

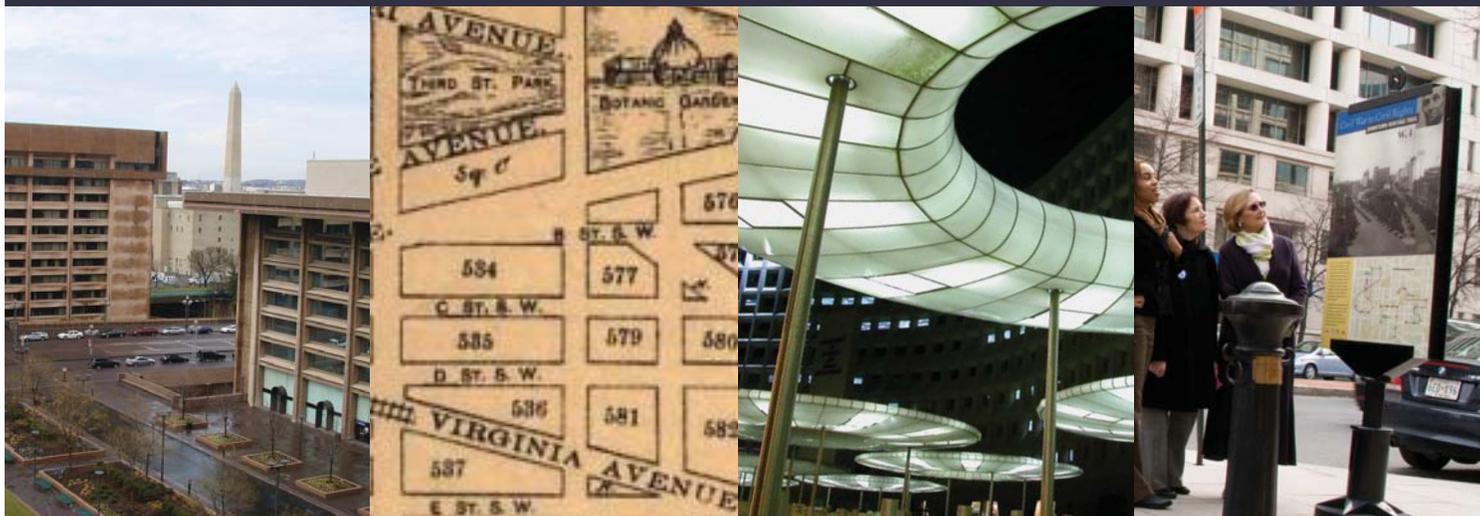


# Southwest Federal Center Heritage Trail

## ASSESSMENT REPORT

Showcasing Southwest Federal Center History and Culture

National Capital Planning Commission | Cultural Tourism DC



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## Showcasing Federal and Southwest DC History and Culture

The Southwest Federal Center Heritage Trail could complement the reuse and redevelopment of federal properties in the Southwest Federal Center. The Heritage Trail can serve as a marketing tool by highlighting the area's local and national significance, showcasing the neighborhood's marketable qualities, and encouraging foot traffic to sites recommended for new museums, civic, or cultural destinations by the Framework Plan and the *SW Ecodistrict Plan*.

The Southwest Federal Center Heritage Trail could support existing public outreach programs of area federal agencies and increase the public's appreciation of the cultural resources offered by federal buildings. The Heritage Trail can help draw visitors from the National Mall and Smithsonian museums to lesser-known federal exhibits in the Southwest Federal Center and support the public outreach activities and programs of federal agencies that want to increase their visibility, such as the U.S. Departments of Agriculture (USDA) and Energy (DOE), and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA). Significant examples of federal architecture and art, such as USDA's Whitten Building, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Robert C. Weaver Building and the Works Progress Administration murals located in the lobby of the General Services Administration's (GSA) Regional Office Building, would receive more recognition through the Heritage Trail signs.

The Southwest Federal Center Heritage Trail could be a near-term strategy to enhance Southwest Washington's public realm. Providing interpretive markers at strategic locations throughout the Southwest Federal Center can increase foot traffic in a currently under-visited area. Following interpretive signs on a planned route, area visitors will be introduced to the lesser-known but equally interesting cultural and historic resources in the streets of Southwest. The Heritage Trail can also improve east-west pedestrian connections within the Southwest Federal Center, and facilitate north-south pedestrian circulation between downtown, the Federal Triangle, the National Mall, and Southwest Washington.



Banneker Park and 10th Street Promenade in the background



Voice of America, Independence Avenue, SW



L'Enfant Plaza



Local businesses at L'Enfant Plaza



L'Enfant Plaza Metro Station

## Benefits to Local Businesses

A key objective of developing a Heritage Trail is to promote local businesses and capitalize on the tourist revenues generated by the National Mall and Smithsonian museums. The Southwest Federal Center currently does not have many local businesses; however, both the Framework Plan and the *SW Ecodistrict Plan* envision the area's future transformation into a lively, mixed-use neighborhood with more retail spaces along 10th Street, Maryland Avenue, and Independence Avenue, SW.

The Southwest Federal Center Heritage Trail will expand the city's existing system of Neighborhood Heritage Trails. The Heritage Trail can enhance pedestrian connections between downtown, the National Mall, Southwest, and the waterfront. A Heritage Trail in the Southwest Federal Center that connects to the SW Waterfront and two existing heritage trails (Civil War to Civil Rights: Downtown Neighborhood Heritage Trail to the north and River Farms to Urban Towers: Southwest Neighborhood Heritage Trail to the south) would be an important first step towards achieving this objective. Linking these trails would provide pedestrians with a seamless network of safe, walkable connections that also offer cultural enrichment.

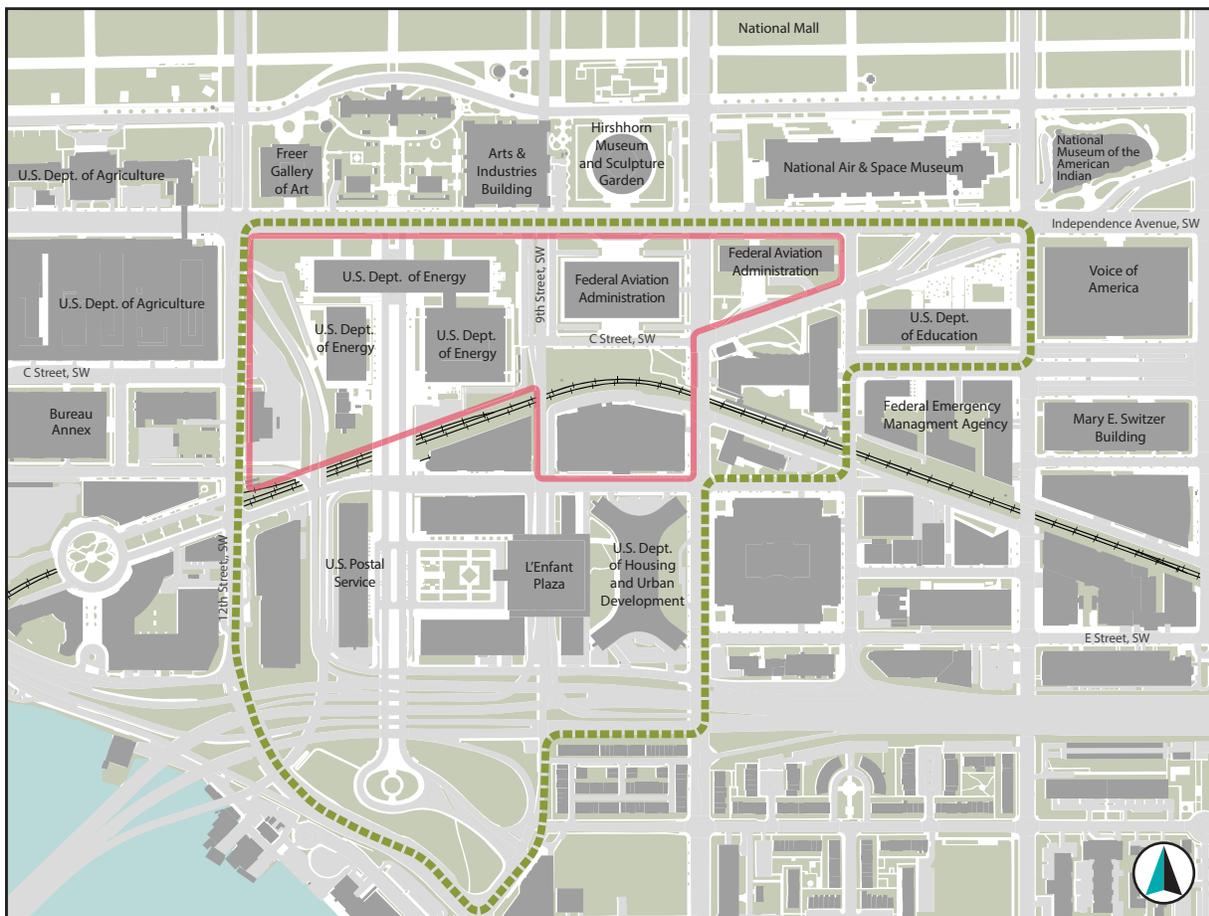


## Capitalizing on the Momentum of Change

The Southwest Federal Center has been the focus of redevelopment and building re-use studies since 2005, led primarily by NCPG and the GSA. The Southwest Federal Center Heritage Trail Assessment Study will capitalize on two major redevelopment activities in the area involving federal properties.

- GSA is evaluating how best to redevelop a subarea of the Southwest Federal Center—referred to as the Federal Triangle South—with an eye towards reducing the federal government’s greenhouse gas emissions and maximizing federal land efficiency and building resources. This Federal Triangle South consists of the James Forrestal building (the DOE Headquarters); the Wilbur and Orville Wright buildings (Federal Aviation Administration Headquarters), the Cotton Annex, and GSA’s Regional Office Building (Figure 2, SW Ecodistrict and Federal Triangle South Study Areas).

Figure 2: SW Ecodistrict and Federal Triangle South Study Areas



### Legend

■ ■ ■ SW Ecodistrict

■ Federal Triangle South

.....

Private property owners are also pursuing various strategies that will help revitalize the area. Examples include the expansion of Arena Stage and development of a planned 26-acre mixed-use development along the waterfront (Figure 3, Near Term Private Development and Public Space Improvements).

The District of Columbia Office of Planning, in consultation with private developers, is spearheading planning efforts to restore Maryland Avenue as a surface roadway with new mixed-use buildings. The *Maryland Avenue SW Small Area Plan*, adopted by the District of Columbia in 2012, will capitalize on the system improvements that CSX Rail will be implementing on the Maryland Avenue, SW railroad tracks, as well as the federal government’s interest in disposing of underutilized land along the tracks.

**Figure 3: Near-Term Private Development and Public Space Improvements**



**Development Activity by Status**

- |  |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|
| <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #008080; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Completed  | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #cccccc; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Roads     | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #add8e6; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Water | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; border: 2px dashed green;"></span> Public Space Improvements |
| <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #e9967a; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Planned    | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #90a48e; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Parks     | Railroads   | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; border: 2px dashed red;"></span> Memorials                   |
| <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #32cd32; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Conceptual | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #696969; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Buildings |   |   |

## Purpose of the Heritage Trail Assessment Report

This report will provide a preliminary look at the research, outreach, collaboration, and resources necessary to design and implement a Southwest Federal Center Heritage Trail. It will be used to garner federal and local support for the project, identify potential funding sources, and inform future planning. The Southwest Federal Center Heritage Trail assessment includes a set of potential historical themes, research and photo documentation, route identification and potential signage locations, cost estimates, and trail enhancement identification such as guidebooks, audio tours, and additional education opportunities.

This report includes the following information:

- The purpose and process for developing this assessment study
- A general description of the proposed Heritage Trail
- A series of possible stories that could be featured along the Heritage Trail
- A suggested timeline and preliminary cost estimate for implementing the Heritage Trail
- Planning considerations that should be addressed during design and implementation
- Conclusion and next steps

The identification of funding sources is not part of this report's scope.



Smithsonian Castle



Federal Aviation Administration, Wilbur Wright Building

## II. Background

Cultural Tourism DC is a local not-for-profit organization specializing in the development of Neighborhood Heritage Trails within Washington, DC. They previously collaborated with NCPD and GSA in development of the Federal Triangle Heritage Trail, the first Heritage Trail project funded by the federal government and completed in 2010.

NCPD saw an opportunity for the federal government to replicate this success in two other federal precincts: the Northwest Rectangle and the Southwest Federal Center. Both precincts are featured in the *Monumental Core Framework Plan* as focus areas for new cultural and commemorative spaces outside of the National Mall, and as sites for public realm and transportation improvements to enhance federal workplaces.

The Southwest Federal Center Heritage Trail is proposed to showcase the contribution of federal agencies in the Southwest Federal Center, expand the existing Southwest Heritage Trail's narrative on Mid-Century Modern buildings, indicate the impact of urban renewal, and reveal the stories of the communities and buildings that preceded the current configuration. When complete, the Heritage Trail will satisfy a long-held desire of the federal and local governments, as well as city residents, to put on display an area of Washington that has strong local and national significance.





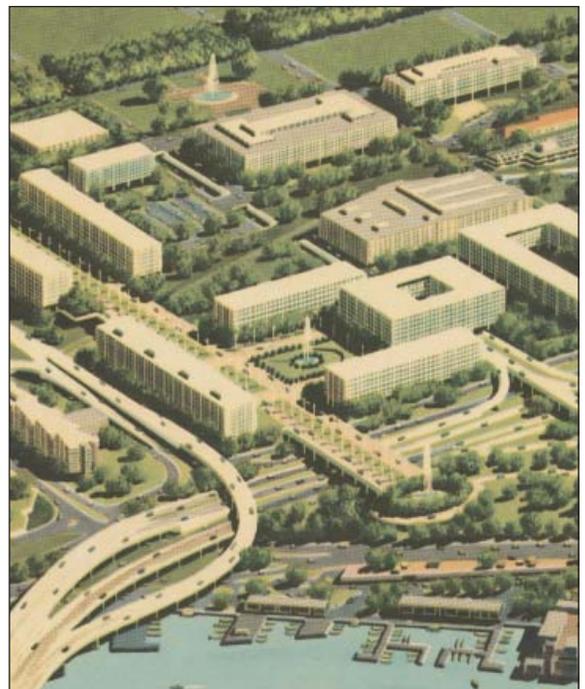
## About Southwest Washington

The Southwest Washington story was first captured and presented as public history in the River Farms to Urban Towers: Southwest Heritage Trail. However, this trail was confined to the southern section of Southwest and left out the predominantly federal section north of the Southeast-Southwest Freeway. The Southwest Federal Center Heritage Trail Assessment Report is the initial step towards filling this gap.

Many narratives about Southwest Washington describe the neighborhood as one of the oldest, and simultaneously, one of the newest in Washington. This characterization recognizes that while this area was one of the first areas settled during the capital's creation, most of it is relatively new because of large-scale redevelopment through urban renewal in the 1950s.

The Southwest neighborhood dates to 1791 when city planners placed a military installation there. Given its proximity to the U.S. Capitol and the White House, Southwest attracted speculative developers who built houses for legislators and government workers. Eventually working-class dock workers, tradesmen, and domestic workers populated the area. As the city's main waterfront, Southwest became a gateway and a community where free African Americans, migrants from West Virginia, and Italian and Eastern European Jewish immigrants lived and worked side by side.

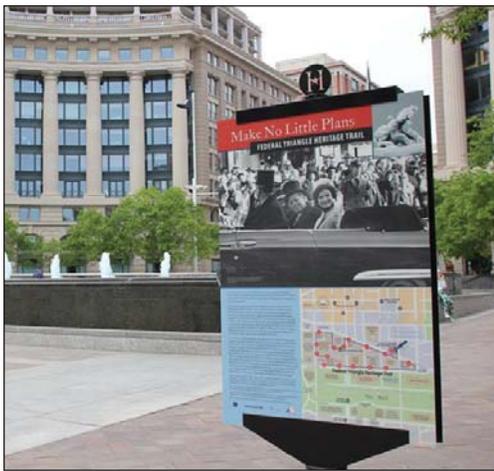
The area is also home to a significant amount of American Mid-century Modern architecture. In 1961, the U.S. Department of Education Headquarters (Federal Office Building No. 6) was the first building to be completed during the urban renewal period (roughly 1955 to 1975). The last was the L'Enfant Plaza Hotel (1973). While the River Farms to Urban Towers: Southwest Heritage Trail provides a rich narrative of local history and personal memories of Southwest residents, there are many more layers of history, including the evolution of the federal government's presence in Southwest, that can be told through a complementary Southwest Federal Center Heritage Trail.



Southwest Washington 1965  
poster rendering

## About the District of Columbia Neighborhood Heritage Trails

As of this writing, the District of Columbia’s Neighborhood Heritage Trails system is a collection of 18 self-guided walking trails in all eight city wards. Though relatively new, they have already become a city “brand” thanks to the collaboration of the general public on their content as well as their distinctive design, consistent presentation, depth of research, and accessibility. The trails embrace a new social history, combining recent memory as developed through extensive oral history interviewing and more formal historical research. As such they represent the cutting edge in public historic interpretation. The result is a dynamic, story-telling approach to bringing history to the general public. In 2009, the Council of the District of Columbia designated the Neighborhood Heritage Trails system as the city’s “Official Walking Trails.”



Heritage Trail signage example

Each Neighborhood Heritage Trail averages 16 signs and is accompanied by a free guidebook summarizing the trail’s information. Signs have about 250 words of text, plus eight to ten images with captions. Thus, the history presented is brief and to the point, enhanced by the “thousand words” contained within each image. Typically each sign will present a primary and a secondary story that occurred at its location. Heritage Trail signs are interpretive and fabricated for a minimum ten-year lifespan; therefore, they are not appropriate for displaying tourist information that is subject to frequent change. The current design of the standard Neighborhood Heritage Trail sign is a component of the District’s citywide wayfinding signage system that was approved by the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts.

Heritage Trails are complemented with summary guidebooks (available in English and Spanish) designed to be distributed free to the public at businesses and institutions along the route as an incentive for walkers to patronize these establishments. The guidebooks are also made available for distribution at area visitor and convention centers as well as in schools and libraries. The guidebooks reproduce some of the photographs used along the trail and provide bibliographical information along with a list of other trails and their locations. A number of trails currently have audio tours accessible via smartphones. These audio tours extend the historical information and enliven the walking experience.

The process of creating a Heritage Trail takes approximately two years. It begins with story sharing and gathering oral histories, extends through thorough documentary and photographic research and expert reviews, and ends with permitting, design, fabrication, and installation.

Like the city’s existing Heritage Trails, the intended purpose of the Southwest Federal Center Heritage Trail is not simply to be a collection of factual markers, but rather a collection of stories and dynamic historic images that convey the social history of the neighborhood while demystifying the activities that take place behind the imposing walls of the current federal structures. With this approach the Heritage Trail will better engage viewers who search for relevant associations as they are entertained and educated.





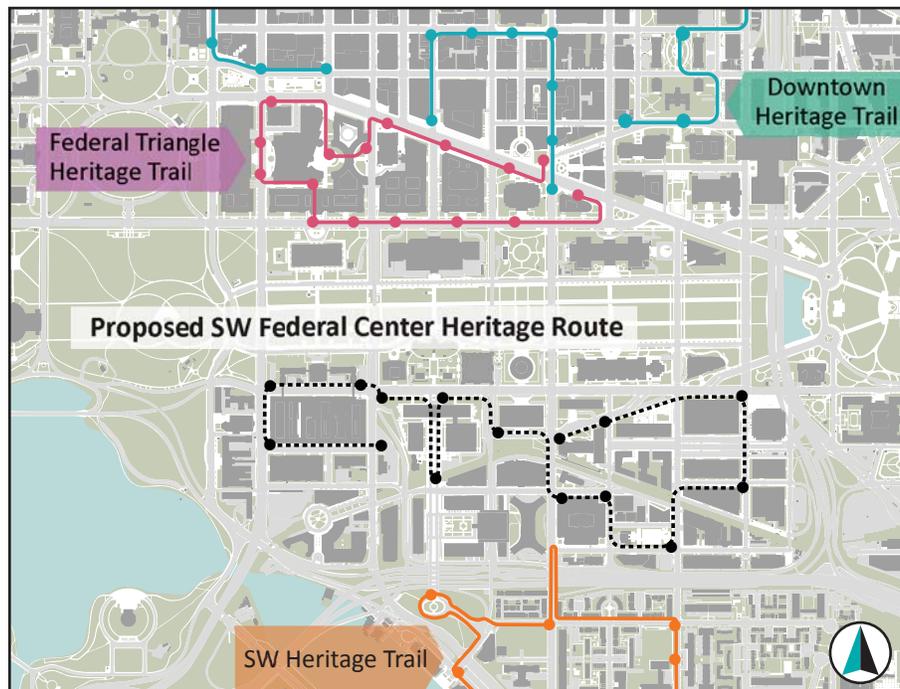
### III. Existing Conditions

#### Study Area

The boundary for this Assessment Report runs along Independence Avenue, SW on the north, 15th Street, SW, on the west, the Southeast-Southwest Freeway on the south, and South Capitol Street, SW on the east (Figure 1: Southwest Heritage Trail Area, Page 1). The study area extends beyond the boundaries of the SW Ecodistrict (Figure 2: SW Ecodistrict and Federal Triangle South Study Areas, Page 4) and the Federal Triangle South. From the onset of the Assessment Report, the boundaries of the study area were kept fluid to allow for flexibility in capturing interesting and relevant stories, both local and federal, and to accommodate public input as part of a later Heritage Trail creation process.

The use of this study area to design a Southwest Federal Center Heritage Trail is important for several reasons. First, this new Heritage Trail will serve as a link to two existing Neighborhood Heritage Trails: the Civil War to Civil Rights: Downtown Heritage Trail and River Farms to Urban Towers: Southwest Heritage Trail (Figure 4, Existing Heritage Trails). The new trail will provide a seamless transition between the Southwest Federal Center Heritage Trail markers and the National Mall’s wayfinding sign system, which directs visitors to the national memorials and park amenities within the National Park Service’s jurisdiction. Finally, using a larger study area for the Heritage Trail Assessment Report accommodates other significant civic and cultural destinations outside of the SW Ecodistrict and the functional boundary used by the *Monumental Core Framework Plan*. Since this Assessment does not provide a final set of stories and sign locations, it is best to keep the study area boundary flexible at this time.

Figure 4: Existing Heritage Trails



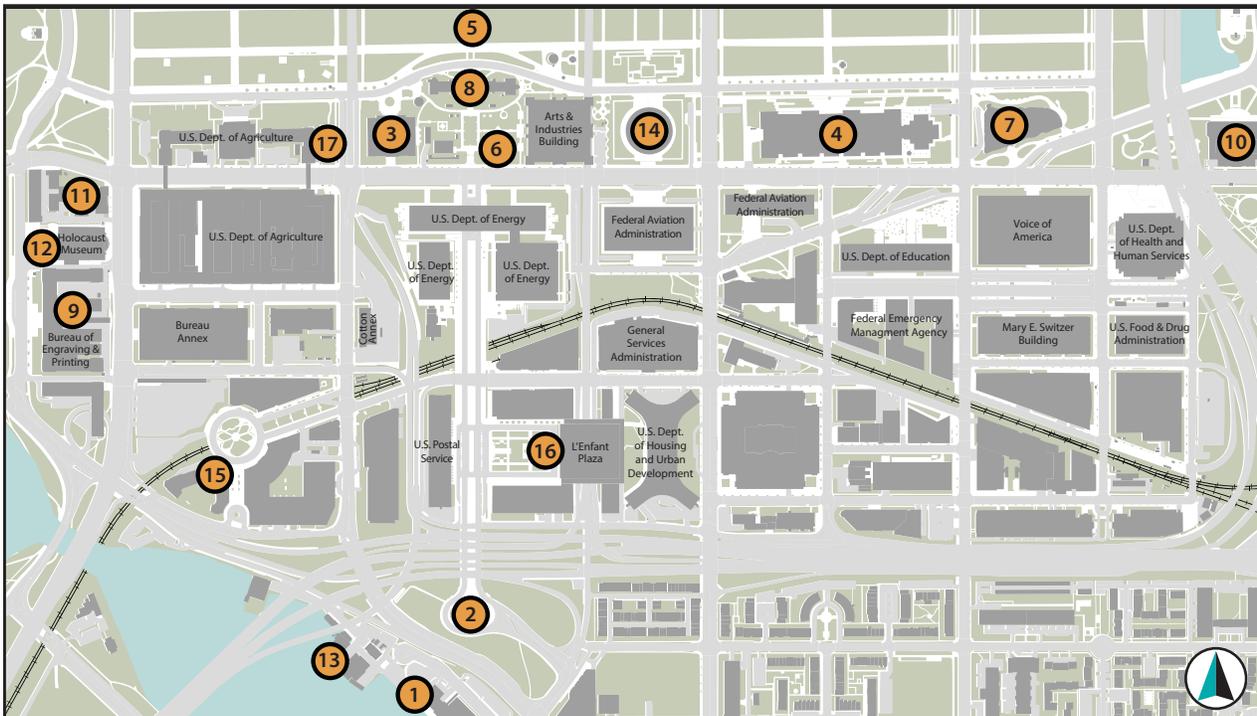
## Land Use

The Southwest Federal Center is predominantly occupied by federal government offices, including headquarters of cabinet level agencies, such as the U.S. Departments of Agriculture, Energy, Education, Health and Human Services, and Housing and Urban Development. Immediately north of the study area is the National Mall and four prominent Smithsonian museums, including the National Air and Space Museum, the most popular based on annual attendance. There are also privately owned office buildings and a hotel, similar in character to the federally owned buildings. Many of these buildings are leased to federal agencies.

## Cultural Resources in Federal Buildings

The study area has a wealth of cultural resources, including historically significant architecture like the Robert C. Weaver Building, headquarters of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, and the Smithsonian Castle (Figure 5, Cultural and Entertainment Destinations). While the exterior features of buildings can be appreciated from a distance, many federal buildings are no longer accessible to the public. Within the walls and interior spaces of these federal buildings are exemplary public art and architecture, such as the Great Depression-era murals in the General Services Administration Regional Office Building and the architectural ornamentation inside the USDA's Whitten Building. Some of these federal buildings were also sites of significant historical events, or associated with historical characters, such as Smokey the Bear, albeit less known to the public. The Southwest Federal Center Heritage Trail will make these cultural resources accessible again through interpretive signs and will celebrate this wealth of historical events and cultural resources.

**Figure 5: Cultural and Entertainment Destinations**



### Destinations

- |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Anacostia Riverwalk Trail                          | 7. National Museum of the American Indian | 13. Southwest Waterfront Fish Market      |
| 2. Banneker Park                                      | 8. Smithsonian Institution Castle         | 14. Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden |
| 3. Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery | 9. U.S. Bureau of Engraving and Printing  | 15. Mandarin Oriental Hotel               |
| 4. National Air & Space Museum                        | 10. U.S. Botanic Garden                   | 16. L'Enfant Plaza                        |
| 5. The National Mall                                  | 11. U.S. Forest Service Museum            | 17. USDA Farmers Market                   |
| 6. National Museum of African Art                     | 12. U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum        |   |

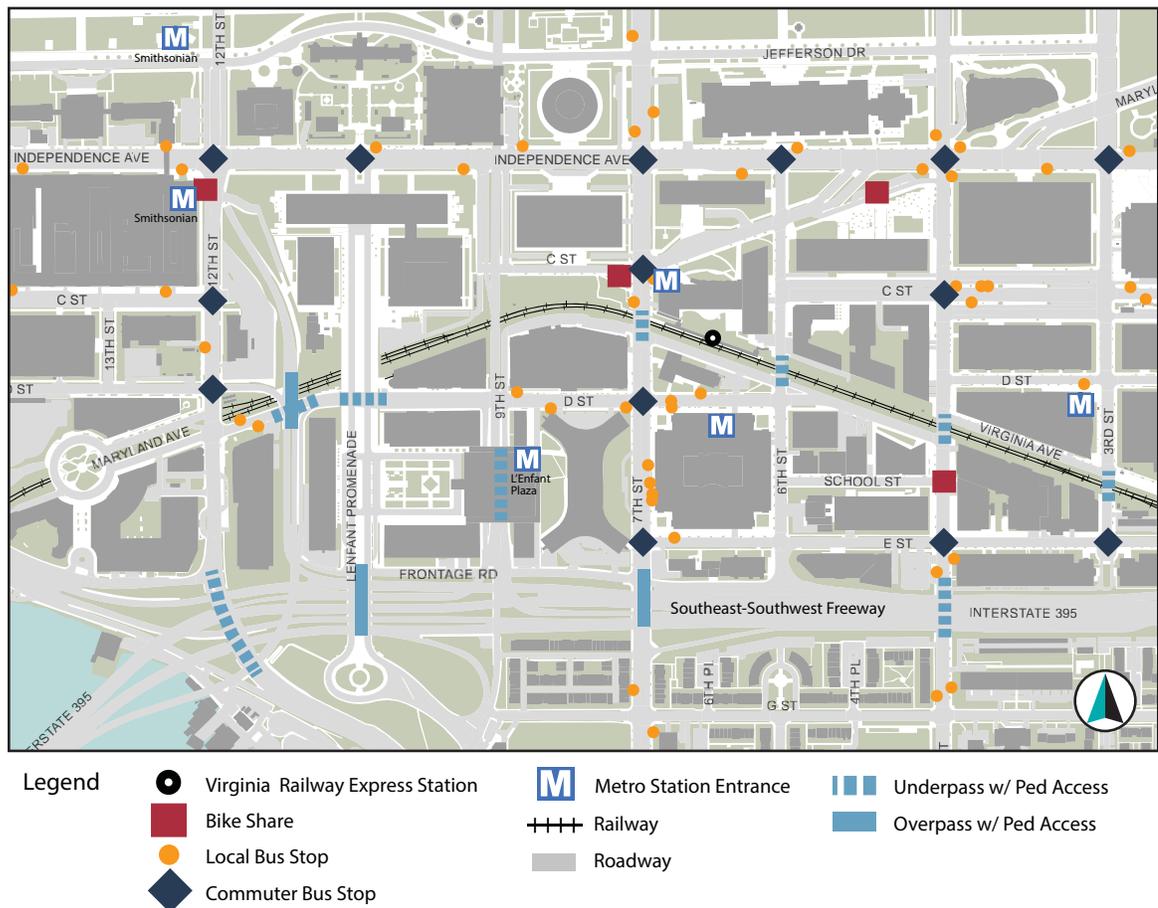
## Transportation Infrastructure

The study area is divided into three sections by railroad tracks running along the Maryland Avenue, SW corridor, and the 15-lane submerged Southeast-Southwest Freeway running east-west at the study area's southern end (Figure 6, Transportation). L'Enfant Plaza is a major transfer and destination point for Virginia Rail Express, Metrorail (Yellow, Blue, Orange and Green lines), Metrobus, and the Circulator.

Metrobuses and the DC Circulator also serve the area, with stops along major east-west and north-south streets. There are also future plans by the District Government to install a streetcar line along 7th Street, SW that will link this area to many of the neighborhoods north of downtown Washington and The Wharf, a new mixed-use multi-building development to be located on the Southwest waterfront. The Southwest neighborhood is also a parking hub for tour buses due to its easy access to the National Mall and the availability of on-street parking along Maine Avenue.

The area is also served by Capital Bikeshare with rental bikes available near the Smithsonian Metrorail station on Independence Avenue, SW and 12th Street, SW, and the L'Enfant Metrorail station on C Street, SW and 7th Street, SW.

**Figure 6: Transportation**





Maryland Avenue, SW



C Street, SW



L'Enfant Plaza VRE Station



10th Street, SW

## Existing Street-Level/Pedestrian Experience

While there are many amenities in the study area, there is little street life due to the poorly configured system of streets, freeways, railways, and massive office blocks. The area is cut off from the rest of the city, especially from nearby walkable amenities including the National Mall, downtown, and the waterfront. Disconnected streets, multi-level street elevations, and a poor wayfinding system create visual and physical barriers and discourage walking. One of the largest federal buildings in the study area, the Forrestal Building (U.S. Department of Energy headquarters), spans 10th Street, SW and creates a visual wall that discourages people from walking down 10th Street from the National Mall to the Southwest Waterfront.

The Heritage Trail can serve as a wayfinding system and promote better connections. Combined with the streetscape improvements proposed as part of the SW Ecodistrict Plan, the Heritage Trail markers can create a more welcoming pedestrian environment, with visual interest at the street level.





## IV. Assessment Study Development

To prepare this report, the National Capital Planning Commission and Cultural Tourism DC convened two meetings with representatives from interested federal agencies located within the Southwest Federal Center, as well as staff from the District of Columbia Office of Planning.

The following federal agencies participated:

- General Services Administration
- National Aeronautics and Space Administration
- National Park Service
- Smithsonian Institution
- U.S. Bureau of Engraving and Printing
- U.S. Department of Agriculture
- U.S. Department of Education
- U.S. Department of Energy
- U.S. Department of Homeland Security
- U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

The meetings focused on four key questions:

1. What stories could be told along a Southwest Federal Center Heritage Trail?
2. Where within the area's public space could these stories be told?
3. What resources are available to help tell these stories?
4. What are possible funding strategies?

NCPD and CTDC staff visited the Southwest Federal Center to gain a familiarity with the study area and its relationship with its surroundings; get a sense of the area's accessibility; take a visual inventory of its cultural, recreational, and commercial assets; and identify areas that may be appropriate for Heritage Trail signs. Additional background research was conducted in order to inform the meeting participants and identify possible Heritage Trail content.





## V. Possible Trail Route and Topics

The success of the Southwest Federal Center Heritage Trail will depend on its ability to effectively and concisely communicate the area's rich, multi-faceted history. This trail should demonstrate that the Southwest Federal Center is home to important federal and local government functions carried out by dedicated public servants, and is part of the larger narrative of city building in the nation. The Heritage Trail will present this history in the context of the planning and development of the nation's capital as well as the growth of the local communities attracted to its economic and cultural opportunities.

The Heritage Trail topics and possible sign locations that appear in the outline are based on ideas generated from the government stakeholder meetings. They also take into account lessons learned during the development of the city's existing Neighborhood Heritage Trails. For example, a key factor in planning a heritage trail is linking it to existing modes of public transportation, in particular Metrorail. Therefore, possible sign locations take advantage of the L'Enfant Plaza's multi-modal transit options near 7th and C Streets, SW. Other important considerations include the distance between Heritage Trail signs, sidewalk conditions, the distance walked and time it takes to complete the walking tour, the number of stories told on each sign, and the relevance of the information on a particular sign to its surroundings. Opportunities to direct visitors to important cultural and civic destinations within the neighborhood through the trail markers also inform the site selection.

The following outline is in no way a comprehensive or fully resolved set of heritage trail topics and sign locations. All titles are for discussion purposes only. The purpose of this information is to provide a foundation upon which the future efforts to design and implement the Southwest Federal Center Heritage Trail can rest. These efforts will require additional research and outreach in partnership with federal and local agencies, current and former public servants, private property owners, and the general public, especially individuals with family roots in the subject area. A result of the future heritage trail outreach effort will be uncovering individual stories that may resonate on a personal level with visitors, while eliciting a new-found respect for the nation's capital as both a government center and hometown.



L'Enfant Plaza Metro Station

## Southwest Federal Center Heritage Trail Draft Outline

All topics and locations will be refined in the project’s next phase.  
See Figure 1, page 1 for potential sign locations

**WORKING NAME: Southwest Federal Center Heritage Trail**  
**ICON: To be determined**

Please note: Sign content, including photographs and historical research, will be developed using resources from the Library of Congress; National Archives; DC Public Library; Historical Society of Washington, DC; Smithsonian Institution; Special Collections, Gelman Library, George Washington University; and specific federal agencies.

| Sign | Location                                     | Story  | Image Sources/Comments  |
|------|--|--|---|
| 1    | SE corner Maryland Ave. and Seventh Street   | Federal Aviation Administration agency history, mission and architecture. Buildings named for Orville and Wilbur Wright. Also site of Willow Tree Alley, well-documented area of old Southwest demolished for urban renewal. Possible place to tell story of alley communities lost in the 1960s. L’Enfant Plan, Maryland Ave. diagonals. Railroad (VRE) is visible, opportunity to mention transportation story.                          | FAA; Curtis photos of alleys. Need to watch for potential redevelopment of FAA buildings. |
| 2    | SW Corner Maryland Ave. and Sixth Street     | Department of Education, Lyndon B. Johnson Building: agency history and mission. Air & Space Museum is visible. Eisenhower Memorial. Good view of U.S. Capitol, Wilbur J. Cohen Building (has studio tours). Also visible is National Museum of American Indian (site of Mary Ann Hall brothel archaeological dig).  | Museums open to public with food, facilities.   |
| 3    | SW Corner of Third St. and Independence Ave. | Department of Health and Human Services, Hubert H. Humphrey Building, agency history and mission, modernist design by Marcel Breuer. Voice of America. U.S. Capitol again. Botanical Garden with Victorian fountain designed by Statue of Liberty sculptor, Bartholdi. Canal route (and remnant: Washington Ave., formerly Canal Street). House office buildings. American Veterans Disabled for Life Memorial at C St. SW and 2nd St. SW. |   |
| 4    | SW Corner Third and D Streets                | Gerald R. Ford House Office Building. Social Security, Mary E. Switzer Building, agency mission and history. Designs for pre-air conditioned Washington. First refrigerated warehouse in the city (300 D Street, SW). Recent archaeological findings of previous community life, rowhouses.  | May include archaeological objects.   |
| 5    | NW Corner Fourth and E Streets               | DC Forensics Laboratory, mission and history (green features of new building). NASA agency mission and history. View to residential Southwest, opportunity to continue urban renewal/mid-century Modern architecture story.  | NASA has public access to museum space, gift shop.  |
| 6    | Sixth and D Streets                          | Impact of Southwest Freeway - separated the residential neighborhood from the federal precinct. Fire station at Sixth and E, origin of School Street. Neighborhood stories pre-modernization.  |   |
| 7    | SE Corner Seventh and D Streets              | HUD building, mission, history, Brutalist design by Marcel Breuer as example of Modernist architecture. GSA Regional Office Building, historic murals and story of warehouse, concept of centralized procurement that helped withstand the Great Depression.   |   |



| Sign | Location                                    | Story  | Image Sources/Comments  |
|------|---|--|---|
| 8    | NE Corner Ninth and C Streets               | L'Enfant Plan, historic intersection of two major boulevards (Res. 113), view of the National Mall, Arts & Industries building, Hirshhorn Museum to the right enroute to next sign. Pre-development community, use of mall as playground. Former site of Army Medical Museum.  | Earth Day Park (may be relocated with the redevelopment of the SW Ecodistrict area).                |
| 9-A  | Tenth St. and Independence Ave.             | View and access to the Washington Channel, architecture and engineering of the area, with discussion of planning concepts including the idea to elevate Tenth St. Department of Energy James V. Forrestal Building, agency history and mission, design (spanning 10th Street). View of Smithsonian Castle, history of the museum's founding. Original intended occupant of Forrestal was the Dept. of Defense. | Uncertain fate of Forrestal Building.   |
| 9-B  | Tenth St. and Maryland Ave.                 | L'Enfant Promenade and Plaza, history and architecture, I.M. Pei design. Railroad history. Side trip to Fish Market and Banneker Park/ Waterfront. Unbuilt urban renewal projects: planetarium, cultural center (which was moved and became the Kennedy Center), National Aquarium and Ponte Vecchio over the Washington Channel.  | HABS SW Urban Renewal report, NCPC research of news clips   |
| 10   | SE corner Twelfth St. and Independence Ave. | Smithsonian museums: Sackler, Freer, African Art with stories of foundings, reference to permanent displays and other distinctive holdings. Loss of VA Avenue to railroad and Urban Renewal.   | Side trip to Smithsonian Haupt Garden.  |
| 11   | 1200 block Independence Ave.                | People's Garden Farm on the Mall (history). USDA mission, history and programs of national significance. Architecture of the Whitten Building.   | Need to check against Mall signage (opportunity to present wayfinding to the monuments and museums) |
| 12   | NE corner Independence Ave. and 14th Street | U.S. Forest Service, agency history and mission. U.S. Holocaust Memorial and Museum. Washington Monument – history of construction and role as centerpiece of public demonstrations on the Mall  |   |
| 13   | NE corner 14th and C Streets                | Bureau of Engraving and Printing, money story. Underground streetcar transfer station still visible, local transportation story. Liberty Loan Building.  | regular tours, gift shop, public access   |
| 14   | NE corner 12th and C Streets                | Cotton Annex historic building, story of role of USDA and cotton industry, Federal Cogeneration Plant at 12th and D. Return to Metro (Smithsonian station)   | USDA library; Library of Congress; GSA, NARA  |





## VI. Implementation Timeline

This implementation timeline is for discussion purposes only and is based largely on Cultural Tourism DC’s experience with designing other DC Neighborhood Heritage Trails. For the purposes of this assessment, design of the Southwest Federal Center Heritage Trail will begin in October 2014, and would continue for a period of approximately 22 months. An underlying assumption of this timeline is that the design of the Southwest Federal Center Heritage Trail signs will be consistent with the city’s existing Neighborhood Heritage Trails.

The timeline is broken into four components in order to show what project activities can take place concurrently, and to help identify areas where the project can be expedited once trail design begins. It is divided into production phases with milestones.

The **Content & Design component** includes public outreach, development of heritage trail content, and site panel design.

The **Agency Coordination component** outlines the schedule of federal and local coordination and review necessary to implement the project.

Finally, the **Sign Fabrication** and **Permitting & Installation components** describe the process of manufacturing and installing the heritage trail signs.

Note: All start dates subject to funding availability.

| Date             | Content & Design   | Agency Coordination  | Sign Fabrication | Permitting & Installation |
|------------------|--|--|------------------|---------------------------|
| 10/2014          | Begin public and agency stakeholder meetings to identify conceptual trail route and topics, and oral history subjects.   | Confirm stakeholder representatives and form a Southwest Federal Center Heritage Trail working group.<br><br>Initiate discussions with GSA, NPS, and DDOT on public space restrictions and permitting processes within the study area. |                  |                           |
| 3/2015           |  | Working group reviews and comments on conceptual trail route and topics, as well as list of identified oral history subjects.  |                  |                           |
| 3/2015           | Prepare request to the District Department of Transportation Public Space Management Branch for inclusion in the city’s Heritage Trail program   | Present conceptual trail route and topics to the District Department of Transportation Public Space Management Branch for review and approval  |                  |                           |
| Milestone 4/2015 | CTDC preparation of conceptual Heritage Trail route and topics.<br>NCPC and CFA review of conceptual Heritage Trail route and topics<br>(**assumes District Department of Transportation Public Space Management Branch approval **) |  |                  |                           |

| Date              | Content & Design  | Agency Coordination  | Sign Fabrication  | Permitting & Installation   |
|-------------------|---|--|---|---|
| 4/2015            | <p>Conceptual trail route and topics are expanded through in-depth research, oral interviews, and researching historical photographs.</p> <p>Preparation of draft trail script and captions and sign placement master plan.</p> | Initiation of Section 106 consultation and National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) processes (if required). |   |   |
| 8/2015            |   | Stakeholders review and comment on first draft of trail script, sign captions, and photo selections.         |   |   |
| 11/2015           | Final edits to draft trail script, sign captions, and photo selections.   | Stakeholders review and comment on final draft of trail script, sign captions, and photo selections.         |   |   |
| Milestone 11/2015 | NCPC and CFA review final trail route and topics.   |  |   |   |
| 11/2015           | Route/sign locations are declared final   |  | Initiate process for identifying contractor(s) for sign panel and hardware fabrication. | <p>Initiate process for identifying contractor(s) for sign installation.</p> <p>Begin permitting process with federal and local agencies.</p> |
| 12/2015           | Begin layout of trail sign panels   |  |   |   |
| 1/2016            | Begin writing companion guidebook (English version)   |  |   |   |
| 1/2016            |   | Stakeholders review and comment on design and layout of sign panels  |   |   |
| 2/2016            |   | Stakeholders review and comment on guidebook (English version)   |   |   |
| 3/2016            | Guidebook copy sent to Spanish translator   |  | Select sign panel and hardware fabricator(s)  |   |
| Milestone 2/2016  | Final design of trail signs sent to fabricator  |  |   |   |



| Date             | Content & Design             | Agency Coordination  | Sign Fabrication                   | Permitting & Installation  |
|------------------|------------------------------|--|------------------------------------|--|
| 3/2016           | Begin work on audio tour     |  |                                    |  |
| 4/2016           |                              | Stakeholders review and comment on guidebook (Spanish version)       |                                    | Complete all necessary permitting processes.<br><br>Select contractor(s) for installation of trail signs |
| 5/2016           |                              | Audio tour submitted to stakeholders for review and comment          |                                    |  |
| Milestone 6/2016 | Audio tour is completed      |  |                                    |  |
| 4/2016           | Guidebooks sent to designer  |  |                                    |  |
| 5/2016           |                              | Design of guidebook submitted to stakeholders for review and comment |                                    |  |
| 5/2016           | Guidebooks sent to printer   | Stakeholders arrange guidebook distribution                          | Trail signs received and inspected |  |
| Milestone 6/2016 | Guidebooks delivered         |  |                                    |  |
| 6/2016           |                              |  |                                    | Signs installed  |
| Milestone 7/2016 | Final trail dedication event |  |                                    |  |



Construction of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Robert C. Weaver building, 1966  
*Library of Congress*



## VII. Cost Estimate

The following estimate reflects the typical costs associated with the planning, design, and installation of a 14-sign heritage trail in the Southwest Federal Center. As with the suggested implementation timeline, this cost estimate is based on the past experiences of Cultural Tourism DC in designing and implementing the existing system of DC Neighborhood Heritage Trails. All cost estimates are based on 2014 pricing and are subject to change based on federal government procurement procedures if the trail receives federal funding as well as when implementation of the Southwest Federal Center Heritage Trail actually begins.

### Phase I through Application

Hold stakeholder meetings; compile data, write application, appear before Heritage Trails Advisory Committee for review and approval.  
6 months (10/2014-3/2015)

#### Meetings & Writing Application

|                                    |                 |
|------------------------------------|-----------------|
| Staff .....                        | \$29,760        |
| Supplies and Travel.....           | \$270           |
| <b>Subtotal.....</b>               | <b>\$30,030</b> |
| No change based on number of signs |                 |

### Phase II Development

Complete research, work with stakeholders on building access questions, compile historic images, edit manuscript, submit for stakeholders' review, and prepare final manuscript.  
8 months (4/2014-11/2014)

|   |                 |
|---|-----------------|
| Staff .....                             | \$66,220        |
| Supplies and Travel.....                | \$300           |
| Photo Acquisition and Permissions ..... | \$2,270         |
| <b>Subtotal for 15 Signs.....</b>       | <b>\$68,790</b> |
| Each additional sign .....              | \$4,586         |

### Phase III Design

Design signs, submit for stakeholders' comments, write, translate into Spanish, design, print booklets, produce audio tour  
8 months (12/2014 - 7/2015)

|                                   |                 |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------|
| Staff .....                       | \$23,430        |
| Translator .....                  | \$2,760         |
| Supplies and Travel.....          | \$200           |
| Cartography.....                  | \$510           |
| Design - English book .....       | \$9,100         |
| Design - Spanish book .....       | \$6,670         |
| Design - Signs .....              | \$13,060        |
| Printing - English Book .....     | \$8,040         |
| Printing Spanish Book .....       | \$5,340         |
| <b>Subtotal For 15 signs.....</b> | <b>\$69,110</b> |
| Each additional sign .....        | \$4,607         |

**Phase III Design CONTINUED**

**Audio Tour**

5 months (3/2015-6/2015)

|                             |                 |
|-----------------------------|-----------------|
| Staff .....                 | \$24,640        |
| Audio producer .....        | \$33,900        |
| <br>                        |                 |
| Subtotal For 15 signs ..... | <b>\$58,540</b> |
| Each additional sign .....  | \$3,902         |

**PHase IV Fabrication and Installation**

**Manage fabrication including all proofs and oversee installation.**

**This does not include permitting costs if applicable.**

5 months (3/2015 - 7/2015)

**Fabrication**

|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| Staff .....                            | \$6,500   |
| Supplies and Travel.....               | \$150     |
| Fabrication of standard HT signs ..... | \$107,650 |

**Subtotal for Fabrication For 15 signs..... \$114,300**

Each additional sign .....\$7,620

**Installation**

|   |          |
|---|----------|
| Staff .....                             | \$2,695  |
| Supplies and Travel.....                | \$150    |
| Installation of standard HT signs ..... | \$28,815 |

**Subtotal for Installation For 15 signs..... \$31,660**

Each additional sign .....\$2,110

**Total cost for all phases: 15 signs: \$369,430, each additional sign: \$22,825.**



## VIII. Planning Considerations

### Federal and Local Review

This section briefly describes the various public review and/or regulatory approvals required for the project, as well as some important design issues that should be considered in the development of the Heritage Trail.

The Heritage Trail signs will be located within public spaces and will require review by the federal and local authorities that have jurisdiction over these spaces. In addition to review requirements, federal projects in the area under Section 106 review for compliance with the National Historic Preservation Act could also consider the heritage trail as mitigation for the adverse effects of project actions. If the federal agencies choose to do this, the project proponent's review and input of the trail content and market location is likely. In addition, federal funding could also be involved in the development and construction of the markers.

### National Capital Planning Commission

As the central planning agency for the federal government, the National Capital Planning Commission has review authority over federal projects in the National Capital Region. If the signs associated with the Southwest Federal Center Heritage Trail are located on land owned by the federal government, this project would be subject to NCPC review and approval. NCPC review involves analysis regarding the consistency of the proposed action with the policies of the *Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital: Federal Elements*, the *Monumental Core Framework Plan*, and other relevant plans and policies. In addition, as a federal agency, NCPC's approval actions are subject to the requirements of Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Therefore, depending on the scope and location of the project, the entity charged with leading the implementation of the heritage trail may be required to initiate and complete Section 106 consultation with the District of Columbia State Historic Preservation Office, and prepare necessary environmental documentation in accordance with NEPA.

### U.S. Commission of Fine Arts

The U.S. Commission of Fine Arts (CFA) reviews the design of public buildings, commemorative works, and parks in the District of Columbia, among other responsibilities. In addition, the Shipstead-Luce Act authorizes CFA to review the designs of private developments on land abutting or across from important federal properties. Therefore, the implementation of the Southwest Federal Center Heritage Trail may be subject to review by CFA.



### **Federal Agency Internal Review**

A federal agency may be interested in sponsoring a marker in front of its building or may allow the installation of a marker within its property. In cases where federal properties are identified as candidate sites for heritage trail markers, early coordination and formal permissions from the federal property owners should be established. If the Federal Triangle Heritage Trail could serve as a precedent, NPS and the General Services Administration may be two agencies that would review the trail marker design and locations, if the markers are to be located on their properties. While these are internal reviews and will not require public reviews, the affected federal agencies should be consulted to coordinate their review processes with the Cultural Tourism DC Heritage Trail development process, and the review time should be factored into the overall project schedule for the completion of the Heritage Trail.

### **District Department of Transportation Public Space Committee**

The District Department of Transportation (DDOT) has management and oversight responsibility for the use and occupancy of the public space. Public space is defined as all the publicly owned property between the property lines on a street and includes, but is not limited to, the roadway, tree spaces, sidewalks and alleys. Depending upon the type and location of the request to use or occupy the public space, the request may require the review of DDOT's Public Space Committee. The Public Space Committee meets monthly to review and render a decision on a variety of types of permit applications, and provides a recommendation to DDOT on whether an application can be approved without having an adverse impact on the use and safety of the public space. Since the signs associated with the Southwest Federal Center Heritage Trail will be located within the public right-of-way, they will require the review of the DDOT Public Space Committee.

## **Public Involvement and Interagency Collaboration**

In addition to the public participation that is necessary during the federal and local review process, the actual development of the heritage trail should be based on extensive public input. As a mostly federal office enclave, the Southwest Federal Center is currently not a "neighborhood" in the traditional sense of the word. However, this should not be interpreted to mean that the area lacks strong personal connections. Modern urban renewal is still a matter of recent memory for families and businesses displaced by the federal and private projects that claimed this space over time. There is an existing body of historical research on what came before the present configurations, and there are former residents and their descendants who are repositories of photographs, artifacts, and documents of this earlier time. The Southwest Federal Center Heritage Trail will be an opportunity to preserve their stories for current and future generations.

To a large degree, the development history of the Southwest Federal Center as a government enclave is a physical embodiment of the story of the United States, and therefore an opportunity to reach audiences on a national level. To ensure that residents, workers, and visitors can personally relate to stories told on the Heritage Trail, efforts should be made to collect stories from as diverse a population as possible during the research phase of the project. The heritage trail is also an opportunity to educate the public on the role of government in everyday life, especially on the history and mission



of the government agencies within the Southwest Federal Center. Therefore, current and former government employees, historians, and other interested stakeholders should work closely with those putting together the heritage trail in order to assemble a clear and consistent message.

## **Sign Design and Placement**

Accessibility to the Southwest Federal Center will be further enhanced by ensuring that the Heritage Trail is seamlessly integrated with the city's existing system of Neighborhood Heritage Trails. In order to make this happen it is important that the design, content, and placement of the Heritage Trail signs are consistent with the city's system. This will allow pedestrians to have confidence in the trails to safely and reliably guide them, as well as provide a consistent set of maps that pedestrians can use to navigate between downtown, the National Mall, the Southwest neighborhood, and the waterfront.

The Southwest Federal Center Heritage Trail should follow the same process for developing signs, graphic and narrative style, and trail content set by the city's Neighborhood Heritage Trails program. The city's system clearly differentiates individual trails and their neighborhoods by the use of distinctive color palettes, titles, and repeating pictorial elements (icons). Thus trail users can clearly see which trail they are following at any given moment even when they are in site of another Heritage Trail.

## **Pedestrian Safety and Accessibility**

A key objective for developing the Southwest Federal Center Heritage Trail is to improve pedestrian connections between downtown, the National Mall, the Southwest neighborhood, and the waterfront.

The Southwest Federal Center Heritage Trail has the potential to be a unifying element of the streetscape throughout the Southwest Federal Center public spaces by:

- Providing visual interest in the public realm and modulating the monumentality of the federal buildings with human-scale street elements.
- Serving as a de facto wayfinding sign system, visually and physically linking existing destinations.
- Drawing visitors and pedestrians into publicly accessible federal and retail spaces.
- Seamlessly integrating with the District of Columbia's existing Neighborhood Heritage Trails and the National Mall Wayfinding Program.

Although sidewalks and walking paths currently exist within the Southwest Federal Center, they may not possess adequate amenities for wayfinding, safety, and pedestrian comfort. The large-scale buildings and the street grade changes cut off sightlines and long-distance views of destinations and iconic landmarks, making wayfinding a challenge. Therefore, pedestrian safety and accessibility must be a key consideration during the Heritage Trail's research and planning stages.





Federal Aviation Administration headquarters, Orville Wright Building, C Street, SW

Taking the necessary precautions to ensure pedestrian safety and comfort will greatly increase the trail's success in conveying information.

This includes:

- Choosing a route where crosswalks are in good working order including paving and signal timers;
- Choosing a route where sidewalks are well-maintained and meet ADA standards;
- Minimizing the number of street crossings;
- Maintaining proximity to places that have seating, shade, and refreshments;
- Locating trail signs far enough away from curbs and busy intersections;
- Locating trail signs so as not to impede pedestrian flow along the sidewalk; and
- Locating trail signs in areas that are well lit, have multiple points of access, and are not screened by walls or vegetation.

In addition to improving pedestrian connections, the Heritage Trail can potentially increase access and visitation to local businesses and civic destinations. To maximize this potential, the Heritage Trail's design should consider existing and planned amenities within the study area.

An initial assessment of the civic destinations in the Southwest Federal Center was conducted by NCPC as part of the *SW Ecodistrict Plan*. The map of Cultural and Entertainment Destinations (Figure 5, page 11) shows several destinations immediately outside of the study area, including several Smithsonian museums, the U.S. Capitol, the Washington Monument, and downtown shops and restaurants.

These major destinations and attractions can be visually linked to the heritage trail through the strategic placement of the trail's interpretive signs near primary building entryways and gateway locations. In the future, when the *SW Ecodistrict Plan* is fully implemented, street-level retail will benefit from the enhancement in the public realm provided by the Heritage Trail. As such, it is important to consider the proposed location of retail by the *SW Ecodistrict Plan* in selecting the location of the trail markers.

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U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development headquarters, 7th Street, SW

## Public Access to Federal Buildings

The typical Neighborhood heritage trail is designed to draw foot traffic to local neighborhood businesses; however, since this area currently lacks retail and storefronts the Heritage Trail could serve to draw visitors to federal agencies' public exhibits and services. Many of the federal agencies in the Southwest Federal Center present interpretive exhibits showcasing their mission and offer special programs in their lobbies, including the U.S. Departments of Agriculture, Energy and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration. The USDA has a community garden and holds weekly farmer's market in the summer.

A heritage trail can also help promote visitor services offered by the federal agencies that are not well known, such as the NASA gift shop and the USDA cafeteria. This cafeteria offers affordable and healthy dining options, and could provide a needed visitor amenity in the west end of the Mall where there are limited places to eat.

The Southwest Federal Center is primarily office buildings, where employees conduct the daily work of federal agencies. As such, if public access is allowed in these buildings workplace disruption should be minimized and work environments secured. Guided public tours could be limited to the lobbies, hallways, and communal areas without disturbing federal employees at work and overall agency operations. Individual building tours could take place on a regular basis when workplace disruption and security concerns would be minimal. Information about these tours could be included in the Heritage Trail guidebooks or on various websites.



## Transit Access and Linkages

To increase visibility and access, Heritage Trail signs should be strategically located near bus stops and Metrorail stations. The L'Enfant Plaza station has some of the highest transit ridership for Metrorail and Virginia Rail Express, where it serves as a transfer and final destination point for workers and residents from various parts of the city and region.

## Design Coordination with Federal and Local Plans and Land Use Policies

The design and location of the Southwest Federal Center Heritage Trail signs should be coordinated with developed design guidelines and ongoing plans for other public amenities such as streetscape improvement plans and transit center plans. This will aid in reducing visual clutter along the streetscape, and help facilitate smooth pedestrian circulation.

As part of implementing the *SW Ecodistrict Plan*, NCPC developed a Streetscape Design Standard for the Southwest Federal Center. NCPC also developed a streetscape concept design for L'Enfant Promenade/10th Street, SW and Banneker Park.

The *Maryland Avenue Small Area Plan* recommended restoring Maryland Avenue between 7th and 9th streets, SW, by creating a new at-grade pedestrian connection, as well as restoring the viewshed of Virginia Avenue. When fully constructed, the new Maryland Avenue will allow buildings to locate their lobby entrances along Maryland Avenue, which is currently a railroad corridor, thus facilitating increased foot traffic at some of the east-west and north-south streets in the study area, as well as raising the visibility of certain intersections that may not be obvious candidates for trail markers at current street conditions. A more in-depth analysis of the impacts of proposed land uses and street grid improvements in the *Maryland Avenue Small Area Plan* should be conducted to assess the opportunities for locating trail markers along Maryland Avenue.

If possible, the sign construction and installation should also be coordinated with street and sidewalk improvements. This will minimize construction costs and ensure a coordinated streetscape design.

## Sign and Trail Maintenance

Prior to construction, a well-thought-out sign and trail maintenance strategy should be developed to ensure the trail's long-term ability to educate and safely guide users. This strategy should identify the agencies or organizations that would be responsible for the physical maintenance of the signs, including carrying out repairs and cleaning when necessary. It should identify and secure the sources of funding for sign maintenance, and for continued publication of the free trail guidebooks. Finally, it should contain a timeline for updating sign content and renovating sign panels.





U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 3rd Street, SW

## IX. Conclusions

Implementation of the Southwest Federal Center Heritage Trail would advance the goals of the *Monumental Core Framework Plan* and the *SW Ecodistrict Plan* and fulfill a long-standing desire to highlight the Southwest Federal Center's rich collection of cultural assets and improve connections throughout this part of the city. Through a series of well-designed, strategically located interpretive signs, the Heritage Trail will describe the history and mission of the government agencies located in the Southwest Federal Center, document the evolution of the area's physical and social make-up, and showcase the diverse array of artistic and architectural assets that currently exist. With such a diverse range of educational offerings, the Southwest Federal Center could become a museum of many parts, comparable to the institutions on the National Mall.

As much as the Heritage Trail will serve to educate, it can also serve as an effective means of wayfinding, and ultimately improve accessibility throughout the Southwest Federal Center by weaving together parks, plazas, and public spaces along a flexible and easy-to-navigate trail. Furthermore, by providing an amenity that will likely result in pedestrians extending the length of their visit to the Southwest Federal Center, the heritage trail will help to invigorate many of this area's public spaces, and perhaps play an important role in a more comprehensive program focused on enlivening these spaces through the use of ground-floor retail, vending, concerts, building tours, and public art exhibits.



U.S. Department of Agriculture's Whitten Building and new plantings on the National Mall, 1937



Planting soybeans on the National Mall, 1931



U.S. Department of Agriculture complex, 1938



## X. Acknowledgements

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USDA's Whitten Building, USDA



The National Capital Planning Commission is the federal government's planning agency for the National Capital Region. NCPC believes the heritage trail can advance the objectives of two of its signature plans: the *Monumental Core Framework Plan* and the *SW Ecodistrict Plan*. Both plans emphasize the importance of creating active, engaging, and high-quality streets and public spaces that workers, residents and visitors can enjoy.

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Cultural Tourism DC, a local not-for-profit organization, specializes in the development of Neighborhood Heritage Trails in Washington, DC. To date they have developed 17 popular, widely recognized heritage trails throughout the city, including nearby trails in Southwest Washington, south of the proposed trail, and in the Federal Triangle, north of the National Mall.

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