National Capital Planning Commission

-- updated 11/16/2026 --

A New Pennsylvania Avenue Plan

Pennsylvania Avenue between 3rd and 15th Streets, NW, Washington, DC

Approval of Preliminary Site Development Plans

National Capital Planning Commission

December 3, 2026 | File: 7509

Project Summary

Commission Meeting Date: December 3, 2026

NCPC Review Authority: 40 U.S.C. § 8701, et seq.

Applicant Request: Approval of Preliminary Site Development Plans

Session: Staff Presentation

NCPC Review Officer: Karin Schierhold

NCPC File Number: 7509

Project Summary:

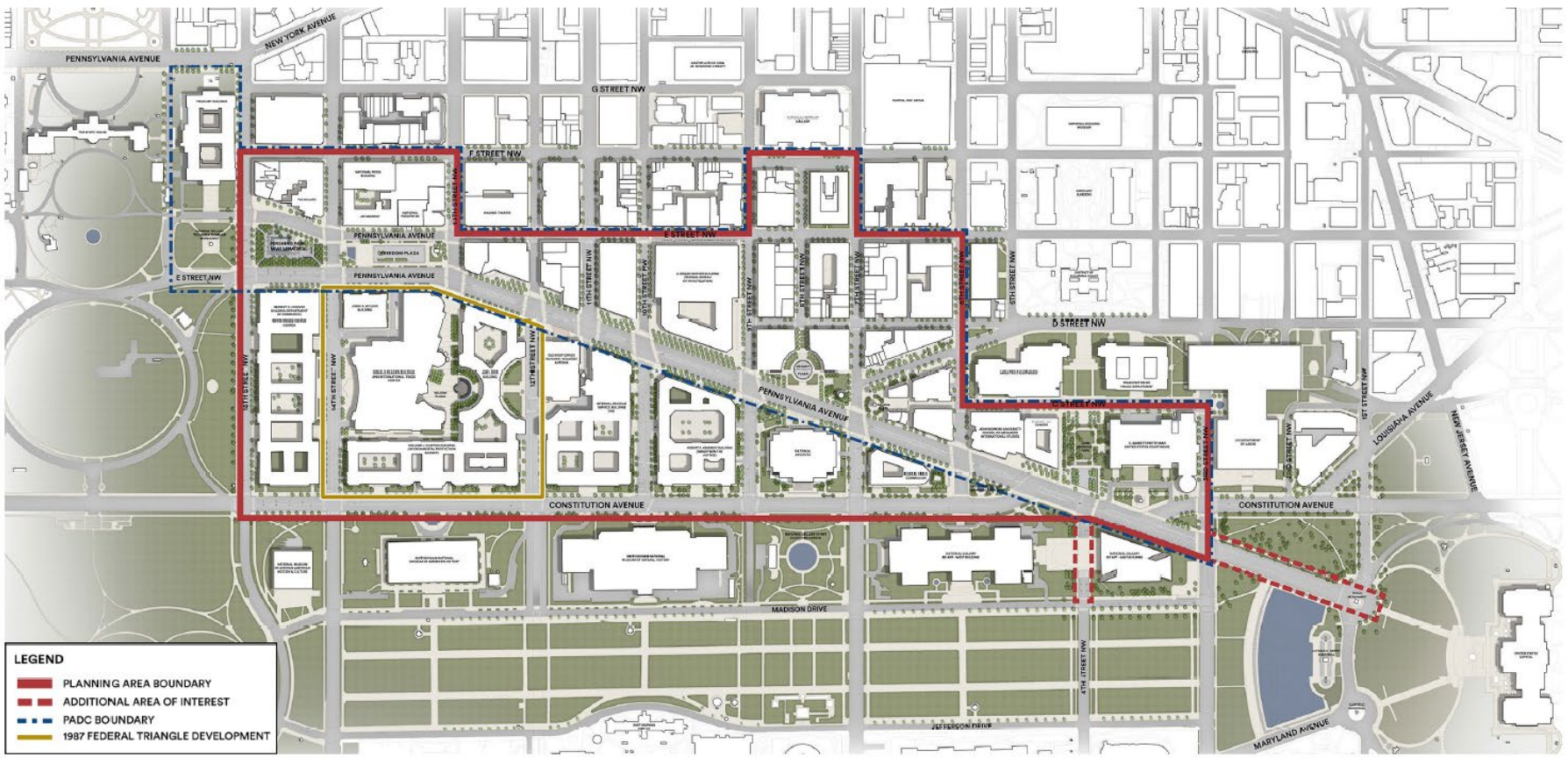
NCPC is working with Federal and District Partners to update the 1974 Pennsylvania Avenue Plan (1974 Plan), which will reimagine Pennsylvania Avenue as a venue and beautiful destination – to transform the corridor into a vibrant public space for the city and the nation.

The new Pennsylvania Avenue Plan (Plan) is a framework for future decision making. It articulates the vision, goals, objectives, and principles to realize the vision. It carries forward the 1974 Plan's property development framework; recommends a new more efficient management structure to improve programming, maintenance and operations; and will incorporate the public space design plan (the subject of this review).

The *Public Space Design* will provide schematic-level design to guide redevelopment of the corridor and three main public space areas, and inform a comprehensive infrastructure modernization. The design approach focuses on key goals, objectives, and themes drawn from technical studies and analysis, public feedback from early design ideas, and input and discussion with the Project Partners.

In April, the Commission provided comments on a series of concept design alternatives and options. Commission comments, public review, technical requirements, and environmental analysis provided the basis for selecting the preferred design alternatives. **The purpose of this Preliminary Review is to present the preferred design alternatives for the corridor and three main public space areas.**

A United Partnership: Federal and Local Collaboration



- 1.2-mile corridor between the White House and U.S. Capitol
- 177-acre project area (11 intersecting streets, and 40 acres of adjoining public space)
- Close to National Mall, museums, and Downtown
- Predominantly office use with about 1,500 residents
- Well-served by transit
- Prior to the pandemic, hosted about 150 local and regional annual events per year

Consultants:

National Capital Planning Commission

GSA

National Park Service

Government of the District of Columbia

Downtown DC

events DC

Land Collective

David Rubin

HR&A

A New Pennsylvania Avenue Plan



The 1974 PADC Plan is over 50 years old

The Pennsylvania Avenue Master Plan will be the new guiding document to replace the 1974 master plan.

The master plan is a framework that articulates the shared vision with detailed guidance for how to implement the plan.

A New Pennsylvania Avenue Plan

NCPC and Project Partners

Land DAVID RUBIN Collective

HR&A

The New Plan will include:

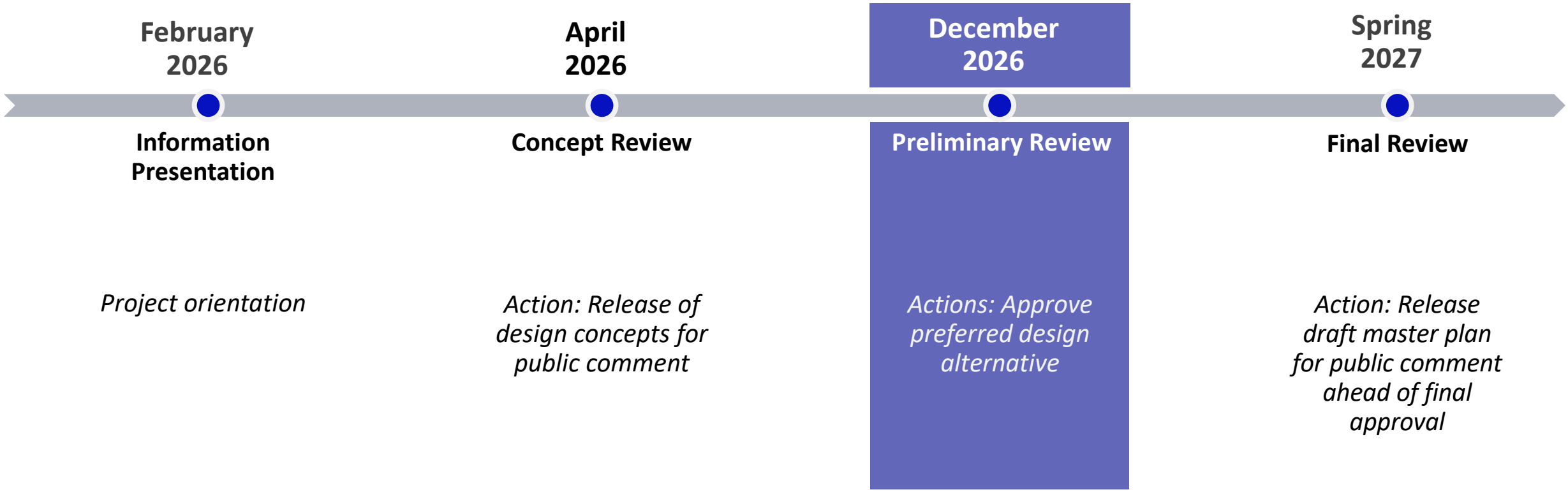
Public Space Design

- Right-sizing, realigning, and beautifying the street and public spaces
- Modernizing infrastructure

Implementation Program

- Event programming requirements
- Strategies to improve management, operations, and maintenance.

Project Review Timeline



Summary – April Concept Review

The Commission approved comments on concept **design alternative(s) and options** for the following locations:

- **The Corridor Reconfiguration – Two Alternatives**
  - Reallocation of Roadway Space
  - Canopy Trees or Columnar Trees (Fastigiate Allee)
  - Corridor Poles or No Poles
- **Western End / Freedom Plaza – Two Alternatives**
  - Historic Alignment (Diagonal Cartway)
  - Central Plaza (Contiguous Plaza)
- **Crossroads / Market Square – One Alternative**
- **Eastern End / John Marshall Park – One Alternative**

Summary – April Public Engagement

"Need shade. It is hot."

"Larger sidewalks with shade."

"Shade and calm."

"Spots to sit and eat."

"...Shaded and ventilated seating."

"Seating (including benches, chairs, tables and a grassy lawn where people can gather and relax.)"

"Free public restrooms."

"Clean public family restrooms."

"Drinking fountain and public restrooms."

"Bio-diversity."

"Plants / Trees are always comforting, especially in D.C. summer."

"More green spaces; trees, nature, etc."

"Wide pedestrian friendly sidewalk."

"Keep bike lanes separate/protected."

"I like bike lanes and an expanded sidewalk."

"Affordable food options with covered outdoor seating."

"Would be great to provide space for food kiosks."

"Diverse food options."







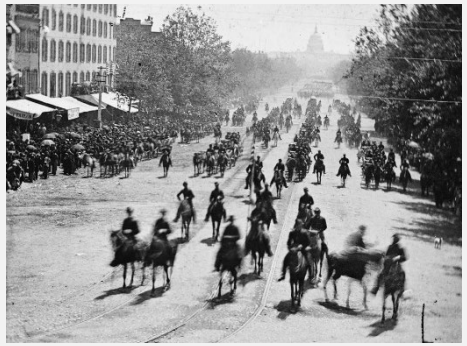





Project Context

Pennsylvania Avenue – A Ceremonial Stage

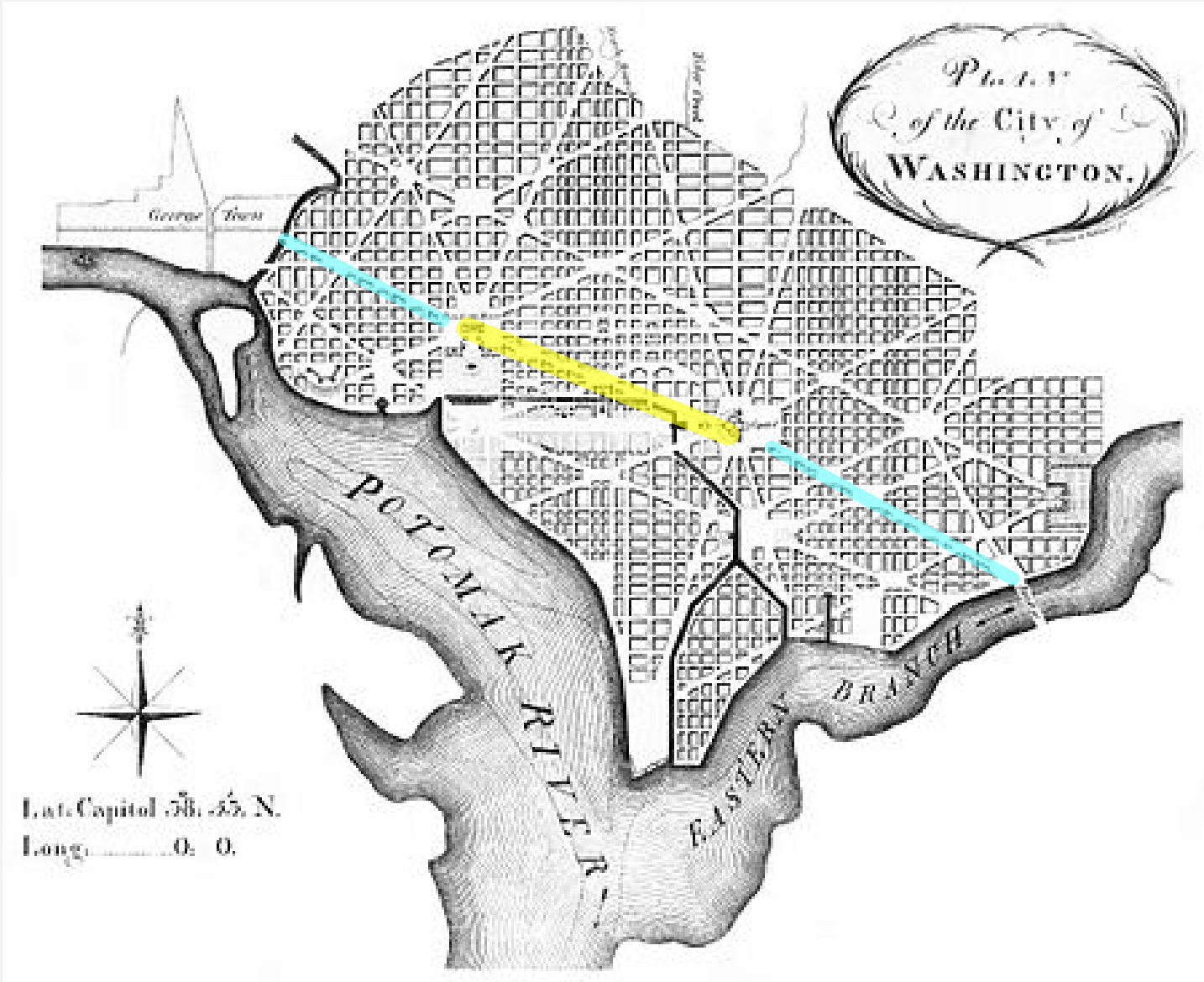
Pierre L'Enfant envisioned Pennsylvania Avenue as the principal corridor and center of civic activity in the new capital city











Existing Site Conditions – Above Grade



Flooding on the Avenue during major storm events and summer heat limit usage throughout the year



Missing trees along the Avenue reduce impact of framing the Capitol viewshed



Tree roots in search of adequate soil volume displace pavers and curbs



Dead and diseased trees in public spaces reduce access to shade



Utility transformer
pavers and curbs



Lane dividers (or "caterpillars"), traffic signals, and other elements in the vehicular cartway that are part of the everyday infrastructure can create barriers to facilitating events, such trip hazards and increased costs

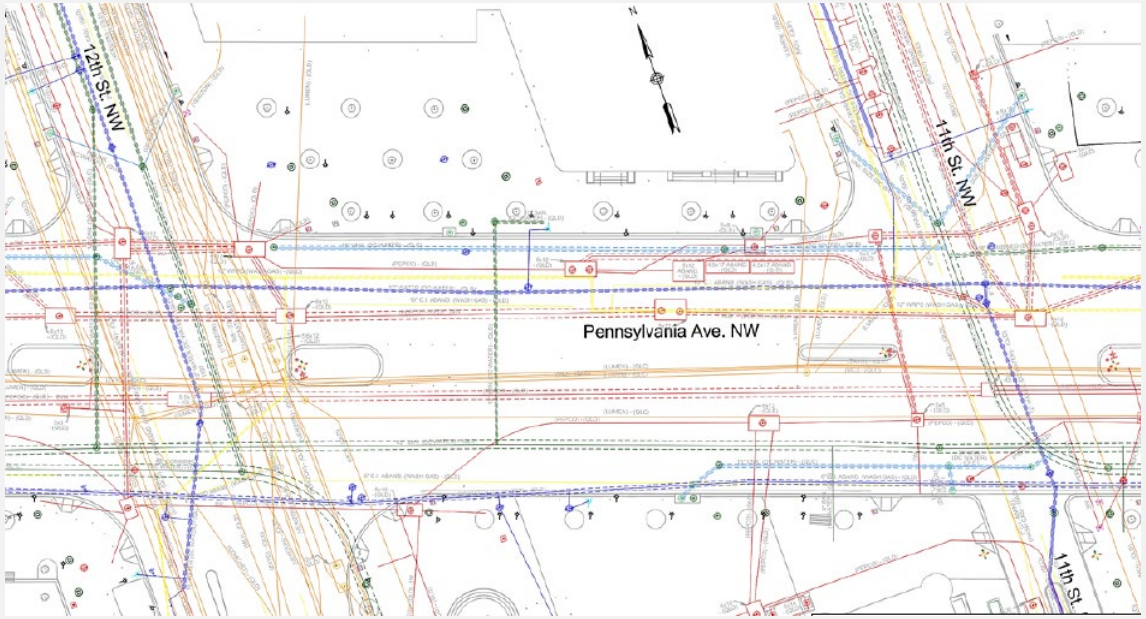


During large events, attendees often climb onto temporary site security elements to gain prospect

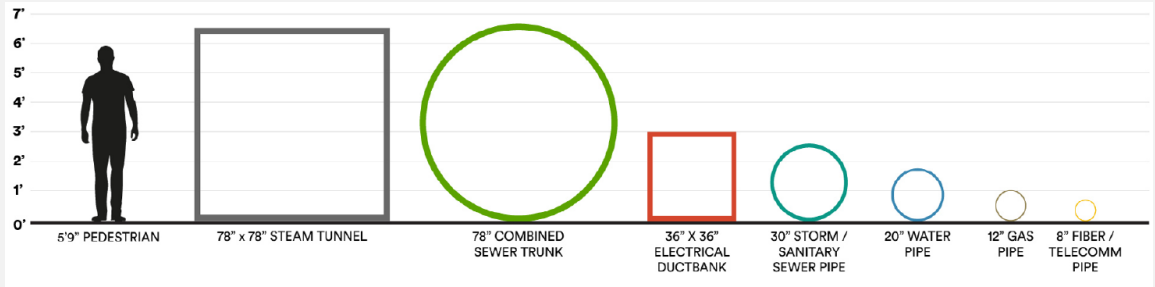


Temporary infrastructure elements for events can feel haphazard and increase both event costs and set-up/ breakdown times

Existing Site Conditions – Below Grade



Existing Utilities



Range of Infrastructure Sizes



Range of Ages and Conditions Dating Back to the 1870's

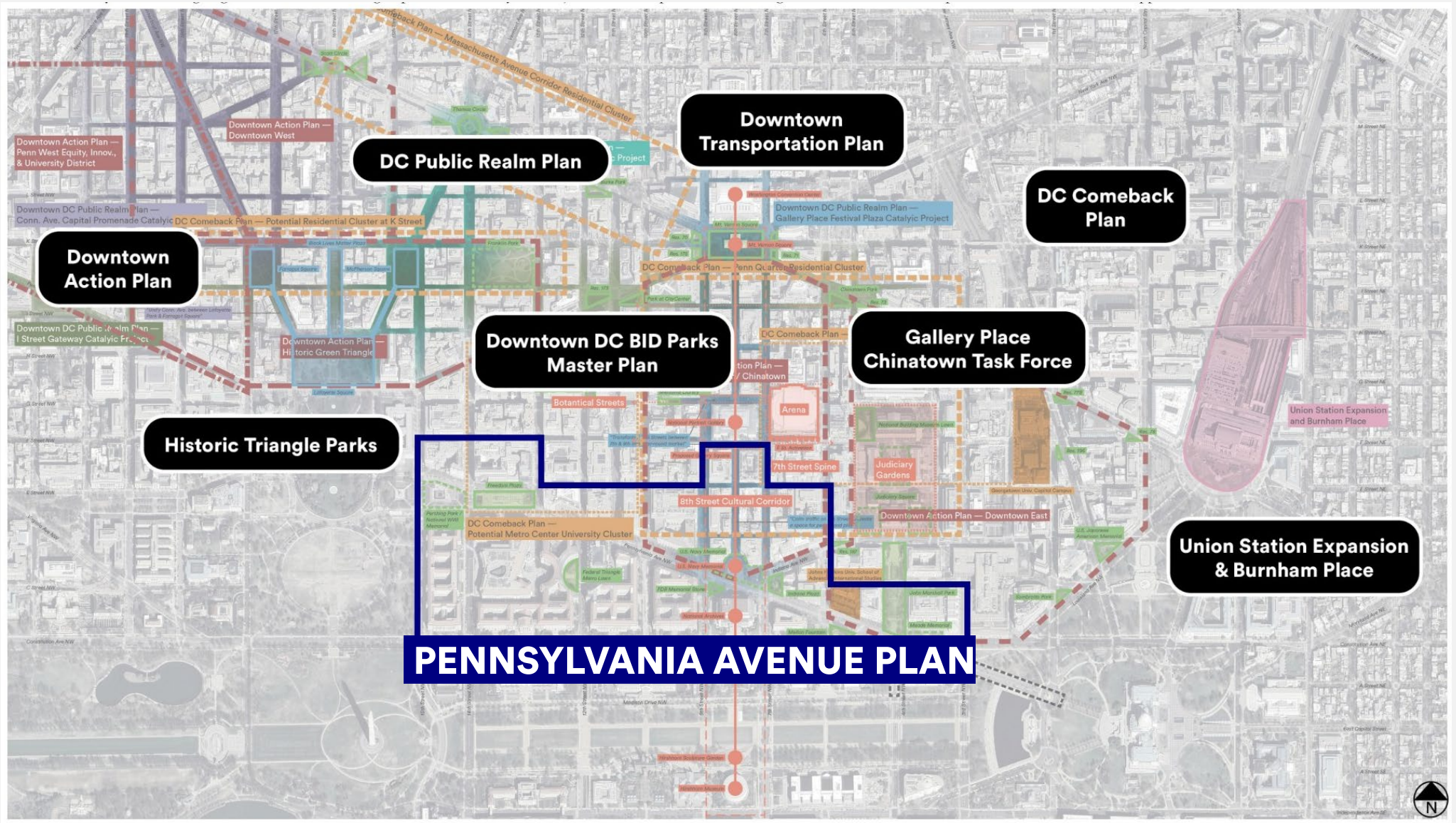
Pennsylvania Avenue – Where America Unites



Main Streets in small towns and large cities across the United States are the center of social connection, economic progress, and civic leadership. Pennsylvania Avenue in our nation's capital serves this same function at a national scale, to create a place where we can come together to march, honor, celebrate, and gather.

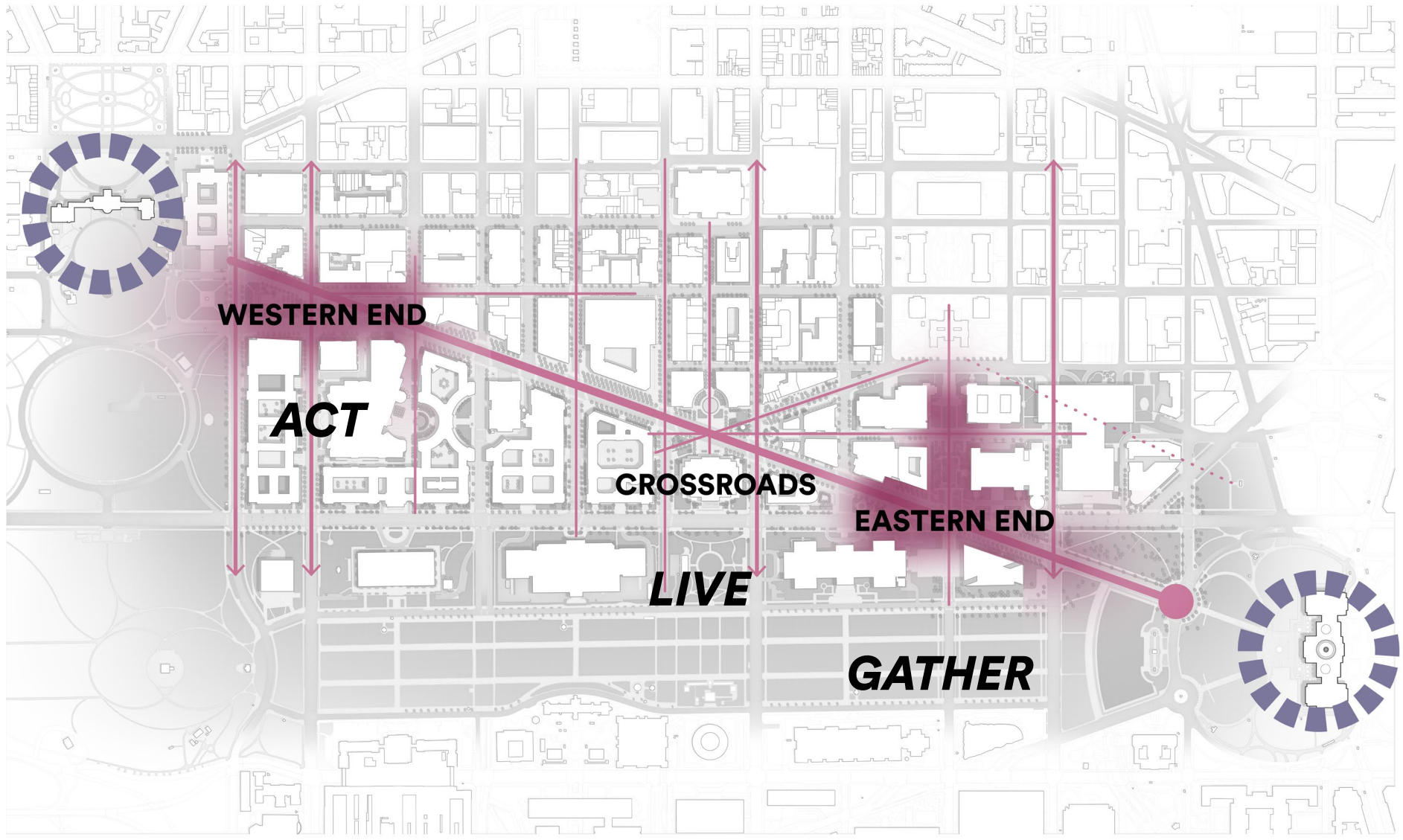
Pennsylvania Avenue can fulfill its promise as America's Main Street—a **dynamic daily destination**, and an **inspiring civic venue**. A place to enjoy city life in the District of Columbia, honor America's past, celebrate achievements, and renew aspirations, embodying the enduring spirit of the nation and the city to inspire pride and confidence in our collective future.

Local Planning Synergies



Public Space Design Plan

Design Approach



Plan Objectives

Create a beautiful and welcoming place

Design and maintain Pennsylvania Avenue as a beautiful and welcoming place for all Americans and visitors.

Strengthen the Avenue as a civic venue

Celebrate Pennsylvania Avenue and its public spaces as a setting for demonstrations, collective expression, ceremonies, celebrations, and events of all scales, including the Inaugural Parade.

Celebrate the Avenue's symbolic role

Reinforce Pennsylvania Avenue's unique role as both a physical and symbolic connection between the White House and the U.S. Capitol and as a bridge between the federal core and downtown Washington, D.C.

Reinforce multimodal connections

Accommodate a range of transportation modes while prioritizing safe, convenient, and equitable access to the Avenue.

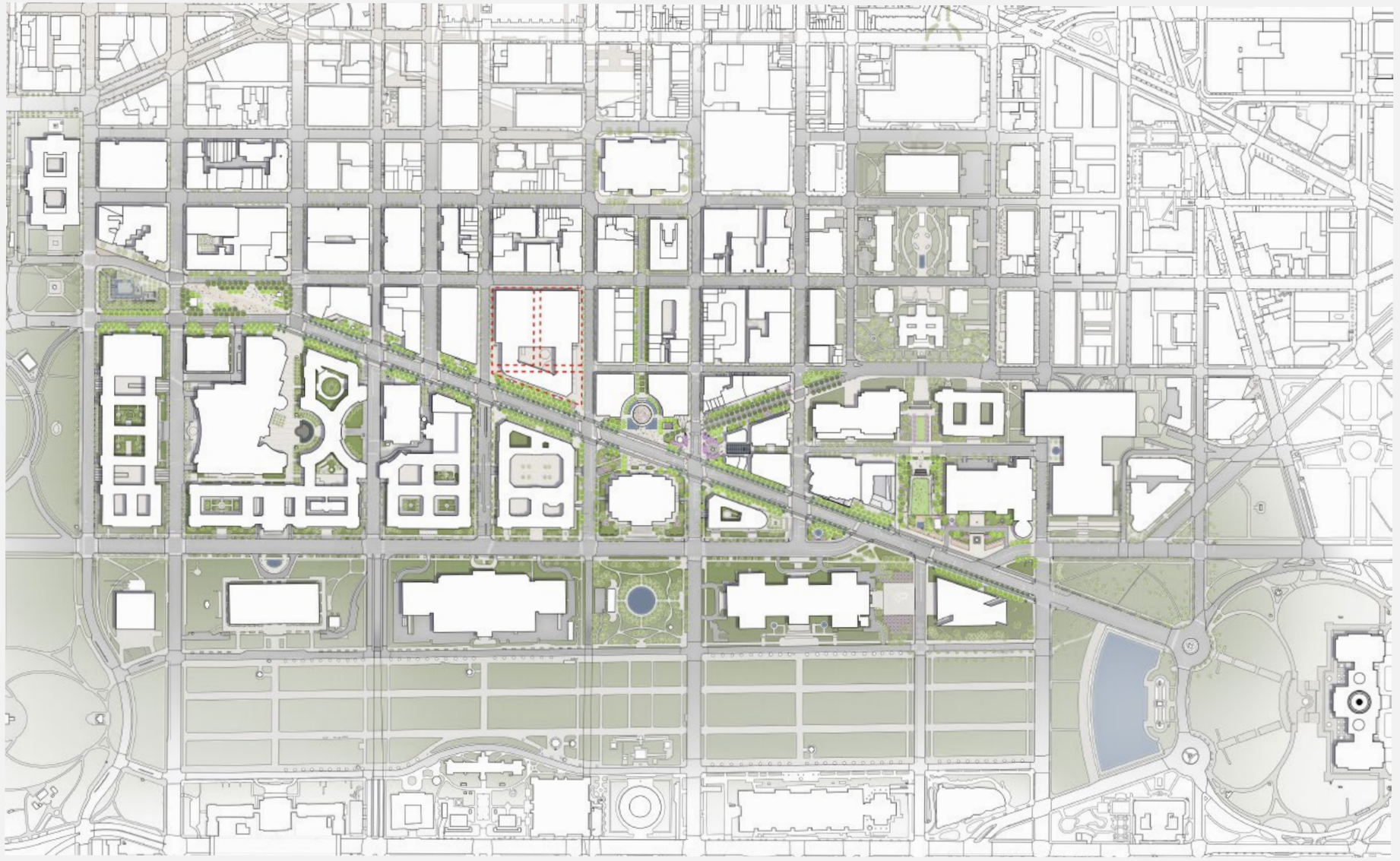
Modernize infrastructure for flexibility

Modernize aging infrastructure through a seamless and integrated approach that enhances the Avenue's functionality, resilience, and adaptability.

Establish efficient management and operations

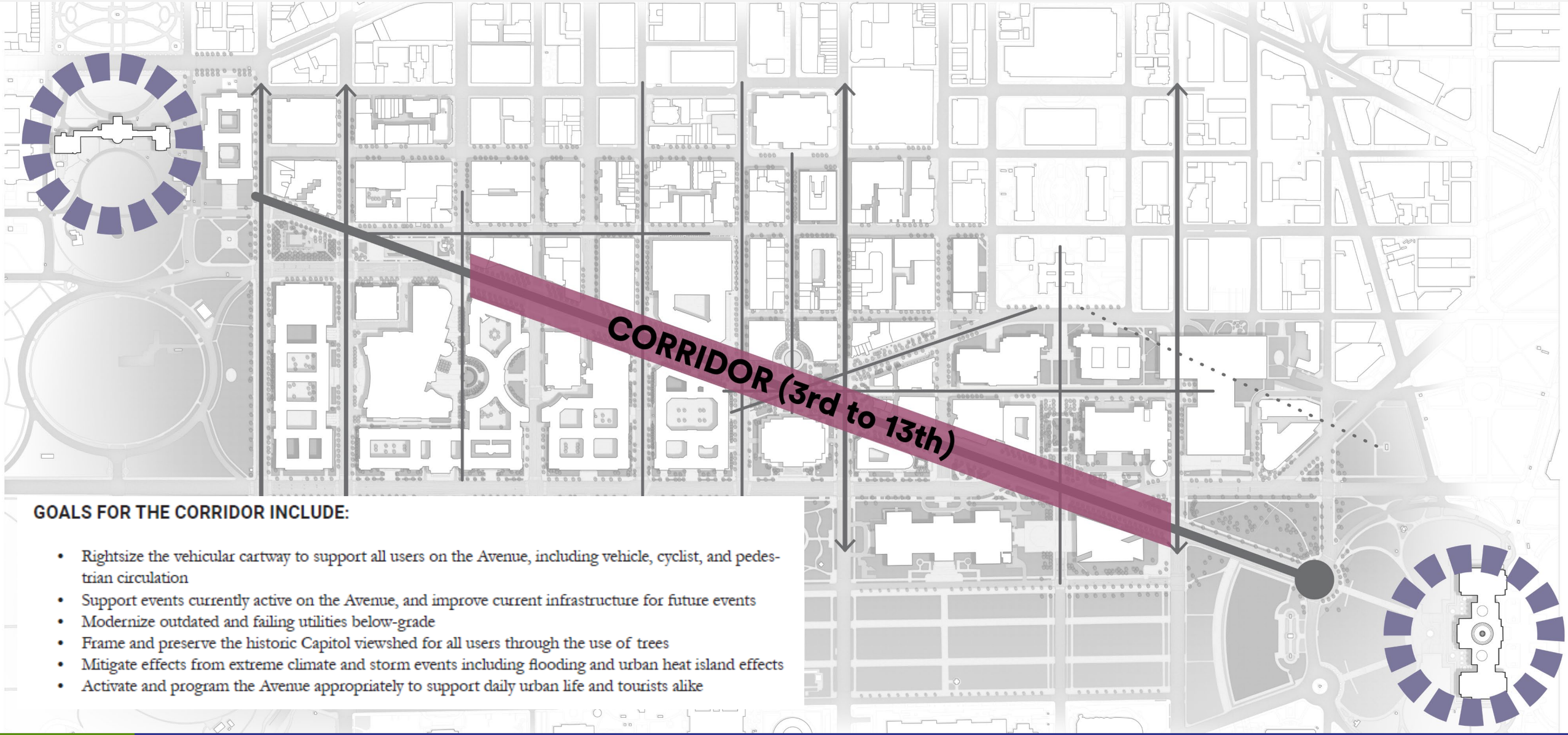
Simplify regulatory and management policies to support coordinated, efficient, and sustainable stewardship of Pennsylvania Avenue.

Proposed Site Plan



Corridor
Preferred Alternative

Corridor – Area Map



GOALS FOR THE CORRIDOR INCLUDE:

- Rightsize the vehicular cartway to support all users on the Avenue, including vehicle, cyclist, and pedestrian circulation
- Support events currently active on the Avenue, and improve current infrastructure for future events
- Modernize outdated and failing utilities below-grade
- Frame and preserve the historic Capitol viewshed for all users through the use of trees
- Mitigate effects from extreme climate and storm events including flooding and urban heat island effects
- Activate and program the Avenue appropriately to support daily urban life and tourists alike

Corridor – Goals and Concept Feedback

WHAT WE HEARD FROM NCPC / CFA COMMISSIONS AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT:

- Symbolic framing is important
- Shade is necessary for DC summers, more canopy trees are better
- Pennsylvania Avenue requires a unique frame differentiated from other D.C. avenues
- The street section should be aligned with the L'Enfant centerline
- Bicycle safety is paramount and valuable to both cyclists and pedestrians
- General support for reduction of car lanes

Canopy Trees



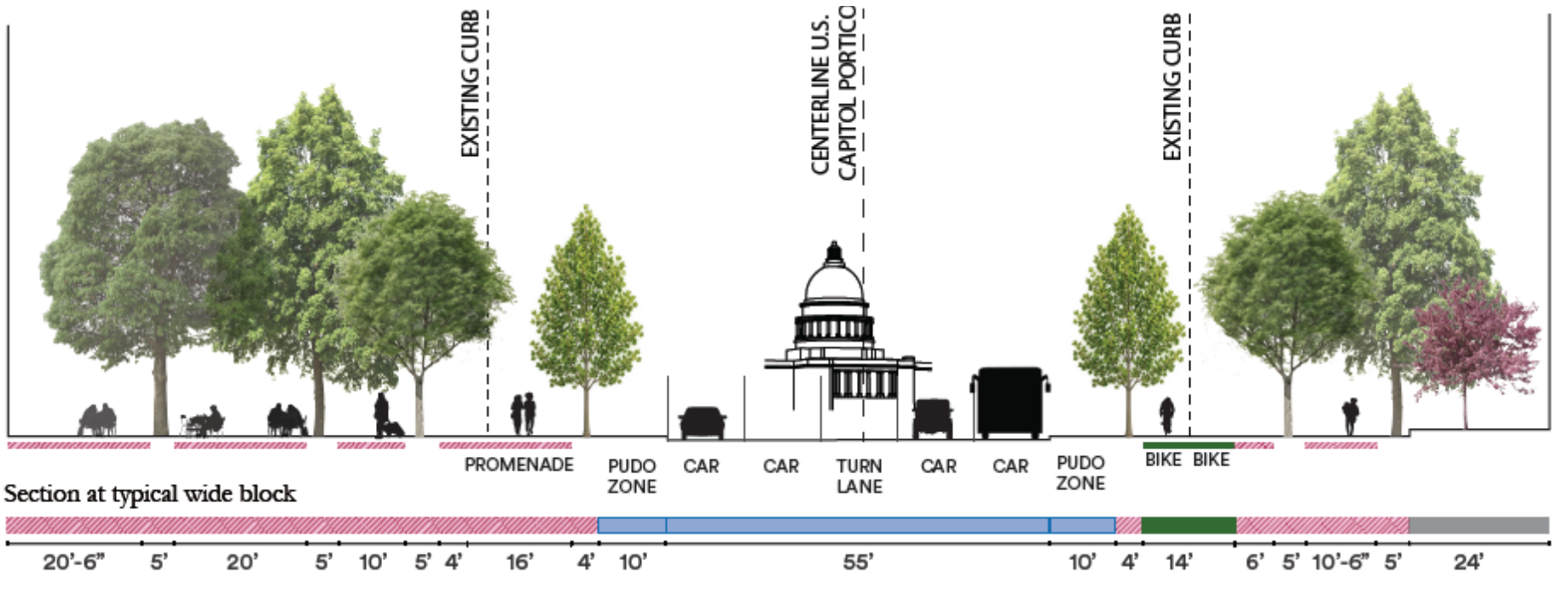
Columnar Trees (Fastigiate Allee)



Corridor – Preferred Alternative

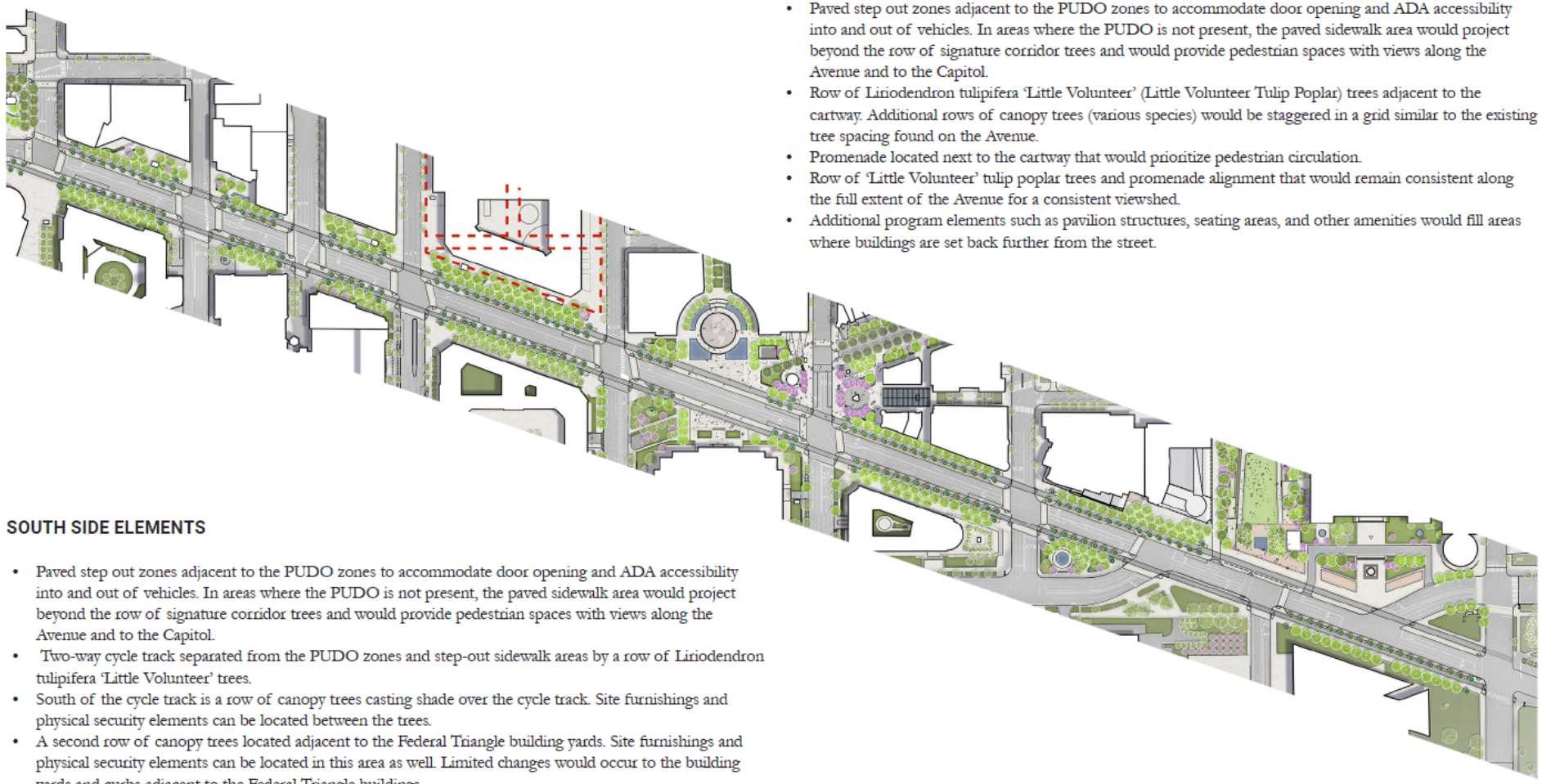
DESIGN UPDATES SINCE CONCEPT REVIEW (APRIL 2026):

- Selected hybrid tree planting strategy with a signature tree along each side of the cartway and a second row of trees (or more depending on right-of-way width) to frame the Capitol view
- Confirmed right-sized traffic lanes and volume through updated traffic studies, pick-up/drop-off areas, dedicated cycling spaces, and bus stops and access.
- Centered cartway on historic L'Enfant axis centerline
- Confirmed event compatibility and flexibility
- Explored expanded sidewalk programming
- Continued utilities analysis and planning for below-grade infrastructure upgrades
- Removed the multi-functional pole alternative from consideration due to challenges with visual impact and long-term maintenance



Section at typical wide block

Corridor – Preferred Alternative



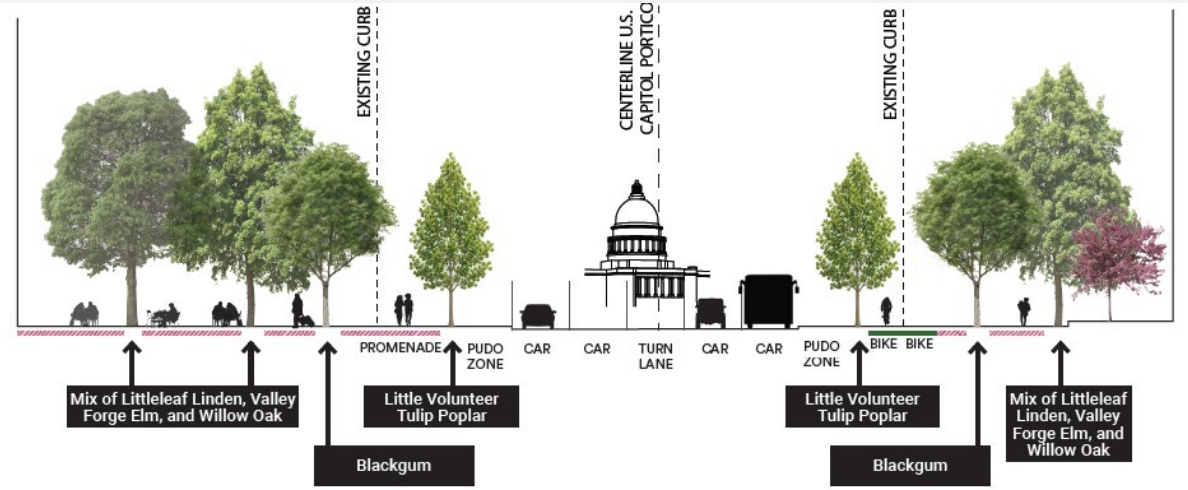
NORTH SIDE ELEMENTS

- Paved step out zones adjacent to the PUDO zones to accommodate door opening and ADA accessibility into and out of vehicles. In areas where the PUDO is not present, the paved sidewalk area would project beyond the row of signature corridor trees and would provide pedestrian spaces with views along the Avenue and to the Capitol.
- Row of Liriodendron tulipifera 'Little Volunteer' (Little Volunteer Tulip Poplar) trees adjacent to the cartway. Additional rows of canopy trees (various species) would be staggered in a grid similar to the existing tree spacing found on the Avenue.
- Promenade located next to the cartway that would prioritize pedestrian circulation.
- Row of 'Little Volunteer' tulip poplar trees and promenade alignment that would remain consistent along the full extent of the Avenue for a consistent viewshed.
- Additional program elements such as pavilion structures, seating areas, and other amenities would fill areas where buildings are set back further from the street.

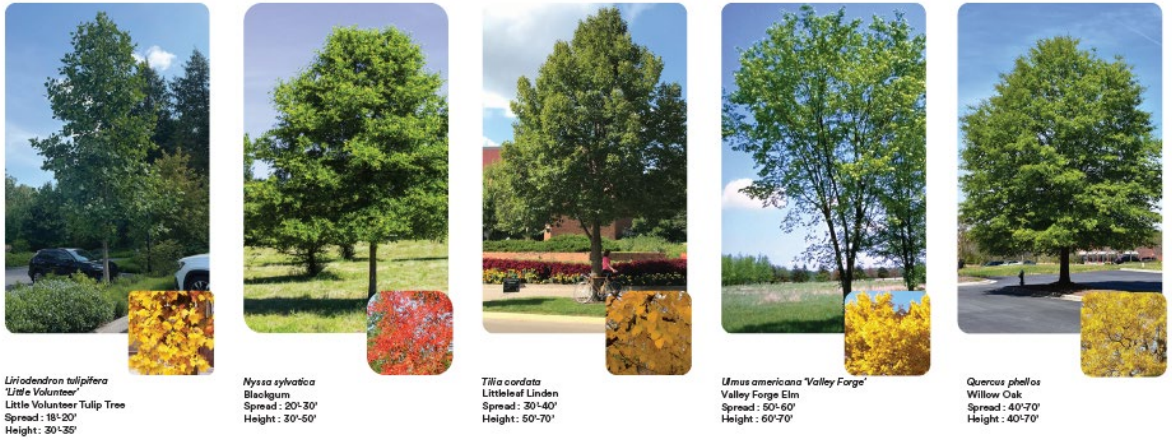
SOUTH SIDE ELEMENTS

- Paved step out zones adjacent to the PUDO zones to accommodate door opening and ADA accessibility into and out of vehicles. In areas where the PUDO is not present, the paved sidewalk area would project beyond the row of signature corridor trees and would provide pedestrian spaces with views along the Avenue and to the Capitol.
- Two-way cycle track separated from the PUDO zones and step-out sidewalk areas by a row of Liriodendron tulipifera 'Little Volunteer' trees.
- South of the cycle track is a row of canopy trees casting shade over the cycle track. Site furnishings and physical security elements can be located between the trees.
- A second row of canopy trees located adjacent to the Federal Triangle building yards. Site furnishings and physical security elements can be located in this area as well. Limited changes would occur to the building yards and curbs adjacent to the Federal Triangle buildings.
- Between the two rows of canopy trees is the primary southern pedestrian circulation route with a consistent width similar to the existing primary walk found on the Avenue today.

Corridor – Preferred Alternative Planting Plan



CANOPY TREE PALETTE



Liriodendron tulipifera 'Little Volunteer'
Little Volunteer Tulip Tree
Spread : 15'-20'
Height : 30'-35'

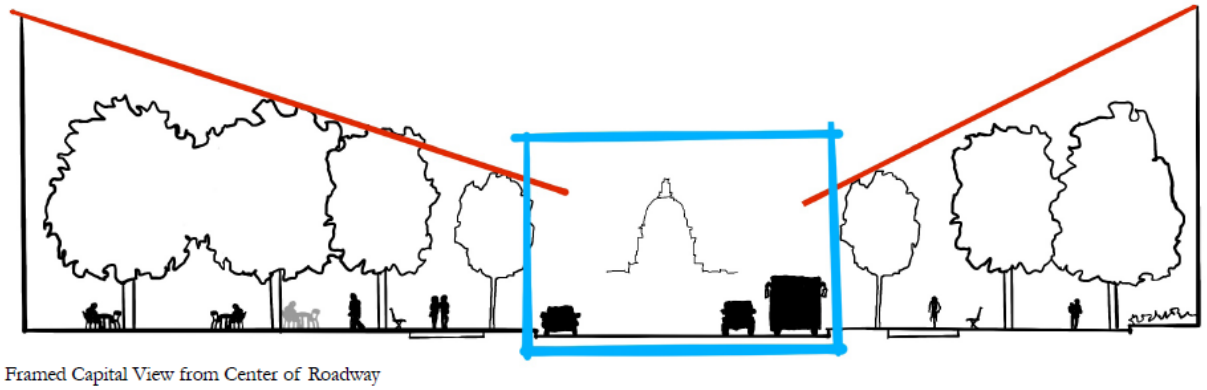
Nyssa sylvatica
Blackgum
Spread : 20'-30'
Height : 30'-50'

Tilia cordata
Littleleaf Linden
Spread : 30'-40'
Height : 50'-70'

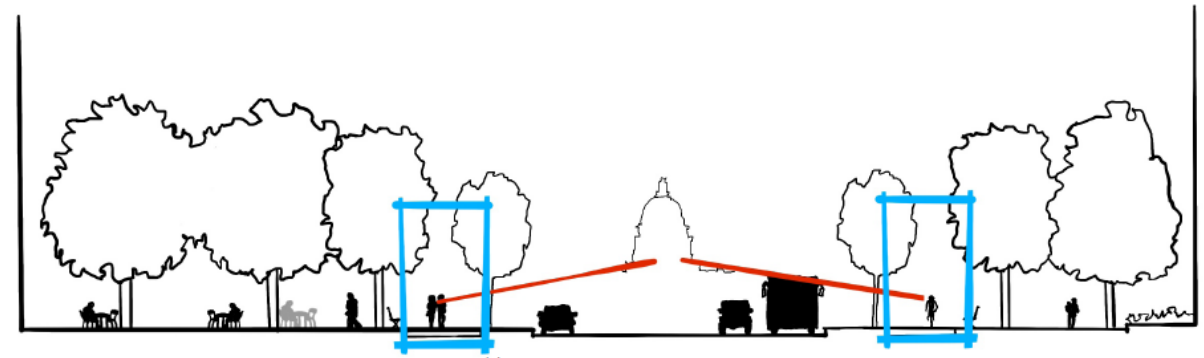
Ulmus americana 'Valley Forge'
Valley Forge Elm
Spread : 50'-60'
Height : 60'-70'

Quercus phellos
Willow Oak
Spread : 40'-70'
Height : 40'-70'

Corridor – Preferred Alternative Framed Views



Framed Capital View from Center of Roadway



Framed Capital View from Pedestrian Promenade and Cycle Track



View looking towards Capitol from vehicular experience

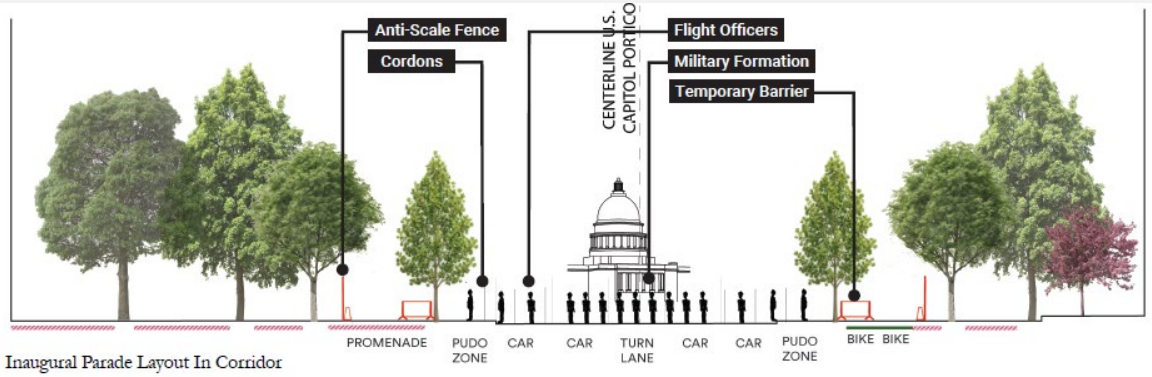


View looking towards Capitol from primary pedestrian experience



View looking towards Capitol from primary cyclist experience

Corridor – Preferred Alternative
Inaugural Parade

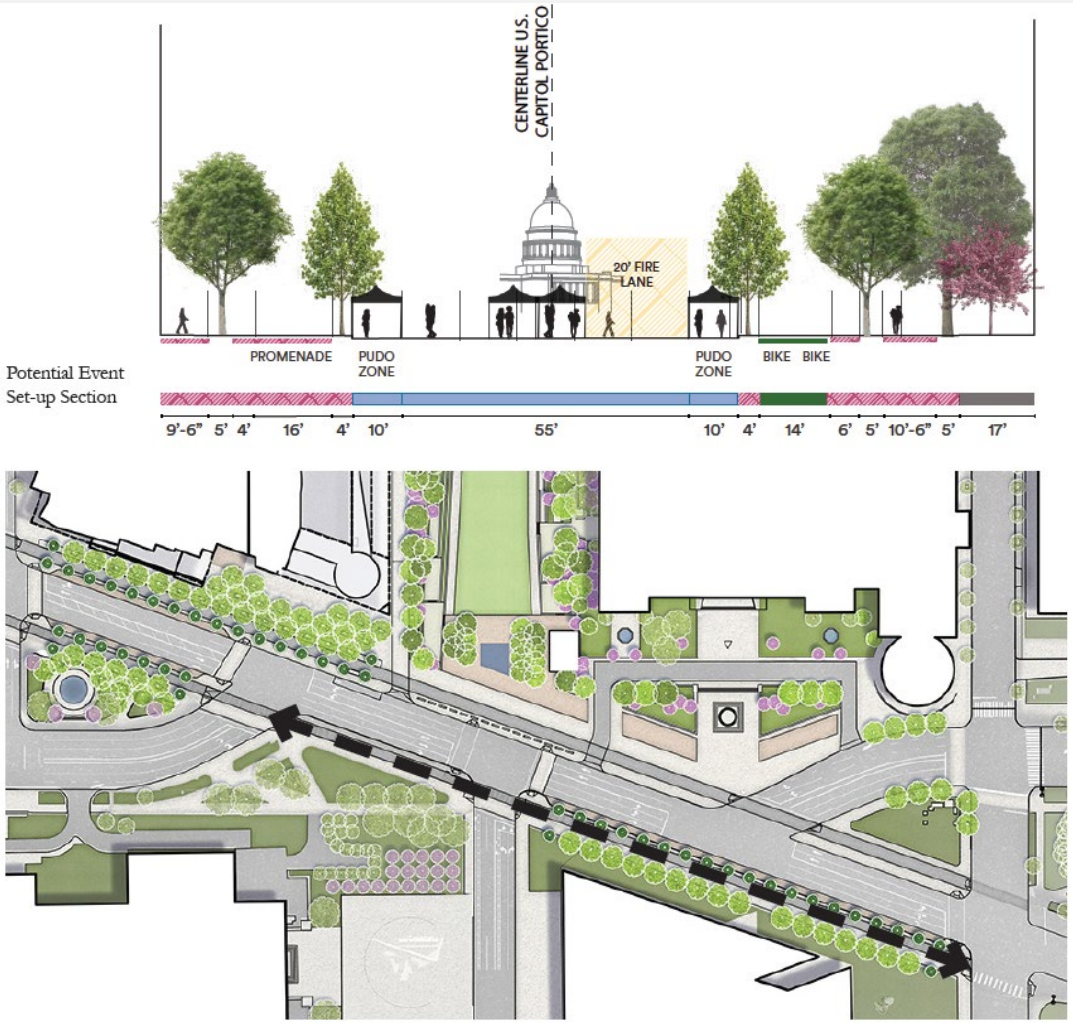


Inaugural Parade Layout In Corridor


Presidential Inaugural Parade (U.S. Army image public domain/Sgt. George Huley)



Corridor – Preferred Alternative
Special Events





Navy Memorial Flags Salute (US Navy Memorial)



World Pride Festival, June 7-8, 2025 (Capital Pride)



Red Bull Showrun, April 20, 2024



Nationals World Series Victory Parade, November 2, 2019

Western End
Preferred Alternative

Western End – Area Map



WESTERN END

GOALS FOR THE WESTERN END PUBLIC SPACE INCLUDE:

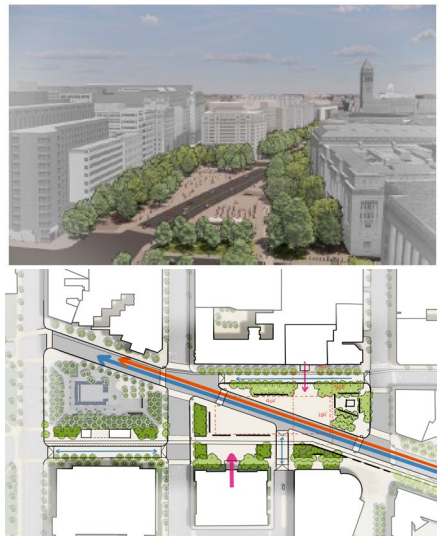
- Maintain an appropriate route for the inaugural parade, minimizing turns where possible
- Relieve stress on the National Mall for demonstrations and other planned events
- Introduce shade or other amenities to create a more welcoming public space
- Celebrate the Capitol viewshed

Western End – Goals and Concept Feedback

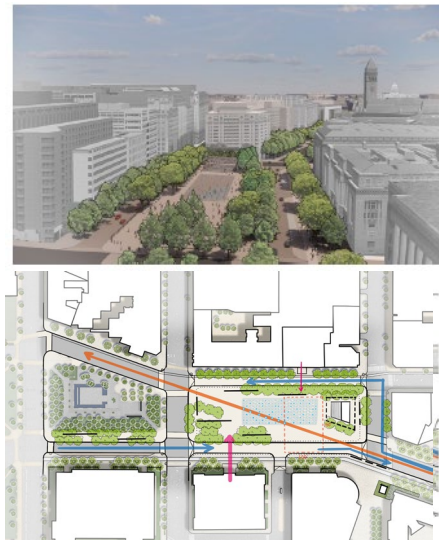
WHAT WE HEARD FROM NCPC / CFA COMMISSIONS AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT:

- Literal or symbolic diagonal gesture desired, including the inaugural parade path
- General Casimir Pulaski sculpture should remain in place as a prominent feature
- Maintain open, flexible space with shade for events and demonstrations
- Plaza should feel safe for pedestrians
- Skateboarding community expressed concern over changes to the cultural skate spot at "Pulaski Park" (northeast area of the existing Freedom Plaza)

Historic Alignment Alternative (Diagonal Cartway)



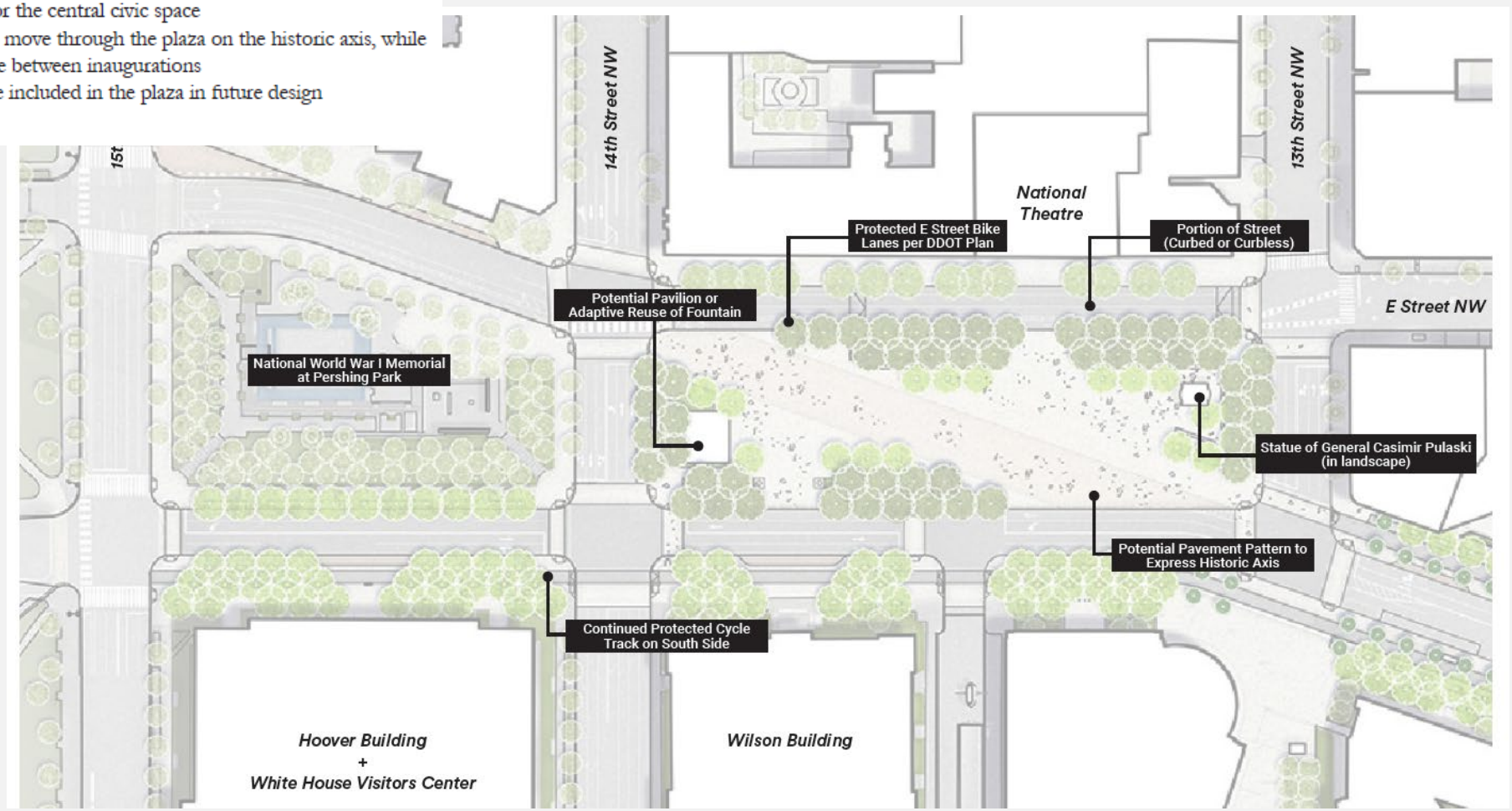
Central Plaza Alternative



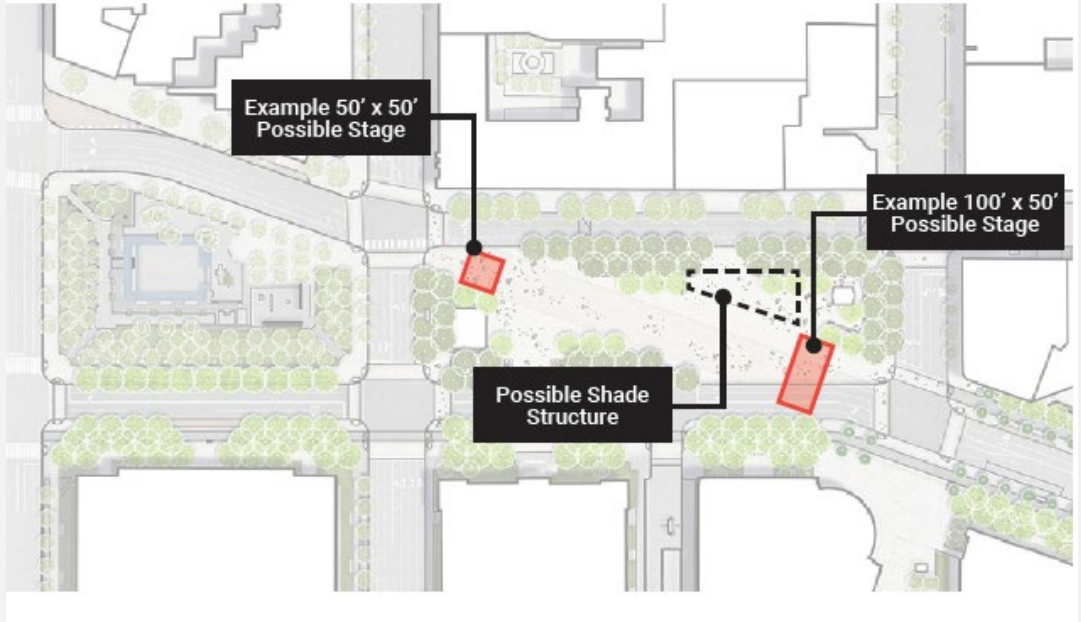
Western End – Preferred Alternative

DESIGN UPDATES SINCE CONCEPT REVIEW (APRIL 2026):

- Selected a preferred alternative that keeps a central plaza with vehicular traffic to the edges, similar to how the roadways are aligned today.
- Developed Freedom Plaza design toward a simplified framework of large flexible central space surrounded by trees, increasing the amount of shade for the central civic space
- Confirmed grading to allow for the inaugural parade to move through the plaza on the historic axis, while providing maximum flexibility for events and public use between inaugurations
- Explored an option for a optional shade structure to be included in the plaza in future design



Western End – Preferred Alternative
Special Events





Event Setup Layout In Freedom Plaza

Market Square Crossroads Preferred Alternative

Market Square Crossroads – Area Map



CROSSROADS

GOALS FOR THE MARKET SQUARE CROSSROADS PUBLIC SPACE INCLUDE:

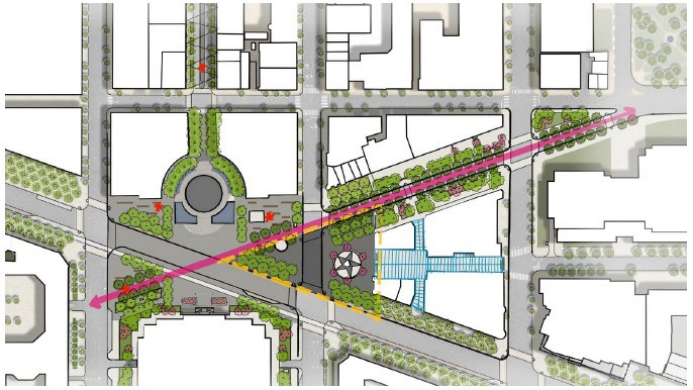
- Emphasize the Indiana Avenue axis per the L'Enfant Plan
- Support existing and future residents and commercial activity in the area
- Celebrate the connection to downtown D.C. along 7th Street NW
- Increase programming opportunities for daily, weekly, monthly small-scale events or installations
- Honor the history of markets and crossroads

Market Square Crossroads – Goals and Concept Feedback

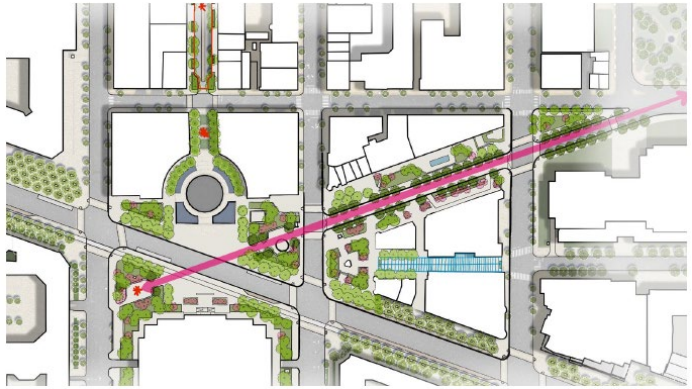
WHAT WE HEARD FROM NCPC / CFA COMMISSIONS AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT:

- Indiana Avenue viewshed is valuable
- Minimize intervention on National Archive grounds
- Enhance commercial activation and retail activities as a gateway to downtown
- Create safer crossings (consider a mid-block crossing)
- Find opportunities for art expression

Crossroads Option



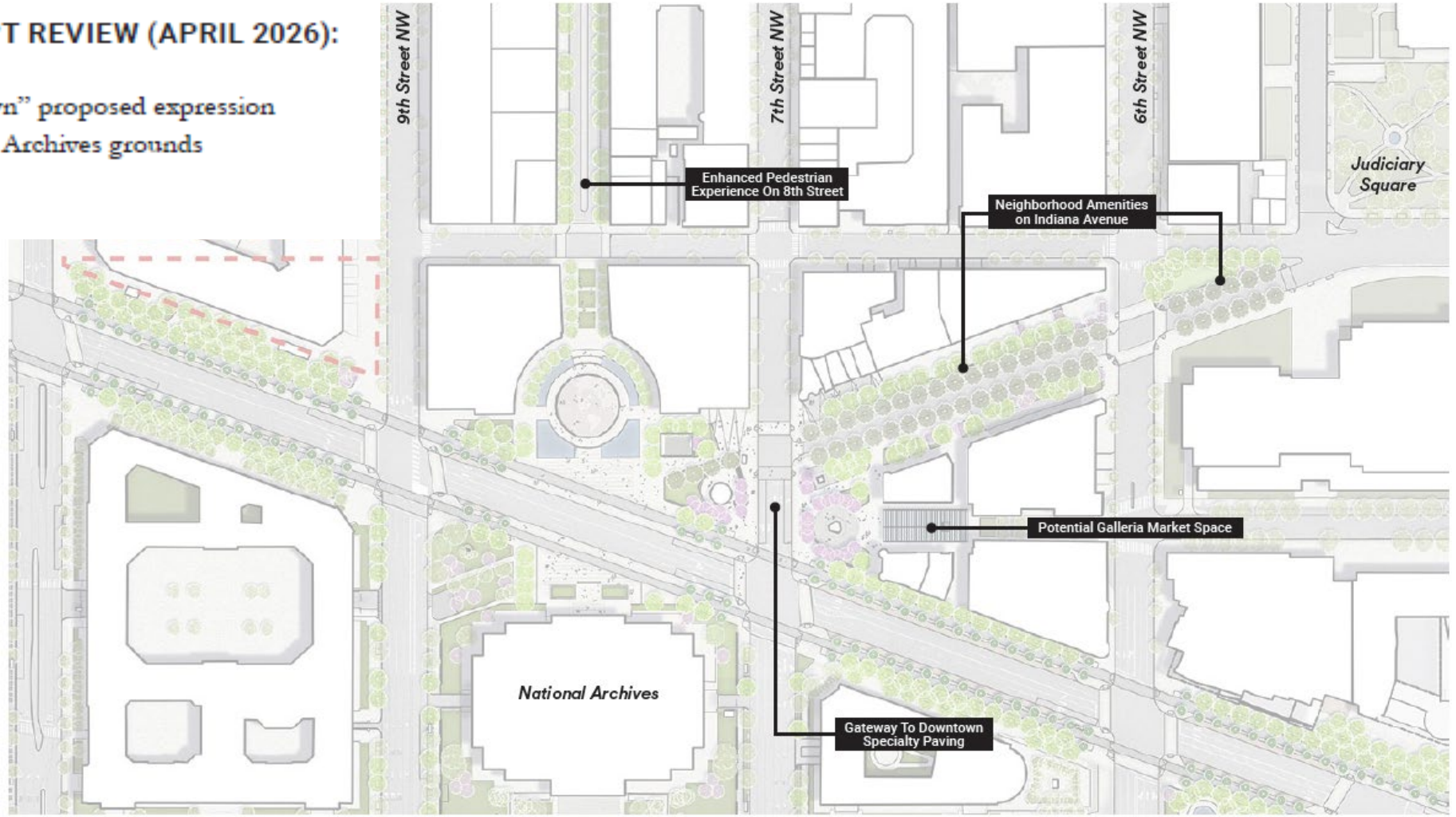
Neighborhood Garden Rooms Option



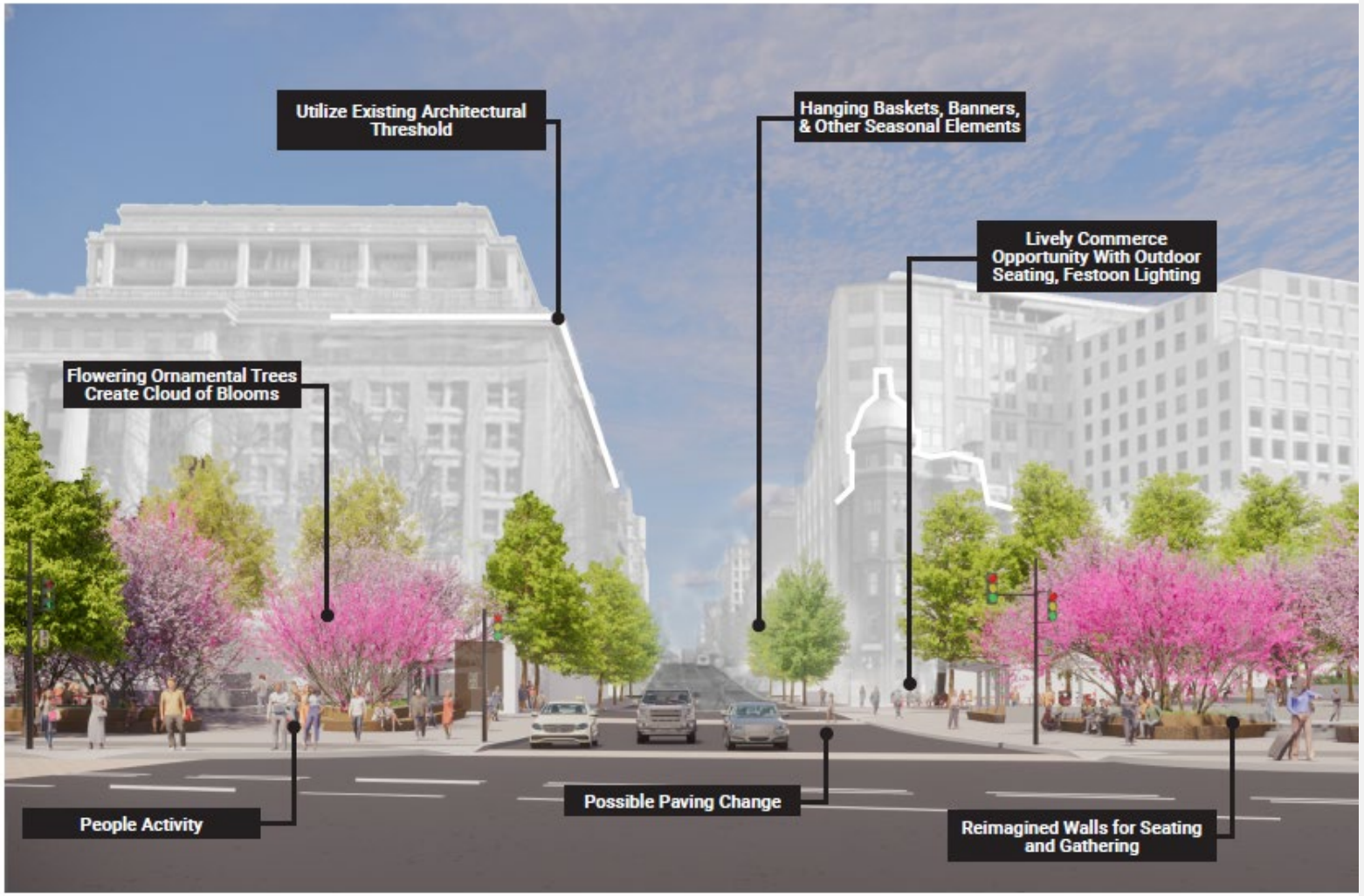
Market Square Crossroads – Preferred Alternative

DESIGN UPDATES SINCE CONCEPT REVIEW (APRIL 2026):

- Developed "Gateway to Downtown" proposed expression
- Reduced intervention on National Archives grounds
- Focus on increased commerce



Market Square Crossroads – Preferred Alternative



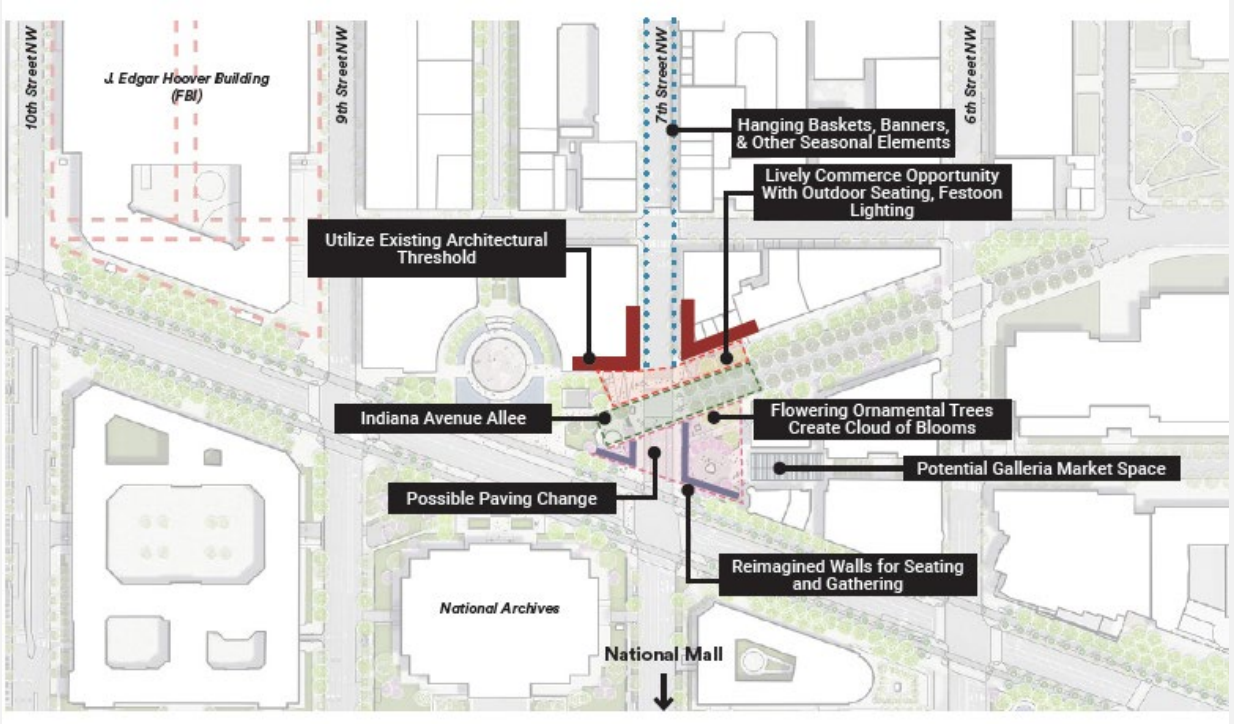


View of Indiana Avenue in Spring



View of Indiana Avenue in Fall

Market Square Crossroads – Preferred Alternative Special Events





Eastern End
Preferred Alternative

Eastern End – Area Map



EASTERN END

GOALS FOR THE EASTERN END PUBLIC SPACE INCLUDE:

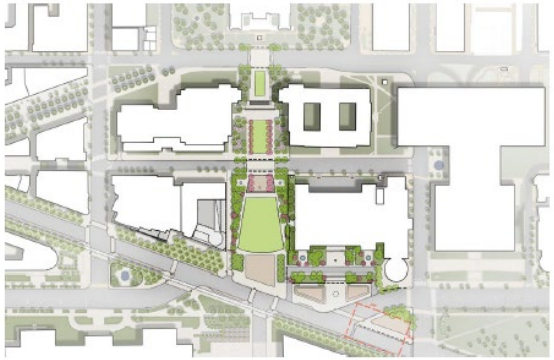
- Provide a large, flexible gathering space that can be used in a variety of event setups and daily use
- Preserve and celebrate the 4th Street viewshed towards the District of Columbia Courts (Old City Hall) and National Building Museum
- Reduce or eliminate stairs and visual barriers along the 4th Street viewshed
- Maintain security offsets as needed around buildings such as the E. Barrett Prettyman United States Court House and the Embassy of Canada to the United States.
- Support events currently active on the Avenue, and reduce jurisdictional complexities for future events
- Modernize outdated utilities below-grade and integrate event infrastructure seamlessly
- Activate and program the Avenue appropriately to support daily urban life and tourists alike

Eastern End – Goals and Concept Feedback

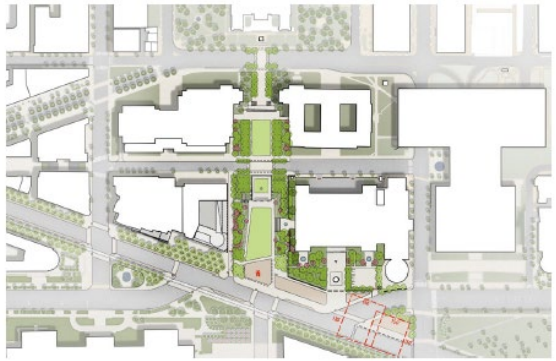
WHAT WE HEARD FROM NCPC / CFA COMMISSIONS AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT:

- Desire for shaded park space
- Ensure the park and adjacent spaces are more flexible to host events at all scales
- Good possible location for public restrooms
- General support for an option with minimal stairs and walls between public spaces
- Security at Prettyman Courthouse is critical
- Manage change of the Carol R. Johnson 1983 design of John Marshall Park responsibly

Raked / Sloped Lawn Option



Hillside Pavilion Option



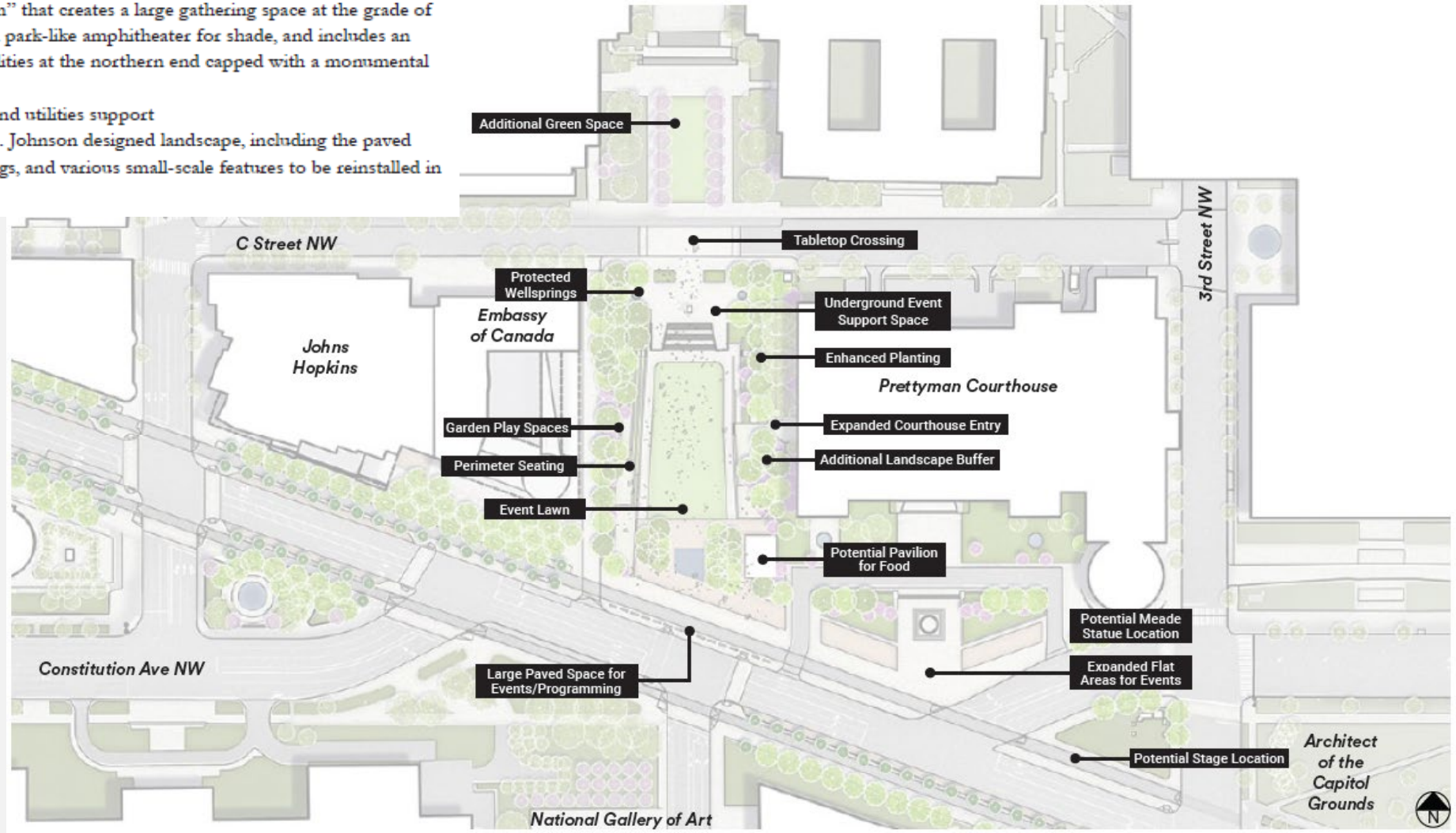
Terraced Spaces Option



Eastern End – Preferred Alternative

DESIGN UPDATES SINCE CONCEPT REVIEW (APRIL 2026):

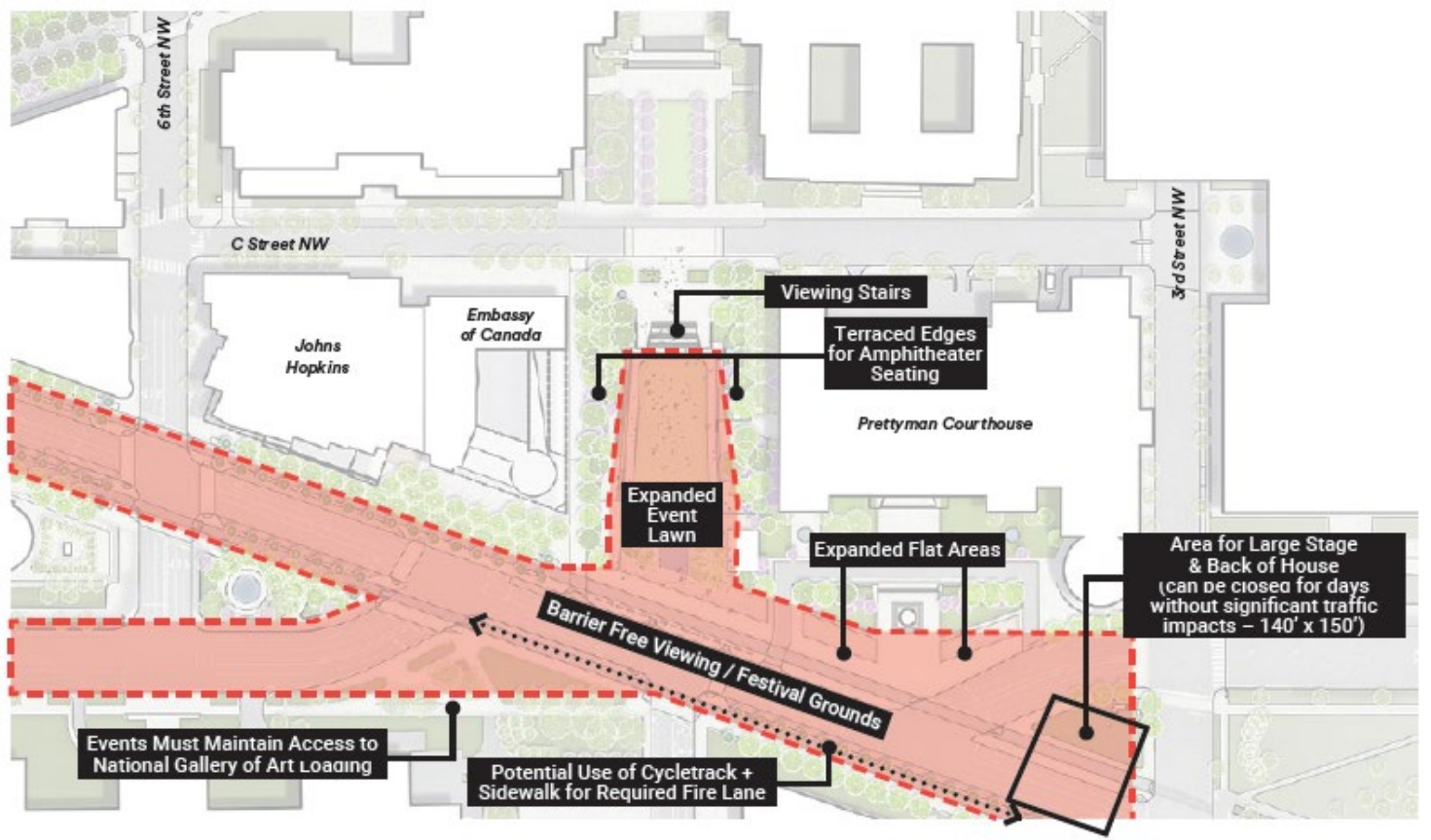
- Selected a preferred option of the "Hillside Pavilion" that creates a large gathering space at the grade of the Pennsylvania Avenue sidewalk, surrounded by a park-like amphitheater for shade, and includes an buried support space for events, restrooms, and utilities at the northern end capped with a monumental stair up the 4th Street axis.
- Explored more options for possible event layouts and utilities support
- Explored areas for reusing elements of the Carol R. Johnson designed landscape, including the paved entry plaza (materials and patterning), the wellsprings, and various small-scale features to be reinstalled in the future design



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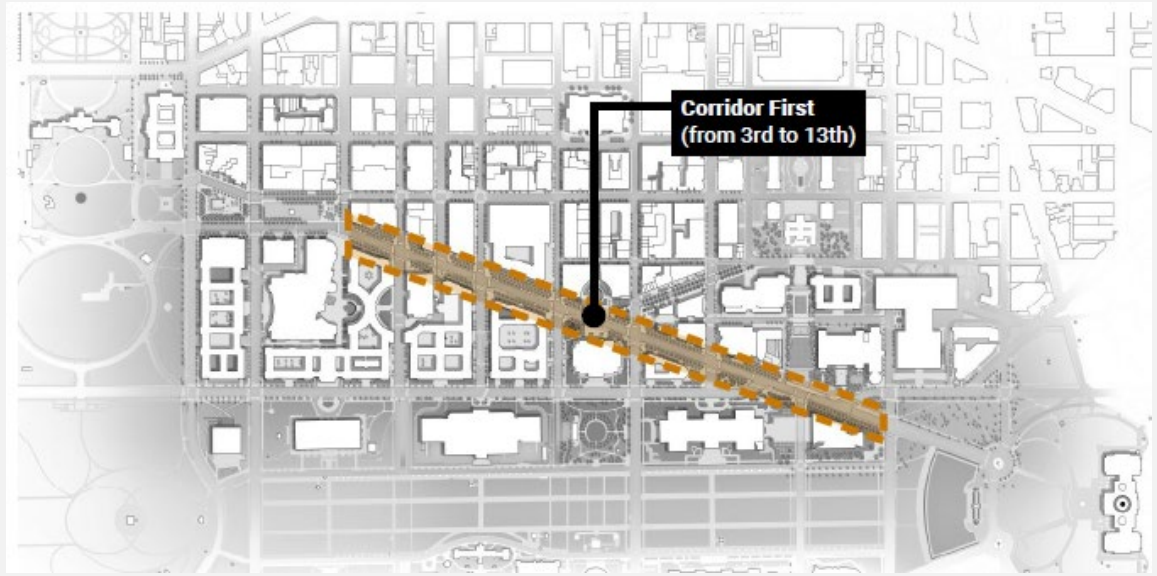
Eastern End – Preferred Alternative Special Events



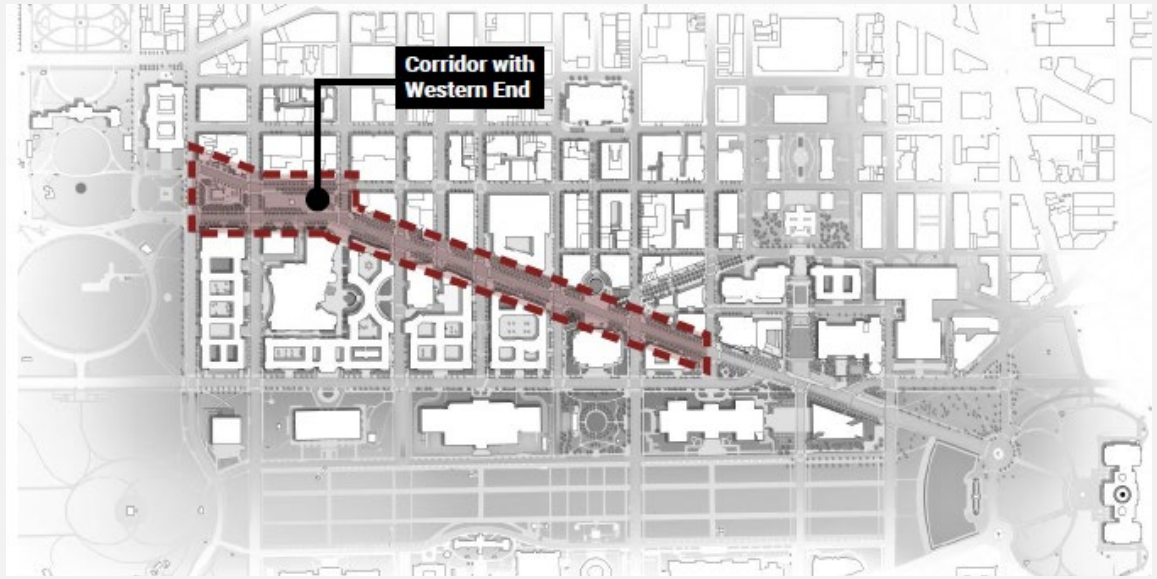


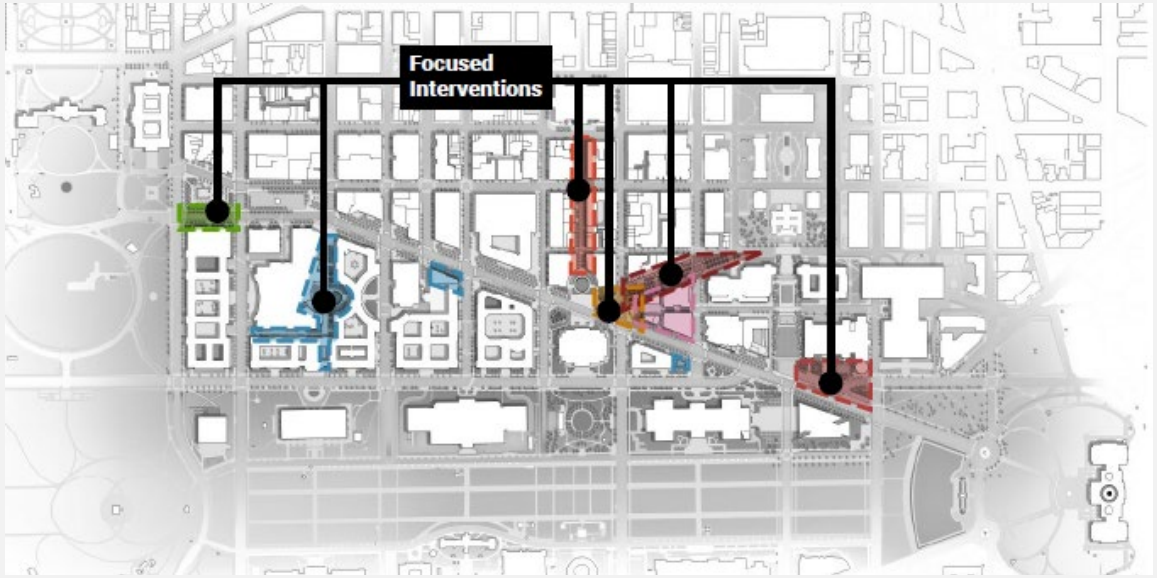
Phasing and Implementation

Phasing and Implementation Strategies









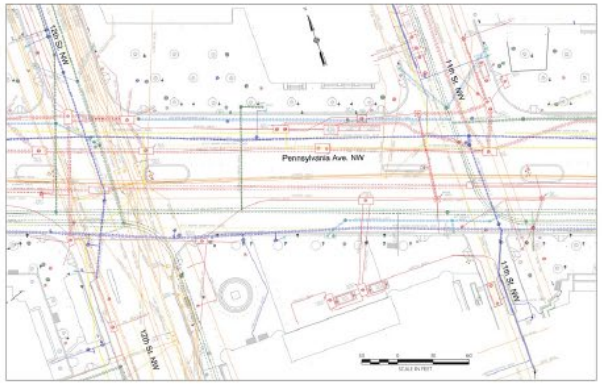
Infrastructure Modernization

The Avenue has numerous physical issues from aging infrastructure, underfunding (leading to deferred maintenance). Underground is a complex mess of below grade utilities and aging infrastructure, including some dating back to 1870s, that will need a comprehensive modernization.

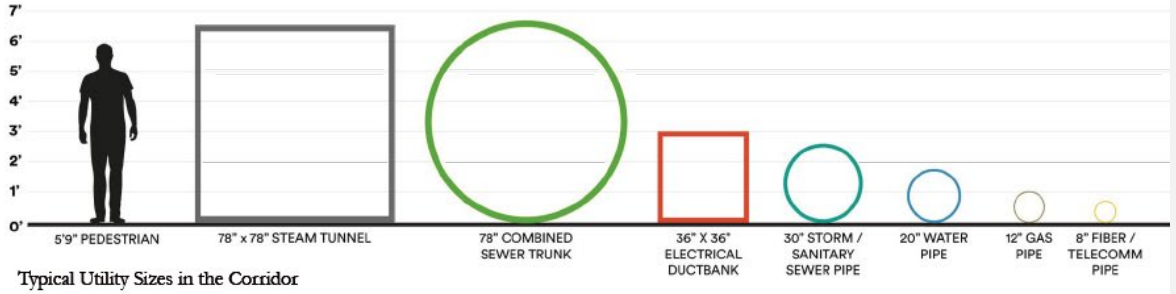
A detailed utility survey is underway and will inform final design to allow for modernized utilities, better soils for trees, and upgraded systems to support the Avenue and events.



Aging Infrastructure Conditions (some dating to the 1870s)



Snapshot of Utility Complexity in the Avenue



Typical Utility Sizes in the Corridor



Representative Section of Multiple Underground Utilities
(exact locations and depths to be determined from ongoing survey)