

# Context

Washington has a proud history of planning and public initiatives that resulted in an urban form and image that are recognized around the world. The National Mall is treasured for its sweeping and graceful landscape and the cultural resources it contains. The city's pedestrian-friendly downtown and neighborhoods make it one of the most walkable cities in the country. Collectively, these attributes contribute to Washington's unique context.

Planning efforts over two centuries have responded to the economic and cultural conditions of the time, shaping the city we know today. For example, hundreds of acres of marshland have been reclaimed for national and city parks; rail and highway infrastructure have been inserted to move people and goods; and contemporary needs to accommodate a growing population and work force have created districts of superblock office buildings. While unintentional, some of these decisions have compromised the optimal use of land and resources in portions of the city.

The *Reimagining Washington's Monumental Core: Framework Plan* strives to respect and uphold time-tested planning traditions while correcting some of the unanticipated consequences of past

interventions. The *Framework Plan* considers a number of current issues, such as: sustainable development, the expansion of central Washington; the increasing demands for the use of a finite amount of federal land for offices, cultural facilities, public gatherings, and recreation in an era that calls for increased security; the need to balance preservation of buildings with the efficient use of land and resources; and the call to embrace the city's rivers as important natural resources and urban amenities.

The *Framework Plan* addresses these and other emerging challenges within the monumental core by focusing cooperatively on federal and local needs within the precincts surrounding the National Mall. Federal and local agencies are in the midst of unprecedented cooperation among agencies planning for the nation's capital, and it is fortuitous that several key agencies are undertaking significant and complementary planning efforts. While the scope of each initiative differs, the concurrent planning efforts (see page 14). provided the opportunity to collaborate and focus on complex issues at various scales, so that together each plan is greater than the sum of their individual parts.

Previous actions, pressing issues, and anticipated trends comprise the context for examining the areas surrounding the National Mall and identifying appropriate interventions.

The *Framework Plan* is rooted in a planning history that spans more than 200 years. Washington’s urban form is largely a result of design principles that were conceived in the vision of the 1791 L’Enfant Plan, while numerous others were borne out of subsequent plans such as the 1901 McMillan Plan and NCPC’s 1997 *Extending the Legacy* vision plan. The *Framework Plan* embraces the heritage of these seminal plans and seeks to enhance the image and experience of the monumental core.

## L’Enfant and McMillan Plans

In laying out a bold plan for the capital of a fledgling but ambitious nation in 1791, Pierre L’Enfant balanced divergent ideals. In the L’Enfant Plan, monumental boulevards intersect the street grid and local neighborhoods abut imposing ceremonial spaces. The large mixes with the small, the grand with the commonplace, and the public with the private. The L’Enfant Plan used the natural environment and the contours of the land, taking advantage of the rivers’ confluence and placing emphasis on ideal topographical sites to create an interconnected system of public spaces and reciprocal views along Washington’s

corridors. The resulting urban form promotes the interaction of government and its citizenry and establishes a city where people can live, work, and visit.

During the 19th century, the proliferation of railroad tracks, saloons, and markets on the National Mall and in adjacent commercial precincts demonstrated the embrace of capitalism in an industrial era. As the century closed, the nation’s desire to separate land uses and its longing for an idealized and ordered public realm manifested itself in the City Beautiful movement. In 1901, the U.S. Senate formed a Park Commission, also known as the McMillan Commission, to address the development and design of a park system for Washington. The subsequent McMillan Plan led to the stately sweep of the National Mall and the surrounding Beaux Arts-style public buildings, an ordered, impressive, and uplifting monumental core. The McMillan Commission used urban design and architecture to set civic life apart from the hustle and bustle of the commercial city.

More recently, there has been a return to an understanding of successful urban design that is closer to that of L’Enfant’s. Urban planners and citizens recognize that in a modern national capital,

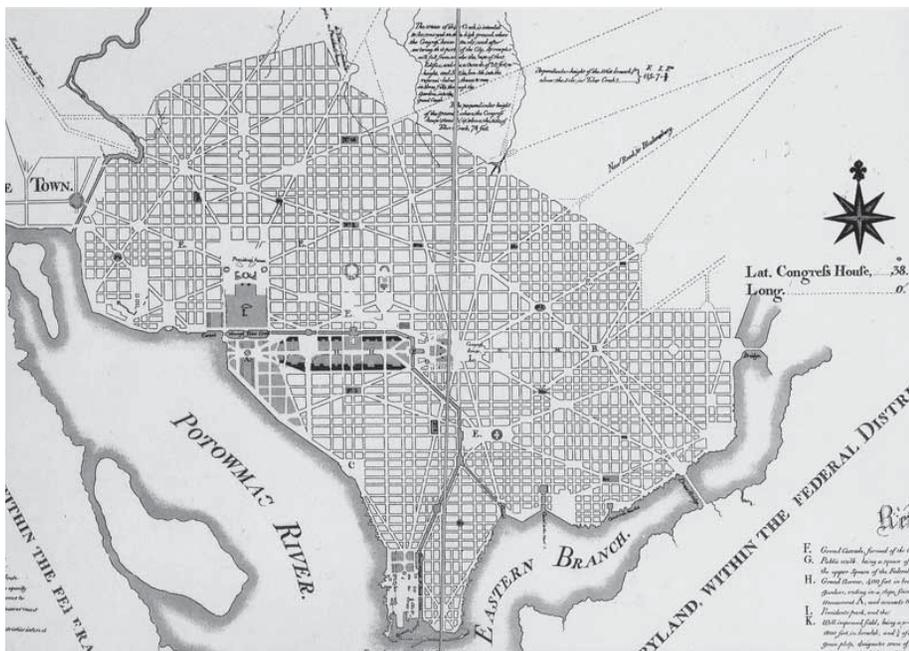
the ceremonial functions and symbolic spaces of the federal city and the economic, social, and cultural life of the local community must enhance and benefit one another. Integration of uses – public and private, local and federal, built and open spaces – is widely understood to be an essential building block of vibrant Washington life.

## Extending the Legacy

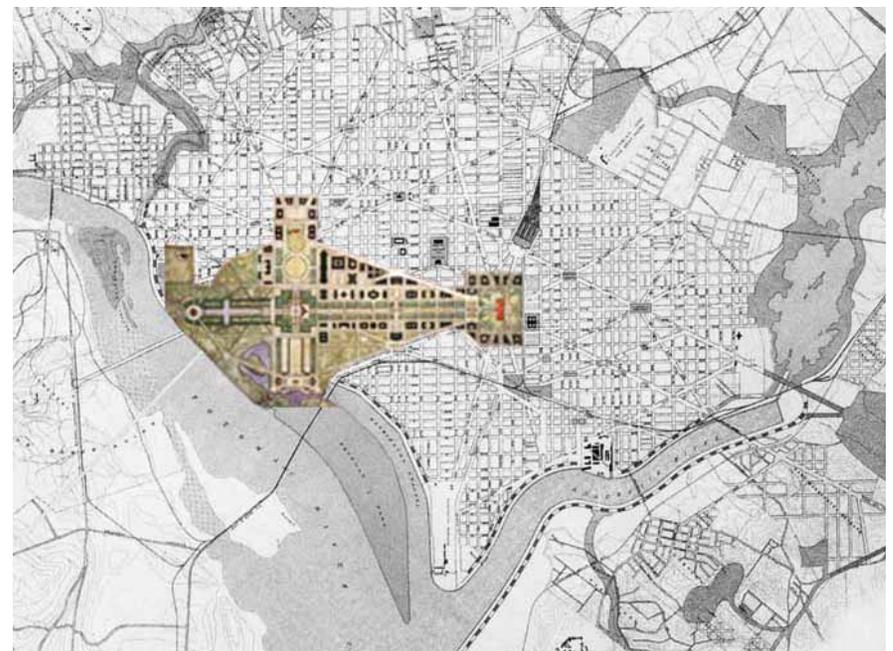
*Extending the Legacy: Planning America’s Capital for the 21st Century* is the third long-term vision plan to guide physical development in the capital city. The 1997 plan calls for a new way of thinking about the role of the federal government in the life of the city and proposes unifying Washington’s monumental core with the local city. The *Legacy Plan* also recommends locating federal facilities in all four quadrants of the city and encourages a mix of federal and private offices, housing, and commercial activity.

Key goals of the *Extending the Legacy Plan* include:

- Building on the heritage of the historic L’Enfant and McMillan Plans, which are the foundation of modern Washington.



L’Enfant Plan, 1791



Senate Park Commission Plan (McMillan Plan), 1901.

- Unifying the city and the monumental core with the U.S. Capitol as the center.
- Protecting the National Mall and its historic landscape from future building.
- Using public buildings, new memorials and museums, and other facilities to stimulate economic development throughout the city.
- Integrating the Potomac and Anacostia Rivers into the city's public life.
- Developing a comprehensive, flexible, and convenient transportation system that eliminates barriers and eases movement around the city.

As a first step in implementing the *Legacy Plan*, NCPIC and its local and federal planning partners developed the *Memorials and Museums Master Plan* in 2001 to guide the location and development of future commemorative works and cultural facilities. The master plan identifies one hundred sites to encourage future memorials to locate throughout the city beyond the traditional monumental core, and calls for a "Reserve" in the cross axis of the National Mall to protect its open space from new development.

## Framework Plan

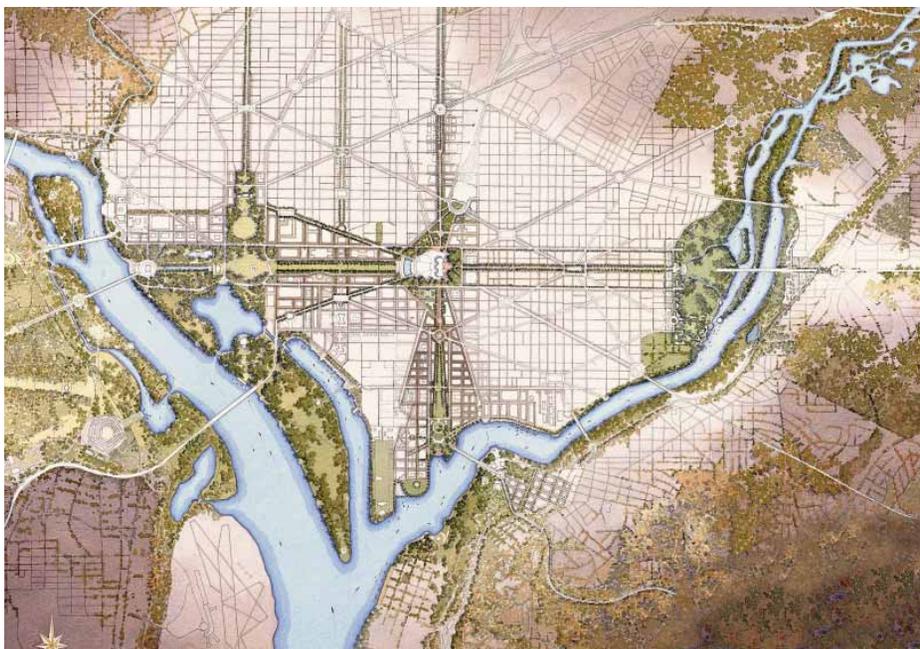
The *Reimagining Washington's Monumental Core: Framework Plan* represents the next phase of advancing the legacy of planning in Washington. Furthering the vision of the *Legacy Plan* for the monumental core, the *Framework Plan* incorporates many of the principles of both the L'Enfant and McMillan plans, ensuring that the city's unique planning history is preserved and that new development continues to reinforce the original principles. In addition, the *Framework Plan* identifies opportunities for reclaiming underutilized land and restoring lost connections and open spaces in a way that enhances the livability and sustainability of the nation's capital.

The *Framework Plan* focuses on specific interventions to help implement the broader vision of *Legacy*. The *Framework Plan* recommends the kind of development and infrastructure changes necessary to attract the next generation of national memorials, museums, and government offices while accommodating the private sector and residential needs. Toward this end, the *Framework Plan* seeks to create extraordinary places of scenic beauty, civic prominence, symbolic importance, and distinctive character worthy of a great capital city.

## Recent Planning Achievements

A number of *Extending the Legacy* recommendations have been achieved and others have helped guide ongoing development decisions.

- Adoption of the *Memorials and Museums Master Plan* and the approval of six new memorials on a variety of sites off of the National Mall;
- Location of the Department of Transportation Headquarters and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives Headquarters outside the traditional core;
- Launch of the Downtown Circulator hop-on/hop-off bus service;
- Redevelopment planning for South Capitol Street as a vibrant urban boulevard and waterfront gateway at the Anacostia River;
- Strategic planning for the future of the RFK Stadium at East Capitol Street and the Anacostia River;
- Study to reroute intrusive railroad lines that divide city neighborhoods and separate them from the waterfront.



*Extending the Legacy, Planning America's Capital for the 21st Century, 1997.*



Washington's monumental core, current view.

The *Framework Plan* addresses the needs of the federal government, as well as the interests of those who live, visit, and work in the capital city. The *Framework Plan* recognizes and responds to several issues, including Washington's expanding downtown; the urgent mandate to protect the National Mall and address the open space needs of the District; the requirement to properly accommodate the federal government within the monumental core; the challenge of meeting federal building security standards; and the complexities involved with preserving historic buildings.

## Washington's Expanding Downtown

The National Mall and adjacent federal precincts have historically been considered the southern edge of Washington's downtown. However, the shape and character of the urban core are evolving because strong growth and revitalization over the past ten years have expanded the city's traditional downtown. Office, residential, and retail development are creating new neighborhoods and commercial destinations in once struggling areas.

It is the intent of the *Framework Plan* to help the National Mall and surrounding federal precincts contribute to the fabric of the new center city and not act as barriers to its urban diversity and vitality.

These former edges should become key elements of the expanding urban core and help reposition the Mall as the central open space of downtown Washington.

## Culture and Commemoration

There is continuing demand for memorials and museums in Washington. Since 1900, an average of one new memorial has been dedicated in the nation's capital each year, and one new museum is built every ten years. If this pace continues, sites for dozens of new commemorative works and a half-dozen new museums and other cultural facilities will have to be accommodated in Washington by 2050. In addition, as America's preeminent gathering place, the historic landscape of the National Mall is suffering from its own success. Each year, the National Mall has more than 25 million visitors and the National Park Service receives more than 3,000 applications for public use. The annual stream of people, concerts, sporting events, exhibits, demonstrations, and celebrations place demands on the National Mall's 650 acres of fragile landscape and public facilities.

To relieve pressure on the National Mall, the *Framework Plan* identifies new, easily accessible, symbolically significant places for museums, memorials, and outdoor gatherings beyond the

Mall, and suggests how to improve their settings to better integrate these areas with the city. The recent success of the *Memorials and Museums Master Plan* supports the premise that memorial sponsors will be attracted to sites off the National Mall as long as there are appealing and exciting destinations elsewhere in the city. Creating new destinations throughout Washington will ease demands on the National Mall, stimulate activity in other parts of the city, and encourage visitors to see more of the nation's capital.

## Parks and Open Space

Washington has a high percentage of land devoted to parks—more than 9,000 acres or about 24 percent of the District. Approximately 74 percent of this open space is federally owned and much of it has been designated for passive purposes, including memorials. While neighborhood and city parks offer recreation and respite opportunities, the city's open spaces are not evenly distributed or optimally managed to meet the demand. Therefore, the city relies on the use of federal land, including the National Mall, for the recreation space necessary to support its population.

Federal and local agencies have undertaken the *CapitalSpace* initiative to address the use, maintenance, management, quality, and long-term viability of Washington's park system. The *Framework*



Recent mixed-use development on Pennsylvania Avenue includes the Newsium.



The National Mall is a historic landscape and the nation's preeminent gathering place.

*Plan* supports this effort by introducing new multi-purpose open spaces and improving access to programming of existing parks to address the growing need for additional recreation and event space.

## The Federal Workplace

The federal government requires high-quality workplaces close to public transportation in order to remain competitive in recruiting and retaining a highly qualified workforce. Yet many of the buildings that the federal government owns and occupies are aging and require extensive modernization to bring them to current standards. In addition, as new laws and regulations are developed to meet new mission requirements, it is necessary to renovate or build offices, meeting spaces, and research facilities. As a result, there is an ongoing demand for federal office space in the District of Columbia.

The *Framework Plan* recognizes that a concentrated employment base is beneficial to the city and the federal government. The *Plan* provides opportunities for increasing the amount of federal office space by more than one million square feet. It preserves federal ownership of land and buildings and acknowledges the cost benefit profile of owned space over leased. The *Framework Plan* supports the retention of federal agencies within the monumental core while recognizing

ing the opportunity for federal offices to relocate to emerging markets throughout the District to promote economic development and satisfy workforce and operational policies.

## Security and Urban Design

A democratic society aspires to be open and transparent; however, security concerns currently impact many aspects of life in central Washington and compromise these values. Closing streets, courtyards, and building entrances fosters perceptions of an inaccessible bureaucracy and hinders efforts to provide access to public buildings and bring more vitality to federal office areas.

Physical design of the public realm can and should strive to reinforce important democratic values without compromising physical safety. This challenge constitutes an urgent and critical task for the federal government.

The *Framework Plan* encourages development of innovative solutions that ensure the safety of people and assets in a manner that is consistent with open character and urban vitality of the nation's capital. Locating publicly accessible ground-floor retail, visitor centers, cultural venues, and other activities in buildings that house federal agencies is one of several sound approaches to balancing urban design,

openness, and security in the design of sites, streets, and architecture without overwhelming the civic character of Washington.

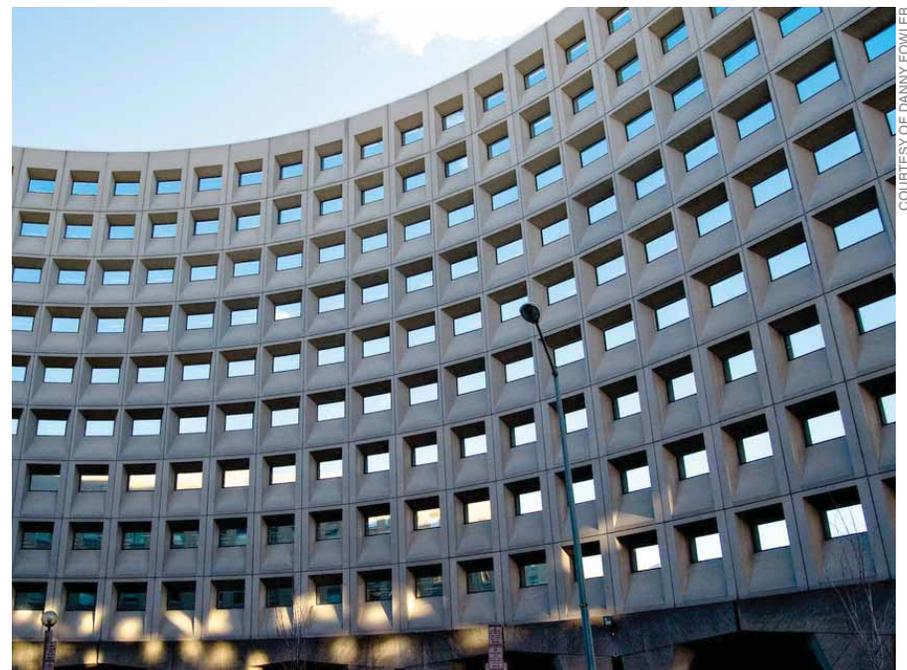
## Preservation and Modern Design

As physical monuments to the federal government's post-war expansion, Modern-era buildings are an expression of mid-20th century theories of urban renewal and represent an important period of American planning, urban design, and architecture. While history teaches caution in making judgments about the architecture of the recent past, sufficient time has elapsed for Modern buildings to be assessed with contextual perspective by historians, architects, planners, historic preservationists, and those who work in and appreciate these buildings.

While several federal buildings are clearly iconic and considered Modern masterpieces, other now-aging Modern buildings pose structural and systemic challenges in preserving their significant qualities while extending their lifespan. Although appreciation for Modern buildings has grown in recent years, it is difficult to integrate their style and large scale in well-established, fine-grained and heterogeneous urban contexts. In Washington, the Modern-era alterations of the historic street grid complicate the task of reconnecting severed rights-of-way and undoing grade separations.



The U.S. Department of Transportation headquarters has been a catalyst for economic development in an emerging neighborhood outside the monumental core.



The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development headquarters, designed by Marcel Breuer, (1963-1968) was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 2008.

Washington has only recently begun to celebrate its more than 40 miles of remarkable waterfront. Originally proposed in the *Legacy Plan*, and further developed by the District of Columbia’s *Anacostia Waterfront Initiative*, the creation of a continuous network of parks, public spaces, and walking/ biking trails along the Potomac and Anacostia Rivers has been widely embraced and is now being implemented.

The National Park Service and the District of Columbia are working on projects that will integrate the full Washington waterfront into city life. These projects, such as the Georgetown Waterfront Park, the Southwest Waterfront development, The Yards, Hill East, and Kingman Island will connect many segments along each of the rivers. However, to fully meet the city’s objectives, gaps along several important segments of the riverfront must be addressed and access to the rivers along key avenues and streets must be strengthened. The *Framework Plan* recommends ways to connect the city with its waterfront in the Northwest Rectangle, the Southwest Rectangle, and Potomac Park.

## Reconnecting with the Waterfront

Along the Potomac River, the waterfront network will connect the ten-acre Georgetown Waterfront Park with the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historical Park, which includes a towpath that extends approximately 185 miles from Georgetown to Cumberland, Maryland. The waterfront open space also connects with the Capital Crescent Trail,

a regional asset that provides a hiking and biking link to Silver Spring, Maryland.

The Anacostia Riverwalk will eventually stretch 16 miles along both banks of the Anacostia River between Benning Road and the Washington Navy Yard, connecting important destinations such as the National Arboretum and the Washington Nationals Ballpark. Under the leadership of the District of Columbia’s Department of Transportation, a part of the Riverwalk is now under construction as a public-private partnership. All of these improvements will create a regional waterfront network that connects new destinations with active waterfront uses while offering vistas and settings of extraordinary beauty.

As the owner of approximately 70 percent of the city’s shoreline, the federal government has a substantial responsibility for protecting and enhancing this extraordinary natural feature. The city’s entire waterfront should be accessible to the public, with some stretches quiet and pastoral, and others more actively developed to support festivals, concerts, and other urban activities. The *Framework Plan* advances efforts to restore the city’s historic connection to its rivers and recommends ways to connect the waterfront to adjoining neighborhoods as places for public enjoyment, recreation, commemoration, and environmental stewardship.

## Enhancing Key Avenues

The *Framework Plan* recognizes the importance of restoring the prominent role of the streets

that radiate outward from the U.S. Capitol and reclaiming a fine-grained street grid to link Washington’s growing downtown and federal districts to the rapidly emerging Southwest and Anacostia waterfronts.

South, East, and North Capitol Streets, representing the cardinal directions extending from the U.S. Capitol, are all critically important within the hierarchy of Washington’s streets. The types of destinations that occur along these urban boulevards, particularly at their termini, should reflect their role as prominent gateways to the monumental core.

The avenues radiating from the U.S. Capitol also link important institutions, places, or monuments and should represent the dignity and strength of the American spirit, as they host many important national and local ceremonial functions. The grid of streets that make up the building blocks of the city should be restored to provide the important secondary connections that comprise a comprehensive network of pedestrian-friendly streets to link the monumental core with waterfront areas.

To achieve this connectivity, rail lines and highways must be decked and new mixed-use development, open space, and pedestrian plazas must fill in the gaps to link emerging areas of the city with the waterfront. These improvements will not only provide for a variety of magnificent waterfront experiences, but will also present opportunities for new commemorative or cultural attractions that will further connect the Potomac and Anacostia Rivers with central Washington.

**A** Georgetown Waterfront Park



COURTESY OF NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**B** Kennedy Center Waterfront



NGPC, ILLUSTRATION BY MICHAEL MCCANN

**C** Southwest Waterfront



COURTESY OF DC OFFICE OF PLANNING

**D** South Capitol Street



NGPC, ILLUSTRATION BY MICHAEL MCCANN

**E** The Yards



COURTESY OF DC OFFICE OF PLANNING



NPFC/ICPA, ILLUSTRATION BY EDAW

**F** Poplar Point



COURTESY OF DC OFFICE OF PLANNING

**G** Hill East



COURTESY OF DC OFFICE OF PLANNING

**H** Anacostia Park



COURTESY OF DC OFFICE OF PLANNING

**I** RFK Stadium



NPFC, ILLUSTRATION BY EDAW

**J** Kingman Island



DC OFFICE OF PLANNING

Coordinated planning and investment by federal and local agencies is imperative so that central Washington can continue to serve as an urban model for the nation and the world. The *Framework Plan* recognizes that the federal government is a key player in the city's economic growth and must participate in planning current and future development to ensure a healthy mix of public and private uses. As the city grows and developable land becomes scarce, it is essential that the federal government continues to identify suitable locations in central Washington for future federal uses, and that it work closely with District agencies when doing so.

## Concurrent Plans

The *Framework Plan* is one of four major planning efforts simultaneously under way for the central portion of Washington. Each has varying jurisdictions, authorities, and constituencies, but they share a common desire for a diverse, vibrant, and beautiful city.

**NATIONAL PARK SERVICE:** The *National Mall Plan* is currently being prepared to address sustainable use, refurbishment, improvement, and maintenance of our nation's most iconic public space, the National Mall. The plan provides for uses important to all, including commemoration, celebration, First Amendment demonstration and civic activities, as well as recreation, education, and relaxation. Acknowledging the reserve on the National Mall as a complete work of civic art and as a source of national pride, the plan will protect memorials, views and other resources; improve the health and appearance of these areas; and provide high-quality facilities and experiences for the American people.

**ARCHITECT OF THE CAPITOL:** The *Capitol Complex Master Plan* is a long-range vision, master plan, and implementation strategy currently being prepared for the maintenance, renovation, and improvement of the Capitol complex over the next twenty years. The planning principles address stewardship, urban form and context, and workplace and visitor needs. The intended outcome is to provide sustainable, safe, high-quality facilities and grounds that meet the needs of Congress, invite the public to visit and participate, and instill national pride in the seat of

government. The plan will ensure that the Architect of the Capitol (AOC) is prepared to address facility renewal requirements and advances in building technologies, as well as to plan for growth and prioritize capital improvement decisions. To date, the AOC has prioritized code compliance, physical security, and energy-saving initiatives.

**DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA:** The *Center City Action Agenda* is the Mayor's action plan to redefine central Washington. It recognizes the great opportunity to develop well-connected and distinct areas in a rapidly-expanding downtown area with the National Mall as its centerpiece. Addressing a broad area that encompasses the *Framework Plan* precincts, the *Action Agenda* advances Washington's identity as a waterfront city. It recommends investment in key places, corridors, and transit to ensure economic vitality, sustainability, and cultural diversity. It puts DC residents first and creates new places to serve both existing and new neighborhoods. The *Action Agenda* identifies strategic initiatives and implementation partners to ensure that center city becomes an even more vibrant, walkable, and mixed-use urban core.

## Integrated Planning Efforts

To facilitate integration of the concurrent planning efforts, NCPC and CFA participated as cooperating agencies in the development of the *National Mall Plan* and contributed to several working groups during the formation of the *Center City Action Agenda*. In turn, input from various constituencies and coordination among federal and local agencies helped shape the *Framework Plan*. Specifically, preparation of the *Framework Plan* included a steering committee comprised of more than 15 senior level leaders and a working group of agency representatives. In addition, NCPC and CFA held a symposium of international experts, "Framing the Capital City," and convened a series of roundtable panels of sustainability specialists to obtain further input. Overall, more than 80 coordination meetings were held with agencies, organizations, and public groups to obtain input, identify opportunities and concerns, and facilitate collaboration.

Consistent with the other plans, the *Framework Plan* seeks to preserve the treasured landscapes of the National Mall and the U.S. Capitol Grounds, and

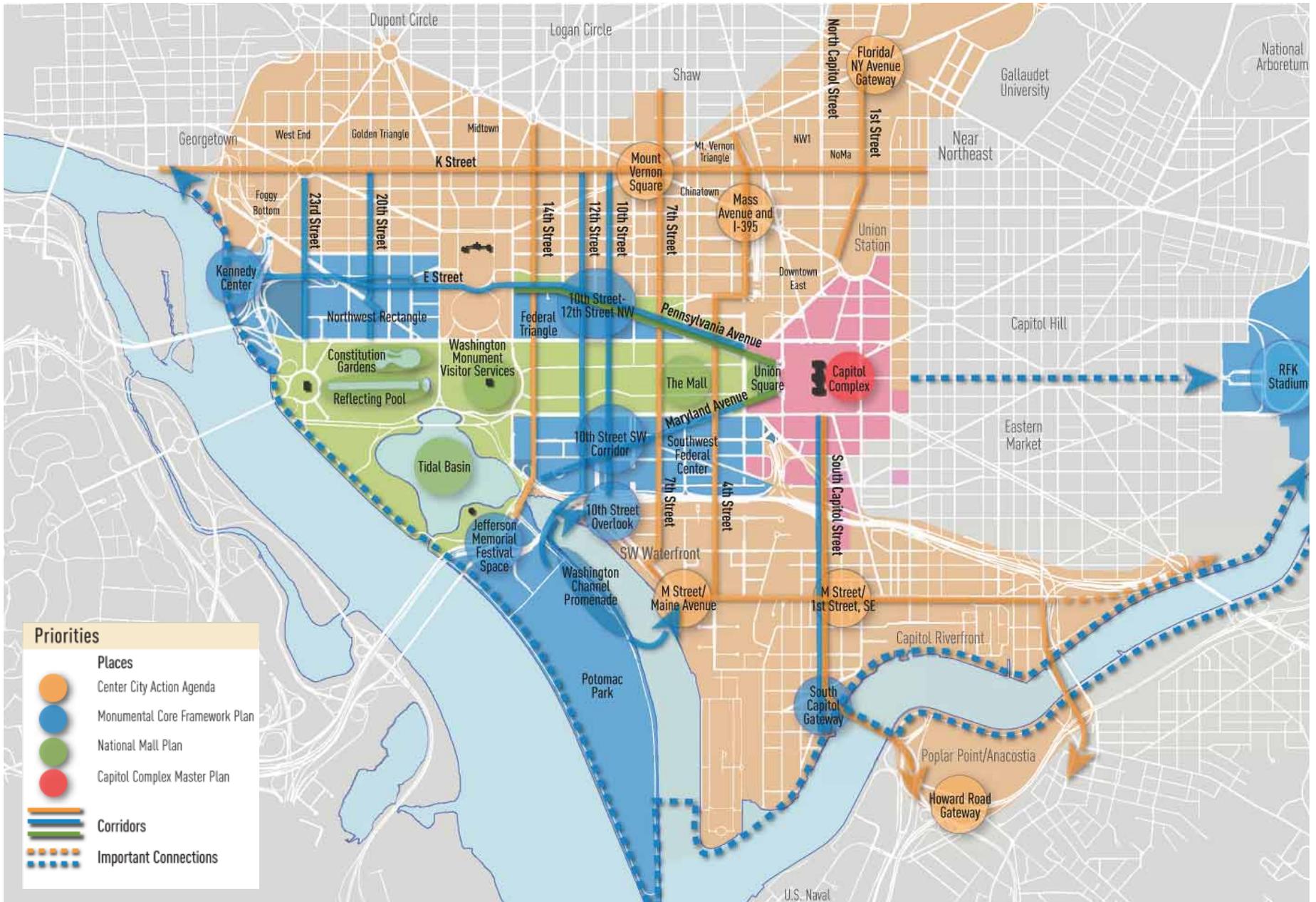
strengthen the natural systems within these special open spaces. The *Framework Plan* proposes strategies to invigorate adjacent areas with a mix of offices, shops, businesses, and cultural activities and to improve connections among them.

The *Framework Plan* also proposes development outside of the traditional downtown area. In dispersing public investment to the broader center city area, the *Framework Plan* and the *Center City Action Agenda* can bring improvements and momentum to developing neighborhoods with public-private initiatives.

## Common Objectives

The agencies responsible for these four plans collectively prepared a common set of objectives to help shape the goals and recommendations of each agency's plan.

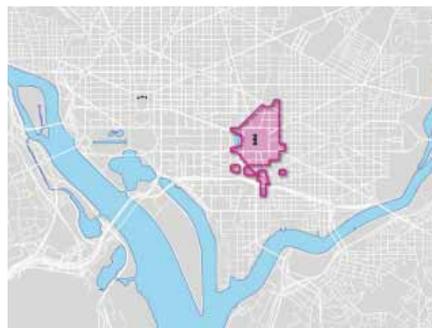
- **WELCOMING ATMOSPHERE** Create an atmosphere that embraces local citizens, visitors, and foreign dignitaries. Celebrate the warmth of a friendly town, the dignity of a seat of government, and the vibrancy of a progressive international city.
- **WELL-CONNECTED PUBLIC SPACE** Create a distinguished and accessible public realm of enduring quality shaped by beautiful civic infrastructure, architecture, streets, parks, and waterfronts. Maintain the free and open public access that is fundamental to a democratic society.
- **DISTINCTIVE PLACES** Create or renew neighborhoods and public places throughout central Washington to provide a mix of uses and experiences that are authentic and diverse and reflect America's history and culture.
- **GREEN AND SUSTAINABLE** Achieve a livable, healthy, and sustainable environment with clean air, water, and soil, and high-performing buildings and landscapes, by using model development and maintenance practices.
- **21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY TRANSPORTATION** Establish a comprehensive, flexible, convenient, and coordinated network of public and visitor transit options, including Metro, light rail, streetcar, bus, and water taxi service, linking central Washington destinations to support economic investment and environmental health.



Coordinating planning efforts can result in a coherent vision and a common set of priorities for central Washington.



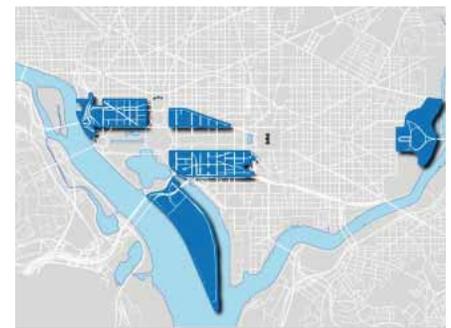
National Park Service:  
*National Mall General Management Plan*



Architect of the Capitol:  
*Capitol Complex Master Plan*



District of Columbia:  
*Center City Action Agenda*



National Capital Planning Commission  
and U.S. Commission of Fine Arts:  
*Framework Plan for Reimagining Washington's Monumental Core*