
PARKS & OPEN SPACE ELEMENT

(DRAFT)

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Introduction to Parks & Open Space Element

Goal Statement

The federal government's goal is to protect and enhance the National Capital Region's parks and open space system while providing recreational, ecological, social, and educational benefits for visitors, residents, workers, and future generations.

Parks and Open Space in the National Capital Region

One of the defining characteristics of the National Capital Region (NCR or region) is its parks and open space system.¹ From community parks tucked away in residential neighborhoods, to urban downtown parks, to the grand expanse of the National Mall, to the extensive open space and natural areas in the outlying reaches of the metropolitan area, the NCR has diverse outdoor spaces for public use.

Open space serves many important recreational, natural resource, and cultural purposes. It offers places for wildlife habitat, natural resource protection, environmental benefits, recreational use, monumental settings, historic landscapes, and visual corridors. The federal government has used open space as settings for the most renowned memorials and museums, grand public promenades, major federal buildings, and quiet gathering places within and outside the nation's capital. Parks and open space also allow communities to explore history and nature, and provide diverse recreational opportunities that enhance urban living.

[Add map of 'Parks and Open Space Resources in NCR and Environs']

Several agencies have jurisdiction over the federally owned and operated parks and open space in the region. These include the National Park Service (NPS), the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), the Smithsonian Institution (SI), the Department of Defense (DoD), the United States Department of the Interior Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), the United States General Services Administration (GSA), and the Architect of the Capitol (AOC). Federal open space occurs in a variety of forms, including designated parkland; areas designated primarily for open space such as the National Arboretum; open space settings for federal buildings, such as the National Institutes of Health; and water areas, including all of the Potomac and Anacostia Rivers within Washington, DC.

Several major federal facilities that contribute to the open space around the region include Andrews Air Force Base, Fort Belvoir, Marine Corps Quantico, National Institute of Standards and Technology, the Beltsville Agricultural Research Center, and the Patuxent Research Refuge. Many of these open spaces are located within secured campuses and are not publically accessible, but do contribute to the region's overall green space and natural habitat.

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

¹ The Element addresses federal parks and open space within NCPC's defined National Capital Region.

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 the Meadowood Special Recreation Management Area.

The NPS administers approximately 65 square miles of parks and open space in the NCR (as defined by the National Capital Planning Commission), within the roughly 239 square miles of designated parks and open space lands controlled by federal, state, and local government in the NCR.² NPS administers roughly 80 percent of the 10,950 acres of parks and open space in Washington, DC. These parklands include formal parks and open space to complement memorials and museums; L'Enfant circles, squares, and triangles; natural and cultural landscapes; historic sites; conservation³ or natural areas; recreational areas and amenities; urban forests; battlefields; parkways; rivers, canals and bridges. Some of the federal parks and open space within the region include the National Mall, Anacostia Park, the Civil War Defenses of Washington, the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historical Park, Piscataway National Park, Prince William Forest Park, Great Falls Park, Wolf Trap National Park for the Performing Arts, George Washington Memorial Parkway, and the Baltimore-Washington Parkway.

The federal parks and open space accommodate a wide range of functions and activities, are recreational, environmental, and cultural resource, and provide a physical and symbolic setting for our government and the nation's most renowned memorials and museums.

Balancing National and Local Interests

Parks and open space are defining and well-loved features that require balancing national and local interests. Publically accessible federal lands provide enhanced recreation and open space for local jurisdictions to address residents' growing demands for parks and recreational space. For example, 20 percent of the total land area in Washington, DC is dedicated to parks and open space.⁴ However, approximately 80 percent of this parkland is federally owned and managed. While neighborhood parks, often managed by the District Government, offer recreation and respite opportunities, federal lands provide additional opportunities for recreation, open space, and environmental education. Other local jurisdictions, like Montgomery and Prince George's Counties, consider federal parkland as part of their natural resource and public parkland inventory. Together, this complementary management structure aims to create a comprehensive network of parks and open spaces that support the needs of residents and visitors. There are many challenges associated with balancing the national goals and interests of federal parks and open spaces with the demands of local needs. This becomes a challenge for federal landowners to manage federal open space within their own regulatory limits, while supporting the needs of local residents.

[Add chart showing Distribution of Parks and Open Space by Ownership]

² Numbers from the 2004 Parks & Open Space Element, which 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. Several groups, including NPS, with boundaries that differ from NCP's, use the term 'National Capital Region'.

³ A protected area of land. In these areas human occupation or the exploitation of resources is limited.

⁴ The Trust for Public Land, 2017 City Park Facts

The Element provides policy guidance on balancing the federal with local interests, while protecting the values of the parks and open space system. In addition to the Parks & Open Space Element, the Urban Design, Historic Preservation, Federal Environment, and Visitors & Commemoration Elements include policy guidance to shape the parks and open space in the region. Together, these policies reinforce key policy direction.

Parks and Open Space Categories

Parks and open space are critical components of the National Capital Region, and encompass different forms and experiences. Specific definitions of parks and open space depend on the context and needs of particular areas. For the purpose of this element, these spaces fall under one or more of the following broad categories, although many of these often overlap and are not mutually exclusive.

- **Parks and Landscapes:**
 - **Designed Landscapes:** A park or landscape in urban, suburban, and/or rural conditions consciously planned or laid out according to a set of design principles.
 - **Historic Park:** A park or landscape significant for its design, construction, as a work of a master designer, or for its association with a historic event, activity, or person. In the National Capital Region, a majority of designed landscapes are also historic parks.
 - **Waterfront Park:** A designed park or landscape, along a river or a large body of water, that incorporates public space and water related activities.
 - **Natural Park:** An area protected in its natural or semi-natural state, including easements and conservation areas. These areas such as forests, wetlands, stream valley parks, or tributary parks, and wildlife refuge areas are platforms for recreation, environmental protection, education, research, and regional development.
 - **Trails and Parkways:** Designated linear routes — trails include, paved or unpaved, linear paths used by pedestrians, bicyclists, and equestrians whereas parkways are roadways in linear landscape parks and open space restricted to use by automobiles.

- **Terrain Features:** Variations in the natural landscape such as escarpments, gorges and palisades, and mountain ranges. A majority of terrain features in the region are part of federally managed parks, open spaces, and conservation areas.

- **Greenways:** Linear, vegetated corridors of natural landscape or strips of undeveloped land that typically function as habitat corridors and follow natural or constructed features. They often accommodate contiguous pedestrian or circulation routes such as trails or scenic drives and are one of the defining characteristics of the region's landscape.

- **Rivers and Waterways:** Potomac and Anacostia Rivers; tributaries such as Rock Creek and Watts Branch; and other unnamed streams collectively comprise the rivers and waterways in the region. A majority of land adjoining the rivers and streams in Washington, DC is federally managed.

Guiding Principles

The following guiding principles serve as the organizational framework for this element. These principles reflect current issues and trends including challenges and opportunities faced by parks and open space in the region. They may apply to more than one parks and open space category, and together they create a cohesive vision for parks and open space in the region through improved stewardship, utilization, maintenance, planning, and design.

- *Protect the Parks and Open Space Design Legacy*
- *Provide Stewardship of Natural and Cultural Resources*
- *Provide Access to and Connections between Parks and Open Space*
- *Balance Multiple Uses within Parks*
- *Balance Commemorative Works within Parks*
- *Build Partnerships and Coordination among Multiple Landowners and Jurisdictions*

Protect the Parks and Open Space Design Legacy

The Plan of the City of Washington (L'Enfant and McMillan Plans) influenced the parks and open space network that is the foundation of Washington's nationally recognized character. As the nation's capital and surrounding region has grown, subsequent planning and design eras and plans have contributed to its parks and open space design legacy. Many historic parks and designed landscapes are important cultural resources and legacies of landscape and architectural significance. Several of these natural and manmade elements also feature scenic viewsheds that contribute to the aesthetic quality of Washington and enhance the visitor experience. Protecting historic parks and their significant features, while allowing modifications for contemporary uses, requires balancing multiple interests, user needs, and the guiding principles of different planning and design eras.

Provide Stewardship of Natural and Cultural Resources

Being the primary landholder of parks and open space in the region, the federal government has an important role in managing and protecting the natural and cultural features of the region for future generations. The federal government's stewardship role also includes protecting landscapes for their scenic and aesthetic values. As a region conceived to take advantage of its topographic and natural setting, its parks and open space encompass unique terrain features and a variety of natural areas such as wetlands, stream valley areas, floodplains, and forests. The natural and cultural resources within parks and open space face challenges that come with regional development and need protection from demands of overuse; threats posed by changing environmental conditions; fragmentation of habitat corridors; stormwater run-off; and invasive plant species.

Provide Access to and Connections between Parks and Open Space

Providing access to and making connections between different types of parks and open spaces in the region provides residents and visitors with a variety of outdoor experiences in a range of settings. Access to and connections through federal parks and open space vary significantly, often driven by security and agency mission. Similarly, the region has miles of federally managed shoreline areas, but some still remain difficult to access and are uninviting to the public. Improving

access and enhancing connections includes improving physical and visual connectivity and filling the gaps in the existing system. It also requires a shift from thinking of parks and open space as isolated spaces to planning how the park network functions as a whole. It also requires rethinking how streets, sidewalks, trails, and plazas, complement and connect parks and open space and facilitate movement within the network.

Balance Multiple Uses within Parks

As the region continues to grow,⁵ there will be additional demands on parks and open space to accommodate a variety of uses and programs. In addition to several dynamic uses such as public assembly, celebration, education, and recreation, parks and open space provide ecological and environmental benefits, serve as settings for commemorative works, and function as transportation and wildlife corridors. Some parks suffer from overuse while others are under-used due to barriers; lack of park amenities; perceived lack of safety; inadequate signage; and poor maintenance. With increasing demand for parks, it is critical that these spaces allow multiple programs and uses while concurrently protecting important natural and cultural resources.

Balance Commemorative Works within Parks

One of the unique characteristics of the parks and open space system in the NCR is the role of commemorative works. Memorials are often located in national parks and are intricate elements of the viewshed. Often, larger memorials include several commemorative components consisting of landscape and built elements. Size and scale is an important consideration when planning and designing memorials as space becomes harder to find. Many memorials are located within urban parks that also function as public gathering areas. These places balance the sacred space for the commemorative experience with the need for green, open space for other activities. This approach is central to creating both a successful memorial and a welcoming park. In addition, as new memorials are increasingly located beyond the monumental core, there will be a need to balance the function of neighborhood parks with commemorative functions. Smaller memorials are usually located within parks that serve multiple functions for the surrounding neighborhood by providing green, open space in an urban environment. With changing needs, effectively balancing commemorative requirements with other important park uses is critical to creating successful public spaces.

Build Partnerships and Coordination among Multiple Landowners and Jurisdictions

Parks and open space in the National Capital Region cross jurisdictional boundaries and have multiple agencies or stakeholders involved in various aspects of planning, preservation, management, and maintenance. Building partnerships among stakeholders is imperative for effective coordination to improve the quality and capacity of the park system, jointly meet interests and missions, and create a cohesive parks and open space network. Encouraging collaboration among federal and local agencies, along with engaging communities and other stakeholders, further encourages flexibility and creativity in the design, use, and maintenance of parks.

⁵ “Between 2016 and 2040, the region’s population will grow by approximately 22% to over 6.1 million people” – Source: MWCOG Cooperative Forecast Round 9.0. (Note: Extracted numbers for counties and cities within the NCR).

Section A. Protect the Parks and Open Space Design Legacy

The Design Legacy of Parks and Open Space

The L'Enfant Plan⁶, the McMillan Plan, and subsequent planning efforts influenced today's parks and open space network, a foundation of the region's nationally recognized character. Solidified through historic designation as the Plan of the City of Washington, the contributions of many of the planning principles and formal plans remain relevant as an inherent part of the city's unique legacy. Several historic parks in the region feature scenic viewsheds that contribute to the aesthetic quality and visitor experience of the region. It is important for the federal government to protect the design legacy of the parks system while considering improvements that allow the parks and open space to function in a way that provides benefits to residents, workers, and visitors. This policy section highlights different eras and plans that contribute to the region's design legacy and identifies their key characteristics that are of significance. It provides guidance on the preservation and adaptation of designed landscapes.

a) The L'Enfant Era: 1800-1850

The L'Enfant Plan of 1791 centers Washington within a distinctive topographic bowl, accentuating the natural beauty of the rivers and allowing extensive views from the region's elevated ridges. Inherent to L'Enfant's Plan was a system of open spaces, streets, avenues, and reservations that established a physical and visual hierarchy and still define the shape of parks and open space today. The geometric form of the plan resulted in green space, including circle, square, and triangle parks found at intersections and along diagonal avenues. These designed landscapes and urban parks provided oases for pedestrians in both neighborhoods and downtown areas, and featured fountains, monuments, memorials, and other features of civic art. Examples include Farragut Square, McPherson Square, Dupont Circle, Franklin Square, Lafayette Park, Lincoln Park, and Stanton Park, as well as many smaller triangular parks within neighborhoods. The avenues were broad and park-like, some allowing for double rows of trees. Little of the L'Enfant Plan was implemented until after the Civil War, when the city experienced significant population growth, and US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) embarked on the systemic construction of roads, parks, and open space as envisioned in the plan.

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The L'Enfant Plan [\[Insert map of The L'Enfant Plan\]](#)

Key guiding principles from the L'Enfant Plan include:

- *Reciprocal vistas that provide orientation, establish commanding views to and from civic places, and symbolize the structure of civic and community life.*
- *Use of natural and topographic features to shape the city plan.*
- *Avenues that connect major buildings, monuments, and public places.*
- *Continuous street grid to maintain the scale of the city's development pattern, to encourage pedestrian circulation, support commerce, and preserve an open visual character.*

⁶ The L'Enfant and McMillan Plans, collectively known as the *Plan of the City of Washington*, were included in the National Register of Historic Places in 1997.

- *A hierarchical system of avenues, streets, and open spaces that form blocks with strong building walls and circles, squares, or parks with important civic landmarks that reinforce the reciprocal vistas.*

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b) The Civil War/Victorian Era: 1850-1900

After the Civil War, the region aspired to make Washington a worthy capital by repairing wartime damage and improving infrastructure and public spaces with amenities and tree plantings. In 1873, Congress commissioned Frederick Law Olmsted Sr. to design the grounds of the US Capitol. His landscape complemented the monumental classical structure and connected it to the L'Enfant city plan beyond its borders creating a procession of harmonious and grand public spaces. Civic design rules provided for landscaping rights-of-way, the creation of park reservations along the avenues, and allowed controlled building projections into public space. This shaped the character of the public space and street walls along thoroughfares, and created development that engaged users at an intimate scale.

During this time, two large open spaces were set aside for the National Zoological Park and the US Naval Observatory. In addition, East Potomac Park and the Tidal Basin were created when the USACE dredged the Potomac and Anacostia Rivers. In 1890, Rock Creek Park was created, which remains one of the largest natural urban parks in the United States.

[Insert map of Rock Creek Park]

As Washington grew beyond the historic city, new development often included features of the L'Enfant Plan such as circles, small pocket parks, and the street grid layout. The Highway Plan of 1893 took its cue from the L'Enfant Plan and further accentuated parks and open space as central nodes. It established a coordinated street structure outside the L'Enfant City, utilizing boulevards and parkways to link the area's large parks and open space into a regional network.

[Insert map of The Highway Plan]

c) The McMillan Era: 1900-1950

The McMillan Plan of 1901-02, under the influence of the City Beautiful movement, reinforced the importance of the L'Enfant Plan and established a comprehensive public park system throughout the region. It formalized the plans for the monumental core, including the National Mall design, proposed major memorials on the western and southern anchors of the National Mall, and grouped public buildings in formal landscaped settings. The McMillan Plan also instituted some changes to the L'Enfant Plan's city grid, most notably in the area now known as Federal Triangle. This change reinforced the civic presence of the federal government within the monumental core. Further, it proposed a linked system of public parks and open space to ensure access to green spaces for all residents. It envisioned scenic drives and parkways along the area's rivers and streams and recognized the opportunities presented by the old Civil War Defenses of Washington ringing the city along the Washington escarpment.

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The McMillian Plan

[Insert map of The McMillian Plan]

Key guiding principles of the McMillian Plan include:

- *Comprehensive urban planning.*
- *Designs that evoke civic pride and enhance the appearance of the city.*
- *Grand uniform neoclassical buildings and majestic civic monuments often set in a park-like setting or within building yards.*
- *A distinct separation of land uses and limiting building heights.*
- *Configuring structures to create order, balance, and harmonious compositions.*
- *Use of design principles of balanced proportions.*

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c) .1 Implementing McMillian's Vision

Other important elements of the McMillian Plan were accomplished over the next quarter-century such as building the Lincoln Memorial, re-landscaping the ceremonial core consisting of the Capitol Grounds, National Mall and the White House; infrastructure improvements, including the Arlington Memorial Bridge and Union Station; building the Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway; and landscaping East and West Potomac Parks. It also set the stage for the development of Anacostia Park where the USACE constructed a seawall on the banks of the Anacostia, dredging the river bottom, and used the sediment to fill in the wetlands behind the wall and envisioned the new lands be used as gardens and recreation space for public use.

Both the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts (CFA) and the National Capital Park and Planning Commission (NCPPC) played a role in shaping the design legacy of the parks and open space system, and in maintaining and implementing McMillian Plan's vision for Washington. These review bodies influenced the design of memorials and monuments, National Mall, monumental core, and the regional park system. Creation of planning bodies at the county and state level, including the Maryland National Capital Park and Planning Commission, established by the state in 1927 helped federal and state agencies work together on planning initiatives throughout the region.

In 1928, NCPPC issued the Plan for Potomac River Parks, covering the area from Mount Vernon to Great Falls. Followed by this plan, the Capper-Cramton Act (CCA) of 1930 authorized NCPPC to acquire land for a regional park and parkway system, including coordinated acquisition of stream valley parks with Maryland and Virginia planning authorities. Funds from this act helped acquire land for the George Washington Memorial Parkway, an extension of Rock Creek Park into Maryland, and an extension of the Anacostia Park System.

d) Post World War II Era: 1950-1996

In the post-World War II era, federal office spaces began to provide publicly accessible open spaces including small green spaces and plazas as amenities. The mid twentieth-century saw the advent of movements that combined functionalism with aesthetic ideals and rejected historical precepts and styles. Urban renewal and comprehensive redevelopment were viewed as a means to stimulate revitalization of the city. Southwest Washington is an example where the entire

neighborhoods were transformed and both buildings and landscapes were rebuilt with a modernist vocabulary utilizing manmade materials such as concrete for the open plaza areas between the buildings, and simple plantings and vegetation in the green spaces. The 10th Street Promenade and Overlook, now Banneker Park, were components of an urban renewal program in southwest Washington. New civic and memorial construction projects utilized the tenants of the modernist movement. Other significant modernist landscapes of that time include East Wing of National Gallery and portions of L'Enfant Plaza; National Zoo and Hirshhorn Sculpture Garden; and the master plans for the National Arboretum, Pennsylvania Avenue, and Arlington National Cemetery.

With the advent of the new highway systems, and consistent with private sector campuses, new federal campuses and facilities were located in suburban Maryland and Virginia. In 1966, Congress authorized Wolf Trap National Park for the Performing Arts as the first national park dedicated to performing arts. Other designed landscape parks in the region, often have cultural and educational purpose, including the Carter Barron Amphitheater in Rock Creek Park, and Glen Echo Park in Maryland.

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The National Capital Planning Act of 1952 renamed the NCPPC as the National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC) and clarified its role as the central planning agency for the federal government in the National Capital Region. NCPC and the District of Columbia shared responsibility for creation of the Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital.

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Throughout the region's history, major plans and significant local and national events have shaped its park and open space system. In 1970, in preparation for the nation's Bicentennial, NPS prepared a master plan for the National Mall. This resulted in the development of Constitution Gardens, locations for new museums, and plans for Pennsylvania Avenue. The *1974 Pennsylvania Avenue Plan* adapted the L'Enfant and McMillan Plan principles to post-war urban development, envisioning it as an urban boulevard and civic event destination for the capital city. Grand public spaces, superblock buildings, and urban parks were proposed. The unique streetscape, with multi-row tree-planting scheme, serves as an urban park. Pershing Park and Western Plaza (now Freedom Plaza), integral components of the *1974 Plan*, serve as important examples of this transformation.

e) The Legacy Era: 1996-today

NCPC's *Legacy Plan* of 1997 envisioned new growth and development east of the US Capitol, and identified opportunities to develop parks along the Anacostia River. One of the core principles of the *Legacy Plan* was to promote the reintegration of the rivers into city life, which in many cases had been disconnected from adjacent neighborhoods by highway development that occurred in the 1950s. Planning efforts such as the 2003 *Anacostia Waterfront Initiative Plan* furthered that vision by promoting a vision for waterfront public spaces and parks.

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The Legacy Plan

[Insert map of 'The Legacy Plan']

Key guiding principles of the Legacy Plan include:

- *Building on the historic L'Enfant and McMillan plans, which are the foundation of modern Washington;*
- *Unifying the city and the Monumental Core, with the Capitol at the center;*
- *Using new memorials, museums and other public buildings to stimulate economic development;*
- *Integrating the Potomac and Anacostia rivers into the city's public life and protecting the Mall and the adjacent historic landscape from future building;*
- *Developing a comprehensive, flexible, and convenient transportation system that eliminates barriers and improves movement within the city.*

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f) Other Planning Initiatives

Multiple plans helped protect the historic designed landscape of the National Mall. The *Monumental Core Framework Plan* advanced the goals of the *Legacy Plan* to relieve development pressure on the National Mall; better integrate federal development with city life; and support a diversifying local economy, growing population, and expanding downtown.

To protect the National Mall and existing commemorative settings, the *Memorials and Museums Master Plan* expands on the *Legacy Plan* ideas that call for distributing new memorials and museums into all four quadrants of the city. The plan designates a 'Reserve' area within the core of the great cross-axis of the National Mall, prohibiting the siting of new commemorative works.

Also in 2003, the *Anacostia Waterfront Framework Plan* recognized the Anacostia River as an important resource for the region. It outlined a vision and brought together District and federal agencies to collaborate on restoring and revitalizing the river and its waterfront.

In order to plan for future changes along Pennsylvania Avenue, in 2014, NCPC, NPS, GSA, and the District of Columbia Government launched the Pennsylvania Avenue Initiative, to assess near and long-term improvements to the Avenue as part of its dual role for the city and nation. The Avenue is a National Historic Site, which runs between the US Capitol and White House and includes a number of commemorative elements, park and plazas, as well as grand streetscape framing iconic views to the Capital.

It is important for the federal government to protect the region's history and design legacy that has helped shape the parks and open space system, and balance the contributions of different design eras and major plans with improvements that allow this critical network to function for current uses.

The federal government should:

- POS.A.1 Rehabilitate, protect, and where feasible, enhance historic designed landscapes and civic streets, including squares, circles, and triangles associated with the historic Plan of the City of Washington.

- POS.A.2 Preserve and protect historic designed landscapes including their natural and manmade elements.

- POS.A.3 Protect and maintain the cross-axis of the National Mall and its historic landscape as a complete work of civic art.

- POS.A.4 Protect historic parks as important architectural and landscape legacies of national and regional significance.

- POS.A.5 Protect the resources and open space qualities of the National Mall and other heavily used parks by encouraging outdoor cultural events, gatherings, and celebrations to take place in East and West Potomac Parks, Pennsylvania Avenue, 10th Street, SW, and other public spaces throughout the National Capital Region.

- POS.A.6 Protect the character of parks and open space with significant cultural or natural resources and that contribute to the setting of the National Capital Region.

- POS.A.7 Protect or restore viewsheds that contribute to the aesthetic quality, historic significance, and visitor experience of the parks and open space system.

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Historic Parks in the National Capital Region

Many of the historic parks serve as areas for recreation, education, and important habitat for plant and animal species. Some of the prominent historic parks and landscapes in the region include Rock Creek Park, Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historical Park (C&O Canal NHP), the Pennsylvania Avenue National Historic Site, the Civil War Defenses of Washington (commonly referred as the Fort Circle Parks), and Prince William Forest Park.

[Add map of above historic parks]

Rock Creek Park,⁷ established in 1890, consists of the natural landscape that preserves the natural, archeological, and historic resources of the Rock Creek Valley. The park includes several significant archaeological sites related to the defense of Washington, DC during the Civil War.

The Pennsylvania Avenue National Historic Site⁸ is located north of the National Mall and south of downtown Washington. It runs between the US Capitol and White House and includes a number

⁷ See Rock Creek Park Foundation Document

⁸ See Pennsylvania Avenue National Historic Site Management Plan

of commemorative elements, parks and plazas, as well as a grand streetscape framing one of the most iconic views to the Capitol.

The C&O Canal NHP⁹ is located along the Potomac River and extends 184.5 miles from Washington to Cumberland, MD. Originally, the C&O Canal served as a transportation corridor for coal, lumber, and agricultural products. In 1971, Congress established the park to preserve and interpret the historic and scenic features while providing recreational opportunities. The Canal towpath links to the Great Allegheny Passage (GAP) Trail, providing a direct connection between Pittsburgh, PA and Washington, DC.

The Civil War Defenses of Washington¹⁰ is a network of green, open spaces along the rim of the L'Enfant City. Constructed during the Civil War to protect the nation's capital, the forts stretch over 37 miles and form a ring around the city. After the Civil War ended, the forts were abandoned, but by the 1890s, neighborhoods began to advocate for their preservation. In 1902, the McMillan Plan proposed a regional park system that included a scenic roadway, "Fort Drive," that was intended to memorialize the remaining forts as parkland and link them together.

Prince William Forest Park,¹¹ at over 16,000 acres, is the largest protected natural area in the NCR. While the region around it has become increasingly urban, Prince William Forest Park still serves as a place where visitors can enjoy the natural landscape that has recovered from years of human use during a distinctive period in American history. The park is the largest example of Eastern Piedmont forest in the National Park system. It also protects the Quantico Creek watershed and is a sanctuary for numerous native plant and animal species.

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Adapting Designed Landscapes

While Washington is largely defined by its neoclassical architecture and landscapes, reflecting the vision of L'Enfant and reinforced by the McMillan Plan, it is also a region influenced by later design eras. Many designed landscapes have helped shape the region's parks and open space system, and collectively contribute to help define its history and design legacy. These includes informal and picturesque landscapes of the Victorian era; landscapes from the Downing and Olmstead era; and landscapes from the Beaux-Arts and City Beautiful Movement. Parks and plazas designed in the Modernist and Post-Modern period can also be found throughout the region. These include landscapes in Southwest Washington, public spaces along Pennsylvania Avenue as well as the landscape for John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts.

Several of these landscapes meet the criteria for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places, which helps protect their character defining features. Others, such as John Marshall Park along Pennsylvania Avenue, are not, yet, eligible for listing in the National Register based on their age criteria. These include urban renewal areas that reflect the socio-political, environmental, and

⁹ See Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historical Park Foundation Document

¹⁰ See National Capital Parks—East Foundation Document

¹¹ See Prince William Forest Park Foundation Document

economic aspirations of the time when they were built, as well as certain works of master landscape architects.

[Add images of designed landscapes from different eras]

Designed landscapes are vulnerable to changes brought on by redevelopment on adjacent parcels that can influence their scale, use, or circulation patterns. Similarly, these spaces are impacted by introduction of barriers such as highways and bridges, vehicular and pedestrian conflicts, security improvements and shifts in demographics. Protecting designed landscapes from different eras and their distinguishing characteristics is important to reflect the design evolution of the area.

As urban environments develop and become denser, the public spaces also evolve. All landscapes, regardless of style or era, have to respond to diverse uses and users. At the same time, many of these designed landscapes may need modifications to adapt to changes in use, access, and maintenance requirements. At times, there will be a need to modify designed landscapes to meet new programmatic goals and infrastructure needs; accommodate changes in the surrounding area; and/or alter elements from different design periods or add new elements to the landscape. These modifications should be balanced in a way that contributes to the region’s design legacy.

Adaptability is key to ensure that designed landscapes meet contemporary needs. Parks and landscapes must employ characteristics of successful public spaces, including the ability to accommodate multiple uses in a comfortable and safe environment. They should be iconic, promote opportunities for social interaction, be well maintained, and be sustainable. Accordingly, there may be times when there are conflicts between competing planning principles and design features that date to different design eras. These characteristics need to be balanced when assessing a designed landscape for improvements. Whether preserved or modified, designed landscapes will continue to contribute to the region’s parks and open space legacy. Key issues such as maintaining physical and/or visual connectivity, significant character-defining elements, and overall functionality are important elements to consider.

In addition, it is important to recognize that designed landscapes of the recent past represent a particular time and context that influenced their form and features. Understanding the original design intent of these landscapes is critical when planning for their future.

The federal government should:

POS.A.8 Recognize the value of more recent landscapes with special design, and/or cultural significance. Maintain a sense of historic continuity and evolution by preserving parks and landscapes that are exceptional representations of different eras and styles.

POS.A.9 Reinforce Washington’s design evolution, grounded in the L’Enfant and McMillan Plans, and the distinguishing characteristics of designed landscapes when making adaptations to address contemporary needs and/or change in use, access, and maintenance.

- POS.A.10 Balance significant and sometimes competing planning principles and design features and elements from different eras when adapting designed landscapes to meet contemporary programmatic goals and user needs.
- POS.A.11 Maintain and improve a strong physical and/or visual connectivity with the surrounding neighborhood context when making adaptations or improvements to designed landscapes.
- POS.A.12 Recognize the original design intent may remain relevant for some landscapes due to their planning, design, cultural, and/or historic significance. Ensure the original design intent is considered when making adaptations or improvements to designed landscapes.

Section B: Provide Stewardship of Natural and Cultural Resources

Value of Parks and Open Space

Parks and open space are valuable resources that help shape a sustainable, livable, and beautiful region and are places where significant historic events have occurred. Their ecological functions help improve air and water quality; function as habitat corridors; provide wilderness protection; improve groundwater retention; and help improve the physical and mental health of residents, workers, and visitors. Parks provide social value as gathering places for families, friends, and individuals of all ages and economic status. Urban parks provide opportunities for recreation and serve as a respite from dense and busy urban settings. Neighborhood open spaces, such as community gardens and play lots, often serve a vital function in bringing people together as well as educating and engaging communities about the value of green space. As cultural resources, parks preserve and protect the history of an area and its people; connect people with their natural landscapes, vibrant culture, and rich history; and inspire the next generation of park stewards.

This policy section provides guidance to ensure protection, appropriate usage, and enhancement of the region's parks, open space, natural, and cultural resources for years to come.

Natural Resources

a) Terrain Features

The region's natural setting and features are key elements that contribute to the character and sense of place for the nation's capital. The region's natural landscape is defined by distinct terrain features including the escarpment of hills that form the topographic bowl surrounding the L'Enfant City,¹² 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 parts of the region.

[Add map of 'Major Terrain Features in NCR and Environs']

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Great Falls Park,¹³ managed as part of the George Washington Memorial Parkway, protects the views and access to the Great Falls of the Potomac, the largest waterfall on the Potomac River. At this site, the river flows over a series of steep, jagged rocks into the narrow Potomac Gorge. The unique geology, geography, and hydrology of this area support an array of rare species and natural communities. Great Falls Park also offers a diversity of recreational experiences in close proximity to the nation's capital.

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Lowland and rim features of the L'Enfant City and environs form the topographic bowl. Its geographic boundaries are the Florida Avenue escarpment, the Anacostia Hills, and the Arlington Hills. The topographic bowl's forested ridgelines provide sweeping panoramic views of the monumental core. The natural juxtaposition of highlands and lowlands emphasized by extensive

¹² See extents of the 'L'Enfant City' per The Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital: Federal Element, Urban Design Element, page 7.

¹³ See George Washington Memorial Parkway Foundation Document

tree cover and tree lines contributes to the area's unique views and vistas, including those seen from topographic vantage points on natural and cultural sites.

The natural landscape of the region is comprised of 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 several federally owned sites such as the Beltsville Agricultural Research Center, Patuxent Research Refuge, Mason Neck National Wildlife Refuge, Washington-Dulles International Airport, Fort Meade, Marine Corps Base Quantico, and Prince William Forest Park.

The palisades and gorges of the rivers and streams, including the Potomac 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 Mountains, which include the Bull Run, South Catoclin, and Sugarloaf Mountains in the western and northwestern part of the region, rise above the gently rolling hills of the Virginia Piedmont to the east. Portions of these natural forested areas are visible from the region's suburban locations. For example, Sugarloaf Mountain is visible from northern Montgomery County.

b) Greenways

Greenways contribute significantly towards one of the defining characteristics of the region's landscape: its green setting. Greenways are linear, vegetated corridors of natural landscape or strips of undeveloped land that typically follow natural or constructed features. Their primary functions include environmental protection, recreation, and as circulation routes. Greenway corridors are established along canals and ridgelines and sometimes resemble linear parks, accommodating contiguous pedestrian and circulation routes such as trails or scenic drives, or overland along railroad right-of-ways converted to recreational use. Their abundant tree cover and vegetation provide a landscape and park-like character that encompasses the urbanized areas of downtown Washington and extends to the suburbs of Maryland and Virginia.

[Add map of 'Major Greenways in NCR and Environs']

A greenway system provides natural buffers that improve water quality, wildlife habitat and migration corridors. Though wildlife corridors are also greenways, because they are primarily intended to aid in wildlife migration, they are not necessarily managed as parks for recreational use, and may not include facilities such as public trails. Greenways can also promote adjacent economic development and increase the beauty of neighborhoods, as well as the value of surrounding properties. In addition to the aesthetic benefits, tree cover provides environmental and economic benefits by reducing stormwater runoff, air pollution, and energy use.

Clara Barton Parkway is an example of a greenway that runs parallel to Potomac River, from MacArthur Boulevard in Carderock, Maryland, east to Canal Road at the Chain Bridge in Washington. Other examples of greenways in the region include Whitehaven Parkway, Normanstone Parkway, Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway, Klingle Valley Parkway, Melvin Hazen Park, Soapstone Valley Park, Piney Branch Parkway, and Glover-Archbold Park, and parts of the Civil War Defenses of Washington. The greenway at Oxon Run Parkway includes forests and seepage swamps, and is a unique natural area in a highly urbanized setting in Southeast Washington.

[\[Add photos of Greenways\]](#)

c) Waterways

Another defining characteristic of the natural landscape is its waterways. In the early days, inland waterways provided routes for trade and transportation. Today, they are valued for their ecological, recreational, transportation, and scenic qualities. The Potomac and Anacostia Rivers, along with the Chesapeake Bay, are the greatest water resources in the region. In Washington, the confluence of the two rivers forms a mighty “Y” shape near Hains Point, part of East Potomac Park. Approximately 90% of the river shorelines in Washington, DC are located on federal lands. The rivers often overflow their banks during high tide, covering adjacent paths with water. This presents opportunities for the federal government to improve water quality, providing for access, resilience, and recreational opportunities.

[\[Add map of ‘Anacostia and Potomac River shorelines adjacent to federal property\]](#)

The most common shoreline conditions found in the region include natural or semi-natural areas, or seawalls located along the water’s edge. Natural shorelines are located in areas such as Kenilworth Park and Aquatic Gardens, and the coves and headlands south of Mount Vernon, Great Falls, Dyke Marsh, and the Gaps at Point of Rocks. These ecosystems in the region are important open space resources that support significant aquatic life and shoreline habitat in addition to protecting watersheds, protecting land from storm surge, and filtering pollutants. Significant for their ecological quality and scenic character, these areas offer unique recreational opportunities that are important in a dense urban environment.

[\[Add map showing Kenilworth Park and Aquatic Gardens, the coves and headlands south of Mount Vernon, Great Falls, Dyke Marsh, and the Gaps at Point of Rocks\]](#)

Seawall conditions along the water’s edge are located in areas such as the Tidal Basin, East and West Potomac Parks, and along Anacostia River. The seawalls, levees, and landfill areas, constructed to manage excessive flooding, were built by dredging a deep channel in the rivers and then flushing the silt and sediment from the waterways. Along the Anacostia River, the seawalls confine the river and limit its width during high and low tide, where vegetated wetlands might normally occur. Ongoing stewardship efforts include reducing sewage, stormwater pollution, recreating wetlands, and improving resiliency in the face of climate change and rising waters.

Waterfront parks are common throughout the region. Examples include the Georgetown Waterfront, the Wharf at the Southwest Waterfront, the Southeast Federal Center, the Washington Navy Yard, Anacostia Park, and the Old Town Alexandria Waterfront in Virginia. Some

parks, like East and West Potomac Parks and the Tidal Basin, are also designated for memorials. Currently, East Potomac Park houses public amenities for golf, tennis, and public swimming. Hains Point, the area at the southern tip of East Potomac Park, between the main branch of the Potomac River and the Washington Channel, features a pedestrian and bike path.

[\[Add map of East and West Potomac Parks, Tidal Basin, Washington Channel, and Hains Point\]](#)

d) Stream Valley Parks

Stream valley parks in the region include natural and forested areas along rivers, streams, and tributaries. These open space resources are often preserved for their ecological and scenic value. These parks and their natural vegetated areas reduce the impacts of development and help protect streams as natural resources. Forested stream buffers, or riparian buffers, help filter nutrients, sediment, and other pollutants from entering the stream. They also protect the stream banks from erosion, slow the flow of water during storm events, and shade the stream and prevent it from getting too warm for sensitive species. Wildlife and vegetation thrive in the open spaces along these green corridors.

[\[Add map of 'Stream Valley Parks'\] \(Create new map or modify one from CapitalSpace\)](#)

Both Rock Creek and Anacostia Parks are concentrated along river and steam valleys protecting approximately 70 percent of Washington's floodplains and wetlands, 68 percent of the wooded areas, and 72 percent of land with steep slopes.¹⁴ Federal funds were allocated, under the Capper-Cramton Act (CCA) as a way to protect stream valley parks and for the extension of Rock Creek Park into Maryland. Anacostia Park came under the jurisdiction of NPS in 1933, and Kenilworth Park and Aquatic Gardens in 1938 under the authority of the CCA. The legislation allocated federal funds for the extension of the Anacostia Park system further up the valley of the Anacostia River and mandated NPS to preserve the flow of water and prevent pollution in Rock Creek and the Potomac and Anacostia Rivers, to preserve forests and the natural scenery in Washington, and provide recreational opportunities in the nation's capital.

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[Capper-Cramton Act \[Insert map of 'Capper-Cramton' lands\]](#)

Along with allocating funds for a comprehensive park, parkway, and playground system in the nation's capital, CCA also allocated funds for the acquisition of certain enumerated stream valleys in the region for protection and land preservation. All land acquired outside the District of Columbia was titled in the name of the individual states or a designated park authority. Some examples of stream valley parks acquired through CCA allocated funds include Cabin John Creek, Paint Branch, Northwest Branch, and Sligo Creek. Today, CCA has preserved and protected over 2,200 acres of stream valley parks in the National Capital Region. In addition to funding for acquisition, CCA authorized the National Capital Park and Planning Commission (NCPPC), the predecessor of the National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC), review authority to approve any development projects in parks acquired under CCA to ensure protection and preservation of the region's valuable watersheds and parklands in perpetuity.

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¹⁴ NCPC, "CapitalSpace," April 1, 2010. https://www.ncpc.gov/DocumentDepot/Publications/CapitalSpace/CapitalSpace_Plan.pdf

d) .1 Capper-Cramton Park Development Projects

Through its review authority, NCPC oversees Capper-Cramton park development projects to ensure continued protection and preservation of the region's valuable watersheds and parklands set aside for protection under the CCA. Review focuses on protecting the character and setting of these parks to ensure that improvements are compatible with existing park use. Projects that incorporate public benefits, such as improving the water quality of streams along with improving park accessibility and park resources, are encouraged. Examples of compatible improvements include adding wetlands and meadow areas to a steam valley park, adding a multi-use trail to improve the regional trail network, or adding a footbridge and connector trail to improve access to an existing park.

A majority of project improvements in Capper-Cramton parks fall under watershed management or stormwater management categories. When maintaining and replacing stormwater infrastructure, adding treatment facilities, such as green streets or using green or natural infrastructure techniques, help maintain the natural character and setting of parks. Use of bio-retention basins, bio-swales, and vegetation as stormwater solutions should be encouraged. Similarly, along streams, more natural streambank restoration techniques for slope protection and erosion control should be encouraged.

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Cultural Resources

There are many cultural resources often found in parks and open space. Cultural resources are physical evidence or place of past human activity: site, object, landscape, structure; or a site, structure, landscape, object or natural feature of significance to a group of people traditionally associated with it. Types of cultural resources often found in the parks and open space include archaeological resources, historic structures, cultural landscapes, and ethnographic resources. For example, numerous events have made Anacostia Park the place it is today including the Nacotchtank Indians, European discovery, planning for the nation's capital, War of 1812, Civil War fortifications, the Bonus Army, and the development of the Anacostia Park. Cultural resources that date back to these events remain in the park today. Harpers Ferry National Historical Park, located at the confluence of the Potomac and Shenandoah Rivers, represents a diverse number of people and events that influenced the course of our nation's history. Similarly, several battlefield parks in the region include cultural sites that influenced course of history and raise awareness for future generations. These include Monocacy National Battlefield in Maryland and Manassas National Battlefield Park in Virginia.

Stewardship Opportunities

The federal government is responsible for protecting many natural and cultural resources located in the region's parks and open spaces. NPS manages many other park sites in the region with cultural resources that are associated with either a historic event, activity or person or exhibiting other cultural or aesthetic values. The NPS has identified just over 6,000 acres of land, as cultural resources in Washington, DC. There are also examples of privately managed parks, such as Mount Vernon Estate and Gardens, where majority of adjacent land is under the control of the federal government. The Mount Vernon Memorial Highway section of the George Washington Memorial

Parkway, Piscataway Park, Fort Washington, Fort Hunt, and other areas within the viewshed from Mount Vernon are integral to the historic property's landscape setting. Federal agencies have a responsibility for protecting these resources and evaluating impacts from development proposals.

Similarly, the federal government is the caretaker of many of the region's urban ecosystems including forests, waterways, shorelines, wetlands, and parkland. These ecosystems are often directly or indirectly affected by development activity in their vicinity. Some of these areas have limited public access to minimize impacts to these resources. Others might require less maintenance and provide erosion control, clean water, habitat, and opportunities for passive recreation. It is important to consider how different activities affect natural areas and their habitat and to incorporate best practices to protect, maintain, and enhance these resources.

It is important to minimize the impact of development on ecologically sensitive areas and protect the habitat and ecological functions of natural areas. Such efforts help maintain clean air, clean water, carbon sequestration, and areas for recreation. Protecting habitat for the diversity of plant and animal species ensures the protection of healthy, viable, and sustainable ecosystems. Maintaining an interconnected network of protected lands and waters allows wildlife to follow natural migration patterns as climates change. Reestablishing broad riparian corridors along, and around, water bodies protects water quality.

Geographic features discussed in this section provide views and vistas of terrain in its natural state, and higher elevations allow unobstructed views to the lowlands below. Sensitive siting and construction of structures can ensure protection of the views and vistas. Development that occurs along or adjacent to the shorelines have the potential to impact the character and scenic qualities of the open space. These areas include private development along the Wharf and federal installations at the Navy Yard and Joint Base Anacostia-Bolling. The mass and scale of development should maintain the scenic qualities and character of the open space.

The region's shorelines are ecologically sensitive areas. Along natural areas of the shoreline, riparian buffers, woodlands, and mature trees help protect steep slopes, floodplains, erosion, and help prevent sediment and associated pollutants from reaching waterbodies. Shoreline parks, like East and West Potomac Parks and Anacostia Park also provide important recreational and commemorative space. It is important to balance recreation and ecological needs when planning for shoreline parks and open spaces. In addition, whether they are maintained as natural areas or more developed, plans for shoreline parks and open spaces must consider fluctuating water levels and their impacts to the ecological and recreational activities that take place.

Green infrastructure techniques play a vital role managing stormwater by infiltrating it in the groundwater or by capturing it for later reuse. Bio-retention areas, vegetated swales, permeable pavements, green roofs, and rainwater harvesting significantly help in meeting local stormwater regulations, managing water supplies, preventing pollution, and creating more sustainable urban environments. They also effectively reduce energy needs, potable water demands, and can reduce maintenance costs. Daylighting streams, which involves redirection of piped or culverted stream into an aboveground channel, restores the stream to a more natural state and improves

the riparian environment. The resulting restored stream or tributary provides stormwater benefits as well as numerous aesthetic, economic, and environmental benefits.

Similarly, planting trees is another green infrastructure technique to improve air and water quality, preserve wildlife habitat, and reduced energy usage due to their cooling capabilities. Tree canopy can reduce stormwater runoff by intercepting rainfall, as well as by improving stormwater infiltration in soils. As the region continues to grow, tree canopy and landscape cover, within parks, need to be prioritized and maintained. Trees help absorb and reduce stormwater runoff; improve air quality, create shade, and mitigate the urban heat island; and create a more diverse ecosystem where wildlife can thrive.

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[Anacostia Park \[Add Anacostia Park map\]](#)

Anacostia Park is one of the largest recreation areas in the region and encompasses more than 1,200 acres at multiple sites located along both sides of the Anacostia River. Anacostia Park serves an important ecological buffer between heavily developed urban spaces and the Anacostia River. The park includes a natural shoreline that provides habitat for a diverse population of plants and animal species such as the bald eagle; woodlands and wetlands that contribute to the protection of the water quality of the river; and a range of recreational opportunities for local residents and visitors.

In 2003, the DC Office of Planning completed the Anacostia Waterfront Initiative (AWI) Framework Plan, which brought together District and federal agencies to develop a vision for the future of the Anacostia waterfront. Two of the primary goals of the initiative were to restore the Anacostia River's water quality and enhance its natural beauty. The *AWI Framework Plan* includes various restoration initiatives involving government agencies, non-profits, and community groups to improve the water quality for the Anacostia. The plan outlines long-term partnerships between the District of Columbia and the federal government, which will result in substantially improving Anacostia River water quality through the implementation of a combined sewer containment plan, wetlands restoration, tributary stream daylighting, and environmental guidelines for future development along the Anacostia waterfront.

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The federal government should:

- POS.B.1 Protect the region's terrain features including:
- a. The region's rivers and streams, their associated valleys and bluffs, and the shoreline park system.
 - b. The palisades and gorges of rivers and streams in their natural state.
 - c. The headwater and reservoir areas along the rivers.
 - d. The forested ridgelines of the topographic bowl surrounding the central city of Washington.
 - e. Other scenic and ecologically significant terrain.

- POS.B.2 Protect features along natural shorelines, such as riparian landscapes, wetlands, steep slopes, mature/healthy trees and understory vegetation, floodplains, woodlands, and highly permeable soils.
- POS.B.3 Protect and maintain greenways for their environmental benefits and as natural and cultural resources.
- POS.B.4 Protect and preserve small forests and stream valley parks as natural resource areas, so they continue to serve as valuable scenic, ecological, cultural, and recreational resources.
- POS.B.5 Encourage gradual transitions from the natural areas surrounding the terrain features to densely developed urban environments.
- POS.B.6 Maintain and protect the Potomac Gorge, and the surrounding palisades and gorges and their resources, in its natural condition and keep its transition highlands, the rim areas, and surroundings free of intrusive constructed forms.
- POS.B.7 Protect the character and setting of all parks acquired as Capper-Cramton lands as critical elements of the region's park and open space system.
- POS.B.8 Improve Capper-Cramton lands to be compatible with their existing park use. Projects that provide public benefits such as improving the water quality of streams, promoting park access, and protecting park resources are encouraged.
- POS.B.9 Encourage land use and actions that protect and improve the Potomac and Anacostia Rivers, including natural shorelines to enhance their ecological quality and scenic character.
- POS.B.10 Retain and restore natural shoreline areas to a more natural state, including daylighting streams to provide more sustainable and resilient conditions.
- POS.B.11 Discourage paved parking areas along the shoreline of rivers, streams and at waterfront parks. Remove existing parking when feasible and restore these areas to a landscaped condition, which could include recreational uses.
- POS.B.12 Treat urban shoreline areas to be resilient and adaptable to variations in water level.
- POS.B.13 Encourage actions that improve the water quality of the Anacostia and Potomac Rivers to contribute to the restoration of natural systems, improved water quality, and increased recreational use.

- POS.B.14 Preserve and maintain natural areas and open space on federal campuses that support wildlife habitat, improve scenic quality, and enhance aesthetic character. Preservation of these spaces should be compatible with the campus mission and programmatic needs.
- POS.B.15 Increase and conserve urban tree canopy, understory plantings, and landscape cover through best design and installation practices to provide long-term aesthetics and environmental benefits.
- POS.B.16 Protect and maintain large tree preserves, forests, and mature urban trees when planning and designing development projects in the region.
- POS.B.17 When planning and designing the location of towers, antennas, or similar structures in or adjacent to the federal park system:
- a. Avoid locating antennas and tower structures within the viewsheds of natural and cultural landscapes and open spaces.
 - b. Encourage innovative designs that reduce the visibility of antennas and towers.
- POS.B.18 Conserve portions of federal campuses and installations that add significantly to the open space system. To the extent practicable, provide public access to and through these open spaces.
- POS.B.19 The mass and scale of development along or adjacent to the shoreline should preserve view corridors and be compatible to the character and quality of open space.

Responsible Practices to Protect Natural and Cultural Resources

As reinforced in the Federal Environment Element, the federal government has an important role in sustainable development, part of which includes potential impacts to the environment. Sustainable practices can be incorporated in the construction, renovation, and maintenance of the region's parks and open space. These practices can reduce the consumption of water, gas, energy, and improve the use of renewable energy sources. Similarly, green infrastructure solutions are a cost-effective approach to water management that protect, restore, or mimic the natural water cycle. In addition to clean the air and water, these solutions can help reduce flood risk, mitigate urban heat island effect, and reduce stormwater runoff.

The federal government should create opportunities to educate and raise awareness of the ecological functions and historic value of the region's parks and open space. Finding ways for people to participate and engage with the natural environment through interpretative signage; educational programs; and community clean up, planting, and maintenance, will encourage continued stewardship of the environment and landscape. Parks and open space are a valuable asset that provide many benefits, and it is important for the federal government to continue to lead efforts and find ways to protect, maintain, and enhance these resources.

The federal government should:

- POS.B.20 Preserve and protect the park-like character and setting of the region by planting native species to promote sustainable practices and minimize maintenance requirements.

- POS.B.21 Consider opportunities to educate and engage communities in the cleanup, planting, removal of invasive species, and maintenance of the region's rivers, trails, parks, and open space.

- POS.B.22 Promote interpretive signage and educational programming, and support the use of mobile technology, to educate and raise awareness about cultural resources and ecological functions of parks and open space.

Section C: Provide Access to and Connections between Parks and Open Space

The region has diverse parks and open space types across a multitude of jurisdictions. From expansive recreational areas, to iconic commemorative spaces and urban parks, to important natural landscapes, the region provides residents and visitors with a variety of outdoor experiences. As a large landowner in the region, the federal government contributes towards maintaining a unified park and open space system by improving access and connections to and between parks and open space.

Providing a contiguous park system may require acquiring new spaces. However, it may include using existing spaces in new and different ways by establishing new connections between parks and the people that use them, and thinking about how the parks and open space system functions as a whole. Creating new connections between existing parks also helps improve accessibility to parks in denser communities where open space is limited. A pedestrian friendly street network that includes traffic calming measures, wider sidewalks, seating and interaction areas allow these routes to become connectors as well as gathering places. Well-connected networks encourage walking, bicycling, and extending the park experience into the city. Green infrastructure and plantings further help to visually extend pedestrian space into the street and create a unified experience.

This policy section provides guidance on how to prioritize access to and connectivity between parks and open spaces in the region in order to provide residents and visitors alike with a variety of outdoor experiences in a range of settings.

Reducing Physical and Visual Barriers

Despite the diverse breadth of parks and open space in the region, physical and pedestrian access can be a challenge for a variety of reasons. Physical barriers, such as freeways, rail-tracks, steep terrain, and security fencing affect accessibility. Similarly, superblock-sized buildings and inadequate or altogether lack of sidewalks and other pedestrian amenities make it difficult to access and connect to existing parks and open space. Visual barriers can also limit connectivity. Limited visibility of entrances, lack of signage, poor maintenance at park edges, and overgrown vegetation, all contribute to safety concerns. As a result, poor visibility can contribute to uninviting and underused parks. Prioritizing the removal of barriers, both physical and perceptual, is important to improving the integration of parks and open space with surrounding communities.

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<Add CapitalSpace Map>

Washington's parks are not uniformly distributed; size variations and conditions affect use options, and physical and perceptual barriers limit access. *CapitalSpace* highlighted areas of the city that have less walkable access to park resources. Continued residential growth in those areas will only exacerbate the need for parks. District agencies have a responsibility to plan and develop space to meet these needs. Similarly, federal agencies must consider increasing visitor numbers, space

demand for future commemorative works, visitor amenities, and events. Close coordination between federal and District entities are critical to address growth and the accessibility to parks.

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Many of the region's parks and open space consists of either large passive natural resource areas or pocket parks that are too small to meet local needs. With limited medium sized parks suitable for recreational amenities and facilities, certain neighborhoods and communities have limited access to green space. In addition, these spaces are often not suitable for a variety of possible user groups, including people with mobility impairments.

These problems increase over time due to a lack of funding to improve park facilities or a general lack of investment in physical connections to parks and open space. It is increasingly important that planning decisions include access to parks and open space —intentionally working to improve connectivity to park spaces and upgrade infrastructure to meet the needs of residents, visitors, and workers. For areas where access to open space may be limited, the federal government should identify opportunities to reestablish connections to existing parks and encourage local governments to provide open space. There is a need to ensure that the region's park system provides access to users of all ages, abilities, incomes, and backgrounds.

Connections to and along the Waterfront

Waterfront parks, when easily accessible, become open space resources and destinations for residents and visitors. A walkable connection to and along the waterfront requires much more than a sidewalk, path, or boardwalk. In urban areas, these connections prioritize access to the waterfront from the surrounding areas and call for a comprehensive approach to parks, open space, and street design that ensures that pedestrians are safe, welcome, and have a range of multi-use public spaces that align with community's shared goals.

With recent redevelopment efforts across Washington, there have been several opportunities to establish new waterfront parks and additional connections to the rivers. Yards Park, part of the Southeast Federal Center, formerly a portion of the Navy Yard, features paved and landscaped areas, a water feature, an area for performance and programmed events, and multiple locations to enjoy river views. Visitors can enter and enjoy Yards Park from multiple access points, including surrounding streets, the Anacostia Riverwalk Trail, and by boat or kayak from the Anacostia River along the water's edge. The redevelopment of the Wharf along the Southwest Waterfront also uses multimodal options that increase access to the river and waterfront parks. The Southwest Waterfront includes over 15 acres of parks and open space connected via sidewalks, promenades, and alleys. Multimodal connections increase the number and types of connections to waterfront parks, thus contributing to the use and enjoyment of these spaces.

Other ongoing redevelopment efforts will provide new connections across the river, including the north and south ovals along South Capitol Street Corridor Project and the 11th Street Bridge Park. Similarly, the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal restoration project in Georgetown would improve access along the canal and will address infrastructure needs in the national historical park, including the safety and accessibility of the popular towpath.

In the region, federal and local agencies focus on improving connections to and between open spaces along the waterfront. At times, local agencies utilize trail segments to link bicycle and walking trails to create a continuous park system. For example, the recently completed Kenilworth Segment of the Anacostia Riverwalk Trail connects Anacostia Park in Washington, DC with Bladensburg Waterfront Park in Prince George’s County, Maryland. The recently completed three-mile connection made it possible to link Washington, Maryland and Virginia through a 16-mile long trail. This segment of trail provides a pleasant, accessible, and safe route for cyclists who commute between Prince George’s County and Washington, and offers convenient access to the river and its natural resources.

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[Banneker Park Connection](#)

[\[Add graphics of Banneker Park Connection\]](#)

Banneker Overlook marks the terminus of the L’Enfant Promenade on 10th Street, SW. It was planned to connect the National Mall to the Southwest waterfront. Designed by landscape architect Dan Kiley, the overlook was intended provide panoramic views of the waterfront.

Following its construction, Banneker Park experienced a period of decline as it was difficult to access, and much of the original landscape did not survive. As interest in the area grew with the planned redevelopment of the Wharf along the Southwest Waterfront, NPS, in cooperation with NCPC and in collaboration with the District Department of Transportation and Hoffman-Madison Waterfront (the Wharf), developed the Banneker Park Connection project to improve connectivity and pedestrian access between the Southwest waterfront, L’Enfant Promenade, and the National Mall. The project includes pedestrian and bicycle access improvements within the park, as well as plantings, improvements to pedestrian crosswalks, integrated lighting, universal accessibility, and stormwater management.

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Trails

[\[Add graphics of NPS Paved Trail Plan\]](#)

Trails in the region link some of our nation’s most significant cultural properties, natural resources, and outdoor recreational assets. The extensive network helps define the region’s multimodal transportation infrastructure while providing diverse trail experiences, linking national parks and other destinations. There are nearly 100 miles of federally owned and managed, paved trails in the region’s national parks that travel through two states, Washington, DC, five counties, and the City of Alexandria—arguably making it one of the most complex trail networks in the nation. The federal government strives to lead the region in providing exceptional outdoor trail experiences, seamlessly linking richly diverse places of natural and historic significance in the national capital area while providing safe and enjoyable experiences for people to walk, run, bike, and commute.

The 710-mile long Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail is a growing network of locally managed trails between the mouth of the Potomac River and the Allegheny Highlands, and is one of 30 congressionally designated scenic and historic trails in the National Trails System. The designated

trail corridor embraces portions of five physiographic provinces and four states, the nation's capital, and 20 other units of the national park system. The Trail intersects with other national trails, which provides opportunities for cooperative trails development, resource conservation, partnerships, visitor services, interpretation, and sustainability. Trails within the network offer a means to explore the origins and continuing evolution of the nation. As a whole, the National Scenic Trail designation is a local and regional catalyst to provide economic and health benefits; expanded non-motorized transportation options; improved educational and interpretive experiences; and connections among communities, historic sites, wildlife areas, and parks.

The NPS recently completed its *Paved Trail Study*,¹⁵ setting a vision to guide future planning and coordination for the paved trails network in the region.¹⁶ Trails on NPS land often traverse historic landscapes, scenic viewsheds, or ecologically sensitive areas. These improvement or enhancement projects, while prioritizing accessibility and connectivity, must minimize impacts on park resources and values.

Trails in the region often belong to one or more system: local, regional, or national. Federally built and maintained trail segments are part of larger regional systems. As the area continues to grow, trail usage has increased, encouraging federal and local governments to address challenges associated with meeting commuter and visitor needs and expanding the trail network. Although the region has hundreds of miles of trails on the ground, they are not all connected in a cohesive, easy-to-navigate network. Administered by multiple jurisdictions with different design standards, trail segments were built at different times when funding was available.

The Capital Trails Coalition (Coalition), a collaboration of public and private organizations, agencies, and citizen volunteers, is an effort to unify the region's trails by advancing the completion of an interconnected network of multi-use trails in the region. The Coalition's goals include closing gaps, improving trail access, and creating a network that links communities and major destinations in the region; promoting health and physical activity; and helping spur both economic development and trail tourism.

The Coalition's core projects include popular rail-trails such as the 11-mile Capital Crescent Trail, which connects Georgetown in Washington, DC to Bethesda, Maryland; and the 45-mile Washington and Old Dominion Railroad Regional Park trail, which runs from urban Arlington to Purcellville in Virginia. Other projects include greenways like the 18-mile Mount Vernon Trail, which follows the George Washington Memorial Parkway from Alexandria south to George Washington's residence at Mount Vernon; the Kenilworth section of the Anacostia Riverwalk Trail, and the Anacostia Tributary Trail System in Prince George's County, Maryland.

The seven-mile long Fort Circle Parks Hiker-Biker Trail runs from Fort Stanton to Fort Mahan in the southeastern section of Washington, and through Rock Creek Park where many of the forts are

¹⁵ Paved Trail Study by National Park Service, National Capital Region, August 2016

¹⁶ The National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board (TPB) has adopted the trail plan to address gaps and deficiencies in the region's trail system. This trails plan has also been adopted by the Capital Trails Coalition (CTC) as central to their efforts to create a system.

located. This urban green space in the region provides opportunities for residents and visitors to explore and visualize the history of the Civil War Defenses of Washington. Stretching over 37 miles, the original fortification system formed a ring around the capital city and included a myriad of forts, batteries, and blockhouses. Public access and interest in these cultural resources can improve by connecting these forts to surrounding neighborhood hubs and using improved wayfinding and interpretive signage. These future improvements will thread together surrounding neighborhood parks, recreational facilities, and community amenities such as schools, community centers, and local and regional trail systems. Enhancing connectivity and activating the Civil War Defenses of Washington will ultimately capitalize on the potential to provide rich opportunities for recreation, leisure, enjoyment of natural resources and wildlife, historical interpretation, and cultural education.

[\[Add map of Fort Circle Parks Hiker-Biker Trail\]](#)

Federal Open Spaces

Along with parks, there are a number of publicly accessible federal open spaces in the region. Some examples include the National Zoological Park, National Arboretum, and Arlington National Cemetery. Many of these spaces serve similar functions as parks in that they provide recreational, educational, and ecological benefits. Many other federally owned open spaces, especially those located on federal campuses such as the United States Naval Observatory, Armed Forces Retirement Home, St. Elizabeths Campus and regional military installations have limited access due to security and mission-driven considerations. As the federal uses on these sites change, security and mission conditions evolve. Federal agencies are encouraged to find opportunities to provide public access to federally owned open spaces by revisiting to see if security conditions have changed, public access at certain times may be managed, and/or public access to limited areas may be allowed when security considerations permit.

To ensure the future success of the region's parks and open space, it is critical that the federal government continues to maintain and improve access and connections. While jurisdictional boundaries between different cities and states in the region are important for the effective management of park spaces, they matter less to visitors that seek access a range of continuous recreational opportunities. As a significant regional landholder, the federal government is in a unique position to increase access to and connections between parks and open space.

The federal government should:

- POS.C.1 Plan and maintain connections between parks and open space through streets, sidewalks, plazas, and trails to create a unified and accessible park system for the national capital region.
- POS.C.2 Improve public access to parks and open space, including removing barriers that limit physical or visual connectivity.
- POS.C.3 Create access points to the region's park system from adjacent communities where impacts on natural and cultural resources will be minimal.

- POS.C.4 Link open space along the Potomac and Anacostia shorelines to provide a continuous public open space system.
- POS.C.5 Promote access to waterfront parks by encouraging improved pedestrian and other multimodal connections, and wayfinding signage from adjacent communities.
- POS.C.6 Promote public access along the region's shorelines, including on federal properties when security considerations will permit.
- POS.C.7 Develop, improve, and maintain a regional trail system that serves recreational and commuter needs by closing gaps and connecting parks and open space, natural areas, and destinations. Ensure that regional trails connect with the national trail network.
- POS.C.8 Consider opportunities to develop trails or connect trail systems when planning and designing projects throughout the region. Ensure that new development do not preclude future improvements to trail connections.
- POS.C.9 Improve access to the Civil War Defenses of Washington historic fort sites by linking them to surrounding communities using the existing street rights-of-way, sidewalks, and trails where possible.
- POS.C.10 Provide public access to open space on or adjacent to federal properties as mission and security considerations permit, while minimizing impacts on natural and cultural resources. Where security is an issue, encourage limited access through coordinated programs and events.

Section D: Balance Multiple Uses within Parks

One of the greatest strengths of parks in the region is their ability to provide areas for multiple types of activities and functions. The range of parks and open space in the region allow for a diversity of uses such as recreation, environmental protection, commemoration, celebration, demonstration, and transportation. In addition, parks serve scenic and aesthetic purposes and can function as protection from natural disasters. At times, conflicts between different uses present management challenges. For example, parkways, which were constructed as scenic roadways or pleasure drives, have evolved into major commuter roadways—a use that conflicts with its original purpose. Many times, these uses are inconsistent with the original park intent and require changes to the existing infrastructure to allow these activities to take place in a safer manner. This policy section provides guidance in reconciling multiple uses while also protecting natural and cultural features of the park system.

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Washington’s unique physical framework as the seat of government creates opportunities for some of the downtown streets to serve functions beyond transportation. For example, Constitution, Independence, and Pennsylvania Avenues are regularly used for civic gatherings and events. These streets are used as temporary parks to accommodate user needs.

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Balancing Competing Uses with Park Resources

The region contains a variety of parks and open spaces, including monumental spaces, urban parks, waterfront parks, larger regional parks, and parkways. All of these spaces serve diverse functions and users.

Urban parks have the ability to adapt and accommodate a number of different activities. The federal government collaborates with local Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) to help program a variety of activities in downtown urban parks. For example, the Golden Triangle BID hosts Farragut Fridays during the summer months at Farragut Park, managed by NPS. This is a free all-day event that brings together area workers, local residents, and visitors to enjoy fun and innovative activities throughout the entire day. Urban parks in residential areas accommodate different activities used by the community. For example, Meridian Hill Park hosts cultural activities like the drum circle and dance performances. With different park areas and distinct levels of visually connected space, Meridian Hill Park accommodates multiple users and uses at the same time and an eclectic array of activities ranging from yoga classes, picnicking, to juggling. Programmed and impromptu activities help attract people to parks and increase the overall health of the surrounding communities.

Beyond the urbanized core, regional parks offer recreational opportunities and a place to enjoy the beauty of the region’s natural resources. Prince William Forest Park is one of the region’s largest protected natural areas, totaling nearly 15,000 acres. The park is the largest example of a Piedmont forest in the national park system, serving as a sanctuary for a diversity of plants and animals. The park offers a range of recreational activities including hiking and camping, while

preserving wildlife habitat areas and providing education and research opportunities on the natural landscape.

The Patuxent Research Refuge, managed by the US Fish & Wildlife Service (FWS), is the nation's only national wildlife refuge established to support wildlife research. The U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) through the Patuxent Wildlife Research Center conducts most of the research on the refuge. With land surrounding the Patuxent and Little Patuxent Rivers between Washington, DC and Baltimore, MD, the refuge has grown and now encompasses land formerly managed by the Departments of Agriculture (USDA) and Defense (DoD). The refuge offers hiking, hunting, fishing, and interpretive opportunities. Throughout decades of change, Patuxent's mission of conserving and protecting the nation's wildlife and habitat through research and wildlife management techniques has remained virtually unchanged.

Federal agencies are individually responsible for compliance with a number of laws and regulations protecting urban and regional park resources. This includes carefully balancing the protection of park resources with visitor use and enjoyment. Balancing recreational uses with educational and interpretive opportunities throughout these parks is important to ensure their legacy is preserved for future generations.

Parkways as Scenic Routes

Parkways are linear, landscaped parks designed to provide a leisure driving experience that links key visitor destinations through the nation's capital. They play a unique role in the region, serving as both transportation corridors and recreational amenities for residents and visitors to the region. A number of large and small parkways throughout the region serve recreational, environmental, and educational functions similar to other parks.

[\[Add map of Parkways\]](#)

The five most prominent parkways in the region include the Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway, the George Washington Memorial Parkway, Suitland Parkway, Clara Barton Parkway, and the Baltimore-Washington Parkway. All have open space qualities worthy of preservation, and are characterized by their scenic or pastoral views.

Although parkways were not intended or designed to be major transportation arteries, they currently function as primary transportation routes for commuters to and from Washington. The transportation needs and safety standards of modern roadways should be balanced with the resource protection and preservation goals of scenic parkways in order to minimize impacts to viewsheds and natural and cultural resources that comprise the parkway landscape.

Visual and physical encroachment on and adjacent to parkways is an important challenge threatening the scenic and pastoral qualities of parkways in the region. Development around parkways should be carefully planned in order to minimize impacts to viewsheds and associated parklands. New buildings and improvement projects threaten the scenic views and vistas of the parkways. Use of berms and vegetation around retaining walls, coupled with consideration for building materials, surface treatment, color, and appearance, collectively minimize the visual

impact of such improvements. Future infrastructure improvements should minimize impacts to and maintain the integrity of parkway elements.

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Parkways

[Add images of Parkways]

Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway occupies the gorge and rim of the lower Rock Creek Valley and is one of the best-preserved and earliest examples of motor parkway development. It functions as a recreational amenity that provides multiple activities and scenic views as well as a primary commuter route connecting Maryland into downtown Washington.

The George Washington Memorial Parkway was the first comprehensively designed modern motorway built by the federal government. Originally intended to connect the historic site of Mount Vernon to the nation's capital and preserve its natural scenery along the Potomac River, the parkway offers respite from the urban pressures of Washington and features views of the nation's capital and iconic monuments. This park includes many scenic and historic qualities, and is used as a primary commuter route.

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 Washington and the Capital Beltway. Dotted along the parkway are several small access points to the adjacent C&O Canal towpath.

The Suitland Parkway opened in 1944 and connects Andrews Air Force Base to South Capitol Street, a major link to the US Capitol used by visitors and commuters approaching the nation's capital from the east. The Baltimore-Washington Parkway connects Baltimore, Maryland with Washington, and was designed to blend with the natural topography and preserve a scenic, forested transportation corridor between the two cities.

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Similar to parkways, trails create an integrated, inter-jurisdictional network for recreation, multimodal transportation, and education. Trails often follow scenic routes, linking destinations including significant cultural properties and natural resource areas. However, these areas can sometimes be vulnerable to ecological or development changes, and trail development in or near sensitive areas and habitats must be planned with thorough research and careful design.

Parks in the region are dynamic spaces that accommodate multiple functions. The federal government should continue to plan, design, and maintain parks to be flexible and adaptable. Parks are used for social interaction, education, and recreation, in addition to being natural and ecological resources. An integrated park network with diverse range of uses improves existing resource preservation and access for a diverse range of users.

The federal government should:

- POS.D.1 Plan and design parks and open space to accommodate and balance multiple uses while protecting natural and cultural resources and mission needs.
- POS.D.2 Encourage programming that supports recreation, education, commemoration, and special events while protecting natural and cultural resources.
- POS.D.3 Accommodate programming and uses that enrich the visitor experience while ensuring resources are protected and impacts minimized.
- POS.D.4 Ensure that proposed improvements and maintenance projects along trails and parkways minimize impacts to viewsheds and are sensitive to their natural and historic qualities that make them significant.
- POS.D.5 Minimize impacts from development adjacent to parks and open space, including trails and parkways, to protect their natural and historic features.
- POS.D.6 Maintain and improve the Anacostia Riverwalk Trail in coordination with the local government as a regional resource that provides multiple recreational opportunities.
- POS.D.7 Develop waterfront parks that accommodate multiple uses and programming opportunities while enhancing the resilience and natural features of the waterfront.

Section E: Balance Commemorative Works within Parks

Memorials are a signature component of Washington’s symbolic landscape and are intricately connects to the park system. The *Plan for the City of Washington* established the urban design framework for the city and created a foundation for memorial planning. L’Enfant’s Plan laid a traditional street grid over a network of ceremonial boulevards, and where the streets and boulevards intersected, L’Enfant proposed circles, squares, and public spaces. At the center of these spaces, L’Enfant called for important structures, monuments, and fountains. This system of parks and open space provides a framework for commemoration that continues to influence memorial planning and design today.

Commemorative works in Washington are located in an urban context, often in highly used parks and open spaces. This policy section provides guidance on the most common planning and design issues related to new commemorative works.

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The CWA guides the process for development, approval, and location of new memorials on federal lands administered by NPS and GSA in the District of Columbia and environs. Under this process, NCPC, the US Commission of Fine Arts, and NPS or GSA as appropriate, are responsible for reviewing and approving the site and design of memorials. Under the CWA, NCPC and CFA can develop site-specific guidelines to ensure that the design of a commemorative work carries out the purposes of the law.

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Siting and Designing Commemorative Works

In NCPC’s recent review of proposed commemorative works, common issues include the protection of the *Plan of the City of Washington*, historic preservation, balancing the commemorative experience with a park’s character, use, size, scale, and circulation. In past reviews, NCPC has adopted site-specific guidelines to address these and other issues. Design guidelines provide parameters and a framework to address planning issues as memorials move forward in the design development process. NCPC has adopted site-specific design guidelines for a number of recent memorials including the Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial; Ukrainian Famine Memorial; and the Dwight D. Eisenhower Memorial.

Protection of the *Plan of the City of Washington* and other historic properties is a key planning consideration with the design of most commemorative works. The *Plan* and subsequent planning efforts in Washington create reciprocal views between natural and built elements. Memorials or statues are often located at the center of parks and open space, and at times become the focal point of a viewshed. The protection of features such as streets, rights-of-way, building lines, and views is a consideration when creating a memorial. The placement and relationship of memorial elements to each of these features has the potential to affect the public space and influence the programming and usability of the park. New commemorative works should not detract from a prominent viewshed. Memorial or landscape elements may be used to frame or define an edge

condition of a view corridor to maintain the openness of vistas and relate to the surrounding context.

One of the key issues when planning and designing memorials is the need to strike a balance between the commemorative experience and the enjoyment of public parkland. CWA calls for new memorials, to the maximum extent practicable, to protect open space, existing public uses, and cultural and natural resources. However, the CWA does not provide guidance on how to achieve that goal. Oftentimes, balancing the size and scale of commemorative and public space uses becomes the most significant design challenge.

Size and scale is an important consideration when planning and designing memorials. Recent memorials have varied in size, with some occupying large sites, and others requiring minimal area. As Washington continues to develop, space for new memorials becomes harder to find. Memorials that consume large areas of land should be discouraged, as the demand for public space and commemorative works will only increase in the future, with increasingly limited sites. NCPC and other agencies must consider how much of a site or park is appropriate to dedicate to the memorial experience versus public space that can accommodate other uses. Once a general building envelope, framework, and program for a memorial is defined, the size of individual memorial elements also must be considered. This is particularly important in existing parks where existing features or park functions contribute to the character of the space.

The appropriate size for a memorial will depend on several factors, including the memorial subject and the scale and use of adjacent buildings and landscapes. Integrating memorials with context-sensitive solutions is critical to a successful commemorative work and public park. Memorial designs must respond to the scale and mass of adjacent buildings including historic properties, the surrounding streetscape, and any existing features that contribute to the character or function of the site or park space. The design of the United States Navy Memorial as a “living park” is a model where a commemorative work and its urban context are integrated, creating flexible space for formal ceremonies, informal social engagement, and relaxation.

In Washington, federal parks and open space are often located in areas with limited neighborhood park space, and therefore are the only green space available to residents. Many visitors expect a certain level of decorum, respect, and dignity at a commemorative element. In such areas, balancing commemoration with local neighborhood needs is critical to creating successful urban parks. These spaces need to accommodate everyday park uses, such as serving as a playground for children, with a respectful and dignified commemorative component. The most successful memorials and parks are often in locations where there are multiple opportunities for placemaking. For example, Dupont Circle, Lincoln Park, and Stanton Park all function as memorials and neighborhood parks.

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Lincoln Park [\[Add Image\]](#)

Lincoln Park is one mile east of the U.S. Capitol within the Capitol Hill Historic District. The park accommodates many uses, including commemoration and recreation. It includes two small memorials, two playgrounds, a large grass panel, and seating.

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Other planning considerations previously addressed in design guidelines relate to circulation and access. Providing clear circulation is important for the visitor experience, but also the success of the memorial as a public space and park. Circulation must be considered at various scales and levels. During site selection, the location of the site or park within the city or region is critical. At the design development stage, considerations become specific to the selected site and how pedestrian, bicyclists, or motorists access the site, as well as how to meet American with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements. At times, depending on the surrounding context, it may be appropriate to limit parking and or vehicular drop off areas in order to minimize impacts on landscape elements and the surrounding environment. Circulation routes should connect to the larger transportation network and consider the experience of visitors traveling to, through, and around a site.

Given the nature of memorial planning and the unique circumstance of each memorial, site-specific design guidelines may be appropriate. In these situations, as part of the design review process, the Commission will work with NPS, GSA, CFA, and the memorial sponsor to determine if site-specific guidelines are required.

The federal government should:

- POS.E.1 Balance the need for public space uses with the memorial program and sacred space required by memorials based on size, surrounding context, and function of site.
- POS.E.2 Preserve and protect park features that contribute to its unique character and function while balancing the addition of new commemorative uses.
- POS.E.3 Provide areas for diverse park uses and functions by balancing landscape and built elements, and reserving space for the commemorative experience.
- POS.E.4 Within neighborhood parks, acknowledge that the site may currently serve multiple functions for residents. Scale and place memorial elements in a manner that balances existing functions along with the commemorative experience.
- POS.E.5 Maintain and protect the urban design framework of *The Plan of the City of Washington* (L'Enfant and McMillan Plans) including original rights-of-way, streets, and vistas. Protect the squares, circles, and triangles of the L'Enfant Plan intended to house memorials and civic art. Avoid the introduction of visual incursions into

the rights-of-way or placement of physical elements that would detract from the views of national memorials, civic institutions, or landmarks.

- POS.E.6 Locate memorial elements in a compatible manner to adjacent buildings, structures, and historic properties by considering existing building lines, massing, and scale. Memorial elements should complement and not compete with the scale of the surrounding landscape and built environment.
- POS.E.7 Relate memorial landscape elements with the surrounding streetscape elements to create a visual connection that is responsive to the surrounding context.
- POS.E.8 Improve and enhance the visual connections between park space, commemorative elements, and the surrounding environment.
- POS.E.9 Plan circulation routes that connect to the surrounding transportation network, accommodate visitors or passers-by, and meet ADA requirements to the memorial and park space.

Programming and Innovative Memorials

Balancing commemorative uses with park space requires careful program planning. As demands grow on the park system, it is important that a variety of programming and events can occur within commemorative settings. Being able to provide space for different types of uses and events contributes to an active, vibrant park, and can enrich the meaning of a commemorative work. While programming can relate to the memorial theme, events that respect the commemorative setting and do not negatively affect cultural or natural resources may also be appropriate.

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United States Navy Memorial

[Add images of Navy Memorial]

The United States Navy Memorial is a good example of creative programming co-existing with memorial spaces. While it serves a sacred space to honor those who served in the Navy, it is rare to stop by the plaza and find it quiet. The U.S. Navy Band and Navy Ceremonial Guard regularly perform concerts at the Navy Memorial to highlight naval history and heritage. Residents, workers, students, and visitors regularly use the space for a range of activities from eating to workouts. Nearby schools and daycare centers conduct recreational activities at the memorial. With Metro access, mixed land uses, and close proximity to downtown and the National Mall, the Navy Memorial illustrates how memorial and park uses can work together to create a more active destination.

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Moving forward, along with programming opportunities, the federal government should consider what future forms memorials will take and how to continue to provide enriching visits to memorials. In 2016, NCPC, NPS, and the Van Alen Institute organized *Memorials for the Future*, an ideas competition to reimagine the way we think about, feel, and experience memorials. The

competition presented new ideas to engage diverse new subject matters, allow for reinterpretation over time, enable and respect multiple narratives, consider the use of technology, and honor national contexts and local experiences. Lessons learned from the competition merit further exploration to ensure that memorials continue to evolve and reflect a diverse range of narratives and innovative designs.

The federal government should:

- POS.E.10 Support innovative programming and events within commemorative settings while minimizing impacts on cultural and natural resources or the visitor experience.

- POS.E.11 Support the installation of temporary memorials or artwork while minimizing impacts on cultural and natural resources.

- POS.E.12 Support memorials beyond physical representations and encourage the exploration of alternative forms of commemoration.

Section F: Build Partnerships and Coordination among Multiple Landowners and Jurisdictions

Parks and open space in the region cross city and county lines, jurisdictions, and geographic boundaries. Federal, state, and local agencies along with non-profit organizations, educational institutions, private landholders, and other stakeholders own and manage parkland. The challenges of preserving, maintaining, and enhancing the region's parks and open space requires a coordinated effort. Building partnerships and coordinating among stakeholders are important factors in managing and maintaining a cohesive parks and open space system. Given the significant federal lands in the region, the federal government is in a unique position to collaborate with other agencies and organizations to support regional parks and open space goals. This policy section identifies opportunities for partnership and coordination efforts when planning, managing, and protecting parks and open space in the region.

Unified Regional Open Space Network

Planning for a unified parks and open space system requires working with different stakeholders and developing a shared vision to strengthen and connect the network of parks, open spaces, greenways, and trails. This includes opportunities to connect federally managed spaces along the Anacostia and Potomac Rivers, Rock Creek Park, the Civil War Defenses of Washington, and other points within the National Capital Region with other regional, state, and local park systems and trails.

By collaborating with stakeholders, there are opportunities to connect federal and regional open spaces and trails, coordinate on operations and maintenance for efficiency, and jointly seek resources for maintenance and improvements. As an example, portions of the trail system cross multiple jurisdictions, and there may be opportunities to collaborate on maintenance or improvement projects with other stakeholders to ensure that trails continue to serve both recreational and transportation functions. The federal government can provide leadership and assist in linking new and existing trail networks with parkland or trails on federal properties to create an integrated parks and open space network serving the residents of and visitors to the region.

Balancing Management of Federal Parkland with Local Community Needs

Federal parkland is an important resource for residents, supporting a variety of activities and serving as neighborhood parks. Shifting demographics and emerging development patterns have pushed downtown parks to meet the needs of a new user groups. With the redevelopment of downtown Washington and more people living in the center of the city, there is a greater demand for commemorative parks, such as Franklin Park, to serve a residential base. Additionally, the federal government has struggled to provide adequate funding to plan, develop, and maintain the range of parks and open space that it operates. Existing and growing partnerships between the federal government and District and nonprofit groups allow the federal government to work and partner with a variety of entities. Federal partnerships with local agencies and organizations, such as the District's Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR), BIDs, and nonprofit groups are key to developing strategies that improve the character and function of these parks, provide new visitor

amenities, and better support their neighborhoods while still protecting commemorative and historic resources within the parks.

Park use and development must strike a balance between recognition of national significance and local needs. Federal-local partnerships should focus on fulfilling shared goals while remaining sensitive to issues of federal interest. Establishing these types of partnerships is a lengthy, complex process; however when done successfully, there are many benefits for both parties. For example, the National Park Service, in partnership with the District of Columbia and the DowntownDC Business Improvement District (BID), are working together to transform Franklin Park into an active, flexible, sustainable, and historic urban park that is better connected to its community. Franklin Park is downtown Washington’s largest park. Easily accessible by Metrorail, Metro bus, and the DC Circulator, the park sits amid a thriving commercial district and a growing residential population. Both the resurgence of downtown and the increase in population has led to an increased demand for high-quality urban parks. Improvements proposed under the partnership include introducing multiple new active and passive recreational opportunities, restoring historic features such as the fountain, improving landscaping and seasonal plantings, and enhancing the streetscape and public realm. The plan includes the development of a new café with restrooms, and a children’s play area. To accomplish these improvements, a new public-private management structure is under consideration to fund, program, maintain, and provide security for the park.

The Franklin Park revitalization project is an effort to respect the historic integrity of the park, modernize the space to meet current recreational needs, and develop a revenue-generating program between partners to ensure the park’s long-term economic viability. Developing collaborative relationships, partnerships, cooperative agreements, or transferring of properties are different strategies to manage federal parkland and address local needs.

[Add image of Franklin Park Revitalization]

The *CapitalSpace* (2010) plan provides a vision for a beautiful, high quality and unified park system for the nation’s capital. As a multi-agency initiative between NCPC, NPS, and the District of Columbia Department of Parks and Recreation, the plan’s goals are to coordinate existing management plans, maximize assets, address current and future needs, and create a stronger park system for the city. The plan recommends that the partner agencies commit to strengthening the legacy of the region’s parks and open space through improving information sharing, exploring legislative changes, and identifying opportunities for cooperative agreements. The plan identifies common goals between the District’s mission to maintain and provide recreational opportunities to residents and visitors and NPS’ mission to preserve the region’s natural and cultural resources.

One of the recommendations from *CapitalSpace* focused on the planning and management of small urban parks to transform them into a connected network of successful public spaces. These small urban parks were created as a result of the urban design framework established by the L’Enfant, McMillan, and Highway Plans. These parks serve multiple functions, including sites for national and local commemoration, neighborhood parks, playgrounds, traffic circles, street medians, and traffic islands. While an important feature of the city’s park and open space system,

many small urban parks are underutilized and could benefit from increased collaboration among federal and local agencies.

Building upon *CapitalSpace*, in 2017, NPS, in collaboration with NCPC, completed the *Small Parks Management Strategies* report that focused on the planning and management of small parks. The study identified approximately 300 small parks under the jurisdiction of NPS that ranged from less than one acre to seven acres in size.

[Add images from [Small Parks Management Strategies report](#)]

The report developed goals to recognize the complex challenges and opportunities facing small parks, and reflects a broad range of desired outcomes from resource protection to branding. The report provides the framework and decision-making methodology used by NPS to identify potential management options. These management options, driven foremost by the underlying resource values of individual parks, are categorized as follows: NPS retaining sole management responsibility; establishing cooperative management/partnerships; or considering conveyance of property or interest (if authorized by Congress).

Coordinating Federal and Local Development Review Processes

Adjacent development pressures and encroachment of new development along park borders threaten many parks and open space in the NCR. Modifications and improvements in the vicinity can affect park character and function. In addition, conversion of parkland to different uses or a lack of resources for adequate maintenance are important issues the federal government must address. Protection of important viewsheds, as well as minimizing adverse environmental impacts are also a priority for the federal government. Greater emphasis should be given to coordinating federal parks and open space plans with development plans for the jurisdictions that surround them. Working together, federal, and local agencies can minimize potential impacts on parkland while also achieving shared and individual development goals.

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[Arlington Courthouse Square Study](#) [Add [Arlington Courthouse Square Study images](#)]

Between 2014 and 2015, NCPC worked with Arlington County, the US Commission of Fine Arts, and NPS on *Envision Courthouse Square*, a community planning effort to reimagine Arlington County's civic center and create a public destination. The Courthouse is located within the primary east-west axis of the National Mall and is an important contributor to the character of the monumental core and its setting. From the steps of the US Capitol, the viewshed to the western horizon includes the Washington Monument, the Lincoln Memorial, and the Courthouse skyline. The primary focus of the collaboration between agencies determined the appropriate height for new buildings in the Courthouse area while maintaining the character and quality of this iconic viewshed. The agencies agreed that a signature building within the Courthouse area would shape the Courthouse area landscape, but also the historic regional landscape of the surrounding environs, including the monumental core. By working together, the agencies agreed on 210 feet as the maximum height for one of the parcels included in Arlington County's Courthouse Sector Plan Addendum (2015).

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The federal government should:

- POS.F.1 Use easements, donations, purchases, exchanges, or other means to create, expand, and enhance a cohesive park and open space system.
- POS.F.2 Develop partnerships and build coalitions among local agencies, non-profit organizations, educational institutions, foundations, and other stakeholders to create, manage, maintain, and connect a cohesive open space system.
- POS.F.3 Coordinate planning, development, and management of federal and local parkland to identify opportunities for shared recreation, open space preservation, and resource protection.
- POS.F.4 Balance the national significance of parks with federal and local interests and the need to accommodate a range of uses and events.
- POS.F.5 Encourage the use of a variety of management and maintenance strategies including partnerships, cooperative management agreements, or when appropriate within the District of Columbia, transfer of administrative jurisdiction to the District government to improve parks and create a unified open space network.
- POS.F.6 Develop federal and local collaborative relationships to maximize the functionality of small parks as local neighborhood amenities.
- POS.F.7 Coordinate with responsible agencies and local jurisdictions to minimize physical and visual impacts of development projects on the regional park and open space system, including natural features and viewsheds.
- POS.F.8 Coordinate with responsible agencies and local jurisdictions during redevelopment projects to encourage new areas of park and open space preservation.