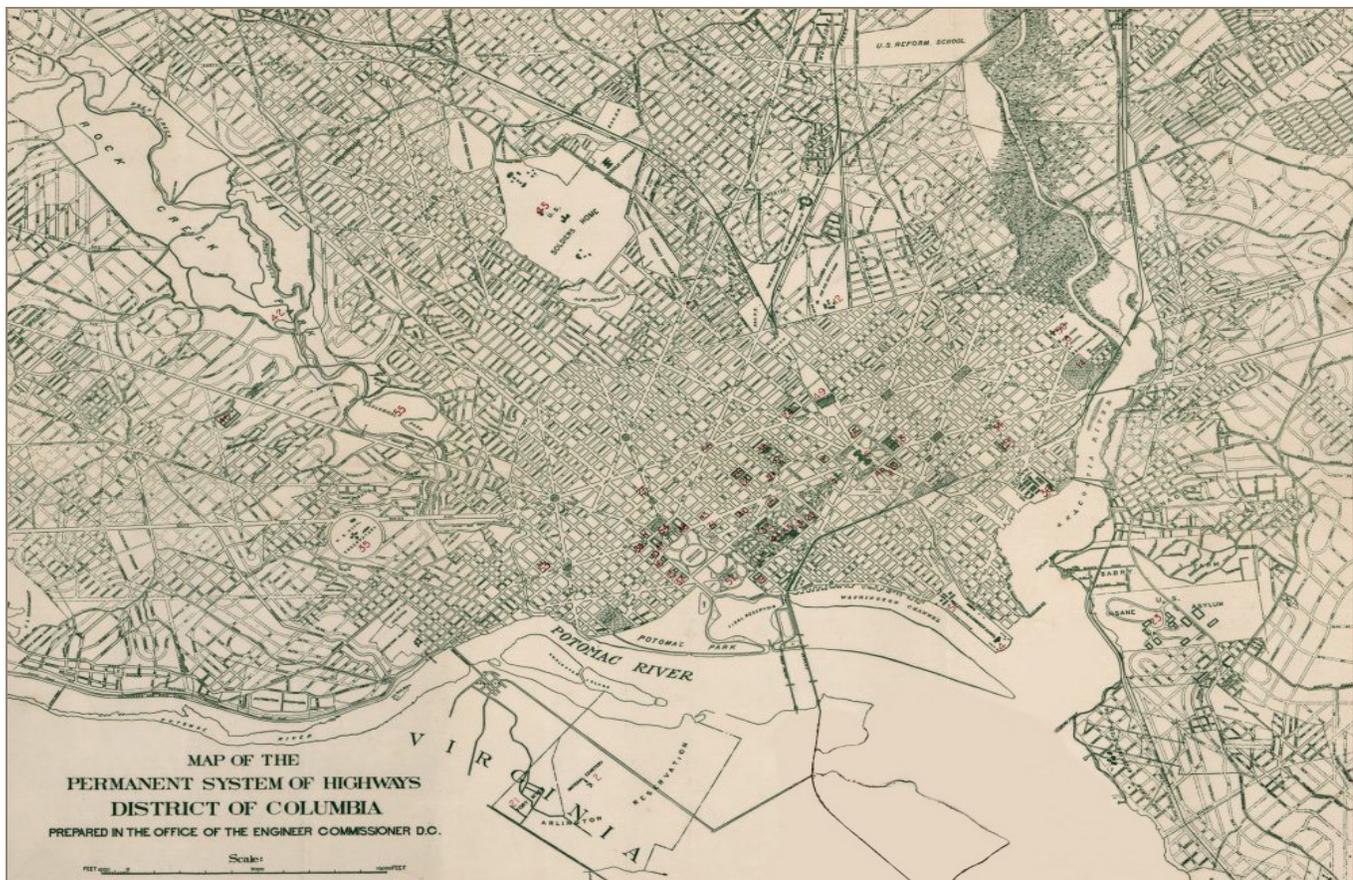


Review of Amendments to the Highway Plan

Overview

While Pierre L'Enfant's plan of the City of Washington is generally recognized as the foundation for the city's urban form, it was the Highway Plan that helped implement that form throughout the city. In response to rapid, disorganized development outside the L'Enfant City in the latter half of the 1800's, which was a contrast to the coherent grid in the central city, Congress passed the Highway Act of 1893. This act authorized the federally controlled District of Columbia government to develop a Highway Plan that would provide an organized framework for the orderly development of streets outside the L'Enfant City. The District government selected Olmsted and Associates as lead developer for the plan. The Olmsted and Associates plan proposed the extension of many of the L'Enfant streets from the city's urban core, while suggesting more curvilinear streets or parkways in areas with challenging topography.

Congress began to implement the plan in 1899 through the extension and widening of several existing streets. The responsibility for plan implementation and modification was transferred to the District government in 1914, which became a shared responsibility with the predecessor agency to the National Capital Planning Commission (NCP) in the 1920s. As the city developed and its road network expanded, the District government updated the plan and recorded any revisions on a document known as the Map of the Permanent System of Highways of the District of Columbia. The 1922 version of this map below displays both constructed and planned roadways throughout the



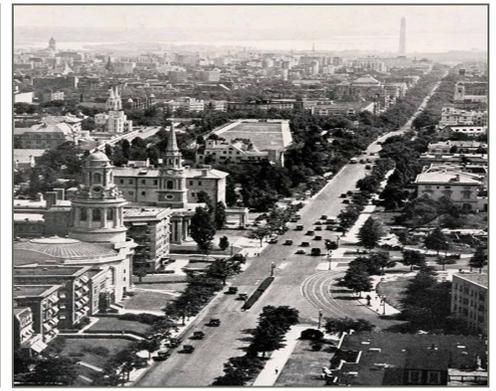
Map of the Permanent System of Highways of the District of Columbia (1922)



Fort Totten



Piney Branch Bridge



16th Street, NW

city at that time. The last comprehensive Highway Plan map was created in 1968. Since then, revisions to the plan are processed by the District government as Highway Plan amendments, which are recorded in the land records maintained by the DC Office of the Surveyor.

Highway Plan Amendments

Many of the streets envisioned in the original Olmsted and Associates plan were constructed over the years, helping to shape the form of Washington outside of the L'Enfant City. However, as the city became more developed, plans for many streets envisioned in the Highway Plan were impeded by physical improvements on proposed rights-of-way or conflicted with the existing street grid. These unbuilt roads (many of which exist on private property) are still retained as paper streets in the land records held by the DC Surveyor. An amendment to the Highway Plan is required to modify or abandon any such paper street, which requires an affected landowner to submit an application to the DC Office of the Surveyor.

Pursuant to DC Code § 9-103.02, the District government must submit any amendments to the Highway Plan to NCPC for review and approval. The Commission makes a determination on any proposed amendment, which is then returned to the DC Surveyor in writing, who records the approved amendment in the land records. It is important to note that NCPC's Highway Plan amendment approval process is distinct from its advisory review process for street and alley closures, under which NCPC submits comments for consideration by the Council of the District of Columbia pursuant to DC Code § 9-202.02.

NCPC Review of Highway Plan Amendments

NCPC is most interested in the protection of built or planned rights of way in the L'Enfant City. Because the Highway Plan was created to guide street development outside this area, staff has generally determined that Highway Plan amendments do not present issues of federal interest, particularly as they occur on private property. The exception to this may be in instances where such amendments relate to planned roadways that lie adjacent to federal properties or provide access to federal facilities. Because the Commission must provide a finding on Highway Plan amendments in writing, the Commission must take an official action on these submissions. Accordingly, any such amendment cannot be approved by delegated action to the Executive Director or Chairman but must be considered during a regular monthly Commission meeting. This resource guide is for general information purposes, and is not a regulatory document.

Applicant Resources

Office of the Surveyor: <https://dcra.dc.gov/surveyors>

