and the addition of new offices, retail and planned residential developments to form a town center. Additional developments and proposals in and around Southwest include:

- **“The Wharf”** – This project, currently under construction on the Southwest waterfront, will create an entirely new waterfront destination of approximately 3.2 million square feet of development that will form a major entertainment and retail destination.
- **Nationals Park at the Navy Yard Metro** – This ballpark now brings an average of 31,000 fans to each game as well as to additional concerts and events throughout the year. This influx of people has created demand for additional amenities in the area but has also strained the transit network. Thanks to public investments in the ballpark, transit system and parks, the Navy Yard/Capitol Riverfront neighborhood is one of the fastest growing in the District.
- **Buzzard Point** – There is a current proposal to construct a 22-25,000-seat soccer stadium in the Buzzard Point area of Southwest. This area has generally accommodated industrial uses with a few residential units on the edge. Buzzard Point is one of the last large swaths of riverfront property in the District. The potential new soccer stadium in Buzzard Point will contribute to the transformation of the broader Southwest area as a center for events and activity.
- **Greenleaf Public Housing** – The District of Columbia Housing Authority (DCHA) owns four large parcels of land adjacent and close to M Street, near the Waterfront Metro Station. DCHA has begun discussions with the Greenleaf residents about potential redevelopment of the properties into a mixed-income and mixed-use community with additional housing and amenities.

- **District Properties** – The neighborhood also contains an abundance of District and federally owned parcels, many of which are currently underutilized and/or underdeveloped with low-scale buildings and expansive surface parking, clustered on M Street near South Capitol Street. As technology changes and service needs grow and evolve, the District is interested in optimizing its properties as well as finding opportunities to utilize these assets to best serve residents and contribute to local neighborhoods through improved design and function.

All of these changes and existing opportunity areas served as a catalyst for studying and analyzing the Southwest neighborhood and developing a Small Area Plan to enhance existing neighborhood assets, guide future growth, and direct investment priorities.

The Planning Process

The planning process was community-based, drawing on the strong “social infrastructure” in Southwest and allowing for multiple opportunities to provide feedback. The Plan was also shaped by neighborhood leadership through an Advisory Committee comprised of former Councilmember Tommy Wells, affected Advisory Neighborhood Commissioners (ANCs), and representatives from civic organizations, homeowner and tenant associations, community groups, and the business community who provided insight and guidance to the Project Team throughout the process (see the full list of Advisory Committee members on page 142). The community engagement process included four community-wide meetings, seven Advisory Committee meetings, three focus groups (seniors/age-friendly, schools, historic preservation), a joint Jefferson/Amidon Parent Teacher Association (PTA) meeting, and two meetings for Greenleaf residents. In addition to a project website

(swneighborhoodplan.org), opportunities to provide input were also available through an interactive online forum (engage.swneighborhoodplan.org), which enabled stakeholders to map issues and opportunities and engage in dialogue about ideas and recommendations for the neighborhood.

Some key concerns and opportunities that arose at the outset of the planning process included:

Varied Housing Choices – Since 2000, home values in the Planning Area have appreciated at a lower rate than the DC average, and home sales prices and rents are lower than the DC average. However, this trend is starting to change, and the apartment communities that are currently leasing are catering toward a higher-income demographic. Community residents want to see affordable housing preserved and new units created. They also want new housing developments to offer varied products, especially units sized for families. Development pressures and potential gentrification were specifically considered a threat to the most economically vulnerable residents.

Enhanced Neighborhood Serving Retail – Retail development along 4th Street SW was of particular concern for most residents. Many expressed frustration at the length of time it has taken to lease up existing retail spaces and the lack of a full range of neighborhood-serving retail amenities and businesses.

Park-like Neighborhood Character – Residents also highlighted characteristics that make Southwest special. The neighborhood was often described as “green” with a network of open spaces and parks as well as the full growth tree canopy lining many neighborhood

streets. Reinforcing this green character and enhancing parks were key priorities. There was also support to improve parks and recreation facilities.

New Development – Residents also expressed civic pride in the neighborhood’s Modernist architecture and were concerned that new development could compromise the neighborhood’s unique character. They also expressed reservations about the impacts of surrounding major developments like The Wharf and Capitol Riverfront on the quality of life in the Southwest neighborhood.

Diverse Community – Southwest’s most defining characteristic is its people. Residents overwhelmingly expressed their desire to maintain the economic and racial diversity that makes the community so strong and vibrant.

Community Facilities – There was near universal support in the community to see a new library in the neighborhood, with considerable discussion surrounding whether to leave it at the current location or move it to 4th Street SW.

Through the planning process, a Vision for the Plan was developed: **to create a thriving, active environment that preserves and enhances the Southwest neighborhood’s culture and character.** The Guiding Principles, which are listed on pages 67 and 68, serve as the core, community-based underpinnings of the Plan and provide direction and values to build the Plan concepts and recommendations. The following pages summarize seven core concepts and the visions for each, around which the Plan goals and recommendations are framed.

Concept **MODEL COMMUNITY**



ILLUSTRATIVE BY ED ESTES

Vision

Southwest will remain an exemplary model of equity and inclusion - a welcoming and engaged community that celebrates and retains a mix of races, ages and income levels and enhances well-being for all amidst neighborhood growth and change.

Goals

- Support the responsible redevelopment of the Greenleaf complex to benefit existing Greenleaf residents and realize a well-designed development and mixed-income community.
- Maintain a mix of affordable and market-rate residential units that better serve community needs.
- Update public realm and transit infrastructure to enhance accessibility for all.
- Promote healthy living and food access for the entire community.

Concept **MODERNIST GEM**



ILLUSTRATIVE BY ED ESTES

Vision

Southwest will promote the preservation of its unique architectural legacy and support new development that reflects the form and rhythm of the mid-20th century, reinforcing the neighborhood design as a “Modernist Gem”.

Goals

- Celebrate the distinctive character of Southwest and promote preservation of its outstanding Modernist architecture, landscape architecture, and urban design.
- Retain and enhance the character of the L’Enfant Plan in Southwest including associated vistas and reservations.
- Ensure that future development is compatible with the existing design of the community.

Concept **GREEN OASIS**



ILLUSTRATIVE BY ED ESTES

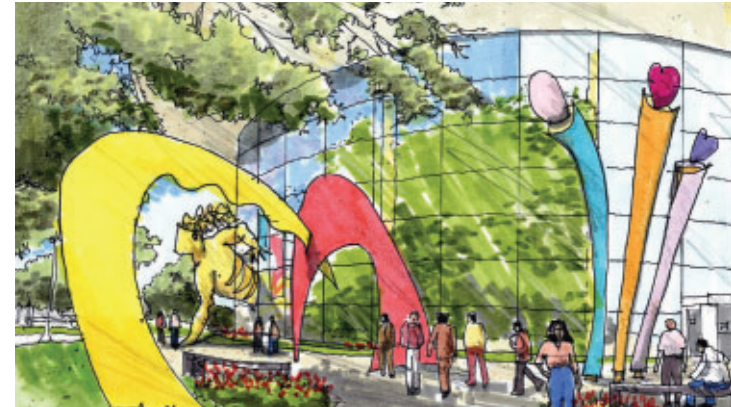
Vision

Southwest will thrive as a green oasis in the city, with lush tree canopy and vegetation, landscaped building edges, thriving parks and robust connections between green spaces, while attaining new levels of neighborhood sustainability and environmental performance.

Goals

- Ensure Lansburgh Park evolves into a “central park” that will become a center of activity for the Southwest neighborhood.
- Improve connectivity through greenways, improved pedestrian and bicycle facilities, wayfinding signage, and coordinated programming throughout all Southwest parks.
- Adopt Sustainable DC goals to showcase the Southwest neighborhood as a steward of green, sustainable practices targeting stormwater management, healthy living, and energy efficiency.

Concept **ARTS + CULTURAL DESTINATION**



ILLUSTRATIVE BY ED ESTES

Vision

Southwest will flourish as a premier arts and cultural destination, creating synergies between existing cultural assets and attracting new creative uses and arts-related activities.

Goals

- Build on and market existing cultural assets and institutions to reinforce the concept of an arts and cultural destination.
- Strengthen ‘I’ Street as a cultural corridor.
- Grow the presence of the arts throughout the Southwest neighborhood.

Concept THRIVING TOWN CENTER



ILLUSTRATIVE BY ED ESTES

Vision

Southwest will enjoy 4th Street SW as a thriving town center and commercial heart of the community, with a range of neighborhood-serving retail options, an active street atmosphere, a high quality public realm, quality new development and easily accessible transit.

Goals

- Establish a strategic marketing approach to attract a unique and tailored retail mix to promote 4th Street as Southwest’s neighborhood main street.
- Promote key corner parcels to serve as anchors and create a vibrant mix of neighborhood town center uses along 4th Street SW.
- Celebrate 4th Street’s envisioned vibrancy as a neighborhood main street, through temporary urbanism practices and through the burgeoning local arts movement and the city’s creative economy.

Concept OPTIMIZED DISTRICT PARCELS



ILLUSTRATIVE BY ED ESTES

Vision

Southwest will be prepared for the future redevelopment of the neighborhood’s outdated public facilities and underused publicly owned land, allowing for the use of public resources in a way that benefits everyone and ensures that development aligns with neighborhood expectations for high-quality design and community benefits.

Goals

- Address the future potential for District-controlled parcels that comprise Southwest’s “Government Cluster” to reflect opportunities to accommodate improved services, allow a mix of uses, and optimize government operations and assets.
- Provide new and improved state of the art public facilities.

Concept **VIBRANT CONNECTIONS**



ILLUSTRATIVE BY ED ESTES

Vision

The Southwest neighborhood will feature vibrant connections that support an active community and attractive environment, accommodate multiple transportation modes, increase mobility and safety within the community and provide ease of access to adjacent neighborhoods and the waterfront.

Goals

- Enhance pedestrian connections and safety throughout the neighborhood.
- Improve neighborhood bicycle infrastructure and safety.
- Establish M Street as a multimodal neighborhood boulevard linking Southwest to adjacent neighborhoods and the waterfront.
- Ensure that Maine Avenue provides an attractive transition from the Southwest neighborhood to The Wharf development.
- Support the transformation of South Capitol Street into a high density, urban boulevard that establishes a robust pedestrian realm.
- Restore L'Enfant Streets on redevelopment sites, including public properties.
- Improve the underpasses connecting the Southwest neighborhood to areas to the north.

PLAN FRAMEWORK

The remainder of the Plan is organized as follows:

Chapter 1 provides an introduction to the Planning Area and the Small Area Planning process and plan methodology.

Chapter 2 presents the key findings regarding existing conditions and technical analysis.

Chapter 3 provides an overview of the community engagement process and presents the community-based vision and guiding principles for the Plan.

Chapters 4 through 10 are framed around seven core concepts and the vision and recommendations for each:

- Chapter 4:** Model Community
- Chapter 5:** Modernist Gem
- Chapter 6:** Green Oasis
- Chapter 7:** Arts and Cultural Destination
- Chapter 8:** Thriving Town Center
- Chapter 9:** Optimized District Parcels
- Chapter 10:** Vibrant Connections

Chapter 11 provides a plan to serve as a roadmap for implementing Plan recommendations, including projected timeframe and lead and partner entities.

01 INTRODUCTION



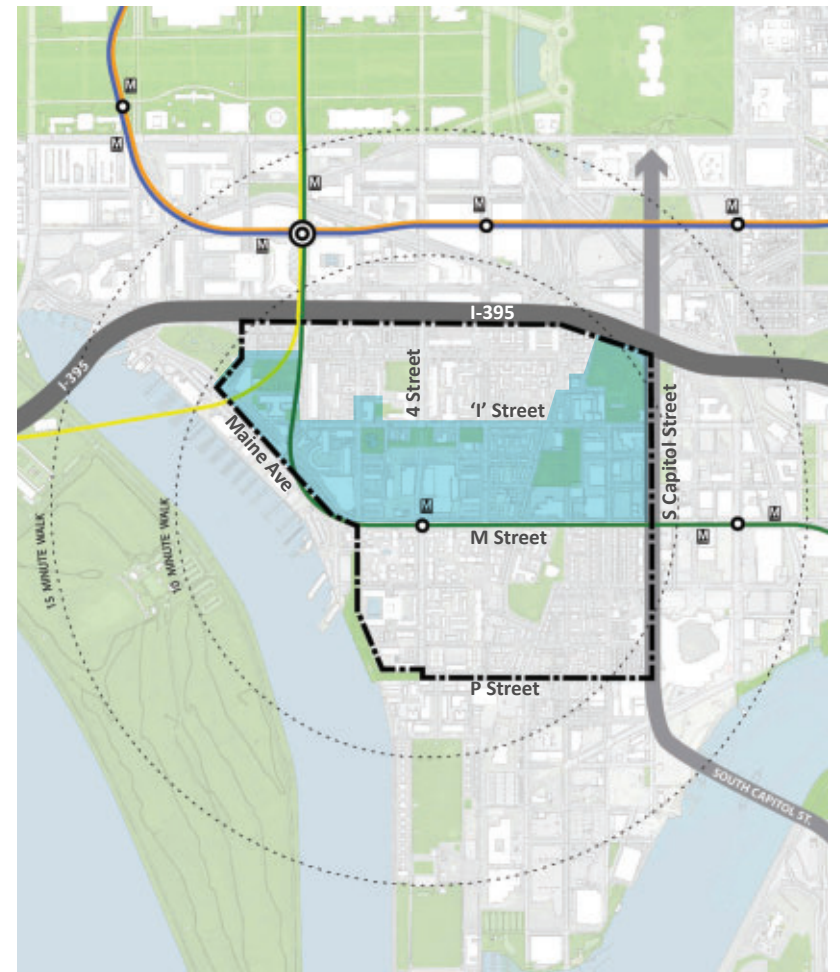
PEDESTRIAN WALKWAY NEAR FORT MCNAIR | SOUTHWEST'S MATURE TREE CANOPIES CREATE AN ENJOYABLE PEDESTRIAN ENVIRONMENT

INTRODUCTION: THE TIME TO PLAN IS NOW

Overview

This Southwest Neighborhood Plan (the Plan) is a Small Area Plan, a community-based strategy developed for the purpose of creating an urban design, land use, and neighborhood preservation framework to enhance parks, pedestrian and street connections, integrate community amenities, enhance transportation choices and guide the direction of future growth in the Southwest neighborhood. The Plan also explores the potential for development to have a positive impact and provides land use guidance for multiple, underutilized District-controlled properties where government uses are currently located. The Plan provides residents, property owners, city officials and District agencies with a blueprint for informing future capital funding priorities, shaping growth and preserving neighborhood character.

The planning process was centered on robust community engagement and participation from residents, Advisory Neighborhood Commissioners (ANC), neighborhood and civic organizations, former Ward 6 Councilmember Tommy Wells, property owners, institutions and government agencies. The DC Office of Planning (OP) formed an Advisory Committee comprised of stakeholders from diverse backgrounds to guide the process. The Plan documents the community-based process and records the shared vision and guiding principles that were collectively developed to serve as the foundation for its key opportunity areas and recommendations. The Plan includes an implementation strategy for transforming the Plan into reality.



- PLANNING AREA
- FOCUS AREA
- METRO
- WALKING RADIUS
- BARRIERS



FIGURE 1.1 | SOUTHWEST PLANNING AREA

Planning Area

The Planning Area extends from South Capitol Street to Maine Avenue SW and from P Street SW north to the I-395 Freeway (see Figure 1.2). The Focus Area, highlighted in red on Figure 1.3, contains the Plan’s development opportunity sites, primary urban design issues and new development context. The areas highlighted in blue in Figure 1.4 represent the Secondary Area, where neighborhood conservation, neighborhood connectivity and sustainability are the principal focus. To better understand the dynamics of the real estate market, a market analysis was conducted with a broader boundary than the Planning Area to include Buzzard Point and Capitol Riverfront to better reflect real estate market dynamics.



FIGURE 1.2 | SOUTHWEST PLANNING AREA IN CONTEXT OF THE RIVERFRONT COMMUNITY



FOCUS AREA
PLANNING AREA



FIGURE 1.3 | SOUTHWEST FOCUS AREA



SECONDARY AREA
PLANNING AREA



FIGURE 1.4 | SOUTHWEST SECONDARY AREA

Why Plan Now

After decades of population decline and disinvestment, the District is experiencing a resurgence, with sustained population growth of approximately 13,000 residents annually over the past few years and current estimates depicting growth of more than 800 residents a month. The demand for housing and other community amenities is strong and likely to continue not only in Southwest but in all quadrants and neighborhoods in the city.

New residents are demonstrating transit preferences that value Metro accessibility and other alternatives to private auto use, as well as neighborhood walkability. They are seeking centrally located neighborhoods with the amenities of city living and easy access to downtown. Given the plentiful transit options and locational advantages of Southwest, just steps from the National Mall and

adjacent to both the Potomac River and the Washington Channel, the neighborhood will continue to be a magnet for residential development. The appeal is only likely to magnify with the increase in local retail amenities and the build-out of surrounding developments like The Wharf and potential soccer stadium, which will boost citywide recognition of the neighborhood. The time to plan is now, to ensure that the characteristics that the community cherishes about Southwest will be protected and enhanced while accommodating growth, change and new residents moving into the community.

Similar to the city as a whole, the Planning Area comprises a diverse community that is growing and is expected to continue to grow into the foreseeable future. The Planning Area population is expected



FIGURE 1.6 | DISTRICT POPULATION GROWTH

to increase from approximately 12,000 residents in 2013 to more than 15,000 residents in 2023, a number of which are likely to be young professionals, a growing segment of the population citywide. Currently, Southwest is unique in part because there are higher proportions of low-income households and senior households than the citywide average, reflecting the neighborhood's supply of income-restricted and senior-oriented housing, and the neighborhood's appeal for aging in place. However, there are many households within all income levels, age brackets and family types and it is precisely this diversity that is a treasured and defining aspect of the Southwest neighborhood. Planning is needed to address community concerns regarding the future of affordable and quality housing options in the neighborhood for a variety of incomes, family sizes, ages and for people with disabilities.

A significant amount of change has happened to the areas surrounding the core of the Southwest neighborhood since the adoption of the Comprehensive Plan in 2006, which set the stage

for development in the city over a 20-year timeframe. On the Southwest Waterfront, "The Wharf" has begun active construction. This catalytic development will bring approximately 3.2 million square feet of new development, including destination-type entertainment and retail experiences.

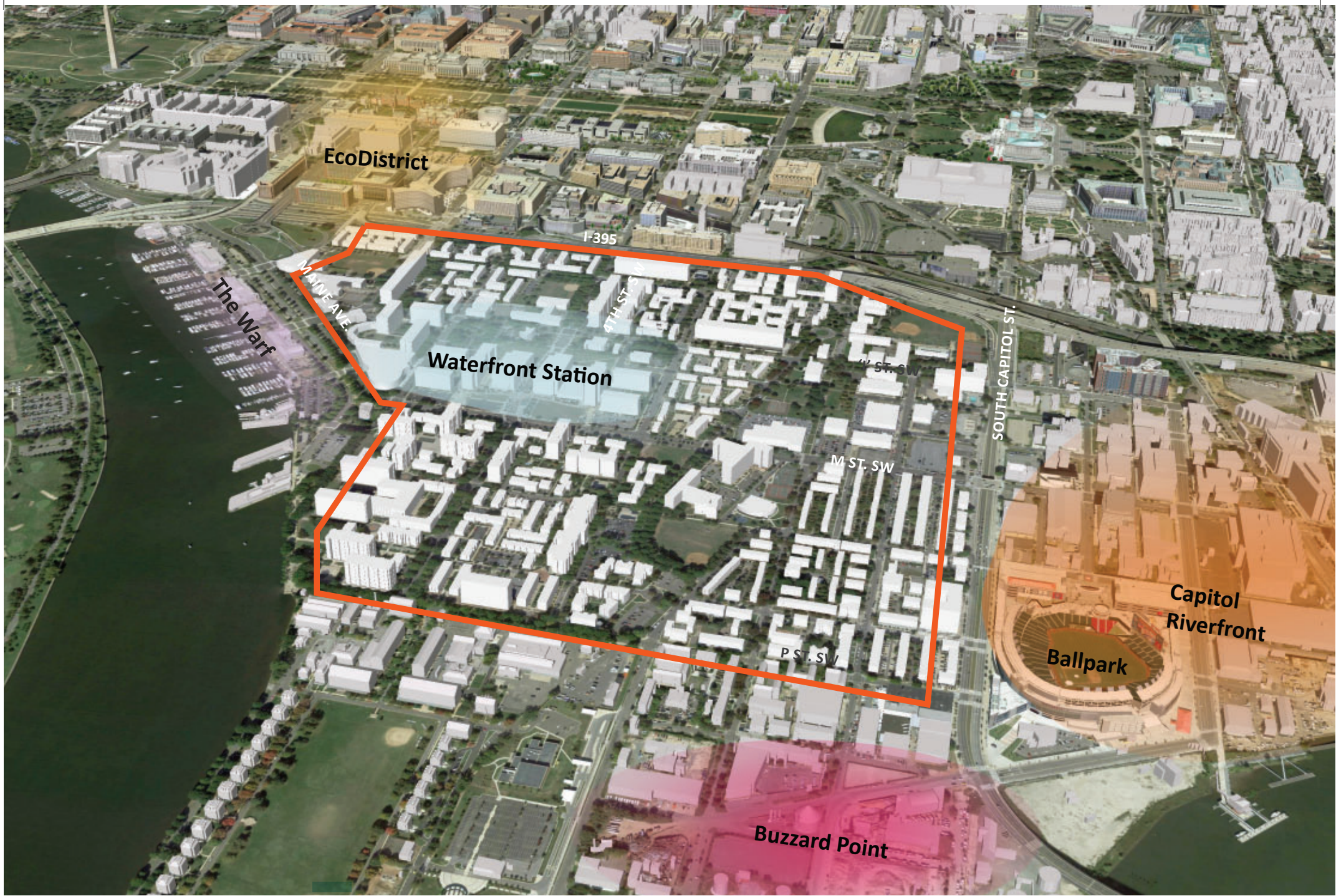
To the east of the neighborhood and beyond South Capitol Street are ongoing and significant changes in the Capitol Riverfront/ Navy Yard Area. This burgeoning district is anchored by the Nationals baseball stadium, which averages 31,000 fans per game. New offices, restaurants, high-rise residential buildings and destination parks have been built in the last ten years with more development to follow. To the South of the planning area, the District is currently negotiating with DC United to build a soccer stadium for approximately 22,000-25,000 fans, which could dramatically change the character of Buzzard Point (not within the Planning Area) which is currently an isolated, industrial area.



THE WHARF MASTER PLAN – PN HOFFMAN



CAPITOL RIVERFRONT DISTRICT DEVELOPMENT – FOREST CITY



█ PLANNING AREA
█ CURRENT / FUTURE DEVELOPMENT



FIGURE 1.7 | MAJOR DEVELOPMENT IN AND AROUND THE SOUTHWEST PLANNING AREA



RENDERING OF PROPOSED SOCCER STADIUM AT BUZZARD POINT – DC UNITED



WATERFRONT STATION PLANNED UNIT DEVELOPMENT MASTER PLAN – FOREST CITY

There is also a significant amount of change planned or underway within the Planning Area itself. Approved development at the Waterfront Station has been partially completed with two new, office towers flanking a restored 4th Street SW creating a main street environment. Additionally, the recently renovated Sky House residential towers reinforce the town center. Full build out of the remaining four buildings will bring a total of 1.1 million square feet of new development to Waterfront Station. Along M Street, the DC Housing Authority has stated its intention to redevelop the aging Greenleaf Housing complex, which consists of four large parcels straddling M Street, into a larger mixed-income development that incorporates housing for existing residents as well as market rate housing. In addition, there is an abundance of District and federally owned parcels, many of which are currently underutilized and/or underdeveloped, with low-scale buildings and expansive surface parking, particularly clustered near M Street closer to South Capitol Street. There is a need to take a closer look at this cluster of District-controlled parcels to more judiciously utilize these assets as the city grows, allowing for consolidation and co-location of municipal uses or for private disposition to raise revenue or achieve citywide goals like affordable housing.

The District Department of Transportation (DDOT) is now in the process of determining the routing of a proposed streetcar network through SW on either M or ‘I’ Streets SW. Opportunities for a premium transit mode in Southwest will likely bring additional market demand for development to the community. In short, there is a large swath of land in the vicinity of M Street SW that will likely be targeted for development in the next five to ten years. The time to plan in the Southwest is now.

The community can play a critical role in shaping just how development occurs and what amenities it can bring to balance growth with livability – achieving an even stronger Southwest neighborhood. Residents have expressed concerns about the significant changes happening around the Southwest neighborhood and wonder what the longer term impacts might be on their close-knit community.

While it is possible for private and government property owners to move forward with development without the guidance of a Small Area Plan, the Plan allows for the community to consider all of the potential development as a whole and create predictability for the neighborhood regarding future change. By thinking holistically about the neighborhood through the planning process, there is an opportunity to better understand future housing and retail needs, provide guidance on the design of new development to meet those needs, preserve essential aspects of neighborhood character, and identify needed improvements to amenities such as parks and open spaces.

- STREETCAR ROUTES
- PLANNING AREA
- METRO
- BUS ROUTES

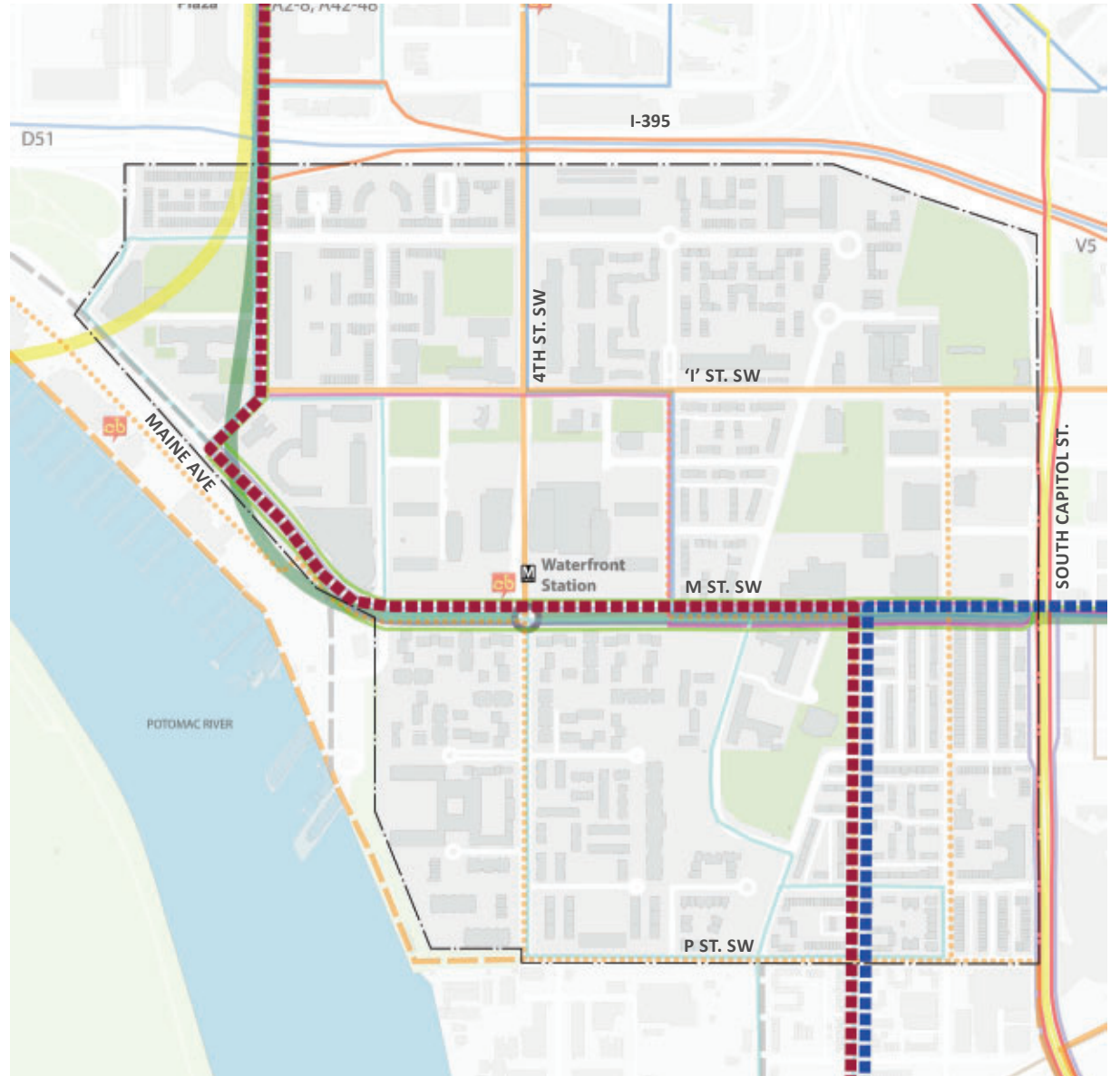


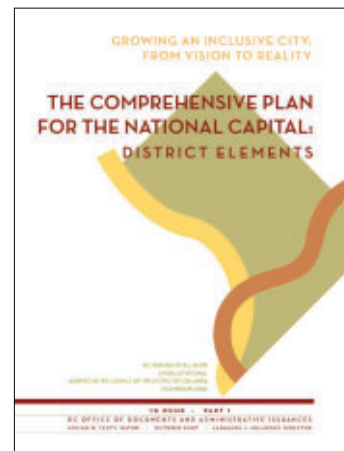
FIGURE 1.8 | POTENTIAL STREETCAR ALIGNMENT MAP

The *2006 Comprehensive Plan* is the District’s foundational planning document which provides general policy and overall guidance for future planning and development of the city for a 20-year period. Amendments to the Comprehensive Plan were made in 2011. While the Comprehensive Plan establishes broad policy goals for the entire city, Small Area Plans (SAP) address planning needs and goals at the neighborhood level to supplement the Comprehensive Plan. The SAP provides detailed direction for the development of city blocks, corridors, parks and neighborhoods, providing supplemental guidance to the Comprehensive Plan. The Southwest Neighborhood Plan is a SAP.

Since 2006, many of the Comprehensive Plan recommendations for the Southwest neighborhood have been completed or are currently underway, such as restoration of the 4th Street SW connection, replacement of the Waterside Mall with new buildings to anchor 4th Street SW, transit-oriented development at Waterfront Station, and the ongoing construction of “The Wharf” development on the Southwest Waterfront. Much of Southwest was designated a Neighborhood Conservation Area. For the established residential portions of the neighborhood, this conservation focus has been realized through designation of historic landmarks and additional conservation measures that are contemplated as part of the Plan. At the time of the Comprehensive Plan in 2006 and subsequent amendments, DCHA was not yet considering the possible redevelopment of the Greenleaf Housing complex and the city was not considering a reevaluation of its public assets and operations in Southwest, making the Small Area Plan a timely and necessary supplement to the Comprehensive Plan.

Another critical planning foundation for the Plan is the *Sustainable DC Plan*, an ambitious 20-year plan to make DC the “healthiest, greenest and most livable city in the United States”. Sustainable DC provides a framework of recommendations, big and small, related to energy, the built environment, food, nature, transportation, public health, community equity and climate, to showcase the District as a leader in innovative sustainability policy. Many of these recommendations can be implemented through Small Area Plans, Comprehensive Plan amendments, future developments and also at the block and individual building level. The Southwest Neighborhood Plan incorporates recommendations where applicable from Sustainable DC and includes sustainability as a guiding principle for the Plan.

DDOT has also undertaken transportation planning work for the Southwest neighborhood which informed the Plan. In December 2012, DDOT completed the *M Street SE/SW Transportation Study*.



THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN, 2006



SUSTAINABLE DC PLAN, 2012

The M Street SE/SW Transportation Study identified existing and future transportation challenges and ways to address them within a roughly 1.7-square-mile area along M Street SE/SW, encompassing the Southwest waterfront from 12th Street SE to 14th Street SW and from the Southwest/Southeast Freeway south to the Anacostia River/Washington Channel. The study analyzed how to integrate transit, bicycling and walking with motor vehicle traffic in order to best serve neighborhoods in this burgeoning section of the city. In addition, the study sought ways to most safely and effectively balance the travel needs of residents with those of visitors and workers in the area.

DDOT also completed the *Southeast-Southwest Special Events Transportation Analysis* which evaluates transportation pressures as a result of the numerous large-scale event venues in Southeast and Southwest—Nationals Park, Arena Stage, The Wharf, (proposed) DC United Stadium, and (proposed) Theater at the Yards. This

analysis affects both pedestrian and transit components of the Southwest Neighborhood Plan. DDOT’s *MoveDC Plan*, a citywide transportation plan, which was concurrently completed with the Southwest planning process, also helped guide the Southwest Neighborhood Plan.

Another basis for the Plan recommendations was the 2015 *Play DC* Master Plan, a long-range plan for the District of Columbia’s parks and recreation resources. The Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) vision framework was released in the spring of 2014, concurrent with the planning process for the Southwest Neighborhood Plan. The Plan builds upon the District’s unique parks legacy and charts a course to improve DC’s parks and recreation system by creating equitable access, great spaces and world-class experiences to District residents.

Also concurrent with the process for the Plan was the development of the *Buzzard Point Urban Design Framework*, for which a draft was released in December 2014 and which informs development just outside the Planning Area boundaries to the South. This Framework design concept seeks to improve the public realm and physical environment of Buzzard Point and connect it with the emerging Capitol Riverfront area to the east while protecting the low scale residential areas of the Southwest neighborhood to the north. It builds on existing and proposed plans and initiatives, like the South Capitol Street and Frederick Douglass Memorial Bridge improvements, which will create three acres of open space and transform traffic circulation as well as a potential new stadium for professional soccer. The urban design concept is intended to create a vibrant, mixed-use neighborhood, improve pedestrian circulation, provide continuous public access to the water, identify



M STREET / SOUTHWEST TRANSPORTATION STUDY, 2012



COMMUNITY MEMBERS PARTICIPATE IN A MODELING EXERCISE AT THE COMMUNITY WORKSHOP, JANUARY 2014

new development opportunities that could increase the inventory of mixed-use development and affordable housing through inclusionary zoning, suggest ways to improve the environmental health of Buzzard Point, and enhance the physical connections to the surrounding community.

Process and Methodology

Community-Based Process

OP developed the Plan using an extensive community outreach and engagement process, including four community-wide meetings, seven Advisory Committee meetings, three focus groups, a joint Jefferson / Amidon PTA meeting, and two meetings held specifically for Greenleaf residents on site at the Family Center. In addition to utilizing a project website (www.swneighborhoodplan.org) to share planning information, an interactive online engagement forum, Engage Southwest (<http://engage.swneighborhoodplan.org>), was created to initiate a neighborhood dialogue and solicit feedback on ideas and concerns. Over 1,100 users registered at Engage Southwest to post comments, answer questions, map opportunities and share ideas. The goal of the community outreach methodology was to ensure that the community had multiple ways to interact and provide feedback on the Plan throughout the entire process. Community input informed the Plan vision, guiding principles, and recommendations to ensure local stakeholder desires help shape and influence future change in the neighborhood.

Technical Approach

In addition to reviewing all relevant planning documents prepared by OP and other District agencies that pertain to Southwest as a planning foundation, the consultant team also completed a full

range of technical analyses to understand the existing conditions and opportunities in land use, housing, retail, urban design and public realm, planning, historic preservation, architecture, open space, landscape architecture, transportation and sustainability. The overall consultant team included an interdisciplinary group of experts, further complemented by the guidance and direction of a District Inter-Agency working group.

A comprehensive market analysis was also completed. By analyzing neighborhood demographics, real estate conditions and trends, and planned development projects, market studies aim to better understand constituencies being served, as well as opportunities and limitations for real estate development in a given area with a special focus on retail demand. The Plan's market analysis offers a framework to inform policy, design, and development recommendations for the Southwest neighborhood.

02 EXISTING CONDITIONS ANALYSIS



ARENA STAGE | A MAJOR CULTURAL ANCHOR IN SOUTHWEST

EXISTING CONDITIONS ANALYSIS

Overview

This chapter presents the summary and key findings of existing conditions and technical analyses of the Southwest Neighborhood Planning Area. It also provides highlights from the Market Analysis to better understand the demand for future housing, office and retail uses in the neighborhood. The findings provide a baseline for building the Plan recommendations which appear in subsequent chapters.

History and Neighborhood Context

The Southwest neighborhood has a rich history and a defining character that is derived from buildings, urban design and open space. French engineer Pierre Charles L’Enfant, completed a plan for the capital city in 1791. Reminiscent of Europe’s great cities, the Plan featured radiating avenues connecting a network of public squares and circles and formed four quadrants, of which the Southwest quadrant was the smallest and earliest to develop. As the city’s population moved north and west in the early 1800s, Southwest came to be regarded as outmoded and neglected. The Washington City Canal, which opened in 1815, effectively cut Southwest off from commerce and construction to the north. In 1846, the land west of the Potomac River was retroceded to Virginia, further distancing Southwest from its Washington neighbors, and creating a self-contained community, both physically and culturally.

Despite its isolation, Southwest was a bustling community with a diverse population and building stock. Industrial areas developed, particularly around the waterfront, and active commercial corridors were established along Fourth and Seventh Streets. The neighborhood was notable for its large African American, Jewish and immigrant populations. Between 1870 and 1900, the population of Southwest doubled, largely as a result of these growing communities. To accommodate the new residents, the Syphax, Cardozo, and Randall Schools were constructed in the first decade of the twentieth century. For a brief time, Southwest became a fashionable residential neighborhood, with speculative developers such as James Greenleaf building prominent masonry



AERIAL OVER THE CAPITOL FACING SOUTHWEST, 1862



- **1791–L’Enfant Plan for DC and Fort McNair established**
- 1793-1794 – Wheat Row townhomes and Thomas Law House built
- 1800**
- 1808 – Long Bridge first built
- 1815 – City Canal opened connecting downtown Washington with the Potomac and Anacostia Rivers
- 1850s-1860s – B&O Railroad constructed along Maryland and Virginia Avenues
- 1862 – Horse-drawn street railway began operation on 7th Street
- 1870s – City Canal paved over
- 1900**
- 1900s – In 1902 and 1906, respectively, the Syphax and Randall (then Cardozo) Schools opened to students
- 1905 – Southwest population peaked at 35,000
- **1907–Sanitary Houses constructed**
- 1918 – Municipal Wharf and Fish Market opened
- 1940 – Jefferson High School constructed
- **1954–Redevelopment Land Agency began to clear land for large-scale urban renewal**
- 1957-1959 – Capitol Park Apartments (now Potomac Place), the first urban renewal apartment building constructed in SW
- 1960 – Arena Stage constructed; Kreeger Theater added in 1969-70
- 1963 – Southwest portion of I-395 opened to cars
- **1970–Waterside Towers, last urban renewal-era residential complex, completed**
- 1991 – Waterfront Metro Station opened
- 2000**
- 2008 – Nationals Park opens
- 2010 – Waterfront Station Safeway reopens

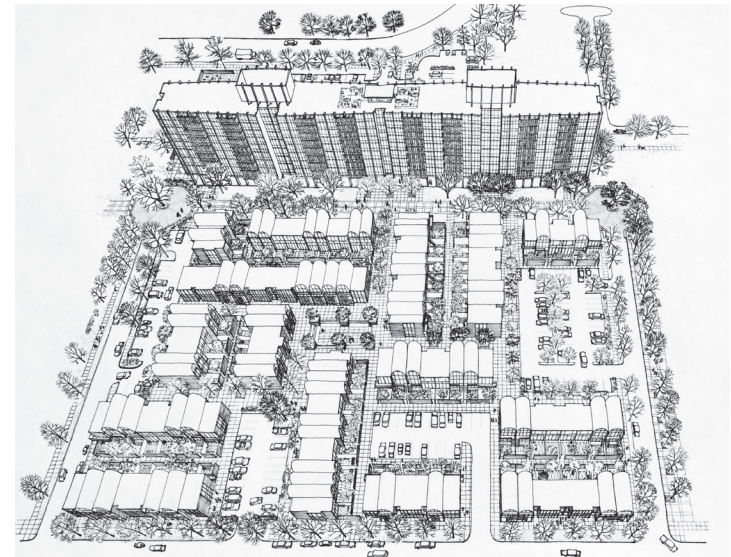
buildings near the water. Around 1905, the population of Southwest peaked at about 35,000 residents. During this period, a number of changes—including pressure from federal development to the north, pollution and noise from commercial and industrial activity, and an aging building stock—caused Southwest to be characterized as a “blighted” neighborhood. Despite the best efforts of residents and community organizations, the neighborhood was unable to shake its image as a slum.

Beginning in the 1940s, reformers, planners and legislators targeted Southwest to become a testing ground for large-scale urban renewal. The practice of using government-funded development to address issues of urban blight was not a new one, but during this period the scope and vision of urban renewal projects expanded enormously, largely empowered by federal legislation and funding. Southwest was deemed to meet the criteria for a blighted neighborhood and—in the literal and figurative shadow of the Capitol—it became a laboratory for urban renewal.

The redevelopment of Southwest between 1945 and the early 1970s was the most ambitious and comprehensive urban renewal effort undertaken in the nation during that time. It brought dramatic changes to the architectural, political and social landscape of Washington, and particularly for the residents of “Old Southwest”. For many these changes were traumatic. Neighborhoods and communities were dismantled to make way for renewal. Approximately 23,000 residents and 1,500 businesses were displaced to allow for a massive redevelopment program for Southwest. Starting from a now clean slate, the new character of Southwest included Modernist high-rise buildings and townhouses, government buildings, a suburban-type mall and a revitalized waterfront.

Urban Design and Neighborhood Character

In the 1950s, the Southwest neighborhood could be experienced in two very distinct ways; one with a thriving commercial district and active entertainment, including a movie theater and a few elaborate homes; the other as a shantytown of tenements, shacks and even tents. Under the direction of the US Congress, the Redevelopment Land Agency implemented a plan to completely rebuild Southwest into a “New Town in the City”. This radical new development incorporated modern high rises, townhouses, and landscapes. Later phases of the development used “modern” style residential complexes, like townhomes or high-rises, closely situated around open spaces and separated from each other by green space and surface parking. A product of comprehensive urban renewal of this magnitude, Southwest’s urban design can be defined as “a museum of mid-century modern architecture”.



SKETCH OF RIVER PARK BY CHARLES GOODMAN, 1961

Today, the urban, architectural, and historic character of this ‘new town’ still embodies a unique and very distinct neighborhood character and serves as home to a diversity of cultures, incomes, and nationalities.

Defined by Modernist architecture, Southwest’s large urban blocks with limited through streets and a blend of public and private open spaces delineate a character unique to Southwest, in the city and nationally. Its high-rise and low-rise building heights, evident in the 1960s Tiber Island development, exemplifies another defining urban design feature of Southwest that contributes to the neighborhood’s physical character. Still unabashedly “modern” in look and feel, Southwest is a candidate for historic preservation. Today, its stock of Modernist architecture and landscapes are reaching maturity. Planners and historians have begun to evaluate the historic significance of Southwest. In addition to structures predating urban renewal, several of the Modernist buildings in Southwest have been listed in the DC Inventory of Historic Sites. Other resources, less immediately recognizable as historic—like the neighborhood’s collection of sanitary, public and municipal housing—also merit investigation into their potential significance.

The community embraces and celebrates this unique character and has made strides to preserve individual buildings and open spaces of high historic value. Older buildings have also seen new life, such as the expanded Arena Stage and the Friendship Baptist Church, home to the arts non-profit, Blind Whino. It is important that buildings and landscapes continue to be revitalized as they add vitality and renewed purpose to the neighborhood.



BLIND WHINO | ART EVENT SPACE






HISTORIC ARENA STAGE

The following properties within the Planning Area have been listed in the DC Inventory and National Register of Historic Sites:

1. Tiber Island, 429 N St, SW
2. Thomas Law (Honeymoon) House, 1252 6th St, SW
3. Harbour Square, 500 N St, SW *
4. Edward Simon Lewis House, 456 N St, SW
5. Duncanson-Cranch House (Barney Neighborhood House), 468-470 N St, SW
6. Wheat Row, 1315-1321 4th St, SW
7. Town Center East, 1001-1101 3rd St, SW
8. Arena Stage, 1101 6th St, SW *
9. Capitol Park Apartments, 800 4th St, SW *
10. William Syphax School (1360 Half St, SW)
11. Randall School (65 'I' St, SW)
12. Friendship Baptist Church (734 First St, SW)
13. Capitol Park Towers (301 G St, SW)
14. Randall Recreation Center -the former District pound and stable- (820 South Capitol St, SW)

* In DC Inventory Only

-  HERITAGE TRAIL
-  HERITAGE TRAIL SIGNS
-  HISTORIC LANDMARKS

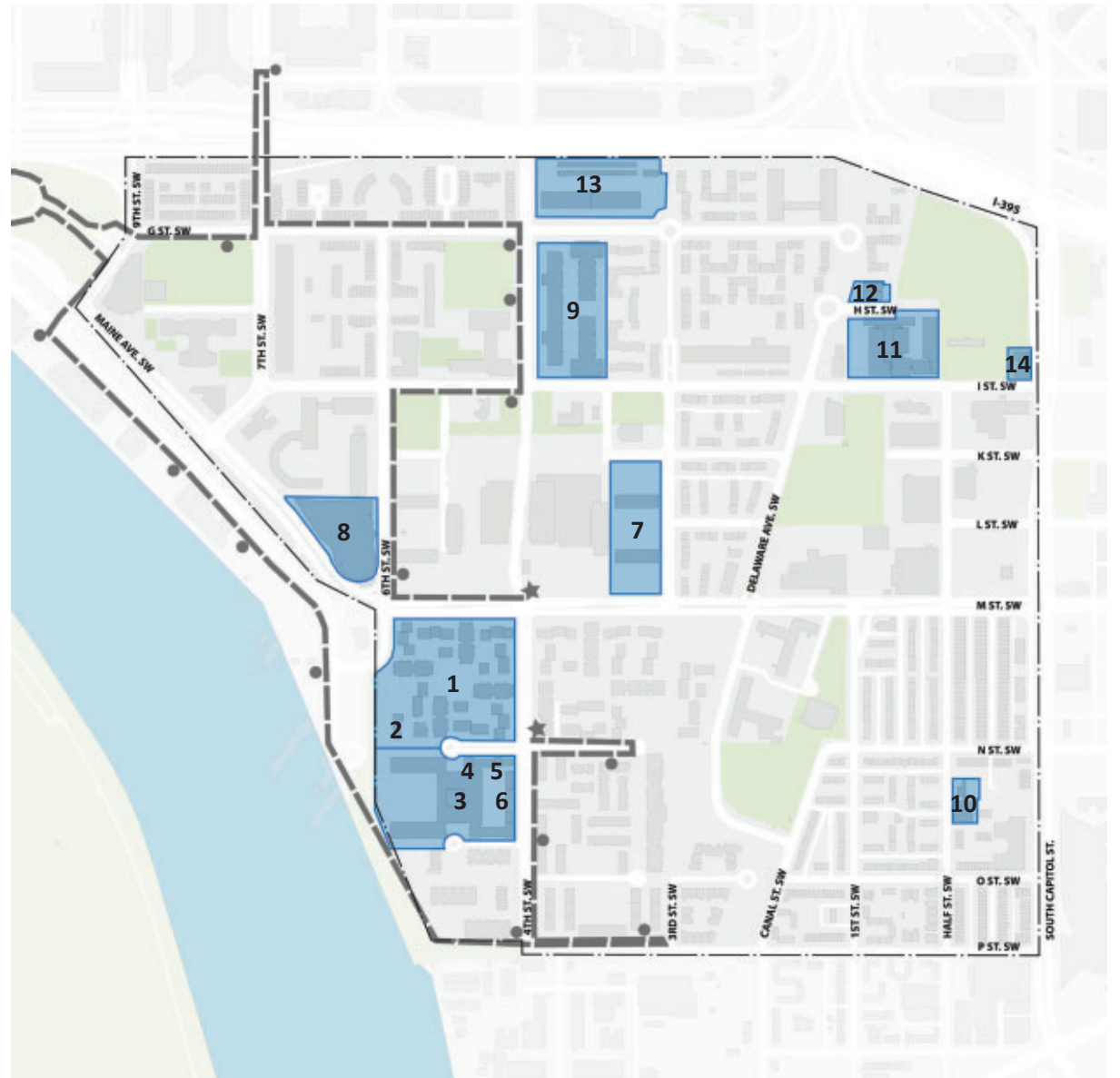


FIGURE 2.1 | HISTORIC LANDMARKS MAP

Beyond landmark applications, the neighborhood is also a potential candidate for designation as a historic district or conservation district (that is, if Council were to adopt legislation to create conservations districts which are recommended in the Comprehensive Plan). There is support among existing community-based organizations in the neighborhood such as the Southwest Neighborhood Assembly (SWNA) to create and adopt an historic district, though some property owners have expressed hesitation about the level of regulation involved with such a district.

Several community members have expressed concern about the design of new development and whether it will threaten the treasured Modernist neighborhood character. Given that planned development and neighborhood growth are underway, how development is shaped becomes integral to evolving character in a direction that can be embraced as complementary and enriching. Arena Stage, Sky House, and Randall School have been identified by the community as examples of new development more in line with the neighborhood’s characteristics. The Plan outlines Design Guidelines to be applied to new development achieved through the Planned Unit Development process to ensure future development is compatible with the existing built environment and contributes positively to the neighborhood form and rhythm that many Southwest residents appreciate.

Other preservation initiatives implemented in the neighborhood include the Southwest Heritage Trail, which tells the story of the development of Southwest from the eighteenth to twentieth centuries. Through seventeen illustrated panels, the trail leads visitors through the neighborhood, passing landmarks both lost and preserved. The panels use both interpretive text and historic photographs to tell stories of old and new Southwest.



FIGURE 2.2 | SOUTHWEST HERITAGE TRAIL (CULTURAL TOURISM DC)

The Southwest Heritage Trail *River Farms to Urban Towers* is composed of 17 illustrated historical markers. You can begin your journey at any point along the route. The walk should take about 90 minutes. Each marker is capped with an **H**.

Sign 1 is found atop the Waterfront/SEU station on Metro's Green line. Sign 6 is at the corner of Seventh and E streets near the L'Enfant Plaza station on the Blue, Orange, Yellow, and Green lines.