

# South Capitol STREET

MARCH 2005

## GRAND URBAN BOULEVARD AND WATERFRONT GATEWAY

A grand urban boulevard and waterfront gateway with spectacular views to and from the U.S. Capitol would serve as the centerpiece of the South Capitol Street corridor, as envisioned by the National Capital Planning Commission's South Capitol Street Task Force. Green space, mixed-use development, new commemorative works, and a beautiful new Frederick Douglass Memorial Bridge would help turn the area into a vibrant boulevard bustling with life and activity.



Illustration by Michael McCann



Illustration by Michael McCann

South Capitol Commons—  
a seven-acre open space in the rotary's  
interior—would be a perfect location  
for public gatherings, commemorative  
works, civic art, and landscaping.

After months of study with federal and local partners, NCPC's task force has unveiled its recommendations to transform South Capitol Street into a grand urban boulevard worthy of the nation's capital.

The task force envisions the development of an oval traffic rotary, with a green common and space for a memorial and civic art, where the new bridge intersects with South Capitol Street and Potomac Avenue. The new South Capitol Waterfront Park would be located between the rotary and the river with a possible new museum or major memorial on the banks of the Anacostia River. The resulting stunning view would run from the Capitol to the waterfront.

The plan also calls for a mixed-use development, including cultural institutions, housing, and retail. Sites for privately developed federal facilities would be located north of the M Street corridor. The plan would connect the South Capitol area with the rest of the city while building on the momentum of the proposed baseball stadium for the Washington Nationals.

## ON THE BRINK OF CHANGE

As defined in Pierre L'Enfant's original plan for Washington, South Capitol Street and the corridor's Anacostia River gateway set the tone for the southern route to the Capitol. In its current condition however, South Capitol Street is a bleak stretch of thoroughfare that is strewn with empty lots and abandoned businesses. Fortunately, the corridor is on the brink of change.

For more than a decade, NCPC has had its sights on a long-range vision for this neglected area—a vision to transform the avenue into a boulevard with magnificent spaces for public plazas, parkland, national monuments, and commercial and residential uses. NCPC first proposed this concept in the agency's 1997 *Legacy Plan*. In a more detailed assessment of the area in its 2003 *South Capitol Street Urban Design Study*, NCPC proposed several potential scenarios to transform the corridor.

To help advance and coordinate plans for the area's revitalization, NCPC established a joint task force in 2004. NCPC's South Capitol Street Task Force involved numerous entities including representatives from the National Park Service, the General Services Administration, the Department of Defense, and the District of Columbia. Through collaboration, the group developed an open space framework that identifies a new cultural area and a commemorative zone at the Anacostia River waterfront terminus of South Capitol Street.

As envisioned, the area will include a combination of parkland, retail, residential, and cultural establishments, such as a museum or performing arts venue. The commemorative zone could hold one or more national memorials of preeminent significance and possibly a signature facility, such as a national aquarium.

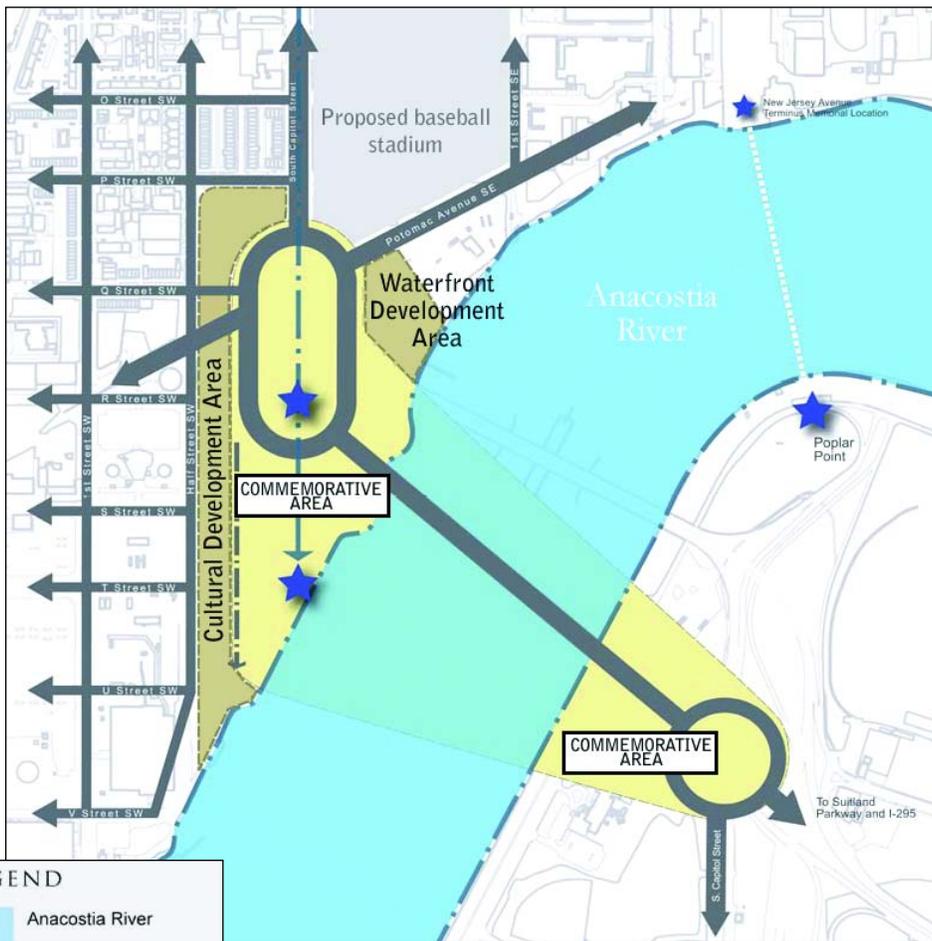


## Key Corridor Components

- 1 **Virginia Avenue** would become the mixed-use interface at the edge of Capitol Hill, with a circle intersection replacing the I-395 interchange.
- 2 **South Capitol Street/North of M Street** would have a more urban character with smaller parcels, multiple street crossings, and no median.
- 3 **M Street** is an important community intersection that would be marked with a vibrant urban square surrounded by high density development.
- 4 **South Capitol Street/South of M Street** would have a larger scale with longer blocks, fewer street crossings, and a green median to connect with the river.
- 5 **Potomac Avenue** would be reestablished as a waterfront roadway with an oval rotary intersection providing a memorial opportunity.
- 6 **Anacostia Waterfront** would become a mixed-use open space area with recreational, cultural, and retail opportunities.
- 7 **Realigned Bridge** would be an elegant new river crossing that is pedestrian-friendly and attractive.
- 8 **Suitland Interchange** would be an open space circle connecting the Suitland Parkway and South Capitol Street.

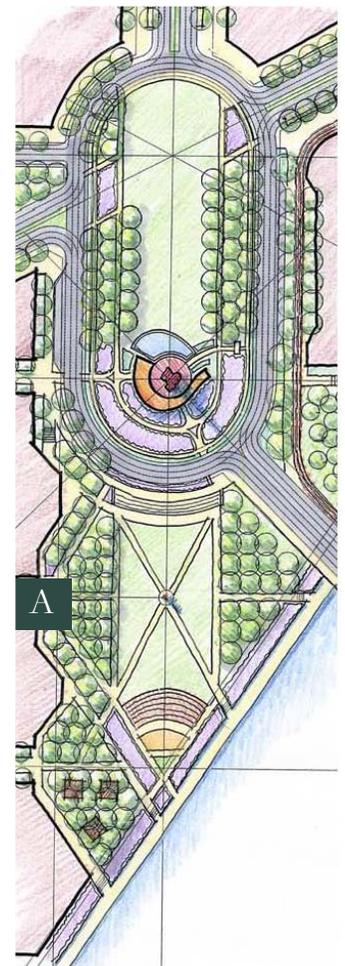
South Capitol Street/South of M Street would feature a green median that connects with the river.





**LEGEND**

- Anacostia River
- Commemorative Zone (20+ acres north)
- Cultural Development Sites (10+ acres)
- Potential Memorial Site
- Line of Sight/Axis



## KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

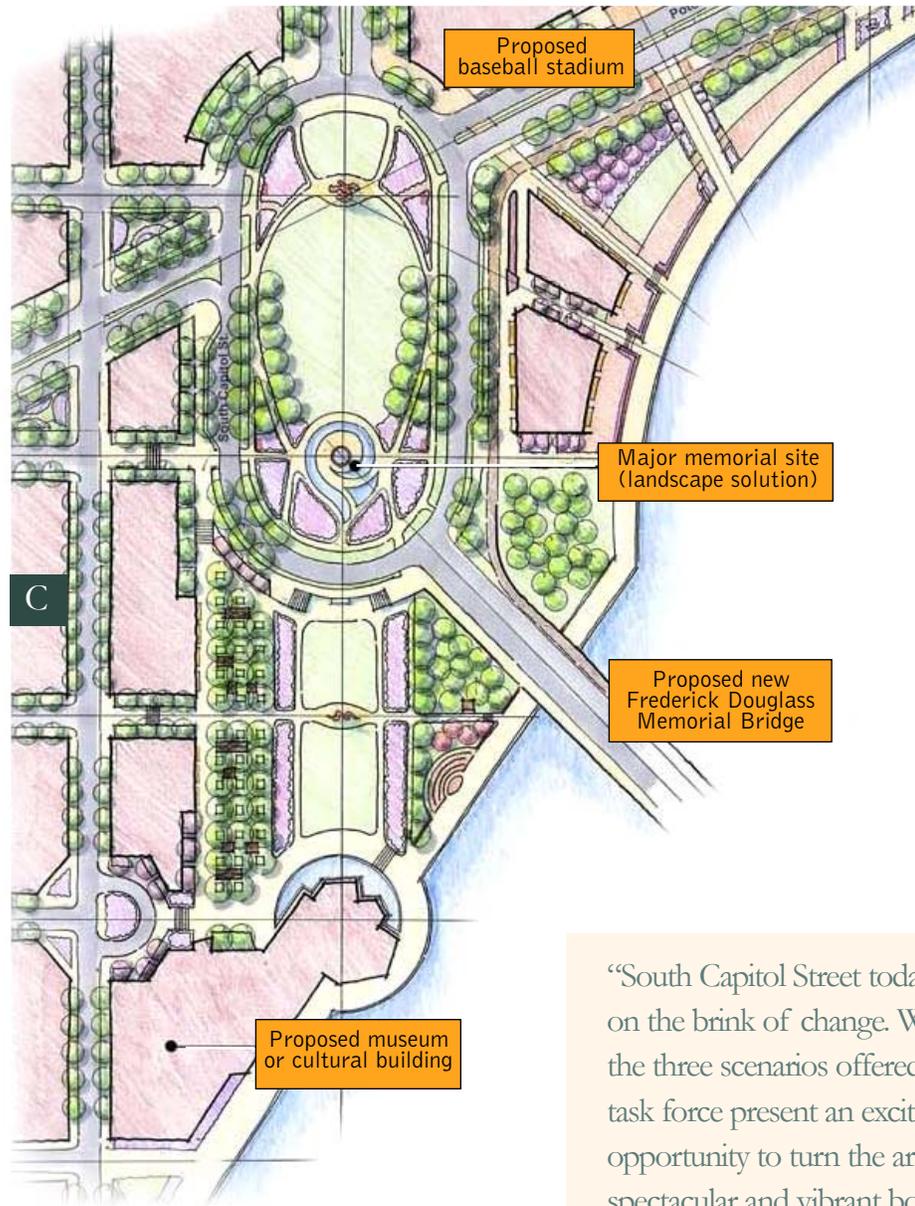
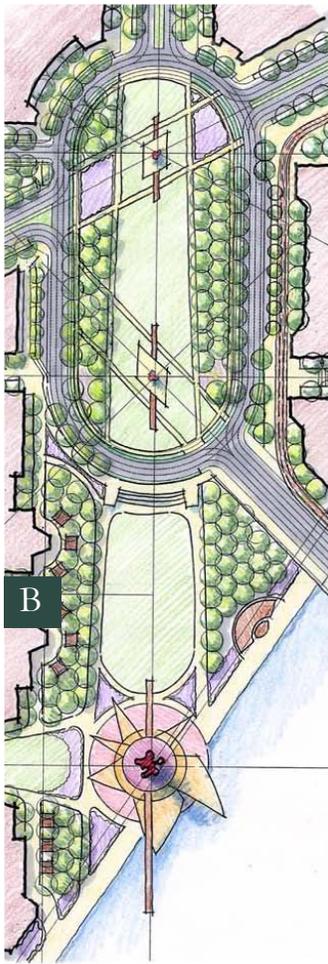
The task force's recommendations for the corridor focus on five key areas:

1. Transforming South Capitol Street into a grand urban boulevard.
2. Developing an oval traffic rotary and South Capitol Commons (major public open space and memorial site), where the new bridge intersects South Capitol Street and Potomac Avenue.
3. Creating a South Capitol Waterfront Park (major public open space and a memorial site or new museum) between the traffic rotary and the terminus of the South Capitol Street viewshed on the Anacostia River.
4. Establishing a mixed-use cultural development zone adjacent to the common and waterfront gateway.
5. Supporting federal facilities as part of a broader mixed-use development along the corridor predominantly north of M Street.

## A SPECTACULAR NEW ADDRESS FOR THE CORRIDOR

NCPC's South Capitol Street Task Force developed three flexible scenarios to bring its vision of creating a spectacular new address for South Capitol Street to life.

- A. The central memorial alternative: a major memorial and smaller civic art in the common and an amphitheater or other active public space on the waterfront terminus.
- B. The waterfront memorial alternative: a major memorial on the waterfront terminus and smaller civic art/memorials and major public gatherings and events in the common.
- C. The major cultural facility alternative: a significant facility at the waterfront terminus and a major memorial and civic art in the common.



“South Capitol Street today stands on the brink of change. We believe the three scenarios offered by the task force present an exciting opportunity to turn the area into a spectacular and vibrant boulevard that will attract residents, workers, and tourists alike.”

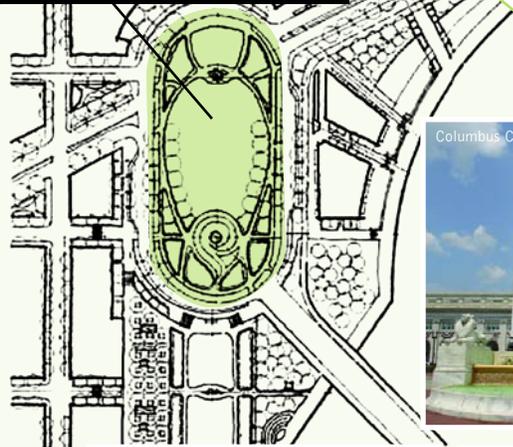
José L. Galvez III, Chairman  
NCPC's South Capitol Street Task Force

In combination with any of the three scenarios, the northwest corner of the South Capitol Street and Potomac Avenue oval traffic rotary is a key development site. To complement the proposed baseball stadium on the east side of South Capitol Street, this site should incorporate a major cultural facility of architectural significance.

The flexible scenarios all allow for the creation of spaces appropriate for preeminent memorials and museums. These commemorative works could be sited at the bridge landings on both sides of the river, at South Capitol Commons and the South Capitol Waterfront Park, or within the mixed-use cultural district.

To create a great urban boulevard and maintain an open view of the U.S. Capitol, South Capitol Street would maintain its current width of 130 feet. It would accommodate six lanes of through traffic and permanent parking lanes on each side of the street. New construction along the corridor would be set back an additional 15 feet from the property line. This would also allow for attractive landscape features including a double row of trees on each side of the avenue. Open space should be preserved at the street's intersections with Virginia Avenue, M Street, Potomac Avenue, and Suitland Parkway in order to emphasize the corridor's grandeur.

## SOUTH CAPITOL COMMONS



“In the coming days I look forward to working with NCPC, the District of Columbia, and the federal government to keep this process moving forward so that we can ensure that the South Capitol Street corridor becomes the magnificent gateway to our nation’s capital that we have long envisioned.”

Congressman Steny Hoyer (D-MD)

To improve traffic flow, the task force—as suggested by the District Department of Transportation (DDOT)—recommends the creation of an oval traffic rotary where the bridge intersects with South Capitol Street and Potomac Avenue. This would also create the opportunity to develop South Capitol Commons, a new seven-acre green space, in the oval traffic rotary’s interior.

This lively open space would be an ideal location for public gatherings, commemorative works, civic art, and landscaping. It would also serve as the stadium’s front door and an inter-modal transit center, featuring two levels of underground parking for up to 1,000 cars and a light rail station at grade to the east of the rotary.

The creation of South Capitol Waterfront Park is critical to protect the South Capitol Street views between the U.S. Capitol and the Anacostia waterfront. Accessible from the common by a tiered staircase, the park would provide a direct connection from the common to the waterfront and create additional opportunities for recreational space, public events, and a major memorial or museum.

The area immediately around the common and waterfront gateway should be developed as a mixed-use cultural zone. New museums and cultural institutions should be integrated with retail and restaurant elements to create a vibrant and bustling environment day and night. The addition of residential dwellings will further establish the makings of a great neighborhood.

Due to its proximity to the U.S. Capitol and to public transit, the South Capitol Street corridor will rapidly become an attractive destination for future office development. The task force expects that many federal agencies will look to lease space in privately developed buildings predominantly north of M Street during the next ten years.

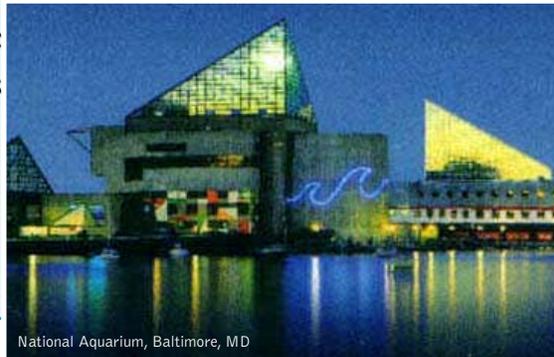
**SOUTH CAPITOL WATERFRONT PARK**



Central Park, New York City



Washington Harbor, Washington, DC

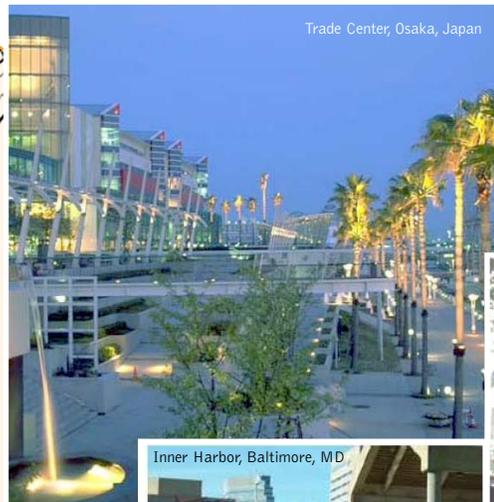


National Aquarium, Baltimore, MD



Jefferson Memorial, Washington, DC

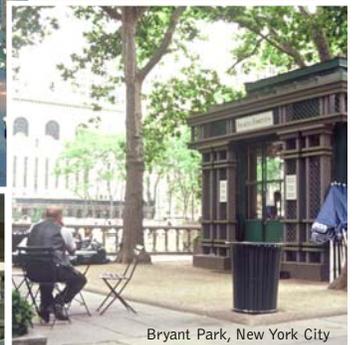
**MIXED-USE DEVELOPMENT**



Trade Center, Osaka, Japan



Inner Harbor, Baltimore, MD



Bryant Park, New York City



Illustration by Michael McCann

## THE TIME IS NOW

As emphasized in a 2004 Urban Land Institute study of the corridor, market forces, combined with recent opportunities presented by the planned baseball stadium and related activity, make it critical to move forward in a timely manner to ensure proper development.

One of the keys to revitalizing the corridor is planning, funding, and constructing the new Frederick Douglass Memorial Bridge. DDOT is expected to determine the preferred location of the new bridge this year.

NCPC believes that, today, South Capitol Street stands on the brink of change. This past year saw a remarkable number of developments related to this important gateway, including the signing of an important agreement pledging the federal government's commitment to facilitate construction of a new bridge and the District of Columbia's plans to build a baseball stadium.

The South Capitol Street corridor and new Anacostia River crossing both represent important federal interests. The National Capital Planning Commission is committed to building on the momentum generated by these events to keep this project moving forward. We look forward to the day when South Capitol Street is transformed into a signature address in the nation's capital, as we first envisioned a decade ago.

## South Capitol Street Task Force

José L. Galvez, III	Task Force Chair Commissioner, NCPC
John V. Cogbill, III	Chairman, NCPC Presidential Appointee
Arrington Dixon	Commissioner, NCPC Mayoral Appointee
Ellen McCarthy	Commissioner, NCPC Representing the District of Columbia Office of Planning
Michael McGill	Commissioner, NCPC Representing the General Services Administration
Robert Miller	Commissioner, NCPC Representing the District of Columbia City Council
John Parsons	Commissioner, NCPC Representing the National Park Service
Jerry Shiplett	Commissioner, NCPC Representing the Department of Defense

### Other Participants

Keith Abouchar	U.S. House of Representatives Office of Steny Hoyer (D-MD)
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William Brubaker	Smithsonian Institution
John Deatrick	District Department of Transportation
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