

Chapter 2

Vision & Principles

A shared vision and principles have guided the development of the Union Market Streetscape Design Guidelines. All participants in the process have recognized the need to accommodate new uses in the market, but in a way that protects and maintains its distinct character and diverse mix of businesses and vendors.

Vision

The District of Columbia and the Union Market stakeholders are committed to working together to establish and implement a public realm and streetscape plan that celebrates and preserves the market's character, history, and vibrancy while positioning it for its next evolution.

Union Market is a distinct district that has existed since the 1930s. The Market sits just west of the historic campus of Gallaudet University, the nation's only liberal arts university providing bilingual education in American Sign Language and English. It includes several blocks of two story concrete and masonry mercantile buildings, concrete streets and sidewalks, and remnants of its light industrial and mercantile past. The 74-building "core" of Union Market was designated a historic district by the District's Historic Preservation Review Board in November 2016. As it has its own unique sense of place, it should be protected and celebrated through the implementation of streetscape guidelines. However, since the neighborhood is atypical for Washington DC's urban fabric, it is appropriate that in some instances the streetscape guidelines depart from DDOT standards.

A large volume of development is planned over the next several years. We have an opportunity to ensure that the public realm remains a defining element of the neighborhood, and that they, too, share in the authentic character of the place.

Principles

These Guidelines provide a design framework for the cohesive development of the network of streets, parks and plazas within the Union Market area to achieve the following Principles. Revise fourth bullet as follows:

- Respect the existing neighborhood's character and history by creating a place-specific set of design guidelines that reinforce its unique sense of place and its gritty character, as well as its architecture, mix of existing and new businesses, and retail and light industrial commercial history. Integral to the sense of place is the neighborhood's depth as a district - organized around multiple nodes as opposed to a single intersection.
- Create an enhanced streetscape and public realm design that accommodates existing and new uses that are in keeping with the market's traditional use as a place of liveliness and activity: retail, outdoor dining; entertainment; residential apartments and condominiums; and office. All while encouraging the growth of wholesale and 'maker' businesses.
- Leverage the streetscape and public realm to capitalize on multi modal connections (pedestrian, metro, bicycle, and vehicular) to form connections with NoMa, Ivy City, Gallaudet University, Trinidad and the Atlas District.
- Employ the best thinking of Human Centered Design to ensure people of all abilities may enjoy the market. Developers are strongly encouraged to engage users and stakeholders with a variety of sensory, physical, cultural sensibilities throughout the design process.
- Foster a sense of community and a vibrant neighborhood through the creation of public spaces and playable streets to ensure the long-term success of the neighborhood.
- Develop a coordinated means of managing and maintaining the market's public spaces and streets with active programming, sanitation, security and stewardship.
- Enhance the environmental resilience of the neighborhood through green spaces, low-impact development and sustainable infrastructure.

DeafSpace Design Principles

Deaf people inhabit a rich sensory world where vision and touch are a primary means of spatial awareness and orientation. Many use sign language, a visual-kinetic mode of communication and maintain a strong cultural identity built around these sensibilities and shared life experiences. Our built environment, largely constructed by and for hearing individuals, presents a variety of challenges to which deaf people have responded with a particular way of altering their surroundings to fit their unique ways-of-being (1). This approach is often referred to as DeafSpace.

These practical acts of making a DeafSpace are long held cultural traditions that, while never-before formally recognized, are the basic elements of an architectural expression unique to deaf experiences. The study and application of DeafSpace offers valuable insights about the interrelationship between the senses, the ways we construct the built environment and cultural identity from which society at large has much to learn (2).

As such, DeafSpace principles have been used throughout the Union Market Streetscape Guidelines. DeafSpace manifests itself in a variety of ways through the guidelines including fundamental decisions about how the public space is distributed (e.g. wide sidewalks throughout Union Market to facilitate safe and easy movement for signers, lighting levels to promote visibility, etc) to fine-grained details (e.g. textured paving in the sidewalk to cue users to the edge of the pedestrian area, and designs of seating areas to promote visual communication). Guidelines that are particularly important to DeafSpace principles are highlighted on the following pages with the icon noted next to the title.

(1) Bauman, Hansel. DEAFSPACE: "An Architecture Toward A More Livable Sustainable World", *Deaf Gain Raising The Stakes For Human Diversity*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press) H-Dirksen Bauman and Joseph J. Murray Editors, pp 378

(2) Bauman, Hansel. *DeafSpace Design Guidelines*, pp: 10