Central Washington Area Element

Overview

The Central Washington Planning Area is the heart of Washington, DC. Its 6.8 square miles include the Monumental Core of the District, with such landmarks as the U.S. Capitol and White House, the Washington Monument and Lincoln Memorial, and the Federal Triangle and Smithsonian museums. Central Washington also includes the District’s traditional downtown and other employment centers, such as the Near Southwest and East End. Also located there are Gallery Place and Penn Quarter, the region’s entertainment and cultural center. Finally, Central Washington includes more recently densified urban neighborhoods like Mount Vernon Triangle and North of Massachusetts Avenue (NoMa).

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

Central Washington is of great importance to the District, the region, and the nation. It is the seat of the federal government, and the economic, cultural, and historic core of the region. It contains the third largest concentration of office space in the United States, trailing only New York City and Chicago, with 475,531 persons employed within its boundaries. The area’s preeminence is underscored by its land use patterns; it includes more than 115 million square feet of office space (almost 23 percent of the region’s total), 2.6 million square feet of retail floor space, over 15,000 hotel rooms, major entertainment venues, and one of the largest theater districts in the country. It is also the center of the region’s transportation network, with one of the best underground mass transit systems in the world.

To most residents, workers, and visitors, downtown, in a broad sense, includes the area as far north as Dupont Circle, as far west as Foggy Bottom, and as far east as Capitol Hill. However, only about half of the central city workforce is located within the District’s downtown. Additionally, downtown is almost completely built out. Most of the District’s future employment growth will take place beyond its boundaries, in areas like...
Downtown East, NoMa, and Near Southeast (in the adjacent Anacostia Waterfront Planning Area). 1600.4

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

1600.5

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

1600.6

Most of the area just north of the National Mall is federal land. This includes the Northwest Rectangle of government and institutional buildings between 17th and 23rd Streets NW, the Federal Triangle, the White House and Eisenhower Executive Office Building, the Potomac Hill Campus (also known as the Observatory Hill Historic District), the U.S. Institute of Peace, and a number of parks. The Federal Triangle area, which experienced a major interior flooding in 2006 and a more minor flooding event as recently as 2019, is at a higher risk of interior flooding, and future development or retrofits of infrastructure should address this through resilient design and construction. Another major concentration of office space lies on the south side of the National Mall in the Near Southwest Federal District. This area includes the headquarters of several federal agencies, as well as private office and hotel complexes like L’Enfant Plaza and the Portals.

1600.7

On the eastern and northeastern flanks of downtown, the pattern of intense office development gives way to more varied land uses. The Walter E. Washington Convention Center occupies six square blocks north of Mount Vernon Square. A high-density residential area is emerging to the east in the Mount Vernon Triangle on land formerly used for surface parking and small businesses. After 20 years of planning, the area including Mount Vernon Triangle and adjacent Massachusetts Avenue NW corridor between Mount Vernon Square and Union Station has become one of the densest neighborhoods in Washington, DC. Density on many of these sites is between 200 and 400 units per acre.
NoMa lies north and east of the Massachusetts Avenue NE/NW corridor. This former light industrial enclave is today a vibrant and new mixed-use neighborhood between the North Capitol Street NE/NW office corridor and the row house neighborhoods of Capitol Hill, spanning over the CSX railroad tracks. Office development has moved eastward into NoMa as developable land in West End, the central business district, East End, and Capitol Hill has become scarcer. The opening of the NoMa-Gallaudet U Metro station in late 2004 made the area more attractive for investment, and many residential and office projects have been built.

While the office market in Central Washington has remained consistently strong in general, portions of Central Washington have experienced higher vacancy rates due to lower demand for office leases from the federal government, the general office market compression due to technological and cultural changes, and the creation of new and more competitive Class A and trophy office space in new and emerging neighborhoods. The area has also reversed a decades-long decline in its role as a retail and entertainment destination. To that end, the goal of creating a living downtown with high-density housing is finally being realized, especially in the outer edges of Central Washington, where new mixed-used and vibrant neighborhoods have emerged. The development of new residential buildings and the conversion of old office space to residential in the central business district proper have been less common, as residential prices still trail office prices in neighborhoods closer to the core, with a few notable exceptions like Penn Quarter and the old convention center sites. Billions of dollars in private investment, coupled with public incentives and plans to attract that investment, have had a transformative impact since the late 1990s. The area now has first-rate restaurants, hotels, and entertainment venues that have attracted thousands of new residents.

History

Before 1791, Central Washington consisted of open fields, pastureland, groves of trees, meandering creeks, and wetlands. This landscape was reshaped as work began on the new national capital, starting with the Capitol, White House, and key departmental buildings and defenses. In 1800, the government arrived from Philadelphia, and the town of about 500 households began to grow, as major buildings rose on the avenues and homes and businesses clustered along the side streets. The British invasion of 1814 ruined most of the federal buildings, but the next year’s opening of a canal along what is now Constitution Avenue helped speed the repairs. Not until 1820 was the cornerstone, still visible today in Judiciary Square, laid for a permanent city hall.
Throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries, the area extending from the Capitol to the White House and from Pennsylvania Avenue NW north served as the commercial heart of the emerging District. In 1862, the first streetcar line opened along Pennsylvania Avenue between the Capitol and State Department at 15th Street NW. Six months later, extensions reached Navy Yard and Georgetown, with 7th and 14th Street NW connections to the District’s edge (now Florida Avenue NW). By 1865, another streetcar line opened along F Street NW, which eventually became the city’s primary shopping corridor. As in other cities, streetcars helped fuel the first round of suburbanization. Streetcars also promoted the conversion of downtown from a mixed-use area to a more commercial destination. 1601.2

As the District matured through the late 19th century, larger buildings for both private and government offices gradually displaced most of downtown’s residences and churches. By 1891, there were nearly 21,000 federal employees in the central District, and federal bureaus spilled into many leased buildings originally designed for other functions. Residential growth shifted to new neighborhoods to the north, east, and south. 1601.3

By the end of the 19th century, the National Mall and Smithsonian museums had taken on increased importance as American gathering places and cultural centers. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) completed the Washington Monument in 1888, and the prospect of a more beautiful Washington, DC, arose as the USACE shaped spacious riverside parkland and an ornamental Tidal Basin by filling in the Potomac River mudflats. This promise was recognized and elevated by the McMillan Commission in 1901. The commission’s grand plan for the National Mall and its environs reshaped Washington, DC, for the 20th century, bringing a unified vision for Central Washington oriented around parks, fine architecture, and city-beautiful design principles. Central Washington’s physical form was further shaped by height restrictions adopted in 1894 and later revised in 1899 and 1910. Though first applied out of concern for fire and public safety, and harm to the property value of overshadowed neighbors, these height restrictions evolved to become integral to the new aesthetic vision for the national capital. 1601.4

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

As the metropolitan area decentralized in the 1950s, downtown’s role became more one dimensional. Its retail function waned as interstate highways were constructed and the customer base shifted to the suburbs.
Office development moved from downtown to K Street NW and to the redevelopment area south of the National Mall. Plans to revitalize Pennsylvania Avenue NW and other special streets and places were developed in response, and a variety of redevelopment concepts were explored for West End, South Capitol Street, and Near Southeast. These plans did little to stem downtown’s economic challenges. The center of office activity continued to shift north and west, and many of downtown’s historic landmarks, department stores, and office buildings were demolished or vacated. The unrest in 1968 also took a toll.

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

In 1982, the Mayor’s Downtown Committee, with support from the Office of Planning (OP), produced Downtown DC: Recommendations for the Downtown Plan. The proposed objectives and policies in that document were later placed into legislative format and adopted almost intact as the Downtown Element of the District’s 1984 Comprehensive Plan. The recommendations addressed the area’s economic challenges and called for more diverse uses, with a strong emphasis on housing. The plan envisioned a city center with retail uses focused on F Street NW, Gallery Place, and Chinatown; new arts uses along 7th Street NW; and significant residential development at Penn Quarter and Mount Vernon Square. Quantified targets for new housing units, hotel rooms, office space, and arts space were established.

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

By 2000, the targets set in the early 1980s were finally becoming approachable realities. The Downtown Action Agenda of 2000 provided an updated framework for decisions, established a new vision, and set new goals for downtown. A 2006 update of the agenda provided an opportunity to develop new goals and strategies for the coming years. These goals—except for the need to create more housing—have been mostly reached in the last decade. They include ambitions to:
• Maximize and concentrate downtown housing;
• Increase the vitality of street life;
• Provide clear direction for downtown growth and new development; and
• Connect downtown economic growth to District residents. 1601.11

Land Use 1602

Statistics on existing land use are estimated using current lot-by-lot property tax data and information on housing units, employment, District and federal land ownership, parks, roads, water bodies, and other sources. They are not comparable to the statistics included in the 2006 Comprehensive Plan, which were based on a much simpler method. Even large differences between the older and newer statistics may reflect differences in the modelling approaches, used a decade apart, and not actual changes in land use. Land use statistics for the Planning Area appear in Figure 16.1. Central Washington comprises about 3,285 acres, or about 7.5 percent of the District. About 510 acres of the total area consists of water. 1602.1

Compared to the other nine Planning Areas in the city, Central Washington contains much higher percentages of commercial, mixed-use, and federal land. Commercial and mixed-use land represent 14.6 percent of the total. Non-park federal land represents 19.9 percent of the total. Much of this land is also developed with offices, but the owner and occupant is the federal government. 1602.3

Approximately 33 percent of the Planning Area consists of transportation rights-of-way One-quarter of the land area is parks, recreation, and open space, and the portion allotted for this is slightly higher than Washington, DC’s total of 22.7 percent. Much of the open space is contained within the National Mall and almost all of the remainder comprises federal reservations managed by
the National Park Service (NPS). The federal open space has significant programming restrictions, limiting its use for local purposes and District activities. 1602.4

Residential land (land that is only residential and not mixed-use) comprises just 1.7 percent of the Planning Area. Almost all of this acreage consists of mid- to high-rise apartments, with average densities exceeding 100 units per acre. The area features this low percentage because most residential developments in Central Washington also include non-residential uses within their buildings, making them mixed-use developments, which are counted under the commercial and mixed-use category. Most of the residential development is located in Dupont Circle along the Massachusetts Avenue NW corridor, Mount Vernon Triangle, and NoMa. Another concentration is located in Penn Quarter, around 7th and D Streets NW. 1602.5

The percentages of land area for other uses—for example, institutions, public facilities, and utilities—are all relatively small. Only about 1.4 percent of the Planning Area consists of vacant, unimproved private land. 1602.6

Much of the land in Central Washington is publicly owned. Government uses—classified as federal, local public (i.e., District-owned land), and transportation rights-of-way—represent just over 57 percent of the total land uses in Central Washington. 1602.7

Demographics 1603

Basic demographic data for Central Washington is shown in Figure 16.2. In 2000, the area had a population of 10,665, or about 1.8 percent of the District’s total. By 2017, the population had increased to about 18,107, or about 2.7 percent of Washington, DC’s total. 1603.1

Relative to the District, Central Washington had a lower percentage of older adults and children in 2017. Overall, only about 19.5 percent of the population was under the age of 18 or over 65, compared to over 29.5 percent District-wide. The area’s percentage of residents aged 18 to 34 was also higher than the District-wide total. 1603.2

Central Washington experienced shifts in racial composition since 2000, when over 60 percent of the population was Black and 25.9 percent of the population was White. By 2015, the Black population decreased by just over 1,000 people, and the percentage dropped to 29 percent. Conversely, the White population more than tripled in size (from 2,757 people to 9,478), and the overall percentage increased to 52 percent. Similarly, the
### Basic Statistics and Projections

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2017*</th>
<th>2025</th>
<th>2035</th>
<th>2045</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>10,556</td>
<td>15,714</td>
<td>18,107</td>
<td>32,098</td>
<td>39,842</td>
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<tr>
<td>Households</td>
<td>5,159</td>
<td>8,975</td>
<td>10,159</td>
<td>18,316</td>
<td>22,407</td>
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<td>Household Population</td>
<td>9,023</td>
<td>14,349</td>
<td>16,974</td>
<td>30,056</td>
<td>37,544</td>
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<td>Persons Per Household</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td>1.60</td>
<td>1.67</td>
<td>1.64</td>
<td>1.68</td>
<td>1.72</td>
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<td>Jobs</td>
<td>375,145</td>
<td>441,297</td>
<td>475,531</td>
<td>511,903</td>
<td>543,809</td>
<td>567,025</td>
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<td>Density (persons per square mile)</td>
<td>2,455</td>
<td>3,654</td>
<td>4,211</td>
<td>7,465</td>
<td>9,266</td>
<td>10,152</td>
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### 2000 and 2017 Census Data Profile

#### Age

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2000 Total</th>
<th>2017* Total</th>
<th>Citywide 2017* Total</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under 18</td>
<td>1,893</td>
<td>1,820</td>
<td>17.6%</td>
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<tr>
<td>18-64</td>
<td>7,112</td>
<td>14,577</td>
<td>70.6%</td>
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<tr>
<td>18-34</td>
<td>3,295</td>
<td>8,162</td>
<td>35.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-64</td>
<td>3,817</td>
<td>6,415</td>
<td>17.4%</td>
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#### Residents Below Poverty Level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2017*</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>7,560</td>
<td>3,394</td>
<td>19.5%</td>
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#### Racial Composition

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2017*</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>2,757</td>
<td>9,478</td>
<td>52.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>6,450</td>
<td>5,272</td>
<td>29.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native American</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian/Pacific Islander</td>
<td>952</td>
<td>2,191</td>
<td>12.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>247</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Multi-Racial</td>
<td>231</td>
<td>737</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
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#### Hispanic Origin

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<th></th>
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<th>2017*</th>
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<tr>
<td>588</td>
<td>1,668</td>
<td>9.2%</td>
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#### Foreign-Born Residents

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1,788</td>
<td>3,285</td>
<td>18.1%</td>
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#### Tenure

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<th></th>
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<th>2017*</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Owner Households</td>
<td>571</td>
<td>2,089</td>
<td>20.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Renter Households</td>
<td>4,611</td>
<td>8,071</td>
<td>79.4%</td>
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#### Housing Occupancy

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<th>2017*</th>
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<tr>
<td>Occupied Units</td>
<td>5,182</td>
<td>10,159</td>
<td>87.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vacant Units</td>
<td>698</td>
<td>1,426</td>
<td>12.3%</td>
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#### Housing by Unit Type

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2017*</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-unit detached</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-unit attached</td>
<td>380</td>
<td>431</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-4 units</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-9 units</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-19 units</td>
<td>340</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 or more</td>
<td>4,777</td>
<td>10,589</td>
<td>91.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobile/other</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
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</table>

Asian/Pacific Islander population more than doubled, and the population increased from 9 percent to 12 percent of the total. The area also includes a higher percentage of foreign-born residents than the District as a whole.

**Housing Characteristics**

The majority of the housing units (91.4 percent) in Central Washington are multi-family housing in buildings with 20 or more units. The number of new units in buildings with more than 20 units increased by almost 6,000 units, from 4,777 in 2000 to 10,589 in 2017. This indicates that most new units constructed in the Planning Area were in larger buildings.

Similarly, the 2017 Census reported that 79.4 percent of the households in the Planning Area were renters and only 20.6 percent were homeowners. This represents a quadruple increase in owner-occupied units as more condominiums have been constructed in the Planning Area.

In 2017, nearly 12 percent of the housing units in Central Washington were vacant. This is slightly higher than the District-wide average of 9.8 percent.

**Income and Employment**

Data from the Department of Employment Services (DOES) and OP indicates there were approximately 475,531 jobs in Central Washington in 2017, primarily in the government, professional, and non-profit sectors. This represents about 59 percent of the District’s job base.

According to the 2017 Census, the median household income in the Planning Area was $94,318. This is substantially above the District-wide average of $77,649. More than 19.5 percent of the area’s residents lived below the federal poverty level in 2017. The addition of thousands of market-rate condominiums and apartments since 2000 has undoubtedly brought a sharp rise in median household income in the area.

**Projections**

Based on projects that are under construction, approved, or proposed; regional growth trends; and the planning policies articulated by the Comprehensive Plan, significant growth is expected in Central Washington during the next 20 years. The Planning Area is expected to grow from 10,159 households in 2017 to 23,986 households in 2045. Population will more than double, from about 18,107 residents in 2017 to about 43,653 residents by 2045. Most of the growth in Central Washington is expected to consist of new high-density housing, particularly in the Mount Vernon Triangle and NoMa areas. Medium- and moderate-density housing is also anticipated, as communities like Sursum Corda/Northwest One are redeveloped.
The number of jobs is expected to increase from about 475,531 in 2017 to 511,903 in 2025. This represents just less than half of the total increase in employment projected for Washington, DC, between 2017 and 2045. Most of the increase will take place in NoMa and on the eastern side of downtown. Replacement of some of the aging building stock in the downtown, Near Southwest, and Golden Triangle areas also can be expected. 1606.2

**Planning and Development Priorities** 1607

This section summarizes the opportunities and challenges residents and stakeholders prioritized during the 2006 Comprehensive Plan revision. During large community workshops, residents shared their feedback on District-wide and neighborhood specific issues. Since the 2006 community workshops, however, some of the challenges and opportunities facing the community have evolved. The following summary does not reflect new community priorities or feedback from either amendment cycle but summarizes the most important issues during the 2006 Comprehensive Plan revision. 1607.1

Priorities for Central Washington were discussed at Comprehensive Plan community workshops throughout 2005 and 2006. Several meetings with the Advisory Neighborhood Commissions (ANCs) in Central Washington were conducted. Briefings to business and trade organizations with a stake in downtown’s future also took place. The revision process also included a small group discussion on downtown in October 2005. About 25 participants representing an array of Central Washington neighborhoods and interests were present. 1607.2

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

- The vision of a mixed-use living downtown remains even more applicable today than it was 305 years ago when it was conceived. A priority should continue to be placed on diversifying the mix of downtown land uses to strengthen its role as the heart of Washington, DC. The area is already the center of one of the largest urban office markets in the world. Strengthening Central Washington as a creative, vibrant urban center will require more housing, retail, and arts and entertainment venues. It will also require facilitating the expansion of the traditional downtown to the east and southeast. Capital projects, financial and development incentives, and continued strong leadership will be needed to create the desired mix of uses.

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

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

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

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

- While recognizing Central Washington’s national and international role, the area should also play a special role for District residents. It should serve the needs of all residents and users of all abilities, without regard to age, income level, race, and gender. Many activities serving very low-income persons, persons with disabilities, including social services, low cost housing, and emergency shelter, have faced displacement as land values and rents have increased. Given the area’s location, urban character, and accessibility, a significant number of housing units for persons with disabilities and older adults and human service facilities should be retained in the future. This should be achieved by preserving the remaining affordable housing units, preserving (or replacing) emergency shelter space, and creating new forms of affordable housing that work best in a downtown setting such as Single Room Occupancy (SRO) hotels. Other social service facilities, such as day care centers and job training facilities, are needed to sustain downtown as a community hub.

- Central Washington is the hub of the metropolitan transportation system with 15 Metrorail (Metro) stations, commuter and interstate rail terminals, and major bridges, freeway, and surface street infrastructure. However, to retain its central role, it must overcome transportation challenges including:
  - Some Metro stations that are nearing capacity;
  - Security-related street closures that have constricted traffic;
  - Conflicts between street activities, such as truck deliveries, bus stops, taxi stands, and parking;
  - Conflicts between building perimeter security and pedestrian circulation;
  - An inadequate supply of parking to meet shopper and visitor needs;
  - Confusing signage and a lack of information about routes and transportation services; and
  - Improvements to the DC Circulator, which has been essential in connecting Central Washington destinations; however, additional improvements are needed. Improving east-
west and north-south circulation and improving parking management continue to be high priorities. Supporting Metro’s efforts to increase capacity, especially at Metro Center, also should be a priority.

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

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

- While downtown has been among the top office markets in the world for decades, the health of that market should not be taken for granted. Changes in security policies on the part of the U.S. Department of Defense will result in the abandonment of over four million square feet of office space in Arlington alone, most of it proximate to Metro stations, and already less costly per square foot than downtown office space. This situation will require achieving a delicate balance between using the strength of the downtown office economy to leverage public benefits without hindering its ability to compete with other jurisdictions for office tenants.
• Central Washington should continue to lead the way in the city’s overall efforts toward environmental sustainability. While downtown’s density of uses, and its extensive reliance on public transportation help it to score high on any index of sustainability, more can be done. 1607.3

Policies and Actions

CW-1 General Policies

CW-1.1 Guiding Growth and Neighborhood Conservation 1608

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

Policy CW-1.1.1: Promoting Mixed Use Development

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

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

Policy CW-1.1.2: Central Washington Office Growth

Retain Central Washington as the premier office location in the greater Washington region. Office development should generally be guided eastward from its current area of concentration. Capitalize on the strong demand for office space in Downtown East, along North and South Capitol Streets, and in the vicinity of the NoMa-Gallaudet U Metro station. A range of office space should be planned to meet the needs of high-end, mid-range, and low-end office space users, and this space should also include modern workspace concepts such as shared workspaces, membership offices, rental conference rooms, and virtual offices. 1608.3

See also the Economic Development Element for additional policies related to growth of the office economy.
Policy CW-1.1.3: Incentives for Non-Office Uses
Take action to attract non-office uses within the area to create a vibrant collection of central neighborhoods. Continue using zoning and other regulatory mechanisms to incentivize mixed-use development, including housing, ground floor retail, educational uses, and arts facilities in locations consistent with the Comprehensive Plan. 1608.4

Policy CW-1.1.4: New Housing Development in Central Washington
Continue to encourage the development of new high-density housing in Central Washington, particularly in NoMa and east Mount Vernon Square, including Mount Vernon Triangle, Northwest One, and the L’Enfant Plaza/Near Southwest areas. Ground floor retail space and similar uses should be strongly encouraged within these areas to create street life and provide neighborhood services for residents. A strong downtown residential community can create pedestrian traffic, meet local housing needs, support local businesses in the evenings and on weekends, and increase neighborhood safety and security. 1608.5

Policy CW-1.1.5: Central Washington Housing Diversity
It is important to keep Central Washington a mixed-income community and avoid the displacement of lower-income residents. Preserve Central Washington’s existing low- to moderate-income housing, including public housing, housing (both contracts and vouchers), and other subsidized units. The District has taken a proactive approach to preserving affordable units at the Museum Square, Golden Rule, and other Central Washington Area redevelopment sites. The District should continue to expand the number of affordable units through land disposition with affordability requirements and through the use of zoning and other regulatory incentives. 1608.6

Policy CW-1.1.6: Capturing Visitor and Employee Spending
Capture a greater share of the demand for goods and services generated by the 475,531 persons working in Central Washington and the millions of visitors who come to the area each year by supporting additional retail and restaurant development. This will generate a substantial amount of jobs, tax revenues, and social and economic benefits for the city. 1608.7

Policy CW-1.1.7: Central Washington Arts and Entertainment Uses
Retain, enhance, and expand Central Washington’s arts and entertainment uses, including theaters, cinemas, galleries, studios, museums, and related services. Cultural uses should be actively encouraged in the area along 7th Street NW (between the National Mall and the convention center), the E Street corridor (between 5th and 15th Streets NW), Pennsylvania Avenue (between 3rd and 15th Streets NW), and 10th Street SW. The clustering of arts uses in these areas should complement the significant cultural institutions already present or planned, such as the Smithsonian museums.
Policy CW-1.1.8: Promote Central Washington Retail

Develop and promote Central Washington as a regional retail destination with a mix of retailers that serve the local office market, as well as District-wide and regional customer bases. Particular emphasis should be placed on sustaining concentrated regional shopping areas at:

- The F and G Street corridors between 7th and 15th Streets, NW;
- 7th Street, NW in the Gallery Place and Penn Quarter neighborhoods; and
- CityCenterDC.

The design of streets and facades in these areas should be conducive to pedestrian-oriented shopping, with wide sidewalks, window displays, well-managed on-street vending activities, outdoor seating areas, and other shopper amenities. A mix of traditional large-format retail anchors and specialty shops should be encouraged, with a focus on shopping goods retail. In particular, support should be provided to attract new and retain existing department stores in these areas and attract supermarkets to support residential development in these areas.

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

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

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

Policy CW-1.1.10: Leveraging Major Development Sites

Use major development sites—such as urban renewal sites, air rights, Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) joint development sites, and federal property disposition—to implement key objectives and policies of the Central Washington Area Element, especially with respect to land use and urban design. These sites should be viewed as...
a portfolio of assets that to be strategically managed to meet the District’s long-term needs. 1608.11

**Policy CW-1.1.11: Reinforcing Central Washington’s Characteristic Design Features**

Reinforce the physical qualities that set Central Washington apart from all other major American city centers. Balance the symbolic monumentality of the national civic center with a respectful, but distinct and impressive, expression of local life. Blend historic, traditional, and contemporary architecture to express the vitality of a diverse and growing District that is as proud of its neighborhood amenities, architectural heritage, and character as it is of its position as the seat of the national government. 1608.12

**Policy CW-1.1.12: Creating Active Street Life and Public Spaces**

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

- Discouraging second-level pedestrian bridges, underground walkways, and underground or privatized cafeterias that drain activity from Central Washington streets;
- Encouraging multiple entrances in large projects to increase street-level activity;
- Managing certain streets so they can be easily closed to traffic on special occasions for pedestrians;
- Providing streetscape improvements that make downtown streets more comfortable and attractive;
- Encouraging active ground floor uses and discouraging wide building entrances, large internal lobbies, and street-facing garage entrances and loading areas;
- Creating and managing well-designed public spaces that provide space for spontaneous performances, programmed entertainment, social interaction, and activities like farmers markets;
- Supporting collaboration with NPS to accommodate national and local needs at federally owned parks in the heart of the central business district, such as Pershing and John Marshall Parks, Freedom Plaza, and Franklin, McPherson, Lafayette and Farragut Squares, while emphasizing the need for federal agencies to maintain their open spaces, parks, and monuments in a timely and proper manner; and
- Making Pennsylvania Avenue NW a destination showcasing Washington, DC’s economic, cultural, and civic strength on local and national levels. 1608.13

See also the Urban Design Element for additional policies relating to improving the public realm and creating active downtown street environments.
Policy CW-1.1.13: Central Washington Multi-modal Transportation System

Develop and maintain a balanced multi-modal transportation system for Central Washington that makes optimal use of the existing street network, the Metro and commuter rail networks, the bus system, and public spaces, including sidewalks and alleys. Mass transit, walking, and biking should be supported as the dominant forms of transportation to, from, and around the area. To achieve this, mass transit requires dedicated facilities and infrastructure to give transit priority over automobile traffic. 1608.14

Policy CW-1.1.14: Reduce Single-Occupancy Trips in Central Washington

Reduce single-occupancy trips in Central Washington by promoting alternative modes of transportation like transit, biking, walking, and carpooling to achieve the District’s goal of having 75 percent of all commuter trips be achieved by non-single-occupancy vehicle modes. For this District-wide goal to be achieved, Central Washington, where most commuter trips begin and end, needs to reach a commuter trips share mode of non-single occupancy of 75 percent or higher. Regional policies like those on congestion pricing should also be explored. Public transit, and other non-single-occupancy vehicle modes, should be emphasized as the preferred means of access to and around Central Washington by:

- Giving priority to public transit vehicles on the area’s streets;
- Promoting the use of public transit for commuting;
- Encouraging direct connections from Metro stations to adjacent development;
- Improving the availability of information and signage about public transit service;
- Developing new forms of transit, such as circulators and trolleys;
- Improving public transit service, particularly during off-peak hours; and
- Encouraging and supporting biking, bike sharing, and walking—as the primary means of travel between areas in Central Washington—with appropriate infrastructure. 1608.15

Policy CW-1.1.15: Central Washington Parking Management

Develop creative, effective solutions to manage downtown parking demand. These solutions should be responsive to the needs of local retailers and businesses without inducing excessive auto traffic or discouraging transit use. Incentives for short-term parking within private garages, the sharing of parking by multiple uses with different demand characteristics, and better
parking signage are all strongly encouraged. Additionally, with autonomous vehicle (AV) technology progressing, the District should continue studying and planning for AVs’ impacts on parking demand and land uses. 1608.16

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

Policy CW-1.1.16: Making Central Washington’s Streets More Pedestrian Friendly

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

• Improving certain streets for pedestrian use;
• Providing safe and accessible pedestrian waiting space on the widest thoroughfares;
• Maintaining sufficiently wide sidewalks and regulating sidewalk obstructions;
• Restricting curb cuts and parking garage access along major streets;
• Providing safe and accessible pedestrian detours at construction sites;
• Encouraging sidewalk widening within private development; and
• Enforcing traffic and parking laws, such as no parking zones. 1608.17

Policy CW-1.1.17: Crosstown Circulation

Strengthen transportation connections between Central Washington and the rest of the District by improving east-west connections—including F Street NW, H Street NW, and I Street NW, and by implementing a transitway on K Street NW to give public transit dedicated lanes. Enhance north-south connections, such as 7th and 9th Streets NW, and explore whether permanently closed streets from L’Enfant’s 1791 plan for the City of Washington can be re-opened or could be used to improve connections for pedestrians through easements or other mechanisms. 1608.18

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

Policy CW-1.1.18: Goods Movement and Service Delivery within Central Washington

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

• Maintaining and improving interior alleys, where needed, to provide for off-street loading facilities and minimize curb cuts on streets;
• Encouraging the consolidation of loading areas within new development and limiting on-street service deliveries;
• Encouraging adequate off-street or below-grade loading and service parking areas;
• Converting on-street loading facilities to off-street facilities whenever possible; and
• Managing goods and service delivery times. 1608.19

See the Transportation Element for additional policies on goods delivery.

**Policy CW-1.1.19: Wayfinding Signage**
Maintain, upgrade, and manage pedestrian, bicycle, and vehicular signage within Central Washington to improve connections within the area, and between the area and the rest of Washington, DC. Street signs, directional signs, and maps should provide clear information on travel routes, emergency routes and procedures, parking, and transit operations. 1608.20

See the Urban Design Element for additional policies on signage.

**Policy CW-1.1.20: Design Character**
Create a more coherent design character for Central Washington by improving the physical linkages among the Monumental Core, the business sub-districts on the perimeter of the National Mall, and the expanding mixed-use areas east and southeast of downtown. Urban design strategies should focus on making the entire area more walkable, discouraging monolithic architecture, improving signage and streetscape features, and adding new land uses that make the area more lively, interesting, and dynamic. 1608.21

**Policy CW-1.1.21: Downtown Street and Block Pattern**
Maintain a fine-grained pattern of downtown blocks, streets, and alleys, with intersections and frontages that encourage pedestrian movement and reduce the potential for immense variations in scale and fortress like office buildings. Preserve and encourage activation of historic alleys like Blagden, Naylor, and Prather’s. 1608.22

**Policy CW-1.1.22: Downtown Edges**
Establish and maintain scale and density transitions between downtown and adjacent lower-density neighborhoods. Use variations in height, massing, and architectural quality to respect the fine-grained pattern of adjacent neighborhoods. 1608.23
**Policy CW-1.1.23: Architectural Excellence**
Promote excellence in the design of downtown buildings and landscapes. Particular attention should be focused on ground floor levels, with greater architectural details used to improve visual image. 1608.24

**Policy CW-1.1.24: Federal Coordination**
Coordinate with the federal government to achieve a consistent urban design vision for Central Washington. As applicable, the District should incorporate design concepts from the NCPC’s Legacy Plan and similar design-oriented plans for the Monumental Core of Washington, DC, into its own design plans and strategies. 1608.25

**Policy CW-1.1.25: Pedestrian Bridges and Tunnels**
Discourage the construction of second-level downtown pedestrian bridges that drain activity from the street level. Subterranean tunnels between buildings also should be discouraged, unless they improve access to Metro and are necessary for pedestrian safety. 1608.26

**Policy CW-1.1.26: Interagency Flood Risk Management**
Coordinate with NCPC and DC Silver Jackets to reduce flood risk and enhance stormwater management in the Federal Triangle neighborhood, and to encourage federal agencies to use preservation design standards to guard against future flood risks when they develop or redevelop lands located in other known flood-prone areas. This includes ensuring compliance with implementation guidelines for the Federal Flood Risk Management Standard. 1608.27

**Action CW-1.1.A: Land Use and Transportation Planning for Central Washington**
Conduct land use and transportation research and planning for Central Washington, including the collection and analysis of data on the area’s employment, population, housing, visitors, land use, development, travel patterns, and economic characteristics. Research and planning are necessary to monitor Central Washington’s competitive position in the nation and region and to make policy recommendations to maintain its health. This activity should be done in concert with the NCPC, the Washington DC Economic Partnership (WDCEP), and the local BIDs. 1608.28

**Action CW-1.1.B: Central Washington Urban Design Planning**
Develop plans and guidelines for the design of buildings, streets, and public spaces in Central Washington. Design guidelines should help implement the Comprehensive Plan by reinforcing the unique identity of Central Washington’s sub-areas and neighborhoods, improving connections to the National Mall, encouraging pedestrian movement, creating active street life,
preserving historic resources, promoting green roofs and other sustainable design principles, and achieving high-quality architectural design. 1608.29

See the Federal and District elements on Land Use, Urban Design, and Economic Development for related policies.

Action CW-1.1.C: Focused Planning and Implementation for Catalytic Sites

Develop detailed plans for catalytic sites with the potential to significantly shape the future of Central Washington, and work on implementing existing ones. These sites include the I-395 air rights north of Massachusetts Avenue NW, the Northwest One neighborhood, and the air rights north of Union Station. Work with the federal government to prepare plans or implement existing plans for similar sites under its jurisdiction, such as Freedom Plaza, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and the Labor Department buildings, Old Naval Observatory Hill, the federal buildings near L’Enfant Plaza in support of the SW Ecodistrict Plan and the Maryland Avenue SW Small Area Plan, and the area around the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. 1608.30

Action CW-1.1.D: Public Space Regulations

Simplify public space regulations for downtown to avoid duplicative or incompatible standards and overly complex permitting requirements. 1608.31

Action CW-1.1.E: Residential Development Incentives

Continue developing financial and non-financial incentives for the conversion of lower-performing retail/office buildings into new housing or mixed-use development throughout Central Washington. 1608.32

Action CW-1.1.F: Reduce Downtown Congestion Through the Implementation of moveDC.

Implement the recommendations from moveDC that pertain to Central Washington and are aimed at reducing downtown congestion issues through the use of multimodal transportation planning tools and policies like congestion pricing. 1608.33

See Near Northwest Area Element for more information on planning and implementation for Foggy Bottom and West End.

CW-1.2 Conserving and Enhancing Community Resources 1609

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

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

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

Preserve and enhance Central Washington’s historic resources by continuing the current practices of:

- Preserving the area’s historic buildings and districts;
- Requiring that renovation and new construction is sensitive to the character of historic buildings and districts;
- Applying design incentives and requirements to encourage preservation, adaptive reuse, and appropriate relationships between historic development and new construction;
- Encouraging the adaptive reuse of historic and architecturally significant buildings; and
- Preserving the original pattern of streets and alleys from L’Enfant’s 1791 plan for the City of Washington, especially alleys that provide for off-street loading, deliveries, and garage access.

Historic resources should be recognized as essential to downtown’s economic vitality and competitive edge, particularly for retail, tourism, and entertainment activities.

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

Policy CW-1.2.3: Central Washington Open Space

Provide high-quality, readily accessible, multigenerational outdoor public spaces that are adequate in size and use throughout Central Washington and that support the goal of attracting residents and families to central neighborhoods. This should include the development of new open spaces and substantial improvements to old ones for underserved central neighborhoods like Mount Vernon Triangle, Chinatown, NoMa, and Downtown East. New parks serving NoMa and Mount Vernon Triangle, the rehabilitation of Franklin Park and Chinatown Park, and enhancements to Judiciary Square (in accordance with the approved Judiciary Square Master Plan) are also priorities. In addition, the area’s triangle parks should be enhanced as accessible neighborhood parks and important elements of L’Enfant’s 1791 plan for the City of Washington. Parks and open spaces in Central Washington should be well maintained, well designed, and appropriately programmed based on the future growth of the area, the demand of their users, and their location, context, historic significance, and design features.
Policy CW-1.2.4: Recreation for Current, New, and Future Downtown Residents and Workers

Ensure that emerging residential and employment centers such as Northwest One, NoMa, Downtown East, and Mount Vernon Triangle include adequate parks, open spaces, and recreational facilities for residents, workers, and other users, as well as public access to these spaces. Such parks and open spaces should feature attractive designs, comfortable street furniture, and a wide range of amenities to serve different users. The use of payment-in-lieu-of-taxes (PILOTs) to fund such improvements should be explored. 1609.4

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

Policy CW-1.2.5: Central Washington Economic Opportunity

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

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

Policy CW-1.2.6: Central Washington Social Services

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

Policy CW-1.2.7: Central Washington Leadership and Management

Achieve Central Washington planning objectives through leadership and management strategies, as well as land use, transportation, and design strategies. Support the activities of local BIDs or Community Improvement Districts (CID) to coordinate special events, marketing, planning and design, business development, maintenance and security, transportation, and joint development activities. 1609.7
Policy CW-1.2.8: Building a Sense of Community in Central Washington

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

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

Support the activities of the CIDs within Central Washington. Encourage partnerships between these entities and District government to achieve local job training, job placement, and business assistance goals.

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

Action CW-1.2.B: Central Washington Open Spaces, and Arts and Culture Planning

Work with NCPC and NPS13th arts and cultural, and open spaces. In addition, work with the federal government to develop unique management policies and procedures for the smaller (non-National Mall) Central Washington federal parks.

Action CW-1.2.C: Identification and Designation of Historic Properties

Complete the identification and designation of historic properties in Central Washington. Make information about eligible properties widely available to the public, and encourage property owners and preservation groups to cooperate on designations.

See the Policy Focus Areas below for more specific actions relating to community resources.
The Comprehensive Plan identifies eight areas in Central Washington as Policy Focus Areas, indicating that they require a level of direction and guidance beyond that provided in the prior section of this Area Element and in the Citywide Elements. These eight areas are:

- Metro Center/Retail Core
- Gallery Place/Penn Quarter
- Chinatown
- Mount Vernon District
- Downtown East/Judiciary Square
- Golden Triangle/K Street NW
- L’Enfant Plaza/Near Southwest/Maryland Avenue SW; and
- NoMA/Northwest One.

With a few exceptions, these areas exclude what is commonly thought of as the federal city or the portions of Central Washington under federal jurisdiction. Planning for that area which includes the Kennedy Center, Federal Triangle, the Northwest Rectangle, the Southwest Federal Center, and East Potomac Park— is the responsibility of NCPC. In 2009, NCPC adopted the Monumental Core Framework Plan (Framework Plan), which addresses the future of these areas. NCPC and the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts (CFA) developed the Framework Plan to expand the civic qualities of the National Mall beyond its boundaries and to integrate the District’s vitality into adjacent federal precincts. It also identifies how to transform the architectural monumentality of the core to more contextual placemaking, proposing new destinations as prestigious locations for future cultural attractions, distinguished settings for government offices, and inviting places to enrich the experience of people who live, work, or visit the capital city. Where connections between these destinations do not exist, they will be established; where they do exist, they will be reinforced. NCPC and NPS are also engaged in planning for the National Mall. Similarly, the Architect of the Capitol (AOC) is engaged in an update of the U.S. Capitol Master Plan. The details below are complementary to federal policy initiatives and result in a unified vision for the future of central Washington, DC.
Map 16.1: Central Washington Policy Focus Areas

2.1 - Metro Center/Retail Core
2.2 - Gallery Place/Penn Quarter
2.3 - Chinatown
2.4 - Mount Vernon District
2.5 - Downtown East /Judiciary Square
2.6 - Golden Triangle/K Street
2.7 - L’Enfant Plaza/Near Southwest/Maryland Ave.
2.8 - NoMA/Northwest One
Adjacent Focus Areas (see figure 16.3)

Jurisdiction of the Architect of the Capitol
The Retail Core has enjoyed a comeback since 2000. Many buildings long underused have been modernized and converted to retail spaces, providing a better mix of retail and office space in the downtown core.

**CW-2.1 Metro Center/Retail Core**

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

This area includes the 11-acre site of the former Washington Convention Center, now the location of CityCenterDC, one of the District’s premier shopping and dining destinations. The area also includes one of downtown’s largest department stores, other major retailers, many large office buildings, hotels, theaters, and restaurants. At the heart of this area, the Metro Center subway station is one of the busiest stations in the Metro system and is a major transfer point between intersecting Metro lines. The Retail Core has enjoyed a comeback since 2000. Many buildings long underused have been modernized and converted to retail spaces, providing a better mix of retail and office space in the downtown core. The retail energy that for many years shifted eastward toward Gallery Place is now equally present in the Metro Center area. Metro Center, once perceived as an office district, rather than a regional shopping destination, has undergone years of renovations and investments. The opening of national retailers has been a positive sign of a reenergized downtown.

The Retail Core of the District should continue to be strengthened. Retail strategies should continue building off the success of nearby Gallery Place and the Capital One Arena (formerly Verizon Center), increasing the synergy between these areas and the historic F Street shopping district. Since the opening of CityCenterDC on the site of the old convention center, connectivity between the two areas has improved to create an expanded Central Washington shopping district for the region. New department stores, major national retailers, and smaller independent specialty shops have opened. These types of retail offerings should be strongly encouraged to continue to promote the continued success of downtown.

Future renovations should continue to include ground-level retail space within new and renovated office space in the Metro Center area to create the critical mass necessary to make Central Washington a vibrant shopping hub. Strategies to address parking needs, improve public transit links, and create a more comfortable and attractive street environment can support the goal of increasing the area’s prominence as a retail center.
Policy CW-2.1.1: Strengthening the Retail Core
Strengthen the traditional Retail Core along F and G Streets between 9th and 15th Streets NW. Encourage the extension of the Retail Core eastward to 6th Street NW to create greater synergy between this area and Gallery Place. Large-scale retail and entertainment uses should continue to be strongly encouraged as buildings in the Downtown Retail Core are adaptively reused, and as new infill development takes place. 1611.6

Policy CW-2.1.2: Promoting Central Washington Shopping
Facilitate District and private sector efforts to market the Central Washington Retail Core as a shopping destination for District residents, as well as for visitors and suburban residents, and to promote Central Washington as a preferred alternative to suburban shopping malls. Retail strategies for this area should be structured to avoid damaging the vibrant and strong regional retail economies in Georgetown and Friendship Heights. 1611.7

Policy CW-2.1.3: Creating a Critical Mass of Retail Choices
Improve downtown’s viability as a shopping destination by encouraging additional small retailers to locate around existing retail anchors, adding new major retail anchors, and requiring continuous ground floor retail space wherever appropriate. Encourage the greatest possible variety of goods, services, and pricing so that the Retail Core meets the needs of a diverse range of residents, employees, and visitors. 1611.8

Policy CW-2.1.4: Establishing a Unique Identity for Downtown Shopping
Enhance the identity of the downtown Retail Core as a unique shopping area. Design attention should be focused on the lower levels of buildings, with at-grade retail frontages and frequent street-level store entrances. Special features such as canopies, signs, and lighting should be used to create a vibrant shopping environment. Streetscape and landscape design, street lighting, and signage should contribute to the area’s unique sense of place. 1611.9

Policy CW-2.1.5: Pedestrian Movement in the Retail Core
Emphasize and encourage pedestrian movement in the Downtown Retail Core, particularly along F, G, and H Streets NW. Future development in this area should create and support street-level activity. Interior or underground pedestrian arcades, cafeterias, or passageways should be discouraged. 1611.10

Policy CW-2.1.6: Connections to Adjacent Areas
Improve pedestrian connections within the downtown Retail Core, with a particular emphasis on improving the north-south connections along 6th, 8th, 9th, 10th, 11th, 12th, and 13th Streets NW to better connect the area.
to Federal Triangle and the National Mall on the south and the convention center and Franklin Square areas on the north. Use strategies such as improved signage and streetscape design to draw visitors from the National Mall.

**Policy CW-2.1.7: Complementary Activities**

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

**Policy CW-2.1.8: Parking in the Retail Core**

Encourage the provision of sufficient parking and loading areas in and adjacent to the Downtown Retail Core. Provide short-term parking for shoppers at appropriate levels to meet demand in a transit-oriented downtown. Wherever feasible, access to parking should be from alleys or, if alleys are not available, from E and H Streets NW and from the north-south streets, rather than from F and G Streets NW.

**Policy CW-2.1.9: Pennsylvania Avenue**

Promote and maintain Pennsylvania Avenue NW between the U.S. Capitol and the White House as a distinguished, high-quality, mixed-use, multimodal boulevard for residents, workers, and visitors. It should contain an actively programmed, pedestrian-oriented, and inviting public realm that enhances the avenue’s symbolic character and function and connects Downtown Washington, DC, and the National Mall. Honor the avenue’s iconic reciprocal views of the U.S. Capitol and White House grounds through a cohesive streetscape design.

**Action CW-2.1.A: Redevelopment of FBI Headquarters Site**

Any future redevelopment of Squares 378 and 379 on Pennsylvania Avenue NW, where the FBI’s headquarters at the J. Edgar Hoover Building is currently situated, will be subject to the Square Guidelines adopted unanimously by NCPC in 2017.

**Action CW-2.1.B: Update the Pennsylvania Avenue Development Corporation Plan**

Work with federal and local partners to update the 1974 PADC Plan to further strengthen physical and programmatic connections across Penn Quarter, downtown, and the National Mall.

**Action CW-2.1.C: Retail Revitalization Programs**

Continue to use retail revitalization programs—such as tax increment financing, grants and loans for façade improvements, and small business development loans—to boost downtown retail development. Periodically assess whether programs are achieving desired outcomes.
**CW-2.2 Gallery Place/Penn Quarter**

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

Gallery Place/Penn Quarter is a thriving retail destination, cultural center, and activity hub for the District. Since opening in 1997, the 20,000-seat Capital One Arena has brought millions of sports and concert patrons to the area. The arena has ushered in a boom in restaurants, bars, night clubs, and entertainment-oriented retail. The opening of the 250,000-square-foot Gallery Place mixed-use complex in 2005 has further boosted the area's reputation as the center of Washington, DC's nightlife and entertainment scene.

In addition, the reopening of the National Portrait Gallery/Smithsonian American Art Museum in 2006, and the presence of major art galleries and theaters, has made the area the city's preeminent center for arts and culture. The Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company, Gallery Place and E Street cinemas, and Shakespeare Theater Company theater bring additional evening foot traffic to the area and further support the restaurant and gallery scene.

The area is also an important residential neighborhood and includes Penn Quarter buildings like the Lansburgh and the Pennsylvania.

Meanwhile, reinvestment in public and private buildings is prompting a discussion on Pennsylvania Avenue's role in the 21st-century capital. Regarding this issue, NCPC, the U.S. General Services Administration (GSA), NPS, and the District government formed an executive committee and launched the Pennsylvania Avenue Initiative to consider near- and long-term improvements to the avenue. Pennsylvania Avenue is one of Washington's—and the world's—most recognized streets, physically and symbolically connecting the U.S. Capitol with the White House. As a home to federal headquarters, businesses, museums, residents, civic activities, and lively downtown events, it plays a significant economic and cultural role in the capital city. Presently, the avenue retains a strong civic identity and character but does not provide a consistently engaging experience. With public input and the guidance of the executive committee, the initiative is exploring potential physical, economic, and operational changes to strengthen the avenue's national and local presence in Washington, DC.

The continued development of this area as an arts and entertainment district should be supported. As thousands of new housing units have come online...
in Mount Vernon Triangle and along Massachusetts Avenue, the area’s resident customer base continues to expand. Its position as Washington, DC’s top location for arts and entertainment should be sustained by encouraging additional venues, providing new amenities, and strengthening connections to the National Mall, Retail Core, and Mount Vernon District.

1612.6

**Policy CW-2.2.1: Arts and Entertainment District**

Continue to promote Gallery Place and 7th Street NW area as a pedestrian-oriented arts and entertainment district, with nightlife and restaurants, theaters, galleries, and independent and national retailers. Continuous ground floor retail, arts, and entertainment uses should be encouraged along 7th Street NW between Mount Vernon Square and Pennsylvania Avenue NW. 1612.7

**Policy CW-2.2.2: East End Theater District**

Promote the area bounded by 6th Street, 14th Street, F Street, and Pennsylvania Avenue NW as an internationally recognized theater district, capitalizing on the presence of long-existing theaters—such as the National, Warner, Ford’s, Woolly Mammoth, and the Shakespeare Theatre Company’s Lansburgh—and theaters such as the Harman Center for the Arts and the Washington Stage Guild. Marketing, promotion, signage, and special programs should be used to brand the area as the region’s top performing arts center. Complementary evening uses, such as restaurants, should be encouraged in this area. 1612.8

**Policy CW-2.2.3: Penn Quarter Neighborhood**

Continue to develop Penn Quarter as a mixed-use urban neighborhood. Residential uses should be complemented by additional arts, cultural, retail, and office use, as well as open space. 1612.9

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

Retain and adaptively reuse historic buildings within the Penn Quarter/Gallery Place area. The area’s historic features are an essential part of the Quarter’s success and ambiance as an arts district and must be preserved. New construction in the area should respect the historically low-scale building features along 7th Street NW, stepping down as appropriate to preserve the scale and context of important historic buildings. 1612.10

*See also the Urban Design and Historic Preservation elements for additional policies relating to historic resources and design.*
**Policy CW-2.2.5: Links to Adjacent Areas**

Improve the linkages from the Gallery Place/Penn Quarter area to the National Mall on the south, the Retail Core on the west, and the Mount Vernon Square and Mount Vernon Triangle area on the north. The north-south linkages along 7th, 8th, and 9th Streets NW are particularly important. Given the low traffic volumes along 8th Street NW between F Street NW and Pennsylvania Avenue NW, the street’s role as a pedestrian-oriented space linking the National Archives and National Portrait Gallery should be emphasized. Its potential as a large, flexible, programmable open space should be recognized.  

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

Prepare streetscape improvement plans for 7th, 8th, and 9th Streets NW that physically reinforce the desired character of the area as the District’s Arts Walk and provide space for performance, street theater, public art and exhibitions, and other activities that reinforce its role as an entertainment district. Streetscape improvements should be compatible with the approved PADC Plan for this area.

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**CW-2.3 Chinatown**

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

Today, Chinatown is facing challenges retaining its identity as the area around it booms with new retail, office, entertainment, and housing development. The Chinese population in the area has been declining for decades, and many of the Chinese businesses are having a difficult time keeping pace with rising rents and land costs. OP’s 2009 Chinatown Cultural Development Small Area Action Plan found that in 1970, there were 3,000 Chinese Americans living in and around Chinatown. That number had declined to fewer than 300 by 2009.

Keeping Chinatown a viable ethnic commercial district and neighborhood will require proactive measures to assist its businesses, attract new Chinese enterprises and cultural activities to the area, and support the institutions and services that sustain the Chinese community today. The area can capitalize on its proximity to the convention center and Gallery Place without losing its special character. Although the Chinese population in the neighborhood itself is small, the area serves as a cultural and symbolic hub for a metropolitan area with almost 100,000 Chinese American residents. It is also a destination for visitors (including visitors from Asia) and the home
of the Chinatown Community Cultural Center at Gallery Place, which opened in 2006. 16.3.3

**Policy CW-2.3.1: Sustaining Chinatown**

Retain and enhance Chinatown as a thriving downtown community, including housing, community, and cultural facilities; ethnically oriented, street-level retail; related wholesale operations; office and professional uses; and hotels. 16.3.4

**Policy CW-2.3.2: Preserving Chinatown as a Viable Community**

Preserve and conserve Chinatown, not only by installing Chinese-inspired building facades and street signs, but also by supporting the cultural traditions of the local Chinese community, assisting Chinese-owned businesses within Chinatown, sustaining the social services that serve the Chinese population, and attracting new activities that expand the area’s role as a regional center for Chinese culture and education. 16.3.5

**Policy CW-2.3.3: Chinatown’s Architectural Character**

Support architectural, streetscape, and landscape design criteria for new and renovated buildings that reinforce the identity of Chinatown as a special cultural district. These criteria should provide for the use of Chinese design features in a way that does not harm the historic character or structural integrity of Chinatown’s landmark buildings. 16.3.6

**Policy CW-2.3.4: Chinatown Wholesaling**

Support the retention of small food wholesalers and other small non-retail businesses that contribute to the success of Chinatown and help sustain its economic vitality. 16.3.7

**Policy CW-2.3.5: Chinatown as a Destination**

Continue to enhance Chinatown’s role as a destination for residents and workers from the District and surrounding jurisdictions, as well as for leisure and business visitors. This can help strengthen the vitality of Chinese-owned businesses, and support the development of new enterprises. Focus in particular on pedestrian connections along 7th Street between H Street NW and the convention center. 16.3.8

**Action CW-2.3.A: Chinatown Design Review**

Continue to implement design review procedures that support the authentic expression of Chinese culture in new and rehabilitated development, including, as appropriate, building design, signage, streetscape, and open space criteria. Periodically review the procedures and update them as necessary. 16.3.9
Action CW-2.3.B: Chinatown Park at 5th Street and Massachusetts Avenue NW

Support the redesign of the park reservation at 5th Street NW and Massachusetts Avenue NW with a public space design that responds to the cultural and historic context of its Chinatown setting. This will provide a symbolic gateway to Chinatown from Massachusetts Avenue NW while maintaining enough open space to accommodate cultural programming for the enjoyment of residents and visitors. 1613.10

CW-2.4 Mount Vernon District 1614

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

Mount Vernon Square itself was designed to be a focal point in Washington, DC’s ensemble of great civic landmarks. Its focus is the 1902 former Carnegie Library building, an elegant historic structure that is now used by the Historical Society of Washington, DC and is the home of a new global Apple flagship store. Facing the north edge of the square is the 2.3-million-square-foot Washington Convention Center, completed in 2003. To the southwest, sits CityCenterDC, a 10.2-acre, mixed-used development and one of downtown’s largest commercial, residential, and office developments. Immediately northwest of the square is the Marriott Marquis, a 1,175-room hotel, which complements the convention center functions. Large-scale office buildings occupy other sides of the square, framing it as a great public space. 1614.2

In 2004, OP prepared a design workbook for Mount Vernon Square to enhance the square’s identity as the heart of a new urban neighborhood. The workbook explored alternatives to make the square more accessible to pedestrians, more active and animated, and more visually dramatic. Its recommendations include enhancing L’Enfant’s 1791 plan for the City of Washington’s bowtie parks along Massachusetts and New York Avenues NW, improving access to the square, using placards to formalize the identity of Mount Vernon Square as an urban center, and re-inventing the square itself as a 21st-century landmark. 1614.3
East of Mount Vernon Square, the 30-acre Mount Vernon Triangle is bordered by Massachusetts, New Jersey, and New York Avenues NW. An Action Agenda for this area was developed in 2003. Since then, the District also completed the Mount Vernon Triangle Transportation and Public Realm Design Project, leading to major streetscape investments, and supplemented this work in 2018 with the Downtown East Re-Urbanization Strategy to further guide its transformation to a thriving and livable mixed-use neighborhood. Projects like Sovereign Square, the Meridian, and 555 Massachusetts have redefined the area and generated momentum for additional development. A 55,000 square foot Safeway grocery store and more than 600 housing units have been constructed under the City Vista Project at 5th and I Streets NW, and more new units are in the construction or planning stages nearby. While office uses are present, the emphasis is on housing, with supporting retail and cultural uses.

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

**Policy CW-2.4.1: Re-envisioning Mount Vernon Square**

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

**Policy CW-2.4.2: Emphasizing the Avenues and Visual Axes**

Emphasize and reinforce the historic elements of L’Enfant’s 1791 plan for the City of Washington in the planning and design of the Mount Vernon District. This should include the creation of more dramatic and well-lit gateways along Massachusetts and New York Avenues NW, capitalizing on the 8th Street NW view corridor (mitigating the effects of the TechWorld bridge), creating a park-like promenade along the K Street NW axis (on both
sides of the square), and reinforcing the continuity of 7th and 9th Streets NW as access points to the square. 1614.7

**Policy CW-2.4.3: Convention Center Area Land Uses**

Encourage land uses around Mount Vernon Square that capitalize on the presence of the Washington Convention Center. Such uses include hotels, restaurants, retail, and entertainment uses. Convention-related hotel construction should be focused on vacant or underused land immediately adjacent to the convention center to minimize impacts on the surrounding neighborhood. 1614.8

**Policy CW-2.4.4: Mount Vernon Triangle Residential Development**

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

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

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

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

**Policy CW-2.4.6: Mount Vernon District Parks**

Improve the network of public open spaces in the Mount Vernon Square and Mount Vernon Triangle areas to meet the needs of residents, workers, and visitors. Special attention should be given to enhancing the bow-tie shaped park reservations on Massachusetts and New York Avenues NW and improving Cobb Park, at the intersection of Massachusetts Avenue and H Street NW, to serve the recreation and open space needs of the surrounding community. Support the efforts of the Mount Vernon CID in providing more active, programmed uses in Mount Vernon Square itself. This requires coordination with NPS and NCPC. Eventual transfer of park management responsibilities to the District should be pursued for these spaces. 1614.11
**Policy CW-2.4.7: Creating Pedestrian-Oriented Streets in the Mount Vernon District**

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

**Action CW-2.4.A: Parking Management Program**

Develop and implement parking management programs to buffer residential areas from spillover parking associated with the convention center, downtown office and retail growth, new attractions on the old convention center site, and elsewhere on the northern edge of downtown. 1614.13

**Action CW-2.4.B: Create an Iconic Neighborhood Park for Mount Vernon Triangle**

As one of the only District-owned park spaces within the area, Cobb Park should be prioritized as a centrally located and welcoming urban park for the surrounding communities. If Cobb Park is found not to be a viable location for a park, another space of equal or bigger size within the neighborhood should be improved with the same objectives. It should be designed and constructed to be an iconic neighborhood gathering space to adequately meet the open space needs of the rapidly growing neighborhood. Special care should be made to improve pedestrian access at street crossings. Streetscapes at surrounding sites should be enhanced to extend the experience of the park beyond its immediate borders. 1614.14

**CW-2.5 Downtown East/Judiciary Square**

The Downtown East/Judiciary Square Focus Area is a major gateway to the District, lying at the foot of the historic front entrance to Union Station, and is roughly bounded by Massachusetts Avenue NW on the north, North Capitol Street and Louisiana Avenue NW on the east, Pennsylvania Avenue NW on the south, and 5th Street NW on the west. The area has been anchored by government and institutional uses for several decades, including offices for the U.S. Department of Labor, General Accountability Office, and U.S. District Court; the District Municipal Building and Superior Court; Georgetown University Law Center; and the National Building Museum. More recently, however, Downtown East has experienced considerable investment in the form of new private office space, largely due to demand from law firms and other knowledge-based professions that prioritize proximity to the U.S. Capitol and federal courts. The most significant of these new developments, Capitol Crossing, is an expansive...
2.2-million-square-foot project that reconstructs three new city blocks atop the existing I-395 interstate. The area has a small but vibrant cluster of hotels, many of which are located between Union Station and the Capitol and largely cater to business travelers seeking proximity to the U.S. Capitol.

The challenge for the Downtown East/Judiciary Square area is a weak sense of identity, as there are few residents and limited or un-activated public spaces. East-west circulation between Union Station and the broader downtown area is interrupted by I-395, which effectively carves a wide channel through the area between 2nd and 3rd Streets NW. While the Capitol Crossing development reconnects F and G Streets, NW over the freeway, some other buildings in the area inhibit circulation and obstruct historic sight lines. Many of the existing federal office buildings and courthouses are devoid of ground-level retail uses and present block-long street walls, making for an inactive street life outside of the typical 9-to-5 business hours.

As an employment hub and gateway to downtown, Downtown East has the potential to be an iconic neighborhood. To flourish, the area needs well-designed, interesting, and human-scaled public spaces to better serve users, as well as improved connections to surrounding neighborhoods. As federal offices and other major single-tenant users move to locations outside the downtown core, new development opportunities may arise at sites like the U.S. Department of Labor and the Metro headquarters to create new, vibrant, mixed-use developments that are active past 5 pm and that include the needed residential component that is a requirement to create a more active downtown.

The District should encourage place-based design goals at these sites that promote mixed-use development with active building frontages, high-quality architecture, and more varied facades.

Up to 10 percent of residents in Downtown East live in some form of group quarters, including older adults in assisted living housing, student dormitories, and shelters. This is in contrast to the six percent of District residents who share a similar type of housing. The Federal City Shelter, also known as the Community for Creative Non-violence (CCNV), in Downtown East is the biggest temporary home for many people experiencing homelessness in the District and links them with nearby supportive services and nonprofits, such as DC Central Kitchen. The shelter houses up to 150 long-term guests and provides an additional 1,000 beds each evening. There is an active proposal to redevelop the site to smaller-scale supportive housing of approximately 300 beds within a larger mixed-use redevelopment project.
Policy CW-2.5.1: Judiciary Square Improvements
Maintain the primary function of the Judiciary Square area as a judicial center, and enhance the area’s appearance as a great pedestrian-oriented civic space with a strong sense of identity. Consistent with the 2005 Master Plan for the site, buildings in the area should be better related to one another and to the square itself. 1615.6

Policy CW-2.5.2: Connecting Judiciary Square to Gallery Place/Penn Quarter
Improve pedestrian connections between Judiciary Square and the Gallery Place/Penn Quarter area by encouraging active ground floor uses along E and F Streets NW, improving signage, upgrading surface transit, and supporting compatible infill development. 1615.7

Policy CW-2.5.3: Connecting Union Station to Downtown and Gallery Place/Penn Quarter
Improve pedestrian and transit connections between the historic front entrance of Union Station to the greater downtown area, where access is currently blocked and the grid could be reestablished, including at C Street NW. Encourage active ground floor uses along streets that provide east-west routes to and from Union Station, with improved signage and support for compatible infill development. 1615.8

Policy CW-2.5.4: Establish Louisiana Avenue NW as the Primary Route Between Union Station and the National Mall
Louisiana Avenue NW provides the most direct and visible route between Union Station and the National Mall, and its design should be encouraged to reflect its importance to tourists and other users. Improved sidewalks, pedestrian street crossings, bicycle facilities, and wayfinding should be installed to enhance this corridor. Alternative locations for vehicle parking for congressional staff should be explored to eliminate the need for angled parking on Louisiana Avenue. 1615.9

Policy CW-2.5.5: Enhancing the Identity of Downtown East
Strengthen Downtown East as a geographically distinct mixed-use area of hotel, commercial, retail, and residential development, taking advantage of its strategic location as a crossroads community between Capitol Hill, downtown, and Union Station. New buildings and redevelopment sites should incorporate well-designed architecture and provide high-quality streetscape improvements that provide amenity spaces for the public to reduce the canyon-like feel that many large-scale developments impose on the sidewalk. Sites such as the Labor Department building and the Federal City Shelter should be designed to enhance the beauty of the neighborhood and provide spaces for an active street life to flourish. Branding and marketing strategies, particularly around new or renovated public parks, should be pursued to give the area a stronger identity and sense of place. 1615.10
Policy CW-2.5.6: Designate Downtown East as a Placemaking Pilot Zone

Create a Downtown East placemaking pilot zone where property owners, the BIDs, and other area stakeholders can conduct innovative, creative, and tactical placemaking interventions within the public right-of-way and in publicly accessible private spaces, such as office lobbies. Encourage uses that are open to the public, create visual interest from the street, provide pedestrian or neighborhood amenity space, and promote local retailers. 1615.11

Policy CW-2.5.7: Increase Affordability and Services for People Experiencing Homelessness in Downtown East

The District shall prioritize additional public housing and services for people experiencing homelessness throughout the Downtown East area. Emergency shelters for people experiencing homelessness should be accessible 24 hours a day, year-round, and contain high-quality services co-located on-site. New shelters should also include short-term housing designed for the needs of youth under age 24 and permanent supportive housing. 1615.12

Policy CW-2.5.8: Using the Avenues as a Design Framework

Take advantage of L’Enfant’s 1791 plan for the City of Washington avenues that cross Downtown East—including New Jersey, Massachusetts, and Louisiana Avenues NW, and North Capitol Street—to create a framework for the area’s future development. The avenues should be enhanced as pedestrian-friendly streets, with streetscape designs that are consistent from block to block and buildings designed to frame important views and landmarks. 1615.13

Action CW-2.5.A: Link and Expand a Network of Neighborhood Parks and Gathering Spaces

Identify space for new public parks or other gathering spaces and renovate existing open spaces to form a broader network of small parks across Downtown East and the surrounding neighborhoods. The parks network should provide a variety of open space amenities that are equitably dispersed so that no one park is required to serve the needs of all user groups in the area. A wide range of open space features, programming, and landscapes should activate currently underused spaces; maximize comfort with shade and seating; encourage site features that accommodate social interactions, gathering, and lingering; provide choices for active and passive recreation and play for all ages; and maximize the use of durable and easily maintainable materials and plantings. 1615.14
**CW-2.6 Golden Triangle/K Street**

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

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

On the eastern side of this Focus Area, lower 16th Street NW has a unique and historic character that sets it apart from the area around it. The five blocks between H Street NW and Scott Circle are the ceremonial gateway to the White House and provide significant vistas of the White House and Washington Monument. The street’s green space and exceptionally wide right-of-way (including 40 feet between the sidewalks and property lines) are defining elements of its character. In addition, the corridor includes notable architecture and a mix of uses, including high-density housing. For these reasons, this section of lower 16th Street NW was designated as an extension of the 16th Street historic district.  

The Golden Triangle/K Street area was Central Washington’s major development area from 1950 to the early 1980s. Today, the area is almost completely built out and almost no vacant land remains. Some of the area’s buildings are being replaced or modernized as Class A and trophy class office space. This is especially true for its 1950s and 1960s vintage office buildings, many of which lack current amenities. These buildings have seen sustained elevated vacancy rates since the Great Recession and the emergence of newer and more competitive office development in other parts of the District. As infill and renovation take place, there will be opportunities to introduce new uses, such as housing, and to improve architectural quality and street-level activity.  

Because the area has been so heavily dominated by a single use (office space) in the past, its streets are often empty at night and on the weekends. The lack of residents forces many of the retailers to limit hours of operation.
Organizations such as the Golden Triangle BID should continue to activate and program private and public spaces to add vibrancy to the area throughout the day and evening. The area’s architecture is also repetitive, with many buildings almost identical in height and width and similar in exterior design. This should change in the future as the area takes on a more mixed-use character and high-quality architecture becomes more valued as an amenity. More work needs to happen to create a strategy to bring residents and vibrancy to this part of Central Washington. Some of the strategies may require public funding, subsidies, or creative financing tools. Others might include design and urban policies that make this area more appealing to future residents. 1616.5

Housing and retail uses should be considered in this area to balance the office concentration and create after-hours street life. The area has some of the best transit access in the District, with four Metro stations. The Circulator bus on K Street NW has improved connectivity between this area and the rest of downtown, as well as the Mount Vernon District and NoMa area. 1616.6

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

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

**Policy CW-2.6.2: Diversification of Land Use**

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

**Policy CW-2.6.3: Golden Triangle/K Street Amenities**

Retain and enhance the unique characteristics of the Golden Triangle/K Street area. Specifically, Franklin Square, McPherson Square, and Farragut Square parks, should be retained as attractive, high-quality open spaces, with programmed activities that encourage their use and enjoyment. Historic buildings throughout the area should be restored, preserved, and adaptively reused. As the area is renovated and older buildings are refurbished and replaced, the streetscape and public realm also should be improved. 1616.9

**Policy CW-2.6.4: Connecticut Avenue Corridor**

Support the continued concentration of active ground-floor retail uses along the Connecticut Avenue corridor between K Street NW and Dupont Circle.
Policy CW-2.6.5: Pennsylvania Avenue NW West of the White House
Pennsylvania Avenue NW between 17th Street NW and Washington Circle should become a cultural destination, using its position next to the White House and proximity to the World Bank, IMF, numerous embassies, and other international institutions. Because of the avenue’s importance in the context of L’Enfant’s 1791 plan for the City of Washington, it should be treated as a showcase for public space design, public art, mobility, and green infrastructure. 1616.11

Policy CW-2.6.6: Cultural Destinations South of Dupont Circle
Build on existing cultural assets like the Heurich House Museum and support the creation of one or more cultural destinations in the area south of Dupont Circle, between Connecticut Avenue NW and New Hampshire Avenue NW from M Street NW northward, to enhance the cultural elements of the neighborhood's dining and nightlife. 1616.12

Policy CW-2.6.7: East-West Circulation Improvements
Improve east-west circulation through the Golden Triangle to better connect the area to the Retail Core, Gallery Place, and Mount Vernon areas on the east, and the West End and Georgetown business districts on the west. These improvements should reinforce K Street’s NW role as the area’s Main Street. 1616.13

Policy CW-2.6.8: Lower 16th Street NW
Preserve and enhance the special character of lower 16th Street NW between H Street NW and Scott Circle. The street’s historic, ceremonial role as the approach to the White House and Lafayette Park should be recognized and conserved. Future development shall be compatible with the street’s established architectural character and scale. Uses and activities that are appropriate to maintain the street’s appearance and historic significance, particularly its open space and greenery, should be encouraged. 1616.14

Policy CW-2.6.9: Downtown West Transportation Study
Improve east-west travel for pedestrians and cyclists on Pennsylvania Avenue NW and persons using public transit along H and I Streets NW. 1616.15

Action CW-2.6.A: K Street Transitway
Implement the K Street Transitway Project, including exclusive transit lanes from 12th Street NW to 21st Street NW. 1616.16

Action CW-2.6.B: Strategic Park Investments
The District, in partnership with NPS and NCPC, should invest in capital improvements and programming at Farragut Park and Franklin Park in order to create vibrant, central public squares in Central Washington. 1616.17
CW-2.7 L’Enfant Plaza/Near Southwest/Maryland Avenue SW

The L’Enfant Plaza/Near Southwest/Maryland Avenue SW Policy Focus Area is bounded by 15th Street NW on the west, 2nd Street NW on the East, Independence Avenue on the north, and I-395 on the south. The area includes a mix of private commercial development and numerous federal office buildings, including the U.S. Departments of Agriculture, Energy, Education, and Housing and Urban Development. Recently, L’Enfant Plaza has experienced an exciting renewal of interest from non-federal entities looking to relocate headquarters in a prestigious and central area of the nation’s capital, including the International Spy Museum, the Urban Land Institute, and WMATA. These three developments alone will add thousands of new employees and attract new visitors to the area. With a workforce of about 65,000 employees, Near Southwest is one of the major employment hubs of Central Washington.

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

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

In 2012, the District adopted the Maryland Avenue Southwest Small Area Plan. The plan envisions the transformation of the area to a mixed-use neighborhood with streets redesigned to improve connectivity and walkability. Economic trends suggest the area can support at least 1,000 new units of housing, as well as additional hotel, retail, and visitor-oriented uses. Maryland Avenue SW is envisioned as the heart of this reimagined district, with a deck atop the rail tracks and pedestrian-oriented retail uses along the ground floor of new mixed-use buildings facing the avenue. Attracting development to the area will require a range of livability improvements, including new streetscapes and public realm enhancements, better connections to the L’Enfant Plaza Metro station, and Virginia Rail Expressway commuter rail, as well as new and restored parks and open spaces.

Some of Near Southwest’s private complexes, including the Portals and L’Enfant Plaza, are zoned in a way that allows additional development on
their plazas and open spaces. Design measures, such as the zoning changes in 2016 that emphasized the preservation and re-opening of L’Enfant’s 1791 plan for the City of Washington street rights-of-way, are needed to guide this development so that it can help resolve the harsh pedestrian conditions within the area and humanize the streetscape. Streetscape improvements are also needed to better connect Southwest Washington with the Southwest Waterfront (via the Banneker Overlook at the end of 10th Street SW) and the National Mall. Planning for the area should be done collaboratively with NCPC, which has jurisdiction over much of this area. NCPC’s SW Ecodistrict Plan Addendum and Programmatic Design Concept for 10th Street SW and Banneker Circle SW contain extensive recommendations for improving circulation and streetscape in this area, while also addressing security concerns for major federal tenants. In addition, the area is addressed by NCPC’s Monumental Core Framework Plan.

Policy CW-2.7.1: Enhancing Near Southwest
Work collaboratively with NCPC redevelop SW Federal Center as a mixed-use community anchored with national civic and cultural uses. Plans for the area should identify streetscape and signage improvements, pedestrian circulation changes, measures to mitigate the scale of the area’s monolithic buildings, guidelines for new (or replacement) buildings within the area, and the potential for new residential uses if federal properties transfer from federal use.

Policy CW-2.7.2: Independence Avenue SW
Support redevelopment opportunities along Independence Avenue SW while respecting the civic qualities of adjacent cultural institutions and views along the south side of the National Mall. Buildings located along Independence Avenue within the Monumental Core should complement the character of Smithsonian buildings and minimize visual impacts from the National Mall.

Policy CW-2.7.3: 10th Street Promenade and Banneker Overlook
Enhance and activate 10th Street SW as a major point of access between the National Mall, L’Enfant Plaza, the Southwest Waterfront, and the new Wharf development. Encourage a nationally significant cultural attraction at Banneker Overlook that provides a clear connection across Southwest quadrant, the Washington Channel, and East Potomac Park. The recent addition of the International Spy Museum—with its exciting and colorful design and its promise to diversify the visitors of L’Enfant Plaza beyond workers and to lure tourists south of the National Mall—is a great first step in the quest to create a more vibrant neighborhood. Enhance on-street vibrancy with permanent and temporary art, cultural programming, appropriate lighting, and beautiful landscaping. To create more street vibrancy, work with future developments to bring food courts, restaurants, and retail on the street level of new and renovated buildings rather than
creating more underground attractions. Encourage civic destinations and ground level uses at the Maryland Avenue SW intersection. Encourage vertical connections between upper and lower elevations of 10th Street SW, such as at D Street SW. Encourage motor coach parking under 10th Street SW.

**Policy CW-2.7.4: Restoring Maryland Avenue**

Support Maryland Avenue SW redevelopment as an urban boulevard and L’Enfant Metro station expansion for intermodal transit, allowing Maryland Avenue SW to be partially restored as a connecting diagonal street. Develop Maryland Avenue SW as an important corridor that respects L’Enfant’s 1791 plan for the City of Washington’s intent for reciprocal views between historic landmarks and pedestrian movement. The Maryland Avenue Southwest Small Area Plan provided detailed guidance for the reconstruction of Maryland Avenue as a 160-foot-wide boulevard and for improvements to 9th, 10th, 11th, and 12th Streets SW (and underpasses) along D, 4th, 6th, and 7th Streets SW. The reconstructed streets should reconnect the grid at grade with Maryland Avenue where possible. New buildings should be sited to add definition to the street, framing its edges and highlighting the view to the U.S. Capitol. The plan also calls for optimization of building height, recognizing the area’s urban context, central location, and proximity to transit.

**Policy CW-2.7.5: Create a Vibrant, Mixed-Use Neighborhood in the Southwest Rectangle**

Establish a mix of uses that will ultimately include at least 1,000 new residential units as federal properties are redeveloped in the future. Support a mix of residential, commercial, and cultural development throughout the area to achieve a more balanced mix of uses to complement the office presence. Encourage ground floor retail uses, with a goal of up to 100,000 square feet of retail at full build-out to encourage lively street-level activity.

**Policy CW-2.7.6: Activate Key Public Spaces**

Initiate physical improvements to the Maryland Avenue SW streetscape and transform Reservation 13 into a dynamic urban park. Provide attractive settings in the public realm to help activate and beautify the neighborhood.

**Policy CW-2.7.7: Transit Access**

Capitalize on the presence of multiple modes of transportation by emphasizing alternatives to single-occupancy driving, improving transit stations, and focusing activity and future development around transit stops.
Policy CW-2.7.8: 7th Street SW
Support the development of 7th Street SW as a retail street, gateway to and from the National Mall, and intermodal transit connection. 1617.13

Policy CW-2.7.9: 12th Street Expressway and SW Freeway
Support development over 12th Street Expressway and SW Freeway. Encourage the lidding of expressways and freeways to reconnect street grids and encourage mixed-use infill development. 1617.14

Policy CW-2.7.10: Virginia Avenue SW and C Street SW
Restore Virginia Avenue SW and C Street SW between 9th and 12th Streets SW, to achieve the L’Enfant’s 1791 plan for the City of Washington’s intent for pedestrian and vehicular movement and reciprocal views between historic landmarks. 1617.15

Policy CW-2.7.11: Redevelopment of Maryland Avenue SW and Surrounding Lands
Encourage residential uses and neighborhood livability standards for the creation of a new mixed-use neighborhood as part of any redevelopment of the Maryland Avenue SW area. Provide for the reconstruction of Maryland Avenue SW, including cultural use and public space, as appropriate. 1617.16

Action CW-2.7.A: Design Planning for Near Southwest
Work collaboratively with NCPC support the transformation of this area into a mixed-use, livable new community through rezoning and design guidelines. Support new high-density mixed-use development, highly sustainable infrastructure, use of small energy production plants to produce energy needs for local buildings, and other best management practices found in the SW Ecodistrict Plan. 1617.17

Action CW-2.7.B: Residential Uses in Near Southwest
Use the innovative zoning in ZR16, as appropriate, to link development potential to identified infrastructure improvements, and coordinate with NCPC to identify infrastructure compatible with local and federal planning goals for the area. Innovative zoning may include establishing a direct correlation between maximum zoning entitlements and infrastructure construction and requiring minimum residential densities. 1617.18

Action CW-2.7.C: Activating L’Enfant Plaza
In the future, as new development comes in and old buildings are renovated, work with federal partners and private developers to create buildings that contribute to street activation and vibrancy. Refrain from supporting new underground attractions and food courts, and instead, encourage new
developments to create retail and restaurant space on the street level. Retrofit streets with new landscapes, attractive lighting, public art, temporary activations, and cultural programming. Key to creating more vibrancy will be the extent to which local stakeholders will be able to improve connectivity to and from new and old attractions and neighborhoods around L’Enfant Plaza, including the planned renovation of the South Mall campus, the Wharf, and the Southwest Waterfront neighborhood, which is also experiencing significant growth and redevelopment. 1617.19

**CW-2.8 NoMA and Northwest One** 1618

The NoMa and Northwest One Policy Focus Area includes the area roughly bounded by New Jersey Avenue NW on the west, Massachusetts Avenue NW/NE on the south, New York Avenue NW/NE on the north, and 2nd and 3rd Streets NE on the east. This 350-acre area includes the Union Station and NoMa-Gallaudet U Metro stations. 1618.1

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

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

Very few areas of NoMa remain vacant or underused today. The strong demand for downtown housing has shifted the vision for NoMa’s future, and it is now an exemplary modern neighborhood of mixed-use development, rather than just technology and back-office uses. 1618.4

Planning for NoMa should also accommodate established uses. The area includes important historic buildings like the Government Publishing Office (GPO) and the recently refurbished Uline Arena. It also includes active light manufacturing and wholesale uses north of Florida Avenue and east of the
CSX tracks. These uses should not be driven out by rising land values and speculation, but should be retained. 1618.5

In 2006 the District completed the Vision Plan and Development Strategy for NoMa establishing more detailed policies for the area. The strategy envisions an area of high-density commercial and mixed-use development between North Capitol Street NE and the CSX railroad tracks, and a less intense and primarily residential area east of the tracks, stepping down to the moderate-density residential areas of Capitol Hill. A similar transition was envisioned on the north, with vacant land and industrial uses north of Florida Avenue NE and west of the railroad gradually giving way to housing over the next 20 years. The strategy also envisions air rights development over the Amtrak tracks (adjacent to the H Street NE overpass) north of Union Station, helping bridge the railroad barrier and support the revival of the H Street NE commercial district to the east. The Union Station Expansion and Air Rights Development projects present a significant opportunity not only to underscore the role of the station as one of the most important regional transportation hubs in the Northeast and as one of the District’s most distinctive historic landmarks, but also to reinforce the many additional roles it plays in the District. It acts as a critical center of multimodal transportation; a vital community asset to District residents; a place of civic, cultural, and commercial activity; and a national gateway to the downtown, Capitol Hill, and NoMa neighborhoods, which include mixed uses, job centers, hotels, and cultural and entertainment uses that attract millions of visitors and workers each year. 1618.6

West of NoMa, the Northwest One neighborhood is roughly bordered by North Capitol and K Streets NW, and New Jersey and New York Avenues NW. The area includes several public housing developments, including the Sursum Corda Cooperative, Tyler House, Sibley Plaza, and Golden Rule Center. In 2017, approximately 19.5 percent of households were at or below the poverty line. In 2004, Northwest One was selected as the pilot site for the District’s New Communities Initiative, a District government program designed to revitalize severely underfunded public housing and redevelop neighborhoods into vibrant mixed-income communities. Subsequent planning guidance was provided through the Mid-City East Small Area Plan, which was completed in 2014. (See the Mid-City Area Element for more information.) Plans are currently underway to rebuild the Sursum Corda Cooperative as a mixed-income community, providing one-for-one replacement of existing public housing while adding market rate housing and new community anchors and amenities. 1618.7

Policy CW-2.8.1: NoMa Land Use Mix

Promote NoMa’s development as an active mixed-use neighborhood that includes residential, office, hotel, commercial, creative, arts, maker, light
industrial, and ground floor retail uses. A diverse mix of housing, serving a range of household types and incomes, should be accommodated. 

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

Create a production/arts and live/work, mixed-use area east of the CSX railroad tracks between H Street NE and Florida Avenue NE and in the area east of Eckington Place and north of New York Avenue. Some of this area is shown as Mixed-Use Production Distribution Repair/Residential areas on the Future Land Use Map. The intent of this designation is not to blend industrial uses with housing, but rather to retain viable industrial activities while supporting the creation of live/work space, housing, artists’ studios, and similar uses. Mixed-use squares in the NoMa area have unique characteristics that allow for a balance of industrial, residential, and office uses. The industrial striping on the Future Land Use Map anticipates some office use. These two areas should generally not be developed as large-scale commercial office building areas. Mixed-use development, including housing, should be encouraged in both locations.

Policy CW-2.8.3: NoMa Transportation Improvements

Design NoMa to accommodate a wide array of transportation options, with a particular emphasis on walking, bicycling, and improved transit connections. Improve the accessibility, functionality, and safety of the area’s street grid, introducing new streets as needed to improve circulation through the area. This should include the redesign of 1st Street NE as NoMa’s Main Street and the New York/Florida Avenue NE intersection to improve pedestrian safety, enhance access to the New York Avenue Metro station, and create a landscaped neighborhood gateway, possibly including a new national memorial.

Policy CW-2.8.4: Preserving Neighborhoods Abutting NoMa

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

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

Policy CW-2.8.5: NoMa Architectural Design

Establish a unique architectural and design identity for NoMa based in part on the area’s heritage as an industrial area. This identity should preserve, renovate, and adaptively reuse NoMa’s important historic buildings.
Policy CW-2.8.6: Redevelopment of the Parking Lots West of the Government Publishing Office

Encourage the reduction of parking spaces to the west of the GPO building and promote the space as a redevelopment site for new mixed-use commercial and residential buildings, with ample public park or plaza space. Consider closing segments of 1st and G Streets NW, currently blocked off with Jersey barriers, to incorporate these unused portions of the public right-of-way as new and well-designed community-gathering spaces. 1618.13

Policy CW-2.8.7: Union Station Expansion and Rail Yard Air Rights Development Projects

Prioritize Union Station’s vital role, now and in the future, as an intermodal transportation hub, while recognizing the importance of its preservation as a key historic landmark and function as a community asset. Future expansion and air rights development projects should appropriately respond to surrounding land use and design programs and plans, including those for Downtown East, Capitol Hill, and NoMa neighborhoods. 1618.14

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

Implement the NoMa Vision Plan and Development Strategy, including its recommendations for land use, infrastructure, transportation, environmental improvements, streetscape, open space, identity, and neighborhood quality. 1618.15

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

Action CW-2.8.B: Northwest One New Community

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

- Restore the District street grid through Sursum Corda;
- Emphasize K Street NW as a main street that connects the area to NoMa and the Mount Vernon District;
- Maximize private sector participation;
- Include one-for-one replacement of public units;
- Provide family-sized housing, including for multigeneration families;
• Build affordable units first to minimize displacement and maximize the return of residents to their community; and

• Include tenants’ rights of return and comprehensive relocation plans for tenants prior to the redevelopment. 1618.16

Action CW-2.8.C: Mid-City East Small Area Plan

Implement recommendations detailed in the MidCity East Small Area Plan as it relates to neighborhoods in the Central Washington Area Element. 1618.17

Action CW-2.8.D: Union Station Expansion Project and Rail Yard Air Rights Development

Continue participating in the Union Station Expansion Project and continue coordinating with related projects, including the H Street NE Bridge reconstruction and future air rights development projects. 1618.18

Action CW-2.8.E: Public Participation in Union Station Air Rights Development

Because of the Union Station air rights’ uniquely diverse surroundings—including rowhouses, historic landmarks, and dense office development—and its potential to spur other investment in the neighborhood, encourage a process that requires public participation in the review of any development application for that site. 1618.19

See the Transportation Element for additional information on the Union Station Expansion Project.