

# Urban Design Streetscape Framework

## Table of Contents:

### **Introduction**

Background _____	page 3
Problem Statement _____	page 5
Goals and Priorities _____	page 5
Streetscape Guide Purpose _____	page 7
Included Areas _____	page 7
Streetscape Guide and Its Users _____	page 8

### **Urban Design Streetscape Framework**

Introduction _____	page 11
Street Categories _____	page 11
Character Areas _____	page 12
Streetscape Elements _____	page 15
Streetscape Framework and Principles _____	page 16
Urban Design Streetscape Framework Summary Chart _____	page 21
Gateways, Thresholds, Approaches, and Principles _____	page 23

### **Attachments**

- Attachment 1: Character Area Example
- Attachment 2: National Mall Streetscape Interagency Working Group Comments
- Attachment 3: Letter from the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts (May 2018)
- Attachment 4: Letter from the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts (June 2019)
- Attachment 5: Reference Maps

*Note: The Streetscape Guide will be used to guide the planning, design, and construction of streetscape projects within the Monumental Core. The Streetscape Guide is not a planned capital improvement project.*



## **Introduction**

As the nation’s capital, home to nearly 700,000 residents, and destination for over 22 million visitors, Washington’s urban design and character contributes to its national identity while respecting and shaping the precincts and neighborhoods of the local city. Washington’s streetscapes are an important component of the city’s urban design. Their character and quality contribute to how people view and experience the city. These public spaces should reinforce the city’s unique role as the nation’s capital and create a welcoming and livable environment for residents, workers, and visitors.

Within the monumental core, streetscapes reinforce a special civic quality that inspires people and cultivates a sense of pride, permanence, and dignity. The monumental core is a place where the details matter – and its streetscapes must meet these objectives at an elevated standard. The *Monumental Core Streetscape Guide* (Streetscape Guide) contributes to achieving these aspirations by providing conceptual and concrete guidance on the planning, design, and construction of distinguished capital city streets.

This document provides a high-level overview of the *Monumental Core Streetscape Guide* and includes background information on the *National Mall Streetscape Manual* (the current guidance within the monumental core), and existing conditions and policies that present challenges and opportunities for a new Streetscape Guide. This document focuses on:

- An overview of the Streetscape Guide’s three components: the Framework, the Streetscape Guidelines, and the Construction Manual; and
- A draft of the Streetscape Framework for Commission comments.

### **Background:**

The *Monumental Core Streetscape Guide* (Streetscape Guide) is a multi-phased update of the 1992 *National Mall Streetscape Manual* (Streetscape Manual). The purpose of the Streetscape Manual was to “provide guidelines for a coordinated and consistent streetscape treatment for roadways in the central area of the city in the vicinity of the National Mall.” The Streetscape Manual consists of details and specifications for elements within the right-of-way including roadway, curb and gutter, and sidewalk; street furnishings including streetlights, benches, trash and recycling receptacles, bicycle racks, and pedestrian barriers.

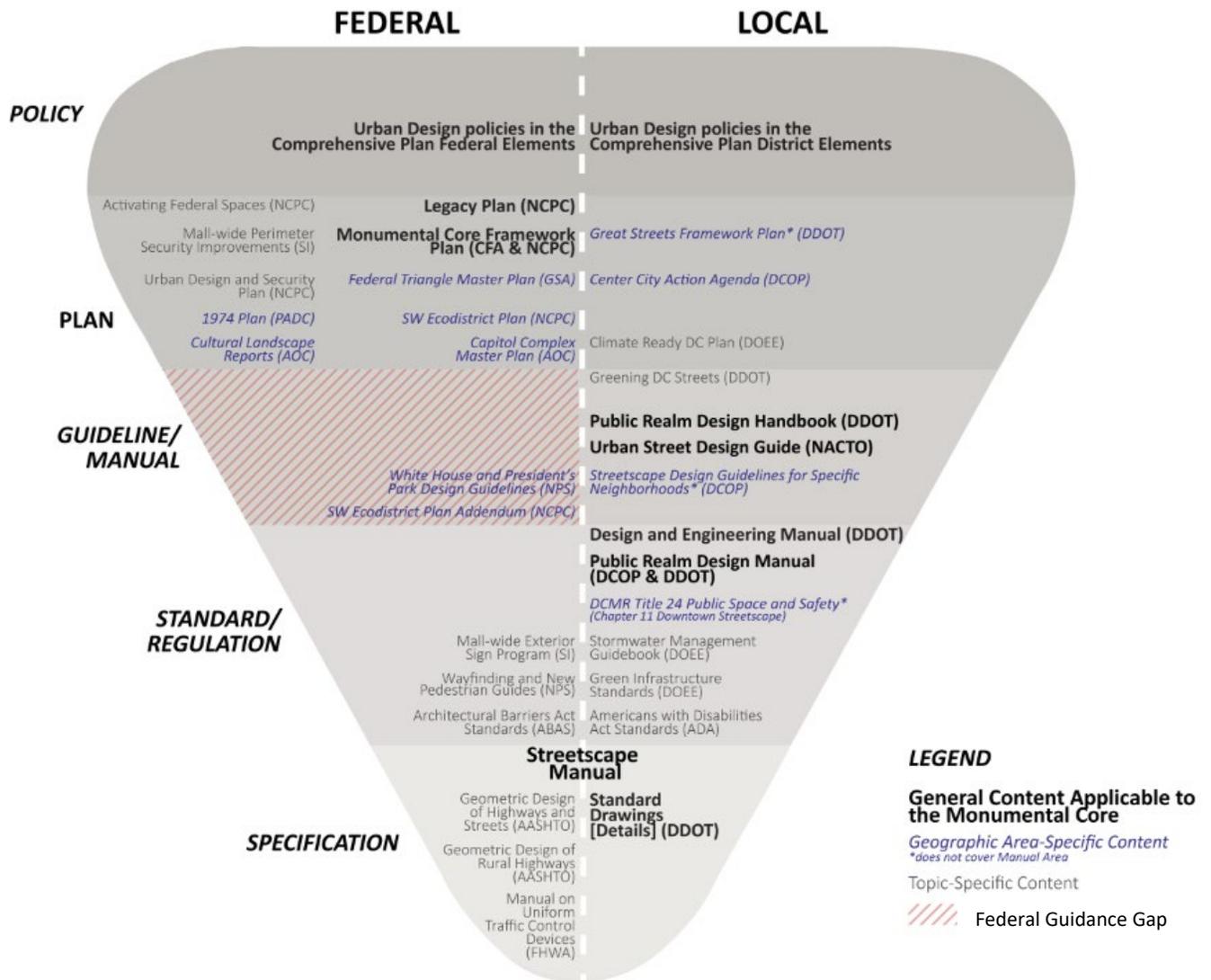
A working group formed to oversee and coordinate roadway improvements within and around the National Mall. A memorandum of understanding (MOU) established the National Mall Streetscape Interagency Working Group, originally comprised of the Architect of the Capitol (AOC), the District Department of Transportation (DDOT), the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), and the National Park Service (NPS). In 2005, the working group expanded the MOU to include several endorsers: the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts (CFA), the General Services Administration (GSA), the National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC), the National Gallery of Art (NGA), and the Smithsonian Institution (SI).<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The District Office of Planning (DCOP) joined the working group to contribute to the development of the Monumental Core Streetscape Guide, including the update of the 1992 construction manual.

By 2013, the National Mall Working Group refocused its efforts from actively managing capital improvement projects to coordinating on smaller construction projects and ongoing maintenance. At that time, they updated the Streetscape Manual with minor amendments to reflect existing conditions. They also identified the need for a more substantive update to address the working group’s evolving function and emerging issues (such as incorporating technologies and stormwater management).

The working group documented the challenges and opportunities for improving streetscapes in the National Mall area and through Washington’s monumental core. One of the key findings is that the monumental core lacks design guidance and a cohesive planning framework that aligns federal and local interests in this part of the city (see diagram below). This was the impetus for expanding beyond the 1992 Streetscape Manual’s construction details and developing the Streetscape Guide that holistically coordinates, planning, design, and construction.



**Problem Statement:**

Several problems were identified in the 1992 *Streetscape Manual* and the existing conditions of monumental core's streetscapes. These problems fall into the following five categories:

**1. Policy and Planning**

- a. Current federal streetscape design guidance is lacking.
- b. It is unclear which standards apply where.

**2. Manual Application**

- a. Overall, agencies succeed in applying the Manual more consistently on the National Mall than off it, even though it is applicable in other areas.
- b. Agencies do not consistently administer the Manual.
- c. The Manual limits flexibility because it uses prescriptive details and specifications for all elements.

**3. Precincts and Transitions**

- a. The Manual did not adapt to the unique character of precincts (e.g. White House and U.S. Capitol Complex).
- b. Materials transition inconsistently across precincts, as well as between the National Mall and monumental core.

**4. Function**

- a. The Manual does not currently address the following functional issues: stormwater management and flooding, changing, and sustainable technologies, expanding transportation options and infrastructure needs, walkability and universal accessibility for pedestrians, wayfinding for visitor orientation, and perimeter security.

**5. Coordination**

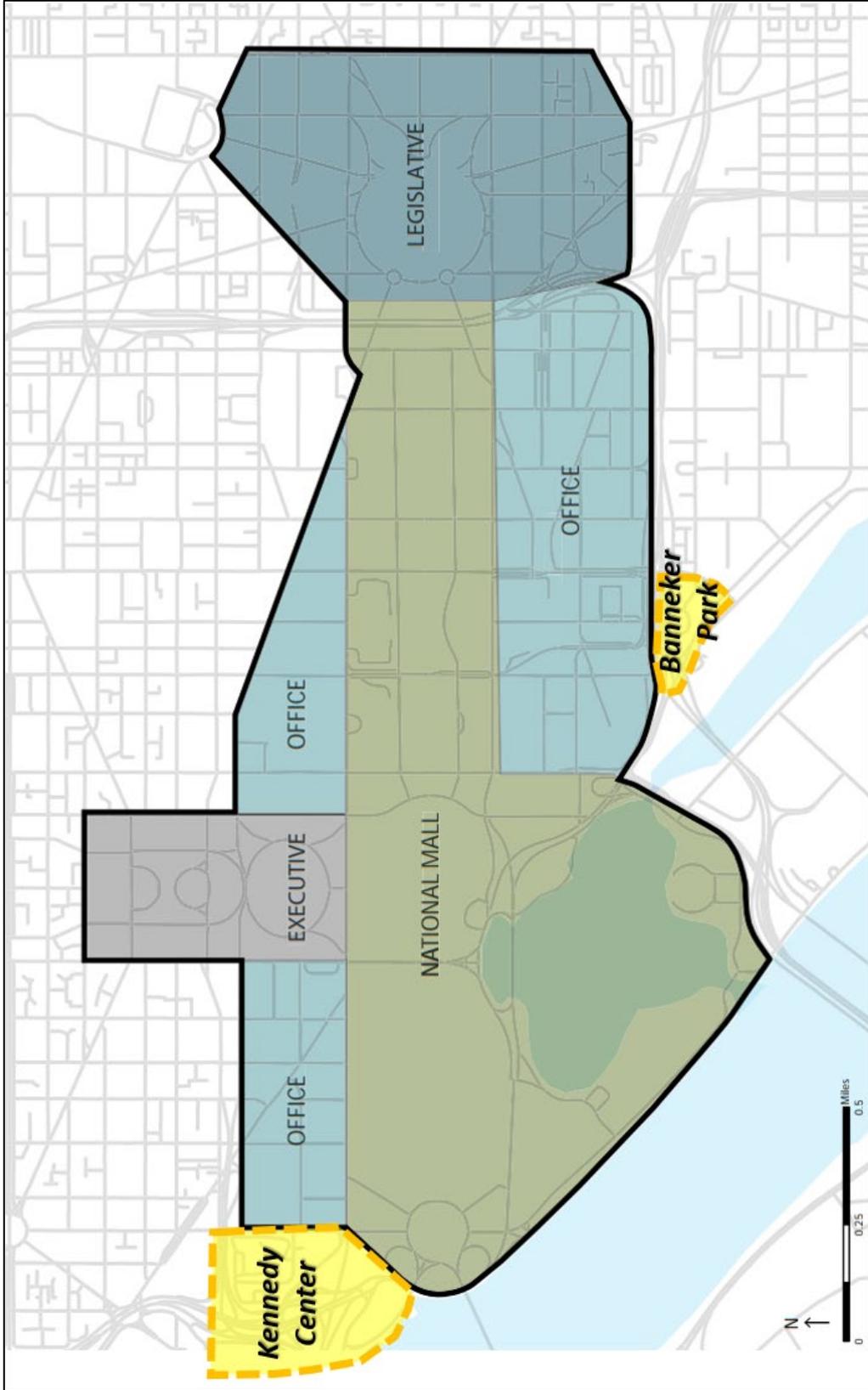
- a. Right-of-way jurisdiction is unclear and enforcement for maintenance and repair work is inconsistent.
- b. The Manual is not regularly updated or used.
- c. The Manual and local standards are not coordinated.

**Goals and Priorities:**

The goals and priorities of the *Monumental Core Urban Design Streetscape Guide* (Streetscape Guide) are compatible with established federal and local plans and policies and include:

- Create a distinguished and accessible public realm of enduring quality shaped by beautiful civic infrastructure, architecture, streets, parks, and waterfronts. Connect destinations and overcome existing physical barriers with walkable landscaped corridors, interpretative and way-finding systems, and engaging views. Meet the highest standards of design, construction, and maintenance. (*Planning Together, 2009*)
- Establish and maintain a vision for a streetscape and public realm design program for all precincts within, and major entrances to, the monumental core, including, but no limited to the White House, U.S. Capitol, National Mall, and Federal Triangle. (*UD.B.3.7 Federal Urban Design Element, 2016*)

1992 National Mall Streetscape Manual Boundary (1992 Boundary)



Proposed adjustments to the 1992 Boundary encompass the Kennedy Center and Banneker Park.

Key: ——— 1992 Boundary      - - - - - Proposed additions

- Create or strengthen multiple visual and functional linkages that connect reservations and civic spaces within the monumental core to the rest of the city. (*UD.B.4.3 Federal Urban Design Element, 2016*)
- Use Washington’s major avenues/boulevards to reinforce the form and identity of the city, connect its neighborhoods, and improve its aesthetic and visual character. (*UD-1.4.1 District Urban Design Element*)

**Purpose:**

The purpose of the Streetscape Guide is to aid federal and local stakeholders in creating a cohesive public realm on key streets in the capital city of Washington, DC. The Streetscape Guide will improve coordination between federal and local partners and its construction specifications will improve guidance for a coordinated and consistent streetscape treatment in the monumental core, particularly in and around the National Mall.

**Included Areas:**

The Streetscape Guide includes nationally significant avenues and streets that are important to the *Plan of the City of Washington*; these streets are important connections between the capital city’s monumental core and the city’s neighborhoods and reinforce the form and identity of the city. The monumental core is not defined with geographic boundaries, but is described in the Federal Urban Design Element as:

*The spatial and symbolic center of the city, which includes the U.S. Capitol grounds, the White House, Arlington National Cemetery, the National Mall, Federal Triangle, and the surrounding government offices and civic, cultural, and symbolic structures. The monumental core is most closely linked to the distinctive image of the capital city and the functions of federal government. While the major landmarks and resources within the core are perceived, it does not have a rigid geographic or jurisdictional boundary and continues to evolve.*

For the purpose of this Guide, the *1992 National Mall Streetscape Manual* boundary (1992 Manual Boundary, as amended)<sup>2</sup> defines a portion of the monumental core within downtown Washington, DC.

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<sup>2</sup> Proposed adjustments to the 1992 Boundary include the addition of the Kennedy Center and Banneker Park.

**The Streetscape Guide and Its Users:**

Building off the 1992 Streetscape Manual, the *Monumental Core Streetscape Guide* (Streetscape Guide) includes conceptual to detailed information, guidance, and reference material that will serve a broad audience. Readers will find different chapters most valuable according to their planning, design, implementation, or maintenance role as follows:

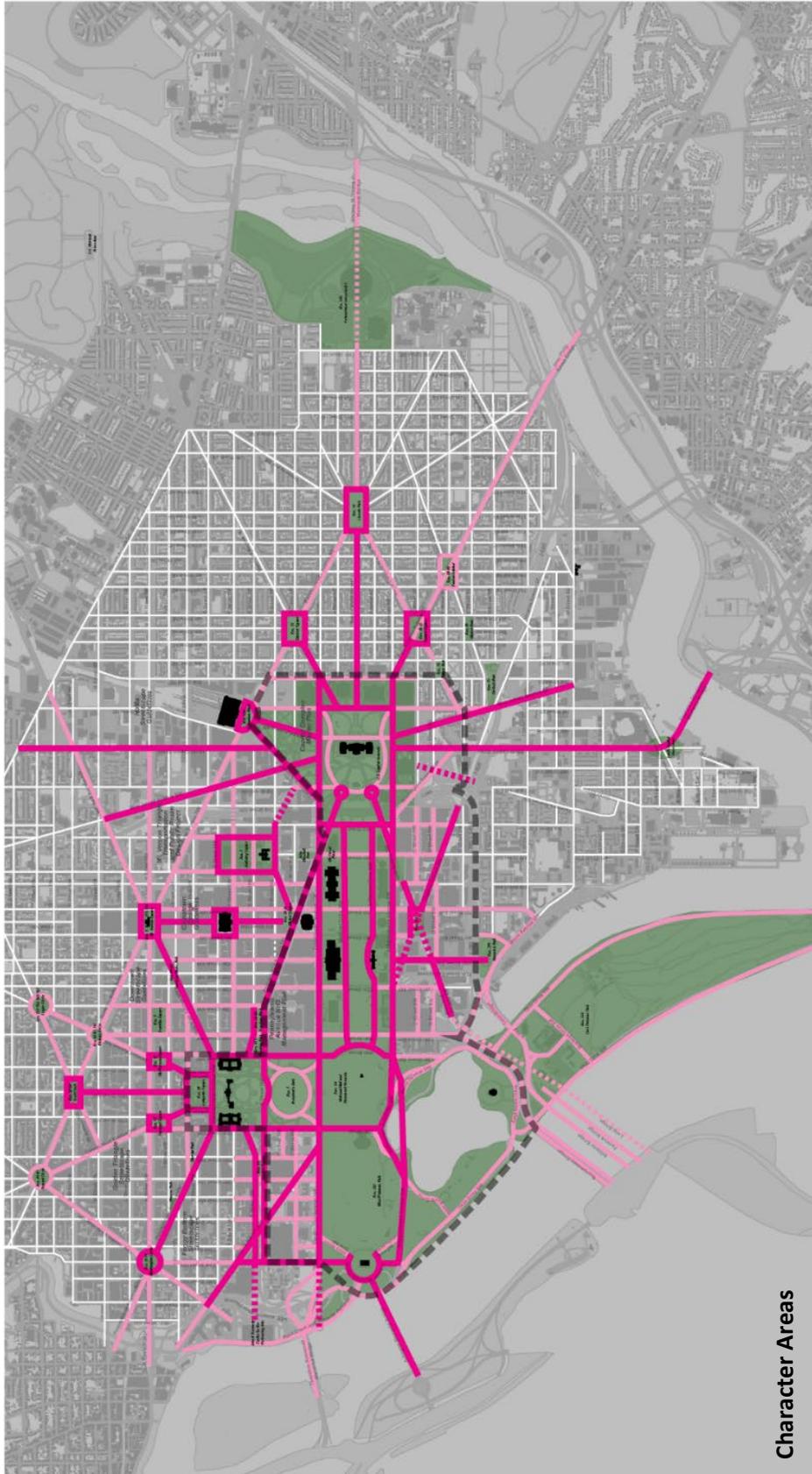
**The Streetscape Framework:** *The Urban Design Streetscape Framework* (Streetscape Framework) comprises three street categories, eleven general character areas, and streetscape elements; it also includes important transitions, gateways, and thresholds. It will be most useful to planners and urban designers to assist in the planning, design, and implementation of new streetscape capital improvement projects. *See pages 10-26 for review in November 2019.*

**The Streetscape Guidelines:** *The Streetscape Guidelines* will consist of detailed planning guidance for streetscape design character and physical quality including the configuration, placement, and alignment of streetscape elements such as streetlights, trees, pavement, and furnishings. These guidelines will supplement the Streetscape Framework's principles. It will be most useful to urban designers, landscape architects, and architects to assist in the design and implementation of new streetscape capital improvement projects. *Draft anticipated for review in 2021.*

**The Streetscape Construction Manual:** *The Streetscape Construction Manual* will include construction details and specifications for important streetscape elements. Some specifications are performance-based, while others may be prescriptive. It will be most useful to facilities managers and construction and repair workers to assist in the installation and regular maintenance of streetscape elements. *Draft anticipated for review in 2021.*

## ***Urban Design Streetscape Framework***

Street Categories



Character Areas

LEGEND

- BUILDINGS/STRUCTURES REFERENCED IN L'ENFANT PLAN CONTRIBUTING VISTAS
- 1992 STREETScape MANUAL BOUNDARY

STREET CATEGORIES\*

- RADIATING & EDGING
- CONNECTING & TRAVERSING
- LOCAL L'ENFANT CITY STREETS SHOWN IN WHITE
- FUTURE CONNECTIONS SHOWN DASHED
- \*PARKING LOTS AND AREAS SHOULD SUPPORT ADJACENT STREET CLASSES

NATIONALLY SIGNIFICANT OPEN SPACE



MAP SHOWS LEVEL OF NATIONAL INTEREST BASED ON PLANNING PRECEDENT, PHYSICAL, VISUAL, AND SYMBOLIC RELATIONSHIPS.

# Urban Design Streetscape Framework

## Introduction

The *Urban Design Streetscape Framework* (Streetscape Framework) provides a conceptual organizational structure for streets within the monumental core and adjacent areas within the capital city. The Streetscape Framework provides context and principles for more detailed planning and technical guidance that will inform development of the Streetscape Guidelines and Streetscape Construction Manual, which will be developed in future tasks of work.

The *Streetscape Framework* includes:

- Three street categories,
- Eleven general character areas,
- Streetscape elements, and
- Gateways and thresholds.

These components, described below, inform the principles for the Urban Design Streetscape Framework found on pages 16-25.

### Street Categories:

Street categories are an important foundation for the Streetscape Framework, providing a strong conceptual basis to organize streets within the capital city and its monumental core. These streets contribute to the *Plan of the City of Washington*<sup>3</sup>. The Comprehensive Plan's Urban Design Element identifies many of these streets as special streets. Typically, they are defined by their national and local identity. This identity is defined by the street function; its spatial and visual relationships to nationally significant structures or spaces; and its civic, ceremonial, and symbolic role. The three categories are:

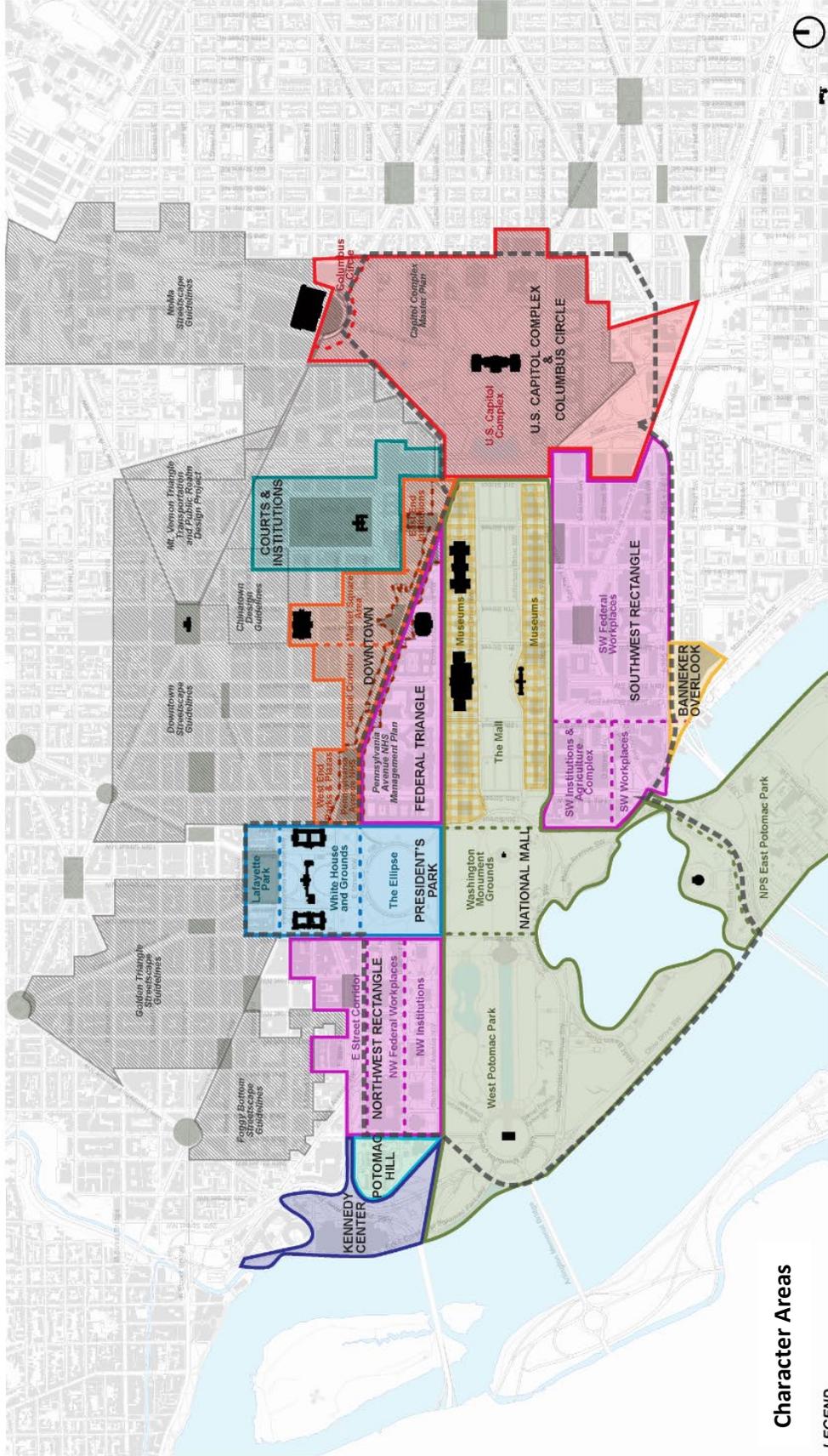
1. **Radiating and Edging Streets:** the iconic avenues and streets radiating or edging the nation's most preeminent civic buildings, reservations, monuments, memorials, or commemorative sites of national importance. These streets are associated with their historic, ceremonial, civic, or symbolic role, allowing some to stand alone as a destination. *Example: Pennsylvania Avenue, NW.*
2. **Connecting and Traversing Streets:** important avenues and street that edge, connect, or traverse one or more nationally and/or locally significant civic buildings or reservations, monuments, memorials, or commemorative sites. *Example: K Street, NW.*
3. **Local Streets:** generally, part of the *Plan of the City of Washington's* orthogonal grid. These streets provide circulation through and between blocks within precincts and neighborhoods to local destinations and are locally significant. *Example: 3<sup>rd</sup> Street, NE/SE.*

Each category of street has guiding principles for streetscape character and quality found on pages 16-17.

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<sup>3</sup> National Register of Historic Places Registration Form for the L'Enfant Plan:  
<https://npgallery.nps.gov/pdfhost/docs/NRHP/Text/97000332.pdf>

Character Areas



MAP PREPARED IN WINTER/SRING 2018 FROM DC GIS. BOUNDARIES REFLECT PRECINCTS, NOT JURISDICTION

Character Areas

LEGEND

BUILDINGS/STRUCTURES REFERENCED IN LENFANT PLAN CONTRIBUTING VISTAS

1992 STREETScape MANUAL BOUNDARY

NATIONALLY SIGNIFICANT OPEN SPACE

EXAMPLE CHARACTER AREA

Character Sub-Area

Areas with existing streetscape guidance

**Character Areas:**

Character Areas<sup>4</sup> also contribute to the foundation for the *Urban Design Streetscape Framework*, providing distinctive places within the broader urban landscape of the monumental core. Character areas do not represent jurisdictions; they are areas distinguished among each other by the patterns of the built environment, landscape organization, and the streetscape infrastructure and amenities that are visible within the public realm.

Character Area boundaries are informed by the following attributes: land use, spatial organization, views and visual relationships, topography, vegetation, circulation, and architectural and landscape structures. Physical features such as a wall, path, or road may clearly define boundaries; in other circumstances, vegetation or topography may loosely delineate boundaries. Most of the character areas include one or more-character sub-areas. The sub-areas share many attributes of its overall character area, but their use, patterns, or features are distinctive enough to set it apart as a section or component of the larger character area.

The Streetscape Guide’s boundary area includes eleven general character areas (in bold); and several sub-areas, as listed below:

- **U.S. Capitol Complex**
- **Courts and Institutions**
- **Potomac Hill**
- **Kennedy Center**
- **Banneker Park**
- **Federal Triangle and Sub-Area:** Pennsylvania Avenue NHS
- **The National Mall and Sub-Areas:** The Mall, Mall Museums, Washington Monument, and West Potomac Park
- **The White House and President’s Park, and Sub-Areas:** Lafayette Park, the White House and Grounds, and the Ellipse and President’s Park South
- **Downtown and Sub-Areas:** Pennsylvania Avenue NHS, West End Parks and Plazas, Central Corridor, Market Square Area, East End Institutions
- **Northwest Rectangle and Sub-Areas:** E Street Corridor, NW Federal Workplaces, NW Institutions
- **Southwest Rectangle and Sub-Areas:** Southwest Institutions and Agriculture Complex, Southwest Workplaces, and Southwest Federal Workplaces

*Using the attributes above, an example description of a character area is provided in Attachment 1. While the research is complete, the eleven character areas and their sub-areas will be described in the next work task, which will inform the Streetscape Guidelines and Streetscape Construction Manual.*

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<sup>4</sup> Source of definition: The Architect of the Capitol’s Capitol Square Cultural Landscape Report: Vitetta (Ed.). (February 16, 2012). Capitol Square Cultural Landscape Report Volume I, p.1.6

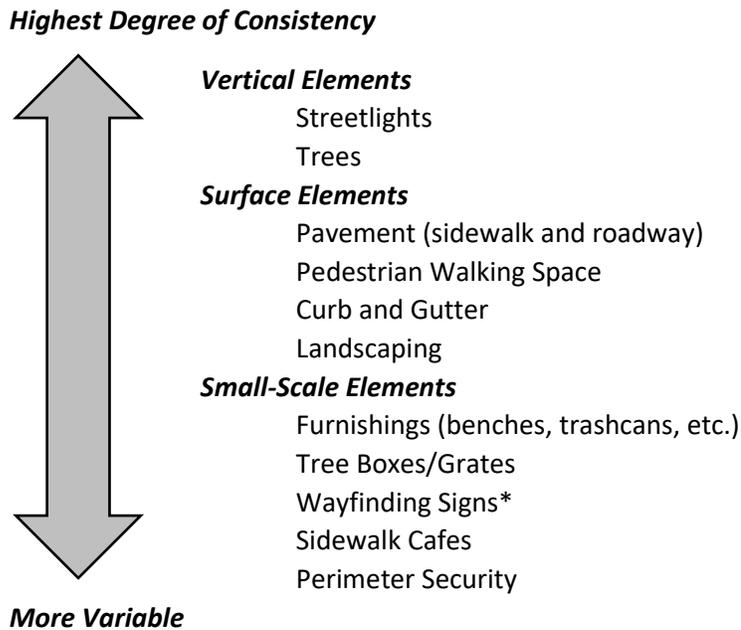
**Adjacent Areas:**

Adjacent Areas lie beyond the 1992 Manual Boundary. The monumental core’s streets extend through and connect to adjacent areas that are comprised of local neighborhoods that have their own identity as part of the capital city. Their adjacency enriches the monumental core with their unique character, design features, and distinct sense of place. Adjacent area’s streetscapes generally conform to the *District of Columbia’s Public Realm Design Manual (PRDM)* or Business Improvement Districts’ streetscape guidelines. To strengthen the identity of the capital city and the monumental core, some monumental core streetscapes should appropriately transition into some adjacent areas for consistency and continuity of character.

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**Streetscape Element: Level of Visual Consistency**

The following diagram illustrates the type of streetscape elements that either contribute to consistency or variability.



*\*A consistent wayfinding system would not preclude unique wayfinding signs within character areas.*

More information on streetscape elements’ consistency and continuity is provided in the Streetscape Framework on page 19.

**Streetscape Elements:**

Streetscape elements have an important role in informing the streetscape character, consistency, and the sense of continuity that link the monumental core with the capital city. The importance of streetscape **consistency** within the monumental core was documented in the 1992 Streetscape Manual. Many of the monumental core's streetscapes frame nationally significant open spaces and connect to national icons. Therefore, the setting and role of these streets demand a consistent treatment that unites the identity of the monumental core and provides formal and ordered connections to important destinations.

The type, use, and application of streetscape elements contribute to the street character, its continuity, and quality of the pedestrian's experience. Highly consistent streetscape elements are important for visual harmony, a cohesive identity, and creating well-defined streetscape corridors. The degree of variation in the type, use, and application of streetscape elements is important to set an area apart, creating a unique sense of place.

The Framework's Street Categories require different levels of visual consistency to support their role within the framework of the monumental core and capital city.

- **High consistency** among streetscape elements is particularly important for Radiating and Edging Streets because of their direct physical and visual relationships to national icons.
- **Moderate consistency** among streetscape elements is important for Edging and Traversing Streets because they indirectly link national icons, and many are located within character areas.
- **Some consistency** among streetscape elements is suitable for Local Streets because they are part of the defining characteristics of the city.

Streetscape elements include both living and non-living elements and are usually interrelated by their role and function. For example, landscape elements such as trees, tree boxes, plantings, and stormwater systems form interconnected systems that perform ecosystem services and have ecological value in the urban environment. However, for the purposes of the Framework, streetscape elements are organized according to their formal and visual role and are categorized into vertical, surface, and small-scale elements.

- **Vertical elements:** define the edges and form outdoor rooms that establish the visual frame or corridor and sense of scale along streets. They are the most pronounced elements that contribute to continuity.
- **Surface elements:** define the ground plane and have a powerful ability to set the context of the place and either contribute to its continuity or set an area apart.
- **Small-scale elements:** contribute to the character and continuity but have the greatest potential to diversify the character and add variety to the pedestrian's experience.

**The Urban Design Streetscape Framework (Streetscape Framework) and Principles:**

Street categories, character areas, and streetscape elements define the Streetscape Framework. The relationships among these attributes inform the street’s guiding principles. These attributes, together with a neighborhood’s or precinct’s uses and features, contribute to the overall sense of place of a street or given area.

Depending on the degree of consistency or variability of streetscape elements, the streetscapes either contribute the city’s national identity, local identity, or to the identity of a particular neighborhood or precinct, regardless of jurisdictional boundaries. Because streetscapes link, connect, and unify the capital city, transitions between street categories are important to establish consistency and continuity of a streetscape.

**Radiating and Edging Street Principles:**

1. Generally, the character of each individual street should be **highly consistent** across precincts, neighborhoods, and jurisdictions.
2. The vertical, surface, and small fixture elements are **highly consistent** as they traverse through neighborhoods and precincts to unify the monumental core and city. This reinforces the monumental core and capital city identity by tying the city together, physically and visually, to maintain a stately streetscape appearance.
3. Streetscape elements should have a continuous rhythm and be balanced and symmetrical on both sides of the street, to represent the order and stability of nation’s government, create streetscape corridors, and to direct and focus vistas and viewsheds to significant landmarks or destinations.
4. Ample pedestrian space should accommodate a range of civic and ceremonial uses.
5. The streets nationally symbolic, civic, and ceremonial role warrants the highest attention to streetscape design and quality to reinforce the street’s identity and significance in the nation’s capital.

**Connecting and Traversing Street Principles:**

1. Generally, the character of the streets is **mostly consistent** to unify the streetscape and link destinations across precincts, neighborhoods, and jurisdictions to reinforce the city’s identity and imply wayfinding cues.
2. Vertical and surface elements are **mostly consistent** along the street’s length to provide continuity and contribute to the capital city’s identity; however, surface and small fixture elements may adapt to character areas, highlighting a precinct or neighborhood unique qualities.
3. Streetscape elements should have a continuous rhythm and be balanced and symmetrical on both sides of the street, except where spatial relationships or edges of certain uses warrant an

asymmetrical streetscape. For example, waterfront streets like Ohio Drive may have an asymmetrical streetscape oriented to the water edge; and streets that edge different uses like 2nd Street, NE may have an asymmetrical streetscape transitioning between the US Capitol Complex and Capitol Hill neighborhoods.

4. The street's significance as a connection between important national and local civic uses warrants high attention to streetscape design and quality.

**Local Street Principles:**

1. Policies, guidance, and regulations for local streets are in DC's Public Realm Design Manual or Business Improvement Districts' Streetscape Guidelines.
2. Generally, the character of streets should be **somewhat consistent** across precincts, neighborhoods, and jurisdictions to define the capital city and give character and grace to neighborhoods.
3. Generally, the character of the street reflects the identity of the local city, precincts or neighborhoods that it traverses, creating a strong local identity.
4. Vertical elements are mostly consistent along the street's length to provide continuity and contribute to the capital city's identity and imply wayfinding cues; however, surface and small fixture elements may adapt to character areas, highlighting and reinforcing a precinct's or neighborhood's unique qualities.
5. Streetscape elements should have a continuous rhythm and be balanced and symmetrical on both sides of the street, except where spatial relationships or edges of certain uses warrant an asymmetrical streetscape. For example, streets that edge different uses like 1st Street, NE may have an asymmetrical streetscape transitioning between Union Station and the NOMA neighborhood.
6. The street's significance as a connection between important national and local civic uses, or its significance to a local neighborhood or precinct may warrant streetscape treatment that is different from local standards and treatments.

**Transition Principles:**

1. Transitions are locations where street categories change, typically responding to urban and natural features, such as intersections, parks, circles, squares, etc. Transitions are important because they can provide a sense of continuity along longer streetscape corridors.
2. Vertical streetscape elements (streetlights and trees) are critical to providing streetscape consistency and continuity where street categories or character areas transition.

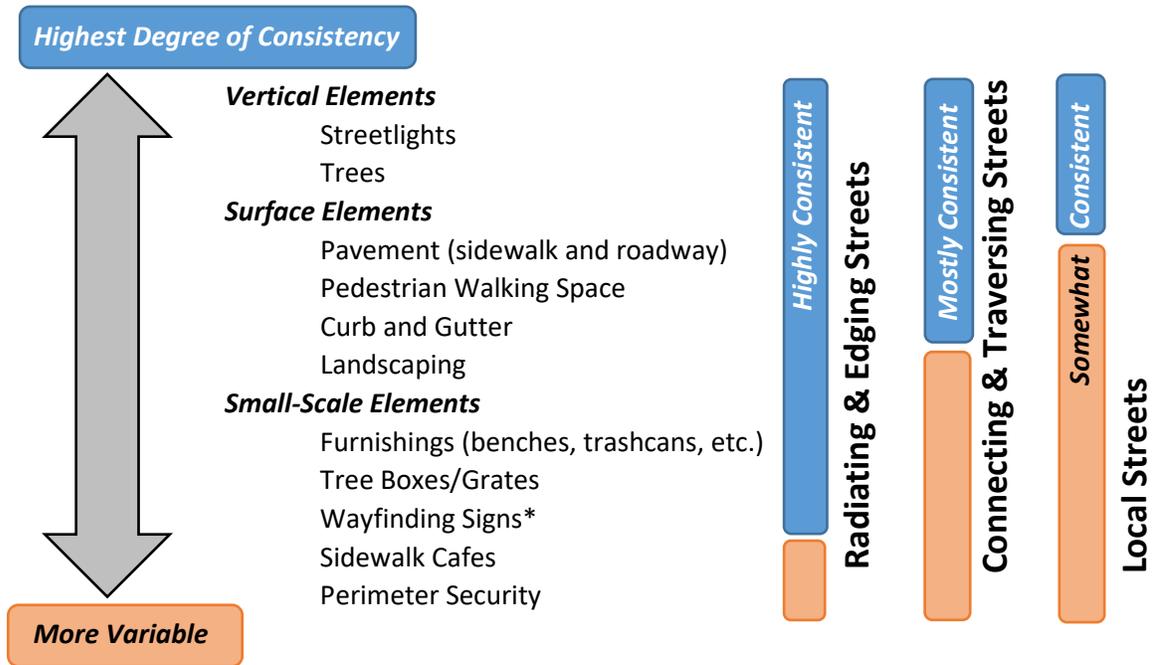
3. Parks, circles, squares, street intersections, or physical barriers (such as highways, railroads, or grade changes) should be used as transition points between street categories to minimize visual and physical disorder and provide streetscape consistency and continuity along street lengths between destinations. Streetscape consistency and continuity should continue on either side of physical barriers.
4. Where two or more different street categories intersect at parks, circles, squares, or intersections, the highest street category should be used along the interior side of the street that circumscribes the perimeter of the park, circle, square, or intersection. Symmetry, particularly among vertical elements (streetlights and trees), should be provided across both sides of the street (interior and exterior perimeters of the park, circle, or square). Surface and small-scale elements may reflect the character of the park, circle, square, or character area.
5. Avoid changing streetscape elements for short segments (e.g. one or two blocks) in order to provide consistency and continuity along street lengths.
6. Preserve vistas and viewsheds through the placement and alignment of streetscape elements and provide pedestrian and streetscape consistency and continuity particularly where elevation changes, infrastructure elements, or other barriers occur.

**Character Area Principles:**

1. Streets within character areas shall have a high level of consistency to reinforce the character area and sub-areas within it.
2. Streets at the edges or boundaries of character areas should defer to their street category for guidance on consistency and continuity of streetscape elements.
3. Vertical streetscape elements (streetlights and trees) shall be consistent on both sides of character areas boundary streets to provide consistency and define vistas and viewsheds.

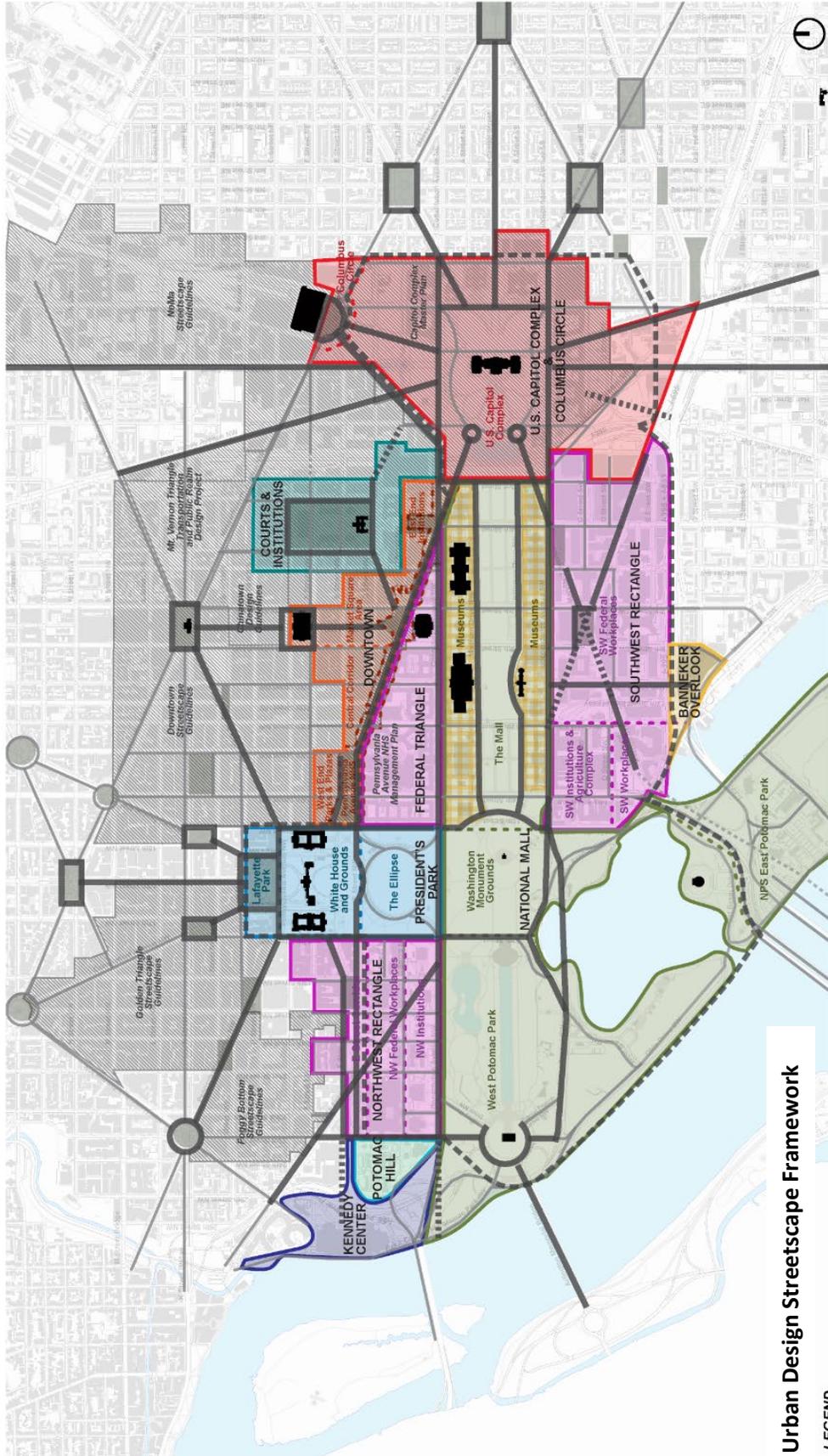
**Diagram of Streetscape Elements and Street Principles:**

The following diagram illustrates how the streetscape elements relate to the street category principles, which inform the degree of streetscape consistency.



\*A consistent wayfinding system would not preclude unique wayfinding signs within character areas.

Urban Design Streetscape Framework



MAP PREPARED IN WINTERS/SPRING 2018 FROM DC GIS. BOUNDARIES REFLECT PRECINCTS, NOT JURISDICTION

Urban Design Streetscape Framework

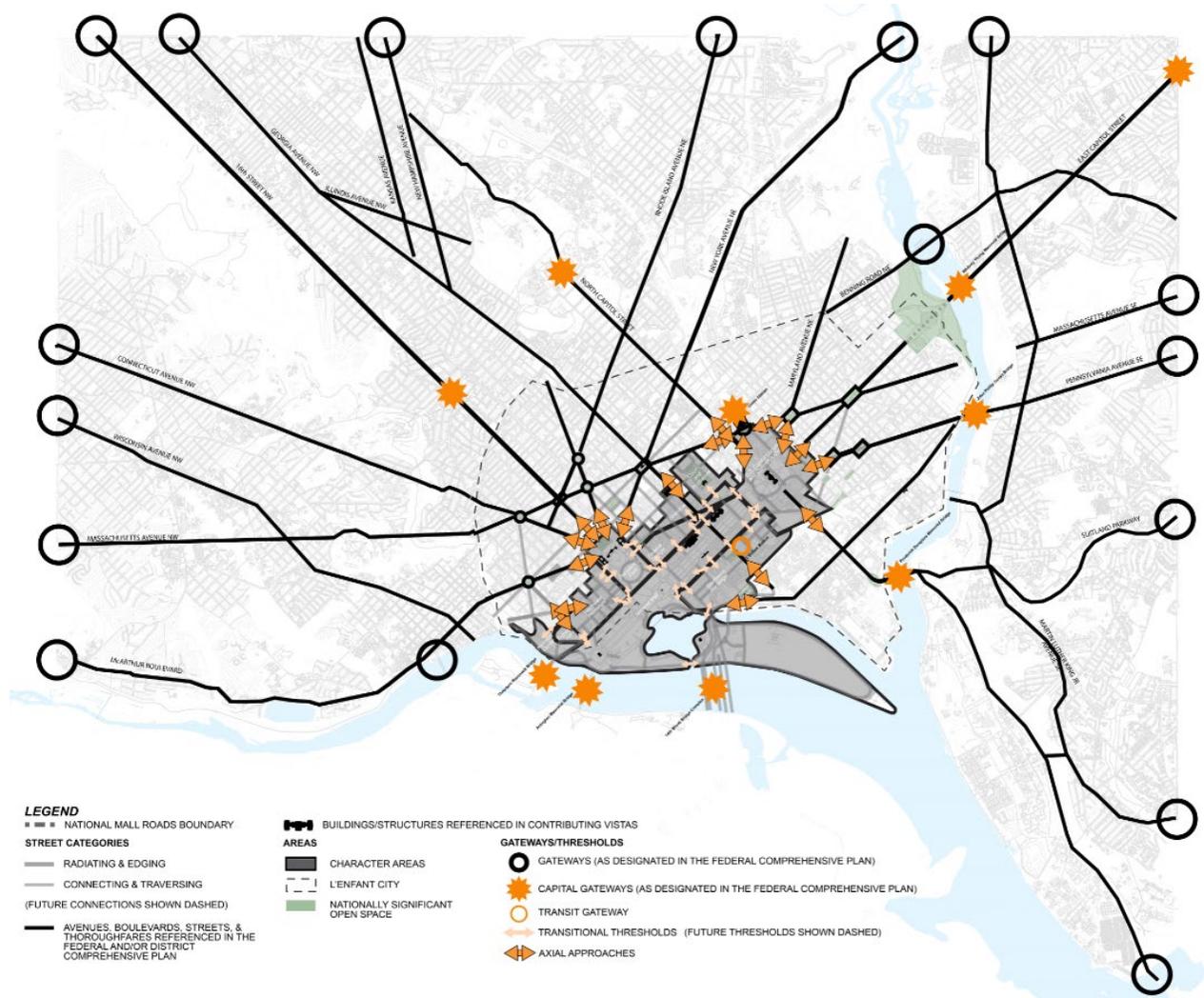
- LEGEND**
- BUILDINGS/STRUCTURES REFERENCED IN LENFANT PLAN CONTRIBUTING VISTAS
  - 1982 STREETScape MANUAL BOUNDARY
  - NATIONALLY SIGNIFICANT OPEN SPACE
- STREET CATEGORIES**
- RADIATING & EDGING
  - CONNECTING & TRAVERSING
  - FUTURE CONNECTIONS SHOWN DASHED
- EXAMPLE CHARACTER AREA**
- Character Area
  - Character Sub-Area
  - Areas with existing streetscape guidance

Urban Design Streetscape Framework Summary Chart

CATEGORY	Radiating & Edging Streets	Connecting & Traversing Streets	Local Streets
DEFINITION	<p>Preeminent L’Enfant Plan Streets</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Symbolic/ Monumental/ Civic/ Commemorative/ Cultural Role</li> <li>• National significance</li> <li>• Radiate from or edge nationally significant structures or icons and open spaces</li> <li>• May stand alone as a destination</li> <li>• May have Linear Viewsheds as described in the Urban Design Element<sup>5</sup></li> </ul>	<p>Notable L’Enfant Plan Streets</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Civic/Recreational Role</li> <li>• National and local significance</li> <li>• Connects destinations and nationally significant open spaces</li> <li>• Edge, connect, or traverse one or more nationally or locally significant civic buildings or reservations, monuments, memorials, or commemorative sites</li> </ul>	<p>Local L’Enfant Plan Streets</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Orthogonal grid with a functional role</li> <li>• Local significance</li> <li>• Provides circulation through and between blocks within precincts and neighborhoods</li> <li>• Provides access to destinations</li> </ul>
GUIDANCE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Highly consistent streetscape</li> <li>• Streetscapes and elements unify the identity of the monumental core and capital city</li> <li>• Cohesive and consistent across character areas and neighborhoods</li> <li>• Balanced and symmetrical with continuous rhythm</li> <li>• Direct and focus vistas/viewshed to significant structures</li> <li>• Ample pedestrian space for civic and ceremonial uses</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mostly consistent streetscape</li> <li>• Elements unify the identity of the monumental core and capital city and link destinations</li> <li>• Responds to the character areas and neighborhoods with some variable elements</li> <li>• Balanced and symmetrical with continuous rhythm, except where spatial relationships or character area edges warrant an asymmetrical streetscape</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Somewhat consistent streetscape</li> <li>• Elements unify the identity of the capital city</li> <li>• Adapts to the character areas and neighborhoods with many variable elements</li> </ul>
QUALITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Highest durability of material in accordance with the Streetscape Construction Manual</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High durability of material in accordance with the Streetscape Construction Manual</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DC material standards and treatments</li> </ul>

<sup>5</sup> Page 32 of the Urban Design Element identifies and describes Streets with Linear Viewsheds.

### Gateways, Thresholds, and Approaches within the District Context

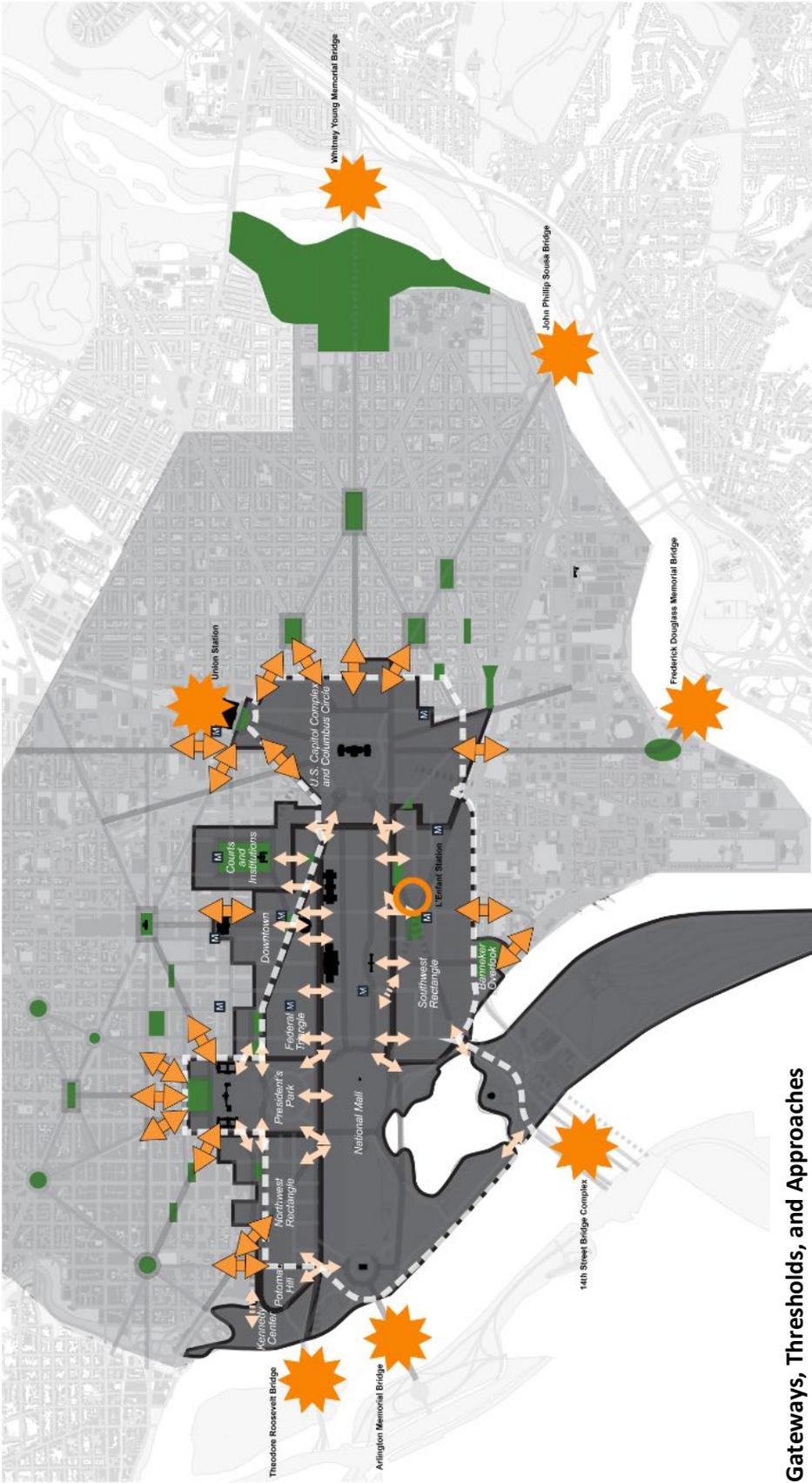


**Gateways, Thresholds, and Approaches:**

It is important to identify where and how streets interact with urban and natural features. These locations are moments offering a sense of arrival and typically occur at entry points, such as intersections, bridges, parks, or waterfronts. Depending on location and context, these entry points form a capital gateway, gateway, threshold, or approach as described in the Federal Urban Design Element and are further described and elaborated below.

- **Capital Gateways:** are entry points to the nation’s capital and monumental core. Capital gateways contribute to the identity and experience of the capital city by announcing entry and connecting to national icons, either as:
  - Visual connections that provide views to the most nationally significant buildings, structures, or landscapes; or,
  - Physical connections that are major axial or radial avenues and streets that link to the most nationally significant buildings or structures.
  
- **Gateways:** are entry points to the capital city. Gateways contribute to the identity and experience of the city by announcing arrival through a passage (possibly through a structure or building such as a bridge or train station) into the capital city, the city’s periphery, or connecting between neighborhoods.
  
- **Transitional Thresholds:** are entry points to or between character areas. Transitional thresholds describe where and how streetscape elements define points of entry and may support unique views or circulation patterns. Transitional thresholds:
  - Denote moments of streetscape transition to define entryways or changes in streetscape character where two or more character areas come together.
  - Occur within monumental core (as defined by the 1992 Streetscape Manual Boundary).
  - Occur between character areas or sub-areas.
  - Possess important visual and material cues to signal character change, support unique views, direct pedestrians to site and building entries, and express moments of passage and transition.
  
- **Axial Approaches:** define entry sequences to the monumental core, reinforcing continuity along major streets within the nation’s capital. Axial Approaches:
  - Denote moments of streetscape continuity where Radiating and Edging and Connecting and Traversing streets enter the monumental core (as defined by the 1992 Streetscape Manual Boundary).
  - Occur along major radiating and axial streets connecting to Capital Gateways or Gateways along the city periphery, as identified in the Federal and District Urban Design Elements of the Comprehensive Plan and Frederick Law Olmsted’s Highway Plan.
  - Occur along major radiating and axial streets where there are important connections to key reservations, open spaces, or destinations within the L’Enfant city, such as Virginia Avenue, 23<sup>rd</sup> Street, Pennsylvania Avenue NW, and Vermont Avenue NW.
  - Possess important visual and physical connections between points within the monumental core and key reservations, open spaces, or destinations within the L’Enfant City.
  - L’Enfant City.

Gateways, Thresholds, and Approaches



**LEGEND**

- NATIONAL MALL BOUNDARY
- BUILDINGS/STRUCTURES REFERENCED IN CONTRIBUTING VISTAS
- METROPOLITAN STATIONS WITH PHYSICAL ACCESS TO THE MONUMENTAL CORE

**STREET CATEGORIES**

- RADIATING & EDGING
- CONNECTING & TRAVERSING
- FUTURE CONNECTIONS SHOWN DASHED

**AREAS**

- CHARACTER AREAS
- L'ENFANT CITY
- NATIONALLY SIGNIFICANT OPEN SPACE

**GATEWAYS/THRESHOLDS**

- CAPITAL GATEWAYS (AS DESIGNATED IN THE FEDERAL COMPREHENSIVE PLAN)
- GATEWAYS (AS DESIGNATED IN THE FEDERAL COMPREHENSIVE PLAN)
- TRANSITIONAL THRESHOLDS (FUTURE GATEWAYS/THRESHOLDS SHOWN DASHED)
- AXIAL APPROACHES

**MAP CREATED IN WINTER/SRING 2018 USING INFORMATION FROM EXISTING PLANNING DOCUMENTS AND DC GIS.**

1 - 16th Street NW and North Capitol Street have northern Capital Gateways that are off the extents of this map.  
 2 - Gateways Benning Road NE and Key Bridge are not shown because they are not connected to the proposed Streetscape Hierarchy

Gateways, Thresholds, and Approaches

Principles for each of these entry points are provided below.

**Capital Gateway and Gateway Principles:**

1. Capital gateways (such as bridges, rail lines, or major transit hubs that physically or visually connect to the monumental core) and gateways (entries into the city or its neighborhoods) should have a distinct or elevated quality to signal entry into the capital city.
2. Capital gateway and gateway bridges that carry pedestrian or bicycle modes, should provide continuity along their length by continuing the adjacent street character across the bridge through consistent lighting, pedestrian walking spaces, sidewalk pavement, curb and gutter treatment, and wayfinding.
3. Newly constructed gateway bridges with signature design elements (such as the South Capitol Street Bridge and 11<sup>th</sup> Street Bridge/Park) may have streetscape elements that are specific to the character and design of the gateway bridge elements and should be coordinated with adjacent streets' streetscape elements with respect to placement and alignment for continuity.

**Transitional Threshold Principles:**

1. Transitional thresholds enhance connections and wayfinding to destinations within the monumental core.
2. Transitional thresholds between character areas may break from the consistency and continuity (rhythm and symmetry) of linear streetscapes to indicate an entry point; establish clear view corridors to other destinations; or direct circulation patterns.

**Axial Approach Principles:**

1. Continuous approaches enhance visual continuity and symmetry along major streetscape corridors entering the monumental core, within the nation's capital.
2. Continuous approaches should prioritize continuity of streetscape elements including: Vertical Elements, Surface Elements, and appropriate Small-Scale Elements.

Criteria for Transitional Thresholds and Axial Approaches provide additional guidance regarding how the built environment can reinforce transition or continuity, respectively.

**Transitional Threshold Criteria:**

1. Announce entry by prioritizing the vertical and surface elements of the character area being entered.
2. Present opportunities to create welcoming and inviting spaces that capitalize on the unique character of the area.
3. May transition in scale (from monumental to pedestrian) to create a more welcoming human-scaled streetscapes.
4. May use streetscape materials and viewsheds to direct pedestrians and focus on site and building entries.
5. May have a distinct or mixed material palette to transition between diverse character area palettes.
6. Design inspiration for any transitional threshold enhancements should be derived from the National Mall's streetscape design and program.

**Axial Approach Criteria:**

1. Vertical elements (streetlights and trees) should not obstruct open vistas and viewsheds where streetscape corridors intersect important reservations.
2. Axial approach character should reinforce continuity along the streetscape. This can be done by using similar streetscape elements (such as street trees, streetlights, or sidewalk pavement) at both the axial threshold and along the streetscape corridor; for an extent of one or more blocks, depending upon the type of entry sequence desired.
3. Design inspiration for any axial approach enhancements should be derived from the existing surroundings and relevant historic plans at the entry point to the axial approach.

## **Attachment 1: Character Area Example**

*(summaries of each agency's character areas are in progress)*

### **U.S. Capitol Complex**

**Area size:** 570+ acres *(see Character Area map for location)*

**Land Use:** The general land use of the U.S. Capitol Complex is congressional office buildings, historic national landmarks, grand public open spaces and other government functions.

**Spatial Organization:** The U.S. Capitol is the physical center of the District of Columbia and this historic L'Enfant Plan and several important streets. Pennsylvania Avenue; North, South, and East Capitol Street; and Maryland Avenue radiate outward from the Capitol Complex creating both a grid based and radial street network. In addition, the buildings of the complex are spatially oriented toward the U.S. Capitol Building, adding to its prominence in the area.

**Views and Visual Relationships:** Due to the design of radiating streets from the Capitol Complex and the U.S. Capitol Building's location on a prominent hill, the views to and from Capitol Square are significant and stunning. The peripheral buildings of the complex also help to reinforce the important views by their design and orientation to the U.S. Capitol Building.

**Topography:** The U.S. Capitol Building was built on a prominent hill and is easily visible above surrounding structures and areas of the city. This topographic difference is most noticeable on the west front of the U.S. Capitol Building. The change in grade in other areas of the complex is less noticeable as it is located between buildings.

**Landscape and Vegetation:** The Capitol complex has extensive landscape areas and vegetation for an urban area. The Capitol Square historic landscape including Olmsted walls and lanterns, Senate Parks, Union Square, the U.S. Botanic Garden, and Bartholdi Park are a few significant landscape areas and features that frame the Capitol complex.

**Circulation:** Circulation in and around the Capitol complex is often restricted due to security priorities. Some major streets are open to almost all vehicles, but many internal streets are closed to public traffic. This can make accessing the complex difficult and confusing. In addition, security measures added during major events can restrict more types of access to the complex.

**Architectural Structures:** *to be developed*

**Landscape Structures:** There are innumerable historic and fascinating landscape structures on the Capitol complex, including the Capitol Reflecting pool, monuments, memorials, Olmsted walls and lanterns, the Summerhouse, etc. These structures add significantly to the character of the complex and its streetscapes.

## **Attachment 2: National Mall Streetscape Interagency Working Group Comments**

National Mall Streetscape Interagency Working Group representatives collaborated on the development of the Urban Design Streetscape Framework from spring 2018 through summer 2018. Working group members' comments on the latest draft of the Streetscape Framework are noted as follows:

- The NPS National Mall (NAMA) unit strongly recommended four street categories consisting of: (1) Symbolic/ Commemorative/ Cultural Roads, (2) L'Enfant Plan Roads, (3) Recreational Roads, and (4) Urban Roads, rather than the proposed three street categories of: (1) Radiating and Edging Streets, (2) Connecting and Traversing Streets, and (3) Local Streets. The NPS NAMA unit also commented that the Pennsylvania Avenue NHS should be its own character area. The Streetscape Framework currently includes the Pennsylvania Avenue NHS as a sub-area to the Downtown and Federal Triangle character areas.
- The DCOP commented in support of categorizing 8<sup>th</sup> Street NW (between the National Archives and Carnegie Library) as Radiating and Edging because of its important as a cross-axis in the L'Enfant Plan. Previously, CFA working group members did not support this. However, the latest draft of the Streetscape Framework does categorize 8<sup>th</sup> Street NW as Radiating and Edging Street. The DCOP suggested reinforcing that all street categories should have continuity among streetscape elements that unify streets and define the character of the city. To this point, DCOP suggested further describing local streets within the Streetscape Framework. DCOP also suggested identifying streets from which nationally significant structures (e.g. the US Capitol Building and the White House) can be seen as important gateway experiences.
- The GSA commented on streetscape elements recommending that wayfinding signs be more consistent in support of quick and easy pedestrian recognition and wayfinding; and that sidewalk cafes be included.

Attachment 3: Letter from the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts (May 2018)

U.S. COMMISSION OF FINE ARTS

ESTABLISHED BY CONGRESS 17 MAY 1910

401 F STREET NW SUITE 312 WASHINGTON DC 20001-2728 202-504-2200 FAX 202-504-2195 WWW.CFA.GOV

24 May 2018

Dear Mr. Acosta:

In its meeting of 17 May, the Commission of Fine Arts was pleased to hear an information presentation by the National Capital Planning Commission staff on the proposed update of the Streetscape Manual for the National Mall roads improvement program. The Commission expressed appreciation for the effort to revise the manual, and provided the following comments for its development.

In their discussion, the Commission members recognized that the manual, which has guided interagency cooperation since its creation in 1992, has become inadequate for many of the contemporary issues facing the National Mall and Washington, D.C. Therefore, they emphasized that the manual must be an adaptable document that can anticipate accommodation of technological and climatic change within the streetscape without being prescriptive. For example, they commented that new digital technologies and the form of associated infrastructure—such as antennas, signage, modifications to lighting, charging stations, or driverless vehicles—cannot be predicted before they are developed, and they cautioned that specific guidelines would soon be obsolete. They recommended instead that guiding concepts should be developed to embrace these changes, suggesting that an approach of adaptable or managed precision would help address such current issues as resilience and the effects of extreme weather on the infrastructure; this could include using performance-based criteria to evaluate new ecological technologies. While expressing support for mobile food and retail service along the roads of the monumental core, they suggested that a design competition for vendor carts and structures could improve their current makeshift appearance. Finally, they strongly recommended that a formal governance and oversight structure for enforcement of the plan is fundamental to ensuring the success of the program.

The Commission looks forward to review of the Streetscape Manual as a product of the planning effort for the protection and stewardship of this nationally significant urban landscape and its infrastructure. For the development of the next submission, please consult with the Commission staff which, as always, is available to assist you.

Sincerely,



Thomas E. Luebke, FAIA  
Secretary

Marcel Acosta, Executive Director  
National Capital Planning Commission  
401 9th Street, NW, Suite 500-N  
Washington, DC 20004

cc: Laurin Lineman, Federal Highway Administration  
Jeff Marootian, D.C. Department of Transportation  
Peter May, National Park Service

Attachment 4: Letter from the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts (June 2019)

U.S. COMMISSION OF FINE ARTS

ESTABLISHED BY CONGRESS 17 MAY 1910

401 F STREET NW SUITE 312 WASHINGTON DC 20001-2728 202-504-2200 FAX 202-504-2195 WWW.CFA.GOV

27 June 2019

Dear Mr. Acosta:

In its meeting of 20 June, the Commission of Fine Arts was pleased to hear two information presentations by the National Capital Planning Commission staff on the Monumental Core Streetscape Project and its proposed frameworks and policies for streetscape and lighting design, part of a comprehensive update of the *Streetscape Manual for the National Mall Road Improvement Program*. The Commission expressed appreciation for the efforts to revise the manual, and provided the following comments for its development.

*Urban Design Streetscape Framework*

In their discussion of the streetscape framework plan, the Commission members identified several issues for further study and clarification. At the broadest level, they advised that the plan should anticipate contemporary environmental issues, such as the impact of extreme weather and localized flooding, so that necessary adaptations of the streetscape can be planned for systematically, rather than on a case-by-case basis. They emphasized that the urban streetscape should be conceived of as a performative landscape system rather than as a composition of separate elements; they cited the presentation of classifying trees as distinct vertical elements, whereas the plan should consider trees to be a complex of living organisms requiring specific infrastructure to thrive within the streetscape. They also questioned the plan's emphasis on the thresholds identified between the National Mall and adjacent precincts within the monumental core, commenting that the boundary drawn between the broader monumental core and the surrounding city may suggest the location of significant thresholds. They advised that the city's major axial and diagonal roadways should be considered as the framework of the monumental city that reaches beyond the strict boundaries of the historic core, and they found that the streetscapes of these corridors should emphasize continuity. Accordingly, they suggested that the design approach to thresholds should derive from the identified hierarchy of street types, emphasizing either continuity or transition.

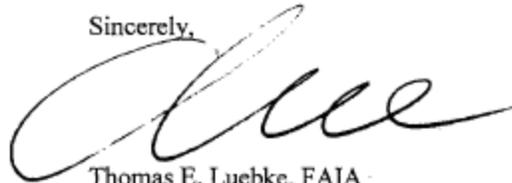
*Street Lighting Policy and Framework*

In consideration of the street lighting policy, the Commission members expressed general support for retrofitting the city's existing streetlights with light-emitting diode (LED) lamps, noting the reduced energy consumption, improved color, and more consistent background against which important buildings and monuments can be lit. However, they cited the existing hierarchy between the white light of the monumental core and the warmer light of the

surrounding city, and they expressed regret that this distinction may be lost when all streetlights are converted to the same color temperature; they suggested exploring ways to preserve this hierarchy. They noted that the spatial and architectural conditions of the city may be expressive enough without using street lighting to delineate the complex system of street classifications, and they therefore suggested simplifying the lighting framework. In general, they encouraged local and federal stakeholder agencies to consult with innovative urban lighting designers for the testing and implementation of this new street lighting technology, and they encouraged constructing in-situ mockups to test the criteria proposed in the policy.

The Commission looks forward to continued review of revisions to the *Streetscape Manual* as a product of the planning effort for the protection and stewardship of this nationally significant urban landscape and its infrastructure. For the development of the next submission, please consult with the Commission staff which, as always, is available to assist you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'T. Luebke', written in a cursive style.

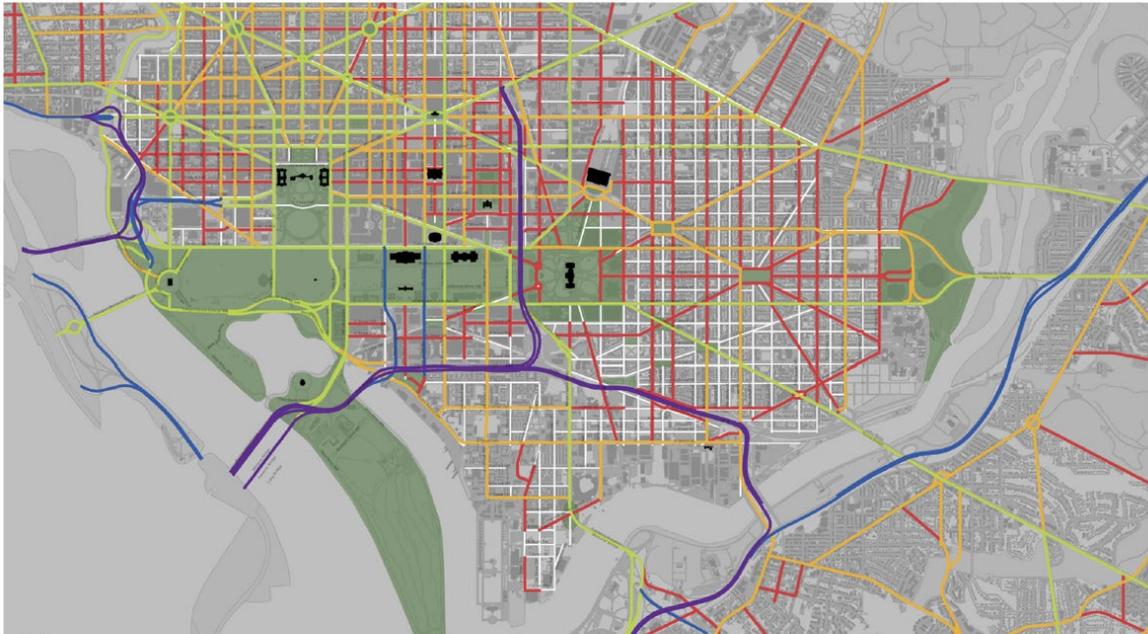
Thomas E. Luebke, FAIA  
Secretary

Marcel Acosta, Executive Director  
National Capital Planning Commission  
401 9th Street, NW, Suite 500-N  
Washington, DC 20004

cc: Laurin Lineman, Federal Highway Administration  
Jeff Marootian, D.C. Department of Transportation  
Peter May, National Park Service

## Attachment 5: Reference Maps

### i. DDOT Vehicular Functional Classification Map (2016)



**LEGEND**

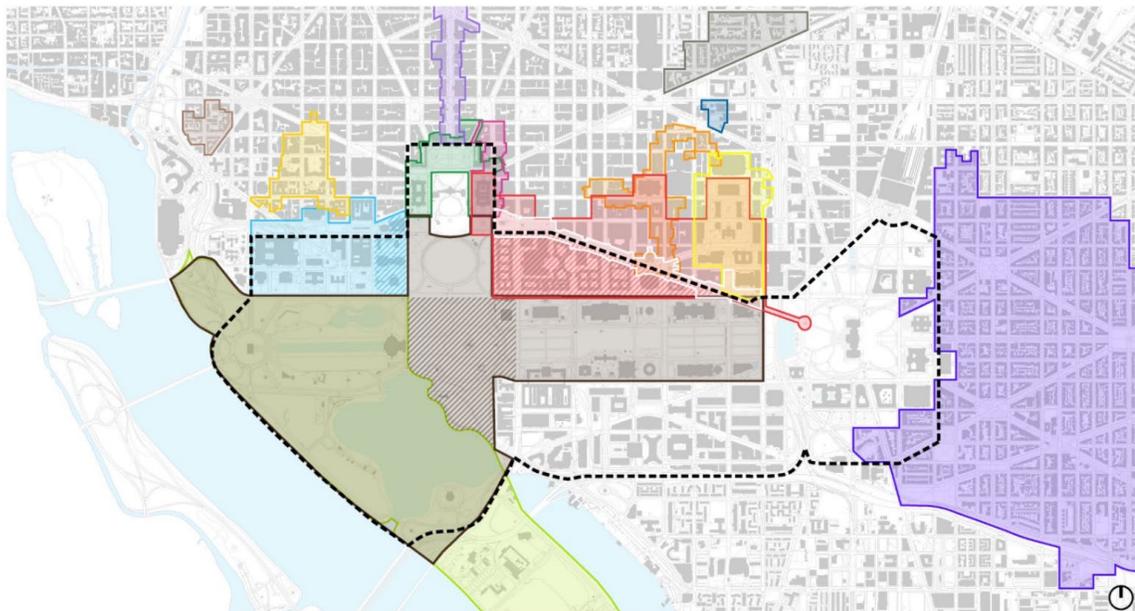
- BUILDINGS/STRUCTURES REFERENCED IN L'ENFANT PLAN CONTRIBUTING VISTAS
- NATIONALLY SIGNIFICANT OPEN SPACE
- DDOT FUNCTIONAL CLASS**
- INTERSTATE
- FREEWAY/EXPRESSWAY
- PRINCIPAL ARTERIAL
- MINOR ARTERIAL
- COLLECTOR

\*LOCAL AND UNCLASSIFIED STREETS SHOWN IN WHITE. GIS DATA DID NOT INCLUDE FUNCTIONAL CLASS INFORMATION FOR NPS OWNED STREETS

FUNCTIONAL CLASS INFORMATION FROM DC OCTO GIS

*Functional Class*

### ii. Historic District Map (2017)



**LEGEND**

- 1992 STREETScape MANUAL BOUNDARY
- NATIONAL MALL (NR/DC)
- WASHINGTON MONUMENT GROUNDS (NR NOMINATED WITHIN NATIONAL MALL)
- EAST AND WEST POTOMAC PARKS (NR/DC) OVERLAPS WITH NATIONAL MALL
- FOGGY BOTTOM (NR/DC)
- NORTHWEST RECTANGLE (NR ELIGIBLE/DC)
- SEVENTEENTH STREET (DC) WITHIN NORTHWEST RECTANGLE
- LAFAYETTE SQUARE (NH/UR/DC)
- GW/JOLD WEST END (NR)
- SIXTEENTH STREET (NR/DC)
- FINANCIAL (NR/DC)
- PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE (NR/DC) PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE OUTLINED IN WHITE
- MOUNT VERNON SQUARE (NR/DC)
- FEDERAL TRIANGLE (NR ELIGIBLE/DC) WITHIN PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE
- DOWNTOWN (NR/DC)
- MOUNT VERNON TRIANGLE (NR/DC)
- JUDICIARY SQUARE (NR ELIGIBLE) OVERLAPS WITH DOWNTOWN AND PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE
- CAPITOL HILL (NR/DC)

MAP AND TABLE WERE CREATED IN WINTER 2017 USING DATA FROM THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE AND D.C. HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE. CHANGES MAY HAVE OCCURRED SINCE THIS DATE. PLEASE REFER TO THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE AND D.C. HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE FOR THE LATEST INFORMATION.

NHL - NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK  
 NR - NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
 DC - DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA