





EDAW

Linking Downtown with the National Mall

THE FEDERAL TRIANGLE

Situated between the National Mall and Washington's traditional downtown, Pennsylvania Avenue and the Federal Triangle offer a unique opportunity to integrate diverse aspects of Washington life. By featuring a mix of activities and engaging public spaces, the Triangle can strengthen its appeal to workers and visitors, and Pennsylvania Avenue can reclaim its role as America's preeminent ceremonial boulevard.

This distinguished precinct should exhibit the purpose of the federal government, America's diverse national heritage, and the best of American art, architecture, landscape architecture, and urban design. It should have lovely and animated city streets and public spaces; welcoming public buildings; flexible and convenient public transit service; sustainable and accessible streets and buildings; and federal, local, and private developments.

The *Framework Plan for Reimagining Washington's Monumental Core* recommends establishing a new destination midway along Pennsylvania Avenue and improving the public space along the avenue as well as throughout the Federal Triangle to link the National Mall with downtown Washington.



Context

Pennsylvania Avenue provides a symbolic, physical, and visual link between the executive and legislative branches of government. The avenue originally was one of the city's main commercial streets, and by the middle of the 19th century, saloons and brothels operated alongside hotels, banks, and shops, making it one of the liveliest streets in the nation, though somewhat disreputable.

The completion of the Romanesque Post Office Building in 1899 signaled a change of fortune for the neighborhood. Not long afterward, the McMillan Commission recommended that a 70-acre triangle containing 23 city blocks south of Pennsylvania Avenue be consolidated and set aside for government office buildings. In 1926, construction began on the massive Beaux-Arts buildings of the Federal Triangle to house the growing federal workforce. The scale and detail of the buildings' architecture reflect "the dignity, enterprise, vigor, and stability of the Federal government," as noted later by Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan. The Federal Triangle includes a delightful series of courtyards and intimate spaces that exhibit one of the largest collections of 20th-century sculpture in the country.

By the 1960s the area north of Pennsylvania Avenue was in decline, losing much of its retail and private commercial activity. Its condition did not represent the grand symbolic avenue originally intended by L'Enfant. In 1972 the Pennsylvania Avenue Development Corporation (PADC) was formed to rejuvenate the area. The streetscape was improved and mixed-use development between 3rd and 15th Streets was added over the following 25 years. Pennsylvania Avenue is a key element and contributing resource to the historic L'Enfant Plan, and the buildings in the Federal Triangle comprise part of the Pennsylvania Avenue National Historic Site.

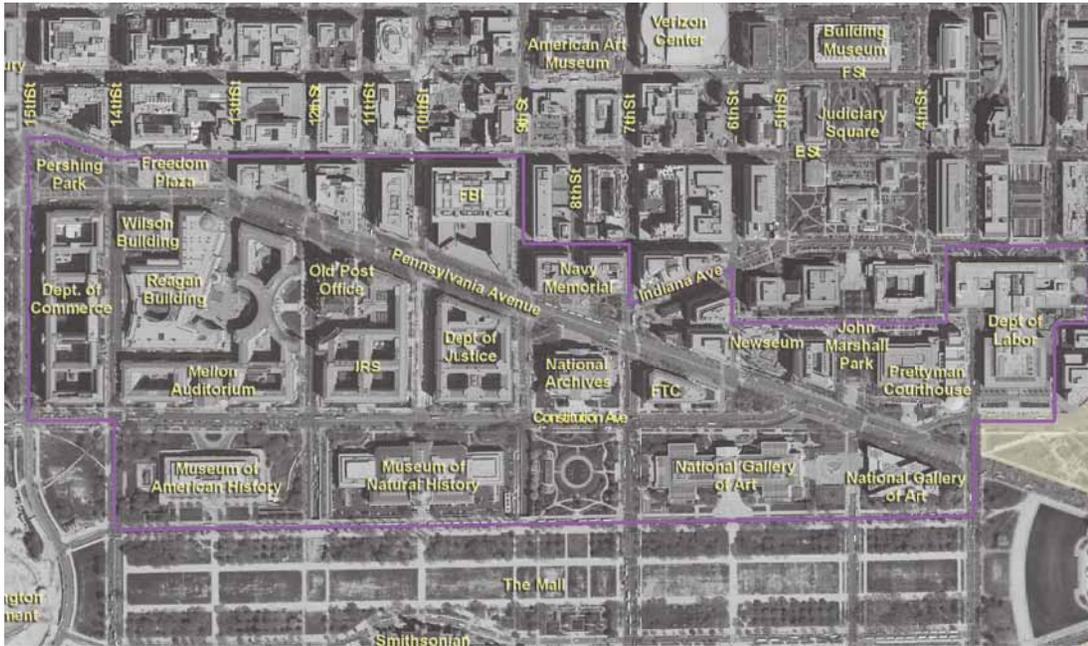
The federal government maintains a dominant presence in the Federal Triangle with more than 16 million square feet of office space, several federal agency headquarters, and more than 33,000 employees. While the unified precinct is grand, ordered, and architecturally successful, the superblocks and predominately single-use offices isolate the National

Mall from the downtown north of Pennsylvania Avenue. Outside of office hours, the Federal Triangle appears lifeless, with deserted streets between downtown and the National Mall. Even during the day, the Federal Triangle can only be experienced from its edges as opposed to within. The government buildings are closed to the public, and east-west passage through the Triangle is restricted. As a result, numerous attractive courtyards, arcades, and interior atriums are cordoned off by security barriers and checkpoints, with many of the spaces used only for parking and loading operations.

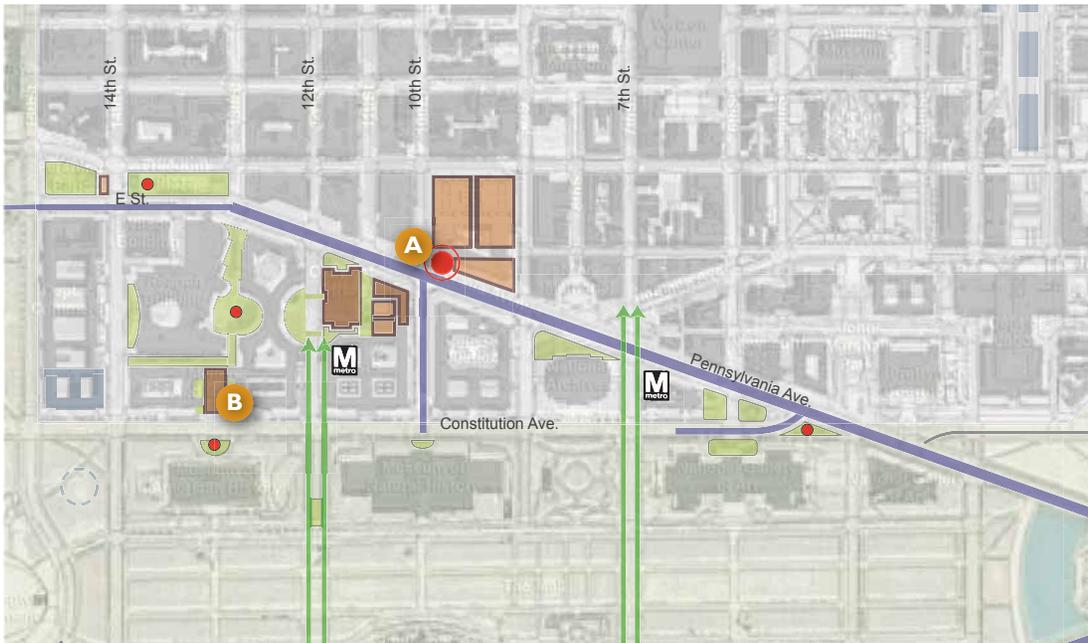
Throughout the precinct, poorly landscaped building yards and the absence of a clear wayfinding system create a monotonous public realm and the parks, plazas, and commemorative spaces along Pennsylvania Avenue are showing their age. Additionally, because the Federal Triangle was built over tributaries of Tiber Creek and has a high water table, a large percentage of impervious area, and antiquated and overtaxed city sewers, the area is highly susceptible to flooding.

North of Pennsylvania Avenue, the FBI's operation and security requirements have prevented street-level public uses along the entire block of the J. Edgar Hoover Building between 9th and 10th Streets. The building's fortress-like presence is exacerbated by security installations, the moat that surrounds three sides of the building, the unornamented International Style architecture, and the absence of street-level activity.

Several recently completed or planned projects will help integrate downtown, the Federal Triangle, and the monumental core. These include the Newseum on Pennsylvania Avenue, the recently renovated National Museum of American History on Constitution Avenue, the proposed National Museum of African-American History and Culture on Constitution Avenue between 14th and 15th Streets, and the proposed relocation of the National Aquarium within the Department of Commerce building from 14th Street to Constitution Avenue. Additionally, Congress recently passed legislation to reuse the Old Post Office (OPO) building and adjacent glass pavilion annex to increase public access and use.



Aerial view of Pennsylvania Avenue and the Federal Triangle.



The Framework Plan proposal for Pennsylvania Avenue and the Federal Triangle.

Key Improvements

A. Establish a New Destination on Pennsylvania Avenue

by concentrating a mix of office, culture and hospitality uses on Pennsylvania Avenue between 9th and 12th Streets, NW.

B. Enhance the Public Realm

by establishing a welcoming, interconnected system of lively and beautiful streets, introducing sustainable public spaces, and improving the pedestrian experience and symbolic importance of Pennsylvania Avenue and the Federal Triangle.



Establish New Destinations on Pennsylvania Avenue

North of Pennsylvania Avenue is Penn Quarter, a vibrant live/work neighborhood and visitor destination. South of Constitution Avenue is the National Mall, the civic heart of the nation's capital and the most popular tourist destination in Washington. In between lie Pennsylvania Avenue, the city's most significant and ceremonial street, and the Federal Triangle, an important and architecturally significant precinct of government buildings and federal headquarters. To better integrate these aspects of the nation's capital, the *Framework Plan* recommends the development of a mixed-use destination on Pennsylvania Avenue between 9th and 12th Streets at the current location of the Old Post Office Building and the J. Edgar Hoover Building.

Redesign of this area will provide the opportunity to incorporate green site and building technologies

in new construction and to retrofit existing buildings. This will advance the federal government's role as a leader in sustainability and enable agencies to meet recently implemented federal green energy standards.

THE OLD POST OFFICE For over thirty years, the magnificent Old Post Office building has not fully realized its potential as an anchor destination along Pennsylvania Avenue. Adaptive reuse would honor the Richardsonian Romanesque structure and make better use of its outdoor public space, thereby enlivening the area beyond the work day and contributing to the vitality of the public realm. Studies have indicated that most reuse scenarios would also require coordinated redevelopment of the adjacent annex. While the best use has not yet been determined for this important site, preliminary review indicates that the OPO building and annex would support a combination of uses, such as a hotel, museum, restaurant, and event space.

If the annex or its site were to be reused as a cultural institution operating separately from the OPO building, the *Framework Plan* recommends studying the feasibility of including the adjacent northern wing of the Internal Revenue Service Building in the new site. This would give the new institution a presence on Pennsylvania Avenue and entrances from the 11th Street plaza and the 10th Street arcade. If necessary, the displaced IRS functions could be incorporated into new construction on the annex site and connected to the main wing of the IRS building.

THE J. EDGAR HOOVER BUILDING If, in the long term, the FBI were better able to fulfill its mission in another building elsewhere in the District, redeveloping the J. Edgar Hoover Building site or adaptively reusing the building would contribute significantly to the rejuvenation of Pennsylvania Avenue. It would strengthen the avenue as an important thoroughfare, increasing public activity on adjacent streets and



Reuse of the Old Post Office Building and redevelopment of the J. Edgar Hoover Building with cultural, hospitality, commercial, and office uses can bring new urban vitality to Pennsylvania Avenue.



Current view of the Old Post Office Building located on Pennsylvania Avenue between the White House and U.S. Capitol.

providing opportunities for commemoration. It could allow development of a well-designed, environmentally-efficient building and help modernize and humanize the federal workplace, increasing the efficient use of the site and contributing to downtown's economic vitality.

If redeveloped, the site should be reconfigured to open the D Street right of way, thereby improving connectivity in the area. Federal office buildings with street-level public uses could fill the blocks north of D Street. The block south of D Street facing Pennsylvania Avenue could be reserved for a museum with a prominent public plaza on the avenue. The new buildings could be designed to green building standards and could contribute to an energy cooperative. A green energy cooperative among federal agencies would allow buildings that generate excess energy to share it with buildings whose historic nature restricts the installation of such technology.

10TH STREET CORRIDOR The 10th Street corridor, which bisects this proposed new hub of activity, is an important connection between downtown and the monumental core. It is becoming a vibrant mixed-use corridor near the Old Convention Center site and a popular tourist destination near Ford's Theater, as well as a major conduit to the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History. It also functions as a Metrobus hub, serving the local employment base and providing a transfer point to other bus routes and to four nearby Metrorail lines.

Enhancing the functional and aesthetic quality of 10th Street between Pennsylvania and Constitution Avenues would support the transformation of the area. Redesign of the area would improve walkability and pedestrian safety, and create an attractive and welcoming forecourt to the National Museum of Natural History. Improvements could also include streetscape redesign, street reconfiguration to allow one-way southbound

traffic for buses only, and appropriately placed and designed Metrobus ticketing and information facilities. An additional Metrorail entrance at the Old Post Office plaza could support easy transit transfers, encourage transit use, and ease traffic congestion.

FREEDOM SQUARE AND PERSHING PARK At the western end of Pennsylvania Avenue, Freedom Plaza and Pershing Park should be redesigned to become a cohesive space and a primary destination for local and national events. Pershing Park could accommodate more restrooms and visitor services as well as a new indoor/outdoor garden pavilion offering food services. Freedom Plaza could serve as a primary civic square and incorporate amenities like shade trees, chairs, and interactive water features.



1. Reuse the Old Post Office building, annex, and the northern wing of the IRS building for a mix of hospitality and cultural uses.
2. Redevelop or adaptively reuse the J. Edgar Hoover Building site with a mix of federal offices, street-level retail, and cultural uses.
3. Redesign the 10th Street streetscape as a beautiful and welcoming forecourt to the National Museum of Natural History and a transit commuting center.
4. Enhance Pennsylvania Avenue to improve its beauty and encourage street life, culture, and commerce.
5. Improve pedestrian comfort and visitor services at Freedom Plaza and Pershing Park, and strengthen the plaza's role as a premier civic space for the city of Washington.
6. Improve pedestrian access by adding two entrances to existing Metrorail stations.
7. Build to the highest green standards and develop a green energy cooperative to harvest renewable energy for use in historic buildings within the Federal Triangle.

Framework Plan proposal for a new destination on Pennsylvania Avenue.

Enhance the Public Realm

Each branch of government is represented along Pennsylvania Avenue, and many executive agencies are located in the adjoining Federal Triangle. As the country's most important symbolic and ceremonial avenue and the center of the nation's governance, this area should reflect the beauty of the nation's capital and exemplify stability, vitality, accessibility, and stewardship. With its handsome buildings and marvelous civic art, the public realm along Pennsylvania Avenue and throughout the Federal Triangle has enormous potential as one of Washington's premier destinations.

SUSTAINABLE STREETScape Pennsylvania Avenue is a monumental avenue of great symbolic importance and a venue for nationally significant civic and ceremonial activities. However, it should also regain some of its liveliness with the inclusion of commerce and culture alongside its government functions. It is also time to renew Pennsylvania Avenue's streetscape, parks, and plazas and find ways to minimize the impact of perimeter security on the public realm.

A comprehensive solution is needed to encourage people to use Pennsylvania Avenue's public spaces

and to ensure aesthetic continuity and adequate safety on the grand boulevard. The wide sidewalks, abundant outdoor spaces, and entry plazas should be enhanced with fountains, seating, improved landscaping, seasonal flowers, commemorative works, and public art. An allée of trees could strengthen the views along the avenue and provide shade and seating, as well as decrease the amount of impervious surface and allow for the natural infiltration or harvesting of rainwater. Sidewalk cafes, tasteful vending kiosks, seasonal activities, and community events could enliven nearby buildings and the avenue, contributing to a more memorable Washington experience. The entries of the buildings fronting the avenue, the forecourts to significant buildings, and the triangular spaces along the street should be improved. Appropriate lighting could accentuate the area's art and architecture and significantly enhance the nighttime experience along the avenue.

In addition to minimizing the presence of perimeter security, redesign of the avenue should include green infrastructure and low-impact, sustainable design and maintenance practices. The federal government and the city should take leadership roles to connect people to natural systems and a more pleasant pedestrian environment, and to capture, treat, and

reuse stormwater. Synergies between these goals should be explored; for example, perimeter security, stormwater management, and pedestrian comfort all could be addressed with the construction of public realm bioswales, which would soften the urban streetscape and reduce stormwater runoff while establishing a security barrier. The ample building yards along Constitution Avenue could also support such an approach.

PUBLIC SPACES The intersections on 6th, 7th, and 12th Streets at Pennsylvania and Constitution Avenues should be redesigned to provide a safer and more pleasant pedestrian environment and to encourage walking. Other streetscape improvements could include additional street trees, better lighting, and useful, well-designed street furniture. In addition, the building plazas where north-south views terminate at major public buildings should be improved to be more welcoming, such as 6th Street at the National Gallery of Art, 8th Street at the National Archives, and 10th Street at the National Museum of Natural History. Other important locations that warrant improvement include Benjamin Franklin Circle on 12th Street, the proposed National Aquarium entrance on Constitution Avenue, and the Andrew Mellon fountain plaza on Constitution Avenue.



Pennsylvania Avenue is the Capital's premier ceremonial boulevard.



Current view of Freedom Plaza, looking southeast toward the U.S. Capitol.



Altering Freedom Plaza to provide urban amenities and improve pedestrian comfort will establish a beautiful and welcoming civic space on the avenue.

One of the most important ways to improve public space and support the national cultural institutions in this area is to increase public access to and through the Federal Triangle. North-south connections through the Triangle should be enhanced and east-west connections should be reestablished. This can be accomplished by beautifying and programming the public space in a way that creates attractive and enjoyable outdoor spaces for workers and visitors to interact, relax, learn, and play. Preferably, full or at least limited access should be provided through as many courtyards as possible. Rotating outdoor exhibits and public art displays could draw visitors into the plazas and courtyards, bringing life to these public spaces and improving pedestrian circulation.

Near the western end of the Federal Triangle, the Woodrow Wilson Plaza should be reanimated by adding a custom-designed fountain and increasing seasonal activities beyond the existing summer afternoon concerts. The enormous basement food court of the Ronald Reagan Building and International Trade Center could support the plaza level with well-designed kiosks and seating. Similarly, visitor services and entertainment venues, now located, behind and security checkpoints, should be given a presence on the plaza to encourage street-level public activity. Extending visitor hours at the

surrounding National Mall museums and organizing more public events in the evening would also increase public visitation in the immediate area.

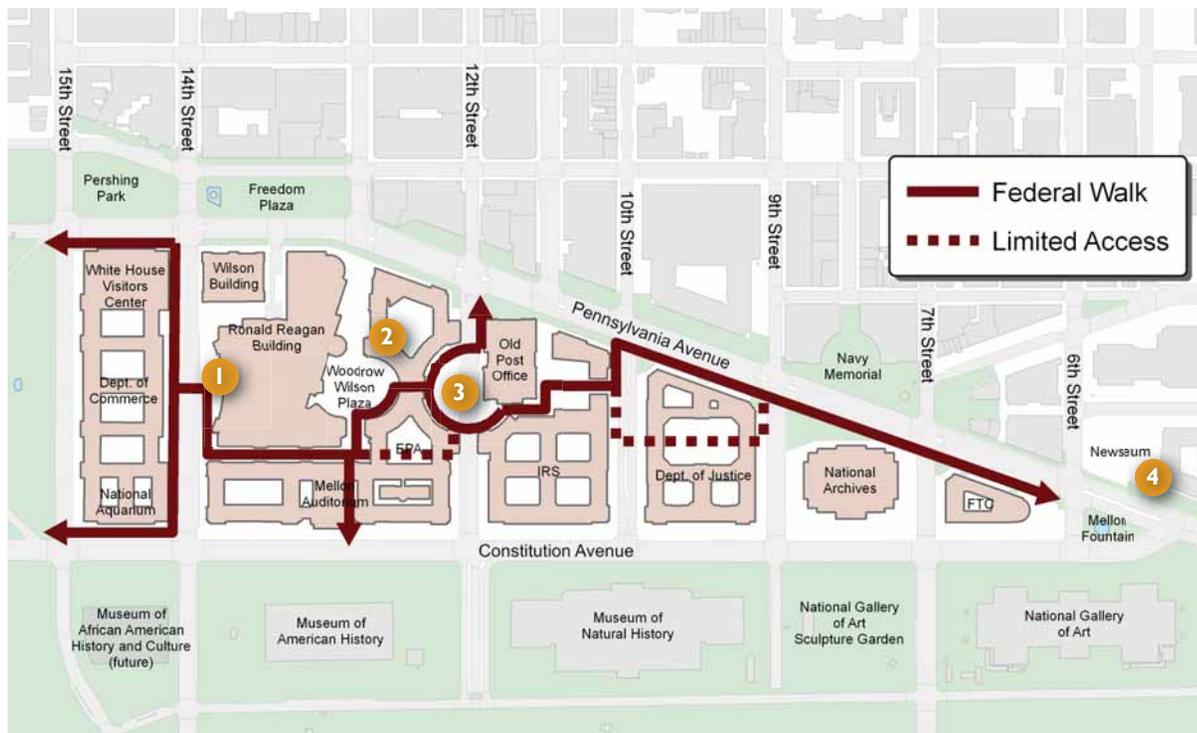
FEDERAL WALK The array of public art and architecture throughout the Federal Triangle could collectively be considered a museum of many parts, comparable to its sister institutions on the National Mall. Another way to improve the accessibility of the Federal Triangle is to weave together its parks, public spaces, and civic art with a flexible and easy-to-use “Federal Walk” cultural heritage trail. Self-guided or docent-guided tours, supported by state-of-the-art technologies, could offer a range of short and long walks along the avenues and through some courtyards. Where appropriate, agencies could use the courtyards to feature their missions. The interpretative walks could focus on a range of themes in American culture and history and bring them to life through sight and sound. The whole program could be supported by a prominent visitor center containing a bookstore, rest rooms, exhibit space, and an information distribution point. The Federal Walk would enrich the visitor’s experience, provide a spontaneous learning opportunity for passersby, be a source of pride for workers, and help establish the Triangle as a destination unto itself.



Improving circulation through the Federal Triangle will increase the visibility of its many civic sculptures.



Gardens within the passageways create enjoyable places for workers and visitors.



Conceptual route for the Federal Walk, a proposed cultural and civic trail to celebrate federal assets and improve the pedestrian experience between downtown and the National Mall.

1. Establish a “Federal Walk” to showcase agency missions, history, architecture, and art in the Federal Triangle.
2. Animate and increase visitor and worker services for year-round use of Woodrow Wilson Plaza.
3. Improve linkages between Benjamin Franklin Circle and the OPO Plaza.
4. Improve pedestrian sightlines and circulation along 6th Street between Pennsylvania and Constitution Avenues.