

# Parks and Open Space

*Element*



.....ComprehensivePlan  
*for the National Capital*



# Federal Elements

## Parks and Open Space

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.....ComprehensivePlan  
*for the National Capital*

# Introduction

## Parks and Open Space

*It is the goal of the federal government to:*

Conserve and enhance the park and open space system of the National Capital Region, ensure that adequate resources are available for future generations, and promote an appropriate balance between open space resources and the built environment.

**The outer jurisdictions of the region are experiencing tremendous growth that reduces the amount of privately held open space and crowds our public parks.**

One of the defining characteristics of the National Capital Region is its park and open space system. From community parks tucked away in residential neighborhoods, to the grand expanse of the National Mall, to the extensive open space and wilderness preserves in the outlying reaches of the metropolitan area, the National Capital Region is fortunate to have

so many varied and beautiful outdoor spaces for public use. Open space serves many important recreational, natural resource, and cultural purposes. It offers places for wildlife habitat, wilderness protection, groundwater retention, air oxygenation, active recreational use, decorative settings, historic landscapes, and visual corridors. Historically, the federal government has used open space as settings for important monuments, grand public promenades, major federal buildings, and quiet gathering places within and outside the nation's capital.

In recent years, however, many factors have challenged the region's ability to adequately serve the residents of and visitors to the National Capital Region. The immense popularity of the Mall has

stressed the infrastructure of this historic open space; an influx of residents to downtown in recent years has created the need for community-scale parks; established neighborhoods have either been underserved by parks and open space or the quality of their parks is deteriorating under tightening fiscal conditions; and the outer jurisdictions of the region are experiencing tremendous growth rates that reduce the amount of privately held open space and crowd our public parks.

The federal government places a high value on the environmental benefits, recreational use, and scenic beauty provided by monumental, natural, and cultural landscapes, and has amassed a significant inventory of natural and historic parks to complement the more formal open-space settings for monuments and memorials. The federal government also maintains parks and open space that serve the everyday recreational needs of residents and visitors. The National Park Service controls approximately 60 square miles of parks and open space in the NCPC-defined National Capital Region, representing 25 percent of the roughly 239 square miles of designated parks and open space lands controlled by federal, state, and local governments in the NCR.<sup>1</sup> The 6,776 acres owned by NPS represents the majority of parks and open space in the District of Columbia, and is 17 percent of the District's total land area.

1. Numbers are approximate, as discrepancies in boundary areas between jurisdictions, ownership, and definitions of parks and open space result in data that does not perfectly match across the region. The term "National Capital Region" is used by several groups, including NPS, with boundaries that differ from NCPC's.

Several federal agencies have jurisdiction over open space, including the National Park Service, the Department of Agriculture, and the Department of Defense. Federal open space occurs in a variety of forms. As described below, estimates of regional federal open space holdings include:

- Designated parkland (such as the holdings of the National Park Service).
- Other areas designated primarily as open space, such as the National Arboretum.
- Open space settings for federal buildings, such as the National Institutes of Health.
- Water areas, including all of the Potomac and Anacostia Rivers within the District of Columbia (approximately six square miles), as well as several reservoirs.

In addition to the vast federal ownership of parks and open space in the National Capital Region, the federal government's vested interest results primarily from two provisions of the National Capital Planning Act, and federal environmental laws.

- The National Capital Planning Act of 1952 grants the National Capital Planning Commission the responsibility "to plan the appropriate and orderly development of the National Capital and the conservation of the important natural and historical features thereof."
- In 1930 the Capper Cramton Act authorized funding for the acquisition of lands in the District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia for the park and parkway system of the national capital. Property acquisition included lands for George Washington Memorial Parkway; stream valley parks in Maryland and Virginia; and the park, parkway, and playground system of the District of Columbia.
- Parks and open space can significantly improve air and water quality, protect wildlife habitats, improve groundwater retention, and help prevent flooding. These are environmental benefits that support federal environmental laws.

Open space exists at many different scales, in many different forms, and under the jurisdiction of many different organizations. Within the District of Columbia, for example, many parks and open spaces

were carved from the triangular blocks created by the original L'Enfant street grid system. Other parks, such as the Prince William Forest Park in suburban Virginia, encompass many thousands of acres of forest land in its natural condition.

A general definition of open space includes any land or water surface that is not occupied by buildings, a broad definition that encompasses the vast majority of federal property, particularly outside of the relatively small landholdings in central Washington. More specific definitions of open space depend on the context and needs of particular areas. In this element, parks and open space have been divided into seven broad categories, although many parks and open spaces could be defined by two or more of these categories.

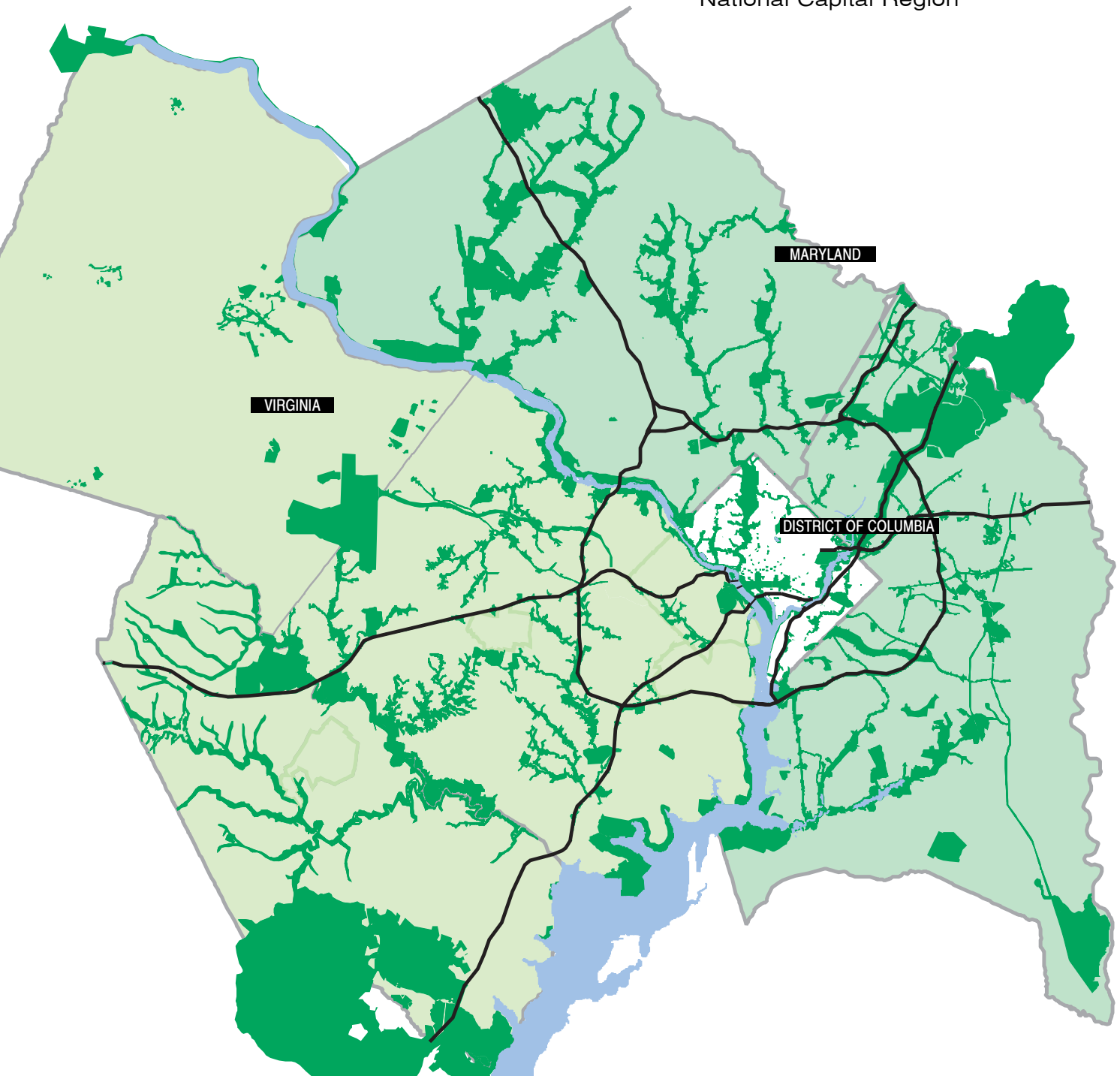
- *Parks and Landscapes*, which includes natural and designed parks and landscapes.
- *Terrain Features*, which includes variations in the natural landscape such as escarpments, gorges and palisades, and mountain ranges.
- *Greenways and Greenbelts*, which includes linear parks and connecting greenways, the large reserves of open space areas essentially forming a "greenbelt," and the tree cover that is so predominant in the Washington area.
- *Rivers and Waterways*, which includes the Potomac and Anacostia Rivers, smaller tributaries such as Rock Creek, and other unnamed tributaries and creeks.
- *Trails*, which includes those used by pedestrians, bicyclists, equestrians, and motorized vehicles.
- *Gateways*, which includes the major roads, highways, and transportation terminals that are the approaches to the nation's capital.
- *Parkways*, which includes roadways in linear landscape parks restricted to use by automobiles.

These various components, whether federal or nonfederal, should be viewed as part of a comprehensive system of parks and open space that contribute to the region's setting or are significant in terms of their historical, cultural, or recreational characteristics.

Several planning challenges have emerged in recent years regarding future parks and open space needs. Among these challenges is the need to ensure that an adequate supply of parkland and open space is available to meet the needs of an increasing population and to fill the gaps in the existing system. Connecting parks and open space; providing public

access to the park system; and protecting existing open space from overuse, conversion to other uses, encroachment by inappropriate new development, or diminution by inappropriate development on adjacent lands are additional challenges that planners are confronting.

 Parks and Open Spaces in the National Capital Region



# Policies

## Expansion and Enhancement

In the past 20 years, the population of the National Capital Region has increased significantly. This population gain is expected to continue, which will likely prompt a commensurate demand for new parks and open space. Increases in tourism to the region also create a higher demand on parks and open space.

For several decades after its creation in the 1920s, the National Capital Planning Commission was actively engaged in the acquisition of parkland for the District of Columbia and coordination of open-space acquisitions throughout the region. While the Commission's authority to acquire land remains intact, this authority has not been exercised for many decades. Other recent federal acquisitions have been few, and have been undertaken by individual agencies or special entities, such as the Pennsylvania Avenue Development Corporation. Future federal land acquisitions could occur by purchase, easement, donation, or exchange.

Direct federal acquisition of new parkland and open space can and should also be augmented with public-private partnerships. For example, private development of greenways that use planned and existing utility easements could minimize public costs of greenway development. In addition, the federal government can provide leadership on regional open

space issues and assist in linking new and existing local properties with federal properties to create an integrated parks and open space network serving the residents of and visitors to the region.

In recent years, local governments have served as the prime acquirers of new open space, helping to preserve important land parcels that become subject to potential development and to meet the recreational needs of local residents. Loudoun County's Purchase of Development Rights Program and Montgomery County's use of Transfer of Development Rights are two examples of local government efforts to protect natural, historic, and scenic open space.

Additionally, redevelopment of surplus federal property may also provide opportunities to add to the region's inventory of parks and open space. The Cameron Station redevelopment in Alexandria, Virginia provides a successful example of such a commitment. The redevelopment of this former federal property not only provided the local community with new residential and commercial space, but importantly with new parks and open space. Over 60 acres of the 165-acre installation was transferred to Alexandria's Parks Department, and the city now has new parks, sports fields, and playgrounds.

### Purpose of Element

The challenges of preserving, maintaining, and enhancing the region's parks and open space and securing more for the future will require a coordinated, multifaceted effort. The Parks and Open Space Element of the Comprehensive Plan is designed to generate federal leadership in regional parks and open space planning by promulgating several objectives: preserving the key natural resources of the region as permanent open space; providing sufficient parks and recreation areas to meet the needs of residents and visitors; preserving for posterity the nature and diversity of our natural and cultural heritage; and using open space to help guide urban growth. The element also fosters cooperation and partnership among federal agencies, local government agencies, and nongovernmental organizations entrusted with the stewardship of the region's parks and open space.

Theodore Roosevelt Island





## Expansion and Enhancement *Policies*

The federal government should:

1. Plan for new parks as part of the park system of the region.
2. Acquire parks and open space as necessary to augment the open space system.
3. Use easements, donations, purchases, exchanges, or other means to acquire land or to enhance parks and open space. Examples of areas or park systems where further acquisition is desirable include:
  - South Capitol Street
  - Anacostia River waterfront and tributaries
  - Georgetown Waterfront Park
  - Areas immediately south of Meridian Hill Park where significant view corridors are blocked
  - Sites at or near the topographic bowl ridge line, as seen from the monumental core
  - Fort Circle Park system
  - Sites at the periphery of Manassas National Battlefield Park
  - An outer greenbelt ring of major open space at the periphery of the region
4. Coordinate planning and development of federal parkland with local parkland in order to optimize recreation, open space preservation, and resource protection.

## Preservation and Maintenance

Existing parks often suffer from chronic overuse, which contributes to the decline of the condition of the park and further burdens the already dwindling resources available for park maintenance. For example, the Mall Complex, a major open space setting for the nation's capital, plays host to millions of visitors who use it for a variety of symbolic and recreational uses. However, the use of the Mall as a gathering place for civic celebrations, peaceful demonstrations, and recreational uses is gradually being displaced by new memorials and museums. To counter this effect, the Mall Complex, from the U.S. Capitol to the Lincoln Memorial and from the White House to the Jefferson Memorial, should be considered essentially complete, and any improvements necessary in this area should be limited in scope and sensitively designed. Paradoxically, other parks are underutilized due to the lack of access and the poor condition of the parks. Examples include parkland along the Anacostia River and the waterfront park in Georgetown.

Shifting demographic and emerging development patterns mean that some parks no longer meet the needs of their users. Some parks in downtown Washington, for example, did not always serve a residential base and are not necessarily meeting residents' needs. Additionally, some federal parks and open space are in need of maintenance. Federal partnerships with local agencies, such as the District's Department of Parks and Recreation, business improvement districts, and nonprofit organizations, are key in developing a strategy and approach to upgrade these spaces, thereby improving their aesthetic and function, and adding vitality to their locations. Park use and development must strike a balance between recognition of national significance in designation, and local needs. Federal-local partnerships should focus on fulfilling shared goals, but not at the expense of impairing federal interests. Thus, a re-examination of federal open space in the District of Columbia should be considered so that federal open space that is essentially local in character can be more effectively integrated into the fabric of the District's neighborhoods.



Meridian Hill Park

Many parks and open spaces in the National Capital Region are also threatened by adjacent development pressures and the encroachment of inappropriate new development along park borders, conversion of the land to different uses, and a lack of resources for adequate maintenance. For example, Manassas National Battlefield Park—a significant historical Civil War landmark and cultural landscape—should be protected from unsympathetic development adjacent to it, as such adverse adjacent uses next to parks threaten their integrity and can cause adverse environmental impacts. Greater emphasis should be given to coordinating federal park and open space master plans with development plans for the jurisdictions that surround them.

Historically, dwindling resources often leave little money for the development and upkeep of federal and nonfederal parks and open space. Because public funding is limited for land acquisition and maintenance, new sources for these essential activities need to be developed and novel solutions shaped. New park and open space planning initiatives that have emerged in recent years, for example, have allowed the federal government to work and partner with a variety of entities. Among these, a nonprofit organization has entered into an agreement with the National Park Service to assist in restoring and enhancing the National Mall; local business improvement districts are addressing small federally owned reservations in downtown Washington; and regional planning agencies are devoting more resources to thinking comprehensively about the regional open space network in its entirety and the importance of adequately planning for and acquiring open space in a growing metropolitan area.

## Preservation and Maintenance

### *Policies*

The federal government should:

1. Enhance parks and preserve open green space for future generations.
2. Maintain and conserve federal open space as a means of shaping and enhancing urban areas.
3. Preserve open space that is crucial to the long-term quality of life of a neighborhood or the region.
4. Conserve and maintain the essential open space character of areas in the region with significant park, open space, cultural, or natural qualities that contribute to the setting of the National Capital Region. Such areas include the National Arboretum, Beltsville Agricultural Research Center, and McMillan and Dalecarlia Reservoirs.
5. Conserve portions of military reservations that add significantly to the inventory of park, open space, and natural areas and should, to the extent practicable, be used by the public for recreation. Examples include Andrews Air Force Base, Fort Belvoir, U.S. Soldiers' and Airmen's Home, Fort Meade, and Marine Corps Base Quantico.
6. Maintain wildlife refuge areas in the region as critical natural open space and protect these areas from potential adverse impacts from surrounding developments, including major highway or other transportation projects.
7. Maintain and conserve trees and other vegetation in the landscaped buffer areas on federal installations in a natural condition. Perimeter roads and cleared areas on these sites should be kept to a minimum, carefully landscaped, and managed in a manner that addresses security, aesthetics, and natural character.
8. Enter joint ventures to acquire and manage parks and open space.

## Connectivity and Access

Many parks and open spaces originally intended to be part of contiguous park systems are not linked. If they were, the region would have a better integrated network of parks, open space, greenways, and trails that could improve and increase recreational and commuter opportunities along the region's trails. Connecting the shoreline parks of the Anacostia and Potomac Rivers, Rock Creek Park, the Fort Circle Parks, and other points within the National Capital Region with other regional, state, and local park systems and trails would serve to strengthen the entire regional park and open space system. A new trail, linking most of the Fort Circle Parks sites and the connecting green corridor should be designated and constructed.

Particular emphasis should be given to completing and maintaining the connectivity of linear open space networks, such as stream valley parks and waterfront recreational trails, since continuous access for the public (and for wildlife) is an important feature of these open space networks. For example, Watts Branch and Oxon Run are significant tributaries to the Anacostia and Potomac Rivers and provide green links between federal open spaces. In addition, shoreline trails should be developed on the Maryland shore of the Potomac, linking southern Prince George's County with Anacostia Park in Washington through the Fort Foote and National Harbor areas, Oxon Cove Park, and the Bolling Anacostia Tract.

In addition, existing trails on the Virginia shore should continue to be strengthened in the Rosslyn area, providing access from nearby bridges to the Mount Vernon Trail. The existing foot trail north from Arlington along the George Washington Memorial

Parkway should be linked to other county trails and extend along the American Legion Bridge connecting the C&O Canal National Historical Park. Where feasible, the Anacostia Riverwalk Trail should be developed on both sides of the Anacostia River to connect existing pedestrian and bicycle trails on the National Mall to those along Anacostia River tributaries in Maryland.

Providing or maintaining public access to open-space areas of particular interest or usefulness allows otherwise unused parkland and open space to become a resource that can be used and enjoyed by all. Additionally, access to major open space could contribute to a "greenbelt" around the region. This green space band could be comprised of stream valleys, agricultural farm land, parks, and other natural and open space areas. The green band concept, which should be a collaboration between federal, state, local, regional, and private entities, builds upon existing federal, state, and local open space programs to conserve land. Green space could include major federal holdings, such as the Patuxent Research Refuge, Beltsville Agricultural Research Center, and the Marine Corps Base Quantico, as well as other public and private lands throughout the region. Green space also includes land with permitted and restrictive access to the public.



C&O Canal National  
Historical Park

## Connectivity and Access *Policies*

The federal government should:

1. Promote public access along the region's waterfronts, including waterfronts on military and other properties when security considerations will permit.
2. Plan, complete, and maintain connection between public parks and open space.



## *The Value of Open Space*

Parks and open space are valued for a variety of reasons—aesthetics, active and passive recreational opportunities, restorative attributes, historic significance, cultural events, environmental benefits, ecological benefits, educational purposes, added economic value, and the opportunity to socialize and congregate with others. In short, society values parks for a multiplicity of reasons, each as unique as the individual user.

**Aesthetic.** Trees, flowers, and other green vegetation offer beauty and welcome contrast to the built environment. Benches, fountains, sculpture, and other built features can further enhance the beauty of urban open spaces.

**Recreational.** From active sports to quiet relaxation, open space can provide opportunities for a variety of outdoor activities for people of all ages. While the neighborhood park is most often considered to be the place for recreation, a space no bigger than a city lot can provide valuable space for neighborhood recreation.

**Restorative.** Natural open spaces, even small ones, can help people “get away” from the din of urban life. Nature can help to restore people physically and psychologically by reducing stress, improving moods, and even lowering blood pressure.

**Cultural.** A variety of cultural activities and events occur in parks in the National Capital Region, from music, art, and history to celebrations and festivals of other nations.

**Environmental.** Vegetated open space can improve air and water quality. Trees rid the air of harmful dust and gasses and lower summertime temperatures. Streamside vegetation filters runoff, and wetlands absorb chemicals that would otherwise pollute surface waters.

**Ecological.** Patches and corridors of open space provide essential habitat for the native plants and wildlife of the National Capital Region. Urban open space networks can sustain complex ecosystems and enhance residents’ understanding of and relationship with nature.

**Educational.** Many parks and open spaces serve the dual purpose of providing an educational experience while accommodating people in park-like outdoor settings. These educational experiences are often directly related to the purpose of the open space or park.

**Economic.** Parks, greenways, and other open spaces can significantly enhance property values, which has been demonstrated in studies of prices people are willing to pay for visual and physical access to open space.

**Social.** Neighborhood open space, such as community gardens and play lots, often serve a vital function in bringing people together and in building personal relationships and bonds that will promote community identity and stability.

Source: *Cityspace: An Open Space Plan for Chicago*, January 1998





## Parks and Landscapes

Parks can be categorized many different ways. Size, use, location, and historic value are just some of the distinctions that are used to determine if the inventory of parks meets the needs of the users. Many parks do not fall neatly into one category. For example, the National Mall is a monumental open space, historic for both its architecture and designed historic landscape as well as the significant events that have occurred on it. It also serves as an educational resource and a place of active recreation and contemplative reflection for both residents and visitors.

**The largest park operator in the region is the National Park Service with more than 700 individual sites.**

In the National Capital Region, the federal government is the steward of a variety of parks under the jurisdiction of many federal agencies. The largest park operator in the region is the National Park Service, with more than 700 individual sites, ranging from community parks that serve as neighborhood gathering places to national monuments that attract visitors from around the world. Other federal agencies that operate parks or manage open space include the Smithsonian Institution with its National Zoological Park, the U.S. Department of Agriculture with its

National Arboretum, and the U.S. Army with its operation of Arlington National Cemetery. Further out in the region, the Department of Veterans Affairs is responsible for Balls Bluff National Cemetery; the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service operates the Mason Neck National Wildlife Refuge; and the Bureau of Land Management runs Meadowood Farm.

Other important parks are privately owned. Mount Vernon Estate and Gardens is one such example, though much of the adjacent land is under the control of the federal government. The Mount Vernon Memorial Highway portion of the George Washington Memorial Parkway, Piscataway Park, Fort Washington, Fort Hunt, and other land areas within the viewshed from Mount Vernon are considered integral parts of the historic property's landscape setting. The surrounding areas and natural views and vistas from Mount Vernon to Piscataway Park and beyond should be protected and enhanced to maintain the integrity of the historic setting.

Most parks in the National Capital Region can be placed into one of the following categories: monumental and designed landscape parks and parkways, natural parks, recreational parks, waterfront parks, and historic parks.



### Monumental and Designed Landscape Parks

Designed landscape parks are the squares, circles, and triangles associated with the L'Enfant City as green landscaped areas. These areas provide oases for pedestrians in both neighborhoods and downtown areas, and settings for existing and future monuments and memorials with ornamental plantings. These urban park areas are often small parks and designed landscapes with fountains, monuments, memorials, and other features of civic art. Examples include Farragut Square, McPherson Square, Dupont Circle, Franklin Square, Lafayette Park, Pershing Park, Lincoln Park, and Stanton Park, as well as many smaller triangular parks within neighborhoods. Other designed landscape parks are larger, and often have cultural and educational purposes. Examples of these resources include Wolf Trap National Park for the Performing Arts, the Carter Barron Amphitheater, Meridian Hill Park, the National Arboretum, the Kenilworth Aquatic Gardens, and the National Zoo.

Monumental parks and landscapes provide settings for public buildings, monuments, and memorials. They create and enhance pedestrian spaces; they showcase ornamental plants; and they are used for displays, cultural activities, passive recreation, and controlled active recreational activities. The

National Mall is perhaps the most significant example of a monumental park, and several planning issues must be addressed to ensure its future integrity as a national gathering place for civic celebrations and demonstrations, and as a place of recreation and education.

The demand is increasing for prime locations for new memorials and museums in the heart of the nation's capital. At the same time, the monumental core may soon surpass its capacity to accommodate these facilities. New memorials and museums may encroach on the settings of existing memorials, threatening the loss of the historic designed landscapes and features that make the Mall and its adjacent areas special places.

Following the release of the *Legacy Plan*, the Commission developed the *Memorials and Museums Master Plan* to preserve the open space, recreation lands, and scenic qualities of the monumental core. The master plan's Commemorative Zone Policy, which has now been codified in law by the U.S. Congress, established the Reserve, a geographical area encompassing the central cross-axes of the Mall, from the U.S. Capitol to the Lincoln Memorial and from the White House to the Jefferson Memorial. No new memorial sites will be





permitted in this area. The law also delineates Area I, which is immediately adjacent to the Reserve and is considered to be a sensitive area designated for commemorative works of preeminent historic and national significance. Area II encompasses the rest of the city, where new commemorative works are encouraged, with emphasis on the important North Capitol Street, South Capitol Street, and East Capitol Street axes; circles and squares on major avenues; waterfronts; urban gateways; and scenic overlooks. The *Memorials and Museums Master Plan* identified 100 potential sites throughout the District of Columbia for locating new commemorative works. As an extension of the Mall, but within Area II, Hain's Point at the tip of East Potomac Park was identified as a location for

a future memorial of lasting historical significance, provided that existing recreational resources are not compromised. Additional information and a map of the Commemorative Zones can be found in the Visitors Element.

Finally, sites of existing buildings at prominent and strategic locations in the monumental core should be considered when the useful life of those buildings has ended. Examples include the Navy Annex area, the Navy Bureau of Medicine and Surgery, the Liberty Loan Building, and the Department of Agriculture North Building.

## Parks and Landscapes

### *Policies*

#### **Monumental and Designed Landscape Parks**

The federal government should:

1. Restore, protect, and enhance historic designed landscape parks (squares, circles, and triangles) associated with the L'Enfant City.
2. Maintain small urban parks primarily as historic parks and designed landscapes with fountains, monuments, memorials, tree cover, and other features of civic art.
3. Provide facilities and areas for events such as concerts, fairs, and displays throughout the National Capital Region, at appropriate locations where such activities will not damage significant existing resources, disturb commemorative settings, or adversely impact adjacent neighborhoods.
4. Enhance the great cross-axes of the Mall, and protect them from inappropriate development.
5. Use monumental parks and landscapes to provide settings for public buildings, monuments, and memorials, and to create special environments for limited activities.
6. Site memorials in monumental and designed landscape parks in compliance with the *Memorials and Museums Master Plan*.
7. Create new open space, memorials, or museums at prominent and strategically located sites in the monumental core when the useful life of the existing buildings on the site has ended.
8. Maintain East and West Potomac Park as an extension of the Mall, as a valuable recreational open space, and as a space that can be used for outdoor cultural events, gatherings, and celebrations.

## Natural Parks

Natural parks include open space that is primarily forest or wetland, rather than designed landscape, and is typically preserved for its scenic, ecological, or topographical qualities rather than, or in addition to, particular historic significance. Examples of natural parks in the National Capital Region include Great Falls Park, Rock Creek Park, Prince William Forest Park, and the Mason Neck National Wildlife Refuge.

Rock Creek Park and its tributary parks in the District and Montgomery County serve important functions with their existing topography, indigenous plant materials, and other natural conditions providing open space amenities. Recreational uses such as hiking, driving for pleasure, biking, horseback riding, and picnicking should be permitted, to the extent that environmental qualities of the park are not adversely affected. The borders of the park should receive special protection from adjacent development that could cause erosion or adverse visual impacts.

## Parks and Landscapes *Policies*

### Natural Parks

The federal government should:

1. Ensure that Rock Creek Park and its tributary parks in the District and Montgomery County continue to serve as important natural resource recreational and cultural areas.
2. Preserve and protect stream valley parks and small urban forest areas in their natural conditions.
3. Protect the unique near-wilderness qualities of Prince William Forest Park, including the watershed of Quantico Creek.

## Waterfront Parks

Within the urbanized area of the National Capital Region, most of the shorelines along the Potomac and Anacostia Rivers have been preserved as parkland or in a semi-natural state. However, developed shorelines along the Potomac and Anacostia Rivers can be found in Georgetown, the Southwest Waterfront, the Southeast Federal Center, and the Washington Navy Yard in the District of Columbia, and in Old Town Alexandria in Virginia.

The shorelines and waterfronts of the Potomac and Anacostia Rivers within the District of Columbia should be publicly owned or accessible, except at planned waterfront locations in Georgetown,

portions of the Southwest Waterfront along the Washington Channel, and Buzzard Point, where controlled private development could be permitted.

Noncontiguous parkland is intermixed with industrial uses on the Anacostia River and access to parks is limited at places. Continuity of urban parklands should be secured from the 11th Street Bridge to Buzzard Point in order to provide uninterrupted riverfront open space. Industrial and nonconforming uses of parklands should be phased out. Future improvements to Anacostia Park should protect sensitive natural and cultural resources while allowing the addition of park amenities and increasing public access for recreation.

## Parks and Landscapes

### *Policies*

#### **Waterfront Parks**

The federal government should:

1. Link open space along the waterfront to provide a continuous public open space system.
2. Develop the banks of the Anacostia River as a high-quality urban park with a mix of active and passive recreational opportunities.
3. Ensure that Anacostia Park functions as a regional recreational resource, emphasizing the park's special riverside, ecological, and scenic qualities and character.
4. Complete the waterfront parks in Georgetown and Alexandria.

#### **Anacostia Waterfront Initiative**



NCPC's *Legacy Plan* envisioned new growth and development east of the U.S. Capitol, and identified opportunities for parks along the Anacostia River. Today, the federal and District of Columbia governments have partnered to move this vision forward through the Anacostia Waterfront Initiative (AWI) and are working together to successfully meet federal and local needs on federal sites. A critical component of AWI is providing over 100 acres of new waterfront public spaces as "Riverparks" and developing a 16-mile "Riverwalk" trail system along both sides of the Anacostia River. Federal involvement in this park and trail system is extensive. The National Park Service manages Anacostia Park, including Kenilworth Park and Aquatic Gardens, and Poplar Point. These areas alone are approximately 41 percent of the AWI study area. Other federal facilities along the Anacostia River include the National Arboretum, Fort McNair, and the Navy Yard, where providing continuous trail systems will require balancing public access goals with the security needs and mandates for these facilities. Another example of the federal government's commitment to AWI is the five-acre waterfront park developed as part of the Southeast Federal Center, a public-private development partnership administered through GSA, which will provide a link in the proposed trail system.



## Historic Parks

Historic parks are important legacies of national, historic, architectural, and landscape significance. Special efforts should be taken to respect their integrity while providing for the interpretation of their history. Ancillary uses, such as access, and visitor and multi-purpose activities should not detract from the historical value of these sites. Examples of historic parks include the Fort Circle Parks, the Manassas National Battlefield Park, and the C&O Canal National Historical Park.

Development and enhancement of the Fort Circle Parks should protect their cultural resources and be compatible with their important natural landscape features, which are visible from the monumental core. Community-oriented recreational opportunities, interpretation of the fort sites, and a well-delineated connecting trail in a park-like setting—utilizing the McMillan Plan park connections—should be provided throughout the system.

Appropriate development adjacent to the Manassas National Battlefield Park should be ensured for the protection of its open space character and historical qualities. Master or management plans for the park and local development plans for areas adjacent to the park should be coordinated to ensure the application of appropriate land uses and development standards for the surrounding areas.



C&O Canal National Historical Park

Preservation of the C&O Canal National Historical Park's historic and natural resources, including its biodiversity and endangered species, should remain the primary focus of the park. However, recreational uses such as bicycling, jogging, hiking, and boating should be permitted, where consistent with this focus. Adjacent development should be low density, except in Georgetown. Public utilities requiring water from the Potomac should be located and constructed so as to protect the historic integrity and natural qualities of the park and help preserve and restore the health of the aquatic ecosystem and shoreline habitats.

## Parks and Landscapes

### *Policies*

#### Historic Parks

The federal government should:

1. Establish and preserve historic parks as important legacies of national, historic, architectural, and landscape significance.
2. Preserve the important scenic, historic, and natural elements of the Fort Circle Parks.
3. Preserve Manassas National Battlefield Park as a significant historical Civil War landmark and cultural landscape resource.
4. Preserve the C&O Canal National Historical Park as a legacy of inland waterway development and as a significant wildlife corridor.
5. Preserve and protect the environs of Mount Vernon National Historic Site as a national legacy.

## Terrain Features

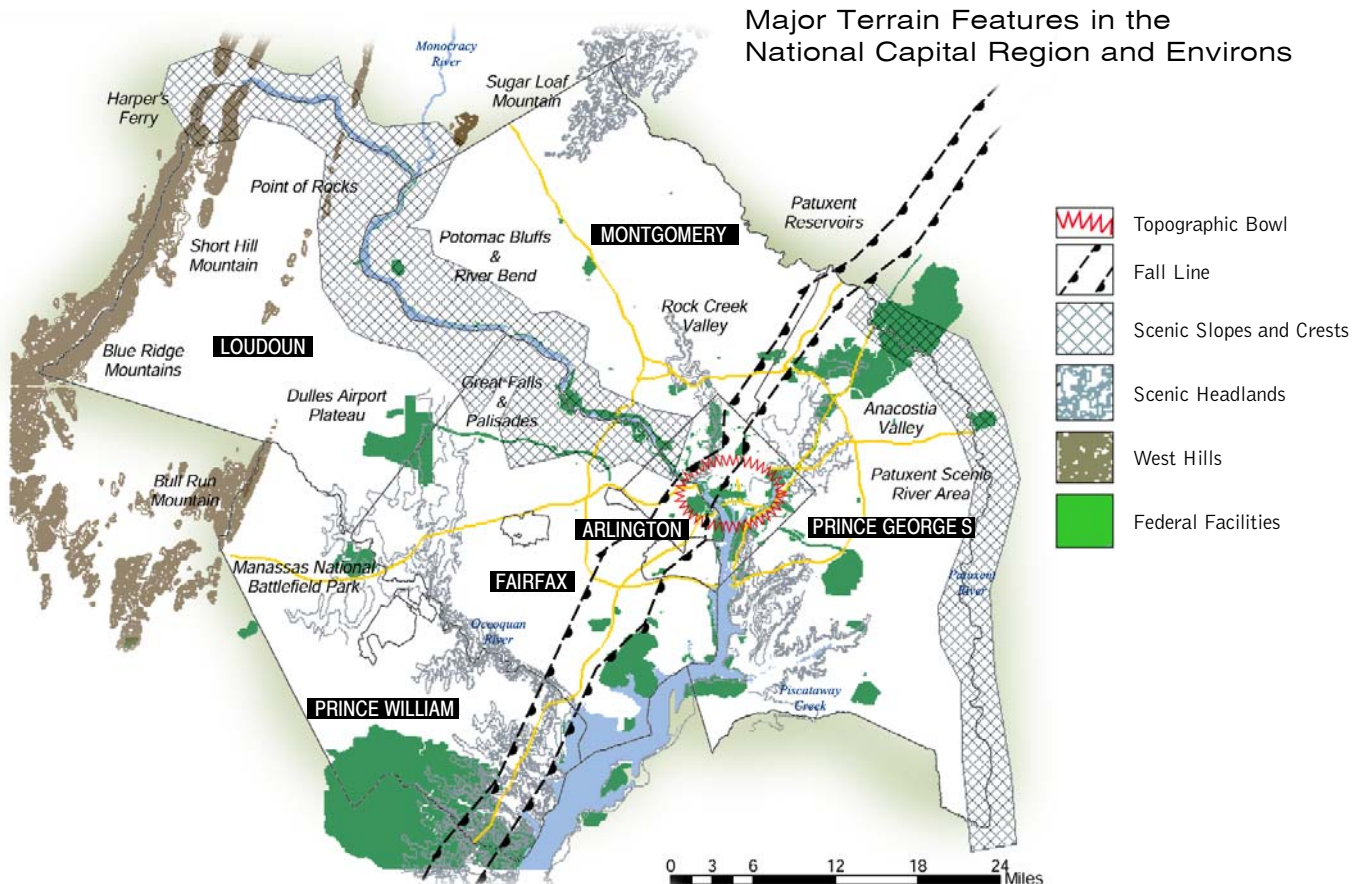
Terrain features are distinctive topographic variations in the natural landscape, such as the escarpment of hills that form a topographic bowl surrounding the L'Enfant City; the palisades and gorges along the Potomac River and Rock Creek; the Coastal Plain and Piedmont Plateau in which Washington is situated; and the mountains of the western and northwestern part of the region. From L'Enfant's time onward, topography has defined and characterized the capital, resulting in thoughtful relationships between urbanized areas and natural terrain. The natural juxtaposition of highlands and lowlands emphasized by extensive tree cover and tree lines contributes to

**Topography has defined and characterized the capital, resulting in thoughtful relationships between urbanized areas and natural terrain.**

the area's unique views and vistas, including those seen from topographic vantage points on natural and cultural sites, such as Fort Circle Parks.

Lowland and rim features of the L'Enfant City and environs form the topographic bowl. Its geographic boundaries are the Florida Avenue escarpment (the boundary of the L'Enfant Plan), the Anacostia Hills, and Arlington Hills. The bowl has forested ridgelines punctuated with constructed forms, and provides unobstructed views of the monumental core.

The National Capital Region is divided into two topographical provinces, the Coastal Plain and the Piedmont Plateau. The low-lying, flat Coastal Plain is characterized by many shallow inland bays and meandering tidal rivers. Further west are the low, rolling hills of the Piedmont Plateau. These hills are like stair steps to the higher mountains of the region to the west. Areas of typical Coastal Plain and Piedmont Plateau character have been preserved at the federally owned Beltsville Agricultural Research Center, Patuxent Research Refuge, Manassas National Battlefield Park, Washington-Dulles International Airport, Fort Meade, Marine Corps Base Quantico, and Prince William Forest Park.



The palisades and gorges of the rivers and streams in the region, such as the Potomac Palisades, the gorge surrounding Great Falls, and the fall-line gorge through Rock Creek Valley, are areas of dramatic elevation changes where calm, upstream rivers and creeks converge at spectacular fall lines. The palisades and gorges are predominantly in their natural state, free of intrusive constructed forms.

The Blue Ridge, Bull Run, South Catoclin, and Sugar Loaf Mountains in the western and northwestern part of the region rise above the gently rolling hills of the Virginia Piedmont to their east. These natural forested areas are visible from the suburban locations of the region.

**Federal agencies should generally identify appropriate locations for antennas and towers during their master planning process.**

These geographic features provide views and vistas of terrain in its natural state, and the higher elevations of these features allow unobstructed views to the lowlands below. However, urbanization and other constructed intrusions threaten to obstruct and diminish these views. For example, construction in recent decades has changed the views to and from the topographic bowl, and further potential threats remain in this and other areas.

East of the region's mountain ranges, creeping suburbanization and the construction of man-made intrusions on the landscape threaten to impair views of the mountains and diminish the aesthetic natural qualities of adjacent historic sites.

The transition from a natural to an urban setting on the higher slopes and crests paralleling the Potomac River and its tributary valleys should remain gradual, and permitted development should not exceed the

## Terrain Features

### *Policies*

The federal government should:

1. Protect and enhance the region's unique terrain features. These features include, but are not limited to:
  - The region's rivers and streams, their associated valleys and bluffs, and the shoreline park system.
  - The Blue Ridge, Bull Run, South Catoclin, and Sugar Loaf Mountains in the western and northwestern part of the region.
  - The headwater, reservoir, and other scenic and ecologically significant terrain areas along the Patuxent River.
  - The areas of typical Coastal Plain and Piedmont Plateau character.
  - The forested ridgelines of the topographic bowl surrounding the central city of Washington.
2. Ensure that development does not intrude through the ridge and tree lines of natural terrain areas unless it will not impact vistas to and from those areas.
3. Protect terrain features throughout the region through careful design.
4. Discourage the location of towers, antennas, or similar structures in or adjacent to the federal park system, to the extent possible.
5. In rare instances where antennas or towers must be located within a federal park or open space, ensure conformance with the Commission's *Guidelines for Antennas on Federal Property in the National Capital Region* as well as the following:
  - Every effort should be made to avoid locating antennas and tower structures within the viewsheds of established natural and cultural landscapes and open spaces.
  - Innovative designs that reduce the visibility of antennas and towers in a natural setting should be encouraged. The use of compatible alternative tower structures that are similar in design or appearance to trees or other tall features may help to reduce the visual impact of these structures.
6. Along with local agencies, identify appropriate locations for the siting of antennas and towers through their master plans and comprehensive plans, to the extent practical. This should help protect the functional integrity of, and the important view-sheds to and from, federal parks and open space areas.



## Terrain Features

### *Policies*

#### **Topographic Bowl**

The federal government should:

1. Maintain the prominence of the topographic bowl formed by lowland and rim features of the L'Enfant City and environs by controlling the urban and natural skylines in the Anacostia, Florida Avenue, and Arlington County portions of the bowl as follows:
  - Preserve the green setting of the Anacostia hills and integrate building masses with, and subordinate to, the natural topography.
  - Maintain the Florida Avenue escarpment's natural definition of the L'Enfant Plan boundaries by retaining developments that are fitted to the landforms and by promoting low-rise development that can be distinguished from the greater height of the L'Enfant City's core areas.
  - Within the western portion of the bowl, retain a horizontal skyline by relating building heights to the natural slope and rim areas of Arlington Ridge as viewed from the Capitol, the Mall, and other riverside outlooks.
  - Control the urban skyline in the background areas of the Mall vista, as viewed from the west terrace of the U.S. Capitol, by ensuring consistency with the building height limits specified by Arlington County in an agreement with the Commission for the Rosslyn-Ballston corridor. Exceptional or "bonus" heights should be avoided.

#### **Palisades and Gorges**

The federal government should:

1. Maintain the rugged terrain characteristics of the stream valleys.
2. Retain the palisades and gorges of rivers and streams in their natural state.
3. Ensure that the transition from a natural to an urban character remains gradual in the area of palisades and gorges.
4. Maintain the "fall-line" gorge through Rock Creek Valley in its natural condition and keep its transition highlands and rim areas and surroundings free of intrusive constructed forms.

## Greenways and Greenbelts

One of the defining characteristics of the National Capital Region is its green setting. Trees, grass, and other plant materials provide a landscape and park-like character. Narrow corridors of natural landscape connect more prominent parks and open space; and significant areas of undeveloped landscape form the basis for a greenbelt around the metropolitan area.

### Green Setting

Perhaps the most predominant characteristic of the region's green setting is its abundant tree cover and vegetation, from the urbanized areas of Downtown Washington to the suburbs of Maryland and Virginia. In addition to the aesthetic benefits, tree cover provides environmental and economic benefits by reducing stormwater runoff, air pollution, and energy usage. Plants reduce stormwater runoff by intercepting rainwater, and trees slow storm flow, reducing the volume of water that must be managed at once. In addition, trees and vegetation provide air quality benefits to the region by removing pollutants from the air.

### Greenways

From narrow threads of natural greenway to the greenbelt in outlying parts of the region, open space at many different scales contributes to the area's green setting. Greenways typically follow natural or constructed features such as streams or roads, and are used for transportation, recreation, and environmental protection. Greenway systems provide natural buffers that improve water quality, reduce the impacts of flooding, and provide wildlife habitat and corridors. Greenways also promote adjacent economic development and increase the beauty of neighborhoods as well as the value of surrounding properties. These corridors enhance the social and psychological well-being of citizens by providing them with settings in which to spend their leisure time.



Some of the greenway areas in the National Capital Region under federal control include Rock Creek Park, the Fort Circle Parks, Whitehaven Parkway, Kingle Valley Parkway, Glover-Archbold Park, Soapstone Valley Park, Piney Branch Parkway, and Oxon Run Parkway. These natural areas should be protected from border development that would adversely impact their natural resources and visual quality.

### Greenbelts

A ring of major open space in the outlying parts of the region could provide a varied greenbelt zone that encompasses continuous wildlife habitats, local recreational amenities, and federal research and training areas. This ring could be formed through a combination of local actions (through limitations on private development) and continuing protection of federal properties within this greenbelt. In order to expand this greenbelt, it must include much more publicly and privately owned open space, incorporate existing local initiatives, and expand upon them. An established greenbelt system also would protect major federal installations, such as Beltsville Agricultural Research Facility, Fort Meade, and Marine Corps Base Quantico, all of which should continue as open space. Implementation of a greenbelt extends beyond the jurisdiction of the federal government to a partnership of local governments and landowners.

Several major federal facilities that could contribute to the greenbelt around the region include: Andrews Air Force Base, Fort Belvoir, Marine Corps Base Quantico, the National Institute of Standards and Technology, the Beltsville Agricultural Research Center, and the Patuxent Research Refuge. There are also wooded, undeveloped buffer areas, such as those along the perimeter of Andrews Air Force Base and Washington-Dulles International Airport, that could augment and enhance the greenbelt.

During the past several decades, the region has experienced a decline in tree and landscape cover due to increasing urbanization and higher attrition rates among trees, dramatically changing the ecology of the area. As the amount of forested area has declined and urban development has expanded, the tree and landscape loss has resulted in an increase in stormwater runoff, decreased air and water quality, and measurable changes in air temperatures from ground surfaces.

Maintaining and restoring tree and landscape cover is a cost-effective way to improve urban infrastructure, and tree cover is a good measure of ecological health. If the remaining tree and landscape cover is to be maintained and enhanced, the condition of existing trees and landscape must be improved; additional trees must be planted; and tree loss must be decreased in new development areas. Strategically planting trees in urban and suburban areas would increase energy savings, air and water quality, and wildlife habitat.

Other measures can be incorporated that balance the urban landscape with the natural ecological system, such as minimizing impervious surfaces and maintaining or restoring trees and vegetative cover.

Adverse development or land uses adjacent to green areas threatens to minimize or decrease their ecological benefits; and public funding is limited for new land acquisition for the development of greenways and additions to the greenbelt. In addition, the amount of greenways is inadequate and public access to many of the region's green areas on federal installations is restricted.

## Greenways and Greenbelts

### *Policies*

The federal government should:

1. Protect and maintain existing greenways and enhance greenbelt areas.
2. Support the establishment of new greenways and extensions and connections of new greenways.
3. Increase and conserve the tree canopy and landscape cover in urban areas of the region.
4. Protect and enhance the green landscape and park-like character provided by trees, grass, and other native plant materials in the National Capital Region by removing invasive species and replanting with native species.
5. Maintain large tree preserves and forests as part of future development in the region.
6. Conserve portions of federal installations that contribute to greenway and greenbelt areas.
7. Retain natural wooded buffer areas in the vicinity of federal installations throughout the region.
8. Protect and maintain the narrow threads of natural areas throughout the District, such as Whitehaven Parkway, Klinge Valley Parkway, Glover-Archbold Park, Soapstone Valley Park, Piney Branch Parkway, and Oxon Run Parkway.
9. Incorporate street and shade trees as part of all public development, especially in the District, to help restore the historic green-city setting of the National Capital Region.



Potomac River



Washington Channel

## Rivers and Waterways

The waterways of the National Capital Region are an important defining characteristic of Washington, providing inland water routes for trade and transportation in the early days of the nation's capital, and ecological, recreational, and scenic qualities today. There are a great variety of waterways in the region, and along their banks are natural areas, landscaped parks, and developed shorelines.

**These ecosystems have unique aquatic plant life and are important for providing shoreline habitat, protecting watersheds, and filtering pollutants.**

The Potomac and Anacostia Rivers are the greatest water resources in the region, and the confluence of these rivers form a mighty Y shape in the urban river setting. In addition, other waterways, such as Rock Creek and many unnamed tributaries and creeks, are important open space resources with fragile ecosystems. These ecosystems have unique aquatic plant life and are important for providing shoreline habitat, protecting watersheds, and filtering pollutants. Natural shorelines can be found along the Potomac and Anacostia Rivers, both inside the District and throughout the region. Water resources of special ecological importance along

the Potomac and Anacostia Rivers can be found in areas such as the Kenilworth Park and Aquatic Gardens, the coves and headlands south of Mount Vernon, Great Falls, Dyke Marsh, and the Gaps at Point of Rocks. Mason Neck, Kenilworth Marsh, Oxon Cove, Fox Ferry Cove, Smoot Cove, Broad Creek, and Piscataway Creek are important conservation and wildlife refuge areas.

Urbanization in the National Capital Region has deteriorated, and in some cases destroyed, riverine habitat, reducing the natural ecological function of the waterways and decreasing their landscape, wetland, and riverbank conditions. Channelization, undue siltation, intermittent flows, and covering over have harmed both the rivers and the adjacent shorebanks. Encroachment by urban development has destroyed the natural floodplain and wetland areas of the Anacostia River Valley, and both the Potomac and Anacostia Rivers have poor water quality: swimming, boating, and fishing are discouraged, as well as water-oriented tourist activities. Adjacent development and transportation infrastructure also take their toll, as bridges disturb unique local riverine habitat, and paved impervious areas inhibit the filtration of rain runoff, as at the Pentagon's north parking lot along Boundary Channel.





The character of waterfront areas should reflect great variety, ranging from the developed shoreline in Georgetown, Old Town Alexandria, the Southwest Waterfront, the Southeast Federal Center, and Washington Navy Yard areas, to the more natural treatment along the shorelines of the Upper Anacostia and Potomac Rivers. Future development areas of intense activity should be carefully controlled and limited to selected key locations, such as the area around Buzzard Point, South Capitol Street, Poplar Point, and National Harbor. Development along the Potomac and Anacostia Rivers, including new roads and freeways, and concentrated governmental or institutional land uses that create barriers, should be designed to allow the public maximum visual and physical access to the waterfront. In other areas, the natural or landscaped character of the shoreline should be restored and preserved. The recreational uses of the rivers should be increased while simultaneously protecting the integrity and health of the shoreline ecosystem.

The closer a building is to the shoreline, the lower the profile should be. In areas characterized as urban waterfronts, such as the Georgetown Waterfront, the Southwest Waterfront, and areas near the Southeast Federal Center/Washington Navy Yard, there may be defined areas where building heights can be expected to be higher. Streets near shorelines where higher building heights could be focused include, but are not limited to, L'Enfant vistas such as South Capitol Street; New Jersey and Potomac Avenues; M Street, SE; and K Street, NW. Areas of lower building heights should generally include National Park Service lands and other parklands and natural areas.

## Rivers and Waterways

### *Policies*

The federal government should:

1. Protect the scenic and ecological values of waterways and stream valleys.
2. Restore forested buffers along waterways and stream valleys.
3. Protect and, where necessary, restore the region's unique river-related features in their natural state. Such features include the Kenilworth Aquatic Gardens and marsh, the coves and headlands south of Mount Vernon, Great Falls, and the gaps at Point of Rocks.
4. Protect, restore, and enhance the Anacostia and Potomac Rivers as great open space resources and as recreational amenities, including shorelines and waterfront areas along rivers.
5. Improve the quality of water in the Anacostia and Potomac Rivers to allow for both restored natural habitats and increased recreational use.
6. Retain shoreline areas in their natural condition or appropriately landscape the water's edge.
7. Manage all lands along the Anacostia and Potomac Rivers in a manner that encourages the enjoyment and recreational use of water resources, while protecting the scenic and ecological values of the waterways.
8. Retain both privately and publicly owned land along waterways in a natural state, except in areas that are determined appropriate for development.
9. In urban waterfront areas that are determined appropriate for development:
  - Avoid construction in environmentally sensitive areas.
  - Restore, stabilize, and/or improve and landscape degraded areas of shorelines.
  - Limit development along or near the shoreline and integrate it with the generally low and continuous line of river embankments.
10. Avoid physical barriers to the waterfront, and long, unbroken stretches of buildings or walls along waterfronts.
11. Determine building height along or near the shoreline based on the building's proximity to the shoreline.
12. Design and locate bridges so that they minimally affect local riverine habitat, waterways, shorelines, and valleys.
13. Encourage swimming, boating, and fishing facilities, as well as water-oriented tourist activities, on the Anacostia and Potomac Rivers.
14. Ensure that the shorelines and waterfronts of the Anacostia and Potomac Rivers remain mostly publicly owned and that privately owned parks provide shoreline continuity through parks and promenades.
15. Discourage large paved parking areas and other non-water-related development along the Anacostia and Potomac Rivers. Where large paved areas are required, preference should be given to using pervious surfaces. Existing large parking areas, such as the Pentagon's north parking lot along Boundary Channel, should be removed as soon as feasible and restored to a landscaped condition with active or passive recreational uses.

## Trails

There are hundreds of miles of trails in the National Capital Region, definable by use, purpose, topography, surface, and system. Trails range from those that are carefully designed and constructed according to standard techniques to nonconstructed trails that generally evolved informally from use.

### National trails are part of a federally designated system of trails incorporating recreational, scenic, and historic trails.

Pedestrians use trails for walking, jogging, running, and skating. Trails that are appropriate for these purposes are typically heavily used and often accommodate people in wheelchairs. Other trails are used for more specialized purposes, such as bicycling or horseback riding. Watercraft use specially designated waterways as trails. Some trails are interpretive, with limited access to or around popular features, such as lakes. While all these trails are used for recreational purposes, pedestrian and bicycle trails are frequently used by commuters as well.

The topography and surface of trails can vary widely. From generally flat trails that may have no more elevation change than broad gentle dips, to steep or rugged trails with switchbacks and retaining walls or stone or log steps, trail surfaces can range from pavement or boardwalk to unpaved dirt or gravel. Often, the same trail will have varying degrees of improvements, and may be a hybrid of different types.



Patuxent Research Refuge

Trails in the National Capital Region often belong to one or more trail systems: local, regional, or national. Local trail systems, such as the Mount Vernon Trail, the Fort Circle Park system, and the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal Towpath, often have historic or especially scenic destinations and routes, and many are incorporated into larger regional trail systems. For example, the Fort Circle Park system was created from the former Civil War Defenses of Washington, and the proposed Fort Drive to connect them was part of the McMillan Commission's plan for the parks of the nation's capital in 1902. Although never completed, starting in the 1930s the federal government acquired substantial amounts of the land for the proposed Fort Circle Drive. Finishing a continuous trail as originally proposed could serve local and regional needs and accommodate educational as well as recreational purposes for both residents and tourists. (Maps on page 123 depict historic Civil War Defenses and NPS' Fort Circle Parks Plan.)

The Blue Trail is another example of a local trail system. A "blue trail" for paddle and rowing crafts on Washington's waterways would include signage and landing facilities along the Potomac and Anacostia Rivers, especially at key destinations such as the National Arboretum, Kenilworth Aquatic Gardens, and other public and private attractions.

Regional trail systems, such as the East Coast Greenway, the American Discovery Trail, and the Potomac Heritage Trail, incorporate local trails into a larger network of trails over a broad geographic area. The East Coast Greenway, for example, is a long-distance city-to-city corridor for cyclists, hikers, and other nonmotorized users. It connects existing and planned trails that form a continuous safe, green route. The National Mall, Memorial Bridge, and the Mount Vernon Trail are official portions of the East Coast Greenway. The American Discovery Trail, stretching from the Pacific to the Atlantic runs through the NCR.

National trails are part of a federally designated system of trails incorporating recreational, scenic, and historic trails. The U.S. Congress established the system to incorporate existing trail systems and add connections between them.





Although the trail system throughout the region is extensive, there is a demand for more trails of all types as the urbanized area encroaches on existing trails. Some of these demands could be met by providing better connectivity between trail systems, and more access points to existing trails. Greater regional issues could be addressed by tying together the local and regional trails to the trails of the national trail system. Additionally, many trails do not meet current national trail standards. National trail standards take into account intended trail uses, user preferences, proximity to sensitive resources and other criteria and assign each trail to an appropriate trail class. Each trail class prescribes the appropriate level of improvements necessary for that trail. In addition, maintenance on

some trail systems is inadequate. Existing trails should be better maintained and upgraded, with recurring activities such as litter clean-up, sweeping, brush-cutting, painting, and minor bridge repair and construction of support facilities such as benches, picnic tables, and kiosks.

Using federal assets such as bridges, trestles, and tunnels through extant railroad, utility, and highway corridors, and developing other trails through federal civilian and military installations, the trail system could be augmented and expanded regionwide. In order to appeal to a variety of trail users, trails should connect to Metro stations, employment centers, and shopping areas.

## Trails

### *Policies*

The federal government should:

1. Develop new trails and complete partial trails that connect to parks, schools, businesses, and other community amenities to provide a system of contiguous regional trails for extensive recreational and transportation use. Examples of trails to be completed include:
  - Anacostia Riverwalk Trail
  - Metropolitan Branch Trail
  - Potomac Heritage Trail
2. Connect local trails to regional and national trail networks.
3. Use federal infrastructure to develop and connect trail systems.
4. Maintain and improve trail quality for a variety of users, as appropriate.
5. Protect trails from adjacent incompatible development.
6. Protect environmentally significant land adjacent to trails.
7. Develop a “blue trail” on Washington’s waterways.
8. Complete the Fort Circle Park trail system as a continuous trail, linking the historic Civil War Fort sites within the District. Existing street rights-of-way should be used when necessary to connect the various sections of the Fort Circle Parks. The existing hiking trail through Glover-Archbold Park should link the Fort Circle Parks trail system with the C&O Canal trail.

## Gateways

A gateway is a point of arrival, a transition point that can have varying dimensions, such as the point where a scenic view or vista comes into sight, or the terminus of a journey, such as an airport or a train station. In the National Capital Region, gateways include major roads, highways, and transportation terminals. These approaches to Washington are important to how visitors, residents, and workers experience the capital.

The points where gateway routes enter the District of Columbia are of special significance. These entry points, and adjacent development, should provide an appropriate sense of transition and arrival, requiring careful design on both sides of the District boundary. The boundary streets of the District are defining features of Washington and should be enhanced and specially treated.

The major approaches to the region should be dramatic in appearance, but pleasant and functional, with a strong sense of arrival. Visitors and residents should enjoy the experience of entering a special place through gateways that are protected from unattractive development and designed and maintained in a manner consistent with their special role.

Special care, too, should be given to the points where gateway routes provide views of the monumental core, especially where such views first appear when approaching the core. These important views should be protected from signage and other intrusions, and enhanced by landscaping that is carefully designed and maintained to frame those views. View corridors to

the monumental city of Washington—such as those experienced when traveling southbound on the George Washington Memorial Parkway atop the Potomac Palisades, or northbound along the Parkway from Alexandria—should be maintained and protected for the enjoyment of all. Underdeveloped gateways, such as New York Avenue, NE and South Capitol Street, should be improved to provide a positive image of the nation's capital and a dignified route to the monumental core from the Baltimore-Washington Parkway and Suitland Parkway, respectively.

The federal government should work with local agencies to ensure the protection and enhancement of gateway routes through the appropriate regulation of nearby development, including scale and use. Where development is unavoidable (such as the Potomac Yards project), it should be carefully designed to avoid detracting from the scenic qualities of gateways and parkways. Where existing development is of an inappropriate character (such as along portions of New York Avenue), redevelopment should be encouraged to enhance the qualities of the gateway or parkway. Limiting advertising signs and erecting sound and noise attenuation walls complements their overall appearance. Gateways should have street trees and attractive street amenities in urban or densely developed areas and should not be encroached upon by new buildings.

**The federal government should work with local agencies to ensure the protection and enhancement of gateway routes.**

## Gateways

### *Policies*

The federal government should:

1. Work with local jurisdictions to ensure the protection and enhancement of gateway routes.
2. Regulate the scale and use of nearby development.
3. Improve and visually enhance gateways with street trees and attractive street amenities.
4. Improve South Capitol Street between the Suitland Parkway and the U.S. Capitol with open space amenities consistent with the *Legacy Plan*.
5. Improve New York Avenue as an extension of the Baltimore-Washington Parkway.



## Parkways

A parkway is a linear, landscaped park designed to encompass a roadway that is restricted to use by automobiles. Although the first concept of parkway design in the District of Columbia was identified by Pierre L'Enfant in his eighteenth-century plan for the city, the first parkway in Washington, D.C. was not approved until 1902, when it was identified for use by bicyclists and horse-drawn carriages.

There are five major parkways in the National Capital Region under the jurisdiction of the National Park Service, and several smaller adjacent connecting roads with parkway characteristics. The Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway, the George Washington Memorial Parkway, the Clara Barton Parkway, the Suitland Parkway, and the Baltimore-Washington Parkway all have open qualities worthy of preservation, and are characterized by their scenic or pastoral views.

### **The Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway**

The Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway is the first federally constructed parkway and one of the best examples of early parkway design. Authorized in 1913 to enable the reclamation and conservation of the polluted Rock Creek, which had served as a dumping ground for nearby industries and tenement dwellers, it provides a scenic drive between the monumental core and Rock Creek Park. It is noteworthy for the graceful path it makes along the creek, into the cavernous valley where Rock Creek begins. The Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway links two major parks—the National Zoological Park to the north and the Potomac River parks to the south.

### **The George Washington Memorial Parkway**

The first section of the George Washington Memorial Parkway, the Mount Vernon Memorial Highway, was developed in 1932 as a memorial to George Washington. That section of the parkway was intended to connect the historic site of Mount Vernon, where he lived, to the nation's capital, which he founded. With its natural scenery along the Potomac River, the parkway is used to travel to historical, natural, and recreational areas, offering respite from the urban pressures of metropolitan Washington. Although the parkway is considered a commuter route by many local residents, its scenic and historic qualities are more important than its traffic-carrying role.

### **The Clara Barton Parkway**

The Maryland side of the George Washington Memorial Parkway is a short segment named in honor of Clara Barton. It runs along the Maryland shore of the Potomac River between the District of Columbia and the Capital Beltway. Dotted along the parkway are several small access points to the adjacent C&O Canal towpath.

### **The Suitland Parkway**

The Suitland Parkway was opened in 1944. It connects Andrews Air Force Base to South Capitol Street, a major link to the U.S. Capitol used by visitors and commuters approaching the nation's capital from the east. The White House, congressional and military personnel, and foreign dignitaries who fly into and out of Andrews Air Force Base frequently use the parkway. The parkway often provides foreign heads of state with their first views of the United States.

## The Baltimore-Washington Parkway

The Baltimore-Washington Parkway opened in 1954. It is a 29-mile scenic highway that connects Baltimore, Maryland with Washington, D.C.

Visual and physical encroachment on and adjacent to parkways is an important challenge threatening the scenic and pastoral qualities of parkways in the National Capital Region. In recent years, development adjacent to parkways has threatened to encroach on—and, in some cases already has encroached on—the viewshed from parkways and associated parklands. Continued development pressures could result in more structures that are visible from the roadway. In addition to buildings, demand for new Metrorail lines and parkway interchanges due to development pressures continues to threaten the scenic views and vistas of the parkways. For example, the recent extension of Metrorail’s Green Line to Branch Avenue required spanning the Suitland Parkway with elevated rail tracks. Likewise, another challenge is protecting the historic designed landscape and parkway qualities from being compromised by the application of federal freeway design standards. Safety is important, but a balance must be achieved to preserve the scenic qualities and design character of historic parkways.

Visual and physical encroachment on and adjacent to parkways is an important challenge threatening the scenic and pastoral qualities of parkways in the National Capital Region.

## Parkways

### *Policies*

The federal government should:

1. Maintain parkways as scenic landscape corridors, and protect their historic aspects.
2. Encourage local jurisdictions to plan for and zone development in such a way that it is not visible from parkways.
3. Encourage local jurisdictions to minimize—through planning, regulation, and careful design—the impact of development that is visible from parkways.
4. Where transportation system impacts are unavoidable, require action to minimize and mitigate these impacts to maintain parkway characteristics.