# DISTRICT DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

# *16th Street NW Landscaped Medians*

## *NCPC Final Design Report*

*April 14, 2026*

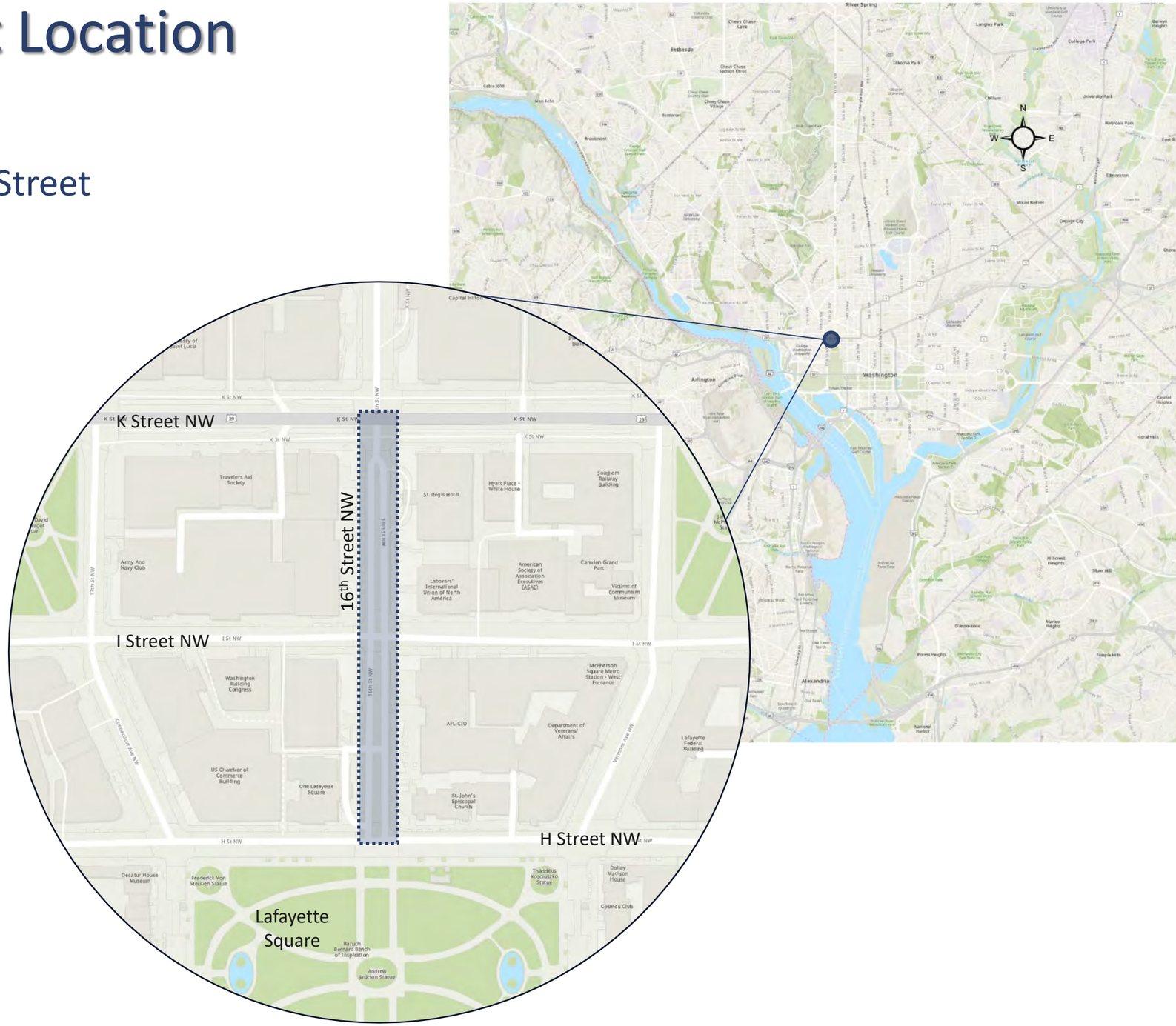
# Project Overview – Project Location

## 16th Street NW – Between H Street and K Street

This design is located on 16th Street NW between H and K Streets NW, directly north of Lafayette Square and was the former Black Lives Matter Plaza.

The project area is two blocks long and all within DC's public right of way, specifically along the centerline of the roadway.

As a beautification project, four raised landscaped medians will be installed. A colorful planting palette will enhance the beauty of the streetscape and provide a natural transition from Lafayette Square into DC's urban environment north of the White House.



# Location History

The 16th Street corridor between Lafayette Square and K Street NW has undergone many changes throughout the years.

It was originally a through street with two travel lanes and two parking lanes.

A painted median buffer in the early and mid-2000's separated travel directions.

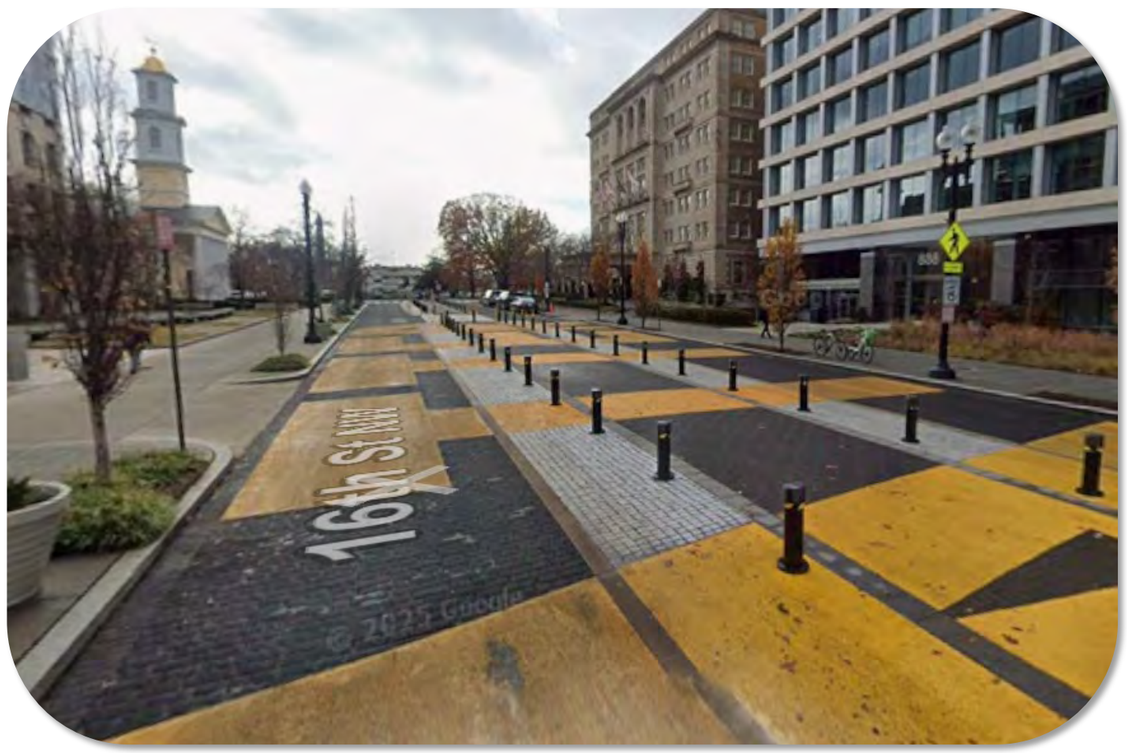
2011

2017

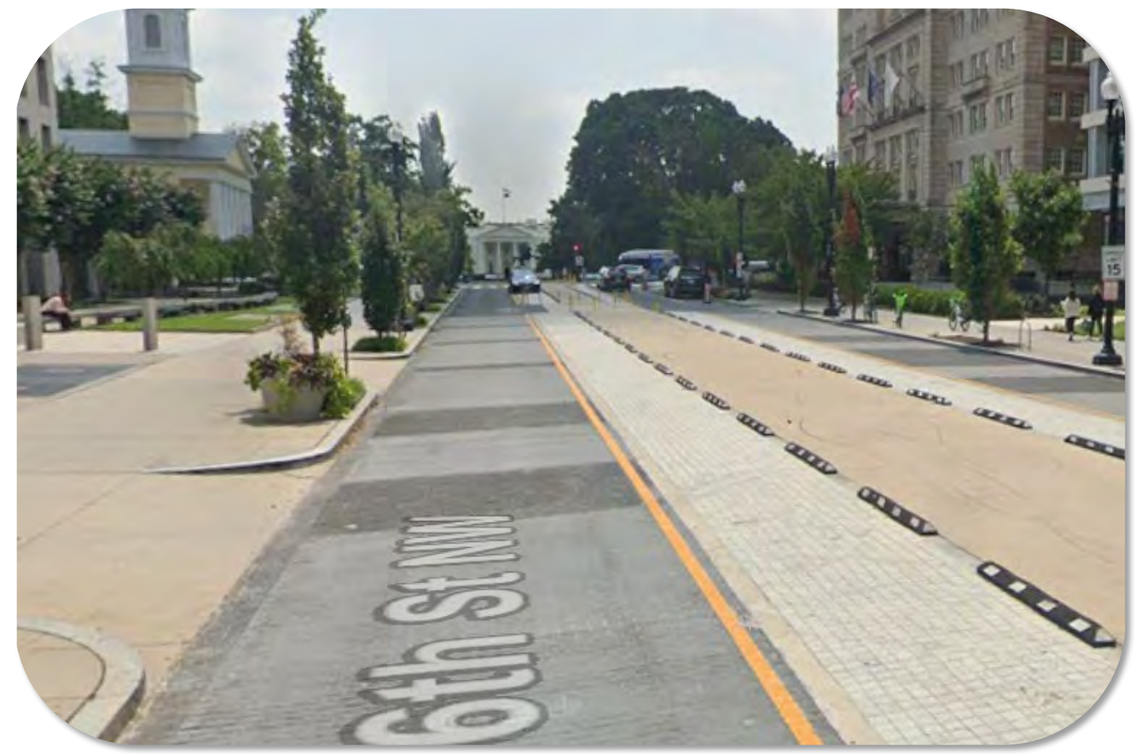
# Location History

In 2020, it became Black Lives Matter Plaza. The original mural was a pedestrian plaza with motor vehicle traffic blocked off. The mural was formalized and made permanent in late 2021 with the installation of a buffered median with bollards and granite pavers delineating the asphalt travel lanes.

In 2025, the mural was removed. The asphalt travel lanes, short term parking, granite pavers and median remained.




2024




2025

# Existing Conditions

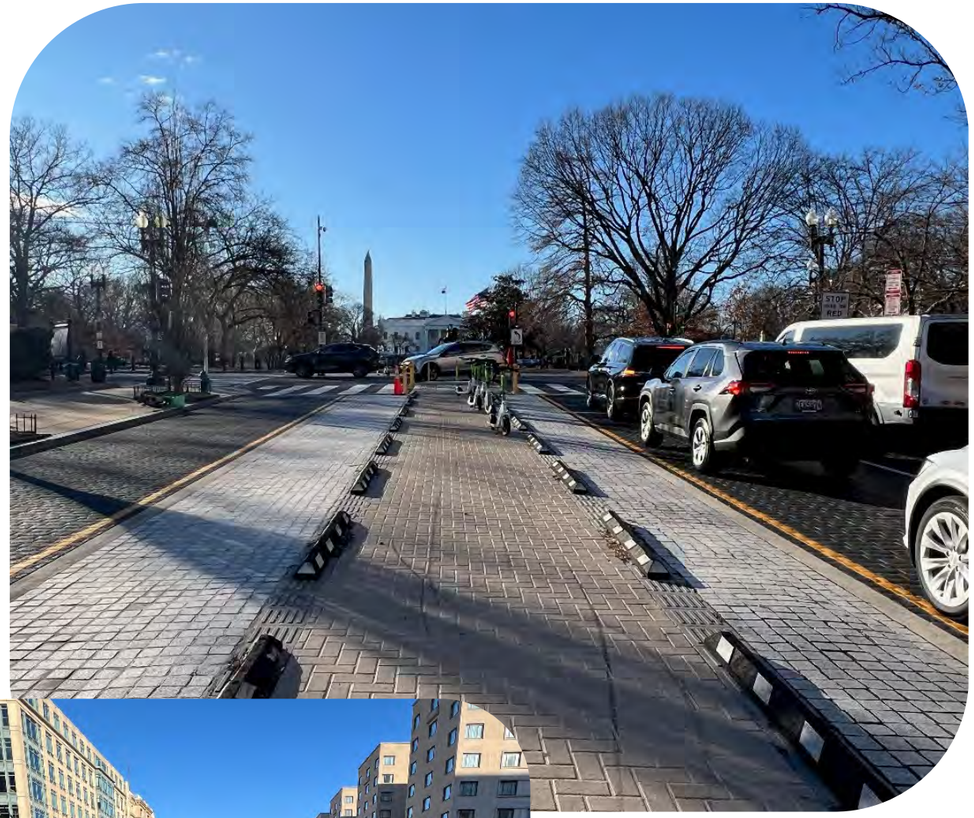
The existing conditions consist of two asphalt travel lanes, granite pavers, concrete pavers, curb stops, and a stamped concrete median. Parking was removed from most of the two-block corridor. The only parking that remains is directly in front of the Hay-Adams Hotel, which is short term 15-minute parking.

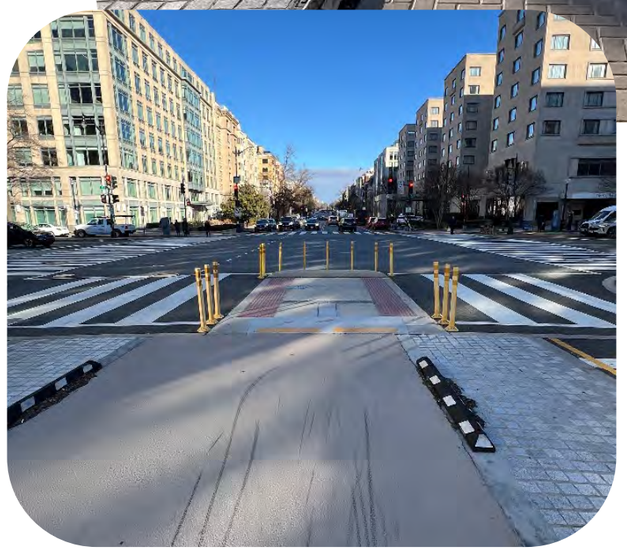
The granite pavers are used for both aesthetic and functional purposes. The detail is a special addition to complement the prestige of the White House. The pavers also delineate the travel lane, provide a buffer for pedestrians in the center median, and accommodate travel around stopped vehicles in the travel lane.  Through evaluation, these granite pavers do operate as the design intended: vehicles primarily only drive on them only to pass a vehicle stopped in the travel lane.

A break in the medians between H and I Streets allows the movement of larger vehicles to access the alley north of the Hay-Adams Hotel.

Pedestrian refuge islands are present at each intersection crosswalk with mountable concrete end caps.

Despite curb stops present, it is common for vehicles to stop, drive, stand, and park in the median space. Pedestrians are rarely seen since the removal of the Black Lives Matter Plaza.





# Existing Conditions

## South Segment – H Street to I Street NW

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## North Segment – I Street to K Street NW

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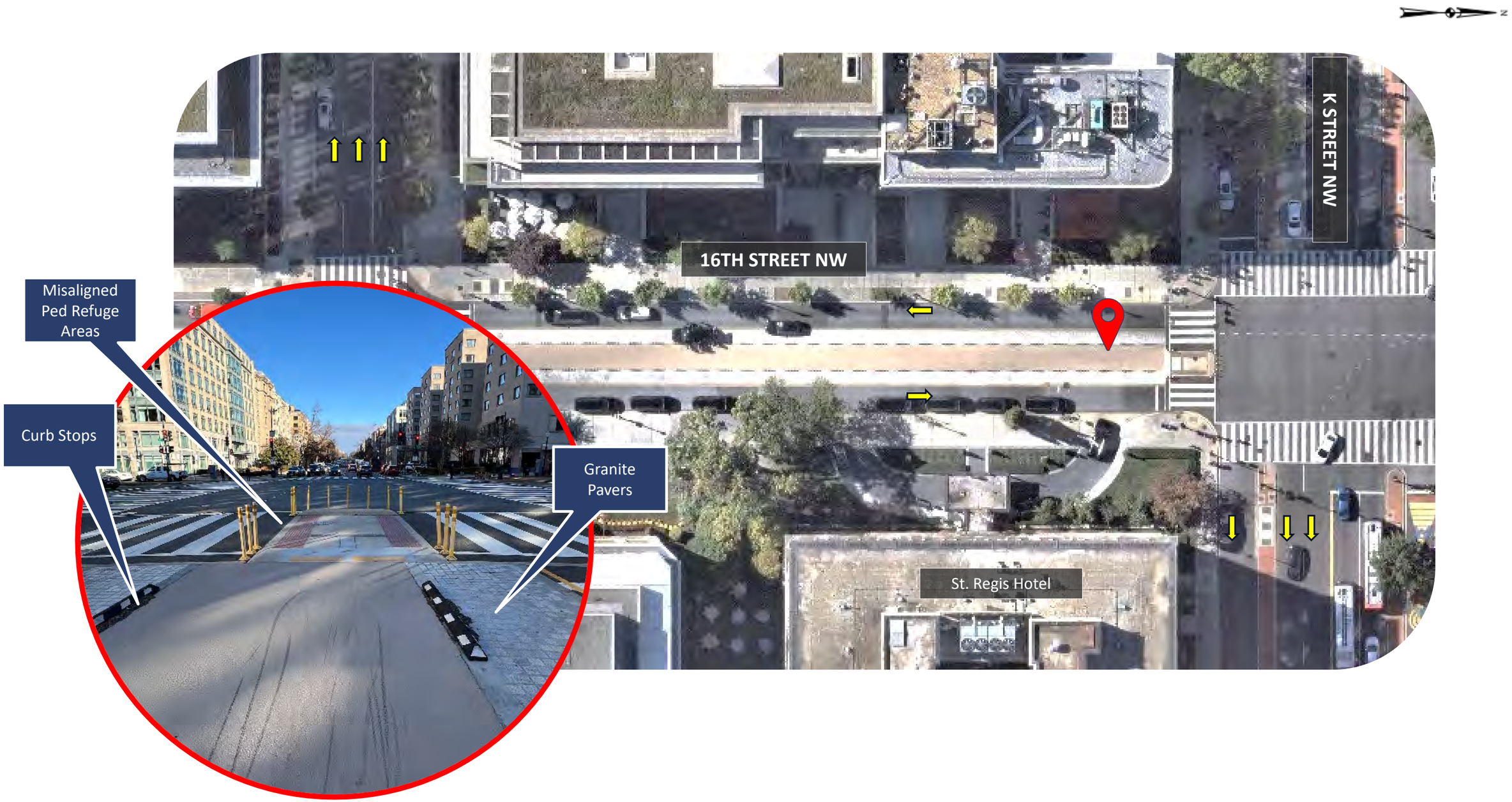


# Basis of Design

Connecticut Avenue medians (between K St and Dupont Circle)

Ensuring the proposed design matches the surrounding context and support cohesion, DDOT will use the same pre-cast concrete wall as the Connecticut Avenue planted medians, which were designed in 2012 and installed shortly after. The Connecticut Avenue medians have been a great success in terms of beautification and material longevity.

Other successful design features will be mimicked, such as the granite curb installed next to the precast concrete wall. The curb provides a buffer from vehicles and protects the wall. Setting the planters back from the intersection will increase visibility for motorists and prevents collisions with pedestrians and other motorists, further increasing safety for all roadway users and increases the lifespan of these planters.

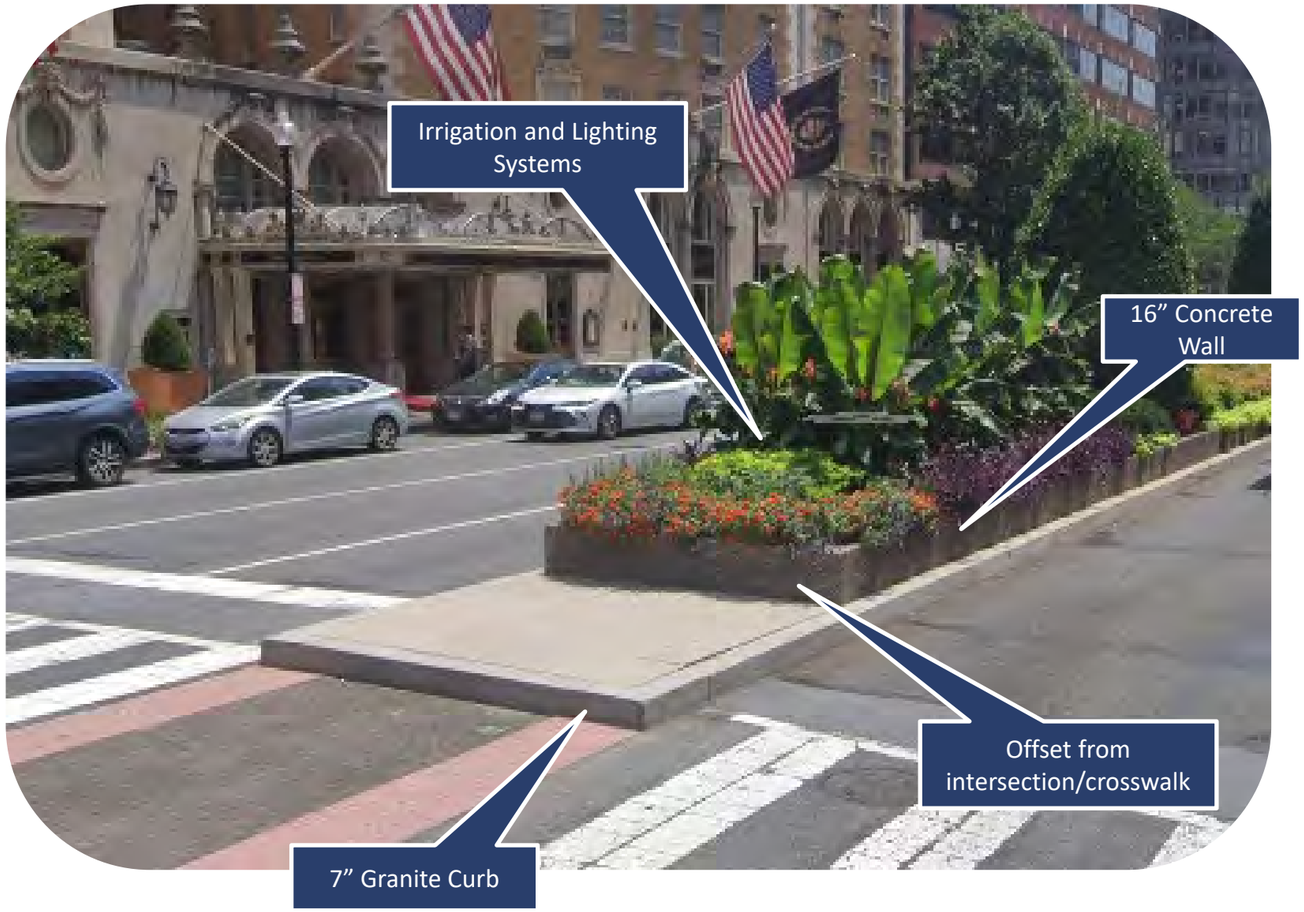
# Basis of Design

## Connecticut Avenue medians (between K St and Dupont Circle)

The Connecticut Avenue medians are equipped with irrigation to ensure plant health. Lighting is also used to highlight plantings; however, the proposed lighting will be softer and only offer white-toned lighting.

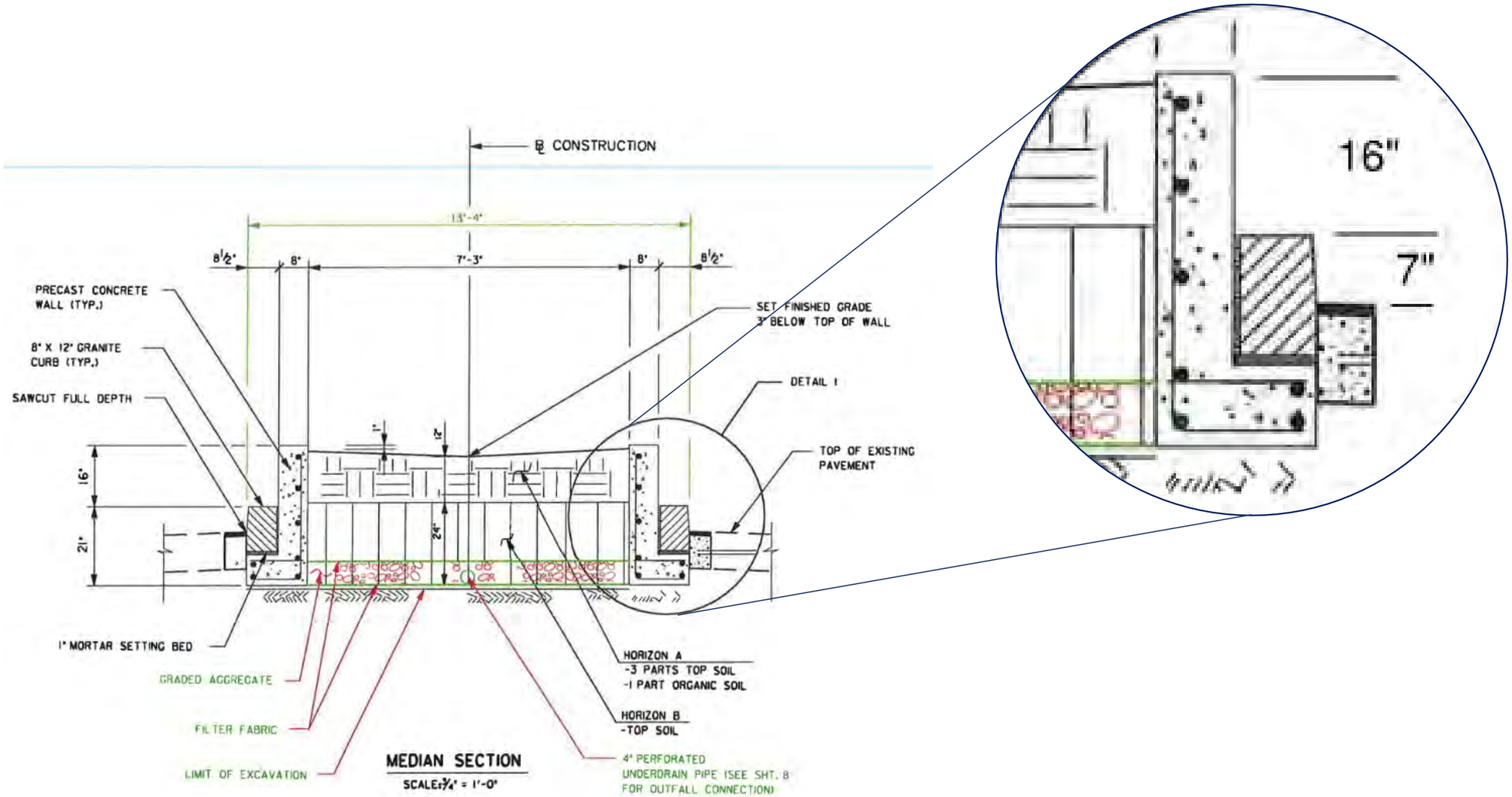
The image to the right provides another view of the Connecticut Avenue median. Though the plantings will differ, materials used will be the same.

The 7-inch DDOT-standard granite curb provides a buffer between vehicles and the concrete planter wall. Sixteen inches of the precast planter wall remain exposed above the curb, for a total height of 23 inches above the roadway. Excavation extends approximately 14 inches below the existing pavement surface.



# Basis of Design

## Connecticut Avenue medians – Typical Section

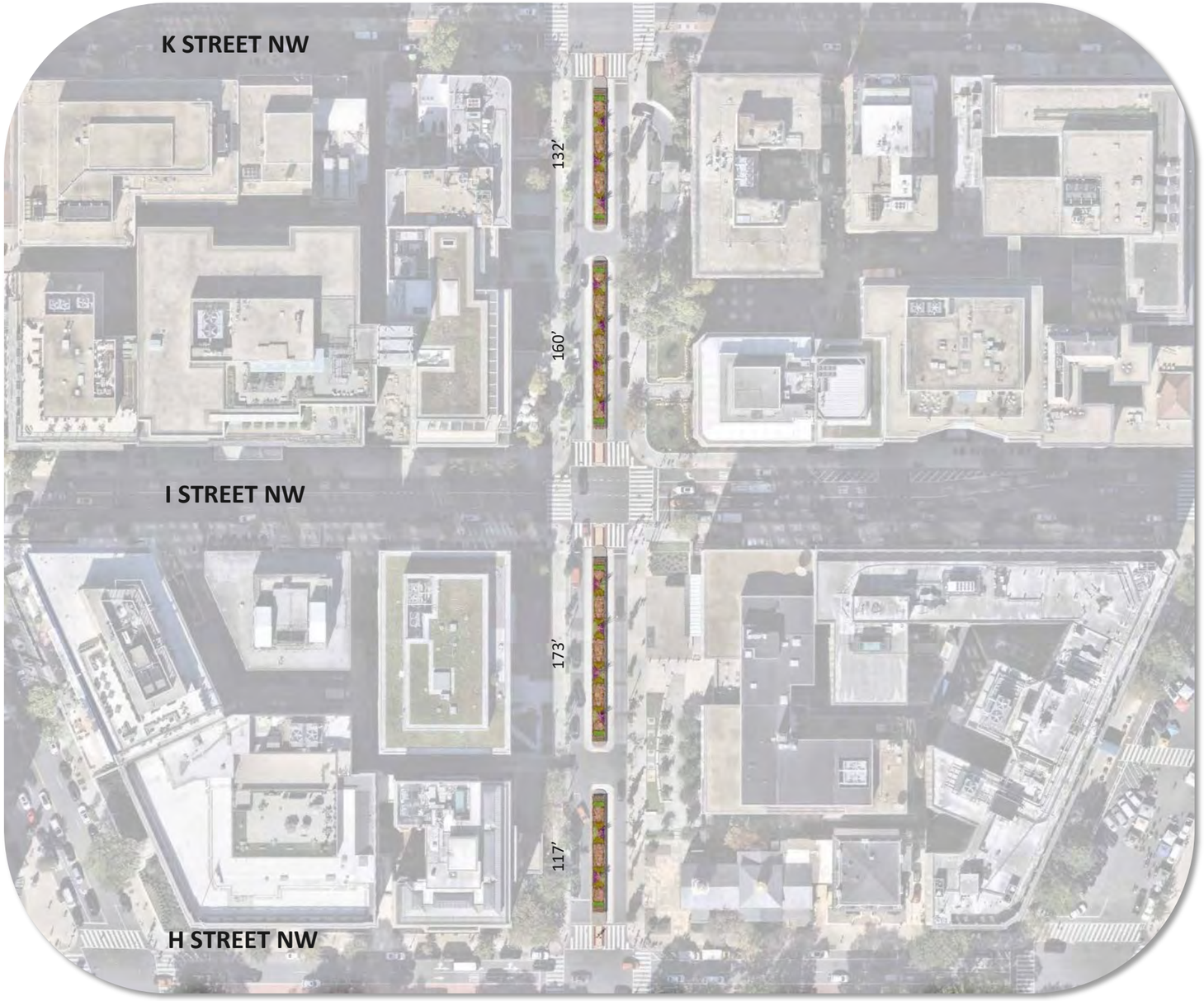


# The Design

The proposed work includes four raised vegetated medians between H Street and K Street NW on 16th Street. The alignment is centered on 16th Street, to maintain the symmetry of the street and reduce impacts to the existing roadway configuration.

The medians will be planted with both native and ornamental species to provide year-round interest. The key feature are dwarf *Prunus* 'Okame' trees will be planted in the center of the medians. The plantings will provide important stormwater management as impervious surfaces will be removed.

The roadway alignment, travel lanes and parking lanes will remain the same. The only change to vehicular access will be a break between medians in the I Street to K Street block, similar to the break in the southern block. This median break will allow for U-turn movements and access to the St. Regis Hotel. This proposed improvement is aimed at increasing circulation and decreasing conflict with pedestrians at the intersection with I Street. The design also features updates to the crosswalks and pedestrian islands.



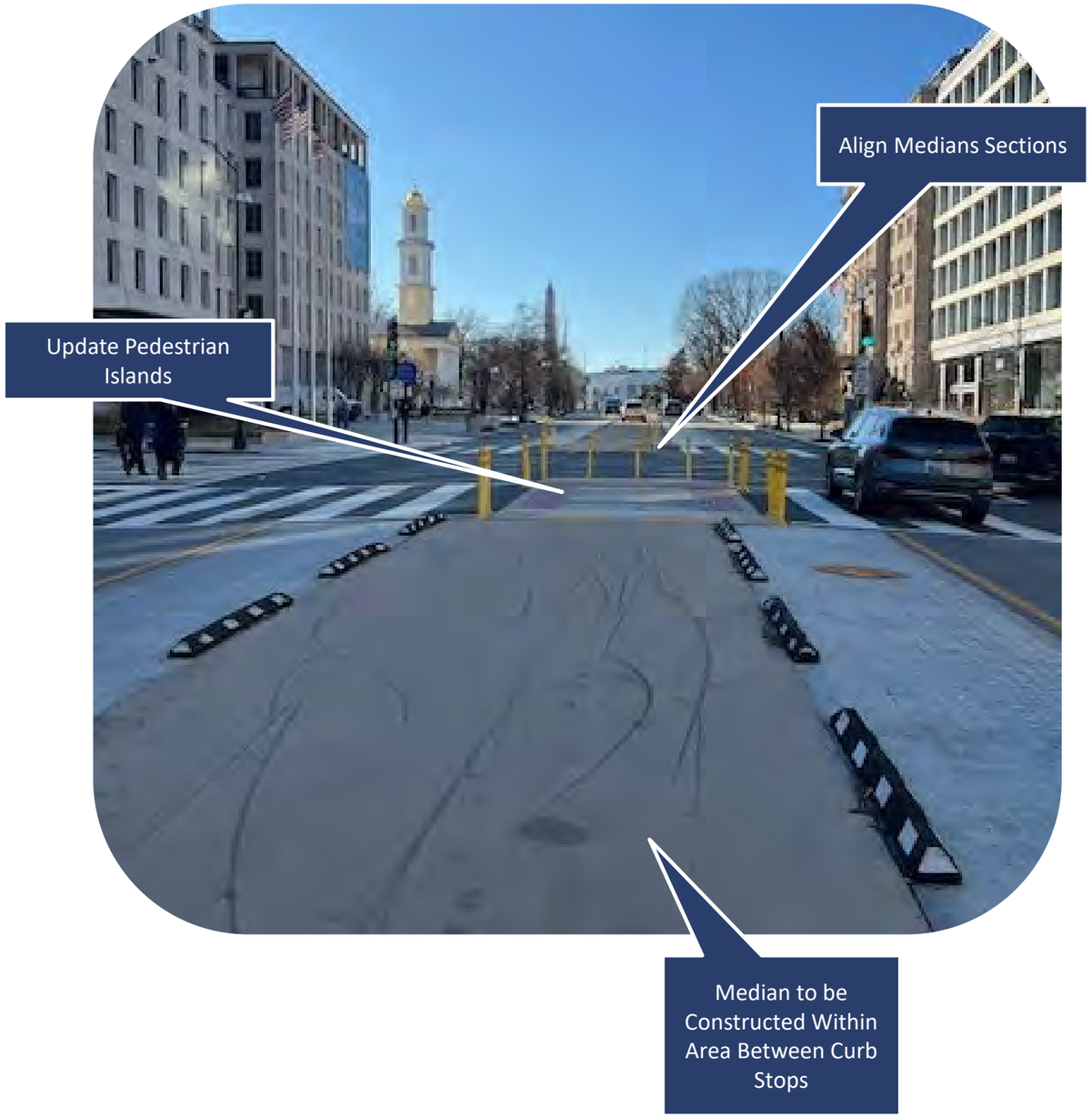
# Proposed Work

The planted medians will be constructed within the space between the existing curb stops and stone pavers, which will be 12 feet and seven inches wide. The granite curb will replace the curb stops and delineate the median area. Beyond the granite curb, the existing granite pavers and asphalt travel lanes will largely remain unaltered.

DDOT is maintaining the existing granite pavers. Observations show that nearly all vehicles utilize the asphalt roadway for travel and the granite paver area acts as a shoulder for occasional passing of a stopped vehicle. They will also act as a needed area for maintenance vehicles to service the median.

Presently, almost no pedestrians utilize the existing protected median to travel, and no pedestrians use the granite paving area (outside the median) as a pedestrian zone.

The pavers are currently laid on a bed of concrete and were engineered with the necessary structure and pavement markings to be a vehicular driving surface. The granite pavers are not an appropriate material for travel lanes or parking lanes.

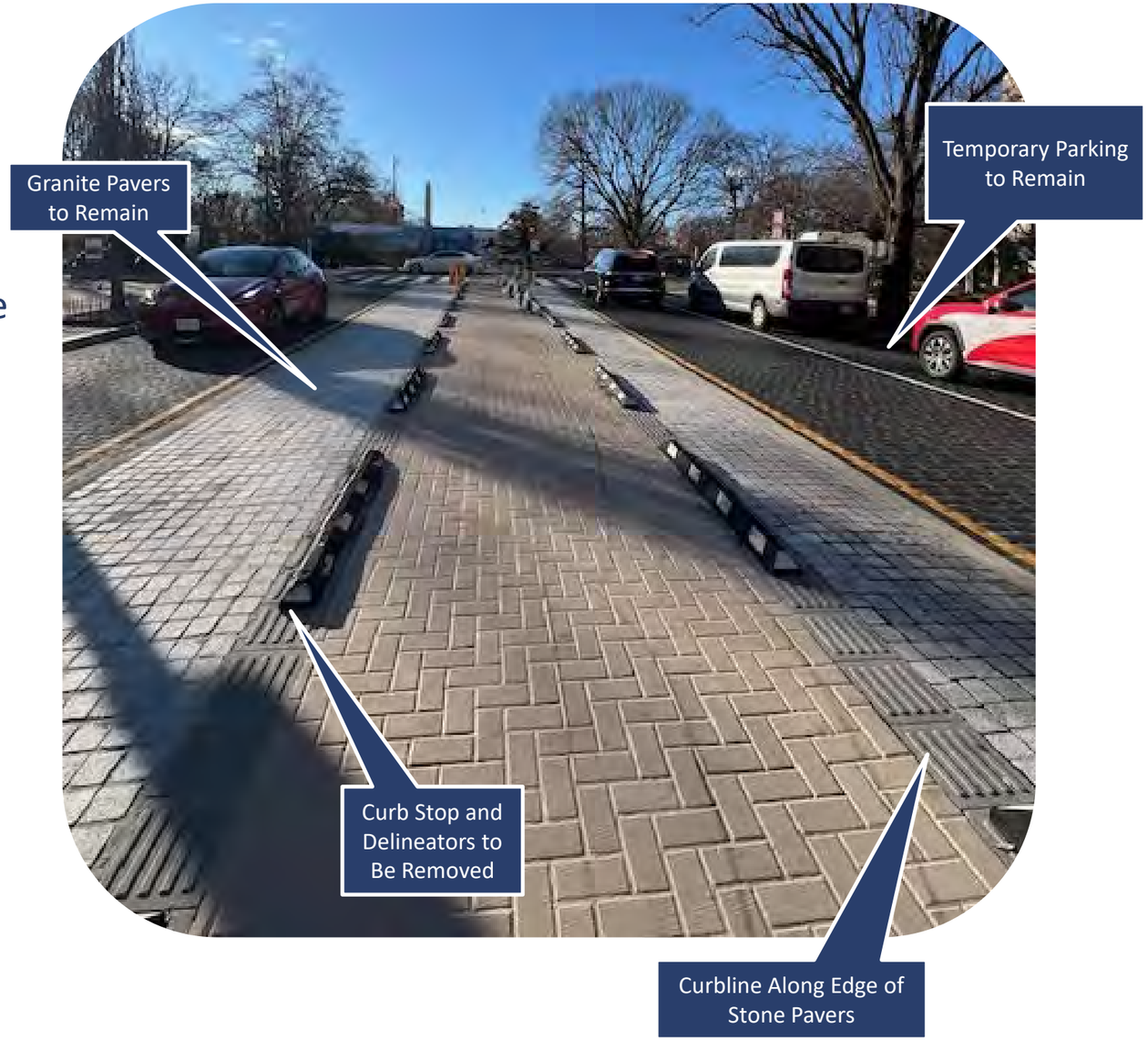


# Proposed Work

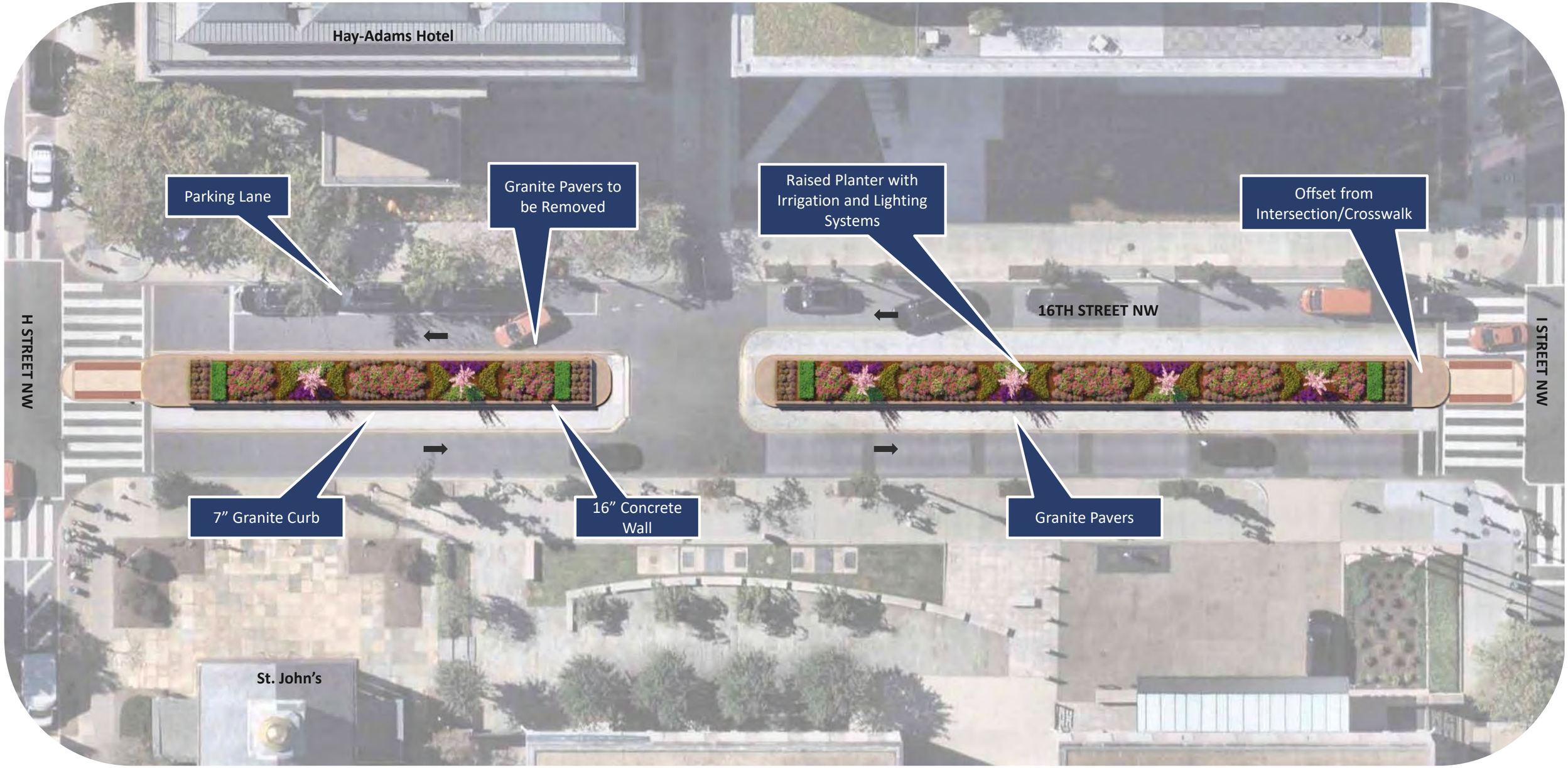
The only change to the granite paver extents will be to the southern most median.  The proposed medians are centered along the entire length of the corridor. This was to present a consistent median width as well as ensure the trees planted in the center are aligned.

Feedback given, during the preliminary design review with NCPC, DC State Historic Preservation Office (DC SHPO), and the United States Commission of Fine Arts (CFA) on February 9, 2026, regarding this section of inconsistency included: suggested expanding the width of the planter to edge of granite paver; suggested moving them to curb side; suggested removing them completely; suggested removing Hay-Adam's parking to maintain granite pavers along southern-most median.

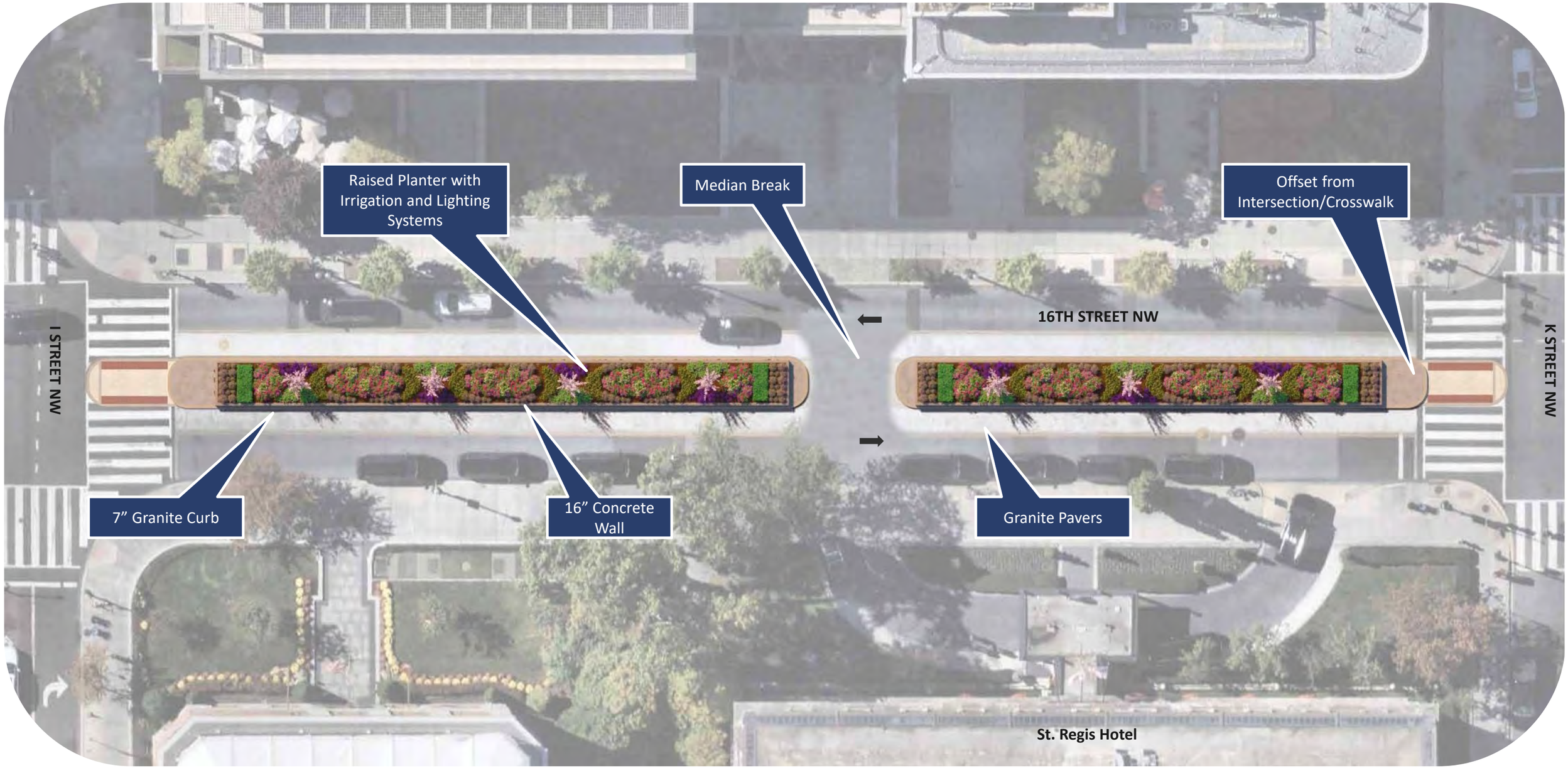
The proposed design maintains the Hay-Adams short-term parking needs as the only entrance for the Hay-Adams Hotel is located on 16th Street; there is no hotel entrance on H Street. The Hay-Adams has four valet spaces on H Street and five additional 15-minute vehicular spaces on 16th Street. The St. Regis Hotel will not be provided with curb-side parking as, in addition to the porte-cochère on 16th Street, the hotel has a lobby entrance on K Street that has nine 15-minute vehicular spaces.



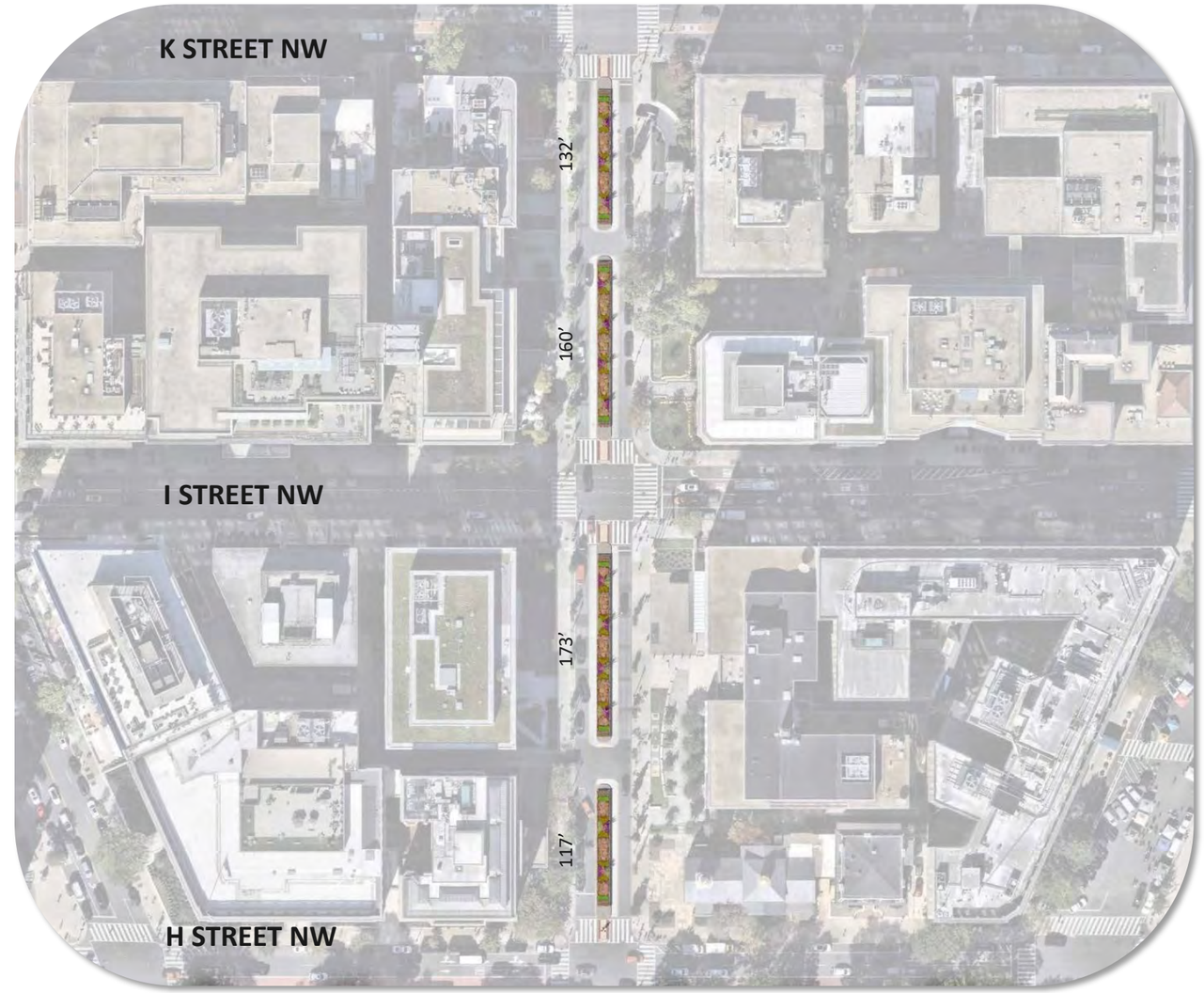
# South Segment – H Street to I Street NW



# North Segment – I Street to K Street NW

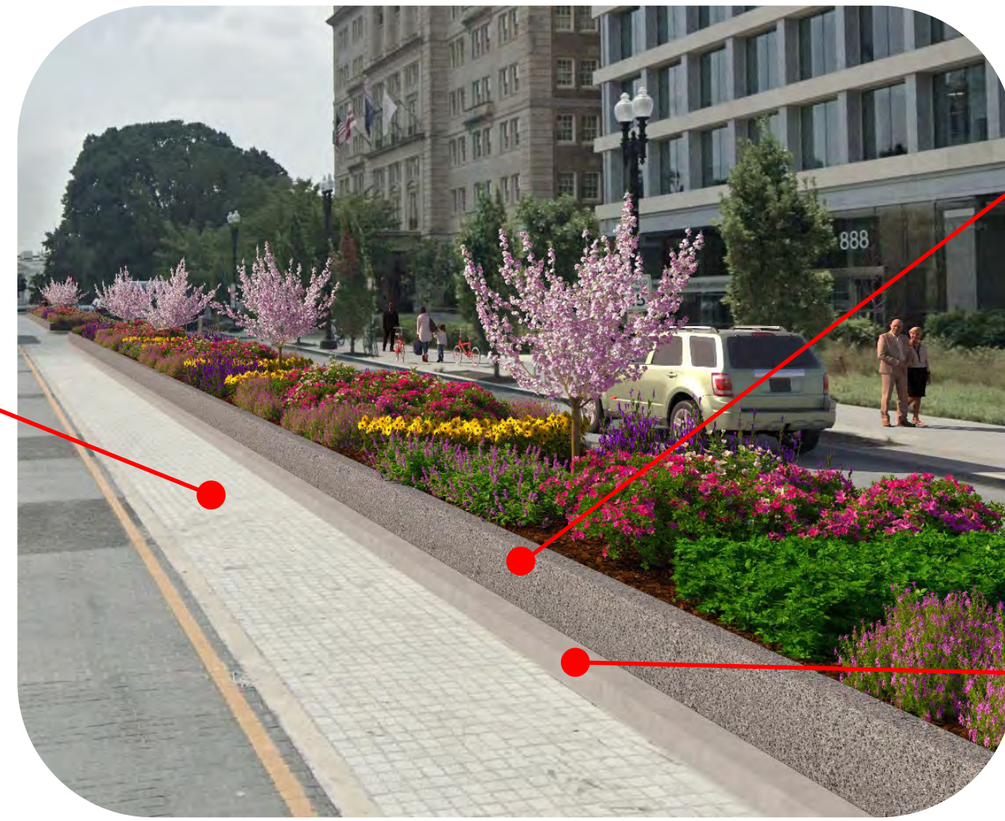


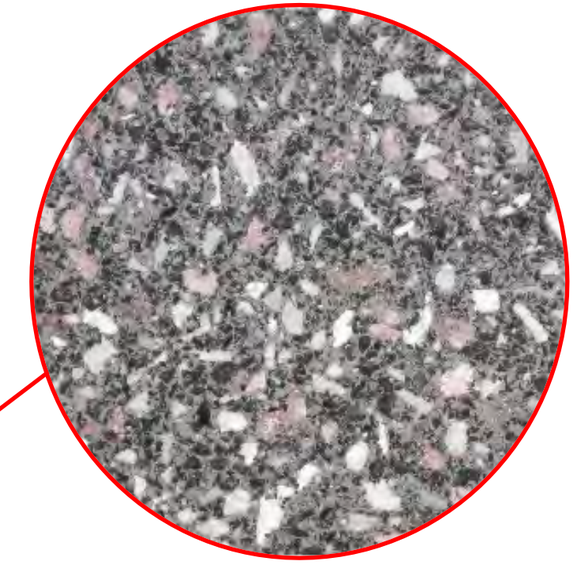
# Typical Median Dimensions



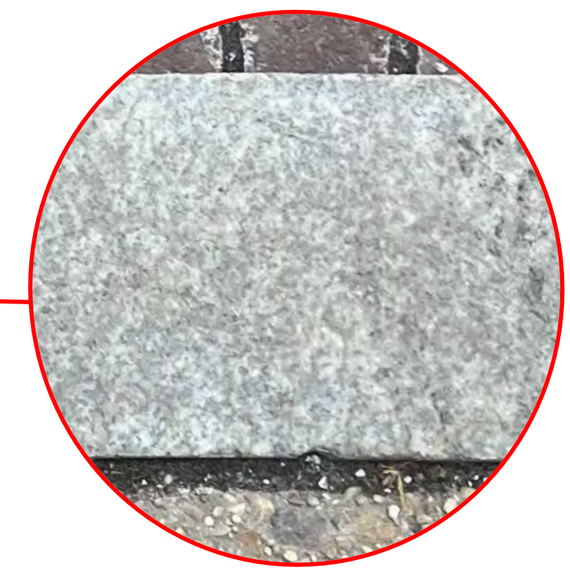
# Materials

**Existing Granite Pavers**
(to remain)



**Concrete Wall – Stone Finish**
(raised planters)



**Granite Curb**
(Medians)

# Landscaping Features

The landscaped medians will be planted with nine species, identified to the right. These species have been used throughout DC and surrounding neighborhoods to provide cohesion. Dwarf flowering cherry trees, *Prunus 'Okame,'* will be planted in the center of the medians to provide the quintessential DC experience in the spring. This species was selected for its small size, upright structure, and slow growth.

All medians will be equipped with minimal accent white colored lighting to highlight the plantings in the evening.

Irrigation and an underdrain connected to the storm sewer will be provided to ensure plants are well maintained through the varying temperatures of DC.

**CATMINT**
*Nepeta racemosa*

**KNOCK OUT ROSES**
**Rosa 'Radyod'**

**JAPANESE HOLLY**
*Ilex crenata 'Helleri'*

**CARDONNA MEADOW SAGE**
*Salvia nemorosa* 'Caradonna'

**DWARF FLOWERING CHERRY**
*Prunus* 'Okame'

**LITTLE BLUESTEM**
*Schizachyrium scoparium*

**EASTERN BLUESTAR**
*Amsonia tabernaemontana*

**DWARF LOROPETALUM**
*Loropetalum* 'Purple Daydream'

**BLACK-EYED SUSAN**
*Rudbeckia hirta*

# Viewshed Study of the White House

A viewshed study was conducted to understand the impact the proposed dwarf cherry blossom trees will have on seeing the White House on 16th Street.

The study was conducted from K Street NW, the proposed use of dwarf cherry blossom trees at maturity (10’ tall, 12’ including the planter box) do not impact the view of the White House from the travel lanes.

The dwarf cherry blossom trees do, however, block the view of the White House from the center of the roadway on K Street NW. The further north on 16th Street, the less the trees impact the White House viewshed.

Comments were given to DDOT on February 9, 2026 to consider grouping the cherry trees. Unfortunately, there is not adequate soil volume to accommodate grouping cherry trees and it would increase the impact to the view of the White House.

# Viewshed Study of White House

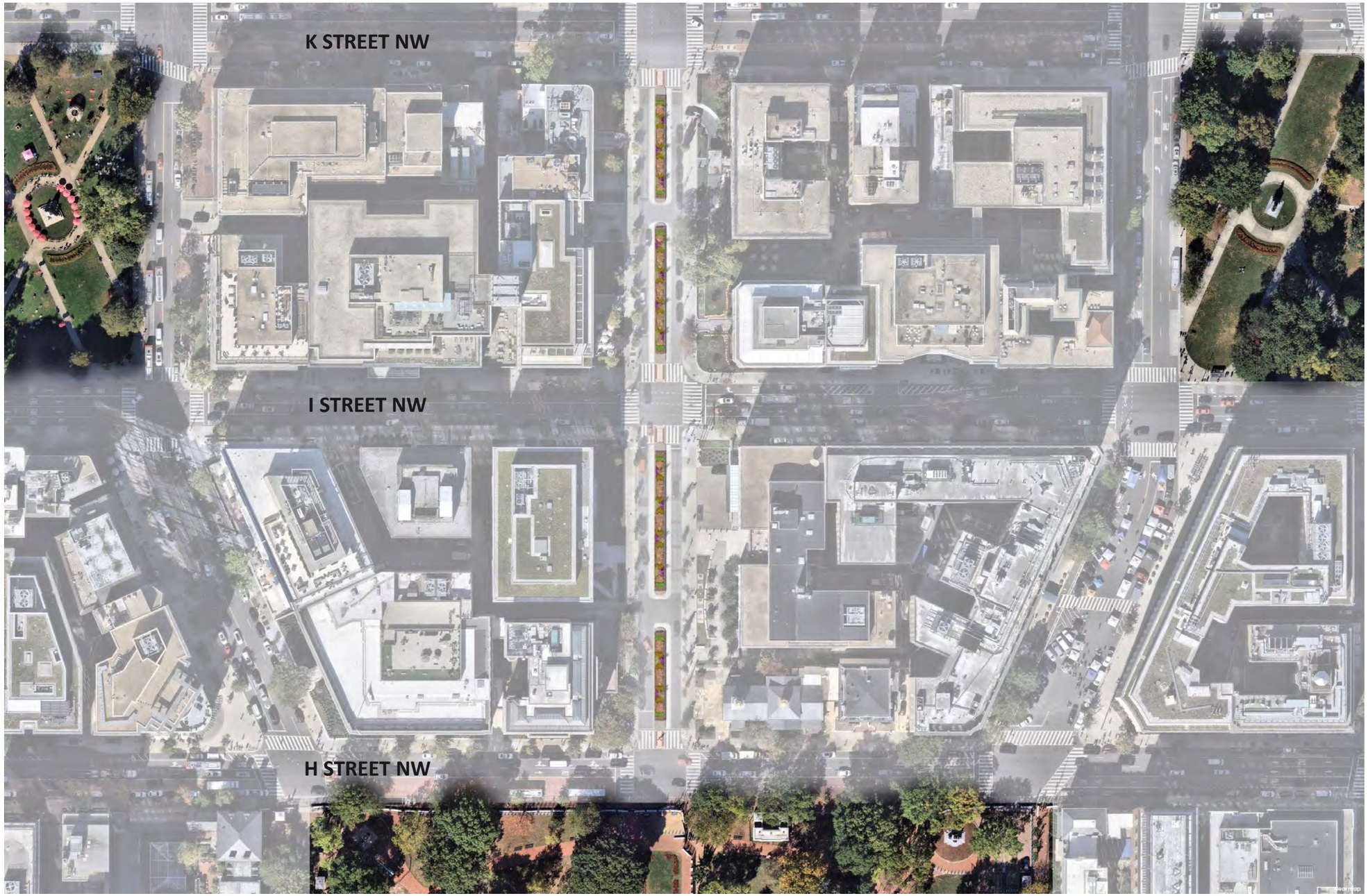
The White House is seen from the travel lane.

# View of the White House from K Street NW

The White House is not seen from the center of the roadway at K Street NW.

# Neighborhood Scale

The proposed design feeds into the symmetry of Farragut and McPherson Square Parks while offering a natural transition from the organic forms of Lafayette Square to the geometric shapes of the urban environment.



d.

District Department of Transportation

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