

# Introduction

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## Introduction

As the nation’s capital, home to nearly 700,000 residents, and destination for over 25 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 and Construction Manual (Streetscape Guide) contributes to achieving these aspirations by providing principles and guidance on the planning, design, and construction of distinguished capital city streets.

The Streetscape Guide focuses on five primary categories of issues, including policy and planning, manual application, precincts and transitions, function, and coordination. 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. 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. The background section summarizes the problem and evolution of planning for the streets within the monumental core since 1992.

The Streetscape Guide includes three primary components:

- Part 1: Urban Design Streetscape Framework
- Part 2: Streetscape Design Guidelines
- Part 3: Construction Manual

### Purpose and Importance:

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.

This guidance is important for developing streetscape consistency along nationally and locally significant corridors, many of which frame views to nationally significant structures and open spaces within the capital city. The Streetscape Framework categorizes monumental core streets and provides guiding principles that reinforce streetscape consistency among vertical, surface, and small-scale elements.

### Goals and Priorities:

The goals and priorities of the 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)
- Use Washington’s major avenues/boulevards to reinforce the form and identity of the city, connect is neighborhoods, and improve its aesthetic and visual character. (UD-1.4.1 District Urban Design Element)
- 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)

## Applicability & Administration

This section describes the areas in which the Streetscape Guide applies, the groups and agencies that will utilize it, and the administrative processes that should be followed when using the Guide on streetscape projects.

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 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.*

The Streetscape Manual applies to a defined area within the monumental core as shown in Figure 1.

### The Streetscape Guide and its Users:

The Monumental Core Streetscape Guide (Streetscape Guide) includes guidance and reference materials 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.

**The Streetscape Guidelines:** The Streetscape Guidelines 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 supplement the Streetscape Framework’s principles. It is most useful to urban designers, landscape architects, and architects to assist in the design and implementation of streetscape projects.

**The Streetscape Construction Manual:** The Streetscape Construction Manual includes construction details and specifications for streetscape elements. Some specifications are performance-based, while others are prescriptive. It is most useful to landscape architects, engineers, facilities managers, and construction workers to when planning, constructing, and maintaining streetscape projects.

**Applicability:**

The Streetscape Guide and Manual apply to federal and District roadways inside the Boundary and on both sides of the street along the Boundary’s perimeter. Application is dependent on geographic area and jurisdiction as outlined below:

**Federal and District Roadways Inside the Boundary:** The Boundary area includes both federal and District roadways. In general, the Streetscape Guide and Manual incorporate District Department of Transportation (DDOT) standards and coordinate them with federal standards to achieve visually cohesive streetscapes.

- **Federal Roadways:** Redevelopment projects incorporating streetscape or public space improvements, capital streetscape projects, and repairs should meet Architect of the Capitol (AOC) and/or NPS standards, based on jurisdictional administration of the roadway, and as directed in the Streetscape Guide and Manual, and coordinated among the IWG.
- **District Roadways:** Redevelopment projects incorporating streetscape or public space improvements, capital streetscape projects, and repairs should meet DDOT standards, based on jurisdictional administration of the roadway, and as directed in the Streetscape Guide and Manual, and coordinated among the IWG.

**District Roadways Outside the Boundary:** Federal and local agencies share interest in ensuring streetscape consistency along important corridors that frame views to nationally significant structures and open spaces and corridors that connect local and federal neighborhoods. The Companion Streetscape Review Guide (CSRG), an associated document, was developed to improve streetscape consistency along these important corridors. It documents established District standards and practices, and coordinates with federal guidance. Outside of the Boundary, roadway improvements and repairs should meet DDOT standards for all construction elements including, but not limited to stormwater infrastructure, tree boxes, and streetlighting.

**Perimeter Security:** The Streetscape Guide and Manual address permanent streetscape elements. It does not address temporary streetscape elements such as those used for special events or perimeter security. The [Federal Comprehensive Plan: Urban Design Element](#) provides guidance on perimeter security.

**Special Circumstances:** Select locations have unique conditions where special regulations apply, or streetscapes are near, above, and/or below ground buildings, structures, or tunnels, and interagency coordination may be needed to address potential constraints. The Streetscape Guide and Manual does not address unique conditions such as:

- Pennsylvania Avenue, 3rd Street, NW at U.S. Capitol to 15th Street, NW at the White House and President’s Park (See *Pennsylvania Avenue Street Furnishing Guide*).
- Fourth Street, NW, which functions as the entry plaza between the East Building and West Building of the National Gallery of Art. A below-grade building connects the two buildings beneath Fourth Street.
- Jefferson Drive, SW, which has a below-grade tunnel connecting the Hirshhorn Gallery to the Sculpture Garden.
- Ninth Street and Twelfth Street tunnels below the National Mall, museums, and gardens. Certain work above or near tunnels may be constrained.
- Interstates, freeways, tunnels, and other similar infrastructure.

**Administration:**

The Streetscape Guide and Manual should be used by applicants during project planning and development, and by federal and District staff during project review. Administration is dependent on geographic area and jurisdictional requirements and procedures as follows:

**Federal and District Roadways Inside the Boundary:** The Boundary area includes roadways under both federal and District administration. All streetscape projects, improvements, and repairs on federal and District roadways should be planned and implemented in coordination and consultation with the IWG using the Streetscape Guide and Manual.

**Federal Roadways:** Streetscape projects and improvements must be reviewed by:

- **CFA:** Reviews streetscape projects and improvements as determined in consultation with CFA. CFA staff will use the Streetscape Guide and Manual during project review.
- **NCPC:** Reviews streetscape projects and improvements on federal land. Project review guidance is provided within [NCPC’s Submission Guidelines](#). NCPC staff will use the Streetscape Guide and Manual during project review.

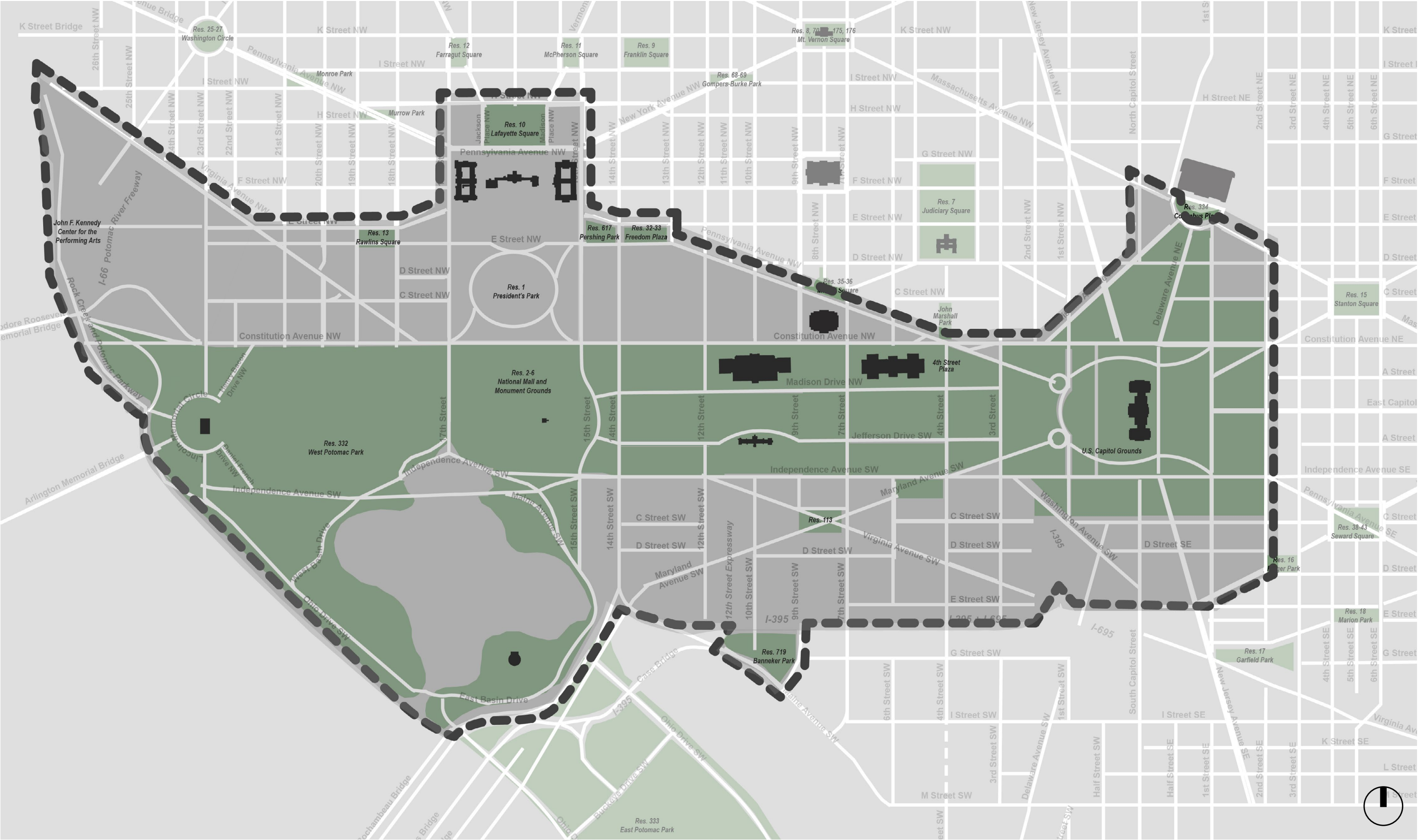
**District Roadways:** Streetscape projects and improvements must be reviewed by:

- **CFA:** Reviews streetscape projects and improvements as determined in consultation with CFA. CFA staff will use the Streetscape Guide and Manual during project review.
- **NCPC:** Reviews streetscape projects and improvements associated with federal site development projects. At the request of the applicant, NCPC reviews streetscape projects and improvements not associated with federal site development projects. NCPC staff will use the Streetscape Guide and Manual during both required and discretionary project reviews.
- **DDOT:** Reviews streetscape projects, improvements, and repairs. Projects that occupy, construct, and/or install in or on publicly owned space between the property lines of a street (including roadway, tree space, sidewalk, or landscaped public parking<sup>4</sup> between such property lines) require a Public Space Permit. DDOT determines whether Public Space Committee review is required.
- **Public Space Committee:** Reviews non-DDOT-standard streetscape treatments. A maintenance agreement is required for any non-standard elements and for elements not installed by DDOT.

**District Roadways Outside the Boundary:** Outside the Boundary, streetscape improvements and repairs should meet DDOT and Public Space Committee review requirements and federal review requirements where relevant:

- **DDOT:** Reviews streetscape projects, improvements, and repairs in District rights-of-way. Projects that construct improvements in or occupy District right-of-way must apply for a Public Space Permit, which may require approval by the Public Space Committee.
- **Public Space Committee:** Reviews non-DDOT-standard streetscape treatments. A maintenance agreement is required for any non-standard elements.
- **CFA:** Reviews streetscape projects and improvements as determined in consultation with CFA.
- **NCPC:** Reviews streetscape projects and improvements associated with federal site development projects. At the request of the applicant, NCPC reviews streetscape projects and improvements not associated with federal site development projects.
- **Companion Streetscape Review Guide and Manual:** For important streets with shared federal and local interest, District and federal staff will reference the Companion Streetscape Review Guide during project review.





Map I-1: Monumental Core Streetscape Boundary

**Note:** The 1992 Streetscape Manual Boundary was expanded to include the E Street corridor, NW, the Kennedy Center and its environs, and Banneker Park. Buildings/structures shown on the map are referenced in L’Enfant Plan Contributing Vistas.

**Note:** The Downtown Streetscape Regulations must be adhered to within the geographic area covered by these regulations. The Council of the District of Columbia adopted the Downtown Streetscape Regulations, which are therefore considered law.

**Resolution Process:** If the Streetscape Guide and Manual recommendations and standards cannot be achieved for any reason, the applicant should consult with federal and/or local review agencies, coordinating with the IWG as needed, to resolve issues in a manner that both meets the Guide and Manual intent and accounts for limitations or constraints.

- Administrative Limits:** The Streetscape Guide and Manual:
- Does not expand or alter CFA or NCPC review authorities
  - Intend to establish or prioritize capital improvement projects
  - Does not address roadway funding priorities
  - Does not address transportation engineering or operations

**Phasing and Implementation:**

The Streetscape Guide and Manual will be implemented over time as streetscape and public realm projects are completed, or as agency’s major capital improvement projects are funded and implemented. Therefore, the Guide’s vision will be realized as projects are implemented over time. The Streetscape Guide and Manual will introduce new elements or modify older elements to incorporate new streetscape standards, address evolving technologies, meet current needs, and/or achieve current performance standards or best practices (such as for improved energy and stormwater management). New elements will be selected, and older elements will be modified, to complement and harmonize with existing elements.

If designed streetscape corridors are rebuilt, new streetscape elements (such as trees, paving, furnishings, etc.) will carry forward special or historic design intent to reflect the corridor’s visual character. Therefore, old, modified, and new elements will be in place at the same time, but there will be a complementary family of streetscape elements to ensure visually consistent streetscape corridors.

Background

The Monumental Core Streetscape Guide and Construction Manual (Streetscape Guide) is an update of the 1992 National Mall Streetscape Manual (1992 Streetscape Manual).

The purpose of the 1992 Streetscape Manual, as set forth by the Secretary of the US Department of Transportation, 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 1992 Streetscape Manual consisted 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.

Since 1992, the Interagency Working Group has continued to coordinate streetscape projects in the monumental core. Over time, the administration of the working group has evolved and there have been updates to the 1992 Streetscape Manual.

**1992 Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).** This MOU established the National Mall Streetscape Interagency Working Group, 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) to oversee and coordinate roadway improvements within and around the National Mall.

**2005 MOU.** This MOU expanded the working group 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). 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.

**2013 Manual Update.** In 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 1992 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 new technologies and stormwater management.

**2015 MOU.** In 2015, the National Mall Working Group entered into a new MOU that added new members to the working group and established the Interagency Working Group (IWG). It also reallocated responsibilities across the different member agencies. The IWG was responsible for the creation of this guideline document.

Problem Statement:

To define the scope of work, the IWG assessed existing conditions and analyzed district and federal guidance to develop the new Monumental Core Streetscape Guide and Construction Manual.

- 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.



Figure I-2: Monumental Core Document Diagram

The diagram at right highlights the most relevant district and federal documents that revealed gaps in federal guidance. This analysis informed the development of the Monumental Core Streetscape Guide and Construction Manual.

As depicted in the diagram, there are numerous guidance documents. Some of those documents are linked below.

Applicable Plans:

