





## Overview 900

**T**HE URBAN DESIGN ELEMENT ADDRESSES THE DISTRICT'S PHYSICAL design and visual qualities. The element describes the ways in which different aspects of the District's landscape, especially its buildings, streets, and open spaces, work together to define impressions of Washington, DC and its neighborhoods. The design and appearance of physical space can create connections or barriers. It can create a sense of safety or a sense of discomfort. Ultimately, urban design shapes perceptions of the District and contributes to the way people interact and experience the environment around them. 900.1

The critical urban design issues facing Washington, DC are addressed in this element. These include:

- Affirming civic identity through a focus on the historic intention of the District's design;
- Strengthening neighborhood quality of life while accommodating growth and change;
- Providing compatible infill development and appropriate transitions between varying uses and densities;
- Supporting a vibrant urban life that enhances the accessibility, performance, and beauty of public streets and spaces; and
- Realizing design excellence and innovation in architecture, infrastructure, and public spaces to elevate the human experience of the built environment. 900.2

The foundation of Washington, DC's design and character is based on continuous and deliberate planning to create a capital worthy of the nation. The streets, reservations, and vistas in the District's urban core collectively establish the historic L'Enfant City as the singular American example of a national capital conceived to physically express the ideals of a new republic. This historic plan serves as a significant urban design framework that both the federal and District governments have extended through subsequent generations of planning and the development of a signature system of public parks, lushly landscaped streets, and architecturally rich neighborhoods and buildings. Deeply rooted in the District's form are also natural qualities like the topography, streams, waterways, and sweeping promontory views that continue to shape the human experience of Washington, DC in both subtle and formative ways. 900.3

As a growing District, and to remain vital for future generations, Washington, DC should respond to the evolving needs of its residents, workers, and visitors and be cognizant of how technology and innovation are transforming the way people engage with the public realm and built landscape. The continued planning efforts by the federal and District governments will build upon



**The overarching goal for urban design in the District is:**

to enhance the beauty, equity, and livability of Washington, DC by reinforcing its historic design legacy and the diversity of its neighborhoods and centers, harmoniously integrating new construction with existing buildings and the natural environment, and improving the vitality, appearance, and function of streets and public spaces.

the planning legacy by shaping the District's buildings, streets, and public spaces as places for people; celebrating the increasing diversity of people and institutions within the District; and elevating the nation's capital as a sustainable and resilient place. By weaving the everyday experiences of people and contemporary design into the District's historic plan, Washington, DC's national image will be elevated. <sup>900.4</sup>

Urban design objectives are interwoven throughout many of the Comprehensive Plan's elements. In particular, the Land Use; Transportation; Environmental Protection; Historic Preservation; and Parks, Recreation, and Open Space elements all speak to the role that design should play in shaping the future of the District. The Comprehensive Plan as a whole recognizes the power of good design to transform and revitalize Washington, DC and its neighborhoods. The Urban Design Element includes diagrams to illustrate the principles suggested by its policies and actions. These diagrams are illustrative only. <sup>900.5</sup>

## Urban Design Goal <sup>901</sup>

The overarching goal for urban design in the District is to enhance the beauty, equity, and livability of Washington, DC by reinforcing its historic design legacy and the identity of its neighborhoods and centers, harmoniously integrating new construction with existing buildings and the natural environment, and improving the vitality, appearance, and function of streets and public spaces. <sup>901.1</sup>



*Public Space in the District*

## Policies and Actions

### UD-1 Shaping a Shared Civic Identity <sup>902</sup>

Washington DC's civic identity is defined by a particular set of physical features, including the Potomac and Anacostia rivers, the topographic bowl around the original city laid out by L'Enfant and the rolling hills beyond, the open spaces and dense tree canopy of its parks and neighborhoods, and the wide diagonal avenues, rectangular street grids, and circles, squares, and triangular parks. The District is further defined by its built form, which includes a horizontal skyline punctuated by civic landmarks, park-like streets, and pedestrian-scale architecture. <sup>902.1</sup>

The character of the District's center has largely been shaped by the L'Enfant Plan, 19th century public space improvements, building height restrictions including the federal 1910 Height of Buildings Act, and the McMillan Plan. The L'Enfant Plan in particular is responsible for the radial arrangement of streets, wide streets, creation of signature views, distribution of public spaces, and many irregular and prominent building sites. Immediately beyond the District's center, much of the Washington, DC urban pattern consists of walkable, compact communities within L'Enfant's original grid of streets. A ring of more than a dozen well-defined neighborhoods lie within two miles of the edge of the National Mall and have the best features of traditional urbanism—housing near open space and transit, pedestrian-oriented shopping streets, and densities that create active street life. Beyond this ring, Washington, DC's hills and valleys include many more neighborhoods that were shaped by the Olmsted Highway Plan and former streetcar lines; these neighborhoods are defined more by domestic-scale architecture, tree cover, and topography, and flank major gateways to the District. <sup>902.2</sup>

The impact of past urban design decisions has not all been positive. The urban renewal and freeway building efforts of the 1950s and '60s resulted in physical barriers between many communities and the displacement of primarily Black residents to other parts of the District. Future design decisions must help to reconcile some of the inequities that persist in the District and respond to varying conditions, changing the District's image from that of a divided city to one that is much more inclusive and connected. In this regard, reinforcing the design of Washington, DC's historic plan and access to natural features through exceptional urban design provides opportunities for achieving a shared civic identity. <sup>902.3</sup>





*Pennsylvania Avenue NW streetscape  
and tree canopy framing the view of the  
United States Capitol*

The text below is organized to respond to the following topics, each related to the urban pattern and identity of the District as a whole:

- Protecting the Integrity of Washington, DC's Historic Plans;
- Designing in Harmony with Natural Topography and Landforms;
- Designing the Waterfront for the Next Century; and
- Enhancing Thoroughfares and Gateways. <sup>902.4</sup>

### **UD-1.1 Building on Washington, DC's Historic Plan** <sup>903</sup>

Washington, DC's historic plans are the backbone of the District's architectural identity and urban form. As a deliberately planned city, the notion of future growth was built into the original L'Enfant Plan in a way that was both visionary and aspirational, anticipating a grander place that would take years to construct and speaking to the promise of a great nation. It would take over a century for the District's population to reach 500,000 and begin to take on the monumental scale of the original vision. With the additional layers of the McMillan Plan, Olmsted Highway Plan, and various other planning initiatives, Washington's urban form has proven to be both resilient at accommodating many of the changing physical and programmatic needs and demands of urban life. <sup>903.1</sup>

L'Enfant's 1791 plan for the City of Washington, with its generous rights-of-ways and network of parks and open spaces, has managed to incorporate, with varying degrees of success, the streetcar, the Metro, the automobile, bike lanes, security requirements, and other evolving layers of urban infrastructure. However, parts of the original plan have been altered and even transformed to accommodate change. Since 1896, 17 percent of the streets in the original L'Enfant Plan (as shown in Figure 9.1) are gone. Over the last 15 years, greater stewardship of the planning legacy has led to the reversal of some of these losses through projects like CityCenterDC and Waterfront Station. So far, approximately 1.7 miles of the original L'Enfant streets have been restored. <sup>903.2</sup>

Figure 9.1:

## L'Enfant Streets Over Time

903.3



The District should continue to balance the need to preserve and honor Washington, DC's distinctive urban and monumental heritage with the pressing needs of a growing population, equity, and long-term resilience. Looking at the strategies other historic capital cities have used to grow sustainably shows that, by respecting and building on these plans, greater density and careful incorporation of taller structures are possible (see Figure 9.2). A commitment to the design concepts and underlying principles of L'Enfant's 1791 plan for the City of Washington should underpin this growth and extend across and beyond the monumental core of the District with design decisions that reinforce the plan's pattern of axial, radial, and diagonal streets; enhance the public spaces formed where these streets intersect one another; and build fine-grained character in the alley system (see Figure 9.3). Finally, the approach to urban design should allow for 21st century realities and aspirations: equitable access, a renewed District identity, and sustainable design are just a handful of the factors giving shape to this vision and forming the backdrop for the public life and cultural engagement of all residents. <sup>903.4</sup>

Figure 9.2:

**Scaled Capital City Comparison** <sup>903.5</sup>

Washington, DC  
**10,528 ppl/sq. miles**



Paris, France  
**54,673 ppl/sq. miles**



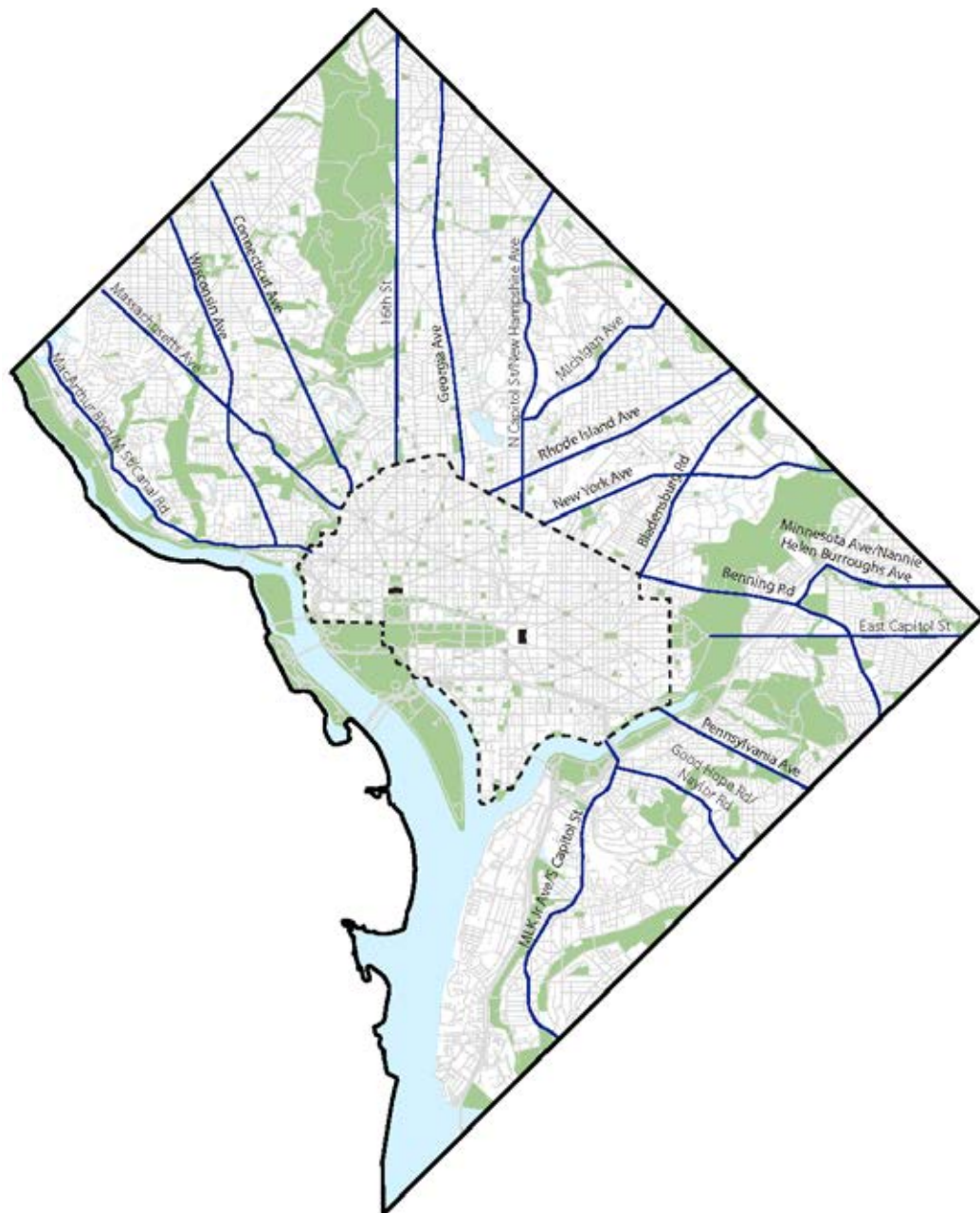
London, UK  
**14,462 ppl/sq. miles**

Paris, France and London, UK are two historic capital cities that have historic dense street plans, height restrictions, and a greater density of people per square mile than Washington, DC. Through careful planning that respects our historic form we can emulate lessons from both these cities to grow thoughtfully.



Figure 9.3:

## Key Thoroughfares 903.6



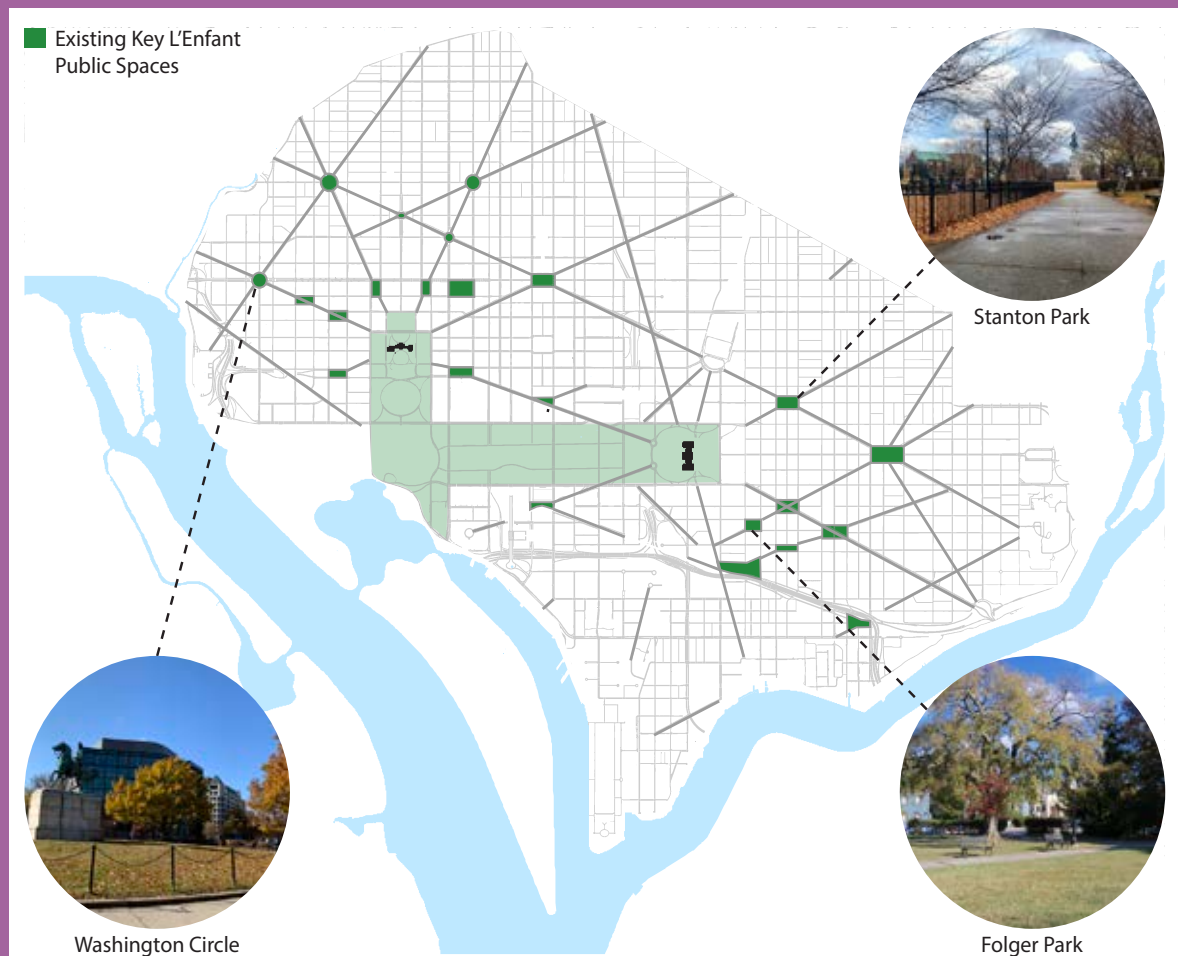
### ■ Key Thoroughfares

The District's key thoroughfares radiate from the L'Enfant planned city core and have traditionally framed the growth and development of neighborhoods in Washington DC's outlying hills and valleys. New development can build upon this historic form and strengthen corridors as places for future growth in the District.

Many of the District's public squares, circles, triangles, and public reservations (see Figure 9.4) are undervalued and lack distinction. They comprise a great design opportunity for the District to work with the National Park Service (NPS) and others to enhance these places as distinctive elements of the cityscape and important legacies of the earlier plans. Building placement is key to reinforcing the identity of the District's corridors and open spaces and to emphasizing, and not obstructing, important vistas. <sup>903.7</sup>

Figure 9.4:

## Key L'Enfant Public Spaces <sup>903.8</sup>



***Policy UD-1.1.1: National Image***

Strengthen and enhance the physical image, character and outstanding physical qualities of the District, its neighborhoods, and its open spaces, in a manner that reflects its role as the national capital and its distinctive identity as a thriving urban community. 903.9

***Policy UD-1.1.2: Reinforcing L'Enfant's 1791 Plan for the City of Washington and Olmsted Highway Plans***

Preserve and reinforce the Plan of the City of Washington, and Olmsted Highway plans to maintain the District's unique and historic character, such as the grand avenues and connections to nature. This policy should be achieved through a variety of urban design measures, including restoration of previously closed streets, appropriate building placement, view preservation, enhancement of L'Enfant Plan reservations (green spaces), limits on street and alley closings and the siting of new monuments and memorials in locations of visual prominence. Restore obstructed view corridors and vistas, where contributing to a historic resource where possible. 903.10

***Policy UD-1.1.3: Preeminent View Corridors***

Reinforce the prominent role of views as a defining feature of the District's character through careful planning of streetscapes and public parks to preserve and frame views of existing landmarks and significant structures and through consideration of the various types of view corridors when designing and planning public projects and streetscapes. Such views could include preeminent views of nationally symbolic architecture, important views of nationally or locally significant civic structures, landmarks, and parks and open spaces. (see Figure 9.5). 903.11

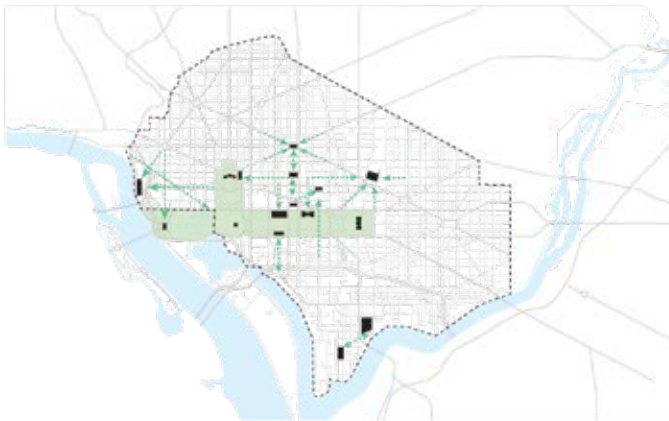
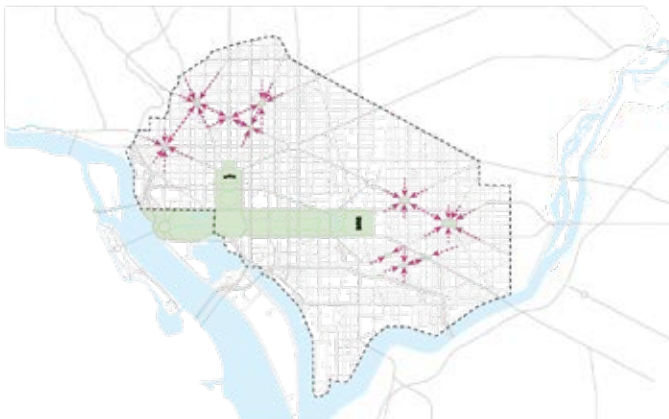


*The Dupont Circle fountain, one of DC's Civil War Monuments and is dedicated to Samuel Francis Du Pont*



Figure 9.5:

## View Corridors within L'Enfant's 1791 plan for the City of Washington 903.12

*Preeminent View Corridors**View of the Capitol Building**Significant National and Civic View Corridors**View of the DC Court of Appeals**Locally Significant View Corridors**View of Dupont Circle*

**Policy UD-1.1.4: Siting and Design of Monuments and Memorials**

Locate commemorative works in places that are relevant to the subject being memorialized, where possible. Design commemorative installations to be accessible to people of all ages and various degrees of mobility, and design them in a way that benefits public life. Explore new types of commemoration, including temporary installations. 903.13

**Policy UD-1.1.5: Height Act of 1910**

Protect the civic and historical character of the city, particularly the “horizontal” urban quality of Central Washington, by limiting building heights in accordance with the Height Act of 1910. Basic principles of the Height Act are shown in Figure 9.20. 903.14

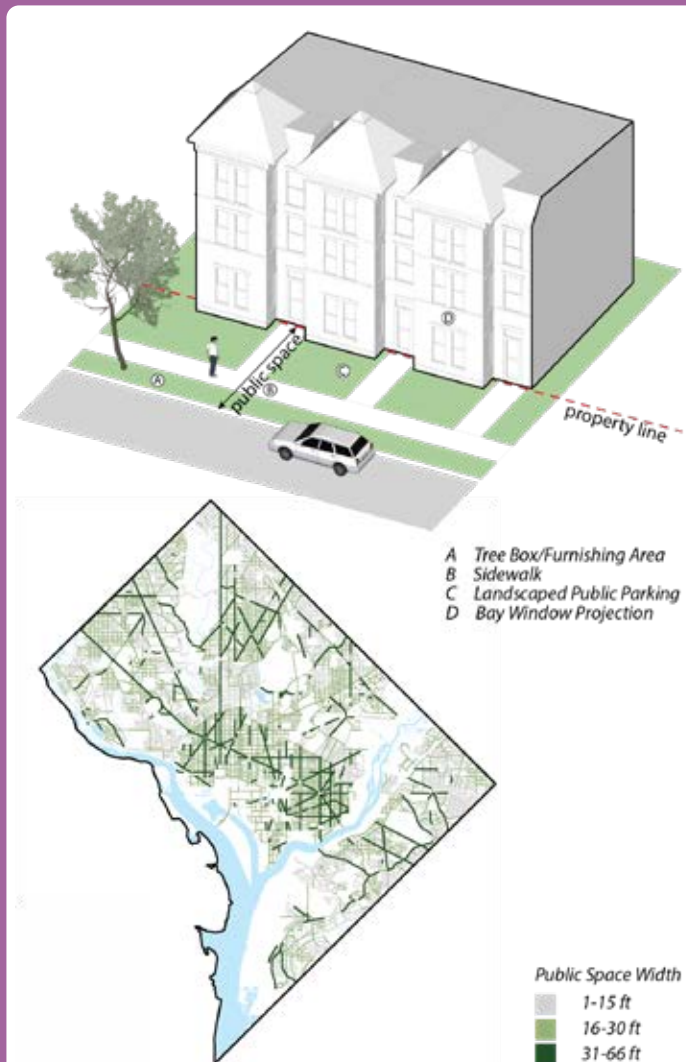
**Policy UD-1.1.6: Inclusive and Vibrant Civic Spaces**

In coordination with federal and other stakeholders, enhance L’Enfant Plan reservations and other historic open spaces as key gathering and civic spaces of Washington, DC through appropriate redesign and programming compatible with historic qualities to attract a diversity of users, enhance user experience, and foster national and local identity. Design the visual qualities of the public spaces to reinforce the District’s grand civic character, as well as its creative culture. 903.15

**Policy UD-1.1.7: Public Space Landscape**

Continue and enhance the use of public parking regulations (see Figure 9.6) to promote a verdant park-like character of the District’s streets, with landscaped yards, generous tree canopy, and pedestrian-scaled retaining walls and fences. Maintain building restriction lines, limit below-grade building projections that detract from green space, and preserve the existing grades along a block or corridor in public space and building restriction areas. 903.16

Figure 9.6:

**Streets with Public Parking** 903.17

The area of public rights-of-way devoted to open space and greenery between a private property line and the sidewalk is referred to as public parking in District regulations. The term parking refers to the intent for this area to be like a park, in effect making each street in the District a parkway. Public parking does more than just make Washington, DC look attractive. It has many benefits that include absorbing stormwater, creating an environment that promotes an increased tree canopy, and visually distinguishing the District from adjacent jurisdictions and other cities.

**Policy UD-1.1.8: Community Life in Alleys**

Promote the use of the historic alleyway systems as multipurpose spaces that meet utilitarian needs and can provide additional housing, support community life, and use approaches such as green alley treatments, and controlled vehicular access. Strongly discourage the closure of alleyways for whole block development. 903.18

Figure 9.7:

**Community Life of Alleys** 903.19

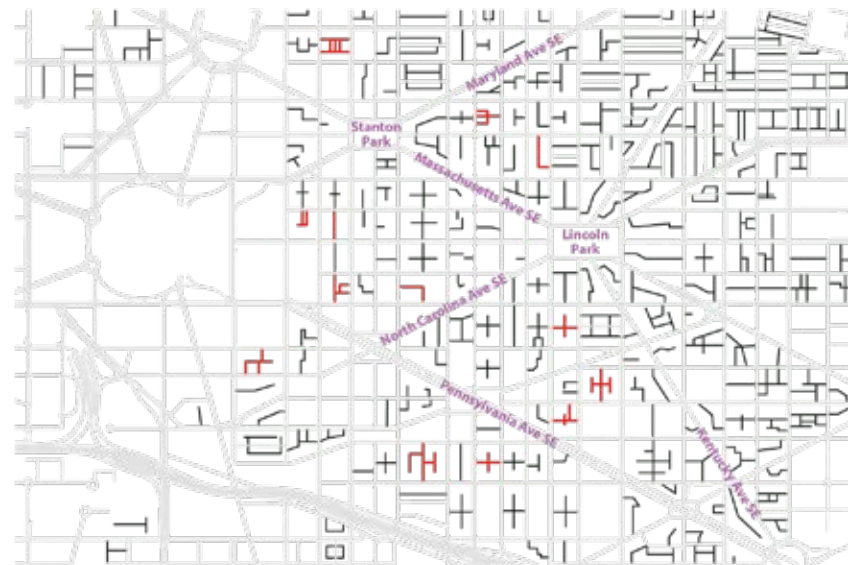
Gessford Court SE



Uninhabited DC Alley

■ Alleys with Occupied Alley Dwellings

■ Uninhabited Alleys



DC is a city of alleys, that historically served both utilitarian needs as well as places for housing and community life. As the utilitarian needs for alleys decrease, opportunities to restore community life with alley houses and accessory dwellings are increasing. The historic alley houses of Capitol Hill provide an excellent model for how different uses and experiences can coincide to enhance the public life of our city.

**Policy UD-1.1.9: Reducing Railroad and Highway Barriers**

Upgrade or rebuild railroad and highway overpasses and underpasses to maintain or restore the continuity of the historic street network for the comfort and safety of pedestrians and bicyclists and connect neighborhoods. In appropriate settings, such as Central Washington, explore longer-term solutions to addressing railroad and highway barriers, such as air rights development over tracks, sunken freeways, or conversion into boulevards.

903.20

**Action UD-1.1.A: Siting of Commemorative Works**

Enhance the District government's approach to the siting and review of both local and national commemorative works. Use existing processes and



as needed, establish new processes for better coordination among District and federal agencies and review bodies regarding federal and District commemorative work proposals. Develop a District-wide master plan for creating and siting District commemorative works and events throughout Washington, DC. <sup>903.21</sup>

*Action UD-1.1.B: Review of Public Parking Regulations*

Conduct a review of public space regulations and standards. Update and refine the design standards for public parking areas, including appropriate materials for curbs, fences, and retaining walls. In addition, develop regulations to promote tree planting in areas without street trees. <sup>903.22</sup>

*Action UD-1.1.C: Alley Greening*

Investigate the adoption of regulations that allow for resident greening and controlled vehicular access of alleyways to promote neighborhood community life. <sup>903.23</sup>

*Action UD-1.1.D: District-Wide Urban Design Vision*

Produce a District-wide urban design vision that facilitates equitable and sustainable growth. The vision should elevate the quality of new building architecture, landscape architecture, and urban design, while conserving essential elements of Washington, DC's traditional physical character. The vision should also strengthen District-wide systems, such as infrastructure, housing, and transportation to address contemporary community needs and improve the quality of life for all residents. <sup>903.24</sup>

*Action UD-1.1.E: View Corridor Study and Guidelines*

Conduct one or more studies, in coordination with the NCPC, to inventory, analyze, and categorize important viewsheds to and from major public open spaces and important view corridors, and develop design guidance for preserving and enhancing views, strengthening the image of the capital city and the District, and improving the pedestrian experience. <sup>903.25</sup>

*Action UD-1.1.F: Small Open Spaces Inventory and Design Guidelines*

Document existing small open spaces and reservations under both federal and District control and develop guidelines for restoring green space and enhancing their usability as recreation and community spaces. <sup>903.26</sup>

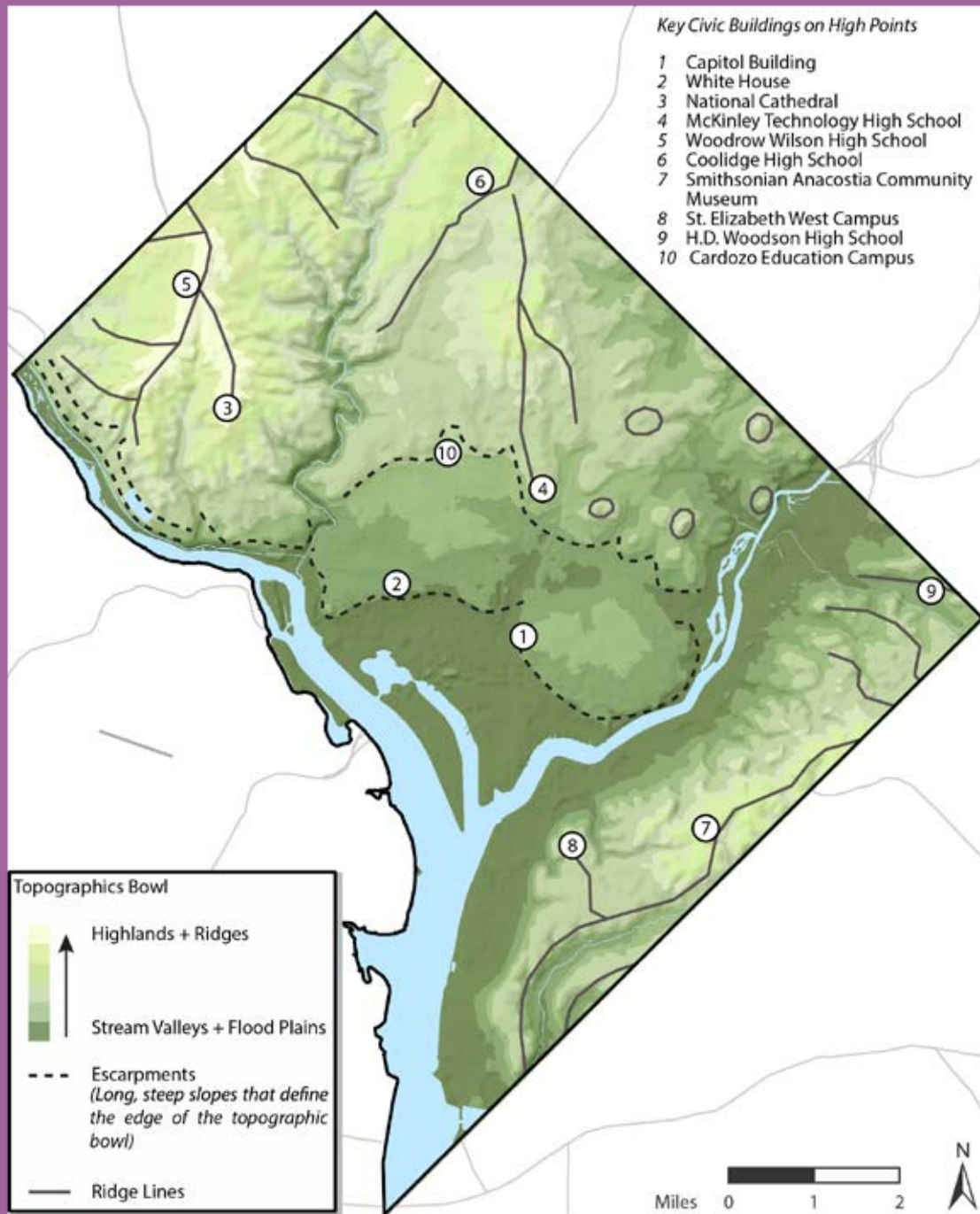
## **UD-1.2 Designing in Harmony with Natural Topography and Landforms** <sup>904</sup>

The escarpments, ridges, hills, plateaus, rivers, and streams of Washington, DC's topography are major components of the District's identity. They shape neighborhoods and parks as well as essential elements of the District's skyline, as shown in Map 9.1. This is particularly true for framing views of iconic buildings in the L'Enfant City. Natural features are also important for

Map 9.1:

# Topographic Bowl

904.2



neighborhoods located on the hills, slopes, and ridges beyond the L'Enfant City, where the natural features frame views of grand prospects toward the Capitol building, panoramic vistas of the District from high elevations like Fort Reno, and street-level views of forested parks and stream valleys in many neighborhoods in Wards 7 and 8 and in Northwest DC. <sup>904.1</sup>

***Policy UD-1.2.1: Respecting Natural Features in Development***

Respect and perpetuate the natural features of Washington, DC's landscape as part of new development. In wooded or hilly areas, new construction should preserve natural features rather than alter them to accommodate development. Development in such areas should be clustered to protect topography and provide setbacks as needed to protect natural features, such as large trees, rock outcroppings, streams, and wetlands. <sup>904.3</sup>

***Policy UD-1.2.2: Protecting the Topographic Bowl***

Consistent with the Federal Elements of the Comprehensive Plan, maintain the prominence of the topographic bowl formed by lowland and rim features of the L'Enfant City (see text box). This protective effort should include preserving the green setting of the Anacostia hills and maintaining the visual prominence of the Florida Avenue escarpment. <sup>904.4</sup>

***Policy UD-1.2.3: Ridgeline Protection***

Protect views of prominent ridgelines from the monumental core, so as to maintain and enhance the District's physical image and identity. <sup>904.5</sup>

***Policy UD-1.2.4: Significant View Protection***

Recognize and protect significant views within the District, particularly characteristic views of landmarks and views from important vantage points (as shown in Figure 9.8). Recognize the importance of views to the quality of life in the District and the identity of Washington, DC and its neighborhoods. <sup>904.6</sup>



Figure 9.8:

## Key Public Places with Panoramic Views 904.7



The historic center of Washington, DC occupies a low-lying bowl of river flats formed by the junction of the Potomac and Anacostia rivers. The bowl is surrounded by a ring of hills, ridges, and upland areas.

The flat topography of the area within the original L'Enfant City lends itself to radial boulevards terminating on monuments or far-reaching vistas. Such geometric road patterns would have been less effective on rolling hills. In outlying areas, where the topography is more varied, important landmarks are often closely related to features of the natural setting. The National Cathedral, for example, is sited on one of the highest ridgelines in the District, affording great visibility of the structure from many points in Washington, DC and beyond. Similar promontories exist in Wards 7 and 8 on sites such as St. Elizabeths Hospital and along the Civil War Defenses of Washington, DC, also known as the Fort Circle Parks that offer viewing opportunities. As the District continues to develop, significant public

landmarks may be built, contributing to Washington, DC's varied and dramatic vistas. <sup>904.8</sup>

#### *Action UD-1.2.A: Public Space Regulations for Grading*

Conduct a review of public space regulations and standards to assess limits and design requirements for protecting natural landforms, including changes to grade, retaining walls, fences, and landscaping. Recommend changes to these regulations as necessary to respect and enhance view corridors and the natural topography and landform. <sup>904.9</sup>

#### *Action UD-1.2.B: Creating View Plane Regulations*

Conduct a study of significant views from key public spaces in the District, in coordination with the National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC). Identify public view locations, key components that define them, and recommendations for protecting and enhancing them. Create view plane diagrams and design guidelines. <sup>904.10</sup>

### **UD-1.3 Designing the Waterfront for the Next Century** <sup>905</sup>

The confluence of the Potomac and Anacostia rivers determined Washington, DC's location, contributing to the design and orientation of the Mall, monuments, central federal institutions, and original port settlements. Subsequently, the development of industry, the construction of railroads and highways, and the reservation of much of the shoreline for military and other federal uses eroded the District's connection to the water. Restoring an urban design emphasis that embraces and reestablishes access to the water is key to strengthening the District's civic identity. Over the last 15 years, both the Potomac and Anacostia rivers have seen dramatic progress toward connected, accessible waterfronts, with destination public spaces such as the Yards Park, the Wharf promenade, and Georgetown Park; a renewed connection to riparian ecology through the Anacostia Riverwalk Trail system and the restoration of Kingman Island; and the redevelopment of new and existing neighborhoods, including Historic Anacostia, Capitol Riverfront/Navy Yard, Southwest Waterfront, and Buzzard Point. <sup>905.1</sup>

Realizing a waterfront that is diverse, resilient, and integrated with established neighborhoods requires continued effort. It is critical to provide equitable access to the waterfront. Riverfront access must also reflect protection of sensitive habitat, and safety and security considerations. Currently, 30 percent of the Potomac and 31 percent of the Anacostia shorelines lack riverfront trails, and only 22 percent of streets physically connect to the water's edge or waterfront public spaces, leaving many low-income neighborhoods along the Anacostia with sparse access to the river (as shown in Figure 9.9). <sup>905.2</sup>



*Georgetown's active waterfront includes a publicly accessible promenade, restaurants, and a docking area for boats traveling on the Potomac River.*

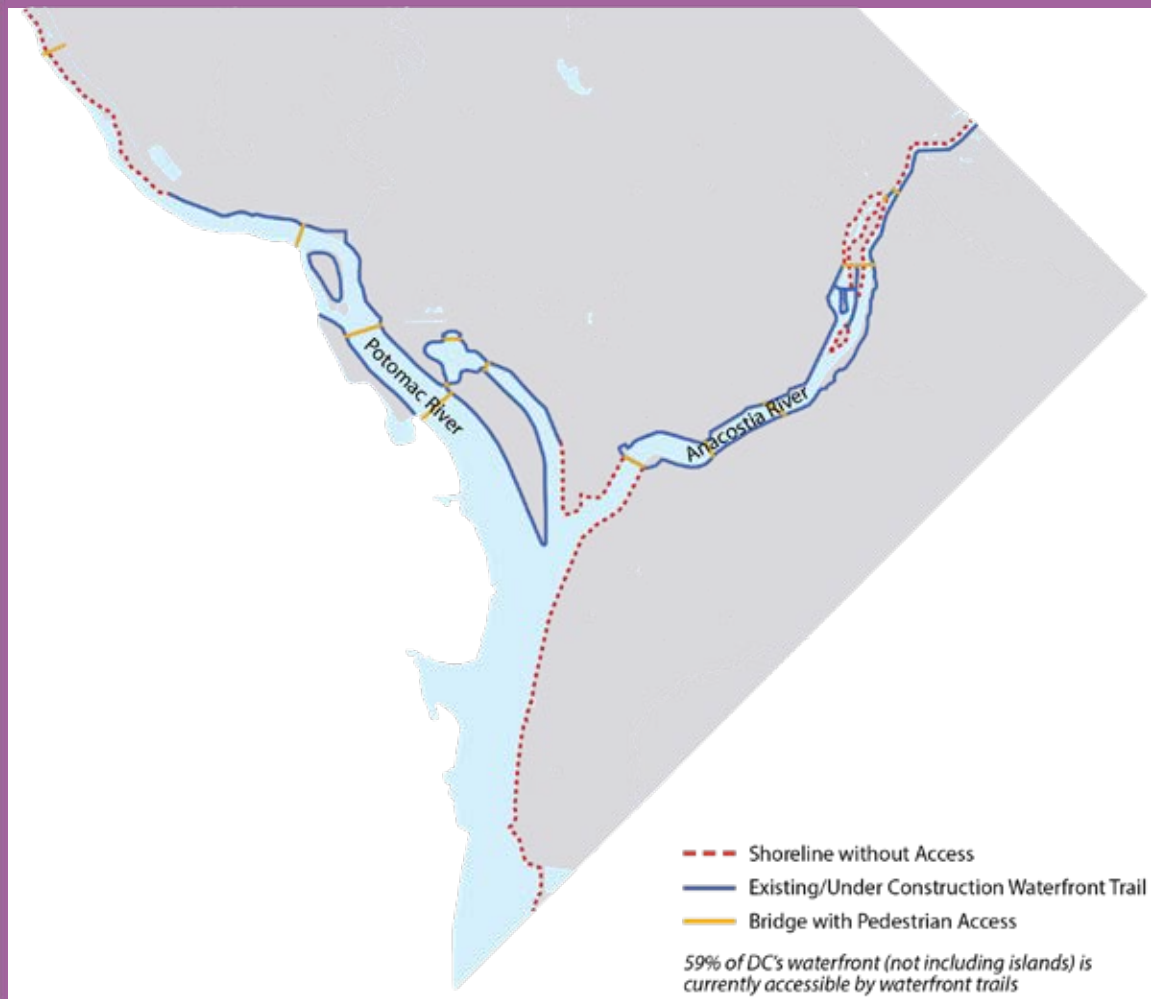


*District Wharf Promenade*



*The Yards Park*

Figure 9.9:

**Waterfront Trails and Shoreline Access** <sup>905.3</sup>

Continuing the revitalization of the waterfront also means managing the growing challenges of coastal flooding, riverine flooding, and storm surge that threaten development along the waterfront as well as interior low-lying areas and areas developed along stream valleys. By 2080, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers predict up to 3.4 feet of additional sea level rise in Washington, DC. These trends threaten not only completed Anacostia waterfront development but also projects underway and planned in areas such as Poplar Point. Resilient and climate-adaptive design will be necessary to protect people and infrastructure in sensitive areas. <sup>905.4</sup>



### ***Policy UD-1.3.1: Diverse Waterfront Experiences along the Anacostia River***

Strengthen Washington, DC's civic identity as a waterfront city by promoting public and private investment along the Anacostia River waterfront and creating equitable and publicly accessible amenities for existing and new residents. Design a mix of new public parks and other natural areas to provide diverse waterfront experiences and help residents use the water as a community asset through programming and recreational amenities. Create continuous public access along both sides of the shoreline, integrate historic features and structures into new developments, preserve or restore habitat areas, and implement other design interventions to improve the physical and visual connections between the waterfront and adjacent neighborhoods. <sup>905.5</sup>

### ***Policy UD-1.3.2: Waterfront Public Space***

Develop public gathering spaces along the Potomac and Anacostia waterfronts, including promenades, viewpoints, boating and swimming facilities, and parks. Such space should be designed to promote continuous public access along the rivers and to take full advantage of site topography and waterfront views. Design treatments should vary from hardscape plazas in urban settings to greener open spaces that are more natural in character, and spaces that provide access to outdoor recreation. Encourage the density and mix of land uses that enliven waterfront sites with pedestrian activity, provide a sense of safety, create visual interest, and draw people to the water.

<sup>905.6</sup>

*See also the Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Element and the Lower Anacostia Waterfront/Near Southwest Area Element for additional actions and policies related to providing continuous public access to the water's edge and removing barriers to waterfront access.*

### ***Policy UD-1.3.3: Innovative and Resilient Waterfront Development***

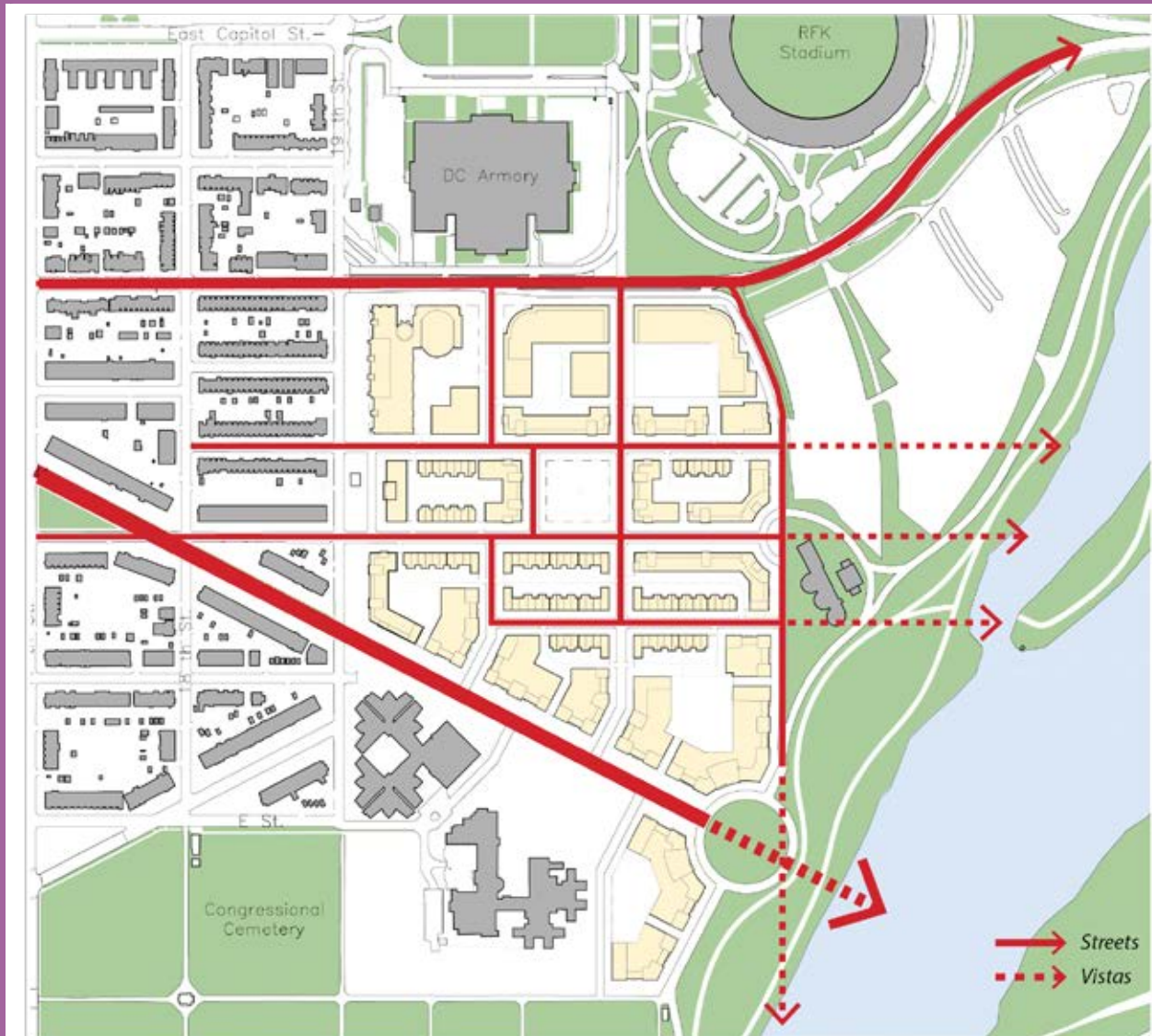
The design of new waterfront development projects should respond to the unique opportunities and challenges of being on the water. Incorporate nature-based design and flood-resilient building and site design methods. New buildings should be carefully designed to consider their appearance from multiple public vantage points along the Anacostia and Potomac shorelines, including from the shoreline and from the water. <sup>905.7</sup>

### ***Policy UD-1.3.4: Resilient Waterfront***

The design of each waterfront site should respond to its natural context and work with the natural processes of tidal rivers to be resilient to flooding from storm surge, sea level rise, and other sources. Design all buildings, structures, infrastructure, outdoor spaces, and shorelines to accommodate and mitigate flooding and to restore ecological systems and natural shorelines. <sup>905.8</sup>

Figure 9.10:

## Extending Neighborhood Street Grids to the Waterfront 905.9



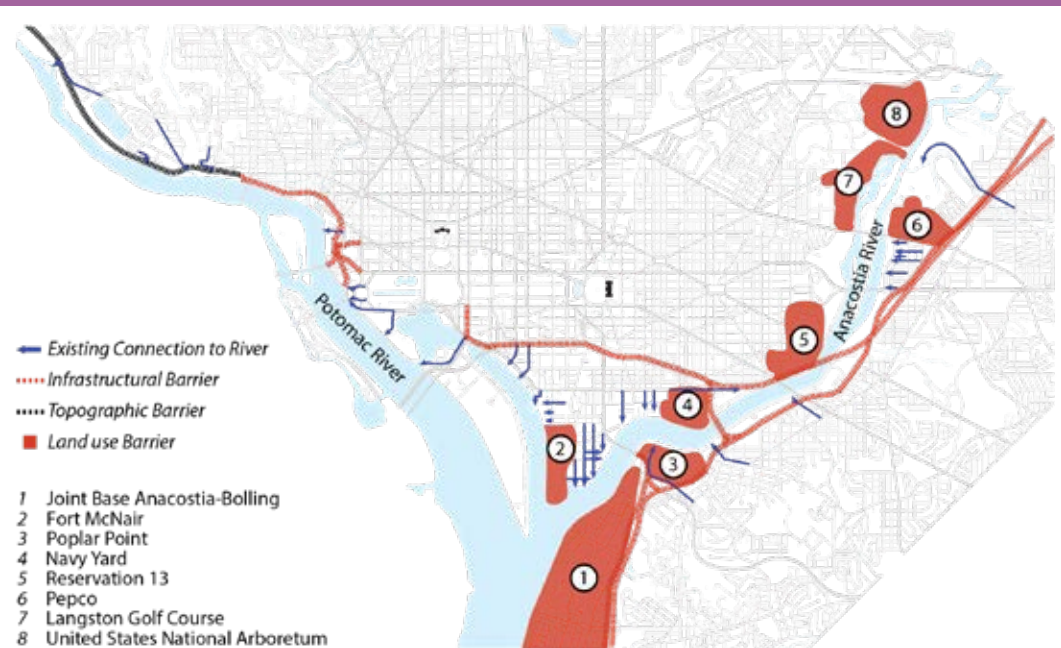
This diagram shows the proposed plan for Hill East. The city grid should be extended to the waterfront, restoring view corridors and connecting the neighborhood east of 19th Street NE to the river's edge.

**Policy UD-1.3.5: River Views**

Protect and enhance street view corridors to the Potomac and Anacostia rivers by shaping the design of buildings to frame views and by encouraging sensitive tree planting and landscaping that preserves an open sky and strong visual access to the water. Public river views on bridges and piers should be enhanced through features such as lighting, seating, and strong pedestrian and bicycle connections. Design buildings and public spaces along the waterfront to provide accessible, pedestrian friendly environments that protect views from important sites. Figure 9.10 illustrates preservation of river views on waterfront development sites. <sup>905.10</sup>

**Policy UD-1.3.6: Waterfront Access and Connectivity**

Improve the physical connections between neighborhoods and nearby waterfronts. Where feasible, extend the existing urban grid into large waterfront sites to better connect nearby developed areas to the shoreline. Greater access to the waterfront should also be achieved by reconfiguring roadways and other infrastructure along the waterfront to reduce access impediments for neighborhoods with limited access, and for pedestrians and bicyclists. Provide a consistent design treatment for waterfront trails (see Figure 9.11). <sup>905.11</sup>

**Figure 9.11:****Neighborhood Street Connections to Rivers** <sup>905.12</sup>

Access to DC's rivers is restricted by both natural topographical barriers and man-made infrastructure barriers. Access to the Anacostia River from Ward 7 and 8 is especially limited, due to the 1-295 highway and District and Federal facilities.



***Policy UD-1.3.7: Anacostia River Gateways***

Improve visual design qualities and pedestrian access of the gateways to and from Wards 7 and 8 neighborhoods from the Anacostia River crossings, with landscape and transportation improvements along Howard Road, Martin Luther King, Jr Avenue, Pennsylvania Avenue, Randle Circle (Minnesota and Massachusetts SE), Benning Road, East Capitol Street, and Kenilworth Avenue. <sup>905.13</sup>

***Policy UD-1.3.8: Buzzard Point Vision Framework + Design Review Guide***

Use the Buzzard Point Vision Framework + Design Review Guide to guide and review both public and private investments in Buzzard Point, in partnership with District agencies, the adjacent Southwest and Capitol Riverfront neighborhoods, the development community, Fort McNair, NPS, and other stakeholders. <sup>905.14</sup>

***Action UD-1.3.A: Anacostia Waterfront Initiative***

Continue to implement the Framework Plan for the Anacostia River, restoring Washington, DC's identity as a waterfront city and bridging the east and west sides of the river. Continue community and public engagement and pursue equitable development outcomes that provide opportunities and benefits for underserved neighborhoods. <sup>905.15</sup>

*See Section UD-1.3 for information about barriers to shoreline access.*

***Action UD-1.3.B: Waterfront Barriers***

Continue to explore ways to address freeway and highway barriers along the Anacostia and Potomac waterfronts. Study options for addressing the visual barrier presented by the Whitehurst Freeway, the physical barrier presented by the waterfront CSX rail line, and I-295's physical and visual barriers. <sup>905.16</sup>

***Action UD-1.3.C: Natural Shorelines***

Identify and map waterfront areas with potential to be converted to natural shorelines. <sup>905.17</sup>

## UD-1.4 Enhancing Thoroughfares and Gateways <sup>906</sup>

Grand and picturesque streets in the form of avenues, gateway corridors, and parkways, and long-established roads are defining elements of Washington, DC's urban form (See Figure 9.12). They create dramatic points of entry into the District, wind through and define neighborhoods, and connect large parks and open spaces. Today, these thoroughfares are classified by their function as part of the transportation system, but they were created at various times and shaped by different forces. The avenues of the Plan of the City of Washington and the Olmsted Highway Plan establish a system of thoroughfares that have a sense of civic prominence, define neighborhoods, and frame views of the District. There are three types of thoroughfares with varying origins and purpose, each creating distinct places and experiences:

- Avenues and gateway corridors, or the formal streets that originate in the District and extend into outlying areas, serve as entrances to the District, and have become part of the national identity of the District;
- Parkway, or the streets with formal and natural characteristics that meander through and around the District, are lined with generous green space, and connect large parks and open spaces; and
- Long-established roads, or the streets with irregular alignments that follow topography that pre-dates or was created very early in the District's history to connect communities outside of the L'Enfant City. <sup>906.1</sup>

Major avenues and gateways are shown in Figure 9.12. <sup>906.2</sup>

### ***Policy UD-1.4.1: Thoroughfares and Urban Form***

Use Washington, DC's major thoroughfares to reinforce the form and identity of the District, connect its neighborhoods, and improve its aesthetic and visual character through context-sensitive landscaping, tree planting, and streetscape design. Special attention should be placed on how public space, building restriction areas, and adjacent buildings contribute to each thoroughfare's character. Focus improvement efforts on thoroughfares with limited amenities. <sup>906.3</sup>

### ***Policy UD-1.4.2: District Gateways***

Create more distinctive and memorable gateways at points of entry to the District and in neighborhoods, parks and open spaces, and neighborhood centers. Gateways should provide a sense of transition, orientation, and arrival through improvements in the form of landscaping, art work, commemoration, and roadway design. They should be designed to make a strong and positive visual impact. <sup>906.9</sup>



*Gateway Boulevard: East Capitol Street looking West towards Lincoln Park and the United States Capitol*



*Parkway: Reno Road NW looking South towards Embassy Row*

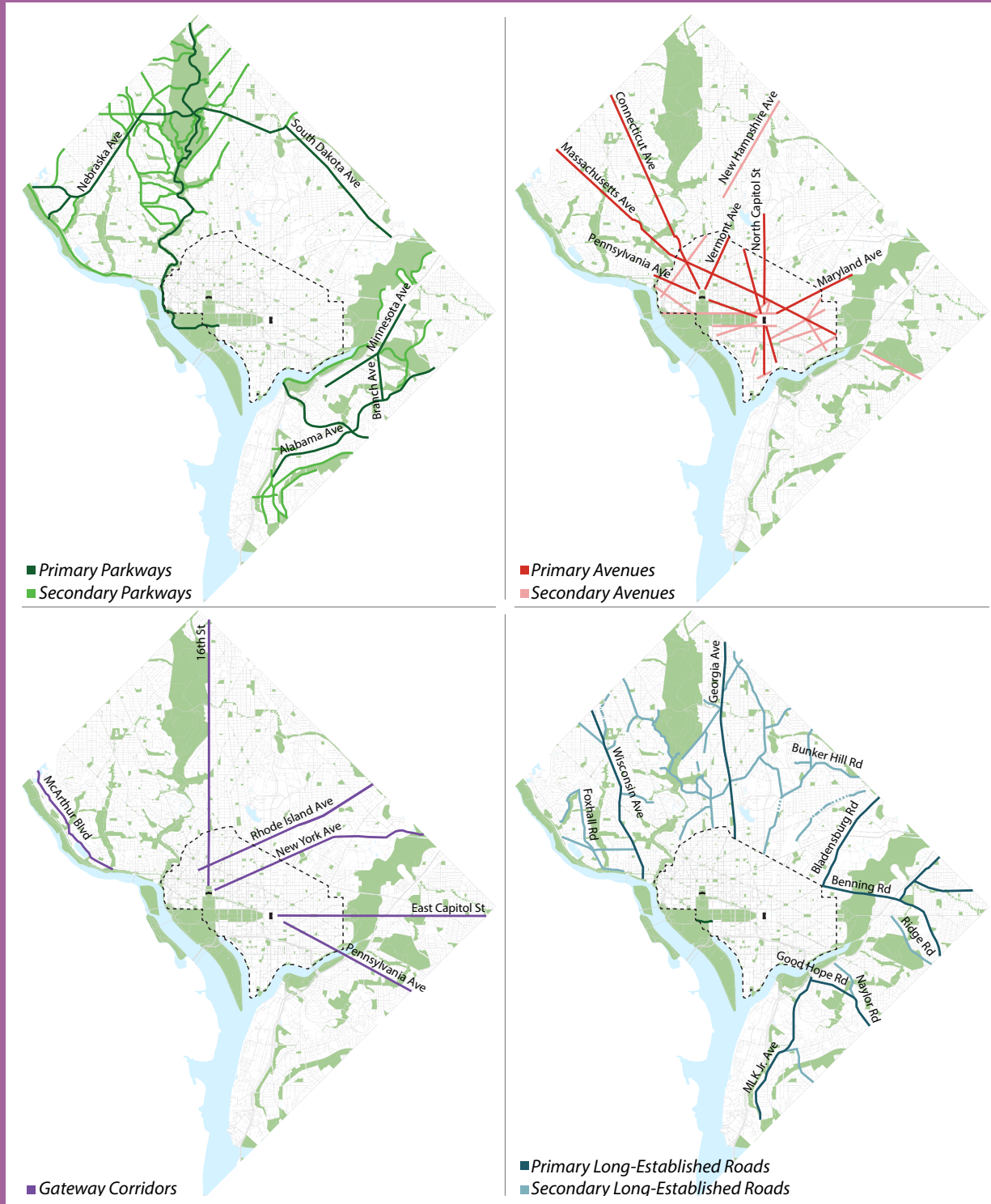


*Avenue: Road Island Avenue NW looking Northeast towards Logan Circle*



*Long-established road: Wisconsin Avenue NW looking Southeast towards Georgetown*

Figure 9.12:

Thoroughfare Types in DC 906.4



***Policy UD-1.4.3: Thoroughfare Vistas and View Corridors***

Protect picturesque views and view corridors along avenues, parkways, and other major corridors, particularly along streets that terminate, connect, and frame important neighborhood and national institutions, memorials, and parks. Vistas along such streets should be accentuated by street trees and include distinct facades of high architectural quality along well-defined street walls and, if appropriate, maintain a park-like character. 906.10

***Policy UD-1.4.4: Priority Avenues and Gateway Corridors***

Focus the District's avenue and gateway corridor design improvements on historically important or symbolic streets, including 16th Street, Rhode Island Avenue, North Capitol Street, Pennsylvania Avenue SE, and New York Avenue. Support federal efforts to preserve Constitution and Independence Avenues as major boulevards. Coordinate with NCPC to preserve and enhance the character of avenues and streets with shared federal and local interests that have important viewsheds and connections to federal and cultural structures and open spaces. 906.11

***Policy UD-1.4.5: Grading of New Streets***

The grade of new streets should respond to existing topography, the existing grading of nearby streets, and the broader urban context. Grading should reflect the function of the street within the broader Olmstead Highway Plan, such as winding streets in residential neighborhoods with topography, level streets and sidewalks in commercial areas, and formal and consistent treatment along boulevards and avenues. 906.12

***Action UD-1.4.A: Zoning and Views***

Conduct a study to determine the feasibility of special design controls that would apply to major thoroughfares and gateway streets to enhance important views and to upgrade the aesthetic quality of key thoroughfares.

906.13

***Action UD-1.4.B: Boundary Streets and Entrances***

Explore the feasibility of enhancing points of arrival into the District at the major Maryland and Virginia gateways to the District through signage, public art, landscaping, restoration and careful maintenance of historic boundary markers, road design and pavement changes, special treatment of boundary streets (Southern, Eastern, and Western Avenues), and related improvements. 906.14

*See the Historic Preservation Element for more on protecting the special character of the L'Enfant Plan's streets.*