

Chapter 3

Land Use

Element





Overview ³⁰⁰

THE LAND USE ELEMENT IS THE CORNERSTONE OF THE COMPREHENSIVE Plan. It establishes the basic policies guiding the physical form of the city, and provides direction on a range of development, conservation, and land use compatibility issues. The Element describes the balancing of priorities that must take place in order to accommodate a multiplicity of land uses within the boundaries of the District of Columbia. ^{300.1}

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

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

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

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

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



7th Street NE rowhouses under construction

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

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

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

Land Use Profile of the District of Columbia ³⁰¹

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

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

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

Map 3.1:

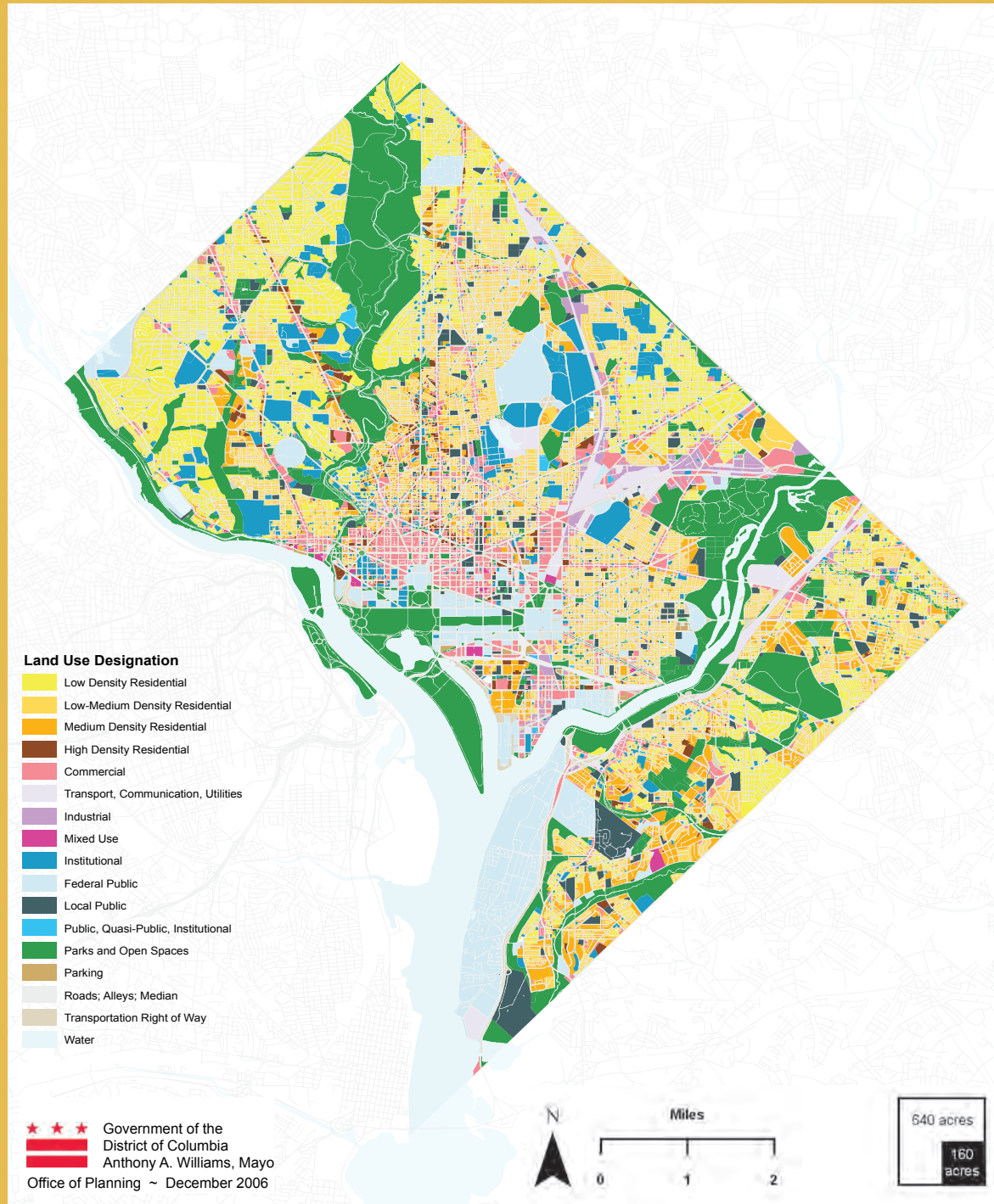
Existing Land Use 2005 301.3

Table 3.1

Acres of Existing Land Use by Planning Area, 2005 ^{301.4}

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

Source: DC Office of Planning, 2006

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

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

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

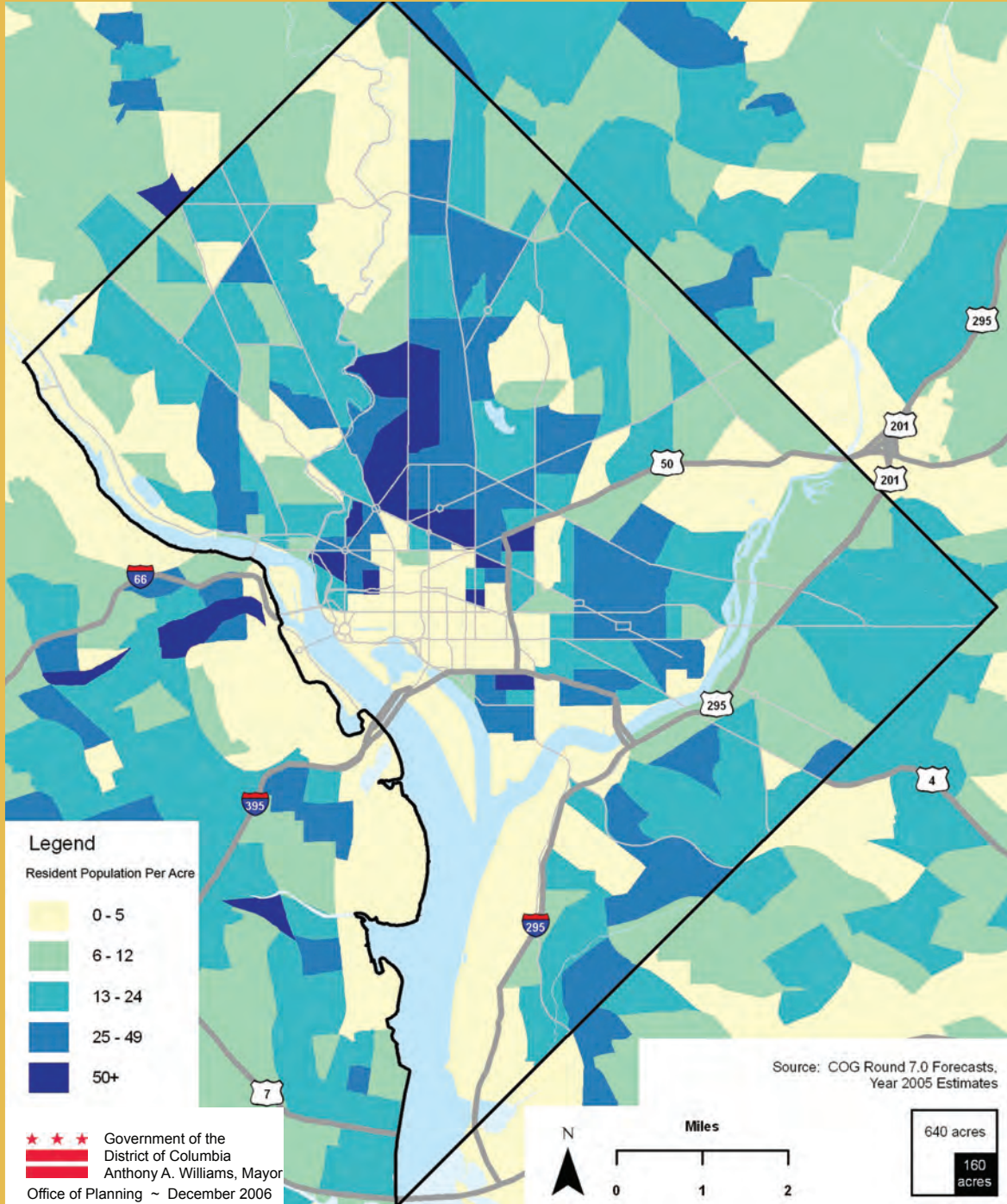
Maps 3.2 and 3.3 show estimated population and employment density in the city and close-in suburbs as of 2005. The data is based on the traffic analysis zones used by the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments for transportation modeling. Map 3.2 again illustrates the "ring" of fairly dense neighborhoods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

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

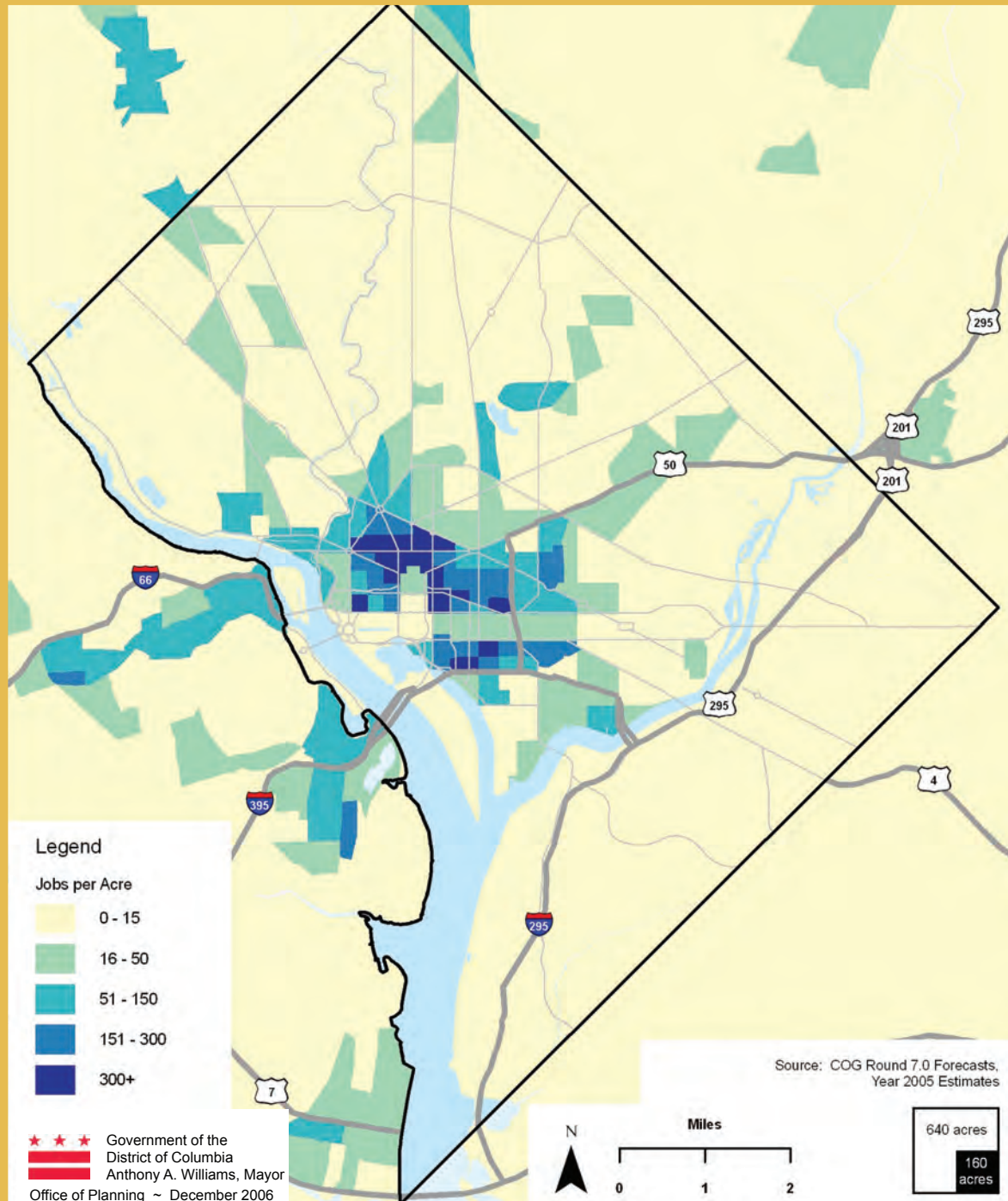
Figure 3.1:
Planning Areas 301.10



Map 3.2:

Population Density 301.11

Map 3.3:

Employment Density 301.12

The Land Use Goal is:

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

Land Use Goal ³⁰²

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Policies and Actions

LU-1 Shaping the City ³⁰³

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

LU-1.1 Strengthening the Core ³⁰⁴

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

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

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

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

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

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

Policy LU-1.1.1: Sustaining a Strong City Center

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

Policy LU-1.1.2: "Greater" Downtown

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

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

geographic extent of Washington’s Central Business District, or the many unique activities it supports. ^{304.7}

Policy LU-1.1.3: Central Employment Area

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

Policy LU-1.1.4: Appropriate Uses in the CEA

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

Policy LU-1.1.5: Urban Mixed Use Neighborhoods

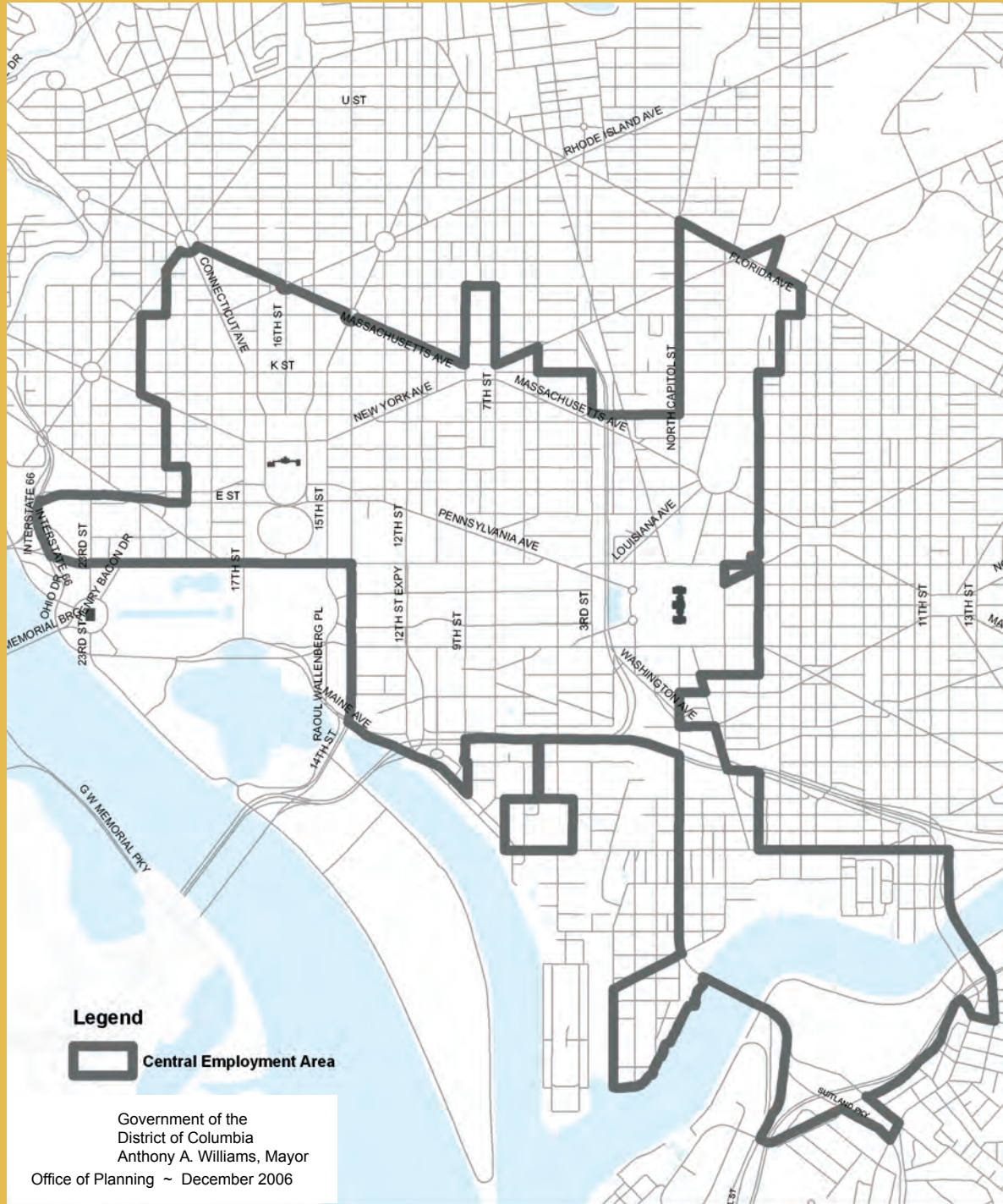
Encourage new central city mixed use neighborhoods combining high-density residential, office, retail, cultural, and open space uses in the following areas:

1. Mt Vernon Triangle;
2. North of Massachusetts Avenue (NoMA);
3. Downtown East;
4. South Capitol Street corridor/Stadium area;
5. Near Southeast/Navy Yard;
6. Center Leg Freeway air rights; and
7. Union Station air rights.

The location of these areas is shown in the Central Washington and Lower Anacostia Waterfront/Near Southwest Area Elements. Land use regulations and design standards for these areas should ensure that they are developed as

Figure 3.2:

Central Employment Area 304.10



attractive pedestrian-oriented neighborhoods, with high-quality architecture and public spaces. Housing, including affordable housing, is particularly encouraged and should be a vital component of the future land use mix. ^{304.11}

Policy LU-1.1.6: Central Employment Area Historic Resources

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

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

Policy LU-1.1.7: Central Employment Area Edges

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

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

Policy LU-1.1.8 Reconnecting the City through Air Rights

Support the development of air rights over rail tracks and highways. In several parts of the central city, there is the potential to build over existing railway tracks and highways. These undeveloped air rights are the result of the interjection of massive transportation infrastructure after the establishment and development of the original city. The tracks and highways have created gaps in the historic urban fabric that have left large areas of the center city divided and difficult to traverse. With substantial investment, these sites represent opportunities for development of housing, retail, and commercial buildings, and for the reconnection of neighborhoods and the street grid.

Where possible, streets should be reconnected and air-rights development should be constructed at and measured from grade level consistent with adjacent land. When development at grade level is not physically possible, air rights should be measured by a means that provides for density and height commensurate with the zone district. Establishment of a measuring point for any particular air-rights development shall be consistent with An Act To regulate the height of buildings in the District of Columbia, approved June 1, 1910 (36 Stat. 452; D.C. Official Code § 6-601.01 et seq.) (“Height Act”), and should not be taken as precedent for other development projects in the city. Densities and heights should be sensitive to the surrounding neighborhoods

and developments and be sufficient to induce the investment needed for such construction. 304.13a

Action LU-1.1.A: Central Employment Area Boundary

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

Action LU-1.1.B: Downtown Action Agenda

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

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

Action LU-1.1.C: Development of Air Rights

Analyze the unique characteristics of the air rights development sites within the District. Determine appropriate zoning and means of measuring height for each unique site consistent with the Height Act, taking into consideration the ability to utilize zone densities, the size of the site, and the relationship of the potential development to the existing character of the surrounding areas. 304.16

LU-1.2 Large Sites and the City Fabric 305

During the next 20 years, about 15 percent of Washington's housing growth and 10 percent of its job growth will take place on ten large sites outside of the Central Employment Area. The large sites include properties in federal ownership, District ownership, and private ownership. The status of each site varies; redevelopment on a few is imminent, but may be over a decade away on others. Some still contain vital, active uses. Others have been dormant for years. 305.1

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

The large sites are shown in Map 3.4 and are listed in Table 3.2 below. The Area Elements should be consulted for a profile of each site and specific

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policies for its future use. The policies in this section focus on broader issues that apply to all sites. As shown on Map 3.4, several of the sites fall within the boundaries of the Anacostia Waterfront Initiative, an economic revitalization and environmental protection program now being implemented by the Anacostia Waterfront Corporation. ^{305.3}

Table 3.2:

Large Sites* ^{305.4}

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

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

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

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

Policy LU-1.2.2: Mix of Uses on Large Sites

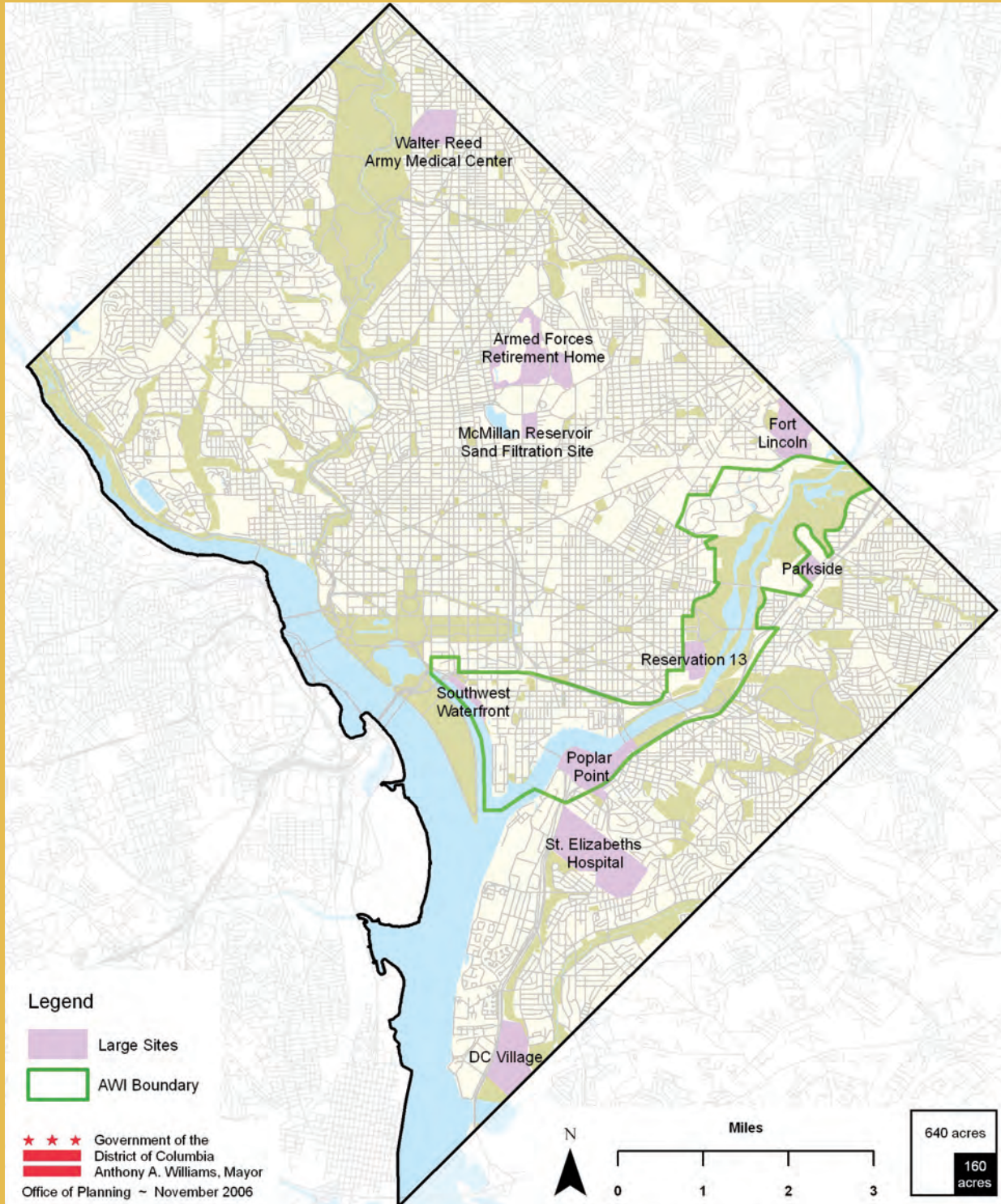
Ensure that the mix of new uses on large redeveloped sites is compatible with adjacent uses and provides benefits to surrounding neighborhoods and to the city as a whole. The particular mix of uses on any given site should be generally indicated on the Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use Map and more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

Policy LU-1.2.3: Federal Sites

Work closely with the federal government on re-use planning for those federal lands where a change of use may take place in the future. Even where such properties will remain in federal use, the impacts of new activities on

Map 3.4:

Large Sites 305.6





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

adjacent District neighborhoods should be acknowledged and proactively addressed by federal parties. ^{305.8}

Policy LU-1.2.4: New Methods of Land Regulation

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

Policy LU-1.2.5: Public Benefit Uses on Large Sites

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

Policy LU-1.2.6: New Neighborhoods and the Urban Fabric

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

Policy LU-1.2.7: Protecting Existing Assets on Large Sites

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

Policy LU-1.2.8: Large Sites and the Waterfront

Use the redevelopment of large sites to achieve related urban design, open space, environmental, and economic development objectives along the Anacostia Waterfront. Large waterfront sites should be used for water-focused recreation, housing, commercial, and cultural development, with activities that are accessible to both sides of the river. Large sites should further be used to enhance the physical and environmental quality of the river. ^{305.13}

Action LU-1.2.A: Federal Land Transfer

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

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

Action LU-1.2.B Encouraging Livability of Former Federal Lands

When land is identified to shift from federal to private or local use, develop planning and zoning approaches that provide for, as appropriate, the reconstruction of historic rights-of-way and reservations, integration of the sites into the adjoining neighborhoods, and the enhancement of special characteristics or opportunities of the sites. Encourage cultural, residential, and retail to ensure mixed-use neighborhoods, even if designated as high-density commercial on the District of Columbia Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use Map; coordinate with the National Capital Planning Commission, as appropriate. ^{305.15}

LU-1.3 Transit-Oriented and Corridor Development ³⁰⁶

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

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

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

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

Metrorail station area development policies must respond to the unique needs of each community and the unique setting of each station. Some station areas wrestle with concerns over too much development, while others struggle to attract development.

trips generated, and to reduce household expenses on transportation by providing options for “car-free” (or one car) living. ^{306.3}

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

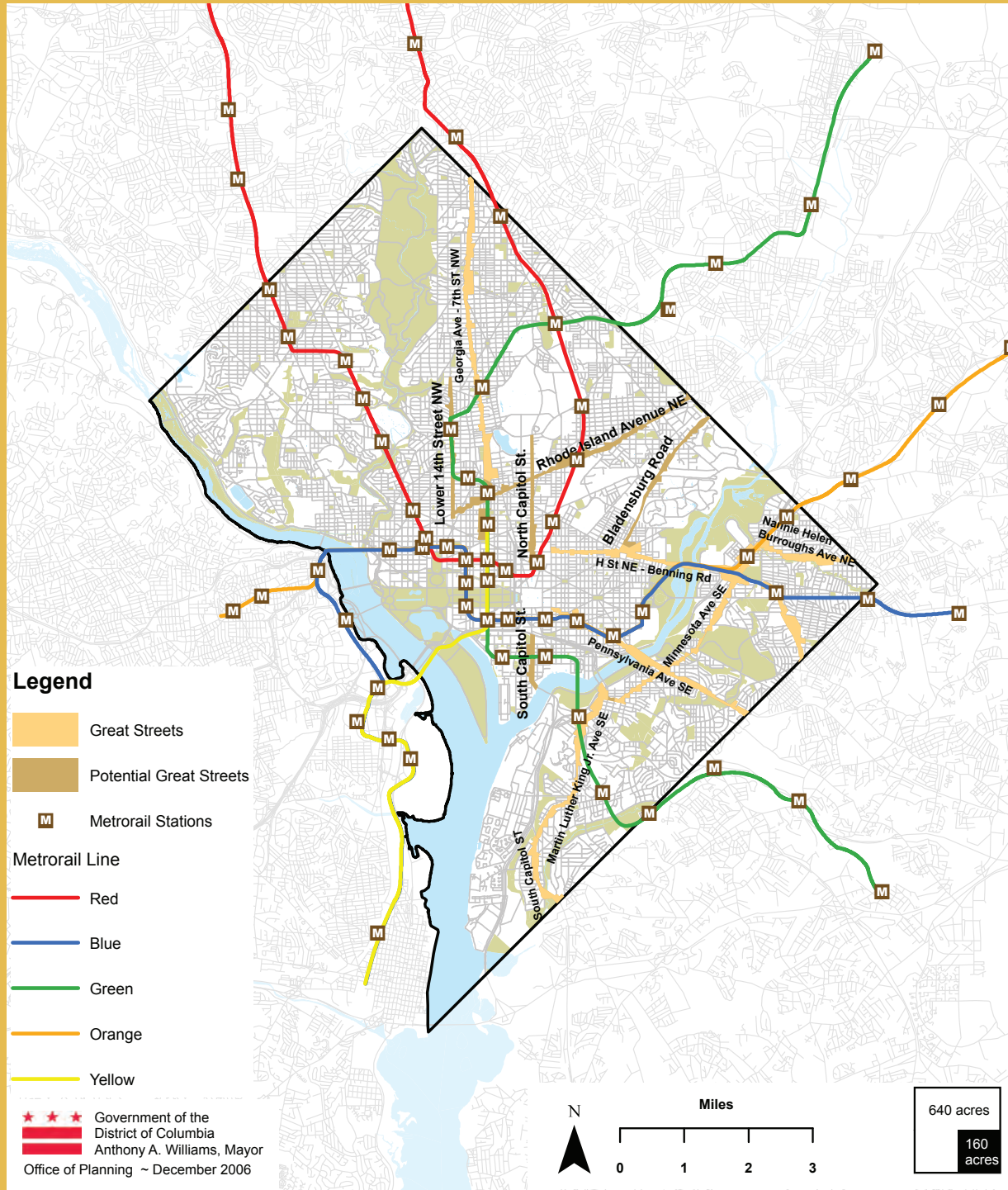
- A preference for mixed residential and commercial uses rather than single purpose uses, particularly a preference for housing above ground floor retail uses;
- A preference for diverse housing types, including both market-rate and affordable units and housing for seniors and others with mobility impairments;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

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

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

Map 3.5:

Great Streets and Transit Stations 306.7



The “reach” of transit-oriented development around any given station or along a high volume transit corridor should vary depending on neighborhood context. While $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ mile is generally used across the country to define the walkable radius around each station, and therefore the area in which higher densities may accommodate growth without increased traffic congestion, applying a uniform radius is not appropriate in the District. The established character and scale of the neighborhood surrounding the station should be considered, as should factors such as topography, demographics, and the station’s capacity to support new transit riders. Many stations abut historic or stable low density neighborhoods. Similarly, many of the city’s priority transit corridors transition to single family homes or row houses just one-half block or less off the street itself. ^{306.8}

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

Policy LU-1.3.1: Station Areas as Neighborhood Centers

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

Policy LU-1.3.2: Development Around Metrorail Stations

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

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

Policy LU-1.3.3: Housing Around Metrorail Stations

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

Policy LU-1.3.4: Design To Encourage Transit Use

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

Policy LU-1.3.5: Edge Conditions Around Transit Stations

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

Policy LU-1.3.6: Parking Near Metro Stations

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

Policy LU-1.3.7: TOD Boundaries

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



Eastern Market Metrorail Station

Policy LU-1.3.8: Public Facilities

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

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

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

Action LU-1.3.B: TOD Overlay Zone

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

LU-1.4 Neighborhood Infill Development ³⁰⁷

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