



Introduction

BACKGROUND

In 1997, the National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC) prepared the Legacy Plan, which provided a vision to guide development of the city's monumental core. The Legacy Plan proposed that Washington's monumental core be re-centered on the U.S. Capitol, that the city rediscover its waterfronts, and that federal development become a catalyst for enlivening the city. The plan also emphasized the need to protect the National Mall as a civic and cultural destination.

In 2009, in partnership with the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts, and consultation with the District of Columbia, NCPC prepared the Monumental Core Framework Plan which focuses on the federally dominated precincts surrounding the National Mall, including the Southwest Rectangle – the collection of large mid-century Modern federal headquarter buildings south of Independence Avenue.

This plan recommends redeveloping 10th Street, SW into a vibrant mixed-use corridor that extends the civic qualities of the National Mall to the waterfront and re-establishing Maryland Avenue, SW as a pre-eminent boulevard on axis with the U.S. Capitol. Also in 2009, President Obama signed Executive Order 13514 Federal Leadership in Environmental, Energy and Economic Performance (EO 13514), making the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions a priority for federal agencies.

With the adoption of the DC Green Building Act and the updated District Elements of the Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital Region in 2006, the District of Columbia set a course to become a more sustainable and inclusive city. In May 2012, Mayor Vincent Gray released a Vision Plan to transform the District into the greenest, healthiest and most livable city in the nation. The plan articulates the goals, priorities, and actions to achieve social equity, economic competitiveness, and environmental quality.

Now, with a combination of proposed development, new federal planning initiatives, and market/economic forces, Southwest DC is on the cusp of change. A multi-billion dollar waterfront development project is planned and sponsors are considering this area for the location of museum and memorial projects. In addition, the federal government is re-examining its property to meet aggressive sustainability targets, create more efficient workplaces for a modern federal workforce, and reduce its operating costs.

THE SW ECODISTRICT INITIATIVE

In 2010, NCPC joined federal and local partners to establish the SW Ecodistrict Initiative to transform the Southwest Rectangle into a sustainable and livable neighborhood that uses federal land and natural resources efficiently and contributes to the economic vitality and environmental health of the city.

The SW Ecodistrict Initiative is a 20 to 25-year plan that lays the groundwork for the area's redevelopment into a highly sustainable mixed-use community. The plan includes a Revitalization Scenario and recommends a series of strategies to address land use, public space, transportation, and a variety of environmental issues confronting the federal government and the area's stakeholders. The plan specifically examines the need to:

- › Reduce carbon emissions, conserve resources, and reduce operating costs;
- › Establish new cultural destinations beyond the National Mall to help relieve development pressure and overuse
- › Establish a diverse mix of uses, including cultural, housing, retail, and open space;
- › Remove visual and physical barriers between the National Mall and the waterfront;
- › Expand transit capacity, improve walkability, and enliven streets and public spaces; and
- › Use limited financial resources effectively to improve buildings and infrastructure.

To realize the SW Ecodistrict vision, the plan includes a roadmap to prioritize and phase projects that can be carried out over time as federal agencies' missions and space needs change and as they are economically viable and align with public (federal and local) and private investment priorities. It recommends a governance strategy and outlines the funding and legislative tools that can help implement the recommendations, including district-wide improvements that will benefit multiple stakeholders.

The *SW Ecodistrict Plan* illustrates that the area can become a highly sustainable mixed-use community by employing district-scale strategies and building-scale strategies to yield significant environmental and economic benefits.