



# Introduction

Washington is one of the world's great cities. It is defined by its monumental spaces; its role as the seat of our national government; and as a city of diverse urban neighborhoods with a thriving cultural scene and a vibrant downtown. These are the qualities we must build upon as the city continues to grow in the 21st century.

The National Mall, with its green expanse framed by iconic buildings and monuments, is the primary stage upon which our civic identity is played out. But while the National Mall is the physical center of Washington, it can not support all the needs of a city that has more than a half million residents, a work day population that nearly doubles, and 20 million visitors per year.

The plans of Pierre L'Enfant and the McMillan Commission established monumental visions for Washington, emulating the great cities of Europe at the time. In 1997, *Extending the Legacy* proposed a vision that would re-center the city on the U.S. Capitol by mixing public and private uses and extending new public buildings, memorials, and museums into all quadrants of the city.

*Reimagining Washington's Monumental Core: A Framework Plan for Connecting New Destinations with the National Mall* advances that vision by focusing on the areas immediately adjacent to the National Mall, and through more detailed planning, identifies how to transform the architectural monumentality of the core to more contextual place-making. The *Framework Plan* lays out a series

of proposals that will integrate the civic qualities of the National Mall with the vitality of the city to create new destinations that will be 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 here. Where connections between these destinations do not exist, they will be established; where they do exist, they must be reinforced.

The *Framework Plan* is a bold, decision-making framework and a practical tool for guiding federal investment through short-, medium-, and long-term projects over the next thirty years. It was prepared by the National Capital Planning Commission and the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts in coordination with other current local and federal planning initiatives.

As identified in one of President Obama's first Executive Orders, the economic health and social vitality of our urban communities are critically important to the prosperity and quality of life for all Americans. Nowhere is the influence of the federal government more significant than in Washington, the nation's capital. In transforming the monumental core of the city, this document is part of a larger effort that requires the full partnership of the federal government with the District of Columbia in ensuring that Washington stands as a 21st century model for outstanding urban design, livability, and sustainability.

The purpose of *The Framework Plan for Reimagining Washington's Monumental Core* is to transform the federal precincts surrounding the National Mall into vibrant destinations and to improve the physical and visual connections between the city, the National Mall, and the waterfront, while achieving the highest levels of livability and sustainability in central Washington.

*Reimagining Washington’s Monumental Core: Framework Plan* was initiated to help preserve the historic landscape of the National Mall as a place for national gatherings and a place to honor our country’s heroes and cultural heritage. While the *Framework Plan* initially sought to improve the settings for future commemorative works located off the National Mall, it expanded in scope to address broader needs, including the demand for federal office space and the planning and economic interests of the city.

## Civic Vitality for the Monumental Core

The *Framework Plan* focuses on key streets and federally owned property in the areas around the National Mall. It examines Washington’s extraordinary but often undervalued assets such as its waterfront, historic public buildings, civic spaces, and parkland. It includes recommendations for integrating the special civic qualities of the National Mall and the dynamic vibrancy of downtown into the adjacent federal precincts to enrich the urban experience for all Americans and our international visitors.

The *Framework Plan* proposes improvements to important sites, intersections, and corridors and the connections between them, making these areas more accessible, more sustainable, and better integrated into the fabric of city life. The *Framework Plan* addresses the needs of our nation’s citizens, the federal government

and its workers, city residents, and the local economy by creating distinctive settings for future cultural institutions and memorials; protecting and expanding the federal office base; enhancing the waterfront experience; and reinforcing the precincts as distinctive and economically viable places to work, live, and visit. It proposes creating linkages among these new destinations, the National Mall, the waterfront, and the rest of the city with bold urban design gestures—symbolic connections that make new civic places possible.

These *Framework Plan* goals can be achieved by infusing each precinct around the National Mall with publicly accessible buildings of distinguished architecture; inviting gathering places and landscapes; well-connected and vibrant public spaces; a dense mix of uses; walkable, friendly streets; and an easy-to-use 21st century transit system.

## A Framework for the 21st Century

The *Framework Plan* is a flexible tool to help guide future planning and development decisions. It is not a prescriptive master plan nor an implementation program; rather, it identifies immediate and long-term opportunities to coordinate land use, urban design, public space, and transportation improvements, and to improve environmental management. The *Plan* seeks to maintain federal ownership of land and buildings and retain federal agencies in the District of

Columbia in locations appropriate to their missions, while capitalizing on opportunities to integrate a mix of services, hospitality, and residential uses to blend the boundaries between the federal and local city.

The *Plan* lays out an agenda for the detailed planning work necessary to evaluate the feasibility, costs, funding sources, and benefits of site-specific initiatives that will help to realize the vision in the years to come. It contains a variety of large and small initiatives, some easily achieved in the next few years, and others that will require a longer time frame. Federal and city stakeholders, with input from the public, will further define, plan, evaluate, and design specific initiatives. This process will ensure compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act, the National Historical Preservation Act, and other requirements.

Many recommendations included in the *Framework Plan* will require additional detailed planning before projects are funded or constructed. Since some initiatives exceed the scope of an individual agency’s mission, Executive and Congressional approval will be required for the necessary capital investments. Individual initiatives could be led by one or more federal, District, or private entities; funding mechanisms such as federal appropriations, partnerships, private financing, and other strategies should all be considered. A detailed action agenda for the *Framework Plan*, addressing implementation and possible legislative tools and organizational approaches, is included at the end of this report.

## Framework Plan Goals

The primary goals of the *Framework Plan* are to:

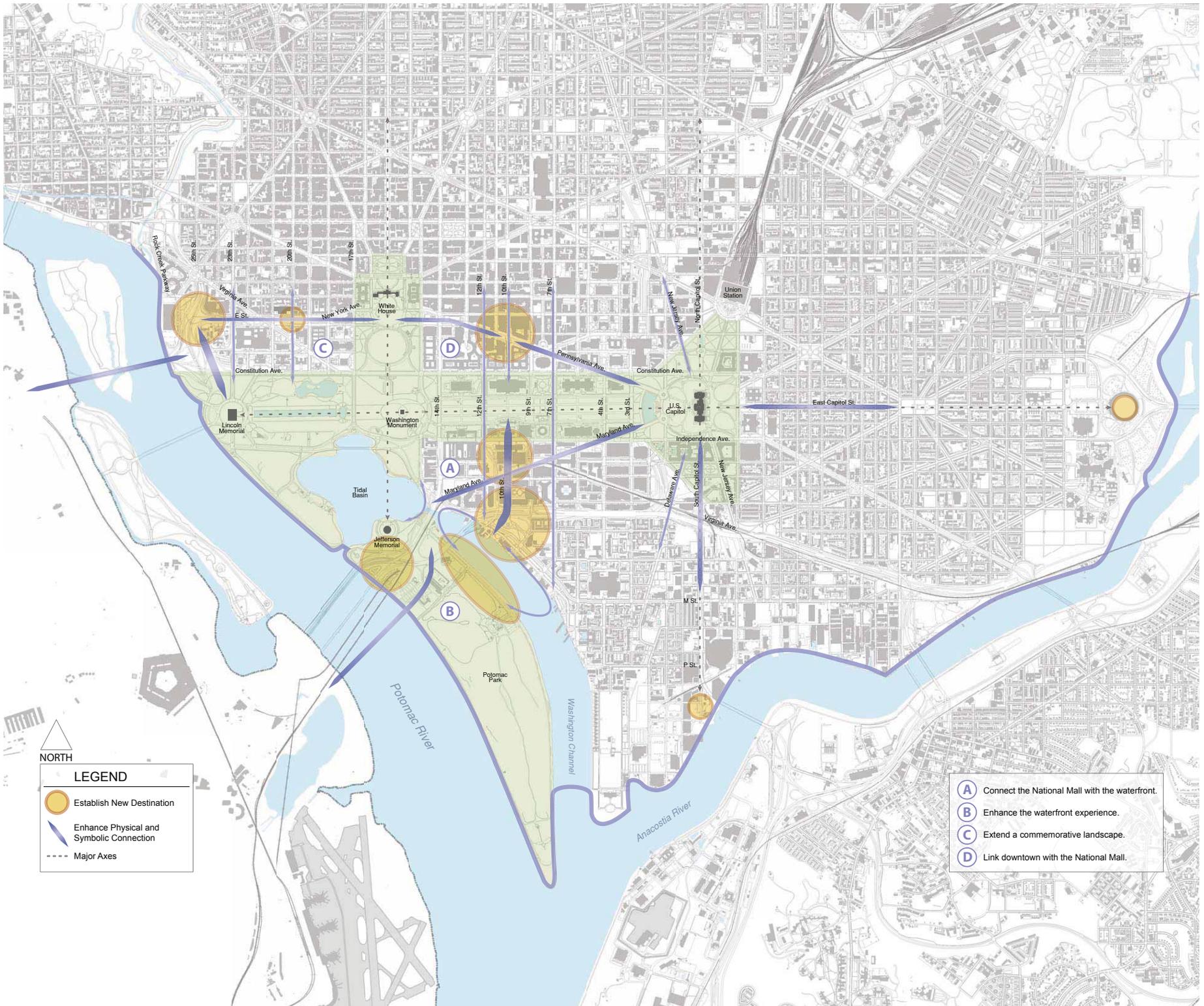
**TRANSFORM FEDERAL PRECINCTS INTO VIBRANT DESTINATIONS** by improving physical settings of key sites and corridors, enhancing the public realm, and infusing a mix of activities and uses.

**IMPROVE CONNECTIONS BETWEEN THE NATIONAL MALL, THE CITY, AND THE WATERFRONT** by extending the civic qualities of the National Mall, repairing the urban fabric, and enhancing mobility.

**ENHANCE THE LIVABILITY AND SUSTAINABILITY OF THE MONUMENTAL CORE** by helping to protect the National Mall as an enduring cultural and natural resource; encouraging compact, walkable, and transit-oriented development; achieving the highest levels of environmental performance; and improving the urban ecology of central Washington.



Linking places that mix culture, commerce, and public gathering spaces with the National Mall will enhance the visitor’s experience and contribute to Washington’s livability and sustainability.

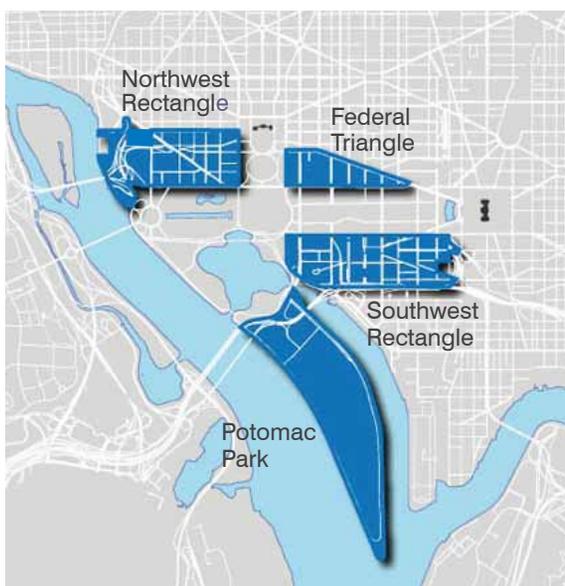


Physical and symbolic linkages to new cultural and commemorative destinations will expand the image of the capital city to areas beyond the National Mall.

The *Framework Plan* envisions the precincts near the National Mall as distinctive new city destinations. It identifies opportunities to enhance existing areas and to guide development to address federal needs and enrich the city's economy and its public realm.

These rejuvenated precincts will accommodate museums, memorials, federal offices, and other uses in a manner that is animated by a variety of day, evening, and weekend activities, including working, sightseeing, shopping, and playing. Mixed-use destinations will be connected with one another by a cohesive network of streets, bridges, green spaces, walkways, transit routes, bicycle paths, and water connections.

In some cases, establishing new destinations and connections will require removing barriers and filling in the gaps in the urban street and block pattern caused by intrusive highways, rail lines, bridges, buildings, and “dead zones” of single-use office buildings that are inaccessible to the general public. In other cases, it means building upon the existing character of the nation's capital by establishing symbolic relationships between prominent sites and enhancing their settings, including the corridors that connect them. Lively, walkable, urban neighborhoods with a mix of uses and a choice of travel options will transform the way residents, workers, and visitors experience the nation's capital.



The *Framework Plan* study area.

## Precinct Proposals

The *Framework Plan* proposes four primary initiatives to overcome barriers and transform the federal precincts. While each precinct has a unique character and its own set of challenges, the objectives and the urban design, planning, and policy strategies for each area are similar. When applied, these strategies establish places that have an identity of their own, yet result in a unified vision to accomplish the goal of the *Framework Plan*: to link vibrant destinations in a manner that enhances the sustainability of the monumental core.

**CONNECT THE NATIONAL MALL WITH THE WATERFRONT:**  
**SOUTHWEST RECTANGLE** Transform the Southwest Rectangle into a distinguished and pedestrian-friendly workplace, a cultural hub, and an exciting and welcoming visitor destination. Restore the urban fabric and improve connections between the Smithsonian Castle and the Southwest waterfront; and between the U.S. Capitol and the Jefferson Memorial. The primary strategies for this precinct include redefining 10th Street, SW as a vibrant mixed-use corridor; establishing the 10th Street terminus at the overlook as a premier cultural and mixed-use site, and reclaiming Maryland Avenue, SW as a grand boulevard.

**ENHANCE THE WATERFRONT EXPERIENCE:**  
**POTOMAC PARK** Establish Potomac Park as an easily accessible destination that offers expanded opportunities for recreation, leisure, commemoration, and celebration in a setting of scenic beauty showcasing environmental

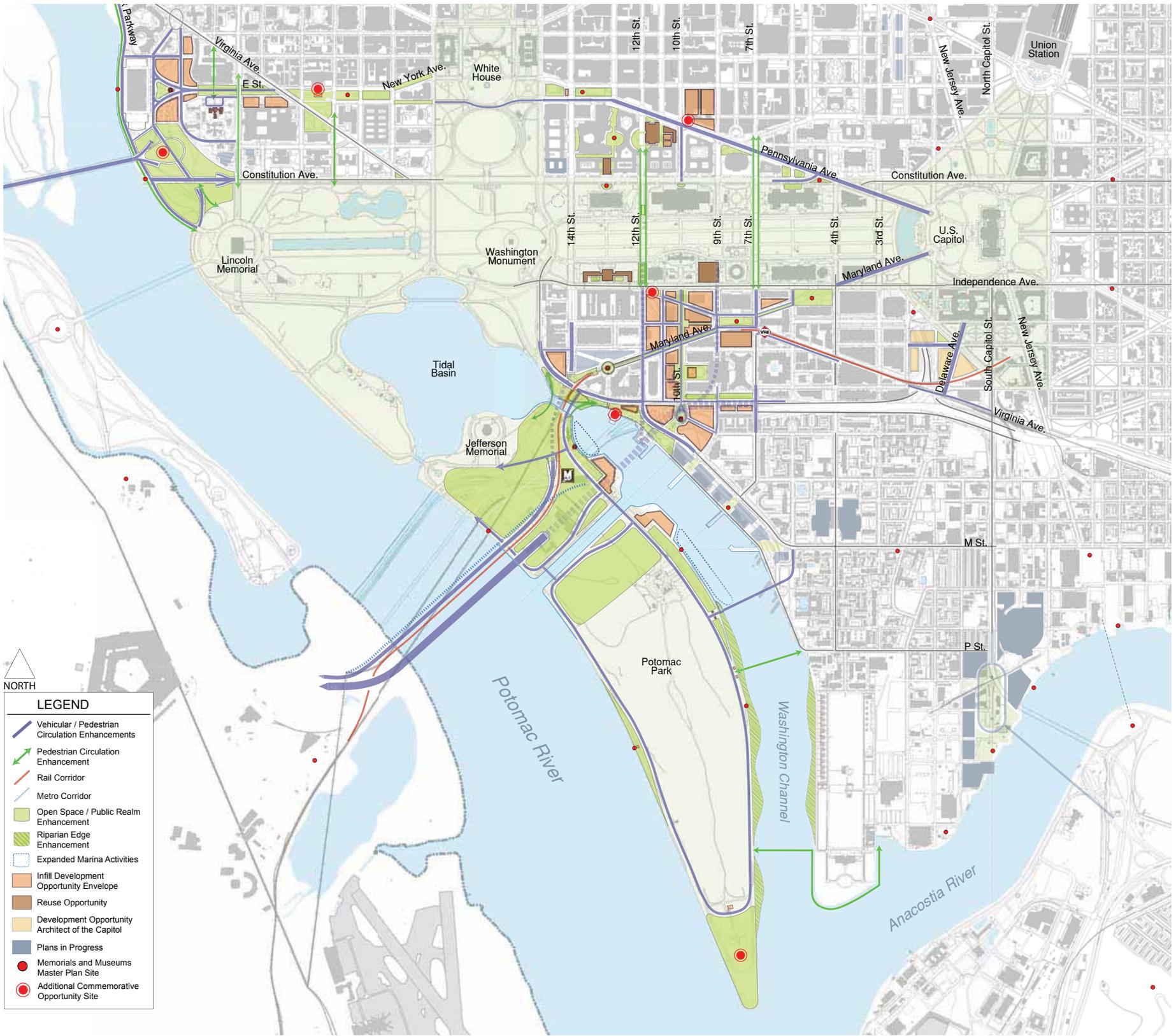
stewardship. The primary strategies for this precinct include developing Potomac Harbor; establishing multiple connections for visitors arriving by boat, car, bicycle, or foot; increasing recreational opportunities; and creating multi-purpose festival grounds at the Jefferson Memorial.

**EXTEND A COMMEMORATIVE LANDSCAPE:**  
**NORTHWEST RECTANGLE** Establish the Northwest Rectangle as an accessible and walkable cultural destination and high quality workplace. Build upon its prestigious location and existing open space to expand the cultural and diplomatic facilities and create an interconnected system of beautiful parks linking the Kennedy Center with both the Lincoln Memorial and the White House and Presidents Park. The primary strategies for this precinct include decking highways to accommodate building expansion and creating new ceremonial boulevards to extend the commemorative landscape.

**LINK DOWNTOWN WITH THE NATIONAL MALL:**  
**FEDERAL TRIANGLE** Strengthen Pennsylvania Avenue's image as a grand urban boulevard and establish the Federal Triangle as a preeminent workplace and visitor destination. Showcase the art, architecture, and civic ideals of the nation with a lively mix of urban activities and animated and distinguished public spaces. The primary strategies for this precinct include establishing new destinations on Pennsylvania Avenue, enhancing the public realm and improving connections along Pennsylvania Avenue and throughout the Federal Triangle.



The *Framework Plan* complements the National Park Service's National Mall Plan by focusing on the federal precincts surrounding the National Mall.



*Reimagining Washington's Monumental Core: Framework Plan* identifies strategies to transform central Washington by linking vibrant mixed-use destinations to the National Mall and improving connections between downtown Washington and the waterfront.