



Executive Director's Recommendation

Commission Meeting: April 3, 2025

PROJECT Poplar Point Master Plan Washington, DC	NCPC FILE NUMBER MP317
SUBMITTED BY United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service	NCPC MAP FILE NUMBER 00:00(05.00)45996
REVIEW AUTHORITY Approval of Master Plans for use by the Commission per 40 U.S.C. § 8722(a) and (b)(1)	APPLICANT'S REQUEST Approval of comments on concept master plan
	PROPOSED ACTION Approve comments on concept master plan
	ACTION ITEM TYPE Staff Presentation

PROJECT SUMMARY

The National Park Service (NPS) in coordination with the District of Columbia Office of the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development (DMPED) and the District of Columbia Office of Planning (DCOP) has submitted the concept master plan for Poplar Point in Washington, DC for Commission review and comment. Poplar Point is a 110-acre site located along the eastern edge of the Anacostia River in Ward 8. It is directly adjacent to Historic Anacostia and is bordered by the Frederick Douglass Memorial Bridge to the west, the Anacostia River to the north, Anacostia Park to the east, and the Bridge District, the Anacostia Metrorail Station parking garage, and I-295 (Anacostia Freeway) to the south. The site is also home to three NPS facilities: the U.S. Park Police (USPP) Anacostia Operations Facility, the USPP Anacostia Aviation Facility, and the National Capital Parks-East Headquarters. The project site is currently under the jurisdiction of the NPS.

The purpose of the Poplar Point Master Plan is to develop a land use plan for Poplar Point, one of the required steps to enable the transfer of the property from the NPS to the District of Columbia. In order to complete the transfer, the Federal and District of Columbia Government Real Property Act of 2006 (Public Law 109-396, commonly referred to as the DC Lands Act) requires the following:

- Provide for the reservation of no fewer than 70 acres of land on site, including wetlands, for park purposes;
- Identify and relocate existing NPS facilities and related properties;
- Determine at least two sites within the park use for the placement of potential commemorative works to be established pursuant to the Commemorative Works Act. The District of Columbia would convey back those sites to the NPS at the appropriate time;

- To the greatest extent practicable, be consistent with the Anacostia Waterfront Initiative Framework Plan

The concept master plan is at any early stage. There will be a number of opportunities for public feedback as the planning process advances. The Commission's comments, along with those from the public, will help guide the master plan development.

KEY INFORMATION

- Poplar Point is a 110-acre site located on the southeastern edge of the Anacostia River in Ward 8 of Washington, DC.
- The majority of the site is located within the 100- and 500-year floodplains.
- Poplar Point is currently under the National Park Service (NPS) jurisdiction and consists of a mix of accessible open space, wetlands and natural areas, abandoned remains of former greenhouses and other government facilities, as well as the NPS's current administrative and law enforcement facilities.
- In 1902, Congress appropriated funds for the improvement of the Anacostia River mudflats. Three years later, contractors for the U.S Army Corps of Engineers significantly built up and expanded Poplar Point into the river and to the east with mud dredged from the Anacostia River, building a thick masonry wall to separate the land from the water.
- Anacostia Park, including the new and enlarged Poplar Point, was dedicated in a six-hour ceremony on August 2nd, 1923. The western part of the site became a 34.5-acre District of Columbia government tree farm (the Landham Tree Nursery) and the 24.66-acre Architect of the Capitol's Botanic Garden Greenhouse and Nursery at Poplar Point.
- In 2006, Congress enacted legislation (Public Law 109-396, commonly referred to as the DC Lands Act) directing the United States to transfer the NPS property at Poplar Point to the District of Columbia. For the land transfer to occur, the DC Lands Act requires:
 - Preserving at least 70 acres for park purposes;
 - Identifying the NPS facilities and their relocation sites;
 - Allocating two locations for federal memorials; and,
 - Completing a land use plan.
- The master planning process is a collaboration between the Government of the District of Columbia (District) and the National Park Service (NPS), which involves preparing an Environmental Assessment (EA) and a Master Plan to meet legal requirements for transferring the land from the NPS to the District.

RECOMMENDATION

The Commission:

Approves the following comments on the Poplar Point concept master plan:

Supports the applicant's project goals for Poplar Point to expand the wetlands, celebrate the Point, rediscover the shoreline, build upon adjacent projects, focus on Metrorail access, and connect with the Anacostia Community.

Notes the plan is a required step in the process to transfer the land from the National Park Service to the District of Columbia outlined in the Federal and District of Columbia Government Real Property Act of 2006 (Public Law 109-396, commonly referred to as the DC Lands Act).

Supports the applicant's intent to improve and develop Poplar Point into a community amenity by providing a publicly-accessible waterfront park with cultural, economic, and recreational attractions and activities, spur revitalization efforts east of the river by providing a mix of residential, retail, and office uses around Anacostia Metrorail Station, and improve access to and expand the recreational amenities within southern Anacostia Park.

Notes the submission includes three alternatives for Poplar Point. The spatial development of each alternative is guided by a key theme.

Notes this early concept submission does not include information regarding proposed density, land use, building heights, and future function of the existing seawall; however, this information is anticipated as part of future submission, after consultation with the public and stakeholders.

Concept Alternatives

Finds that all three alternatives would help address expansion of the wetlands as a focal feature, include new memorial sites and cultural venues, improve use of the shoreline, and provide focal uses on the Point.

Finds the three alternatives each contain successful components (noted below) that may be interchanged or combined in the development of a preferred alternative.

Alternative A: Greenway Connections

Notes Alternative A:

- Emphasizes greenway connections across the site and into Anacostia, linking the wetlands to the 11th Street Bridge Park.
- Places a potential memorial and cultural use at the Point with an unobstructed view of the city and the wetland.
- Places a memorial on axis with views of the Washington Monument and the crossing greenways, ensuring a high level of visibility for a future memorial site.
- Includes a new stand-alone pedestrian bridge to increase access to the site.

Supports the protection of views of the Capitol (New Jersey Avenue) and the Washington Monument, important viewsheds that add to the uniqueness of the site.

Supports the prominent locations identified for two future memorials, including one at the Point.

Supports the absence of development between the wetlands and the river which preserves expansive views and can allow for more natural hydrology.

Finds that the roadway design creates irregular shaped blocks and intersections that will need refinement as the plan progresses.

Finds the development pattern results in a potentially unpleasant green space between buildings and the I-295 freeway which is a space that may be better suited for development.

Alternative B: Central Wetlands

Notes Alternative B:

- Frames the wetlands with development.
- Includes three future memorial sites, one at the Point surrounded by development, another in the center of a public square, and the third at the eastern end of the site, adjacent to the 11th Street Bridge Park.
- Includes a new stand-alone pedestrian bridge to increase access to the site.

Finds Alternative B respects the viewshed to the Washington Monument, but not the New Jersey Avenue view to the U.S. Capitol.

Supports the prominent locations identified for the three future memorials.

Finds surrounding the wetlands with development limits views to and from the wetlands and reduces the opportunity for natural river flooding into the wetlands.

Finds the development pattern to the east is more efficient with smaller blocks allowing greater porosity and more usable areas for recreation.

Alternative C: Anchor Use on the Point

Notes Alternative C:

- Envisions a large anchor on the Point.
- Frames the wetlands with development on three sides and the anchor use to the north.
- Includes two memorial sites and a cultural facility all within the large waterfront park but not at the Point or within the viewsheds.
- Eliminates the stand-alone pedestrian bridge that is proposed in Alternatives A and B, and instead makes the existing access point at W Street, SE pedestrian only.

Finds Alternative C does not respect either the New Jersey Avenue viewshed or the Washington Monument viewshed in the design.

Finds the large anchor use on the Point appears disconnected from the rest of the site and depending on the overall massing, could have a significant impact on views to and from the wetlands.

Finds Alternative C allows for the greatest amount of recreational space to the east, identified as recreational fields.

Finds the elimination of the pedestrian bridge at Chicago Street, SE and conversion of the W Street, SE bridge to pedestrian-only results in the least number of connections to the existing neighborhood.

General Recommendations

Flooding

Finds that unlike the west side of the Anacostia River, this large undeveloped site presents a unique opportunity to connect with the shoreline and model natural flood resiliency in addition to creating a wonderful new neighborhood/amenity.

Requests the following information as part of the next submission, including:

- The overall flood mitigation approach for the site, including resilient approaches to allow water on-site and flood-proofing.
- The impacts of achieving the desired elevation of +10 feet on the design of development and open space, particularly the relationship between the ground floor level and adjacent public spaces.
- The intended future of the existing seawall which is in poor shape, and whether it will continue to provide flood protection and/or be removed to allow more natural hydrology, along with any new flood protection structures.
- The status of any coordination with Joint Base Anacostia Bolling and if/how flood mitigation proposals at both sites are being considered together.

Development/Massing

Supports lining the I-295 corridor and the east oval of the Frederick Douglass Memorial Bridge with buildings given the amount of noise disturbance.

Notes it is difficult to assess the alternatives without information on potential massing and land-use which have implications on views, traffic, and flood protection. The alternatives should reflect potential trade-offs between height, building footprints, and location.

Requests the following information as part of the next submission, including:

- The proposed development density, heights, and land uses.
- How the proposed development will respect and enhance existing views and vistas, both from the site and across the site from Historic Anacostia, specifically views along

- New Jersey Avenue to the U.S. Capitol and from the Historic Frederick Douglass home, as outlined in the Federal Elements of the Comprehensive Plan;
- How a potential anchor use would be incorporated into Alternatives A and B;
 - Whether the anchor use could work in the green space to the east in Alternative C; and
 - Clarifying what opportunities for public space use could occur in the green spaces based on size, configuration and location.

Roadways

Notes all three alternatives show a primary roadway along the riverfront, through the wetlands, and connecting to the Frederick Douglass Bridge south oval entrance.

Finds roadways along the shorelines or through wetlands are not desirable but may be necessary given the constraints of the site.

Requests more information in the next submission regarding the anticipated volume of traffic for this primary roadway, the proposed design, and how pedestrian crossings to the riverfront trail will be accommodated.

Coordination and Outreach

Encourages the applicant to continue coordination and outreach with the community in the development of the master plan, including identifying opportunities for interpretation of the site's history, and other uses that would support local needs.

PROJECT REVIEW TIMELINE

Previous actions	None
Remaining actions (anticipated)	– Draft Master Plan – Final Master Plan

PROJECT ANALYSIS

Executive Summary

The National Park Service (NPS) in coordination with the District of Columbia Office of the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development (DMPED) and the District of Columbia Office of Planning (DCOP) has submitted a concept master plan for Poplar Point in Washington, DC for Commission review and comment. The plan is a required step in the process to transfer the land from the National Park Service to the District of Columbia outlined in the Federal and District

of Columbia Government Real Property Act of 2006 (Public Law 109-396, commonly referred to as the DC Lands Act).

Overall, staff recommends the **Commission support the National Park Service's project goals for Poplar Point to expand the wetlands, celebrate the Point, rediscover the shoreline, build upon adjacent projects, focus on Metrorail access, and connect with the Anacostia Community; and also support the applicant's intent to improve and develop Poplar Point into a community amenity by providing a publicly-accessible waterfront park with cultural, economic, and recreational attractions and activities, spur revitalization efforts east of the river by providing a mix of residential, retail, and office uses around Anacostia Metrorail Station, and improve access to and expand the recreational amenities within southern Anacostia Park.**

The concept master plan is early in development, and the planning process will include a number of opportunities for public input and engagement moving forward. In addition, the Commission will review draft and final versions of the master plan. The comments on the concept master plan are intended to help frame and identify topics of consideration as this effort moves forward. As such, staff recommends the **Commission approve the following comments on the Poplar Point concept master plan.**

Analysis

Overview

Poplar Point is a 110-acre site located along the eastern edge of the Anacostia River in Ward 8, Washington, DC. It is directly adjacent to Historic Anacostia and is bordered by the Frederick Douglass Memorial Bridge to the west, the Anacostia River to the north, Anacostia Park to the east, and the Bridge District, the Anacostia Metrorail Station parking garage, and I-295 (Anacostia Freeway) to the south. The site is also home to three National Park Service facilities: the U.S. Park Police Anacostia Operations Facility, the USPP Anacostia Aviation Facility, and the National Capital Parks-East Headquarters. The project site is under the jurisdiction of the NPS. The Poplar Point Plan would develop a Land Use Plan for Poplar Point, one of the required steps to enable the transfer of the property from the NPS to the District of Columbia.

To complete the transfer of the land from the NPS to the District of Columbia, the Federal and District of Columbia Government Real Property Act of 2006 (Public Law 109-396, commonly referred to as the DC Lands Act) requires the following:

- Provide for the reservation of no fewer than 70 acres of land on site, including wetlands, for park purposes
- Identify and relocate existing NPS facilities and related properties
- Determine at least two sites within the park use for the placement of potential commemorative works to be established pursuant to the Commemorative Works Act. The District of Columbia would convey back those sites to the NPS at the appropriate time. These sites would be for future federal memorials.

- To the greatest extent practicable, be consistent with the Anacostia Waterfront Initiative Framework Plan

The purpose of this plan is to facilitate the conveyance of land from the federal government to the District of Columbia and implement a land use plan to enable redevelopment at Poplar Point. The transfer of the property is needed because the NPS is mandated to do so by Congress through the DC Lands Act. The goal of the DC Lands Act is to improve and develop Poplar Point into a community amenity by providing a publicly accessible waterfront park with cultural, economic, and recreational attractions and activities, spur revitalization efforts east of the river by providing a mix of residential, retail, and office uses around the Anacostia Metrorail Station, and improve access to and expand the recreational amenities within southern Anacostia Park.

The planning approach for the plan is based on an analysis of existing conditions, incorporating ideas from previous planning efforts (including the Anacostia Waterfront Initiative Framework Plan), and identifying general planning principles. The following planning principles guided the development of the alternatives:

1. Expand the Wetlands
2. Celebrate the Point
3. Rediscover the Shoreline
4. Build Upon Adjacent Projects
5. Focus on Metrorail Access
6. Connect with Anacostia Community
7. Establish a Primary Corridor

Prior to 1882, the area that became Poplar Point was comprised of tidal marshes associated with the Anacostia River. Between 1882 and 1927, sediment dredged from the Anacostia River was placed into these tidal marshes to create developable land. From the mid-1920s until 1993 the western portion of acre Poplar Point Site used for plant nurseries and greenhouses. Since the early 1990s, a number of environmental investigations have been performed at the Poplar Point Site. Most of these investigations focused on the areas formerly operated as nurseries and greenhouses which identified contamination consisting of metals, pesticides, semi-volatile organic compounds (SVOCs), volatile organic compounds (VOCs), petroleum hydrocarbons, and polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) in the soils. In addition to the environmental investigations, abandoned drums and inactive underground and above ground storage tanks were removed from the site. In 2008, NPS and the District entered into a Settlement Agreement in accordance with the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA) of the entire Poplar Point site where the District would regularly test the area under the oversight of NPS.

Currently, the site has approximately 5.7 acres of scattered pockets of non-tidal wetlands and a high-water table. The site is almost completely within the 100-year and 500-year floodplains. It is relatively flat with elevations at zero feet along the shoreline to 31 feet at the eastern end, adjacent to the 11th Street Bridge Park. This makes the site vulnerable to flooding. However, unlike the west side of the Anacostia River, this large undeveloped site presents a unique opportunity to connect

with the shoreline and model natural flood resiliency in addition to creating a wonderful new neighborhood/amenity.

The site contains extensive infrastructure including the WMATA Metro tunnel for the Green Line station, the Anacostia River Tunnel, the Stickfoot Branch storm drain, and a variety of other utilities. In addition, there are three buildings on the site including the NPS National Capital parks-East Headquarters, the U.S. Park Police Anacostia Operations Facility, and the U.S. Park Police Anacostia Aviation Facility. All three of these facilities are required to be relocated as part of the land transfer and master plan.

The site is accessible from several locations including the traffic oval at the Frederick Douglass Memorial Bridge, Howard Avenue, SE, and the Anacostia Metro Station. The site also has the potential for views to the U.S. Capitol and the Washington Monument.

The applicant has developed three alternatives as part of the master planning process. In general, staff recommends the **Commission find that all three alternatives would help address expansion of the wetlands as a focal feature, include new memorial sites and cultural venues, improve use of the shoreline, and provide focal uses on the Point; and further, finds the three alternatives each contain successful components (noted below) that may be interchanged or combined in the development of a preferred alternative.**

Alternative A: Greenway Connections

Alternative A emphasizes greenway connections across the site and into Anacostia, linking the wetlands to the 11th Street Bridge Park. This alternative places a potential memorial and cultural use at the Point with an unobstructed view of the city and the wetland. One of the memorials is on axis with views to the Washington Monument and the crossing greenways, ensuring a high level of visibility for a future memorial site. In addition, this alternative includes a new stand-alone pedestrian bridge to increase access to the site. The proposed roadway design in this alternative creates irregular blocks, intersections, and unpleasant green spaces against the freeway that will need refinement as the plan progresses. Staff recommends the **Commission supports the protection of views of the U.S. Capitol (New Jersey Avenue) and the Washington Monument, important viewsheds that add to the uniqueness of the site; the prominent locations identified for two future memorials, including one at the point; and the absence of development between the wetlands and the river which preserves expansive views and can allow for more natural hydrology.**

However, staff also recommends the **Commission find the roadway design creates irregular shaped blocks and intersections that will need refinement as the plan progresses; and finds the development pattern results in a potentially unpleasant green space in between buildings and the I-295 freeway, which is a space that may be better suited for development.**

Alternative B: Central Wetlands

Alternative A frames the wetlands with development. This alternative includes three future memorial sites; one at the Point surrounded by development, another in the center of a public square, and the third at the eastern end of the site, adjacent to the 11th Street Bridge Park and staff recommends the **Commission supports the prominent locations identified for the three future memorials.** In addition to Alternative A, it includes a new stand-alone pedestrian bridge to increase access to the site. Staff recommends the **Commission find this alternative respects the viewshed to the Washington Monument, but not the New Jersey Avenue view to the U.S. Capitol.** However, staff also recommends the **Commission find surrounding the wetlands with development limits views to and from the wetlands and reduces the opportunity for natural river flooding into the wetlands;** further, the **Commission finds the development pattern to the east is more efficient with smaller blocks allowing greater porosity and more usable areas for recreation.**

Alternative C: Anchor Use on the Point

Alternative C envisions a large anchor on the Point and frames the wetlands with development on three sides with the anchor use to the north. The District has recently announced a wellness center including spas, saunas and other amenities, as a potential anchor use for the site. However, staff recommends the **Commission find the large anchor use on the Point appears disconnected from the rest of the site and depending on the overall massing could have a significant impact on views to and from the wetlands.** This alternative includes two memorial sites and a cultural facility all within the large waterfront park but not at the Point or within the viewsheds. Alternative C allows for the greatest amount of recreational space to the east, identified as recreational fields. The alternative does not include the stand-alone pedestrian bridge that is proposed in Alternatives A and B and instead makes the existing access Point at W Street, SE pedestrian only. As such, staff recommends the **Commission find the elimination of the pedestrian bridge at Chicago Street, SE and conversion of the W Street, SE bridge to pedestrian-only results in the least number of connections to the existing neighborhood.** In addition, staff recommends the **Commission find Alternative C does not respect either the New Jersey Avenue viewshed or the Washington Monument viewshed in the design.**

General Recommendations

Flooding

As noted previously, much of the site is located within the 100- and 500-year flood plains. As such, flooding should be a significant consideration in the development of the master plan. This includes determining how to avoid or mitigate flooding, how buildings and public spaces will be designed to address flooding, and how these strategies will coordinate with adjacent sites. Further, staff recommends the **Commission find that unlike the west side of the Anacostia River, this large undeveloped site presents a unique opportunity to connect with the shoreline and model natural flood resiliency in addition to creating a wonderful new neighborhood/amenity.** Therefore, staff recommends the **Commission request the following information as part of the next submission, including:**

- **The overall flood mitigation approach for the site, including resilient approaches to allow water on-site and flood-proofing.**
- **The impacts of achieving the desired elevation of +10 feet on the design of development and open space, particularly the relationship between the ground floor level and adjacent public spaces.**
- **The intended future of the existing seawall which is in poor shape, and whether it will continue to provide flood protection and/or be removed to allow more natural hydrology, along with any new flood protection structures.**
- **The status of any coordination with Joint Base Anacostia Bolling and if/how flood mitigation proposals at both sites are being considered together.**

Development/Massing

As the master plan is still in the conceptual stage, it is not yet possible to evaluate all the potential opportunities or challenges associated with each alternative. The types of uses, densities, and building heights are not yet know, and these will influence the character and function of the master plan area. Generally, however, it seems appropriate that development should be located near the east oval and the I-295 corridor to help mitigate noise and the impacts associated with these high-traffic areas. As such, staff recommends the **Commission support lining the I-295 corridor and the east oval of the Frederick Douglass Memorial Bridge with buildings given the amount of noise disturbance.**

As noted previously, it is difficult to assess the alternatives without information on potential massing and land-use which have implications on views, traffic, and flood protection. Further information will be prepared as the master plan develops, and the environmental assessment is prepared. Therefore, staff recommends the **Commission request the following information as part of the next submission, including:**

- **The proposed development density, heights, and land uses.**
- **How the proposed development will respect and enhance existing views and vistas, both from the site and across the site from Historic Anacostia, specifically views along New Jersey Avenue to the U.S. Capitol and from the Historic Frederick Douglass home, as outlined in the Federal Elements of the Comprehensive Plan.**
- **How a potential anchor use would be incorporated into Alternatives A and B; and**
- **Whether the anchor could work in the green space to the east in Alternative C.**
- **Clarifying what opportunities for public space use could occur in the green spaces based on size, configuration and location.**

Staff notes that at this time Alternative C only includes an anchor use. Additional alternatives with an anchor use should be considered so that various locations can be considered, and the trade-offs better evaluated.

Roadways

All three alternatives show a primary roadway along the riverfront, through the wetlands, and connecting to the Frederick Douglass Bridge south oval entrance. Staff recommends the

Commission find roadways along the shorelines or through wetlands are not desirable but may be necessary given the constraints of the site; and further, requests more information in the next submission regarding the anticipated volume of traffic for this primary roadway, proposed design, and how pedestrian crossings to the riverfront trail will be accommodated.

Coordination and Outreach

NPS and the District will be engaging in a robust outreach process. Staff supports this effort, and recommends the **Commission encourage the applicant to continue coordination and outreach with the community in the development of the master plan, including identifying opportunities for interpretation of the site's history, and other uses that would support local needs.**

CONFORMANCE TO EXISTING PLANS, POLICIES AND RELATED GUIDANCE

Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital

The comments above are intended to support consistency with the Federal Elements of the *Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital*. In particular, staff considered policies related to Historic Preservation, Parks and Open Space, the Federal Environment, and Transportation.

National Environmental Policy Act

NPS initiated scoping pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and will be preparing an Environmental Assessment. NCPC is a cooperating agency to satisfy any NEPA obligations required pursuant to the planning effort or future projects.

National Historic Preservation Act

NPS initiated the Section 106 process of the National Historic Preservation Act in January 2025. This process will allow NPS to evaluate potential impacts to historic properties. This work will also be coordinated with the NEPA process.

CONSULTATION

Coordinating Committee

Without objection, the Committee forwarded the proposed comments on the concept master plan to the Commission with the statement that the proposal was coordinated with all participating agencies. SHPO coordination is conditioned upon completion of the Section 106 review process. DOEE noted that its coordination is ongoing and that it is providing comments for this project through the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development. Participating agencies were: NCPC, the State Historic Preservation Office (DC SHPO), District Office of Planning (DCOP), District Department of Transportation (DDOT), District Department of the Environment (DDOE), General Services Administration (GSA), National Park Service (NPS),

Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA), and the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts (CFA).

U.S. Commission of Fine Arts

The U.S. Commission of Fine Arts heard an information presentation on the proposed planning for Poplar Point at their March 20, 2025 meeting.

ONLINE REFERENCE

The following supporting documents for this project are available online at www.ncpc.gov:

- Submission Package
- NCPC Staff Summary Presentation

Prepared by Jamie Herr
03/26/2025

POWERPOINT (ATTACHED)

Poplar Point Master Plan

Southeast, Washington DC

Approval of Comments on Concept Master Plan

United States Department of the Interior

Project Summary

Commission Meeting Date: April 3, 2025

NCPC Review Authority: 40 U.S.C. § 8722(a) and (b)(1)

Applicant Request: Approval of Comments on Concept Master Plan

Session: Staff Presentation

NCPC Review Officer: Jamie Herr

NCPC File Number: MP317

Project Summary:

The National Park Service (NPS) in coordination with the District of Columbia Office of the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development (DMPED) and the District of Columbia Office of Planning (DCOP) has submitted the concept master plan for Poplar Point in Washington, DC for Commission review and comment. Poplar Point is a 110-acre site located along the eastern edge of the Anacostia River in Ward 8. It is directly adjacent to Historic Anacostia and is bordered by the Frederick Douglass Memorial Bridge to the west, the Anacostia River to the north, Anacostia Park to the east, and the Bridge District, the Anacostia Metrorail Station parking garage, and I-295 (Anacostia Freeway) to the south. The site is also home to three National Park Service facilities: the U.S. Park Police Anacostia Operations Facility, the USPP Anacostia Aviation Facility, and the National Capital Parks-East Headquarters. The project site is under the jurisdiction of the NPS. The Poplar Point Master Plan would develop a land use plan for Poplar Point, one of the required steps to enable the transfer of the property from the NPS to the District of Columbia.

Project Summary

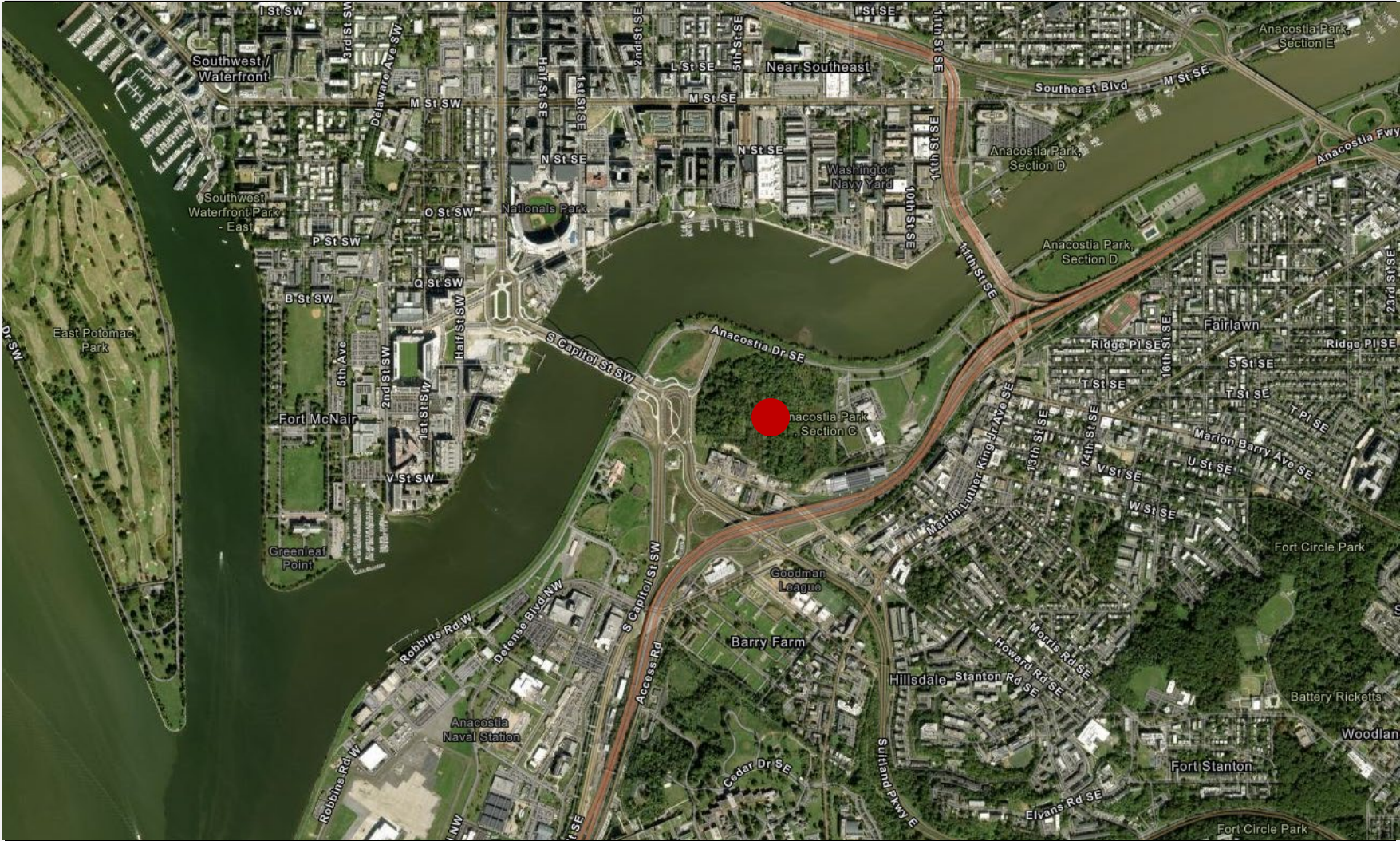
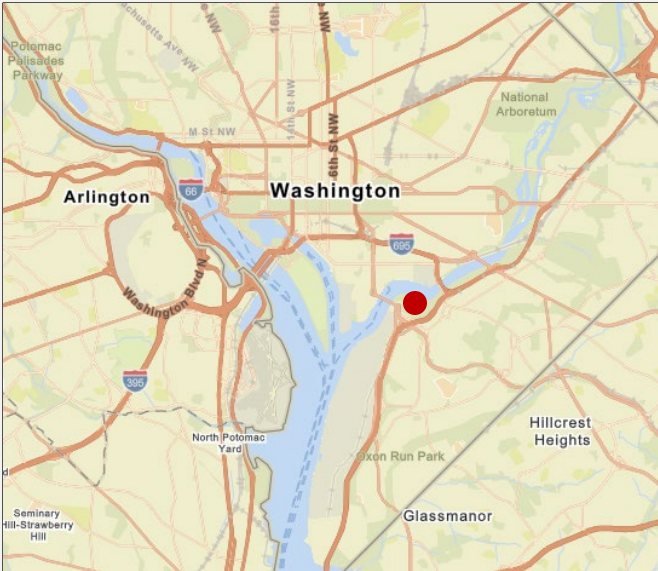
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- To the greatest extent practicable, be consistent with the Anacostia Waterfront Initiative Framework Plan

The planning approach is based on an analysis of existing conditions, incorporating ideas from previous planning efforts (including the Anacostia Waterfront Initiative Framework Plan), and identifying general planning principles. The following planning principles guided the development of the alternatives:

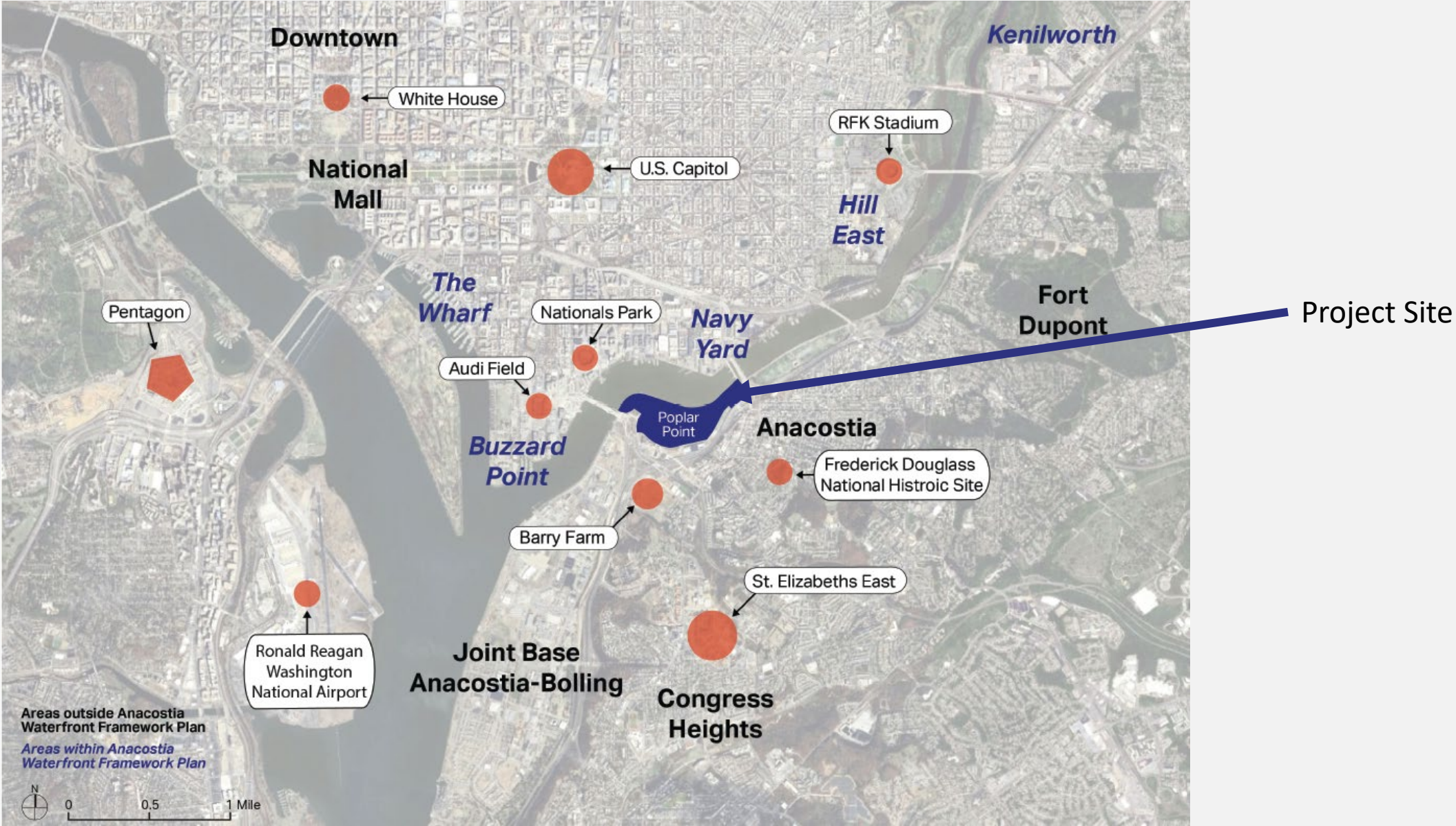
1. Expand the Wetlands
2. Celebrate the Point
3. Rediscover the Shoreline
4. Build Upon Adjacent Projects
5. Focus on Metrorail Access
6. Connect with Anacostia Community

Site Location

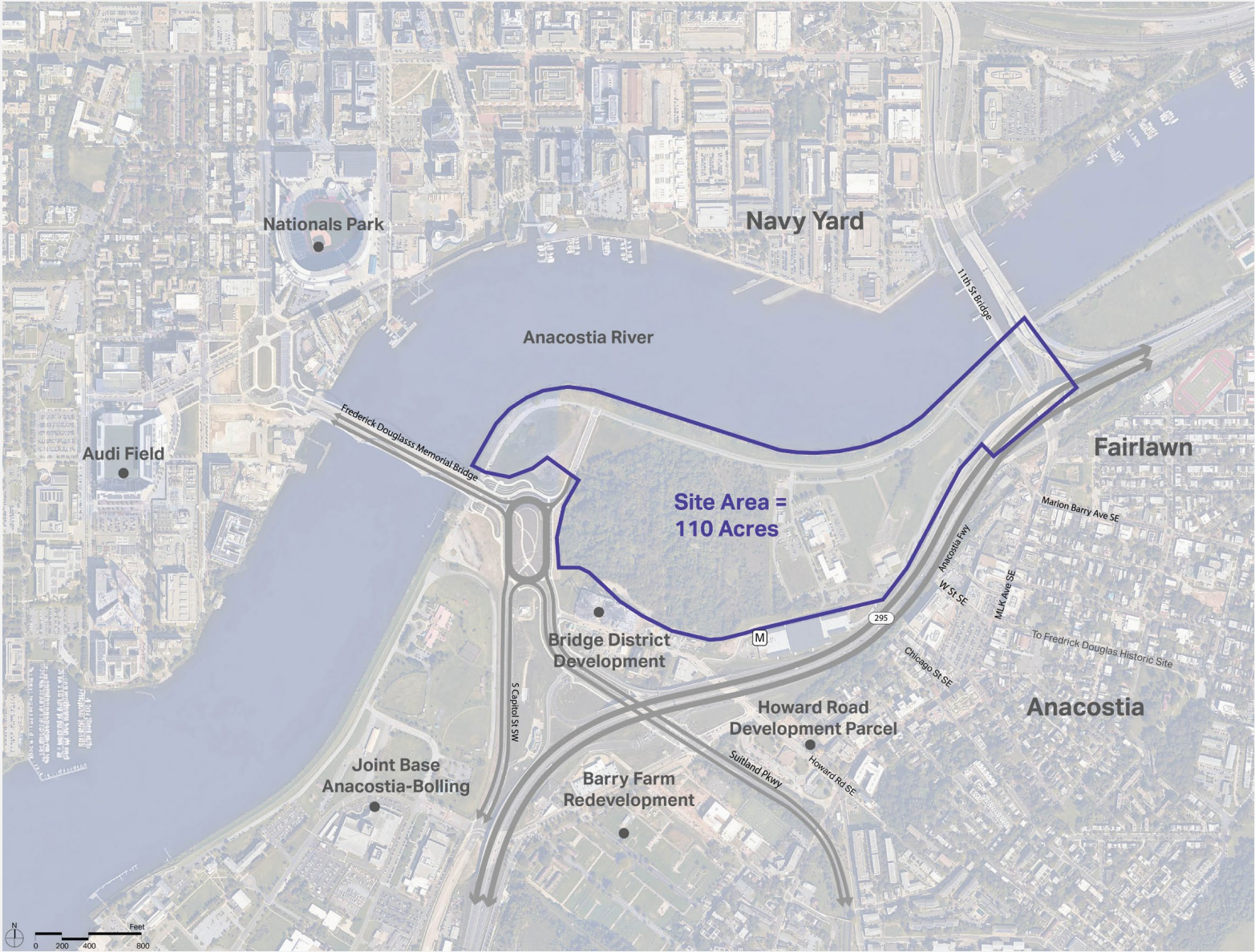


Location Map

Site Context



Site Context



Site History



1894 – Original shoreline



1922 – Reconfigured shoreline



1946 – Navy use and Lamont nursery

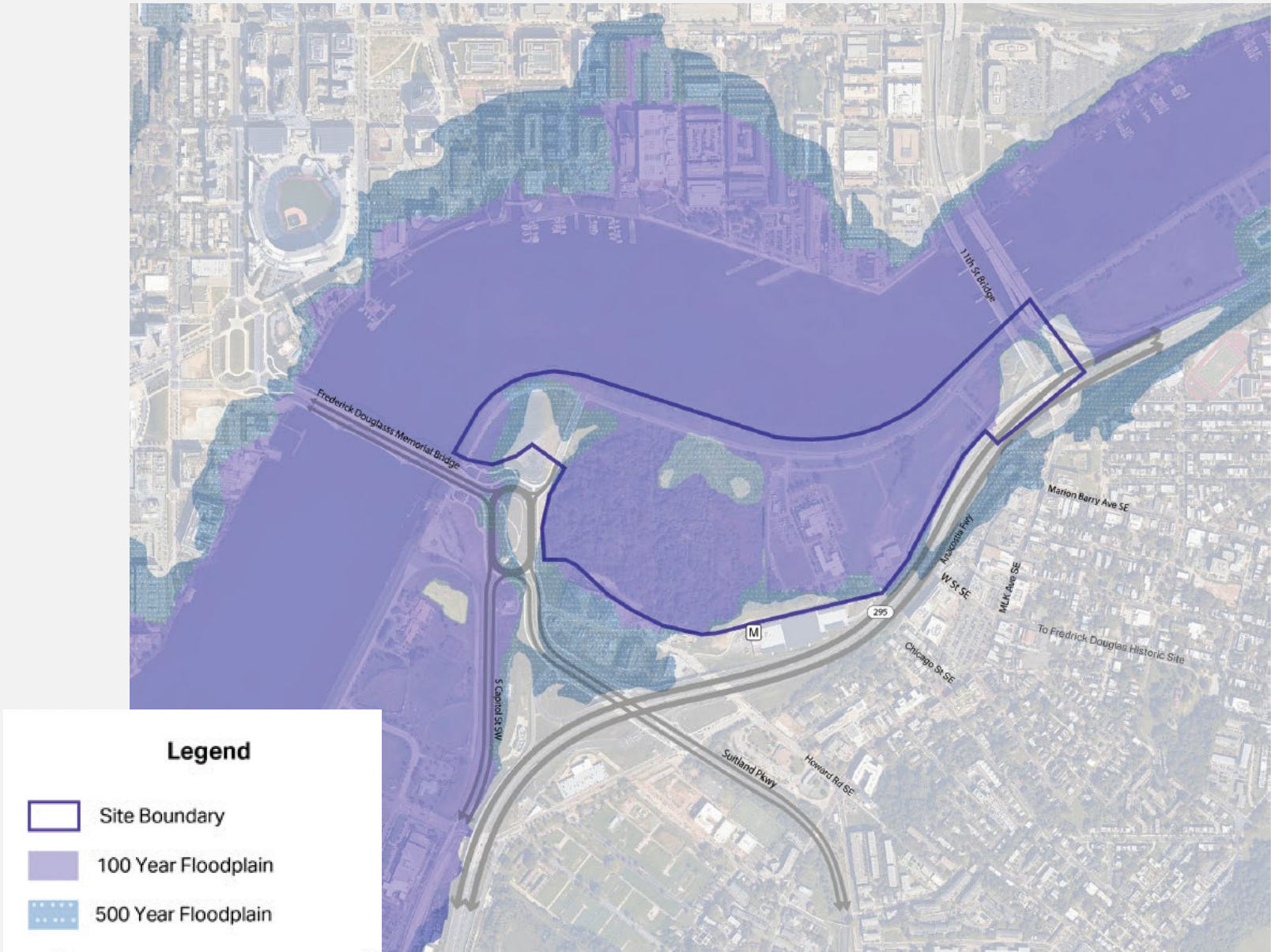


1988 – NPS facilities and Metro construction

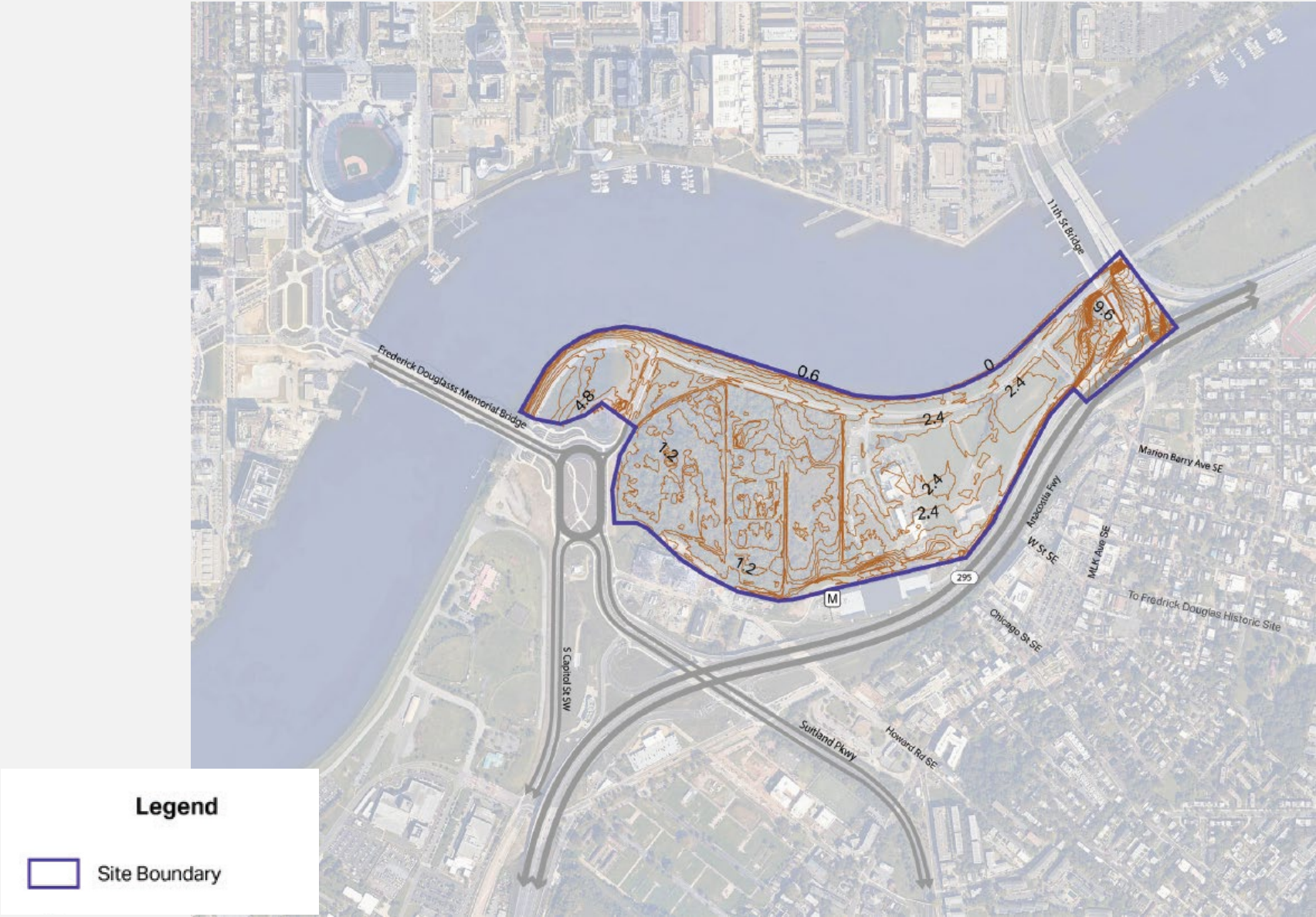
Existing Conditions



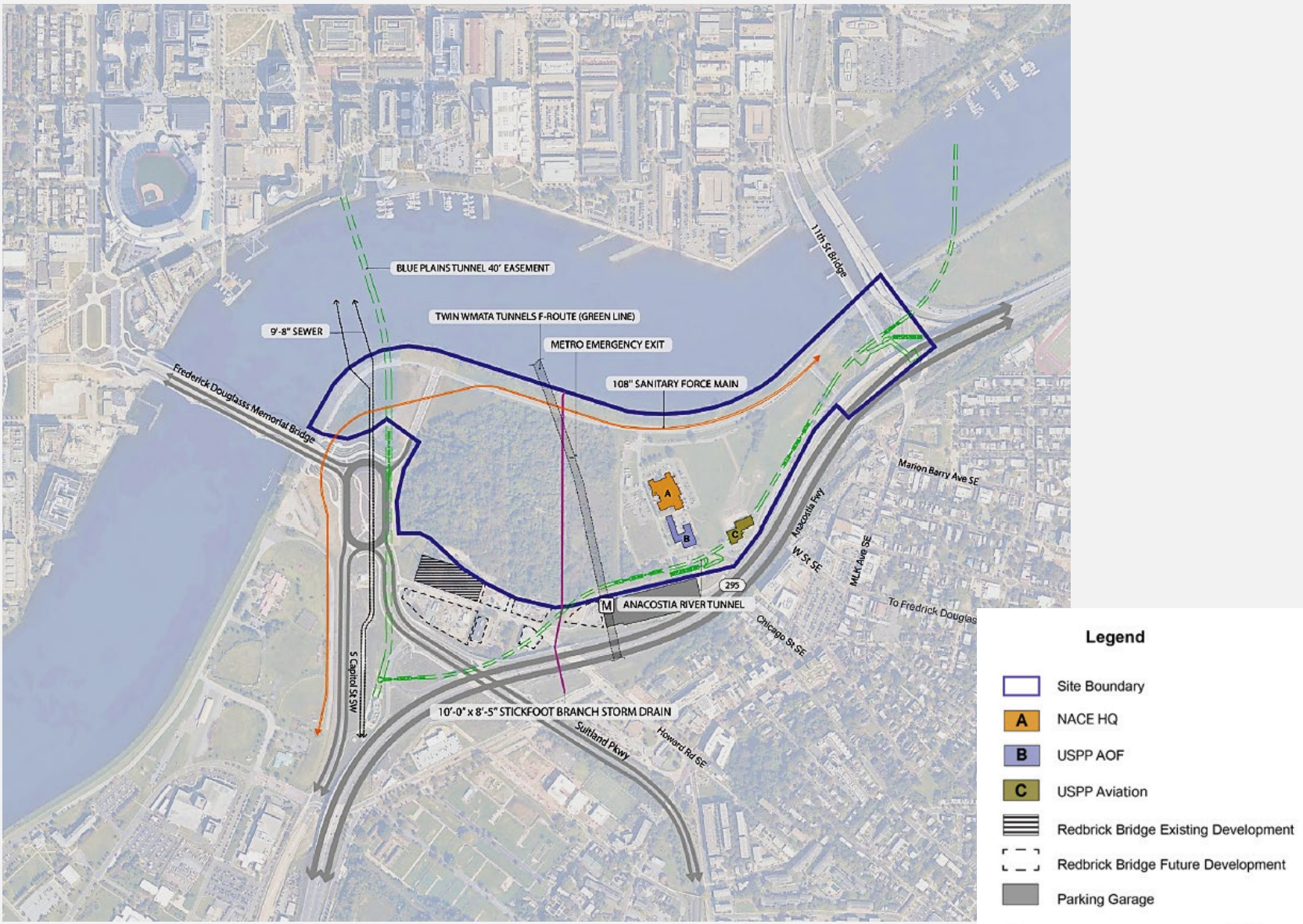
Existing Floodplains



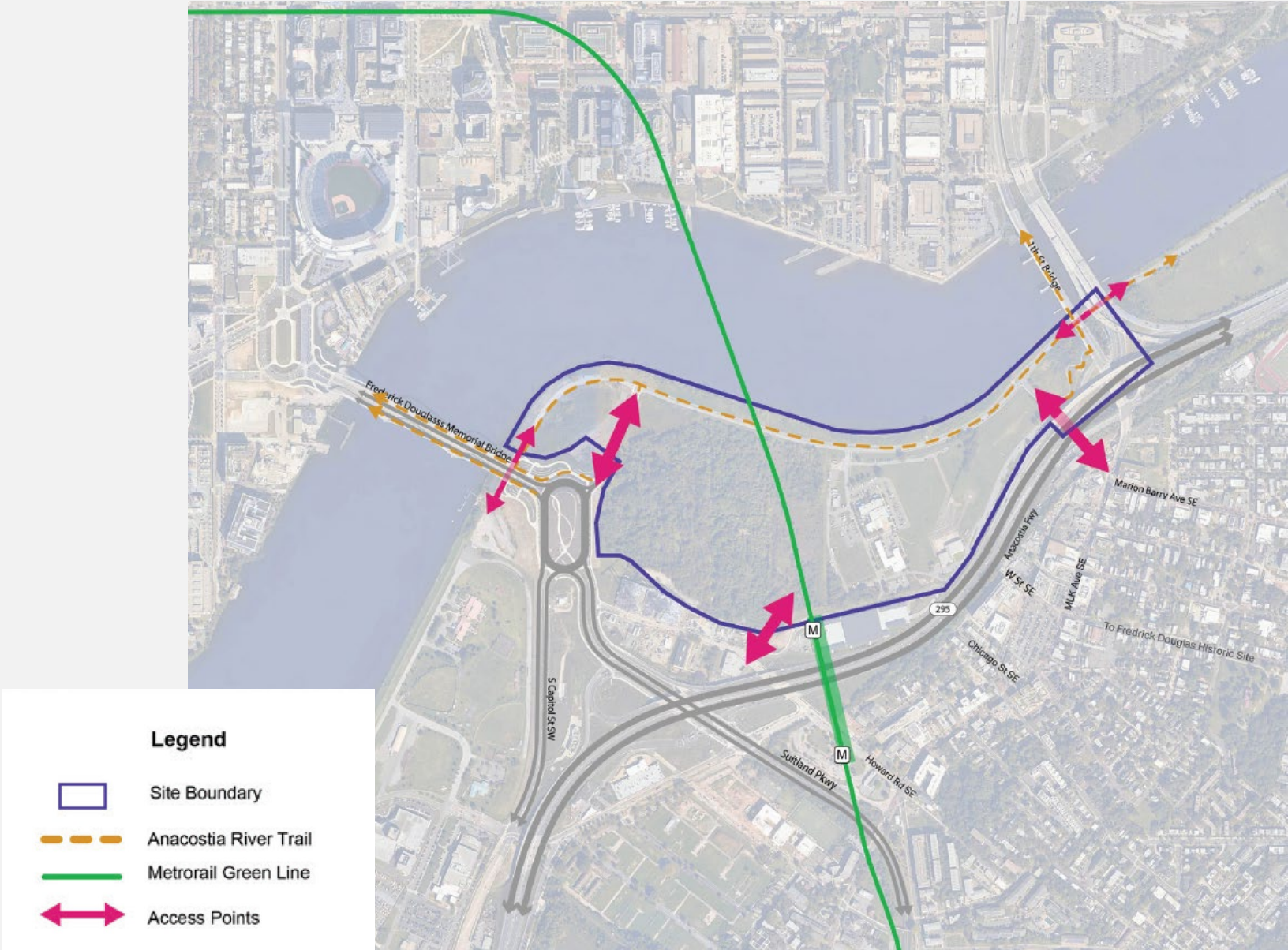
Existing Topography



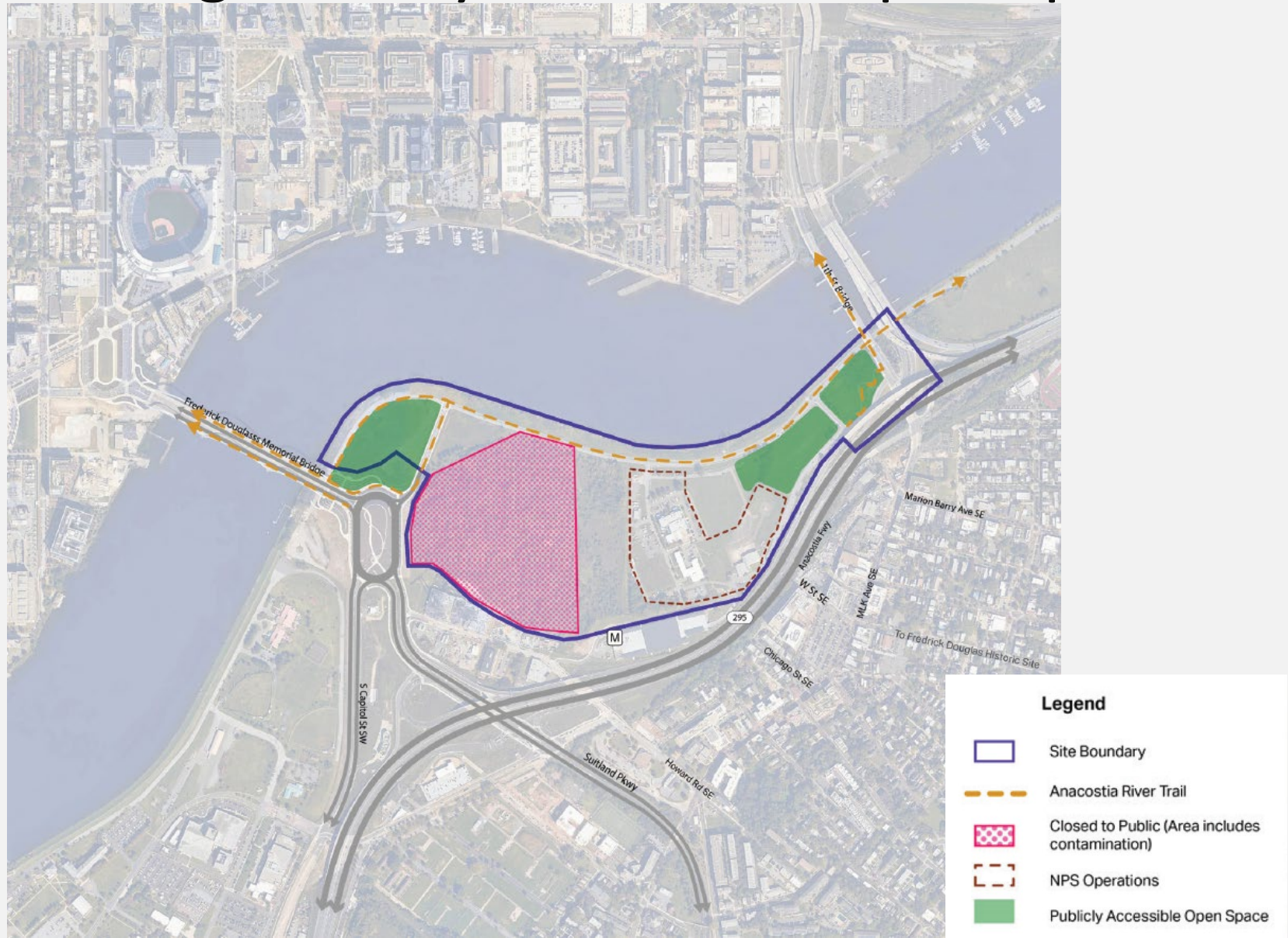
Existing Infrastructure and Facilities



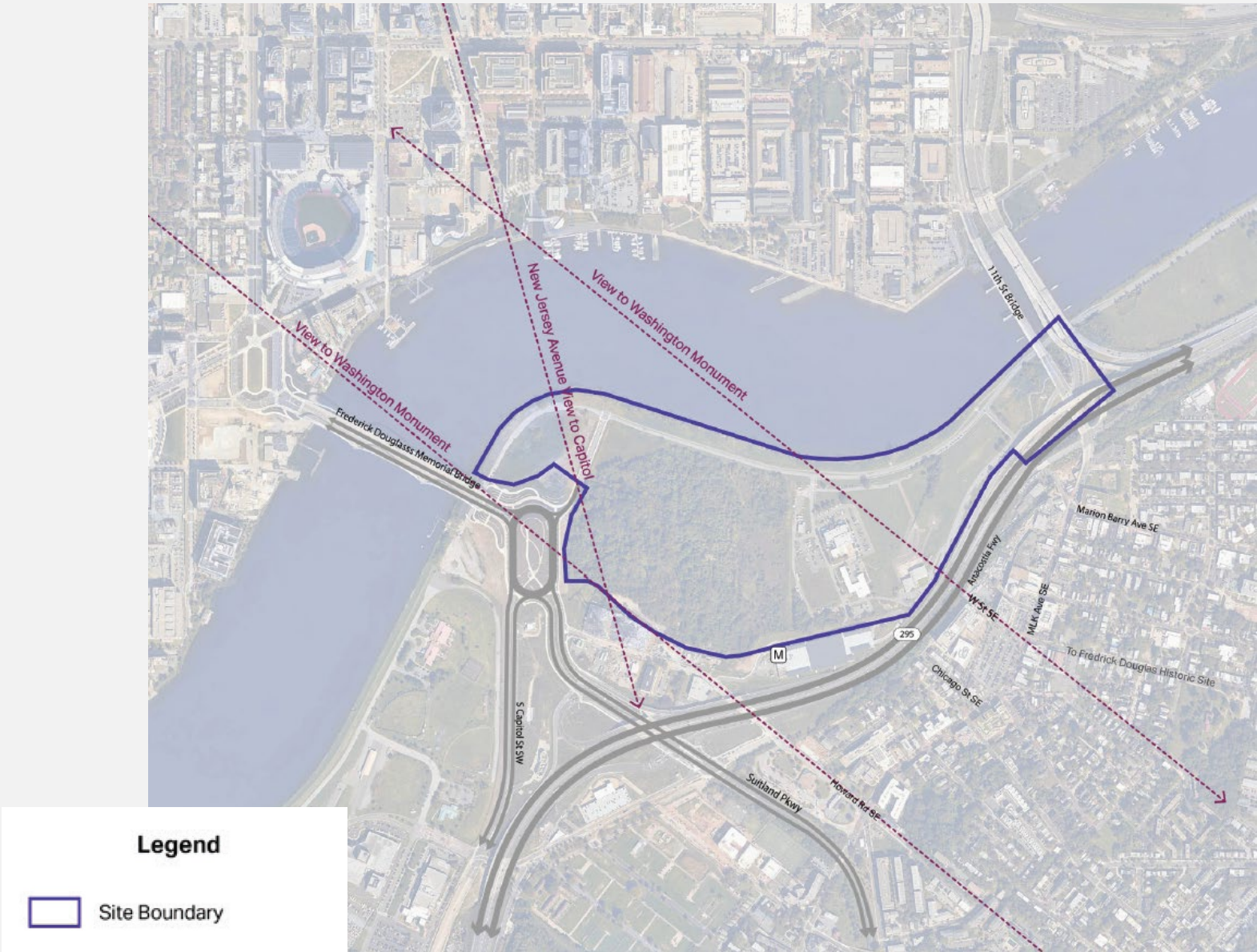
Existing Transportation Access



Existing Publicly Accessible Open Space



Existing Views and Vistas



Planning Principles



Alternative A: Greenway Connections



Wetlands

- Expansive wooded buffer
- Wildlife habitat corridor and educational trail
- Retention of 4.7 acres of existing wetlands and addition of 2.6 acres of new wetlands for a total of 7.3 acres of wetlands, with the expectation that the amount could be increased
- Distance between the buildings that flank Stickfoot Branch is approximately 700 feet

Open Space

- Consolidated green corridors across the site
- Co-location of open space at the point with wetlands
- Series of linear greenways with facilities
- Waterfront park with public square

Connectivity

- W Street as a pedestrian and vehicular greenway
- Improved Marion Barry Avenue access and Howard Road Access
- Direct connection to the South Capitol Street oval
- Continued connection to Anacostia Park via Anacostia Drive

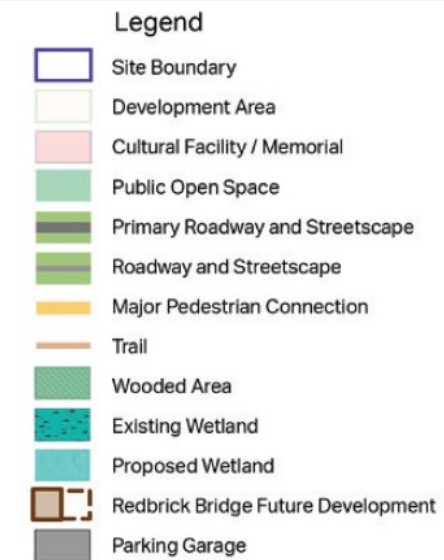
Waterfront Character

- Concentrated development along the waterfront with dispersed open space and recreational uses

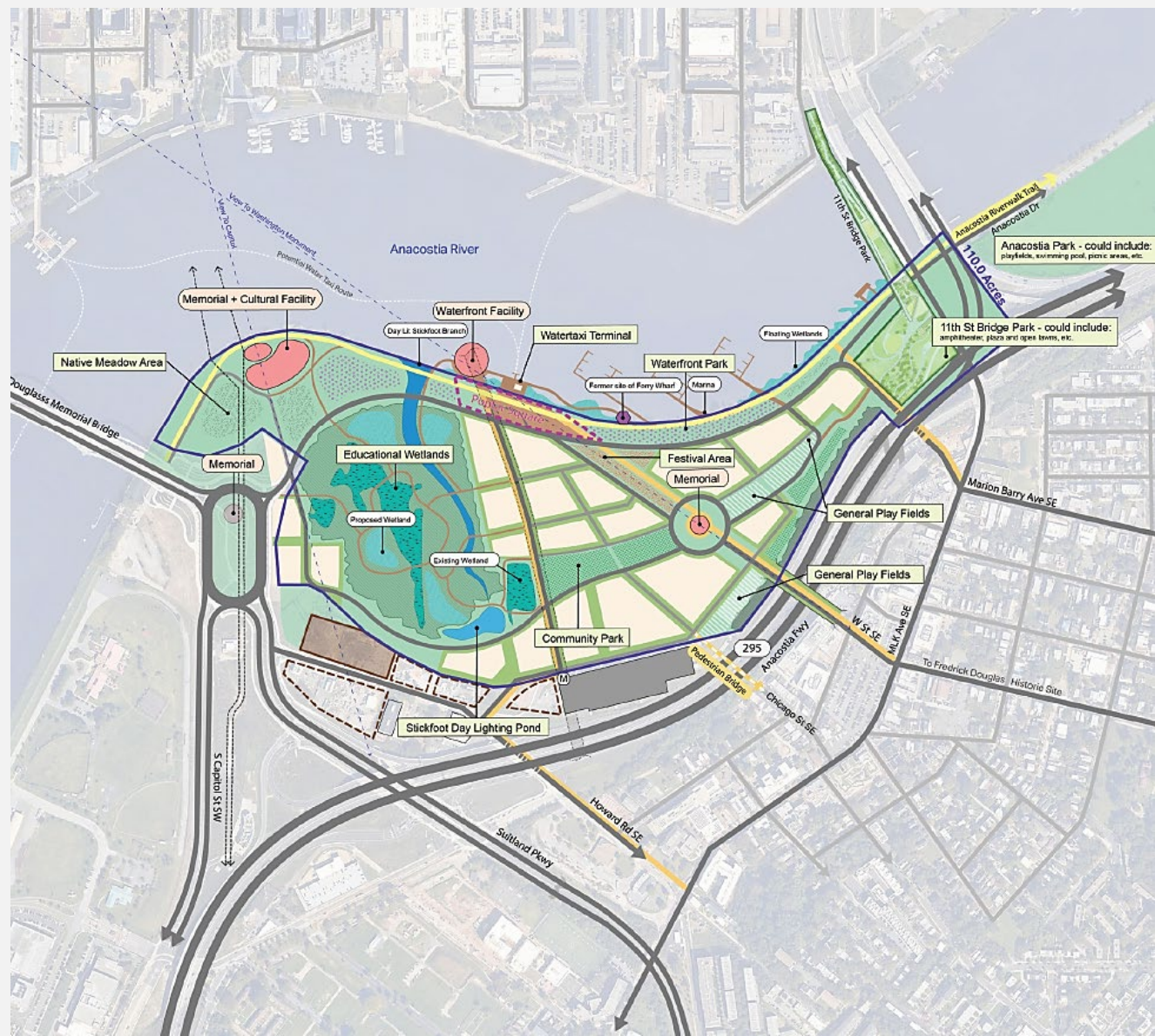
Alternative A: Greenway Connections



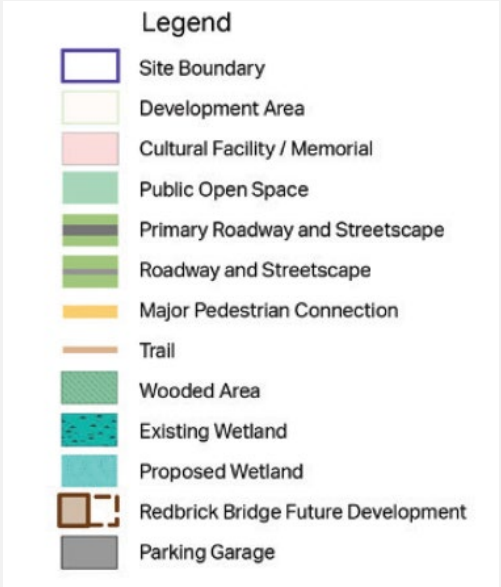
Base Plan of Potential Open Space and Development Concept



Alternative A: Greenway Connections



Potential Open Space and Memorials



Alternative A: Greenway Connections

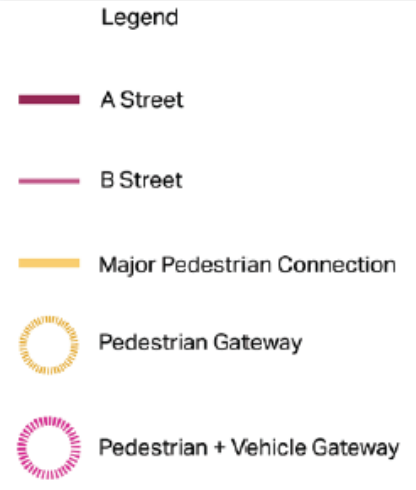


Potential Site Details

Alternative A: Greenway Connections



Potential Circulation



Alternative B: Central Wetlands

Wetlands

- Open space/recreation buffer
- Wildlife habitat corridor and educational trail
- Retention of 5.3 acres of existing wetlands and addition of 2.9 acres of new wetlands for a total of 8.2 acres of wetlands, with the expectation that the amount could be increased
- Distance between the buildings that flank Stickfoot Branch is approximately 450 feet

Open Space

- Separate and distinct areas of open space across the site creating a variety of experiences
- Adjacency of open space on the point to wetlands
- Extended waterfront park
- Public square adjacent to waterfront

Connectivity

- Pedestrian and vehicular activated corridor connecting the site to the community via W Street
- Improved Marion Barry Avenue access and Howard Road Access
- Direct connection to the South Capitol Street oval
- Continued connection to Anacostia Park via Anacostia Drive

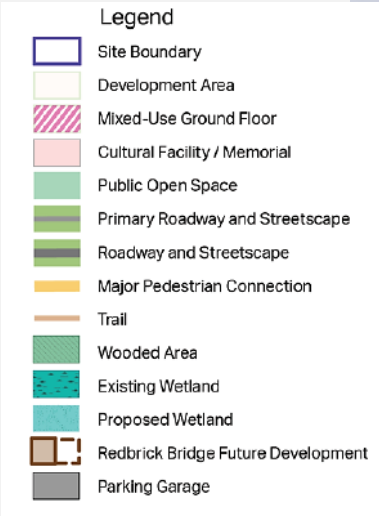
Waterfront Character

- Mix of natural and developed areas along the waterfront



Alternative B: Central Wetlands

*Base Plan of Potential
Open Space and
Development Concept*



Alternative B: Central Wetlands

Potential Open Space and Memorials

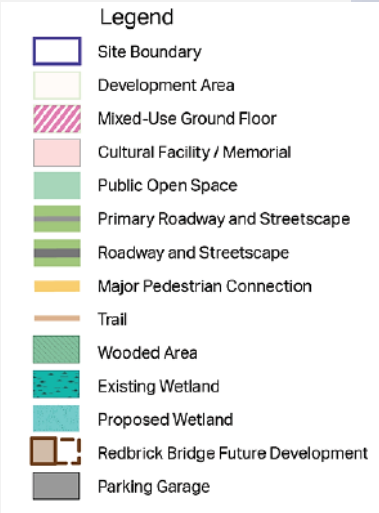
Legend

- Site Boundary
- Development Area
- Mixed-Use Ground Floor
- Cultural Facility / Memorial
- Public Open Space
- Primary Roadway and Streetscape
- Roadway and Streetscape
- Major Pedestrian Connection
- Trail
- Wooded Area
- Existing Wetland
- Proposed Wetland
- Redbrick Bridge Future Development
- Parking Garage



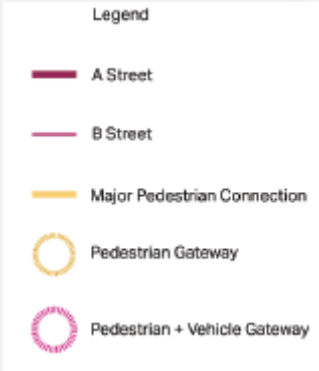
Alternative B: Central Wetlands

Potential Site Details



Alternative B: Central Wetlands

Potential Circulation



Alternative C: Anchor Use on Point



Wetlands

- Adjacent to development
- Wildlife habitat corridor and educational trail
- Retention of 4.7 acres of existing wetlands and addition of 3 acres of new wetlands for a total of 7.7 acres of wetlands, with the expectation that the amount could be increased
- Distance between the buildings that flank Stickfoot Branch is approximately 500 feet

Open Space

- Dispersed and connected pockets of open space across the site
- Some open space adjacent to wetlands
- Waterfront park directly next to outdoor activities
- Public square located interior to the site

Connectivity

- Pedestrian path extending to the waterfront
- Improved Marion Barry Avenue access and Howard Road Access
- Direct connection to the South Capitol Street oval
- Continued connection to Anacostia Park via Anacostia Drive

Waterfront Character

- Consistent development along the waterfront with areas of open public space around Stickfoot Branch and between development and 11th Street Bridge

Alternative C: Anchor Use on Point



*Base Plan of Potential
Open Space and
Development Concept*

- Legend
- Site Boundary
 - Development Area
 - Mixed-Use Ground Floor
 - Cultural Facility / Memorial
 - Public Open Space
 - Primary Roadway and Streetscape
 - Roadway and Streetscape
 - Major Pedestrian Connection
 - Trail
 - Wooded Area
 - Existing Wetland
 - Proposed Wetland
 - Redbrick Bridge Future Development
 - Parking Garage

Alternative C: Anchor Use on Point



Potential Open Space and Memorials



Alternative C: Anchor Use on Point



Potential Site Details

Alternative C: Anchor Use on Point



Potential Circulation



Alternative Comparison

Greenway Connections



Central Wetlands



Anchor Use on the Point



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

25 March 2025

Dear Ms. Nersesian:

In its public meeting of 20 March conducted by videoconference, the Commission of Fine Arts was pleased to hear an information presentation submitted by the National Park Service, in partnership with the D.C. Office of the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development, on the planned redevelopment of the Poplar Point area of Anacostia Park in Southeast Washington. The Commission expressed appreciation for the presentation of a range of alternatives for a new mixed-use district along the city's waterfront, and provided the following comments.

The Commission members cited the unique opportunities offered by the development of this large and prominent parcel on the Anacostia River—such as retaining and restoring significant wetland areas, improving the quality of the waterfront experience, and establishing strong connections to the nearby historic Anacostia neighborhood. In their discussion of the presented alternatives, they observed that Alternatives A and B would promote the best connections to adjacent neighborhoods, helping to extend and strengthen the existing urban fabric, whereas Alternative C appears more focused on attracting visitors from north of the river. Given the extensive wetland restoration proposed by the plan, they recommended integrating an environmental education component into the proposal and using the ecological features as a generator of the precinct's urban design. Finally, as this plan includes establishing several new commemorative sites, the Commission members encouraged a more expansive exploration of commemorative expression within this context—both in its subjects and its typologies, which might include trails, viewsheds, landscapes, and programmed areas in buildings.

The Commission looks forward to the future review of the planning process that will be used to guide the redevelopment of this prominent site. Please continue to consult with the Commission staff which, as always, is available to assist you.

Sincerely,



Thomas E. Luebke, FAIA
Secretary

Jen Nersesian, Regional Director
Region 1 – National Capital Area
National Park Service
1100 Ohio Drive, SW
Washington, DC 20242

cc: Nina Albert, Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development
Alan Harwood, AECOM
Stan Wall, HR&A Advisors