

# Framework Proposals

The *Framework Plan for Reimagining Washington's Monumental Core* establishes new destinations near the National Mall, thereby transforming key precincts into premium settings for commemoration, recreation, and mixed-use activities in the nation's capital. In addition to creating new destinations, the *Framework Plan* connects these areas with one another, the National Mall, the waterfront, and the rest of the city through a cohesive network of walkable corridors and green spaces, and a broader range of transit options.

The *Framework Plan* enhances existing areas and guides new development to meet the needs of the federal government, enrich the city's public realm, and repair the urban fabric. These rejuvenated precincts will better accommodate federal offices, memorials, and cultural facilities, and will be animated by a variety of day and evening activities to enhance the livability of local and federal Washington.

For each precinct, the *Framework Plan* proposes specific recommendations, including:

- Transforming the 10th Street corridor and reclaiming Maryland Avenue in the Southwest Rectangle to connect the Mall with the waterfront.
- Redesigning and programming Potomac Park to enhance the waterfront experience.
- Connecting the Kennedy Center with the White House, President's Park, and the Lincoln Memorial by extending the commemorative landscape of the National Mall through the Northwest Rectangle.
- Increasing the mix of uses and improving the public realm along Pennsylvania Avenue and within the Federal Triangle to connect downtown with the National Mall.

“The voyage of discovery lies not in finding new landscapes, but in having new eyes.”

- Marcel Proust





NOPOCFA, ILLUSTRATION BY MICHAEL MCCANN

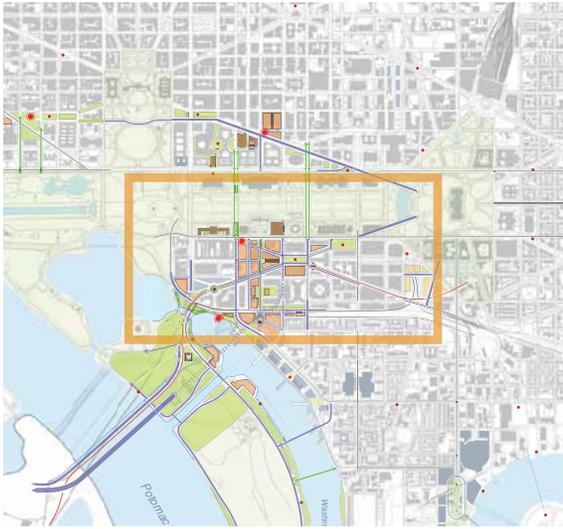
## Connecting the Mall with the Waterfront

### THE SOUTHWEST RECTANGLE

The Southwest Rectangle can be reborn as a lively and sustainable urban center connecting the city's downtown core with the National Mall and the Potomac riverfront. The area's proximity to the Mall and its role as a center of federal employment provides an ideal density of visitors and workers to support a living downtown. The cornerstones to achieving this vision include redeveloping 10th Street as a vibrant, mixed-use corridor between the Mall and the waterfront; reestablishing Maryland Avenue as a grand boulevard between the U.S. Capitol and the Jefferson Memorial; and improving connections throughout the precinct by restoring the shattered street grid.

The *Framework Plan for Reimagining Washington's Monumental Core* proposes maintaining the Southwest Rectangle as a major federal workplace; increasing federal office space while also integrating additional uses to improve the livability of the precinct. For example, redeveloped parcels along 10th Street could house federal offices with shops, services, public amenities, and cultural institutions with a secure setback. Air-rights space over decked highways and smaller, odd-shaped parcels could be used for additional private development, including housing, hotels, and office space.

The transformed precinct would offer green open spaces recovered from intrusive rail and highway infrastructure, tree-lined streets with commanding views to the National Mall and the waterfront, and cultural and commemorative destinations attracting Washington visitors and local residents. Through efficient redevelopment there can be ample space for new federal offices, shops, housing, public spaces, and a connected street network. The *Framework Plan* also identifies four potential locations in the precinct for nationally significant museums on par with those on the Mall: at the 10th Street Overlook; in a portion of the redeveloped Forrestal complex; at the Department of Treasury's Liberty Loan Building; and in the Department of Agriculture's Whitten Building.



## Context

For generations, working-class and newly-arrived immigrants lived in southwest Washington to work at nearby shipping wharves and military arsenals. Despite the diverse mix of land uses, housing, income levels, and populations, substandard living conditions became an embarrassment, and by the 1930s there were widespread calls for radical improvements.

Much of Southwest Washington was razed by one of the nation's most ambitious urban renewal programs in the middle of the 20th century, with the demolition of more than 400 acres of small businesses and row houses displacing more than 23,000 people. The new Southwest Freeway divided the area into an office precinct to the north and a residential neighborhood to the south. The freeway and its ramps became physical and perceptual barriers that interrupted the street grid and impeded mobility.

Numerous proposals were made to improve the Southwest and Southeast neighborhoods. The plan that was implemented included an elevated 10th Street later renamed L'Enfant Promenade, flanked by large modern government buildings and terminating in a circular overlook.

The construction of these and other buildings created a federal enclave built in the austere International Style. Some of these buildings, such as the Housing and Urban Development headquarters designed by Marcel Breuer, are modern landmarks under consideration for historic designation. However, the dominating presence of superblock buildings obstructs vistas, saps street life, suppresses retail activity, and is devoid of green space. One of the largest of these structures, the Forrestal Building, spans 10th Street and effectively separates the

National Mall and the core of the District from the waterfront. The massive scale of 10th Street is unwelcoming to pedestrians and its monochromatic landscape, punctuated by vast empty plazas, discourages movement along the street.

A unique feature of the Southwest Rectangle is that the area between 9th and 12th Streets operates on multiple levels. The upper street level provides primary access to building entrances, while a more utilitarian lower level accommodates rail lines, parking, and service vehicles, similar to downtown Chicago.

Southwest Washington currently contains six federal agency headquarters, 12 million square feet of federal office space, and an estimated 70,000 federal workers. Approximately half of the land is federally owned, and most of the privately owned parcels are leased to federal agencies or contractors. Many buildings do not occupy the full capacity of their site and do not offer accessible uses at the street level, creating an unfriendly pedestrian environment. The precinct is also almost entirely built or paved, contributing to the District's urban heat gain and funneling significant amounts of stormwater runoff into its antiquated sewer system.

Despite the challenges created by mid-century redevelopment, renewed interest in the area can be seen in the recent construction of the Portals complex, the planning for the President Dwight D. Eisenhower Memorial, the modernization of the Nassif Building that formerly housed the Department of Transportation, and the District's redevelopment of the Southwest Waterfront and other nearby projects.



Aerial view of the Southwest Rectangle.



The Framework Plan proposal for the Southwest Rectangle.

## Key Improvements

### A. Redefine 10th Street

as an inviting, lively, mixed-use corridor that connects the National Mall to the waterfront, using state of the art sustainable redevelopment practices.

### B. Restore Maryland Avenue

as a grand urban boulevard that links the U.S. Capitol to the Jefferson Memorial while enhancing mobility and environmental quality.

### C. Repair the Urban Fabric

by restoring the street grid, decking over highways, and redeveloping superblocks to improve the public realm, integrate open space, increase development density, and improve the mix of uses.



## Redefine 10th Street

The section of 10th Street that runs south from the National Mall to its terminus at Banneker Park should be remade as a mixed-use cultural boulevard without reducing owned or leased federal office space. The street, anchored by museums at either end and lined with street-level restaurants, shops, museums, and open space, could become Washington's newest destination. It could offer an appropriate setting for national commemoration and culture with a diverse array of day, evening, and weekend activities.

Near 10th Street on the National Mall, the Smithsonian's iconic Arts and Industries Building currently lies vacant but could be rehabilitated as a highly visible cultural center with day and evening public activities. The U.S. Department of Agriculture's neoclassical Whitten Building, also prominently located on the National Mall, could be reused to extend the line of cultural institutions along the Mall. This would require special congressional appropriation to relocate

the headquarters to another suitable site within the monumental core or the District.

The *Framework Plan* proposes narrowing 10th Street to more closely reflect its intended width, restoring a human scale to the street and enhancing the pedestrian experience. Because of its prominence, the corridor provides opportunities to commemorate Pierre L'Enfant, Benjamin Banneker, and others. The *Framework Plan* also recommends inserting additional infill development and redevelopment to energize the corridor and maximize its development capacity.

**FORRESTAL BUILDING COMPLEX** The reuse of a building is a large-scale form of recycling; however, in certain situations, redeveloping a site may have greater benefits. To address inefficient development patterns, inflexible designs, or unsafe facilities, rebuilding can be more sustainable—particularly if it involves infill development that is compact, walkable, mixed-use, and transit-friendly, and built to the highest standards for green performance. Such is the case with a number of buildings within the Forrestal complex on Independence Avenue.

A redesign of the Forrestal complex is critical to unlocking the potential of the corridor and reconnecting the National Mall with the waterfront. At a minimum, it would require removing the section spanning 10th Street and fully developing the six-block area to the south and west. If developed more efficiently, the 20-acre area between Independence and Maryland Avenues, and 9th and 12th Streets could yield an increase of over 2 million square feet of space. The new space could accommodate federal offices, as well as cultural, hospitality, residential, and retail uses.

While adaptive reuse of portions of the site should be evaluated, redevelopment of this complex offers the greatest opportunity to create a more compact, pedestrian-friendly, and environmentally sustainable urban form, and restore the street grid by opening local streets such as Virginia Avenue, 11th Street, and C Street. Redesign of this area would not only accommodate desired activities and street life, but it would also restore views and establish a significant symbolic connection between the National Mall and the 10th Street Overlook site.



COURTESY OF MICROSOFT MAPS

Current view of 10th Street, looking north toward the Forrestral Building and the Smithsonian Castle.



NCPC/CFA, ILLUSTRATION BY MICHAEL MCCANN

New and existing federal buildings can be enlivened with sidewalk cafes, visitor centers, cultural venues, and gardens.



NCPC/CFA, ILLUSTRATION BY MICHAEL MCCANN

Redesign of the Forrestral Complex and environs could provide an opportunity to develop a 20-acre district, showcasing sustainable urban design and high-performance infrastructure, building, and landscape practices.

Maximizing the development potential of this site would also promote the use of public transit, given its proximity to the Smithsonian and L'Enfant Plaza Metrorail stations and the Virginia Railway Express. Redevelopment is also an opportunity to demonstrate the federal government's leadership in high-performance sustainable urban design and green building practices, which is ultimately necessary to reduce the carbon footprint and contribute to a healthier urban environment.

The area above the L'Enfant Plaza Metrorail station also provides an opportunity to increase the amount of mixed-use development. This will help to create day, evening, and weekend activity. Additionally, redesign of the U.S. Postal Service, south of Maryland Avenue, could also increase the developable area, providing opportunities for street level retail or cultural uses to fully energize the street life. The 10th Street corridor could be the next great destination in the city if the street were designed at a comfortable pedestrian scale with a vibrant mix of uses and improved amenities.



Current view of 10th Street at Independence Avenue, looking south toward the Forrestal Building and Banneker Park.



10th Street can become a lively urban corridor punctuated by a nationally significant cultural institution at the overlook, linking the Smithsonian Castle on the National Mall to the waterfront.

## Imagining a Future Great Street

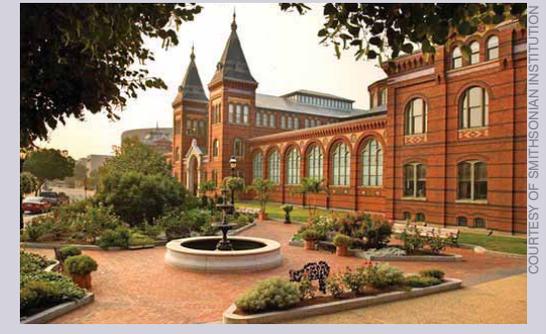
Moving south from the Smithsonian Castle on the National Mall, a person would be inspired by both the compelling beauty of the Enid Haupt Garden and the grandeur of the 10th Street vista. Crossing Independence Avenue would bring the aroma of streetfront cafes and the hum of conversations. Emerging from the shaded allee of trees, one would cross Maryland Avenue, catching a glimpse of the Capitol and admiring a statuesque memorial at the intersection's center.

At the crest of 10th Street, a visitor might take a moment to appreciate an outdoor art exhibit in one of the nearby plazas or get something to drink before proceeding to Banneker Park. Once there, one could review that evening's events at the adjacent museum or sit by the fountain and take in the panoramic view of the Washington Channel below. A quick descent of the grand staircase would lead to ships, markets, and other waterfront attractions.

1. Redevelop the Forrestal complex to include a mix of uses, additional federal office space, and public amenities.
2. Create a mixed-use destination at the 10th Street Overlook anchored by an iconic cultural destination, an engaging civic space, and an improved fountain within Banneker Park.
3. Deck over the Eisenhower Freeway, thus creating a new F Street.
4. Encourage phased air-rights development in concert with infrastructure improvements.
5. Redesign the Postal Service Building to achieve greater efficiency and provide amenities for federal workers.
6. Infill L'Enfant Plaza with private mixed-use development.
7. Reconnect C Street, 12th Street, and Virginia Avenue.



Framework Plan proposal for the 10th Street corridor.



Gardens can provide respite between destinations. (Washington, DC)



Intersections can become engaging outdoor spaces. (Barcelona, Spain)



Spectacular fountains can engage adults and children alike. (Atlanta, GA)



Grand stairs can be destinations for people watching. (Rome, Italy)

**WATERFRONT OVERLOOK** A key feature of the *Framework Plan* is the development of 10th Street Overlook at Banneker Park. The location and topography of the site offers an impressive setting, ideally positioning it to support a prominent cultural institution. Aligned with the Smithsonian Castle on the National Mall, a cultural venue at this location would anchor the 10th Street axis. It would terminate at a dramatic and memorable Overlook and command a monumental and inspiring presence from the Potomac River and its shores. A significant cultural use at this location would also be served by and complement the District of Columbia's planned mixed-use neighborhood along the Southwest Waterfront.

This destination would be the focal point of a mixed-use air-rights development over the Eisenhower Freeway. A cluster of residential, office, and entertainment venues is proposed

to surround a new Banneker Park fountain and plaza, and could be built in phases over time. Initial development could take place east of the 10th Street corridor over the existing freeway. Subsequent development west of the corridor could be completed as roadway infrastructure upgrades allow. As the Case Bridge comes to the end of its serviceable life, the Eisenhower Freeway and 12th Street expressway ramps can be rerouted to support more appropriate urban land uses.

A grand stairway connecting the Overlook to the waterfront can become an important civic feature as well. As the threshold to the Washington Channel, these terraces will be well-traveled, offering a unique opportunity for commemoration and providing sweeping views of Potomac Park. While at a grand scale, the staircase can still provide intimate, shaded seating areas at its edges and incorporate smaller water features and public art at various levels.



COURTESY OF PO FONG

A mix of marine, commercial, and recreational uses can activate the waterfront. (Seattle, WA)



NCPC/CFA, ILLUSTRATION BY MICHAEL MCCANN

As a destination and a vantage point, the Overlook can link the National Mall to a new Southwest Waterfront neighborhood and to Potomac Park.



EDAW

Current view from the Overlook, looking south toward the Washington Channel and Potomac Park.

## Restore Maryland Avenue

The prominence of Maryland Avenue—a symbolically important L’Enfant street that is the geometric twin of Pennsylvania Avenue—should be restored by enhancing its existing public spaces and strengthening views along the corridor. Most importantly, the rail line that now dominates the street should be decked or rerouted to reconnect the street grid and to restore Maryland Avenue as an urban boulevard focused on the U.S. Capitol.

Improving the public realm along Maryland Avenue would contribute several open spaces to Washington’s system of parks and plazas. The currently planned President Dwight D. Eisenhower Memorial will mark Maryland Avenue’s arrival at the National Mall as a significant visitor destination. Reservation 113, at the intersection of Maryland and Virginia Avenues, should be revived as the central open space of the corridor, offering a welcome public amenity in the heart of the Southwest Rectangle. The intersection of Maryland Avenue and 10th Street offers a significant commemorative opportunity, and the avenue’s current western terminus can be redesigned

to improve its link with the Jefferson Memorial by extending the Maryland Avenue deck farther over the rail lines. A pedestrian connection could also be constructed here to physically link Maryland Avenue with the National Mall and the Tidal Basin.

Along the avenue, infill development can strengthen the street wall to better frame the U.S. Capitol, increase opportunities for federal office space and a mix of private uses, and enhance street-level activity. In addition to the Forrester Complex redevelopment opportunities, there are several locations for infill development along Maryland Avenue. For instance, the building yard south of the current Federal Aviation Administration on 7th Street, and the Cotton Annex between 11th and 12th Streets, both offer compelling redevelopment opportunities.

The width of Maryland Avenue’s right-of-way would support a complete and sustainable street, including a wide, planted median to reduce and slow stormwater runoff flowing into the sewer system; dedicated bicycle and transit lanes to help reduce dependence on cars; and new street trees to help reduce urban heat gain and create habitat for migratory birds.

**RESERVATION 113** Reservation 113, prominently located at the intersection of two avenues and two streets, is the geometric complement to Market Square on Pennsylvania Avenue, NW. The site has been marginalized by rail, highway, and building construction over the years, and because of the discontinuous local street grid, the federal office buildings bordering Reservation 113 do not define the open space or encourage its public use.

The *Framework Plan* proposes reclaiming the reservation as an important component of the public realm by enlarging the open space to accommodate public amenities and commemorative elements, and by improving circulation. While the site’s topography poses challenges for its design, its ability to connect to the L’Enfant Plaza transportation hub and active street-level uses will ensure its vibrancy. Rail lines will need to shift slightly to the south in order to realize this concept but the shift can be accomplished in conjunction with the planned construction of new track within the corridor. To realize the full potential of Reservation 113, the railroad tracks would be shifted further south, requiring redesign or redevelopment of the General Services Administration Regional Office Building.

1. Deck the rail line to reclaim Maryland Avenue as a complete and sustainable street.
2. Develop Reservation 113 as a premier public park.
3. Create an overlook and pedestrian connection to the Tidal Basin.
4. Develop the Cotton Annex site with a mix of uses.
5. Develop the Federal Aviation Administration building yard as federal office with ground-floor retail.
6. Redevelop the Liberty Loan Building as a premier cultural destination with ground-floor amenities.
7. Deck the 9th Street tunnel between Independence Avenue and D Street to reestablish 9th Street.
8. Deck the freeway tunnel to reestablish 11th and 12th Streets between Independence Avenue and F Street.
9. Realign 15th Street to connect with a new F Street.
10. President Eisenhower Memorial, currently under design development.



Framework Plan proposal for the Maryland Avenue corridor.



NCP/CFA, SECTION BY EDAW

Tunneling the rail line and reclaiming historic Reservation 113 will create a prominent civic place at the intersection of Maryland and Virginia Avenues on the 8th Street axis within view of the Washington Monument.



NCP/CFA, ILLUSTRATION BY EDAW

Reestablishing Maryland Avenue with a series of civic spaces and developing vacant parcels will anchor a new neighborhood along an important L'Enfant avenue, connecting the Jefferson Memorial with the U.S. Capitol.



EDAW

Current view of the rail line along Maryland Avenue, looking northeast toward the U.S. Capitol.

As currently configured, the entire Southwest Rectangle acts as a barrier to movement. This is primarily due to interruptions to the local street grid caused by the ramps to the Southwest Freeway, the freeway itself, the rail lines along Maryland and Virginia Avenues, and the superblock federal office buildings. The result is an urban character that deters exploration and does not take advantage of prime opportunities to support the National Mall and the federal workplace with services, residences, and hotels.

## Repair the Urban Fabric

Reclaiming the grid, improving the streetscape, and introducing a mix of uses throughout the precinct, in addition to improving 10th Street and Maryland Avenue, would provide more complete, continuous, and pedestrian-friendly streets offering multiple connections between the National Mall and the waterfront. Infill development, including residential and hospitality uses, and the insertion of new green spaces would improve the livability of this district and encourage visitors, workers, and residents to move through and around the area.

**STREETScape AND TRANSIT** Rail and highway transportation networks enable movement through an area, but unfortunately have had a counter effect in this precinct. Local mobility can be greatly improved by modifying if not removing the offending infrastructure. These modifications will not only improve the streetscape but may also facilitate a more efficient regional transportation network.

For example, in addition to shifting the rail alignment at Maryland Avenue, Virginia Avenue could be improved if its tracks ran on a well-designed, elevated trestle above the street once they emerge at Reservation 113. This could be coordinated with improvements to the L'Enfant Plaza regional rail station and to various corridor improvements already planned by CSX. Also, significant below-grade space under 10th Street is available for development as an intermodal transfer station linked to the L'Enfant Plaza Metrorail station. It would be possible at this hub to make connections between regional rail, Metrorail, and local buses. In addition, it could be an ideal location for tour bus parking and both commuter

and visitor parking because it would provide easy transfer to local transportation and convenient access to the National Mall.

The Southwest Freeway and its access ramps now cut major trenches through the precinct. Decking the freeway to reestablish F Street between 7th Street and the waterfront, and decking the access ramps along 9th, 11th, and 12th Streets has many benefits, including reestablishing continuous streets, improving the streetscape for pedestrians and local traffic, and enhancing mobility. Decking the freeway would also offer the opportunity for mixed-use private development in the air-rights space along the F Street corridor and over the 12th Street ramp. Connecting the reestablished F Street with a realigned 15th Street would improve access throughout the area and create opportunities for street-level activities on the north side of Maine Avenue across from the waterfront.

The *Framework Plan* also recommends streetscape improvements and the addition of green space throughout the precinct. For example, along the

1. Construct an expressway tunnel under the Washington Channel to remove a significant barrier near the Jefferson Memorial and create public gathering space.
2. Extend the entry/exit tunnels under 9th and 12th Streets to access downtown and restore the street grid above.
3. Connect the tunnels to the existing SE/SW Expressway to use viable infrastructure.
4. Construct a tunnel for local traffic from Potomac Park to the 14th Street corridor to maximize connectivity across the land bridge.
5. Shift the railroad tracks slightly to allow the restoration of Maryland Avenue and Reservation 113.



Illustration of street-level improvements.

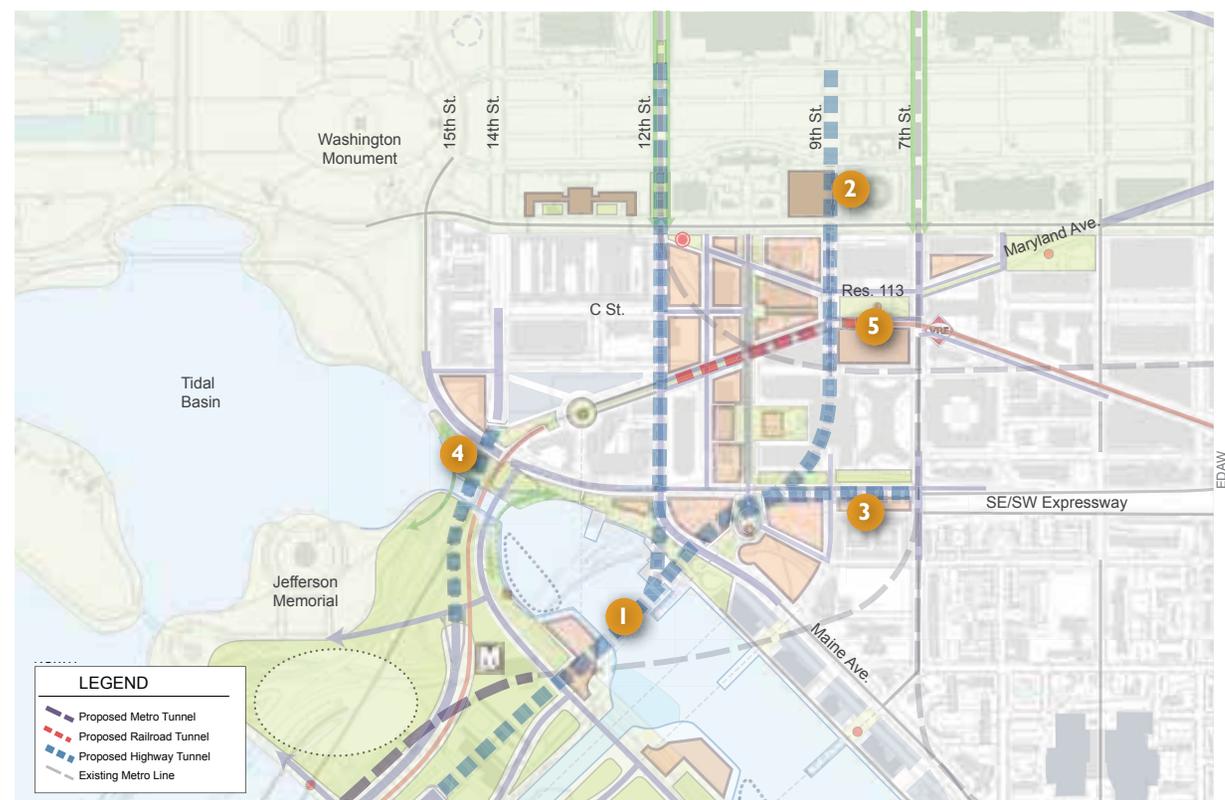


Diagram of proposed tunnels that could improve street-level development and connectivity.

eastern edge of Reservation 113, 7th Street runs from Silver Spring, Maryland, to the Southwest Waterfront as one of the precinct's few existing continuous streets. This important street could be redesigned as a tree-lined connection accommodating pedestrians, bicyclists, and mass transit users, as well as motorized vehicles.

**THE RAIL LINE** In Pierre L'Enfant's plan, the area south of the National Mall received its full share of grand Washington avenues, impressive civic spaces, and open vistas. However, railroad infrastructure undermined L'Enfant's vision for this part of Washington as early as the Civil War, when railroad tracks to support the war effort were laid along Maryland and Virginia Avenues, SW. For over 150 years, these tracks have served key passenger and freight routes along the eastern seaboard. Currently, freight and passenger trains share the same tracks until reaching I-395, where the passenger trains head north toward Union Station and freight traffic continues along Virginia Avenue toward the Anacostia River and Maryland.

The rail line obliterates large stretches of Maryland and Virginia Avenues, interrupting neighborhoods,

hemming in surrounding streets with looming infrastructure, and blocking nearly all views to the waterfront and the monumental core. The tracks also intrude on the historically significant Reservation 113, which L'Enfant imagined as a handsome civic space. Rerouting or decking the rail line would offer significant improvement throughout the area.

Transport of hazardous freight through the District poses a safety and security risk to the nearby U.S. Capitol, to densely populated residential neighborhoods, and to federal and local work centers employing an estimated 100,000 workers. The current rail network also presents obstacles to efficient rail travel. The shared northbound and southbound commuter rail platform at L'Enfant Plaza, and the single track within the low Virginia Avenue tunnel, result in a bottleneck and preclude double-stacking rail cars. Rerouting freight rail traffic away from the monumental core is one solution that would address security concerns while at the same time increase the capacity of the passenger line to help reduce regional and local roadway congestion.

In 2007, NCPC and the District Department of Transportation completed a feasibility study of alternative freight rail corridors in the region. The study considered several options, including tunneling under the Potomac River and through the District, or bypassing the District altogether to reroute freight rail through Virginia or Maryland. Further analysis of alternatives will require extensive public input and a coordinated effort by the District, the states, and the rail companies to determine environmental impacts, public and private benefits, projected costs, and funding sources.

While the *Framework Plan* acknowledges the benefits of rerouting freight rail traffic, reclaiming Maryland Avenue could still be realized even if the service is not relocated. The tracks could be lowered, shifted slightly south, and decked over to reestablish the avenue. Other improvements that are currently planned by CSX in this area, include increasing the capacity of the Virginia Avenue freight rail tunnel and modifying the commuter rail station at L'Enfant Plaza to accommodate two-way traffic.

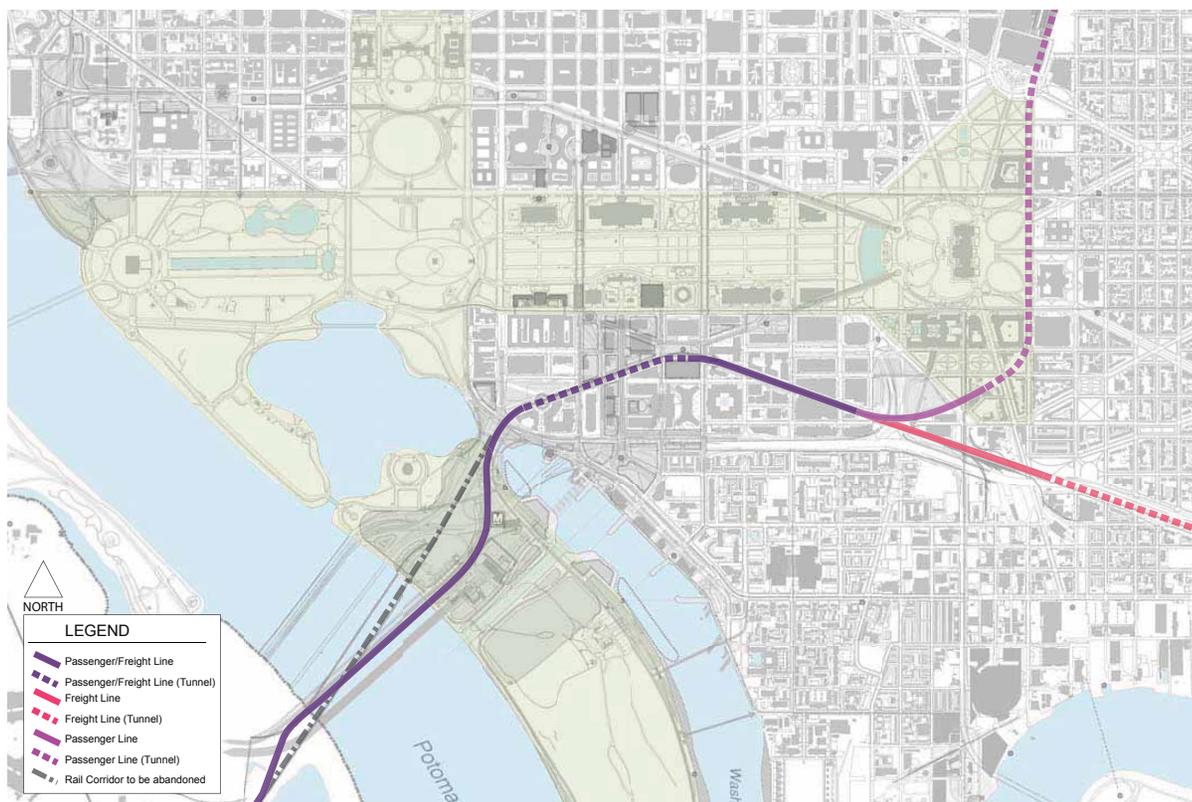


Diagram of proposed realignment of railroad tracks that could create space for the proposed Jefferson Memorial Festival Grounds and reestablishment of Maryland Avenue.



Decking over highways and rail lines can create opportunities for pedestrian friendly open spaces and new development.