



District of Columbia

Height Modeling Study

**Height Master Plan Phase 2 Public Meetings
August 2013**

District of Columbia Office of Planning • National Capital Planning Commission
Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, LLP • AMT • Capital Pixel • CyberCity 3D • Digital Design & Imaging Services, Inc.

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District of Columbia

Height Modeling Study

1 Responding to the
Congressional Request

2 Methodology

3 Approaches

Responding to the Congressional Request

1

“ Any changes to the Height of Buildings Act that affect the historic L’Enfant City should be carefully studied to ensure that the iconic, horizontal skyline and the visual preeminence of the U.S. Capitol and related national monuments are retained.

The Committee encourages the exploration of strategic changes to the law in those areas outside the L’Enfant City that support local economic development goals while taking into account the impact on federal interests, compatibility to the surrounding neighborhoods, national security concerns, input from local residents, and other related factors ”

Representative Darrell Issa
Chairman, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform



The Height Master Plan is Guided by Three Core Principles

- 1 **Ensure the prominence of federal landmarks and monuments by preserving views to and from their settings**
- 2 **Maintain the horizontality of the monumental city skyline**
- 3 **Minimize negative impacts to nationally significant historic resources, including the L'Enfant Plan**

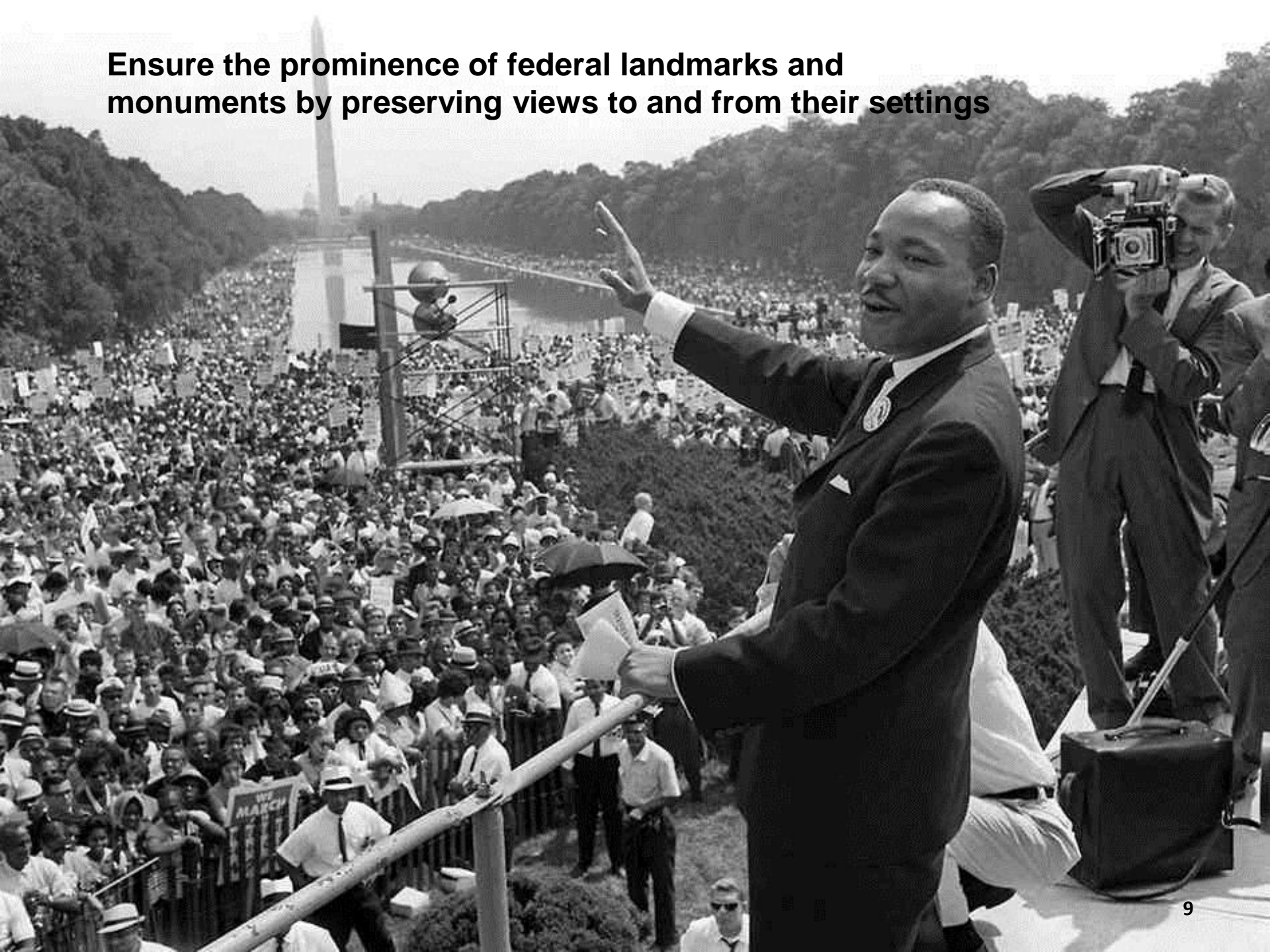
Ensure the prominence of federal landmarks and monuments by preserving views to and from their settings



Ensure the prominence of federal landmarks and monuments by preserving views to and from their settings



Ensure the prominence of federal landmarks and monuments by preserving views to and from their settings



Maintain the horizontality of the monumental city skyline



Minimize negative impacts to nationally significant historic resources, including the L'Enfant Plan



The L'Enfant Plan

“ The avenues were to be wide, grand, lined with trees, and situated in a manner that would visually connect ideal topographical sites throughout the city, where important structures, monuments, and fountains were to be erected. ”

Pierre Charles L'Enfant's notes accompanying the 1791 Plan

The L'Enfant Plan Facsimile, US Coast and Geodetic Survey

1791 Building Code

Rules and Regulations established by the President of the United States, and the Commissioners of the City of Washington, for the erection of buildings

- **All buildings on the streets shall be parallel**
- **The wall of no house to be higher than forty feet to the roof, in any part of the city, nor shall any be lower than thirty-five feet on any of the avenues**
- **Squares are designed for common use, the property is reserved to the public**

Why Congress enacted the Height of Buildings Act of 1910

- The Cairo Building, 164'
- Light, air and fire safety
- Similar efforts by other cities to manage height

The Height of Buildings Act of 1910

Applies Citywide

Residential Streets (80'-160' R.O.W.)

- Width of the street = building height
- Maximum height = 90'

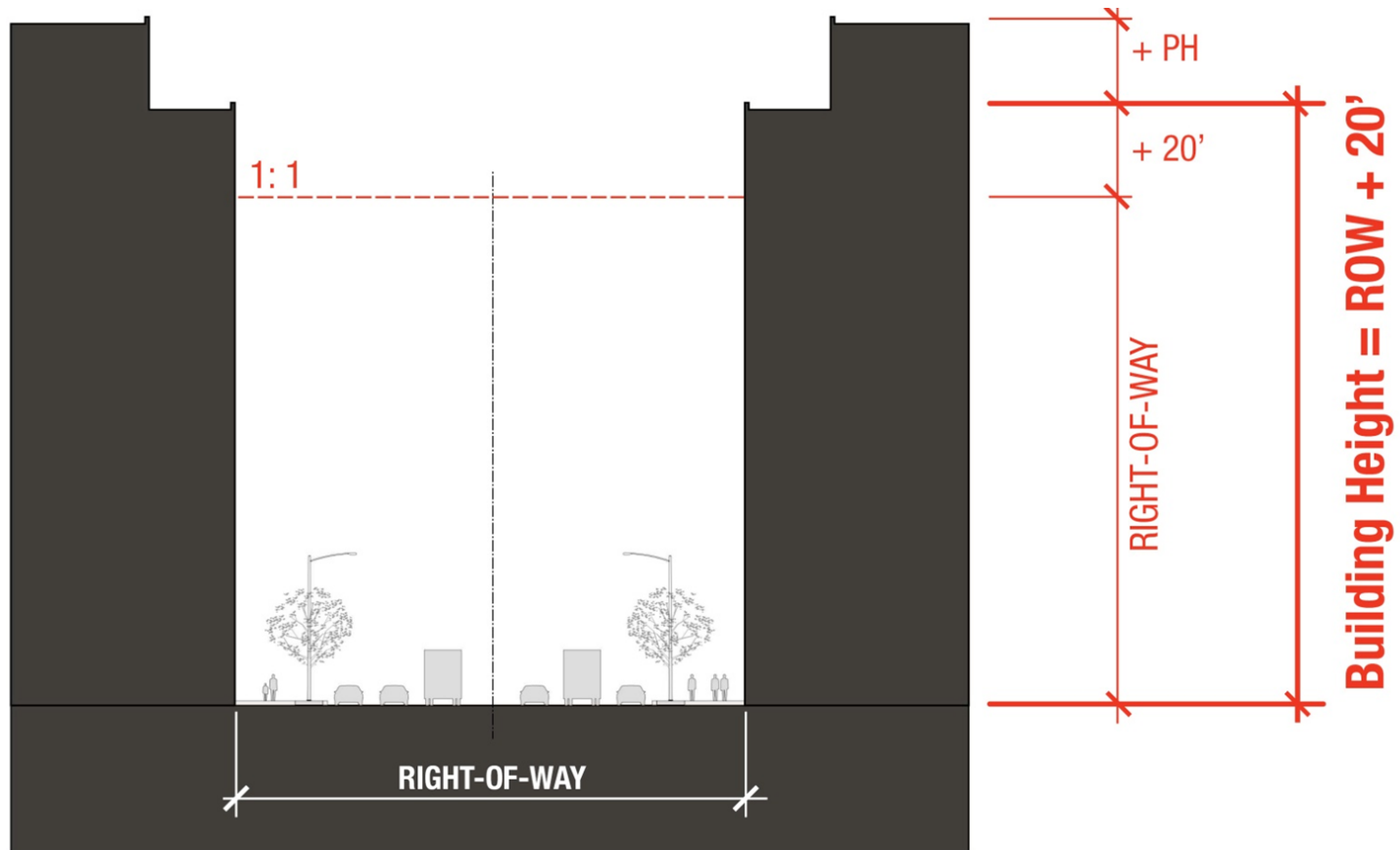
Commercial Streets (90'-160' R.O.W.)

- Width of the street + 20' = building height
- Maximum height = 130'

Pennsylvania Avenue (160' R.O.W.)

- Maximum height = 160'

The Height of Buildings Act of 1910



Commercial Streets

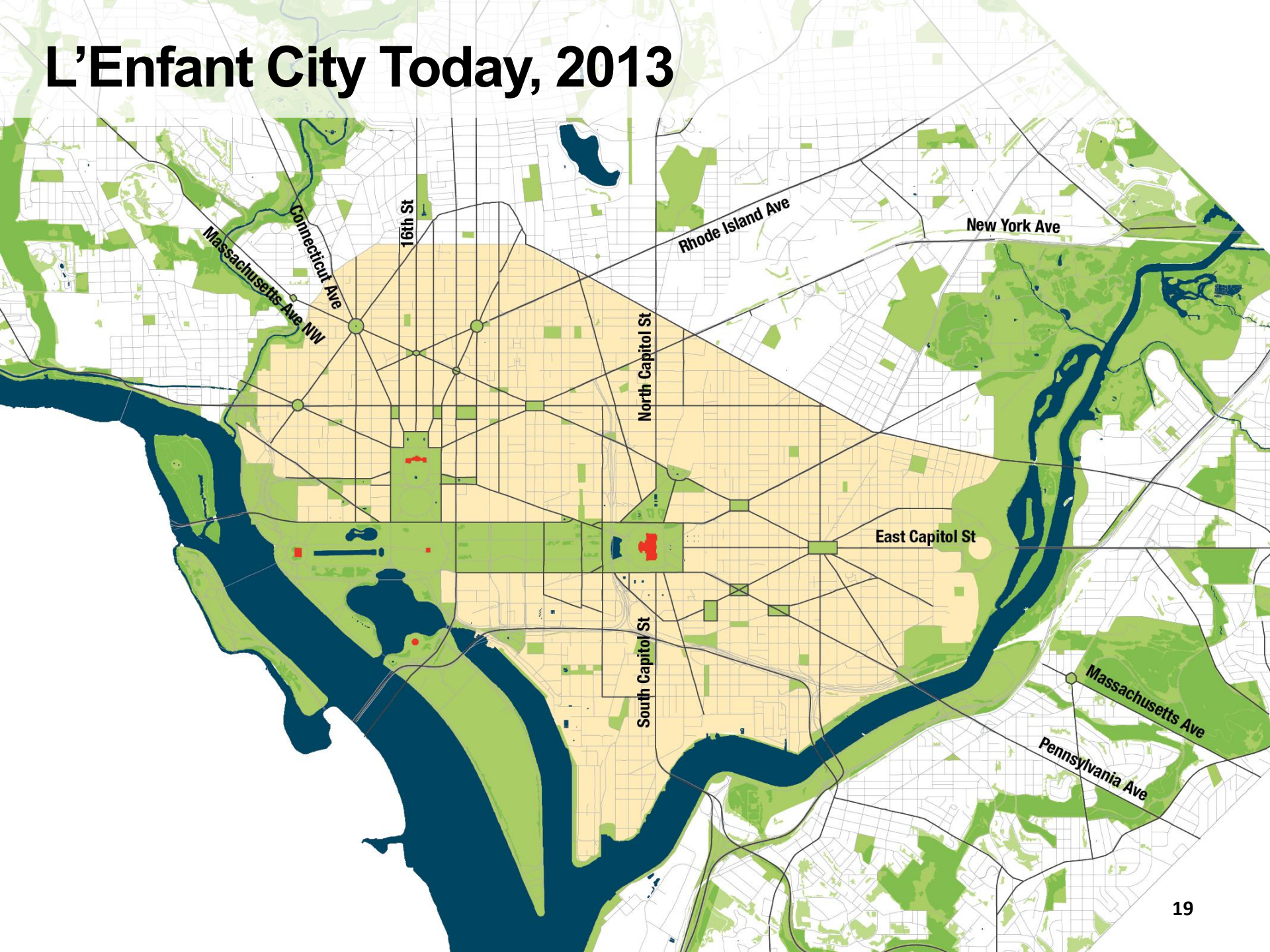
The Monumental Core Framework Plan, 2009

Connecting new destinations
with the National Mall

- Transform the federal precincts surrounding the National Mall into vibrant destinations
- Improve connections between the city, the National Mall and the waterfront
- Achieve the highest level of livability and sustainability in central Washington



L'Enfant City Today, 2013





Methodology

1. Understand the Existing Conditions
2. Define Areas to be Studied for Increased Building Height
3. Update the Citywide GIS 3D Database
4. Develop a Photographic Database, Both Eye-Level & Aerial
5. Model Various Height Increments
6. Consider the Visual Impacts of Increased Building Height on the City's Built Form with Respect to the Core Principles

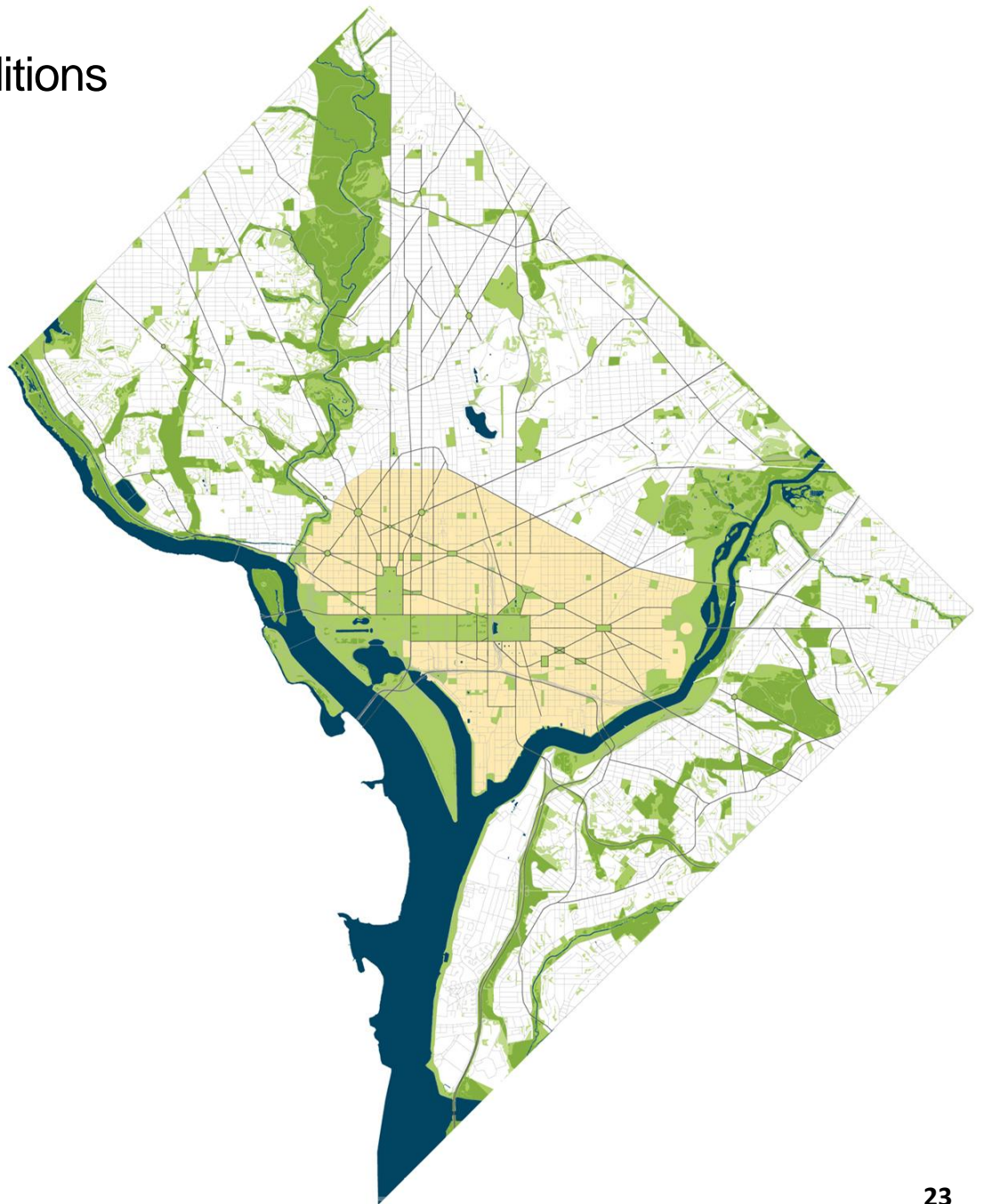
2

Updating the City's 3D GIS Database



Understand the Existing Conditions

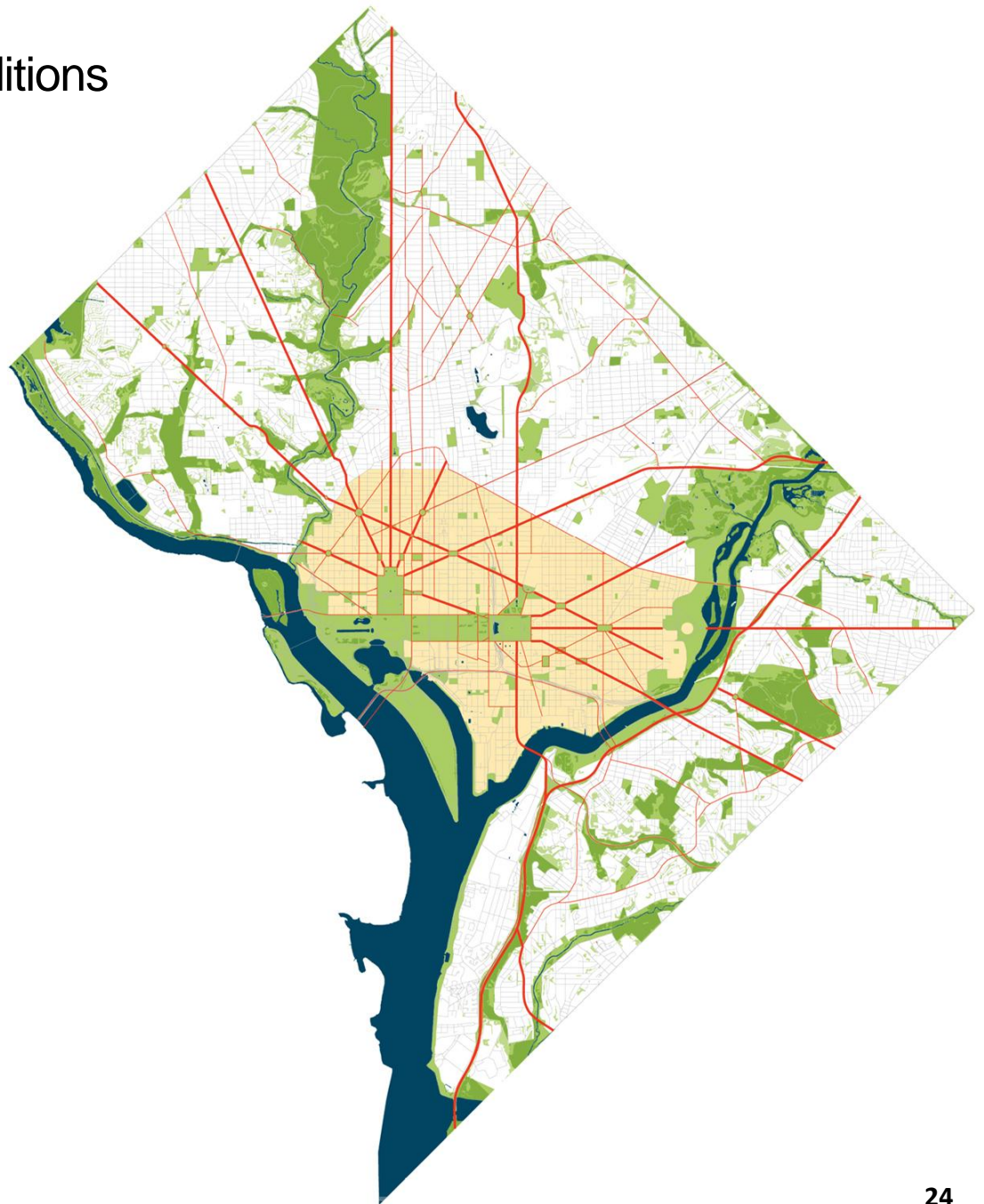
Parks and Open Spaces



Understand the Existing Conditions

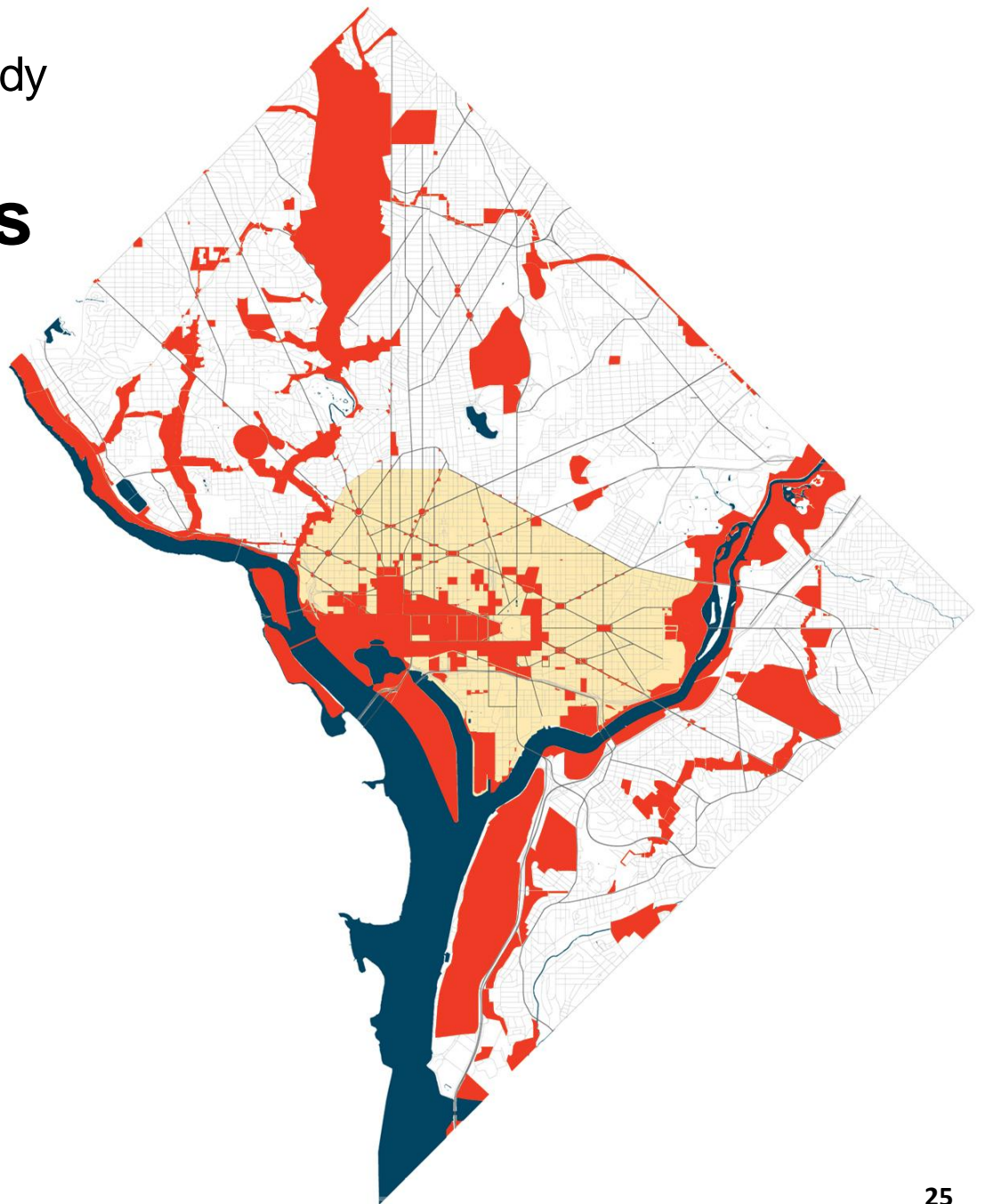
Streets


**A city connected by parks,
avenues, streets and views**



Not included in the Height Study

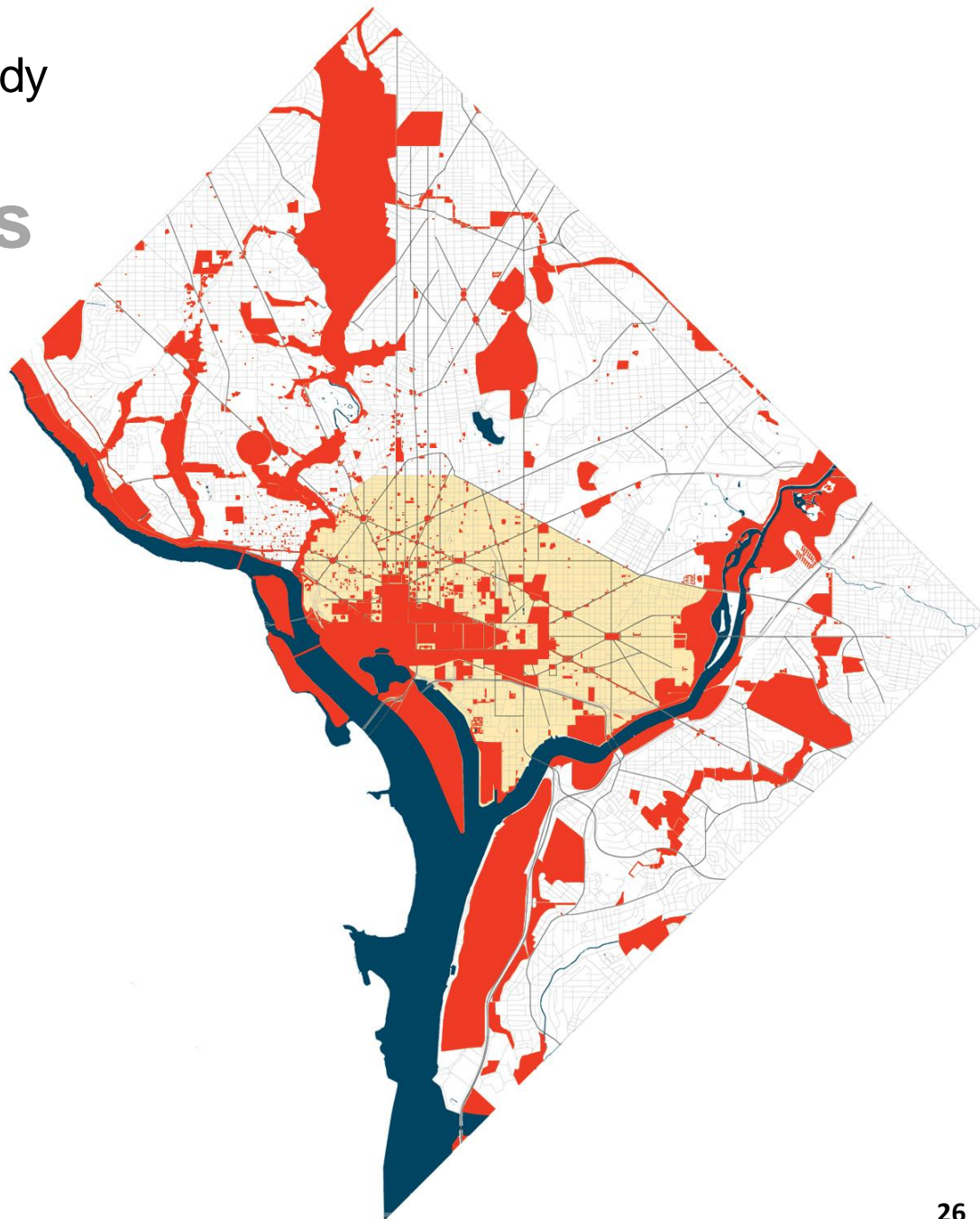
Federal Properties




 Areas not included
in the Height Study

Not included in the Height Study

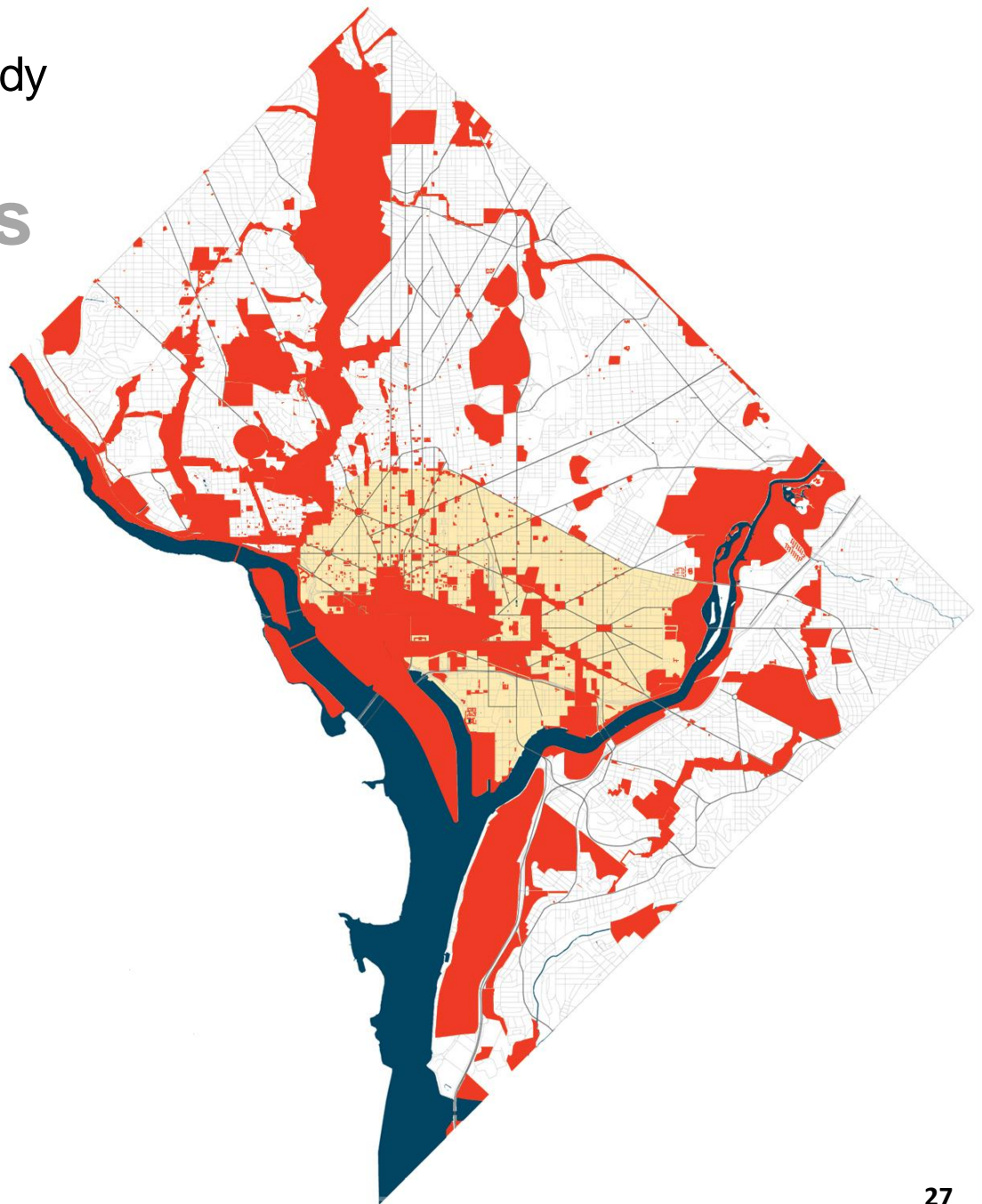
Federal Properties Historic Sites




 Areas not included
in the Height Study

Not included in the Height Study

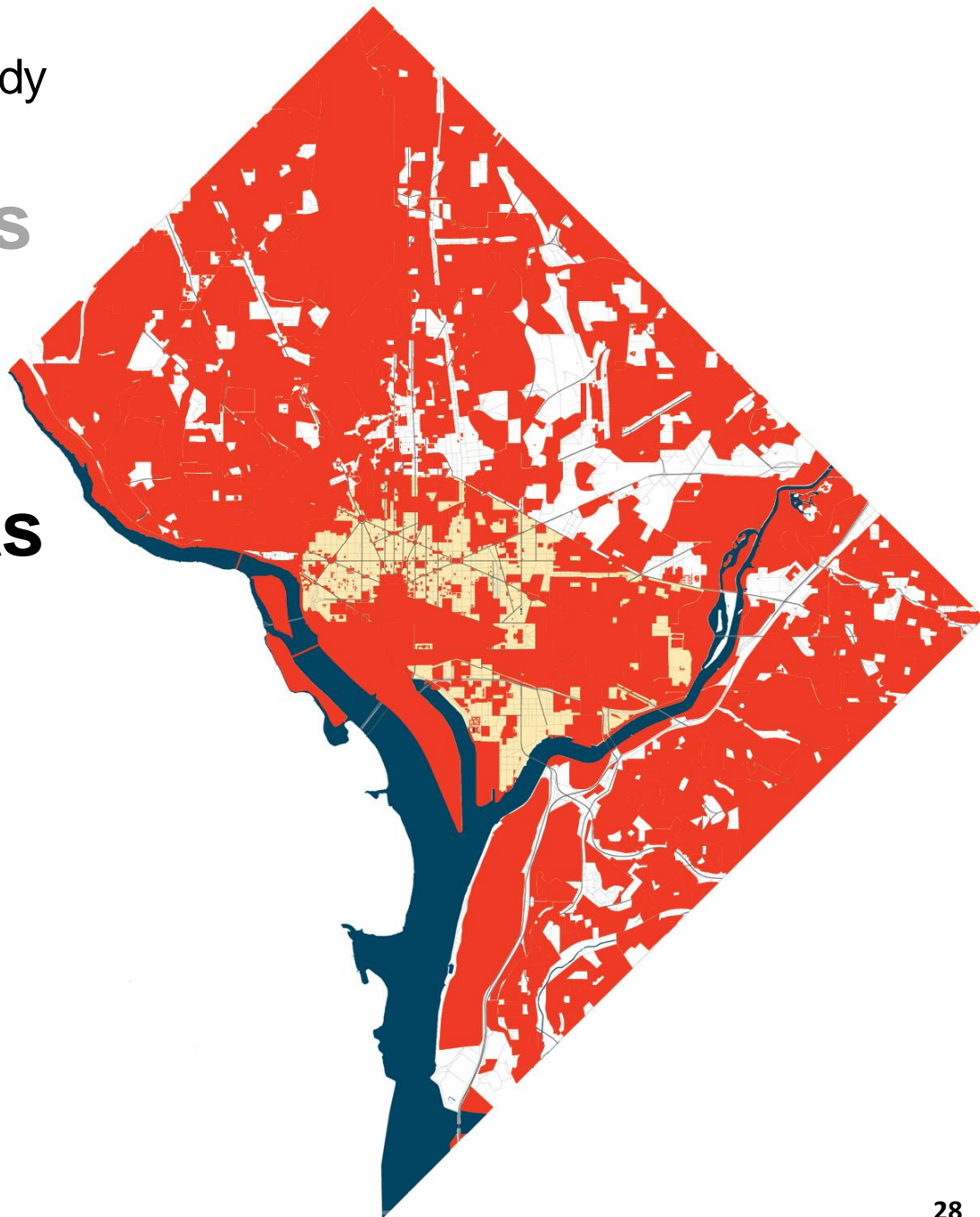
Federal Properties
Historic Sites
Low Density
Historic Districts




 Areas not included
in the Height Study

Not included in the Height Study

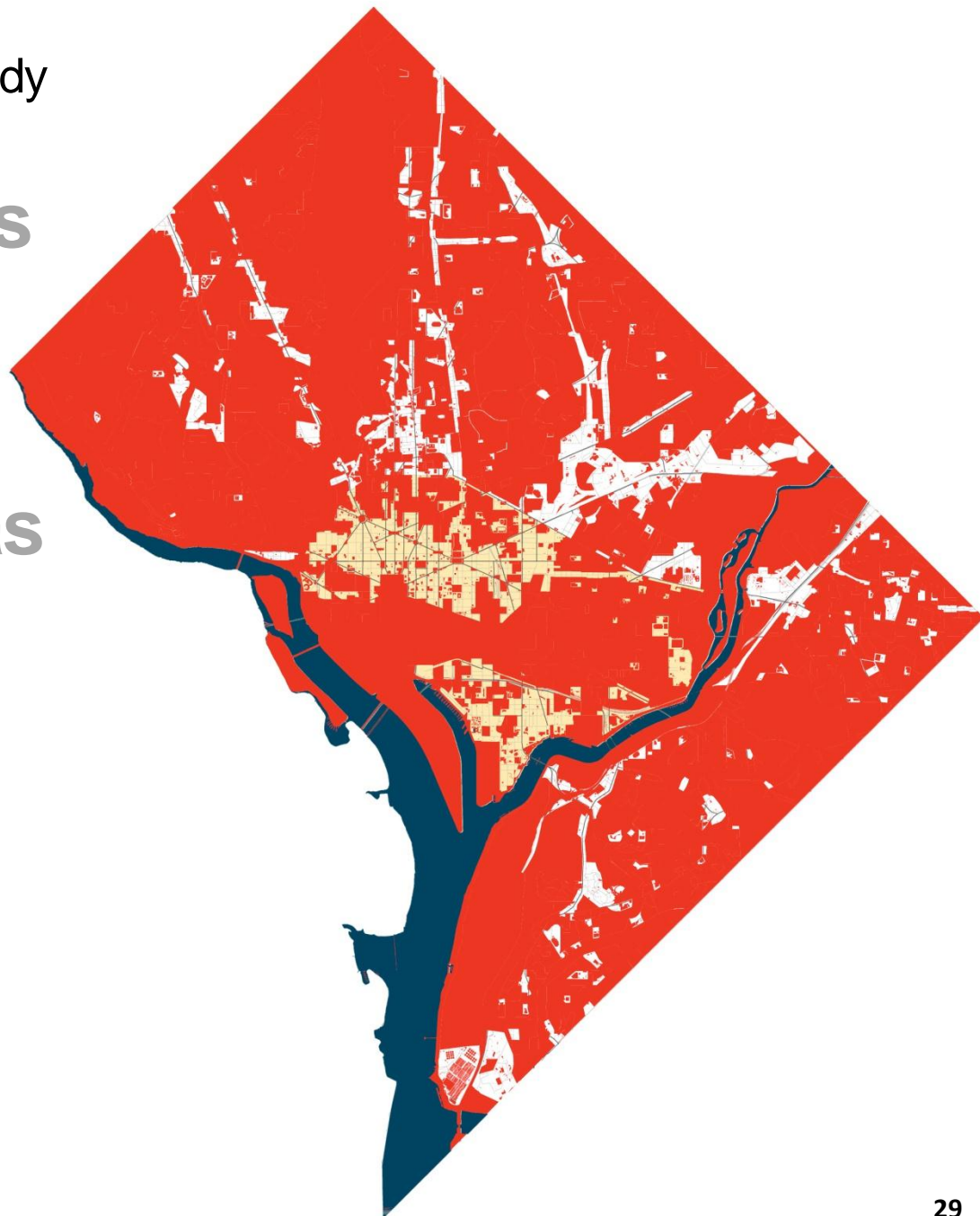
Federal Properties
Historic Sites
Low Density
Historic Districts
Low Density Areas




 Areas not included
in the Height Study

Not included in the Height Study

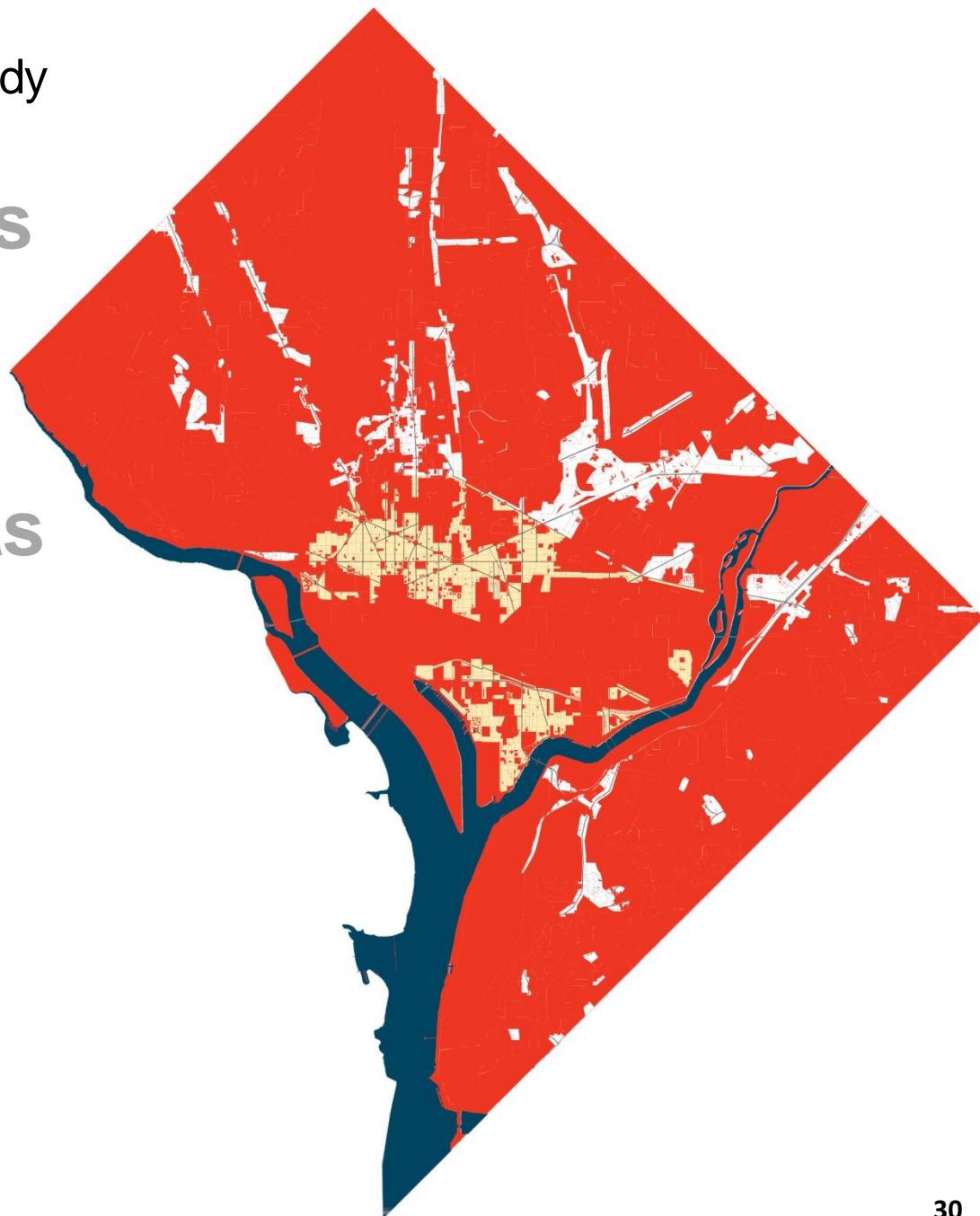
Federal Properties
Historic Sites
Low Density
Historic Districts
Low Density Areas
Institutional




 Areas not included
in the Height Study

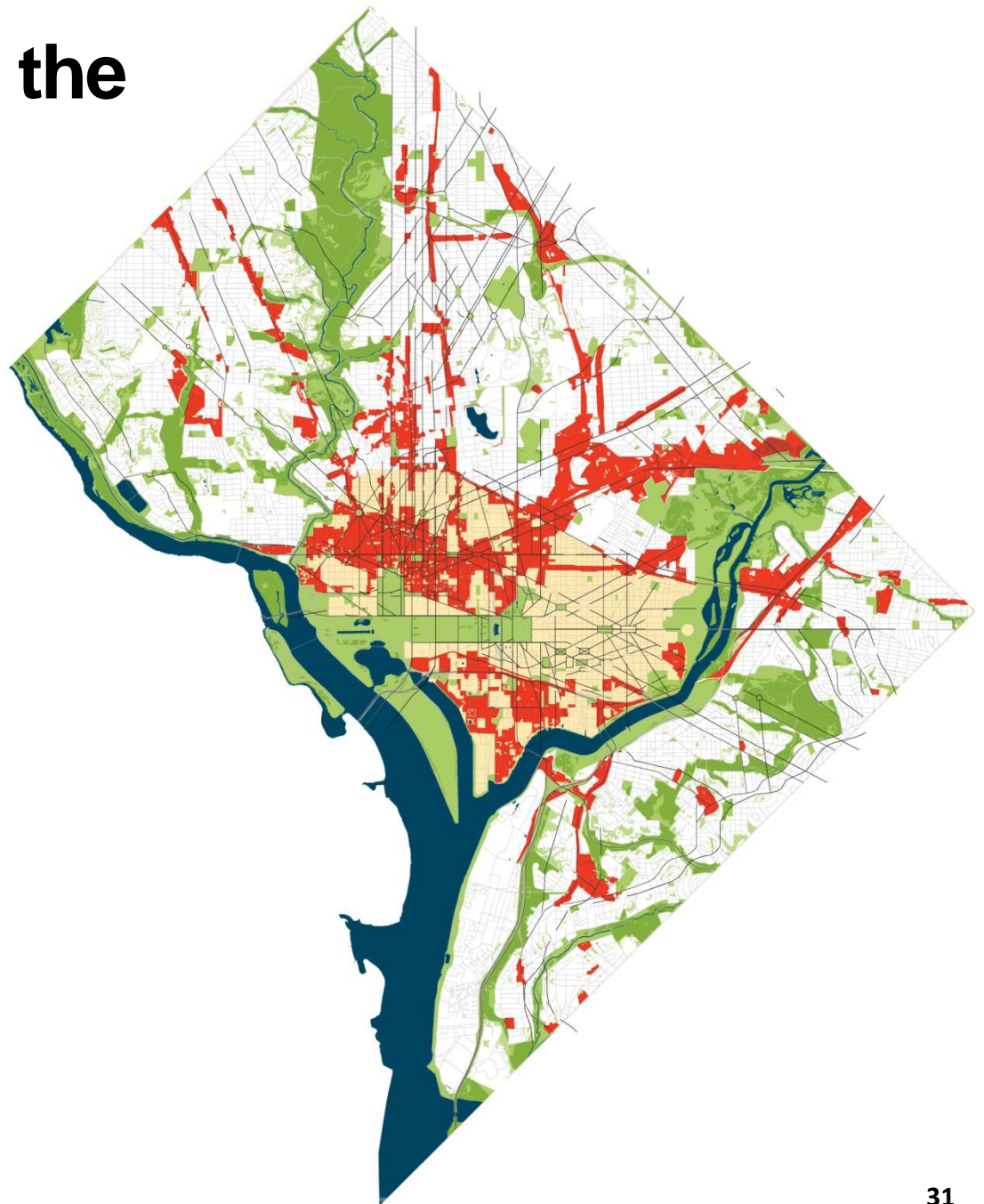
Not included in the Height Study


Federal Properties
Historic Sites
Low Density
Historic Districts
Low Density Areas
Institutional
Public Facilities



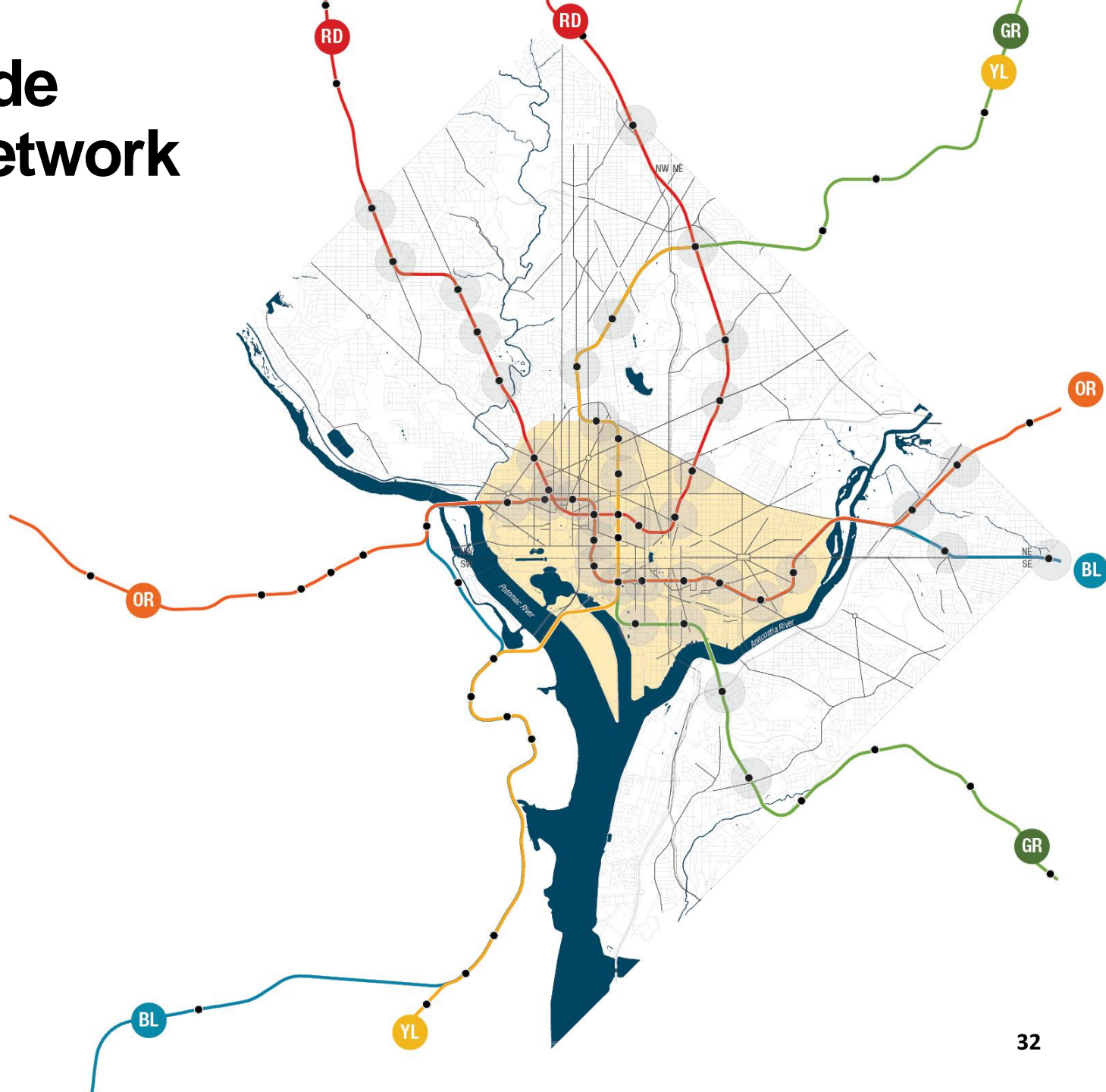
 Areas not included
in the Height Study

Areas included in the Modeling Study





 Areas included
in the Height Study

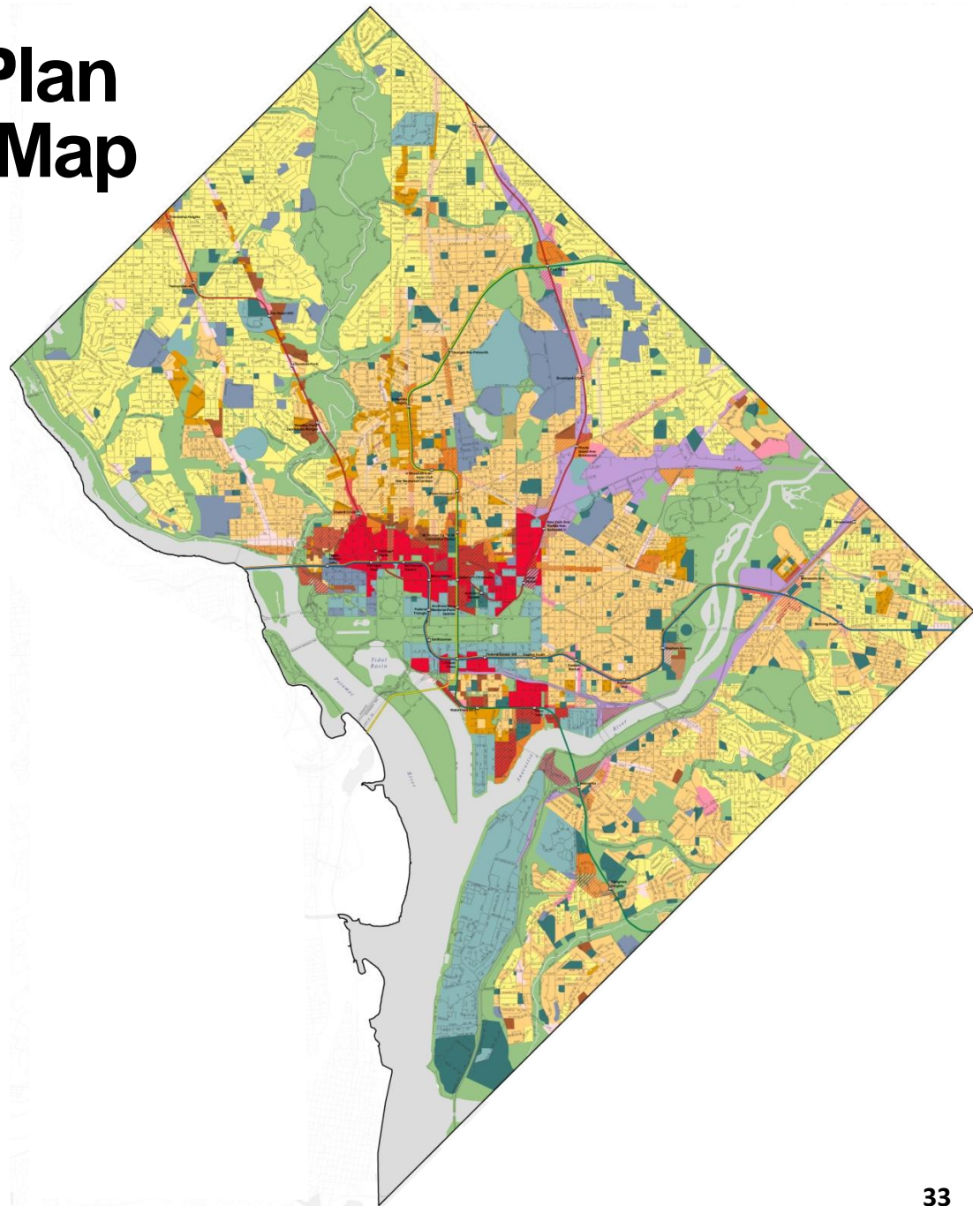
A City Wide Transit Network



1/4 mile pedestrian shed

Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use Map

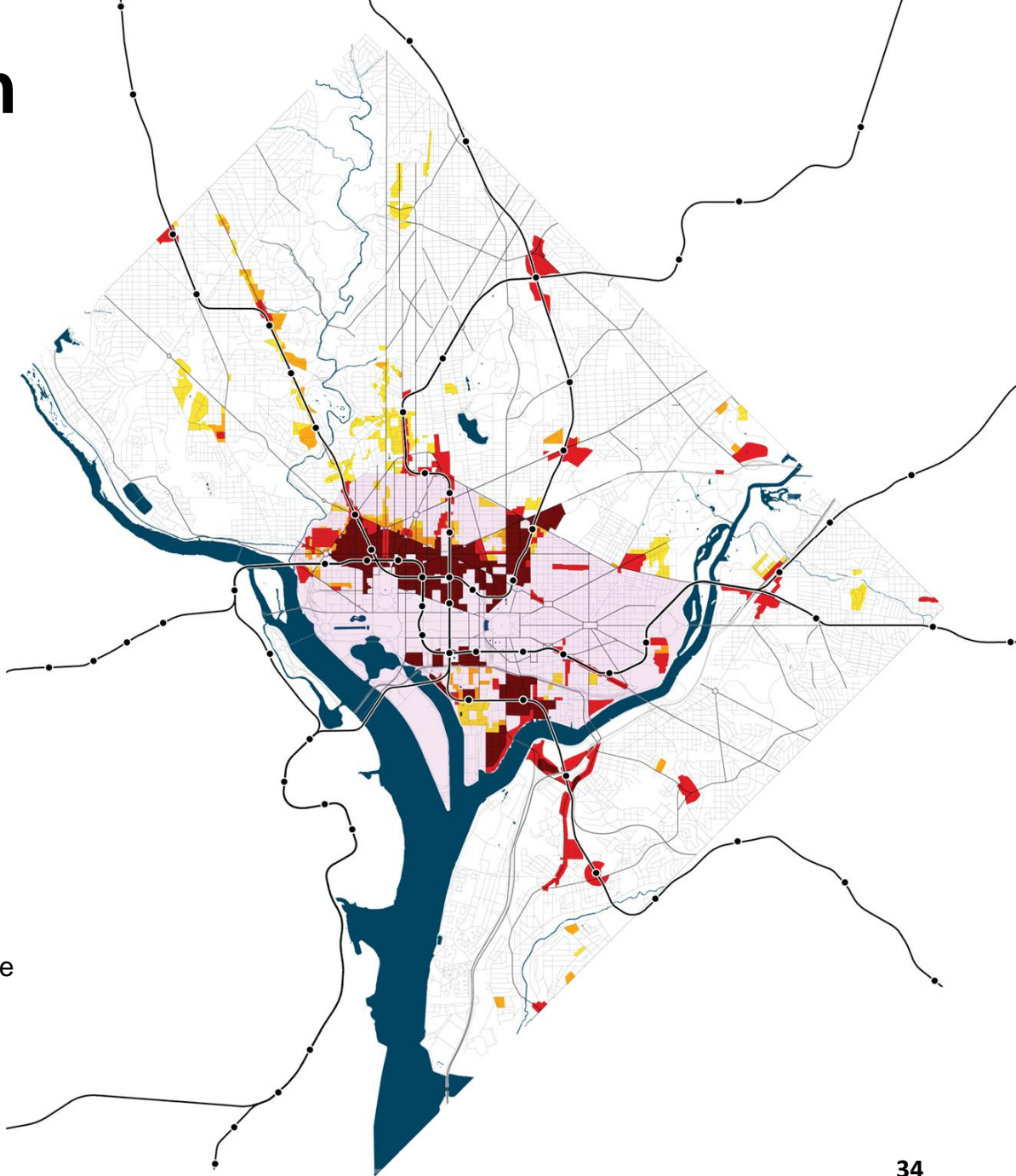
-  High density residential
-  Moderate density residential
-  Medium density residential
-  Low density residential
-  Low density commercial
-  Moderate density commercial
-  Medium density commercial
-  High density commercial
-  Production, distribution and repair
-  Federal
-  Local public Facilities
-  Institutional
-  Parks, recreation and open space



High and Medium Density Areas

Land use information is based on the District of Columbia Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use Designations

- High Density Commercial
- Medium Density Commercial and Mixed Use
- High Density Residential
- Medium Density Residential
- L'Enfant City Boundary



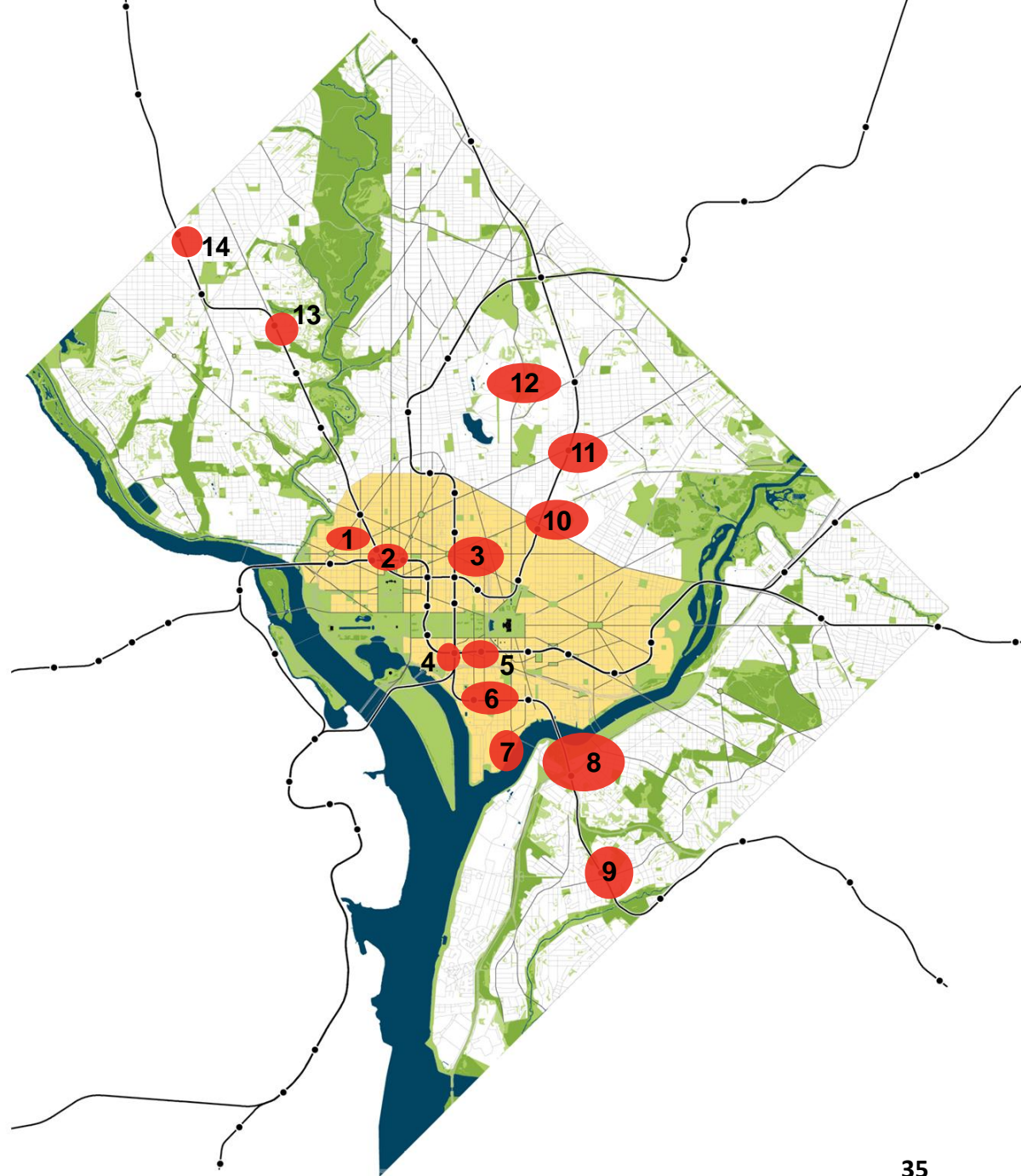
Illustrative Areas

- **High and medium density**
- **Transit based**
- **Development potential**

Illustrative Areas

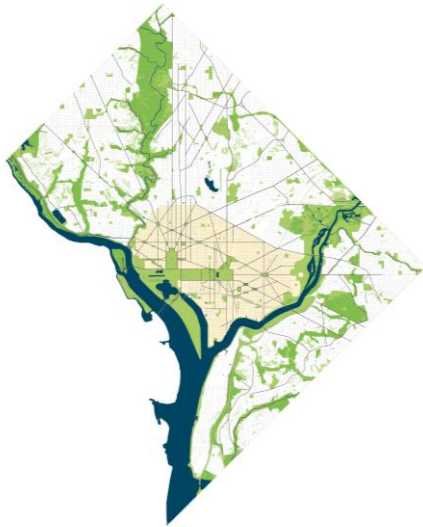


1. M Street and 22nd Street, NW
2. Farragut
3. K Street and 5th Street, NW
4. L'Enfant Plaza
5. Federal Center, SW
6. Waterfront Station
7. Buzzard Point
8. Poplar Point (2 Sites)
9. Congress Heights
10. Florida Avenue Market
11. Rhode Island Avenue, NE
12. Old Soldier's Home
13. Intelstat
14. Friendship Heights



Consider the Visual Impacts at Various Scales

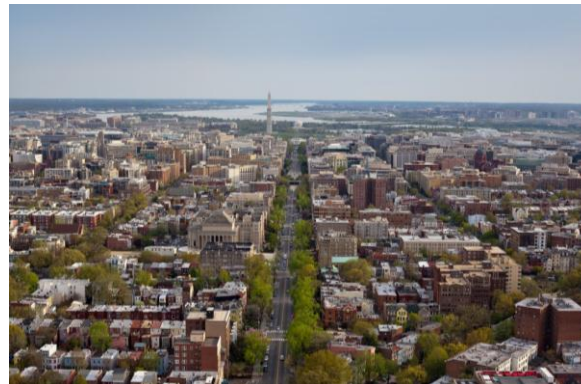
The City



L'Enfant City



L'Enfant Streets



Consider Viewshed Protection



Approaches

1. No Height Increase
2. Reinforce Relationship between Building Height and Street Width
3. Raise Height Cap in Selected Areas
4. Change Height Cap City-Wide

3

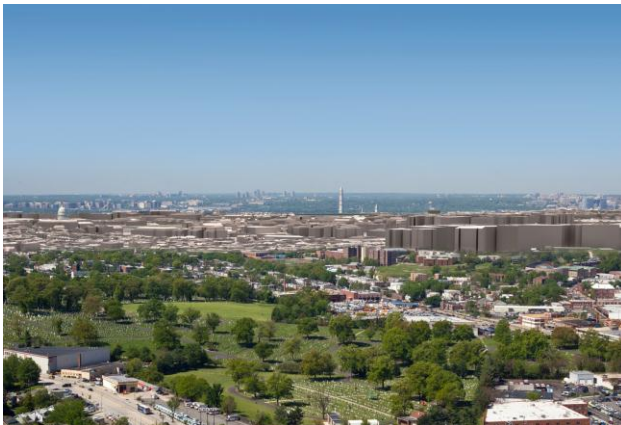
Four Approaches



**Approach 1:
No Change
to the Height Act**



**Approach 2:
Street to Height
Relationship**



**Approach 3:
Selective Areas**



**Approach 4:
City Wide Increase**

Approach 1:

No Height Increase

1A: Status Quo – Maintain the Existing Building Height

1B: Allow Penthouse Occupancy

Approach 1: **No Height Increase**

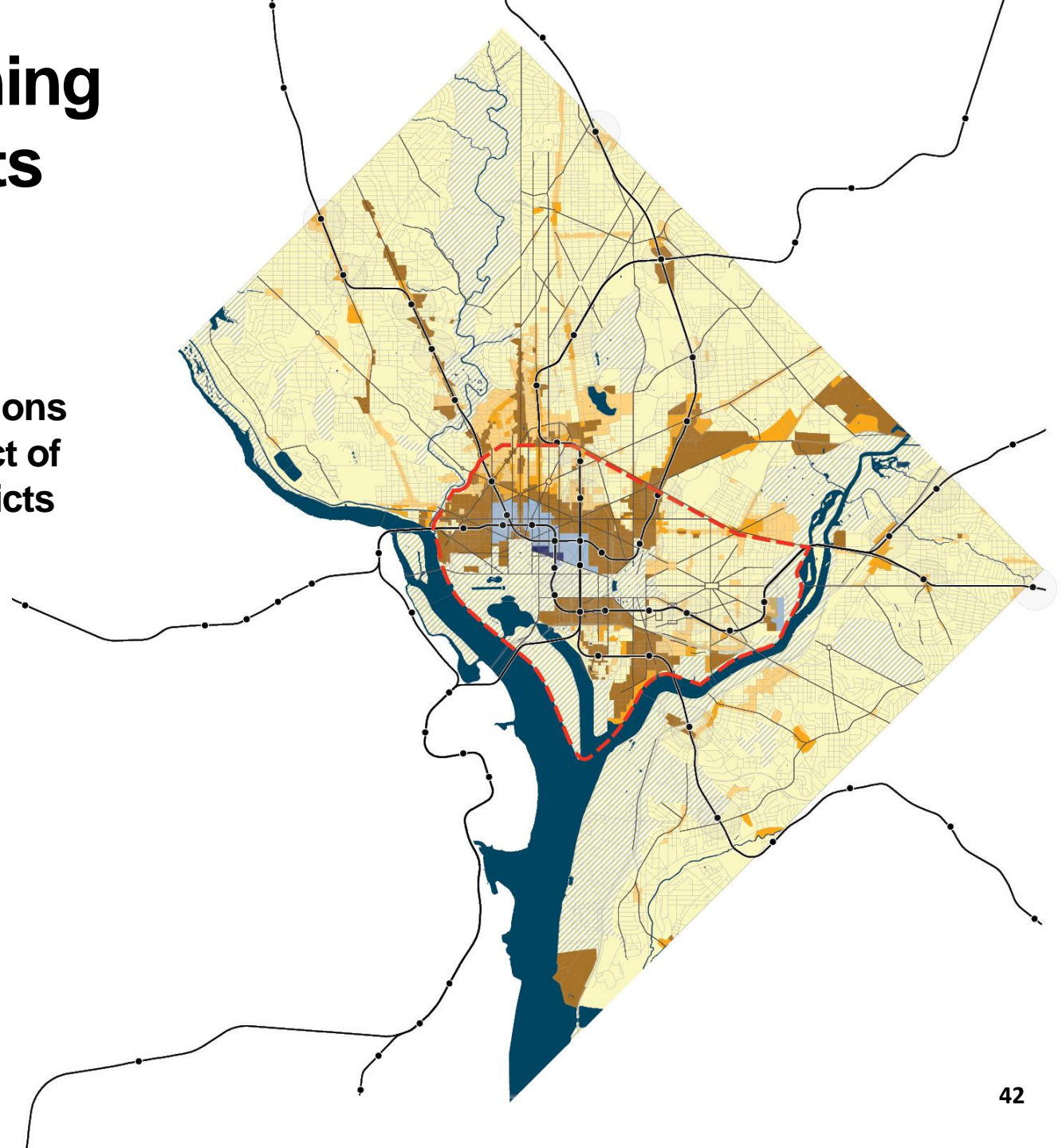
1A: Status Quo – Maintain the Existing Building Height

1B: Allow Penthouse Occupancy

Current Zoning Height Limits

Building heights are based on the regulations outlined in the District of Columbia Zoning Districts

Building Height Limits



Area of the City Currently Zoned for 90' Height Limit



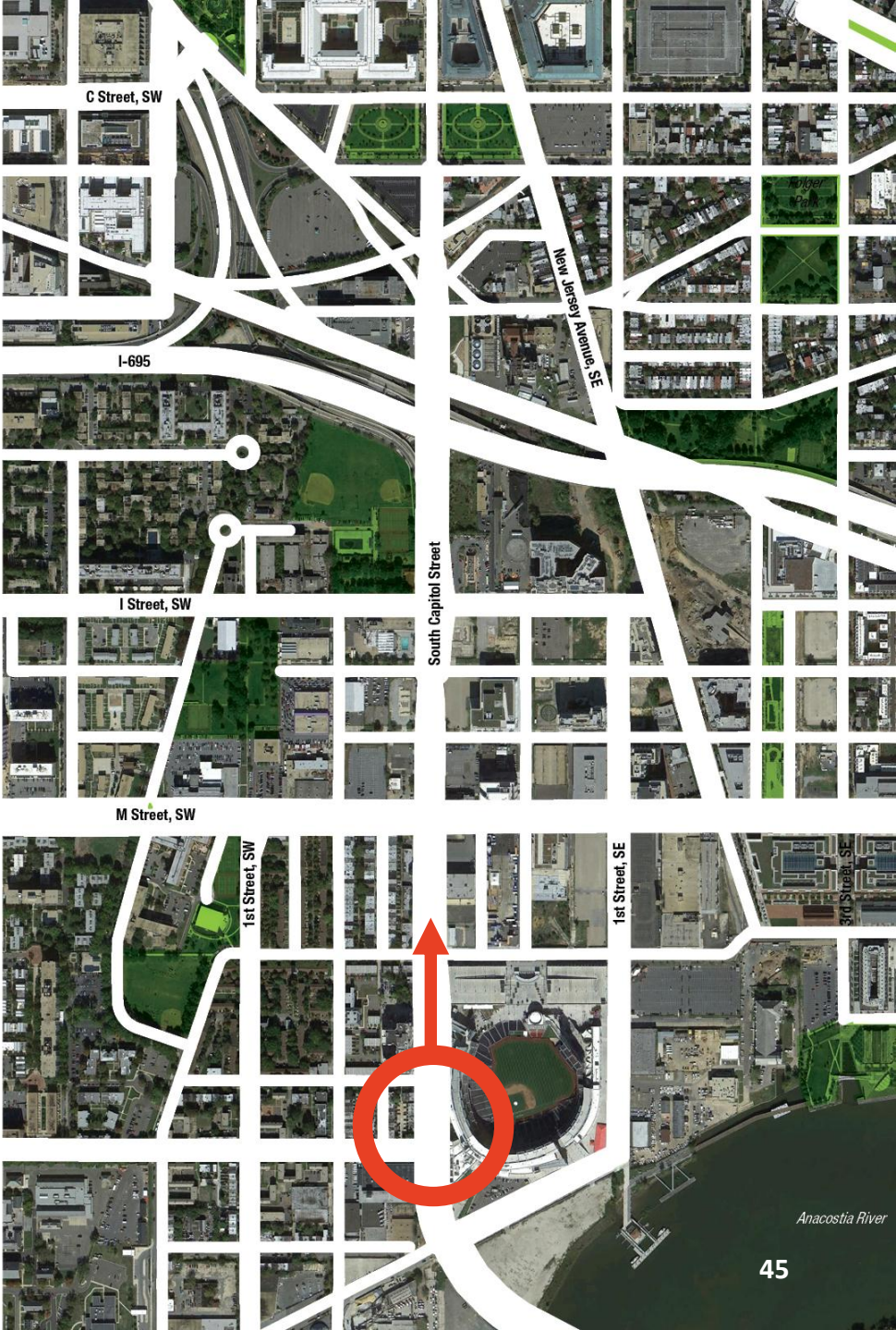
Approach 1A: Status Quo

**South Capitol Street,
looking north:
Aerial view**



Approach 1A: Status Quo

**South Capitol Street,
looking north:
Street Network**





Zoning Height Limit 90'

Planned Unit Development
Zoning Height Limit 110'

U.S. Capitol Building

130' ROW

Approach 1A: Status Quo

South Capitol Street: Existing Conditions



Approach 1A: Status Quo

**South Capitol Street:
Full Build-Out Potential – 130'**



----- Height Limit 130'

147.67' ROW

Approach 1A: Status Quo

**K Street / 16th Street, NW:
Existing Conditions**



----- Height Limit 130'

Approach 1A: Status Quo

**K Street / 16th Street, NW:
Full Build-Out**

Approach 1: **No Height Increase**

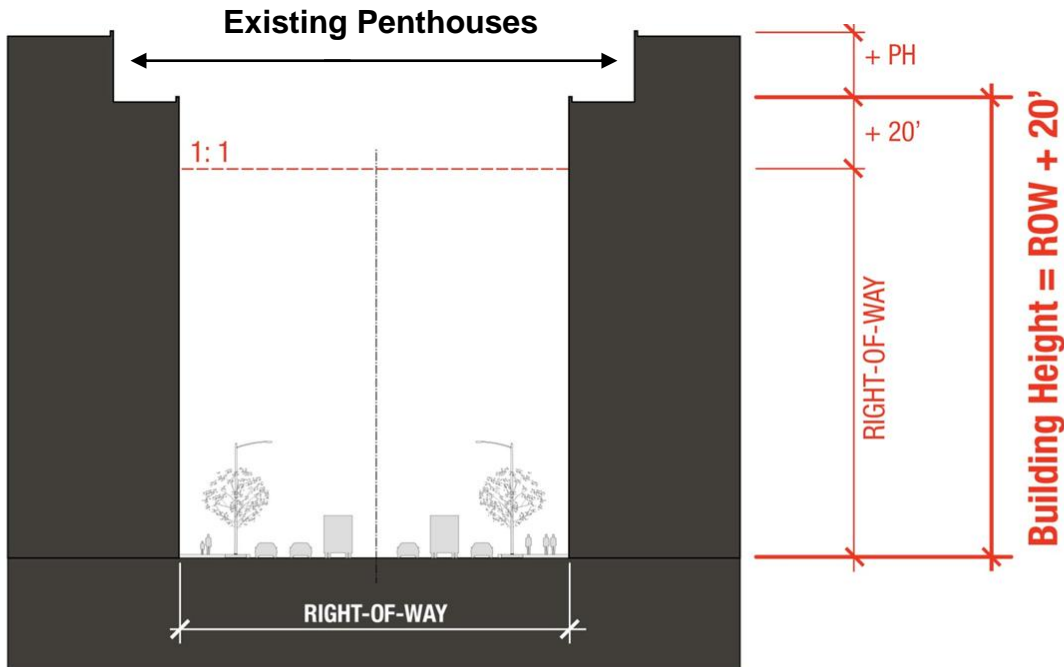
1A: Status Quo – Maintain the Existing Building Height

1B: Allow Penthouse Occupancy

Approach 1B: Allow Penthouse Occupancy

Today Penthouses include Unoccupied Space

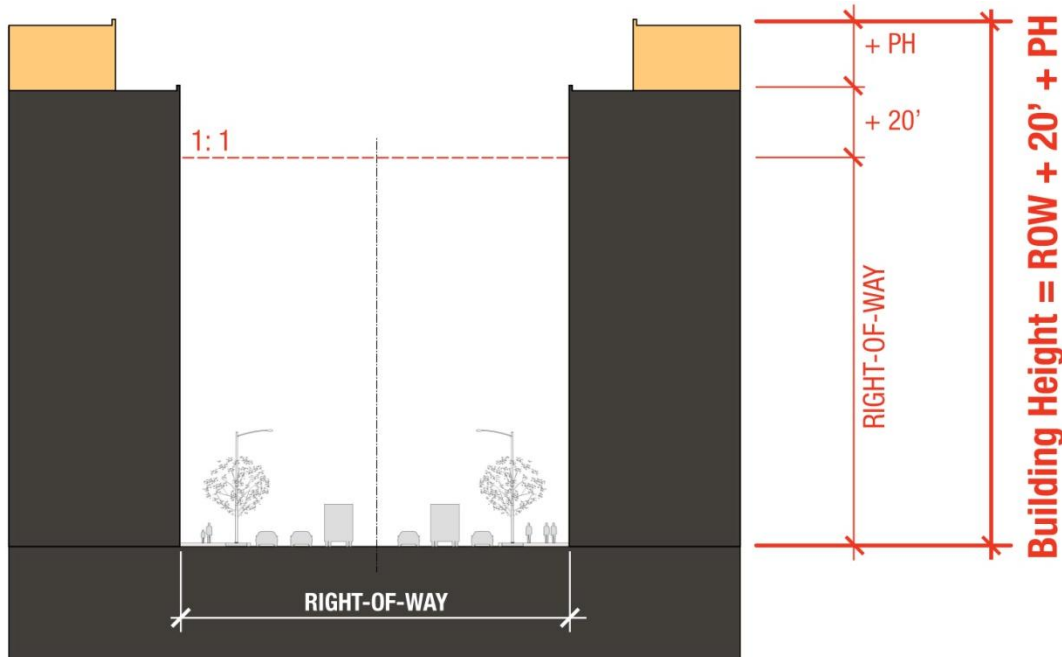
Existing Conditions



Approach 1B: Allow Penthouse Occupancy

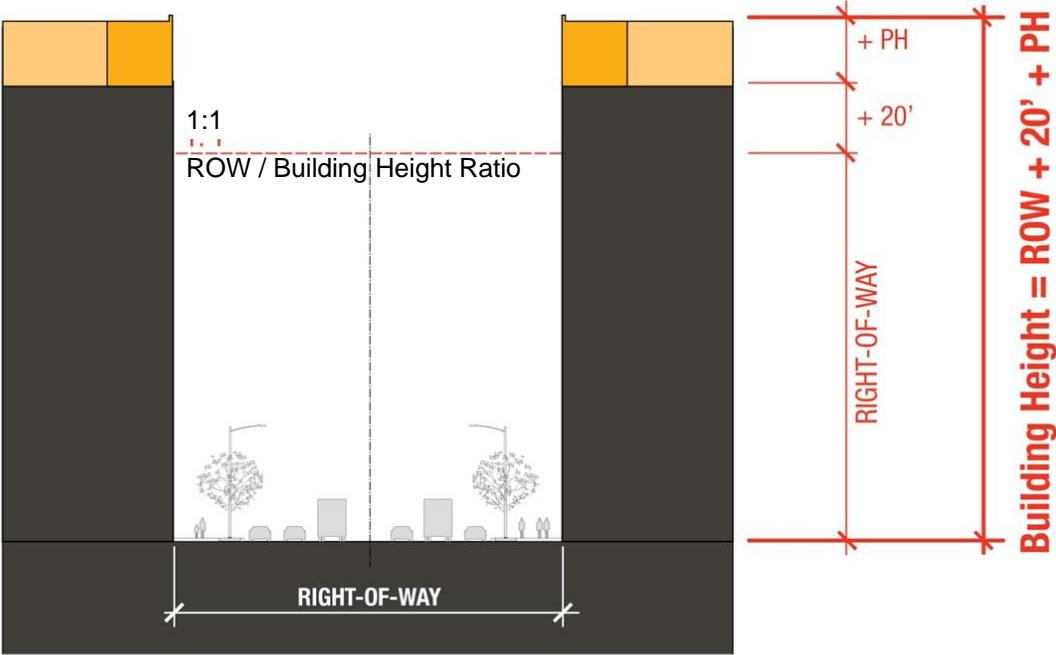
Allow Penthouse to Include Occupied Space

Occupied Penthouse



 Existing Penthouse to be Occupied

Eliminate Penthouse Setbacks



- Existing Penthouse to be Occupied
- Expanded Occupied Penthouse

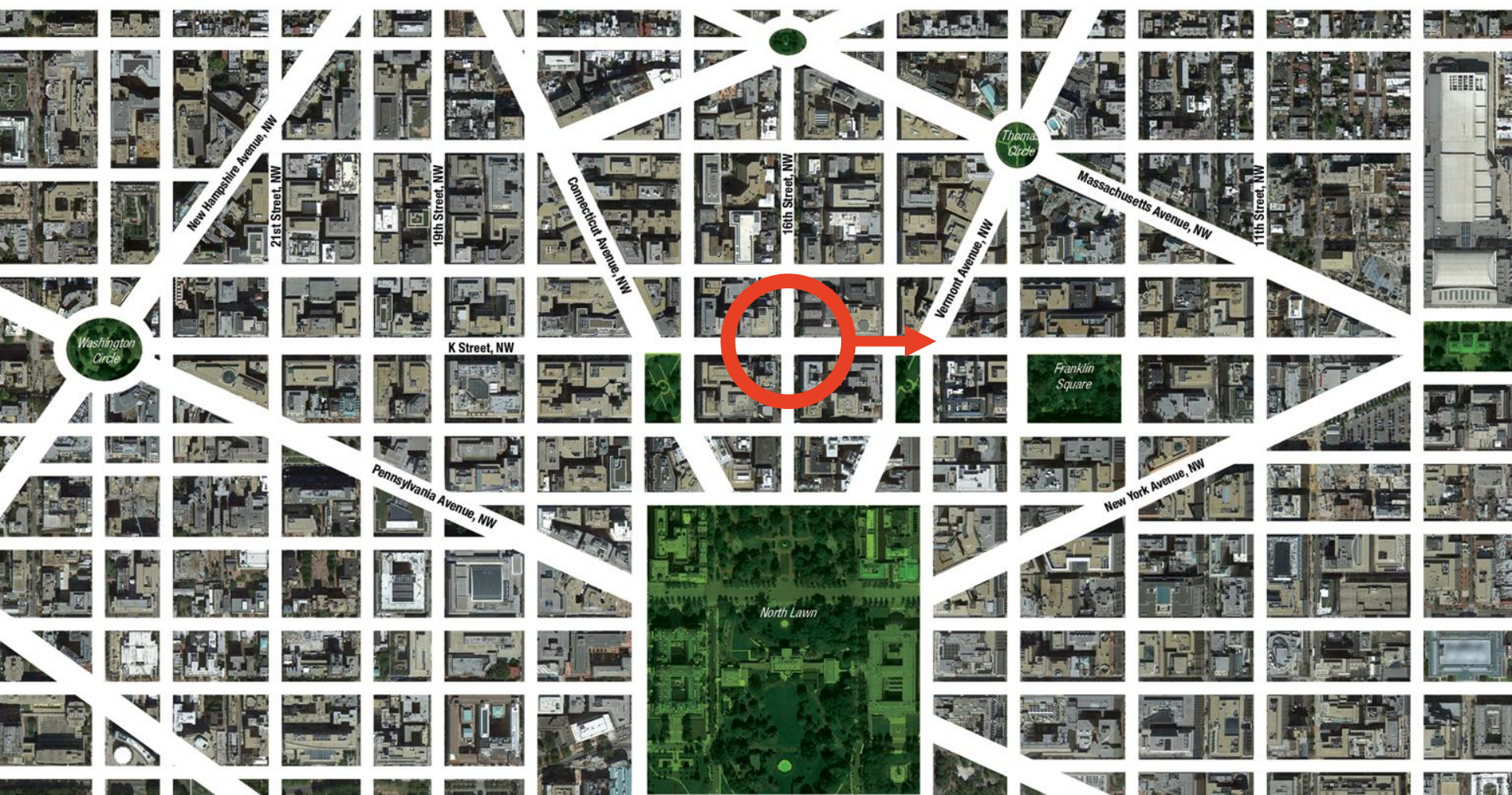
Approach 1B: Allow Penthouse Occupancy

View from K Street / 16th Street, NW



Approach 1B: Allow Penthouse Occupancy

K Street / 16th Street,
NW looking east:
Street Network





Height Limit 130' -----

147.67' ROW

Approach 1B: Allow Penthouse Occupancy

K Street / 16th Street, NW
Existing Conditions

----- Adjusted Maximum
Building Height: 148.5'

Approach 1B: Allow Penthouse Occupancy
K Street, NW

**What if penthouse setbacks
were eliminated?**

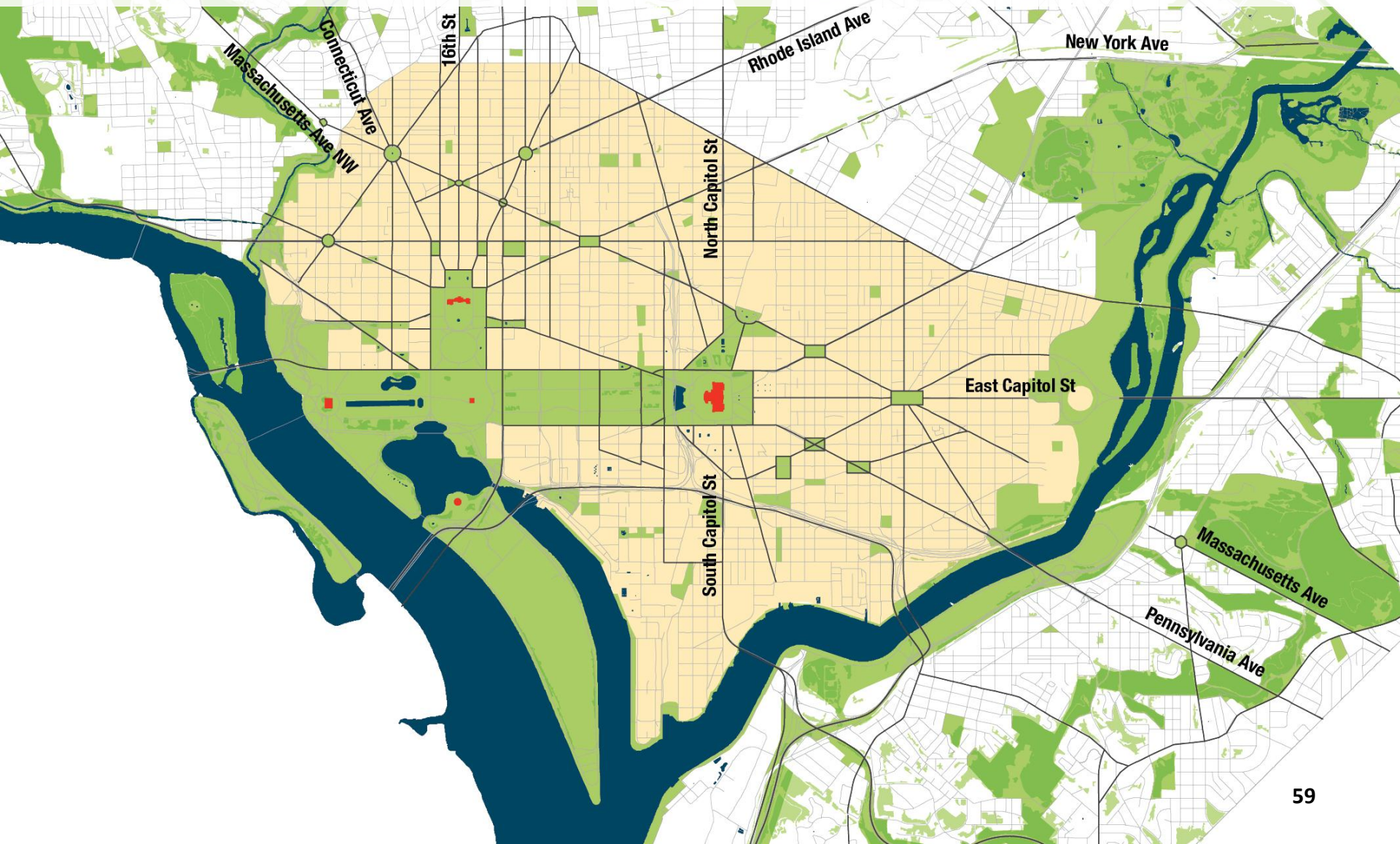



Approach 2:

Working with the principles of the L'Enfant Plan

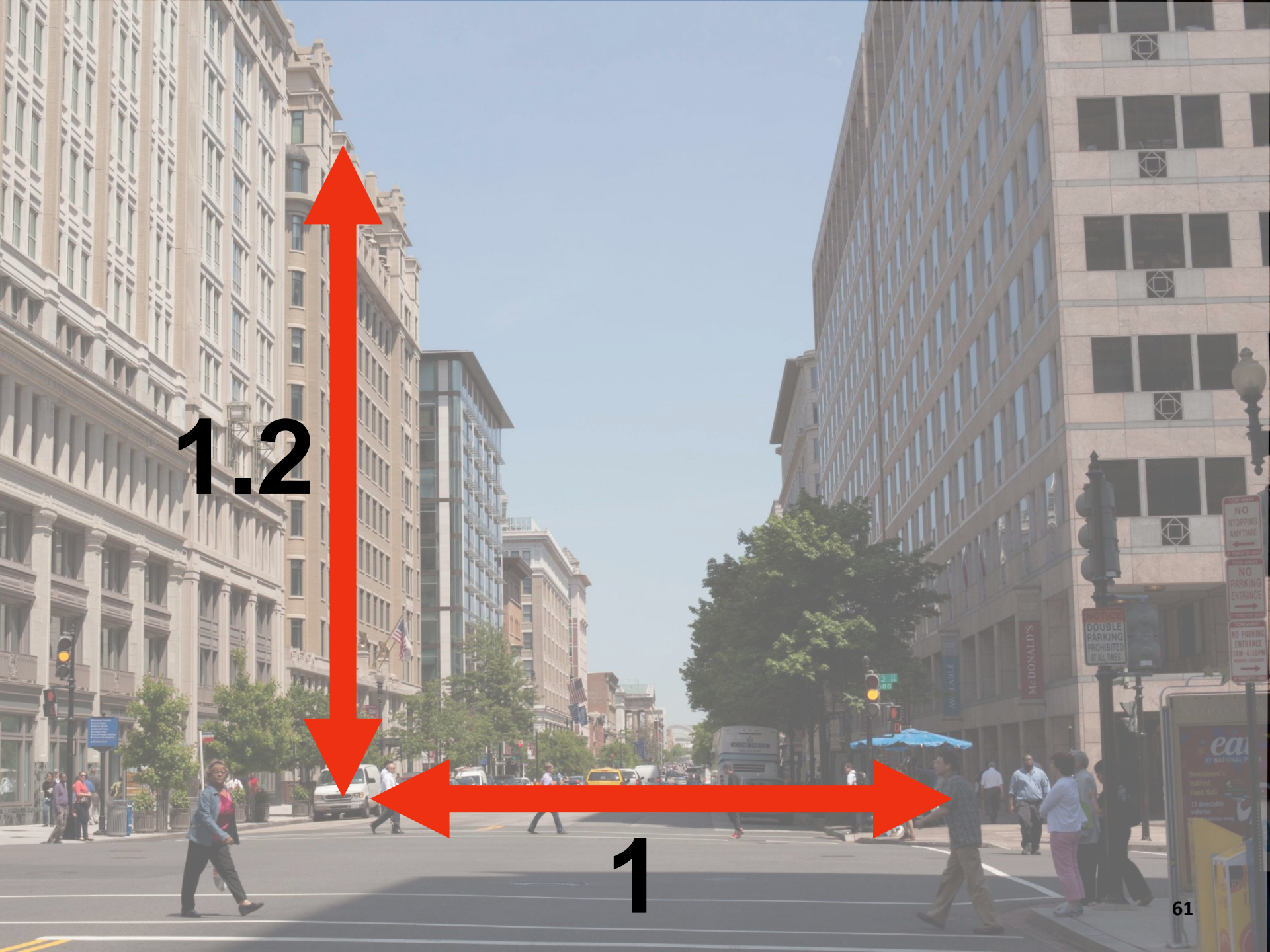
**Reinforce Relationship Between
Building Height and Street Width**


Reinforce the relationship between the street network and the building height



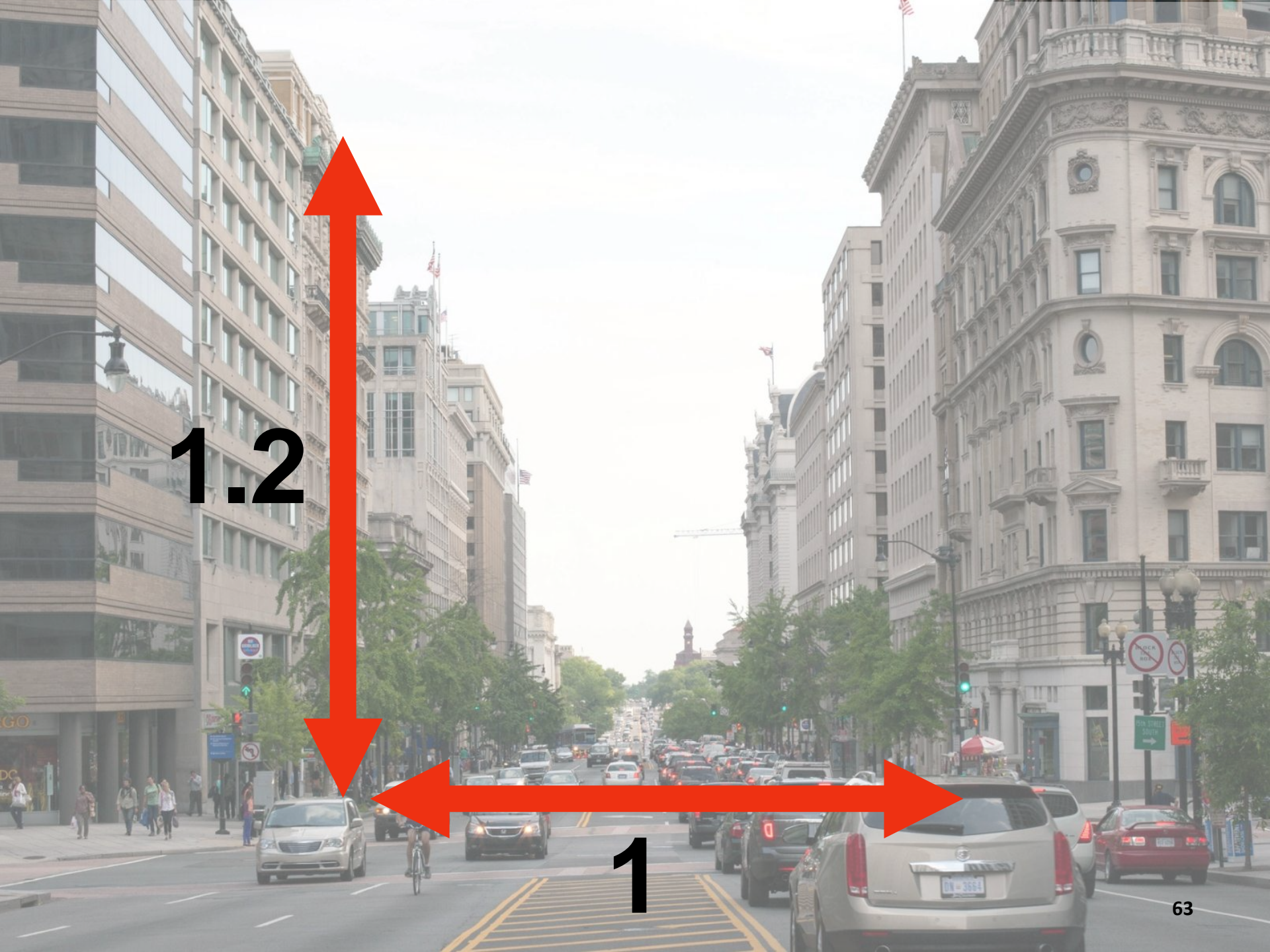


F Street, NW
Street Width = 100'
Building Height = 120'





14th Street, NW
Street Width = 110'
Building Height = 130'



1.2

1

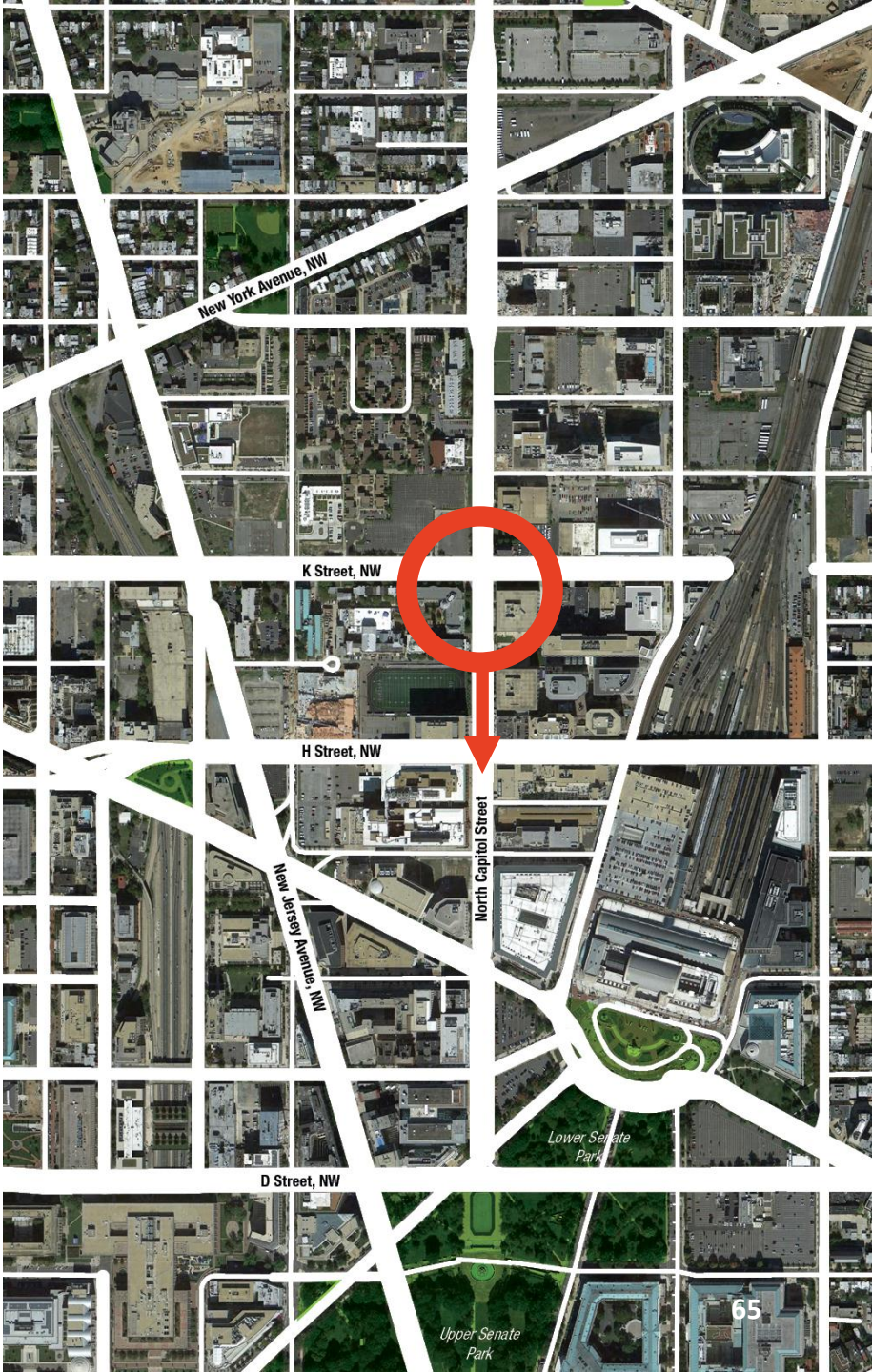
Approach 2: Building Height / Street Width Relationship

North Capitol Street



Approach 2: Building Height / Street Width Relationship

North Capitol Street, looking south
Street Network





North Capitol Street
Street Width = 130'
Building Height = 90'



0.7

1

Approach 2: Building Height / Street Width Relationship



----- Height Limit 90'

U.S. Capitol Building

130' ROW

**Existing building height
to street relationship**

90'

Street Width = 130'

Street to Width ratio = 1 : 0.7

Approach 2: Building Height / Street Width Relationship

What if the relationship between
height and width increased to

130'

Street Width: 130'

Street to Width ratio = 1 : 1



Approach 2: Building Height / Street Width Relationship

What if the relationship between height and width increased to

160'

Street Width: 130'

Street to Width ratio = 1 : 1.2



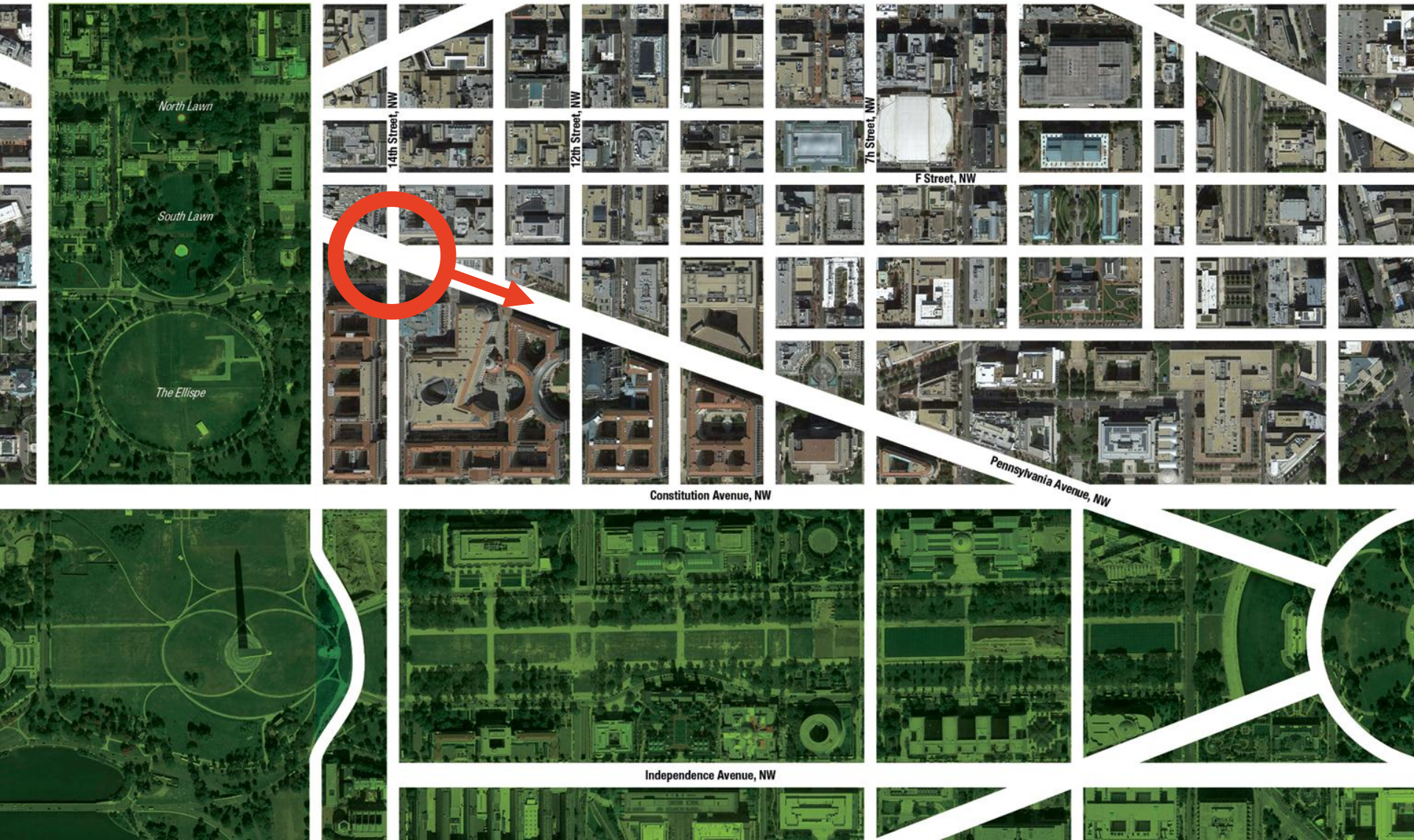
Approach 2: Building Height / Street Width Relationship

View from Pennsylvania Avenue



Approach 2: Building Height / Street Width Relationship

Pennsylvania Avenue: looking east
Street Network



Approach 2: Building Height / Street Width Relationship
Pennsylvania Avenue, NW

----- Old Post
Office Tower 315'

U.S. Capitol Building

160' ROW

Existing building height
to street relationship

160'

Street Width = 160'

Street to Width ratio = 1 : 1

Approach 2: Building Height / Street Width Relationship
Pennsylvania Avenue, NW



What if the existing building
height limit were realized

160'

Street Width: 160'

Street to Width ratio = 1 : 1

Approach 2: Building Height / Street Width Relationship
Pennsylvania Avenue, NW



What if the relationship between
height and width increased to

180'

Street Width: 160'

Street to Width ratio = 1 : 1.125

Approach 2: Building Height / Street Width Relationship
Pennsylvania Avenue, NW



What if the relationship between
height and width increased to

200'

Street Width: 160'

Street to Width ratio = 1 : 1.25

Approach 3:

Raise the Height Cap in Selected Areas

3A: L'Enfant City

3B: Outside L'Enfant City – but within Topographic Bowl

3C: Illustrative Clusters

Approach 3:

Raise the Height Cap in Selected Areas

3A: L'Enfant City

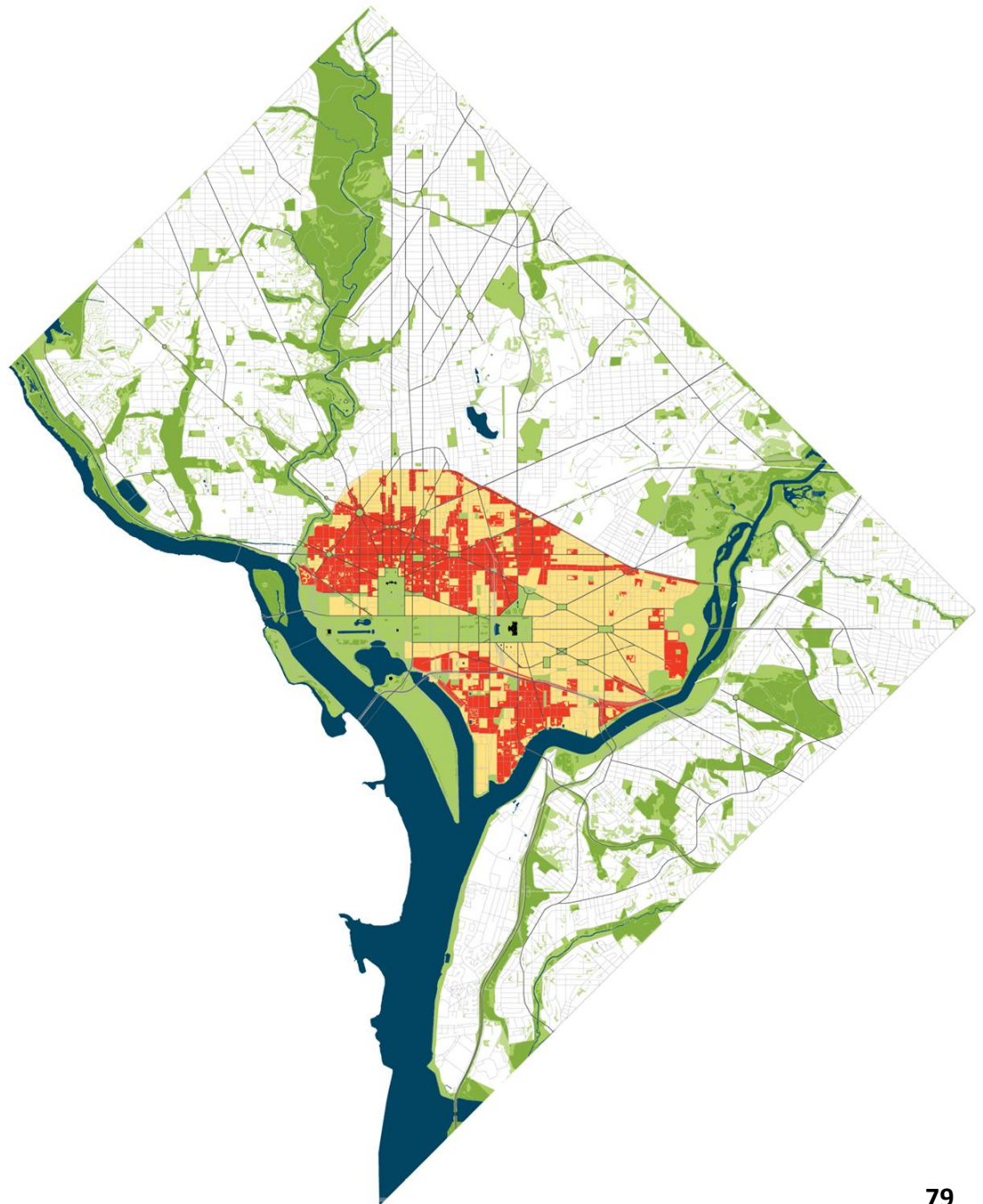
3B: Outside L'Enfant City – but within Topographic Bowl


3C: Illustrative Clusters

Raise Height Cap in Selected Areas:

L'Enfant City

- High and medium density
- Eliminates exclusion areas

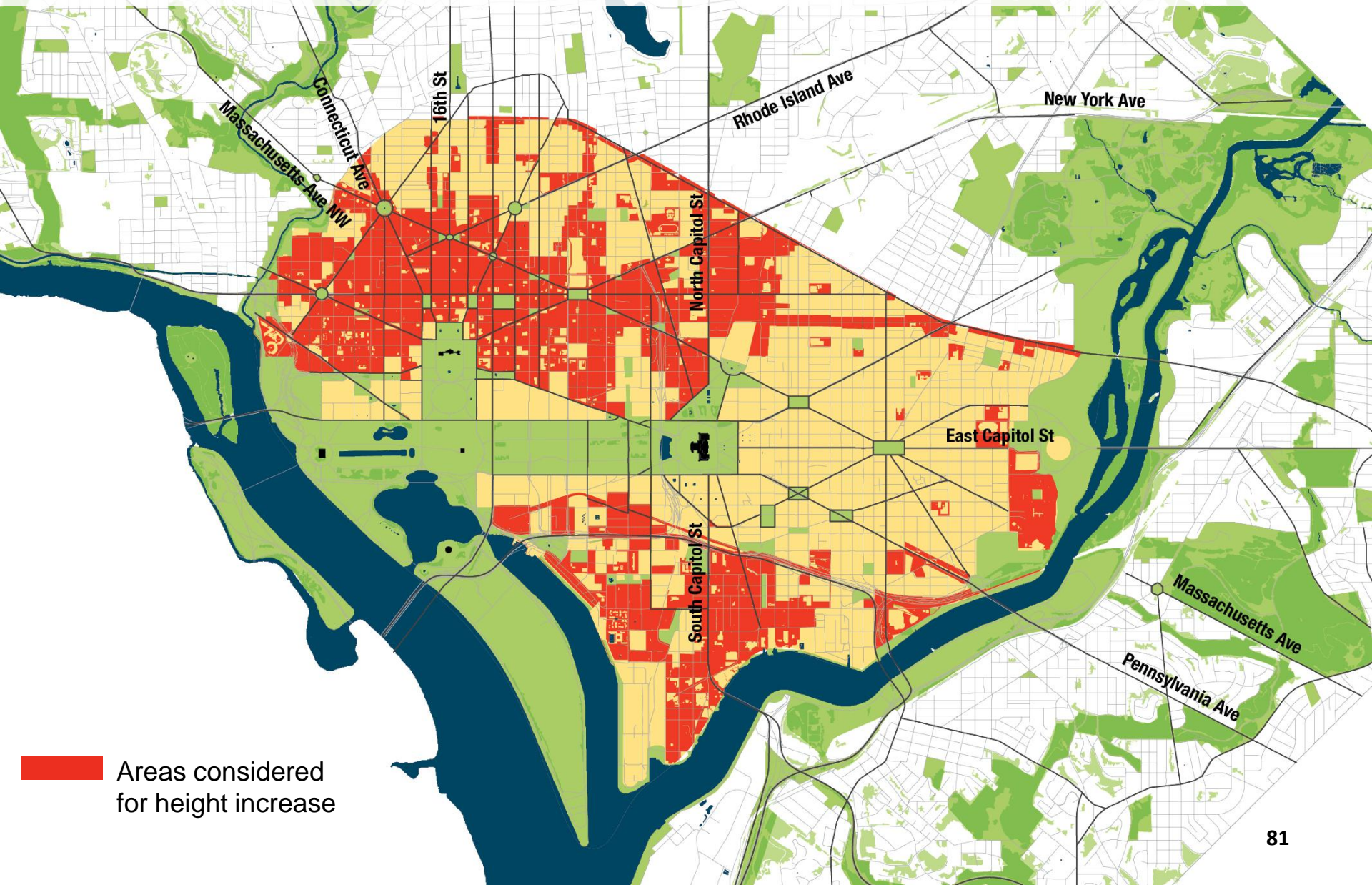


 Areas considered
for height increase

L'Enfant City

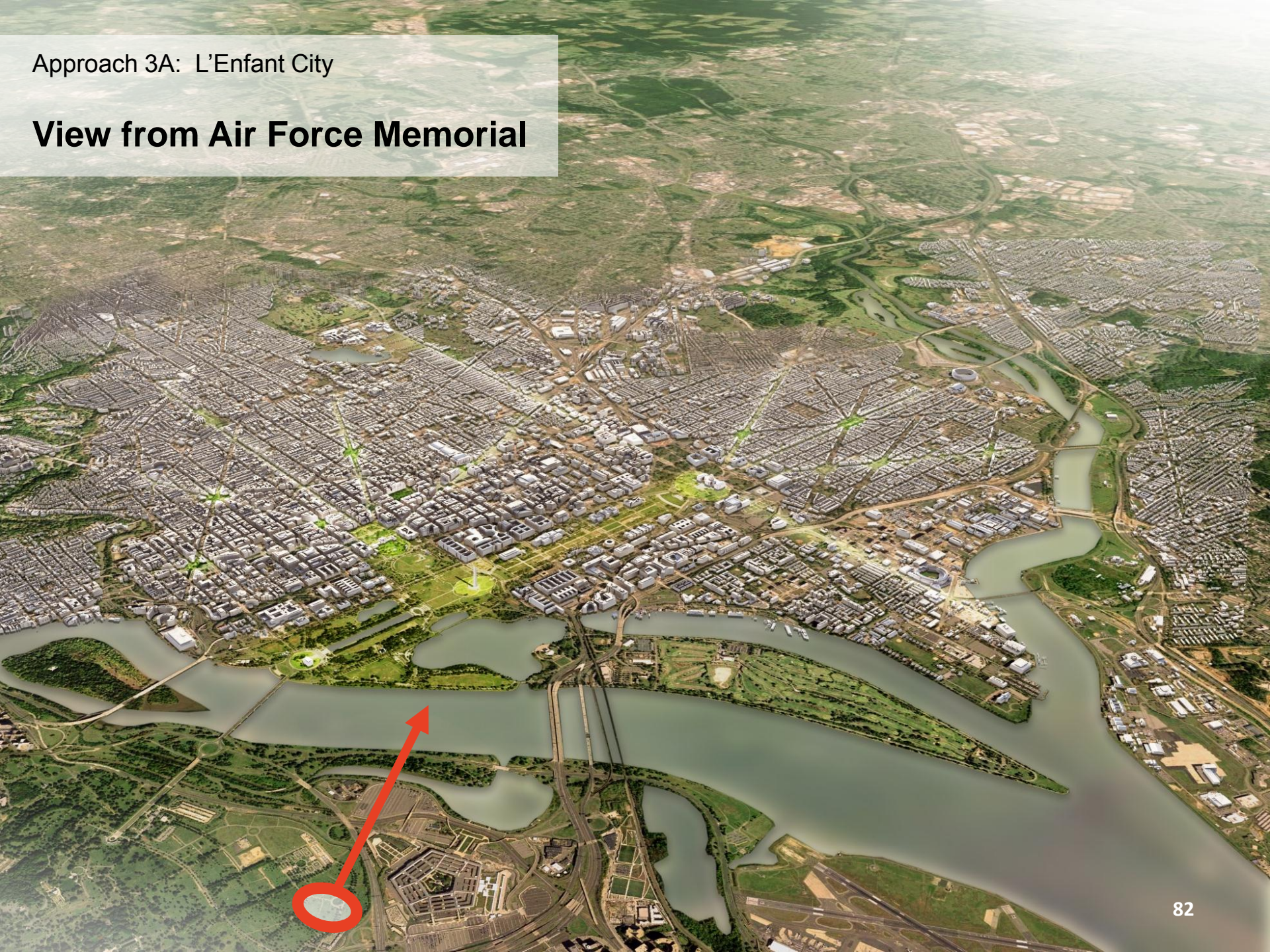


L'Enfant City

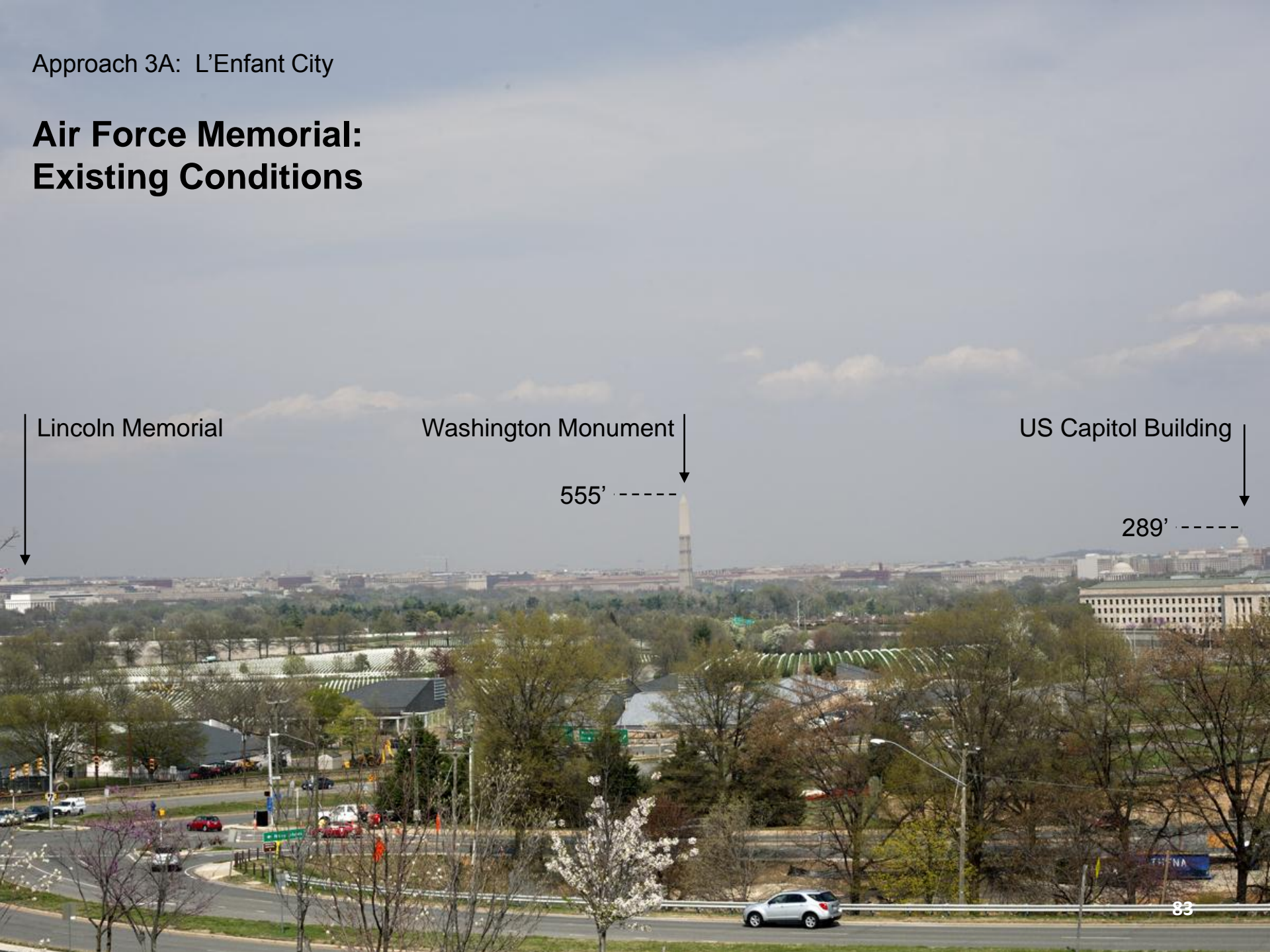


Approach 3A: L'Enfant City

View from Air Force Memorial



**Air Force Memorial:
Existing Conditions**



Lincoln Memorial

Washington Monument

US Capitol Building

555' -----

289' -----

Approach 3A: L'Enfant City

**Air Force Memorial:
What if the building height
in L'Enfant City increased to
130'**



Approach 3A: L'Enfant City

**Air Force Memorial:
What if the building height
in L'Enfant City increased to
160'**



Approach 3A: L'Enfant City

**Air Force Memorial:
What if the building height
in L'Enfant City increased to
180'**



Approach 3A: L'Enfant City

**Air Force Memorial:
What if the building height
in L'Enfant City increased to
200'**



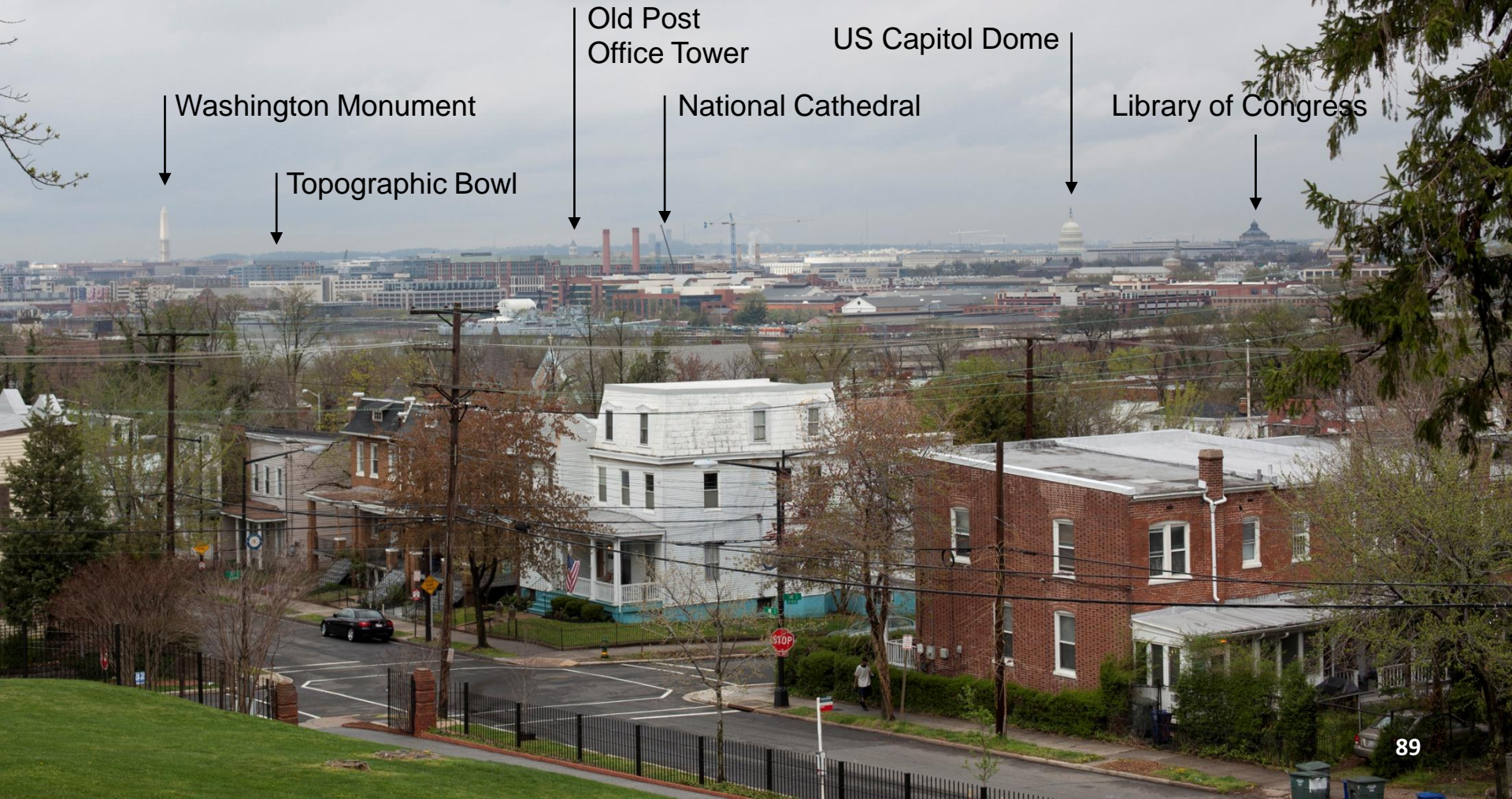
Approach 3A: L'Enfant City

View from Frederick Douglass House



Approach 3A: L'Enfant City

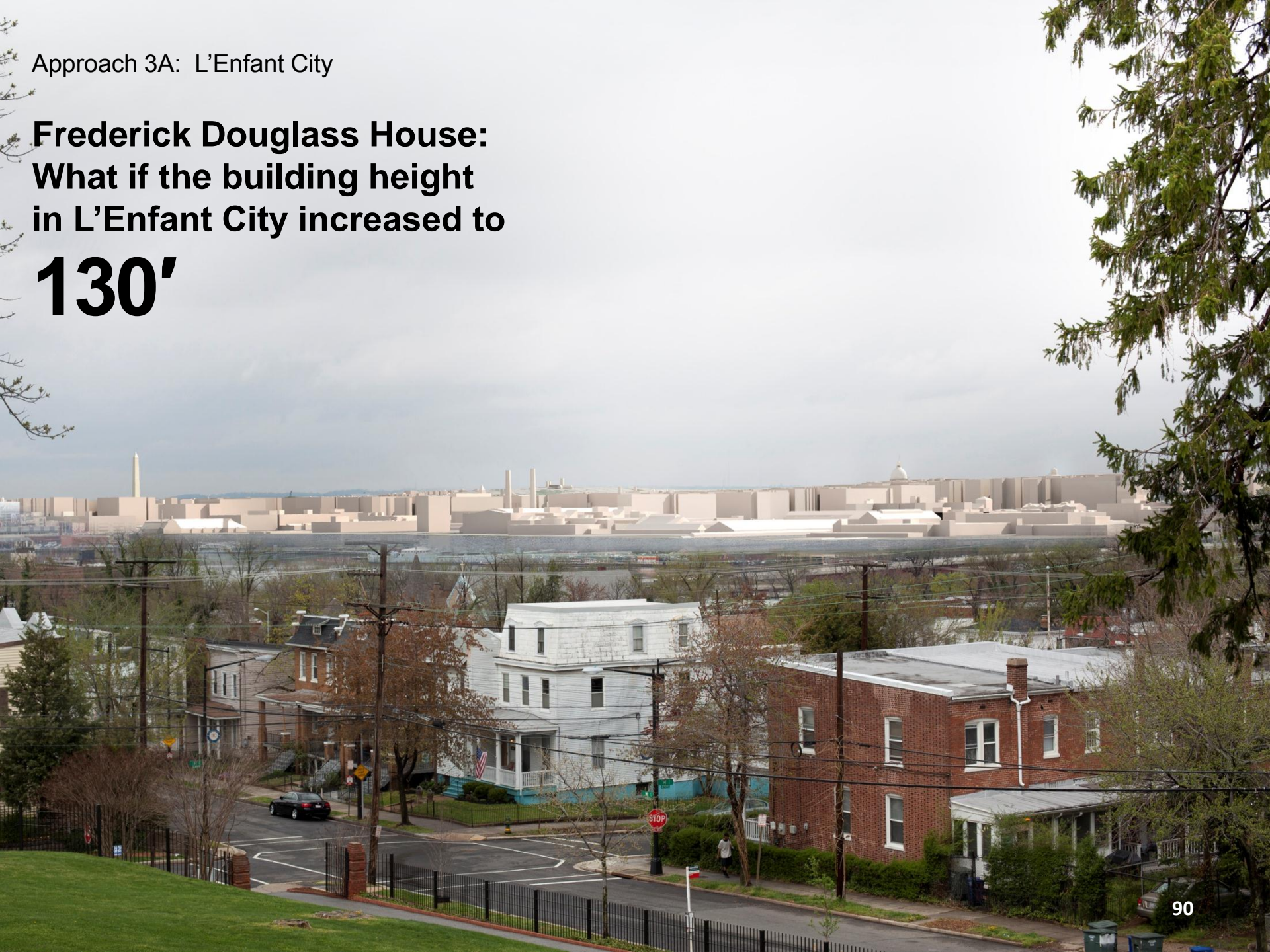
Frederick Douglass House: Existing Conditions



Approach 3A: L'Enfant City

**Frederick Douglass House:
What if the building height
in L'Enfant City increased to**

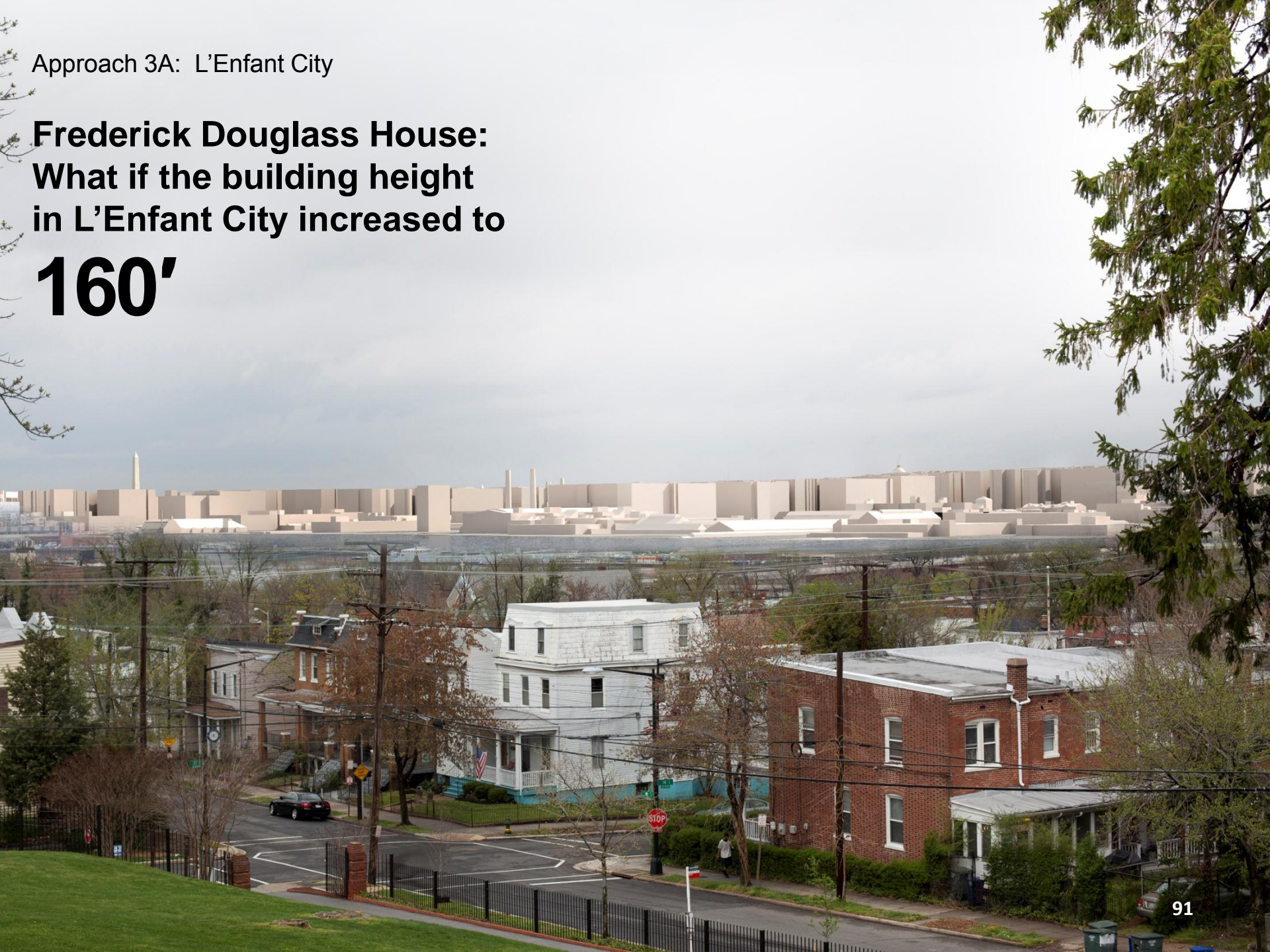
130'



Approach 3A: L'Enfant City

**Frederick Douglass House:
What if the building height
in L'Enfant City increased to**

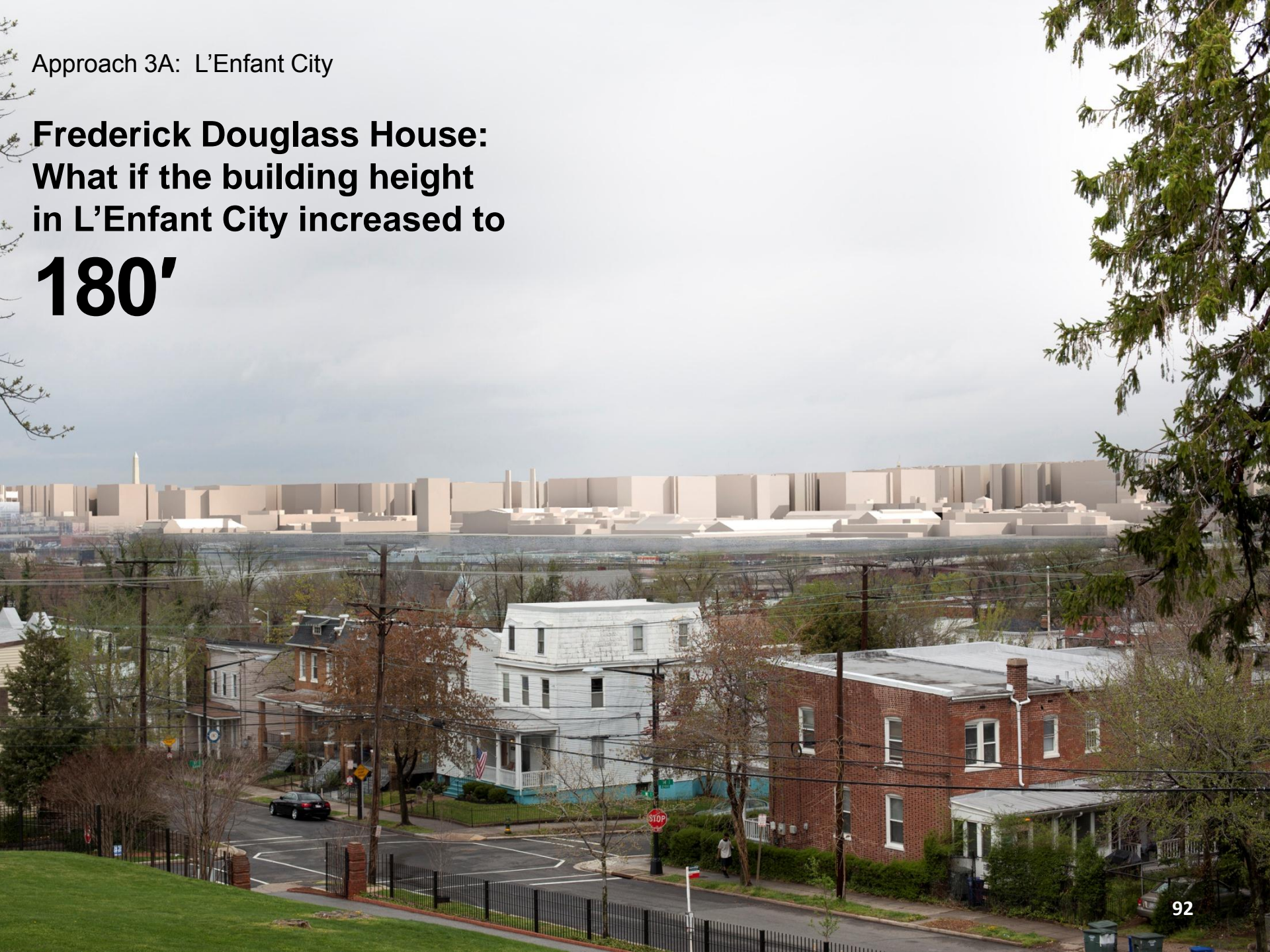
160'



Approach 3A: L'Enfant City

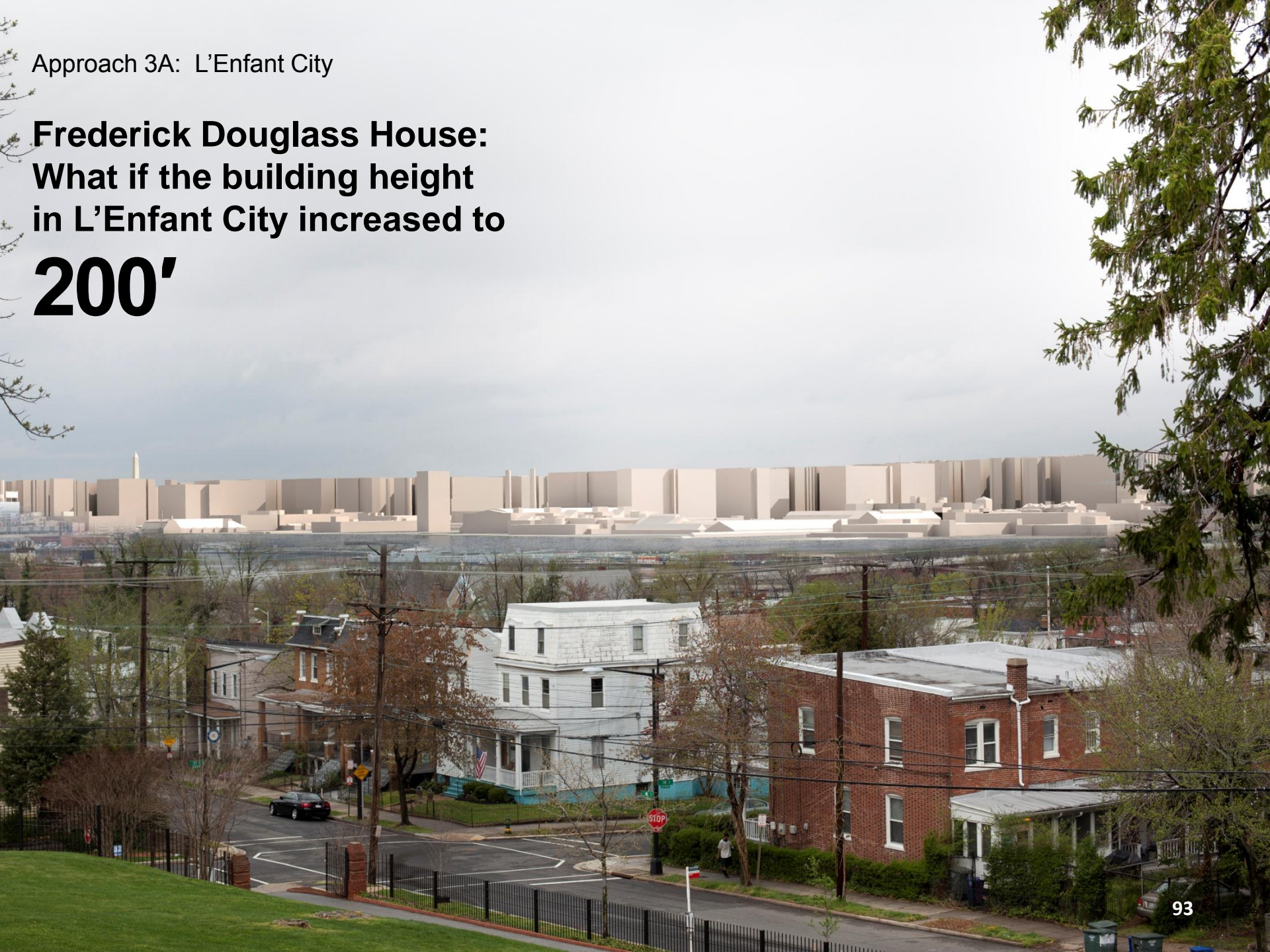
**Frederick Douglass House:
What if the building height
in L'Enfant City increased to**

180'



Approach 3A: L'Enfant City

**Frederick Douglass House:
What if the building height
in L'Enfant City increased to
200'**



Approach 3:

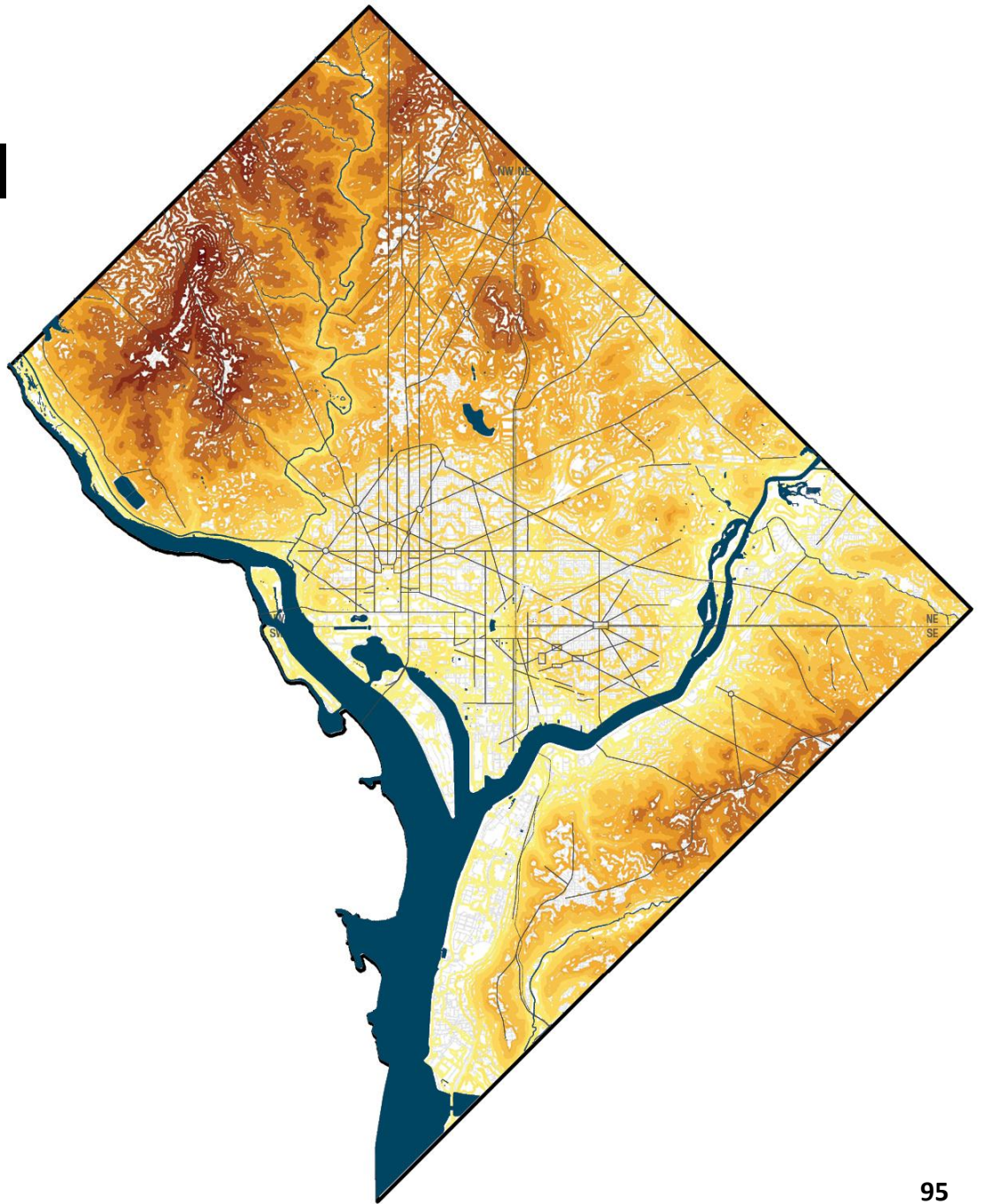
Raise the Height Cap in Selected Areas

3A: L'Enfant City

3B: Outside L'Enfant City – but within Topographic Bowl

3C: Illustrative Clusters

A Clear Topographic Bowl

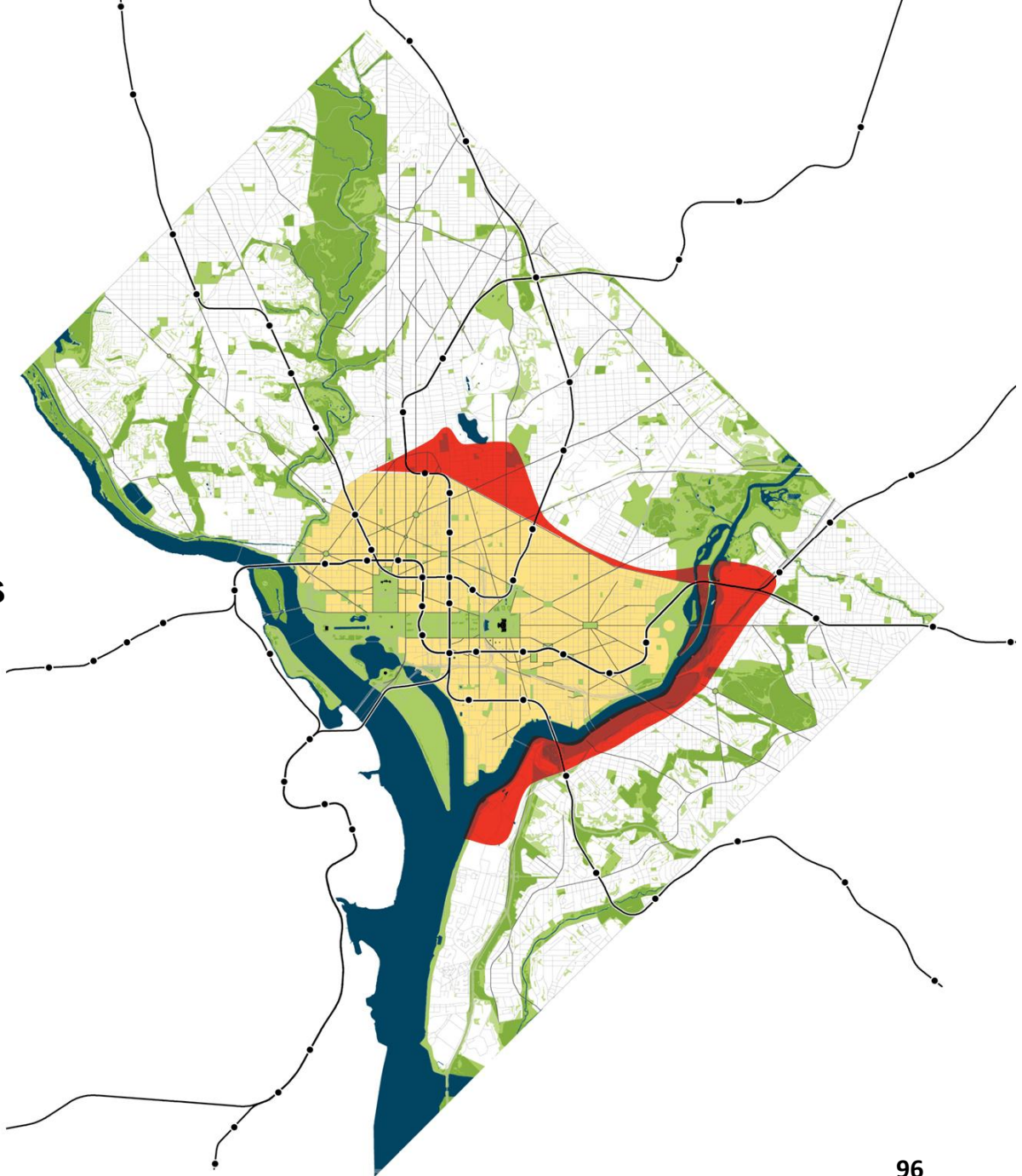


Approach 3B: Topographic Bowl

Raise Height Cap in Selected Areas:

Outside L'Enfant City but within Topographic Bowl

- **High and medium density**
- **Eliminates exclusion areas**



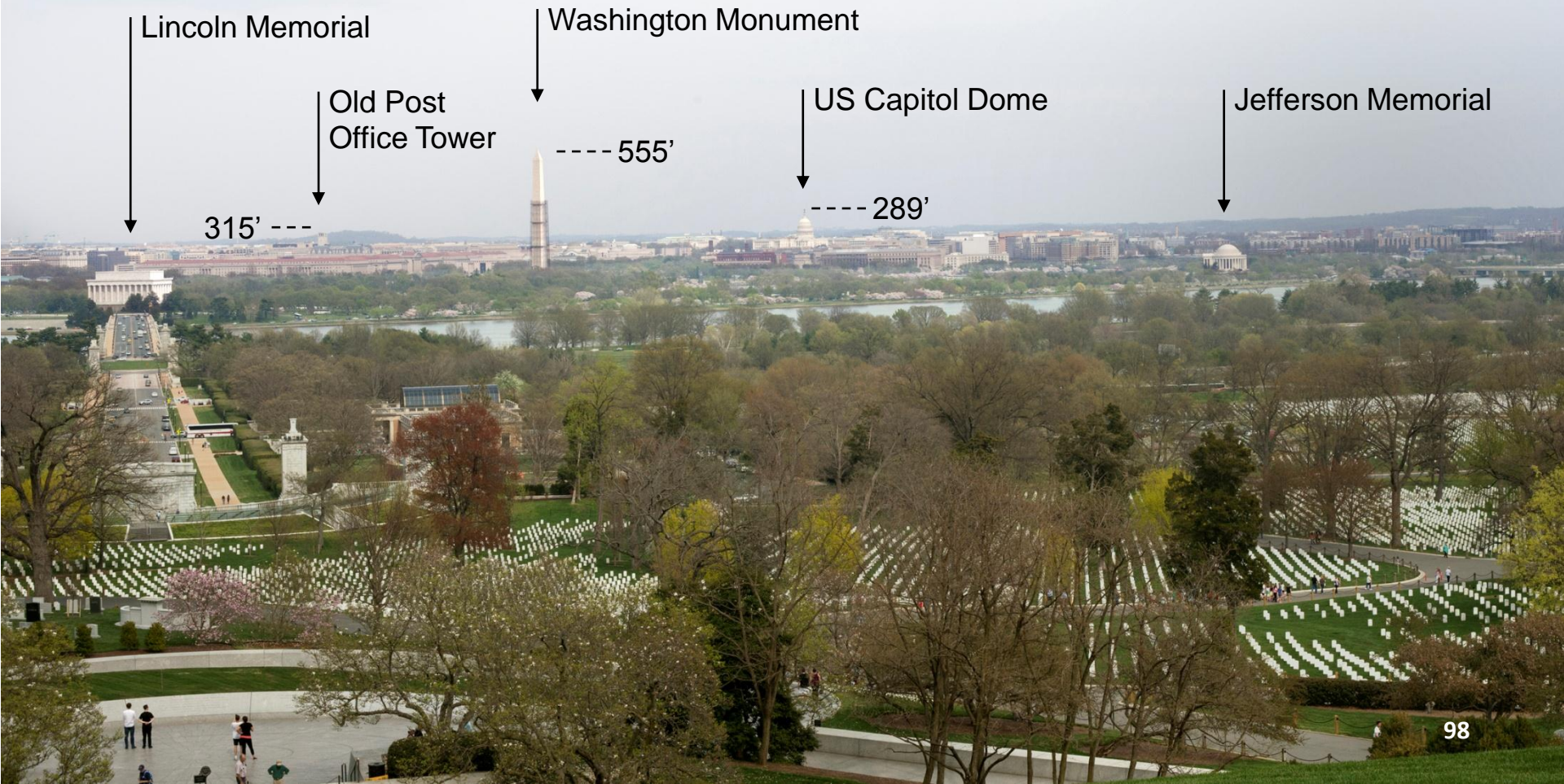
Approach 3B: Topographic Bowl

View from Arlington Cemetery



Approach 3B: Topographic Bowl

Arlington Cemetery: Existing Conditions



Approach 3B: Topographic Bowl

**Arlington Cemetery:
What if the building height outside L'Enfant City
but within the topographic bowl increased to
130'**



Approach 3B: Topographic Bowl

Arlington Cemetery:
What if the building height outside L'Enfant City
but within the topographic bowl increased to
160'



Approach 3B: Topographic Bowl

**Arlington Cemetery:
What if the building height outside L'Enfant City
but within the topographic bowl increased to
180'**



Approach 3B: Topographic Bowl

**Arlington Cemetery:
What if the building height outside L'Enfant City
but within the topographic bowl increased to
225'**



Approach 3B: Topographic Bowl

View from Maryland Avenue, NE



US Capitol Building

Washington Monument

Library
of Congress



**Maryland Avenue, NE:
Existing Conditions**



Maryland Avenue, NE:
What if the building height outside L'Enfant City
but within the topographic bowl increased to

130'



Maryland Avenue, NE:
What if the building height outside L'Enfant City
but within the topographic bowl increased to

160'



Maryland Avenue, NE:
What if the building height outside L'Enfant City
but within the topographic bowl increased to
180'



Maryland Avenue, NE:
What if the building height outside L'Enfant City
but within the topographic bowl increased to

225'

Approach 3B: Topographic Bowl

View from Pennsylvania Avenue, SE



Approach 3B: Topographic Bowl

Pennsylvania Avenue, SE: Existing Conditions



U.S. Capitol Building

Approach 3B: Topographic Bowl

**Pennsylvania Avenue, SE:
What if the building height outside L'Enfant City
but within the topographic bowl increased to
130'**



Approach 3B: Topographic Bowl

Pennsylvania Avenue, SE:
What if the building height outside L'Enfant City
but within the topographic bowl increased to
160'



Approach 3B: Topographic Bowl

Pennsylvania Avenue, SE:
What if the building height outside L'Enfant City
but within the topographic bowl increased to
180'



Approach 3B: Topographic Bowl

**Pennsylvania Avenue, SE:
What if the building height outside L'Enfant City
but within the topographic bowl increased to
225'**



Approach 3:

Raise the Height Cap in Selected Areas

3A: L'Enfant City

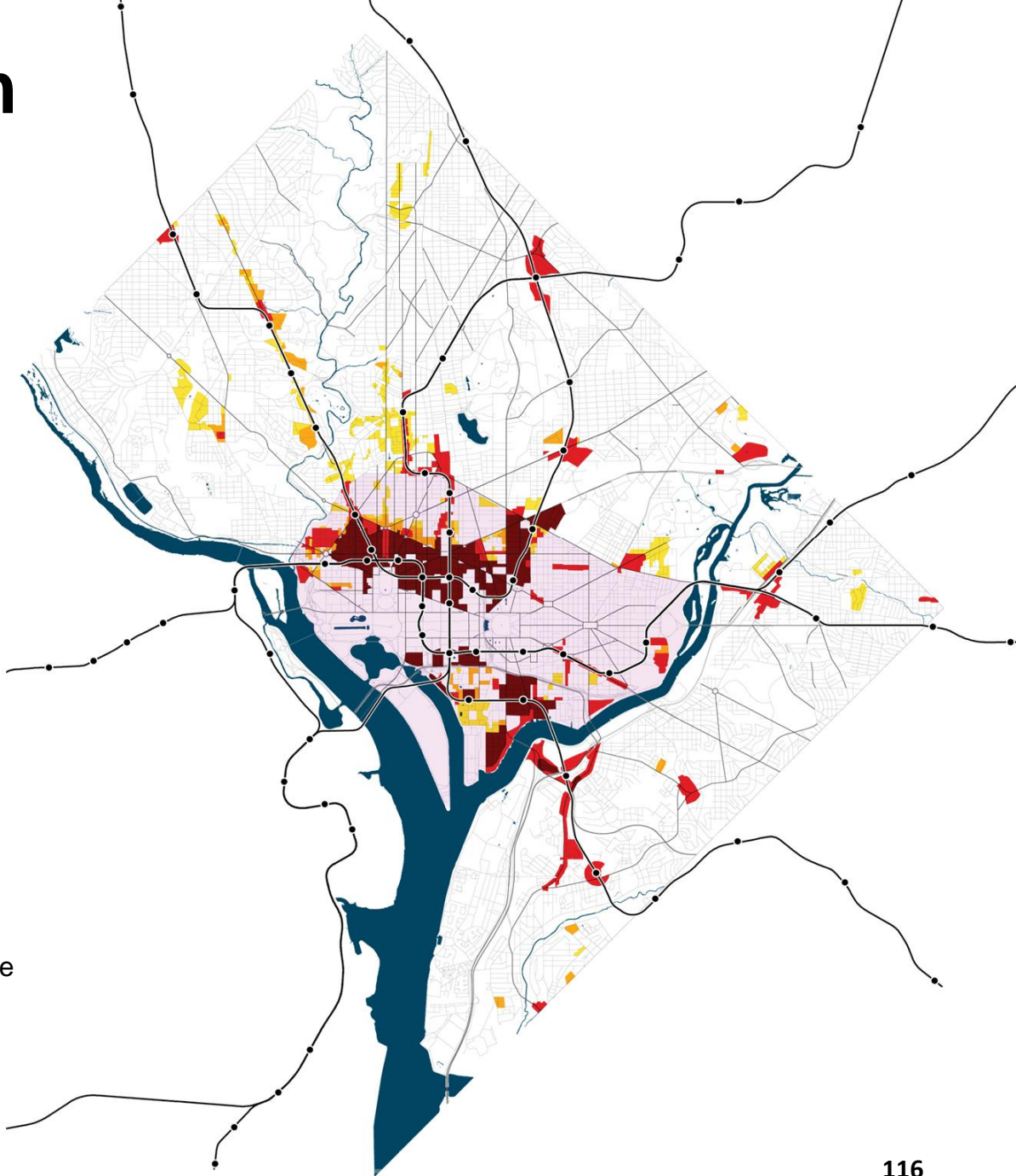
3B: Outside L'Enfant City – but within Topographic Bowl

3C: Illustrative Clusters

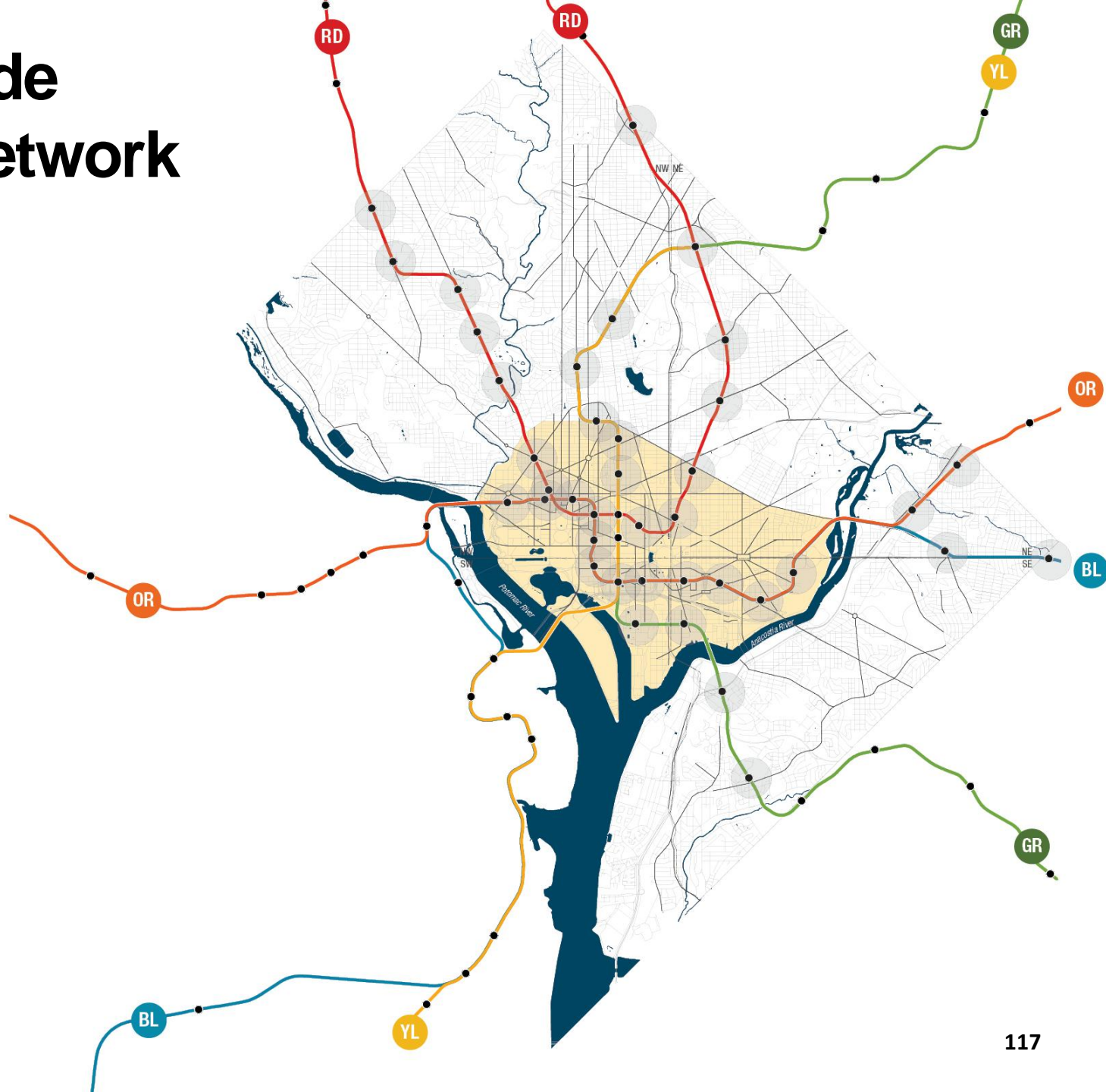
High and Medium Density Areas

Land use information is based on the District of Columbia Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use Designations

- High Density Commercial
- Medium Density Commercial and Mixed Use
- High Density Residential
- Medium Density Residential
- L'Enfant City Boundary



A City Wide Transit Network



1/4 mile pedestrian shed

Adjacent Cores

Building heights for adjacent cores are based on the following regulatory documents:

Rosslyn, VA
Height Plan and Sculpting Guidelines

Crystal City, VA
Crystal City Sector Plan

Friendship Village, MD
Montgomery County Land Use, Zoning and Urban Design Plan

Bethesda, MD
Bethesda CBD Land Use and Zoning Plan

Silver Spring, MD
Silver Spring Central Business District Sector Plan

Building Height Limits



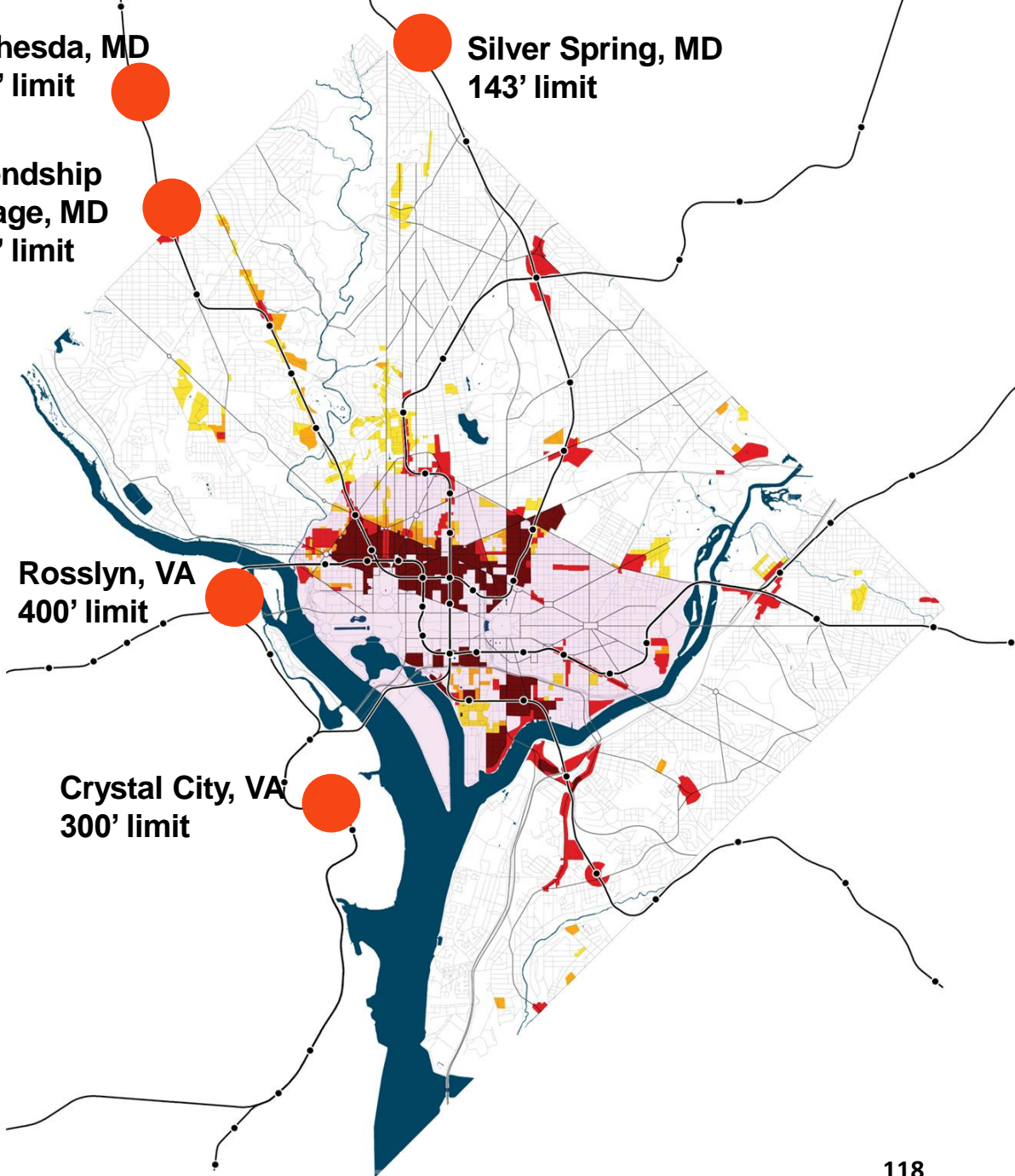
Bethesda, MD
200' limit

Friendship Village, MD
120' limit

Silver Spring, MD
143' limit

Rosslyn, VA
400' limit

Crystal City, VA
300' limit



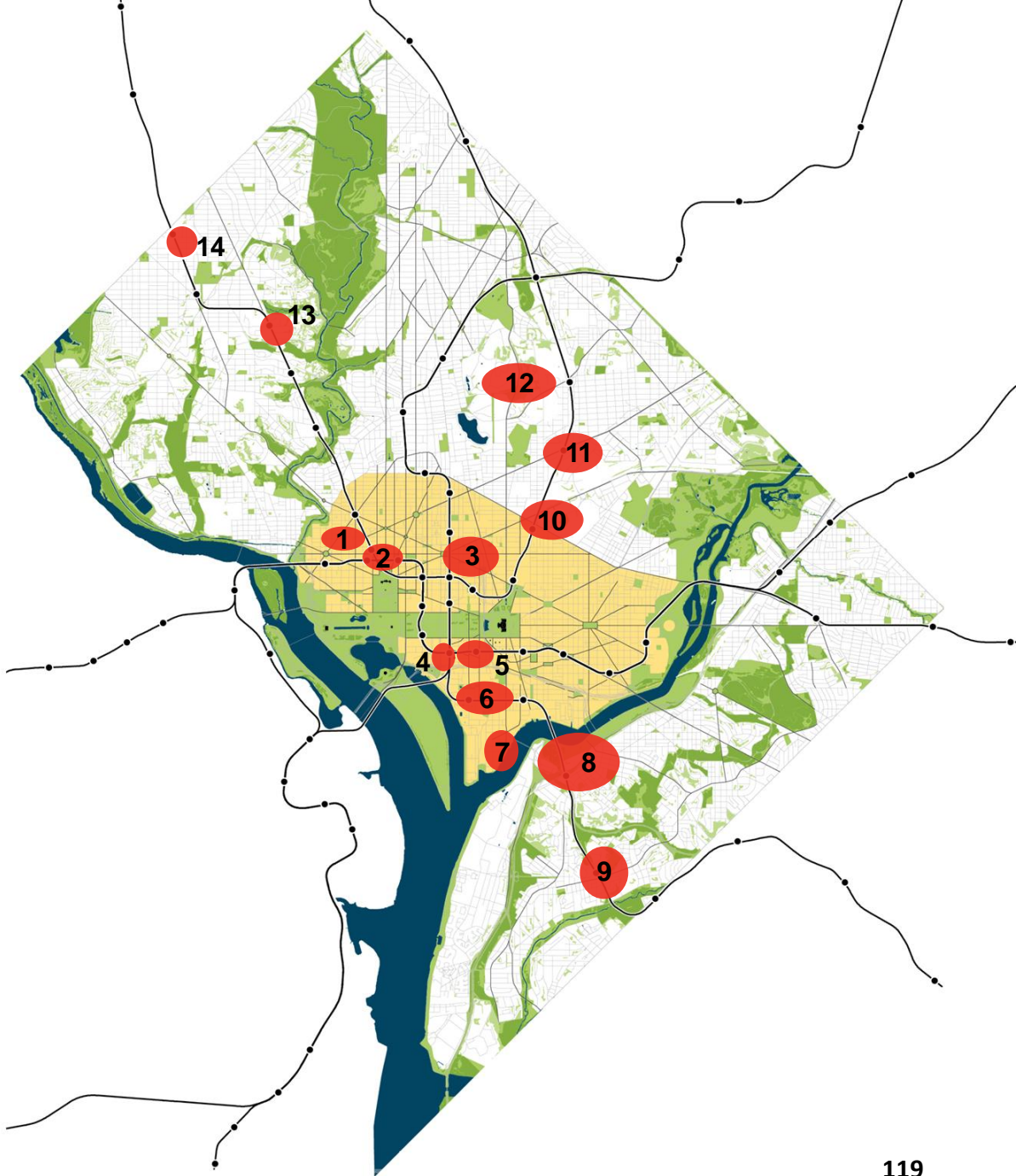
Raise Height Cap in Selected Areas

- **High and medium density**
- **Transit based**
- **Development potential**

Illustrative Areas

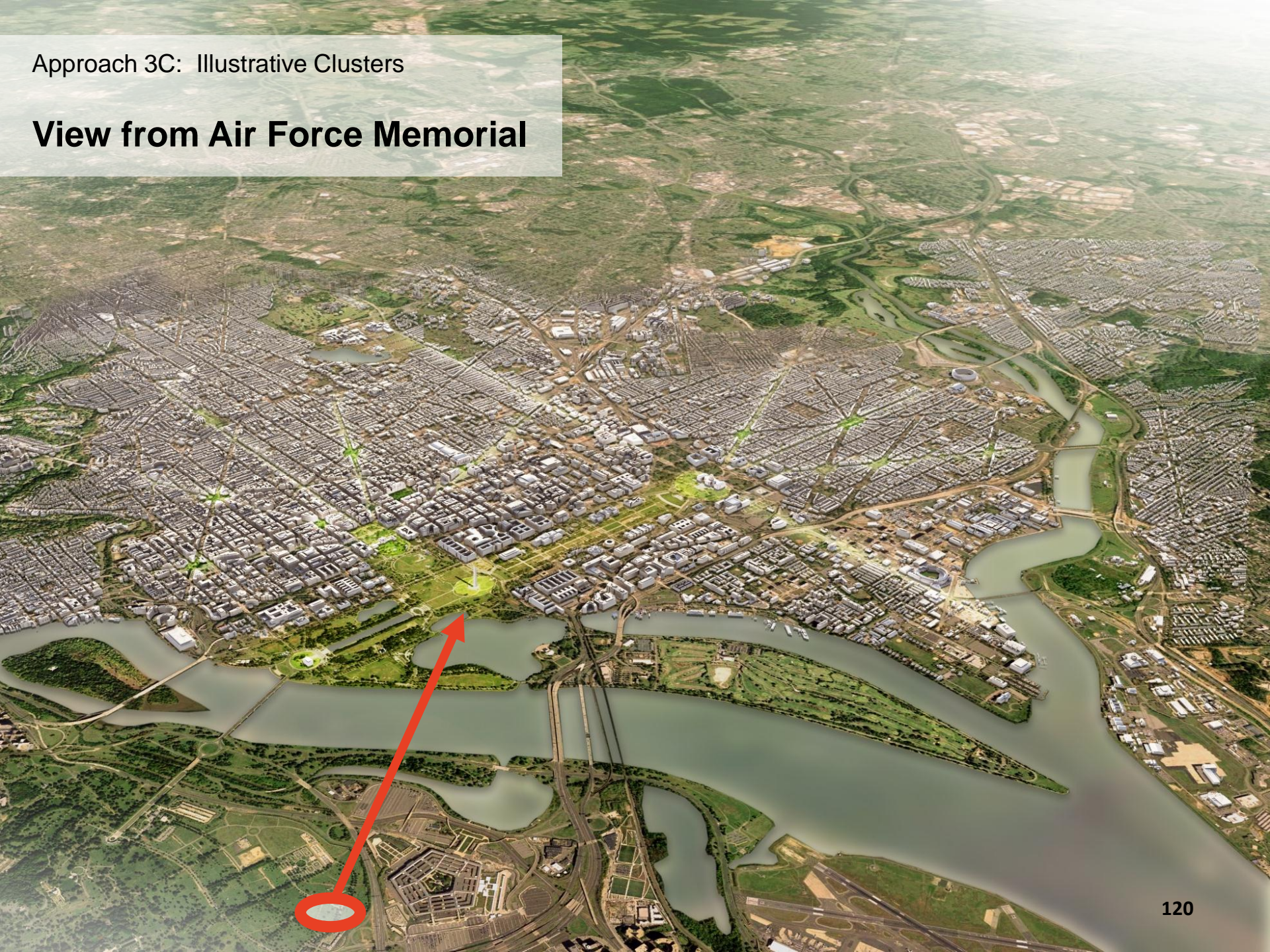


1. M Street and 22nd Street, NW
2. Farragut
3. K Street and 5th Street, NW
4. L'Enfant Plaza
5. Federal Center, SW
6. Waterfront Station
7. Buzzard Point
8. Poplar Point (2 Sites)
9. Congress Heights
10. Florida Avenue Market
11. Rhode Island Avenue, NE
12. Old Soldier's Home
13. Intelstat
14. Friendship Heights



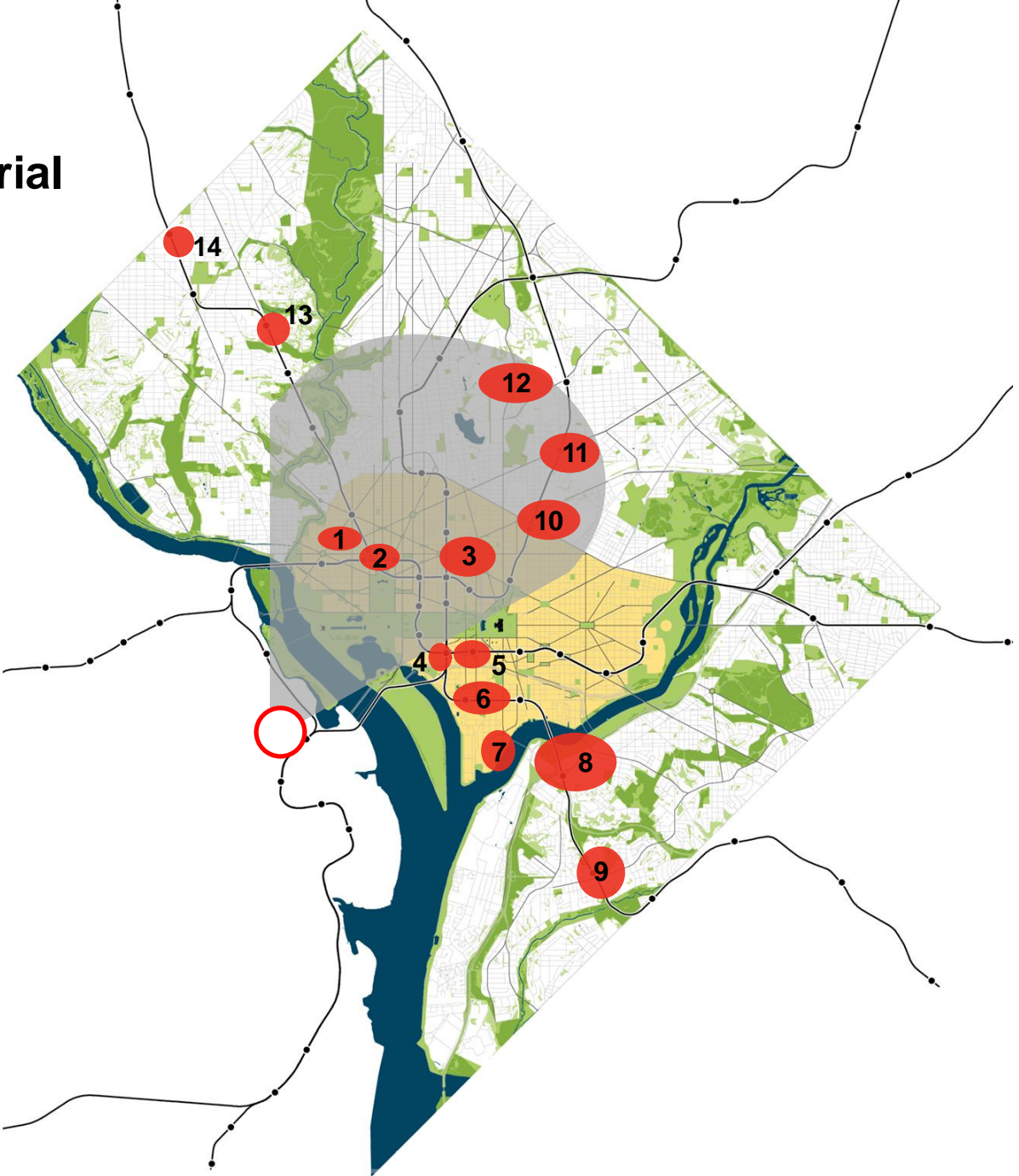
Approach 3C: Illustrative Clusters

View from Air Force Memorial



View from Air Force Memorial

- Illustrative Areas** ●
- 1. M Street and 22nd Street, NW
 - 2. Farragut
 - 3. K Street and 5th Street, NW
 - 4. L'Enfant Plaza
 - 5. Federal Center, SW
 - 6. Waterfront Station
 - 7. Buzzard Point
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 - 14. Friendship Heights



Air Force Memorial: Existing Conditions

Photograph taken 500' above grade



Lincoln Memorial

Basilica of the
National Shrine

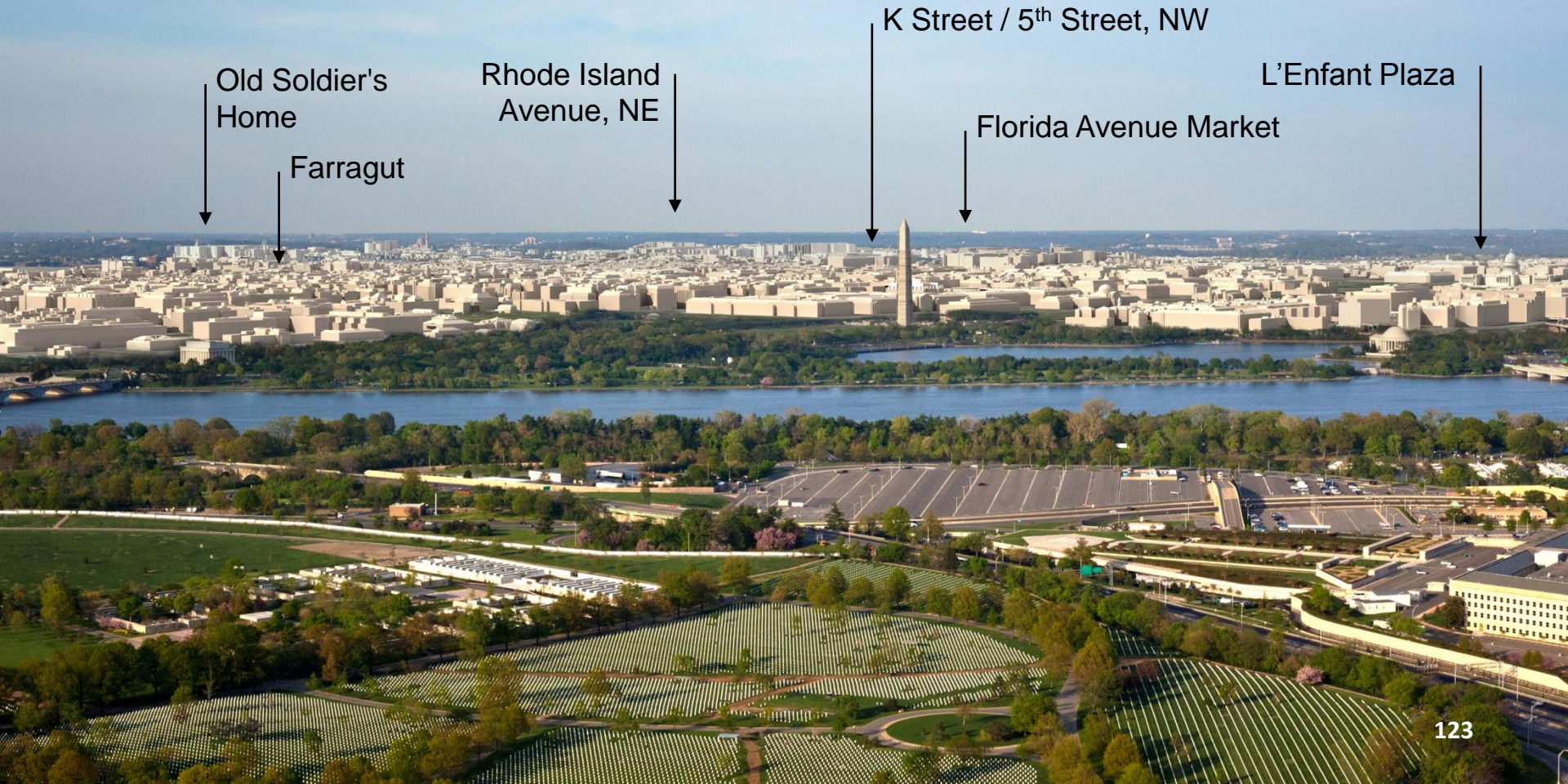
Washington Monument

U.S. Capitol Building

Approach 3C: Illustrative Clusters

**Air Force Memorial:
What if the building height
in the clusters increased to**

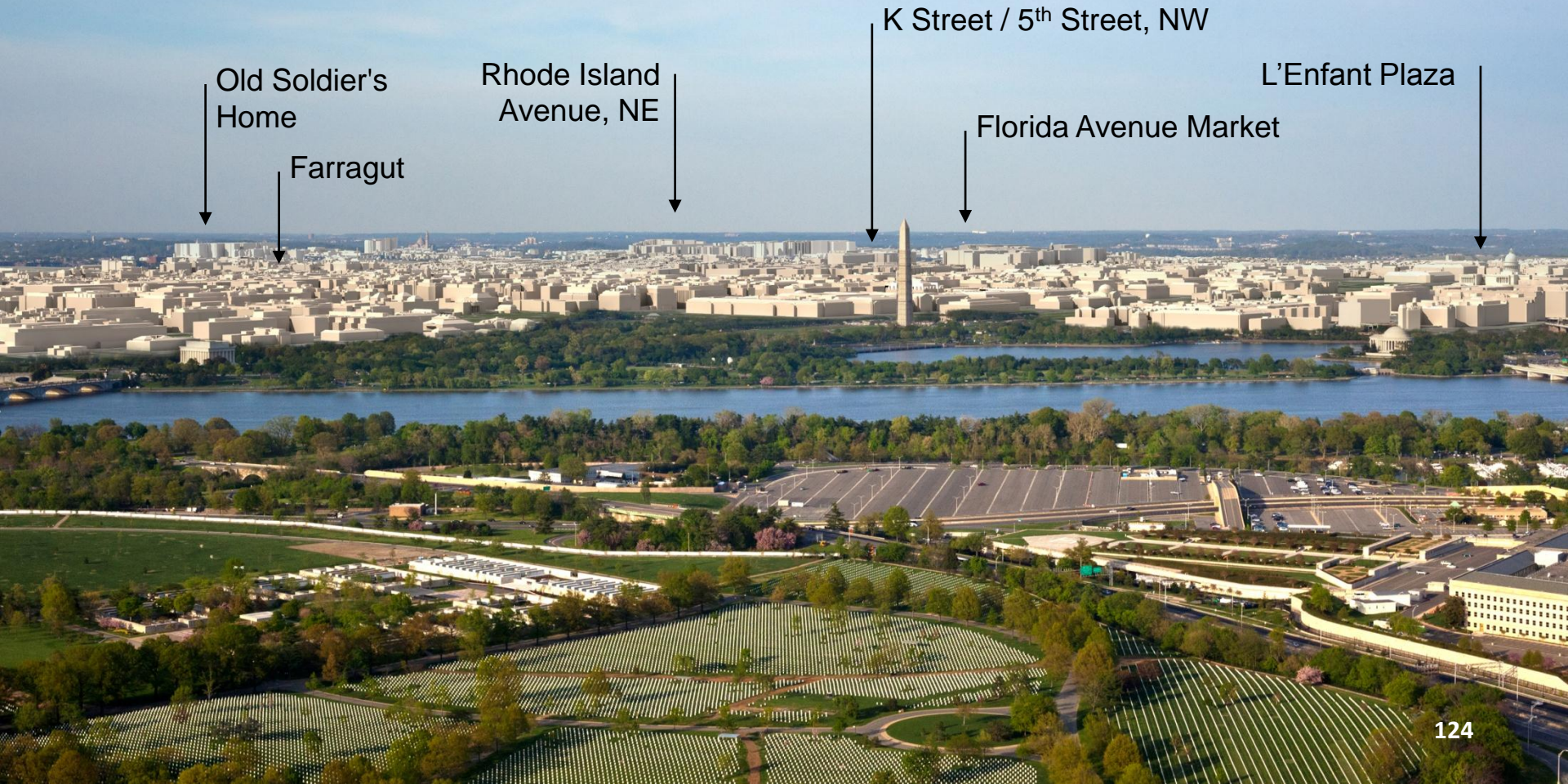
130'



Approach 3C: Illustrative Clusters

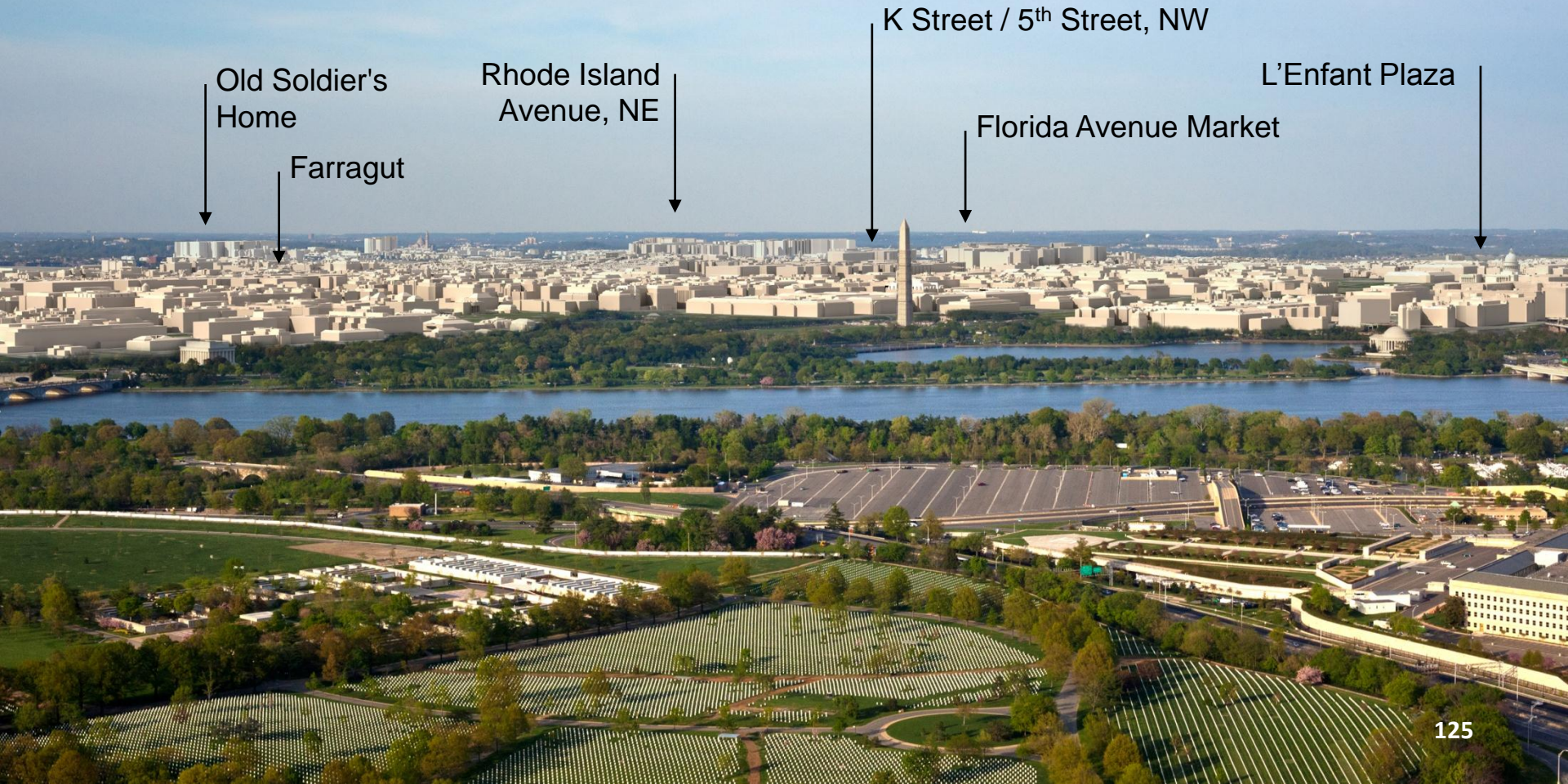
**Air Force Memorial:
What if the building height
in the clusters increased to**

160'



Approach 3C: Illustrative Clusters

Air Force Memorial What if the building height in the clusters increased to **180'**



Approach 3C: Illustrative Clusters

Air Force Memorial
What if the building height
in the clusters increased to
200' / 225'

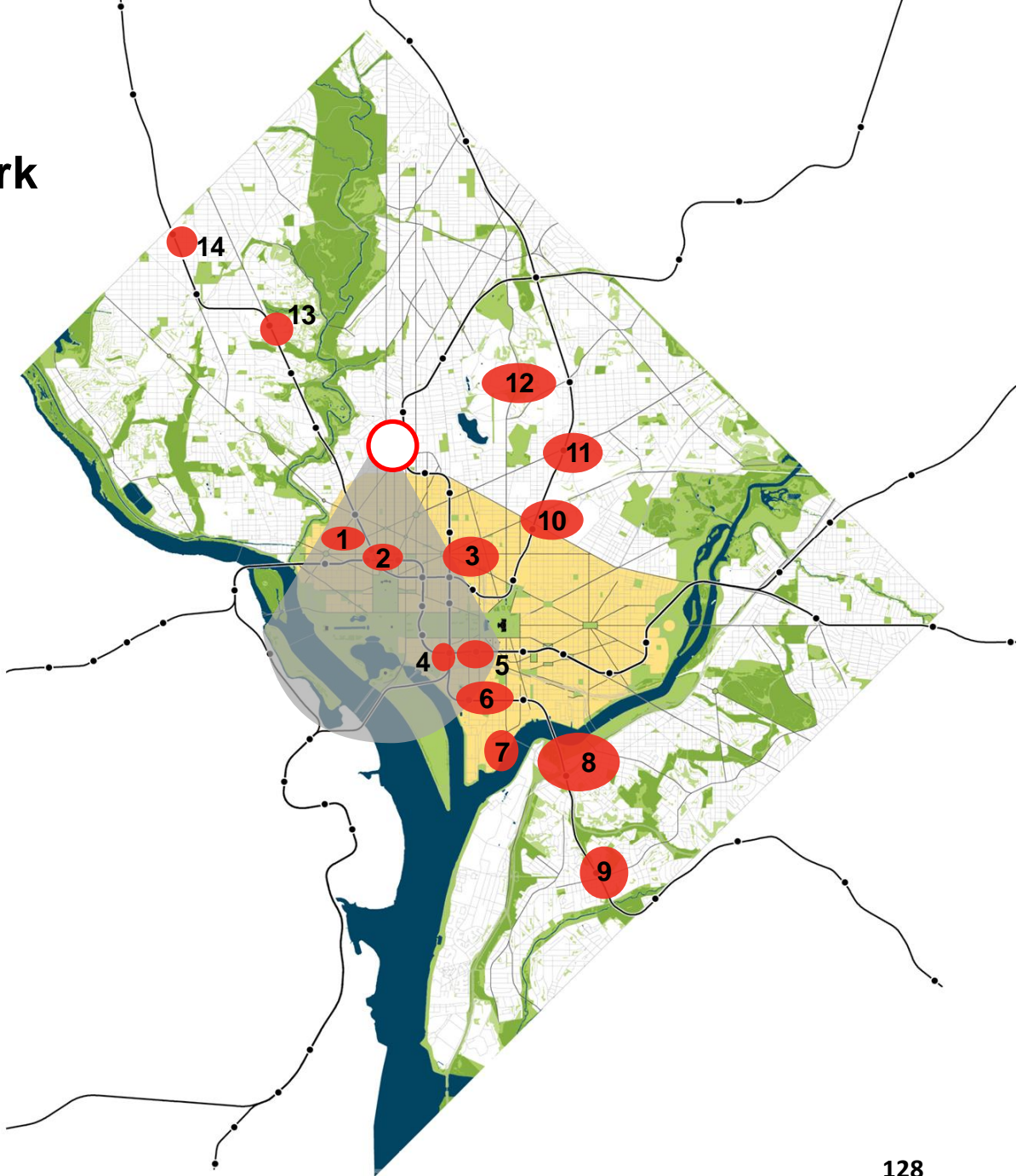


View from Meridian Hill Park



View from Meridian Hill Park

- Illustrative Areas** ●
- 1. M Street and 22nd Street, NW
 - 2. Farragut
 - 3. K Street and 5th Street, NW
 - 4. L'Enfant Plaza
 - 5. Federal Center, SW
 - 6. Waterfront Station
 - 7. Buzzard Point
 - 8. Poplar Point (2 Sites)
 - 9. Congress Heights
 - 10. Florida Avenue Market
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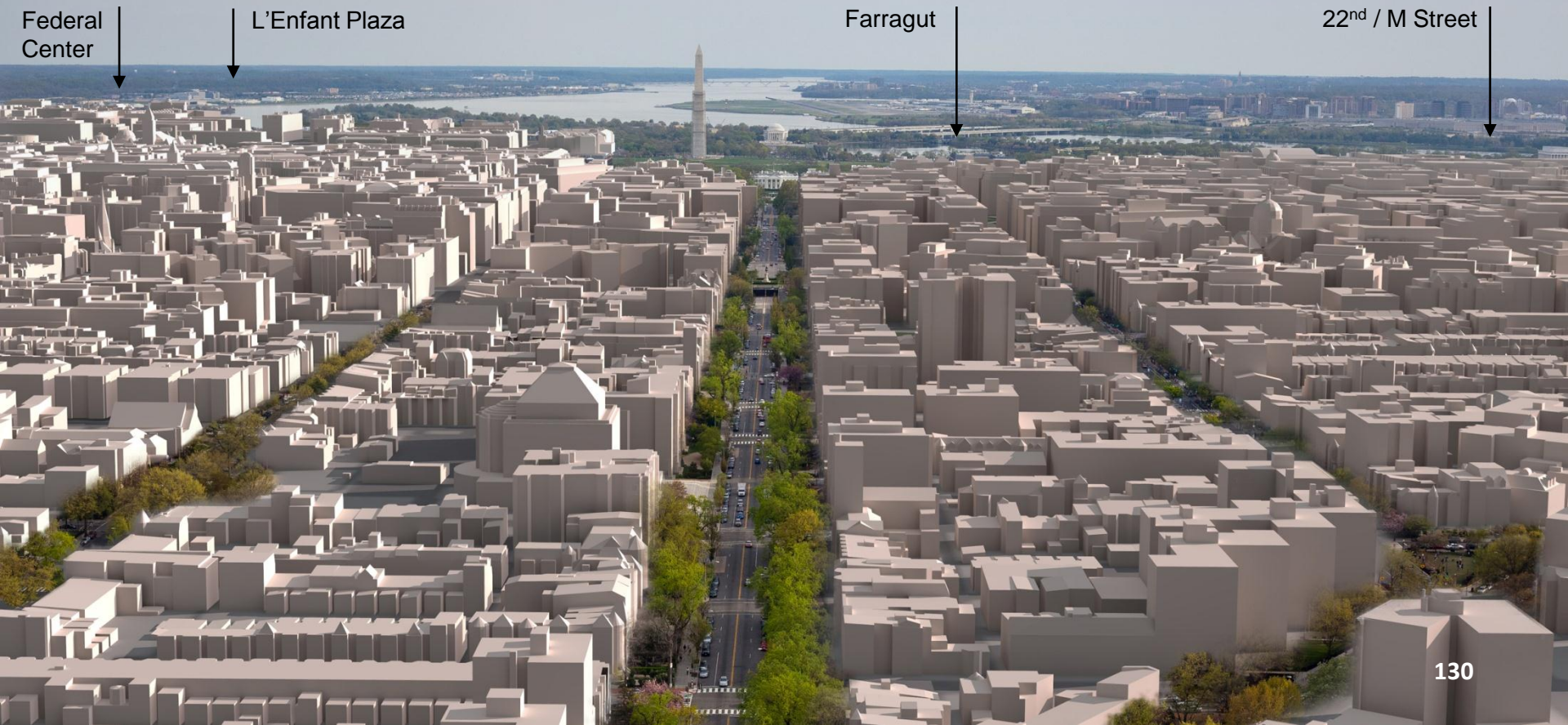
Meridian Hill Park: Existing Conditions



Approach 3C: Illustrative Clusters

**Meridian Hill Park:
What if the building height
in the clusters increased to**

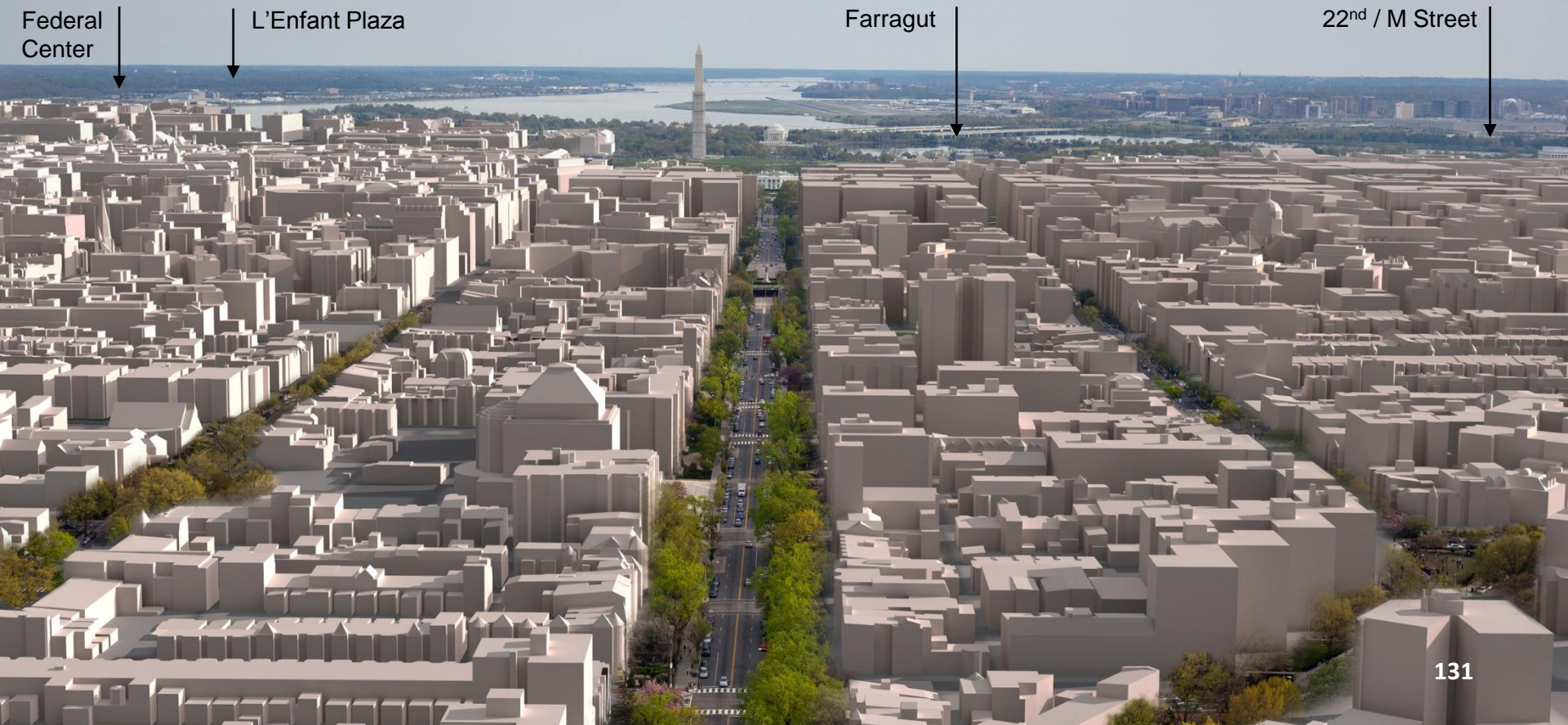
130'



Approach 3C: Illustrative Clusters

**Meridian Hill Park:
What if the building height
in the clusters increased to**

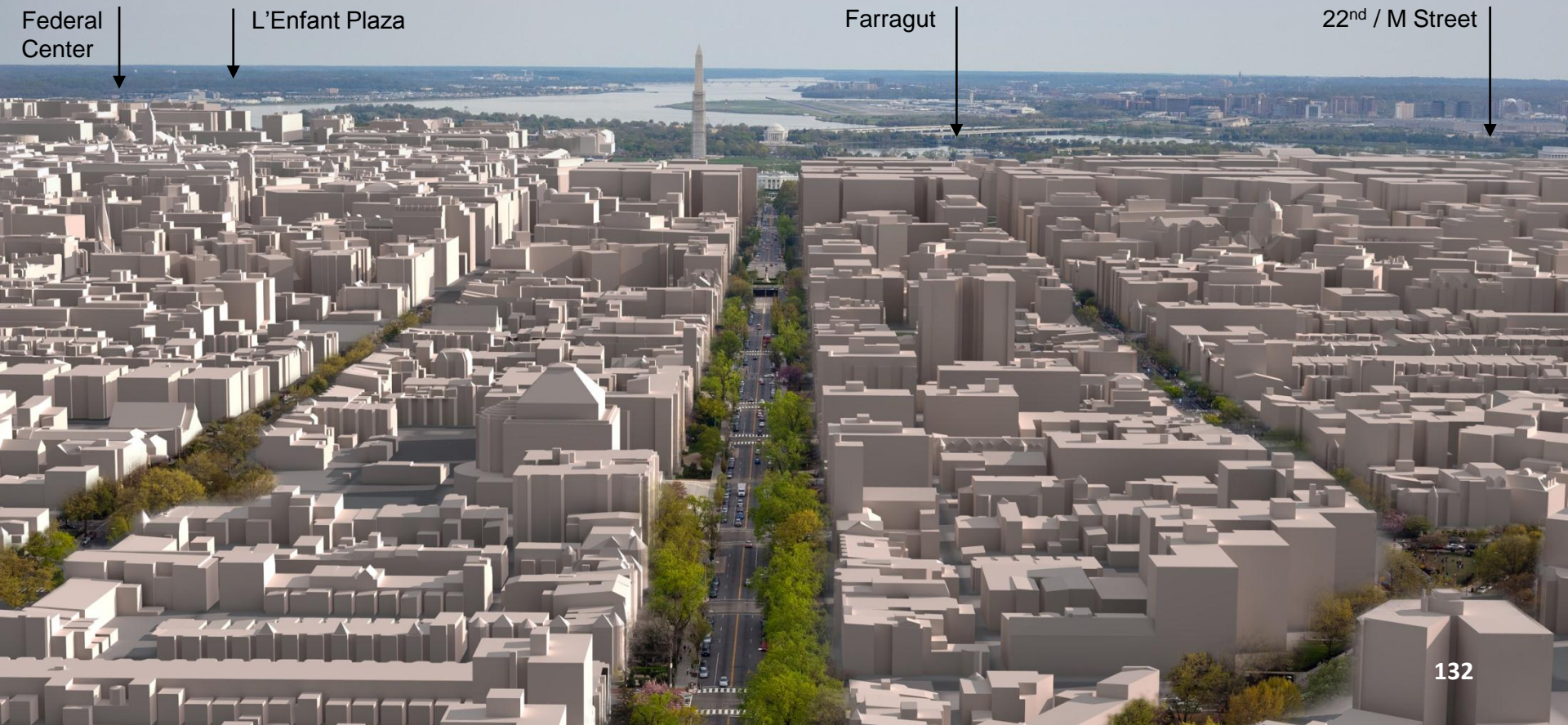
160'



Approach 3C: Illustrative Clusters

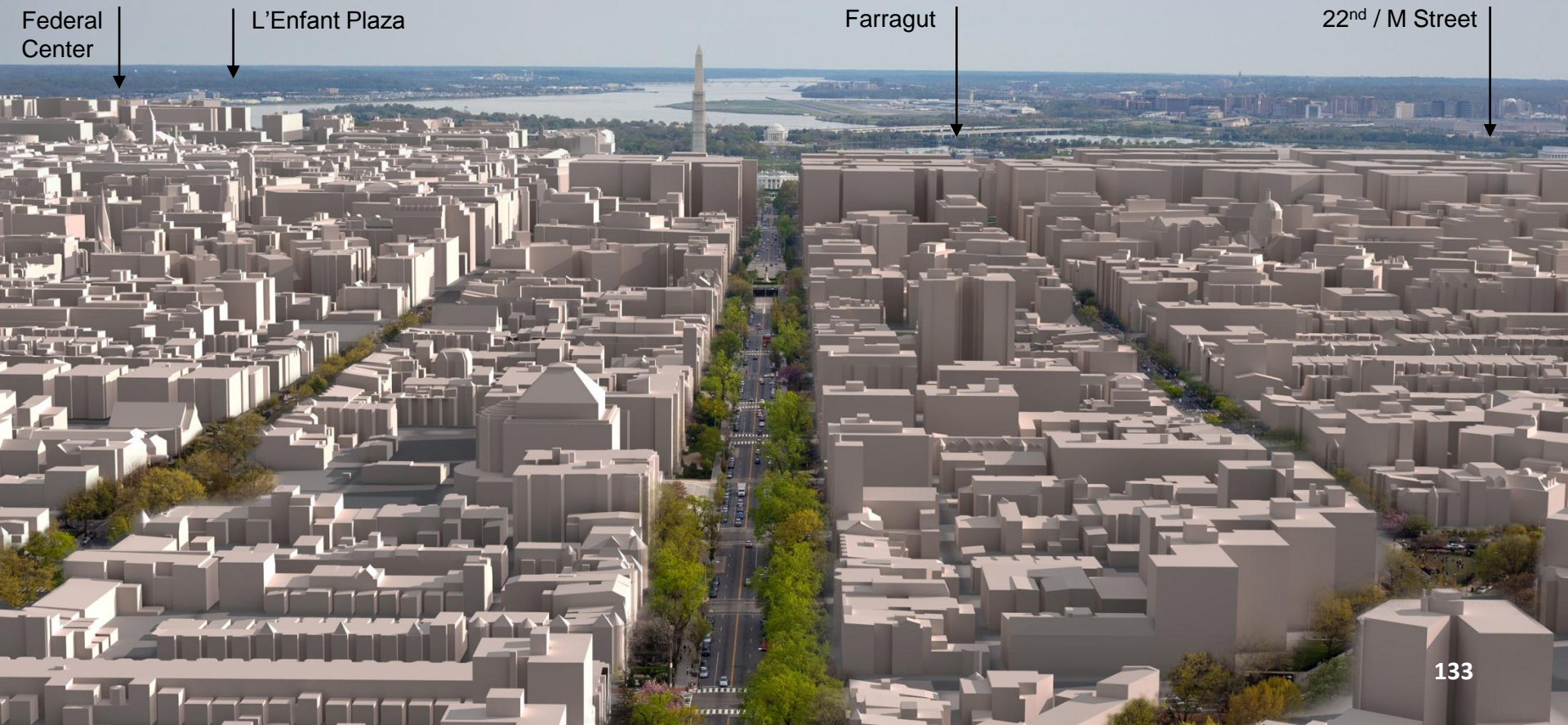
**Meridian Hill Park:
What if the building height
in the clusters increased to**

180'



Approach 3C: Illustrative Clusters

Meridian Hill Park: What if the building height in the clusters increased to **200'**



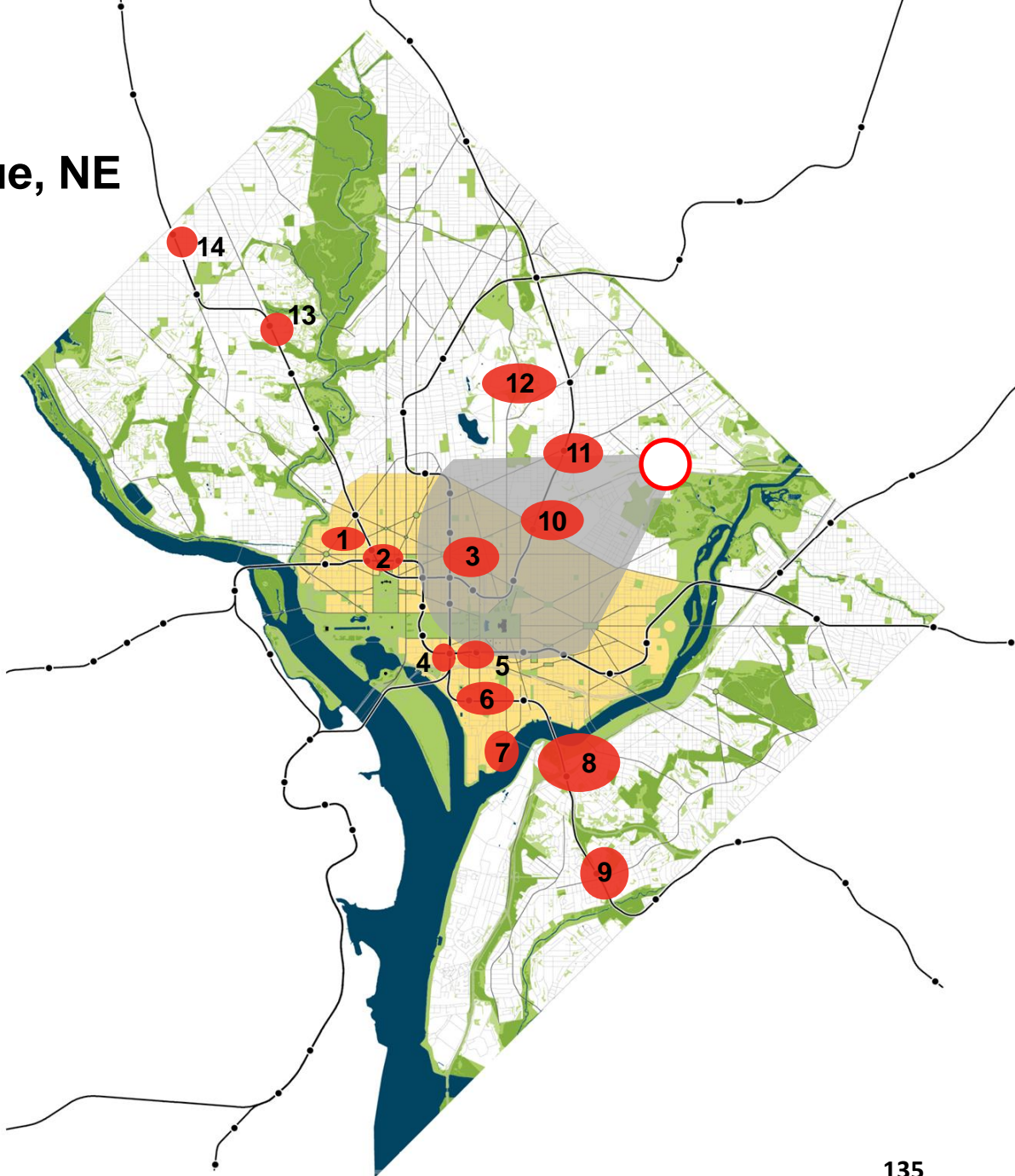
Approach 3C: Illustrative Clusters

View from New York Avenue, NE



View from New York Avenue, NE

- Illustrative Areas** ●
- 1. M Street and 22nd Street, NW
 - 2. Farragut
 - 3. K Street and 5th Street, NW
 - 4. L'Enfant Plaza
 - 5. Federal Center, SW
 - 6. Waterfront Station
 - 7. Buzzard Point
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 - 9. Congress Heights
 - 10. Florida Avenue Market
 - 11. Rhode Island Avenue, NE
 - 12. Old Soldier's Home
 - 13. Intelstat
 - 14. Friendship Heights



New York Avenue, NE Existing Conditions

U.S. Capitol Building



Washington Monument



Approach 3C: Illustrative Clusters

New York Avenue, NE
What if the building height
in the clusters increased to
130'

Florida Avenue Market

Rhode Island Avenue, NE



Approach 3C: Illustrative Clusters

New York Avenue, NE
What if the building height
in the clusters increased to
160'

Florida Avenue Market

Rhode Island Avenue, NE



Approach 3C: Illustrative Clusters

New York Avenue, NE
What if the building height
in the clusters increased to
180'



Approach 3C: Illustrative Clusters

New York Avenue, NE
What if the building height
in the clusters increased to
200' / 225'



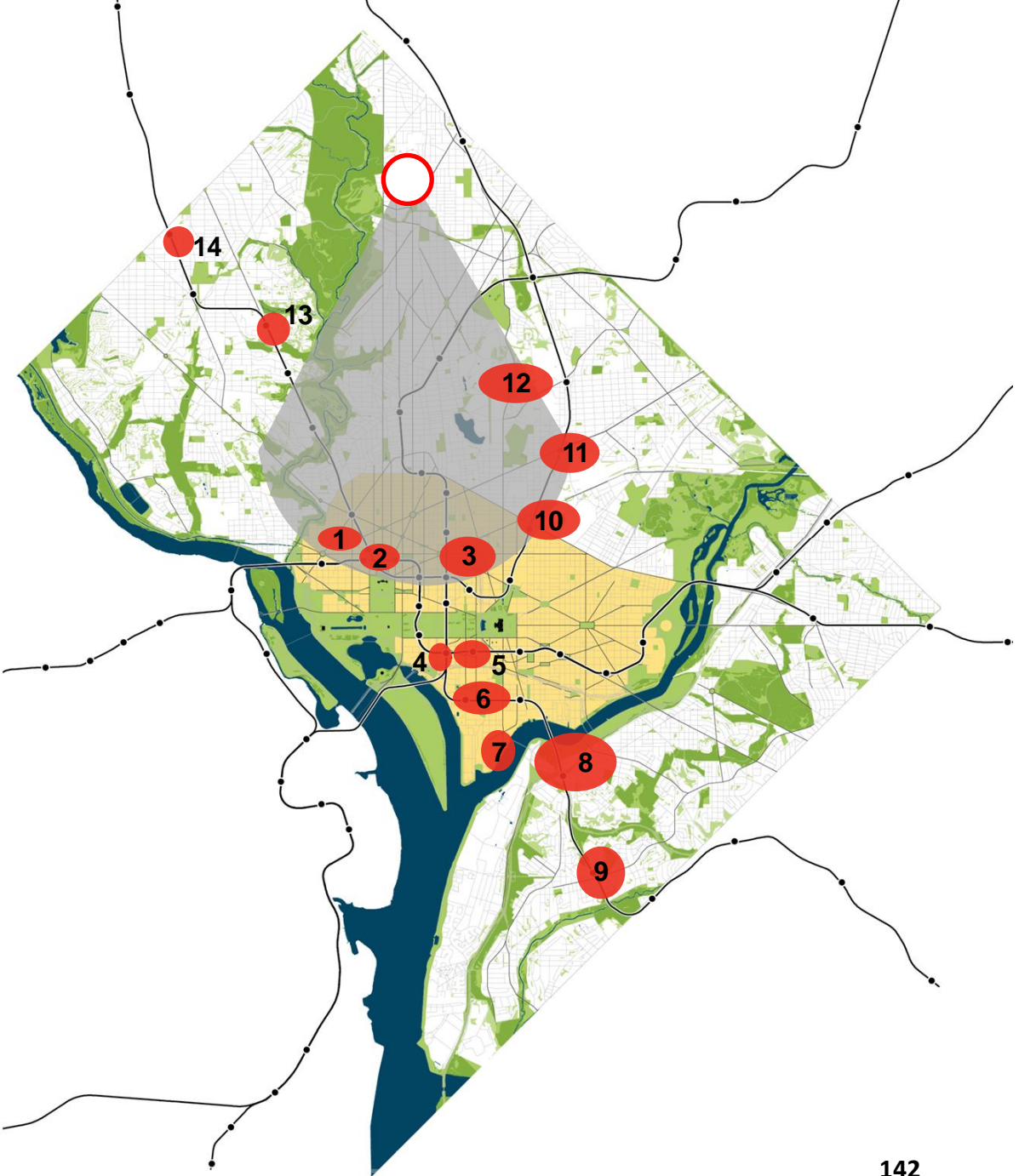
Approach 3C: Illustrative Clusters

View from Walter Reed



View from Walter Reed

- Illustrative Areas** ●
- 1. M Street and 22nd Street, NW
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 - 3. K Street and 5th Street, NW
 - 4. L'Enfant Plaza
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 - 6. Waterfront Station
 - 7. Buzzard Point
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 - 11. Rhode Island Avenue, NE
 - 12. Old Soldier's Home
 - 13. Intelstat
 - 14. Friendship Heights



Walter Reed Existing Conditions

U.S. Capitol Building



Washington Monument



16th Street



Walter Reed

What if the building height
in the clusters increased to

130'

Rhode Island Avenue, NE

Soldier's Home

Poplar Point



Walter Reed

What if the building height
in the clusters increased to

160'

Rhode Island Avenue, NE

Soldier's Home

Poplar Point



Walter Reed

What if the building height
in the clusters increased to

180'

Rhode Island Avenue, NE

Soldier's Home

Poplar Point



Walter Reed

What if the building height
in the clusters increased to

200' / 225'

Rhode Island Avenue, NE

Soldier's Home

Poplar Point



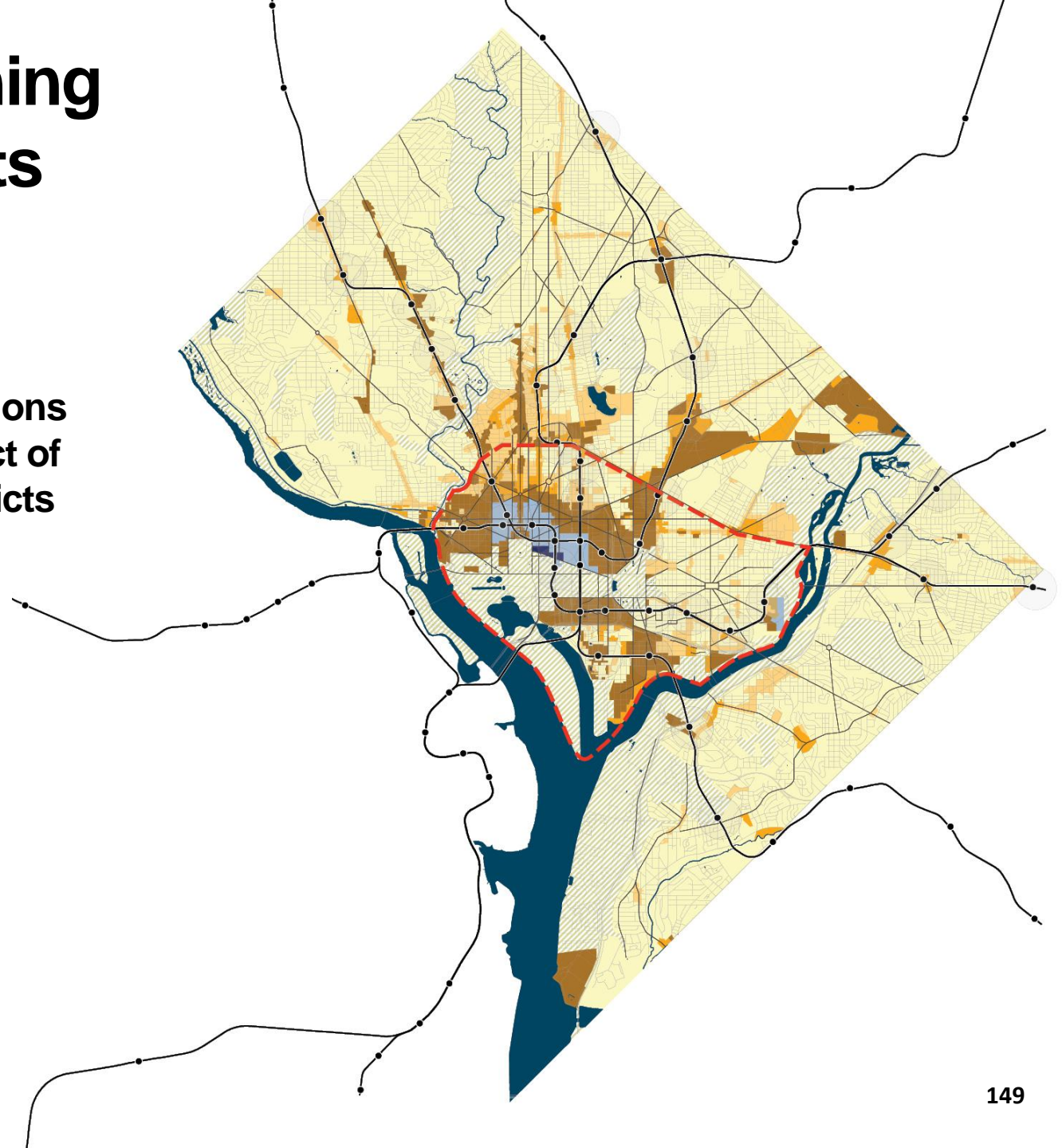
Approach 4: **Change Height Cap City Wide**

Raise Height Cap Uniformly

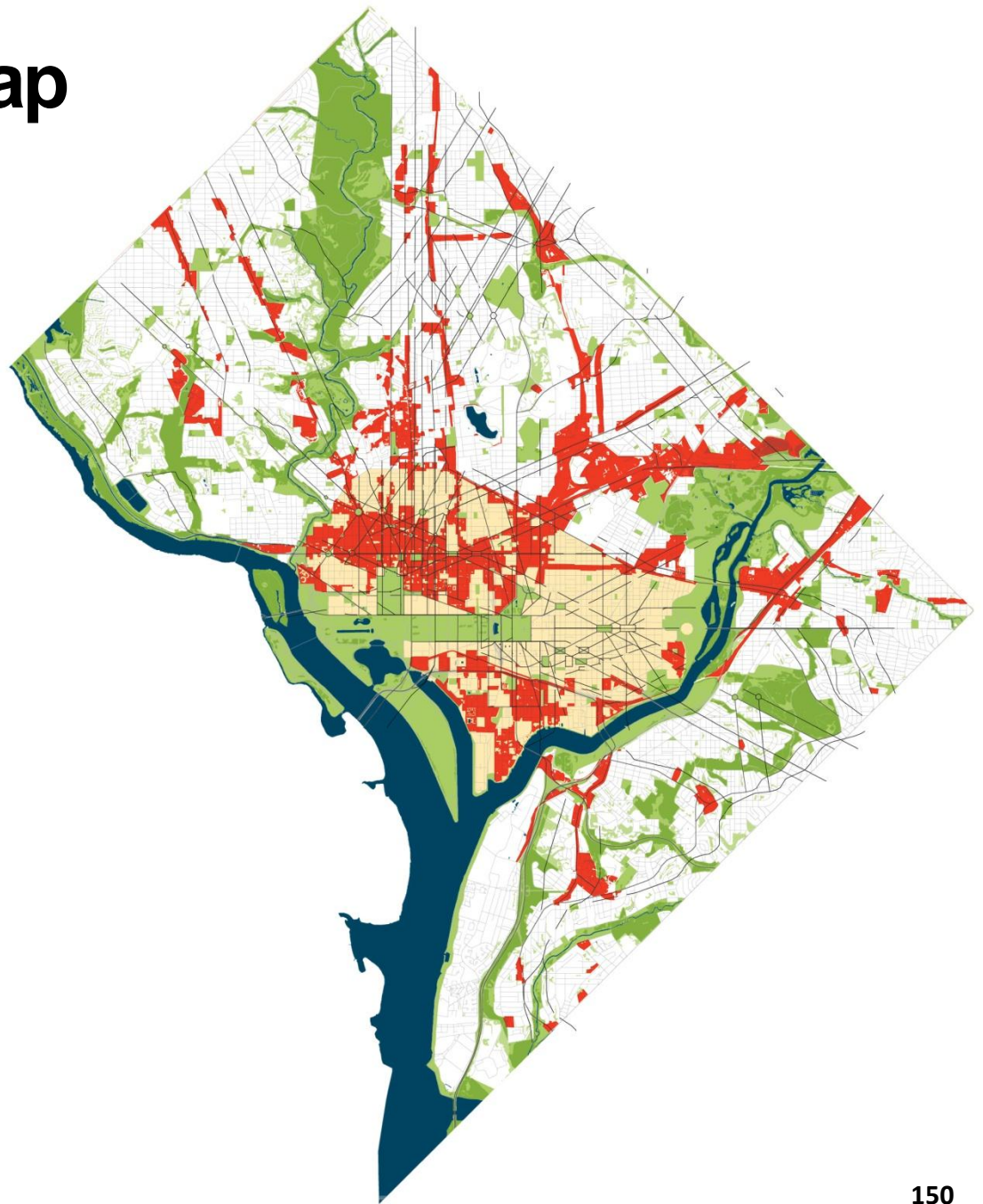
Current Zoning Height Limits


Building heights are based on the regulations outlined in the District of Columbia Zoning Districts

Building Height Limits



Change Height Cap City Wide



 Areas included
in the Height Study

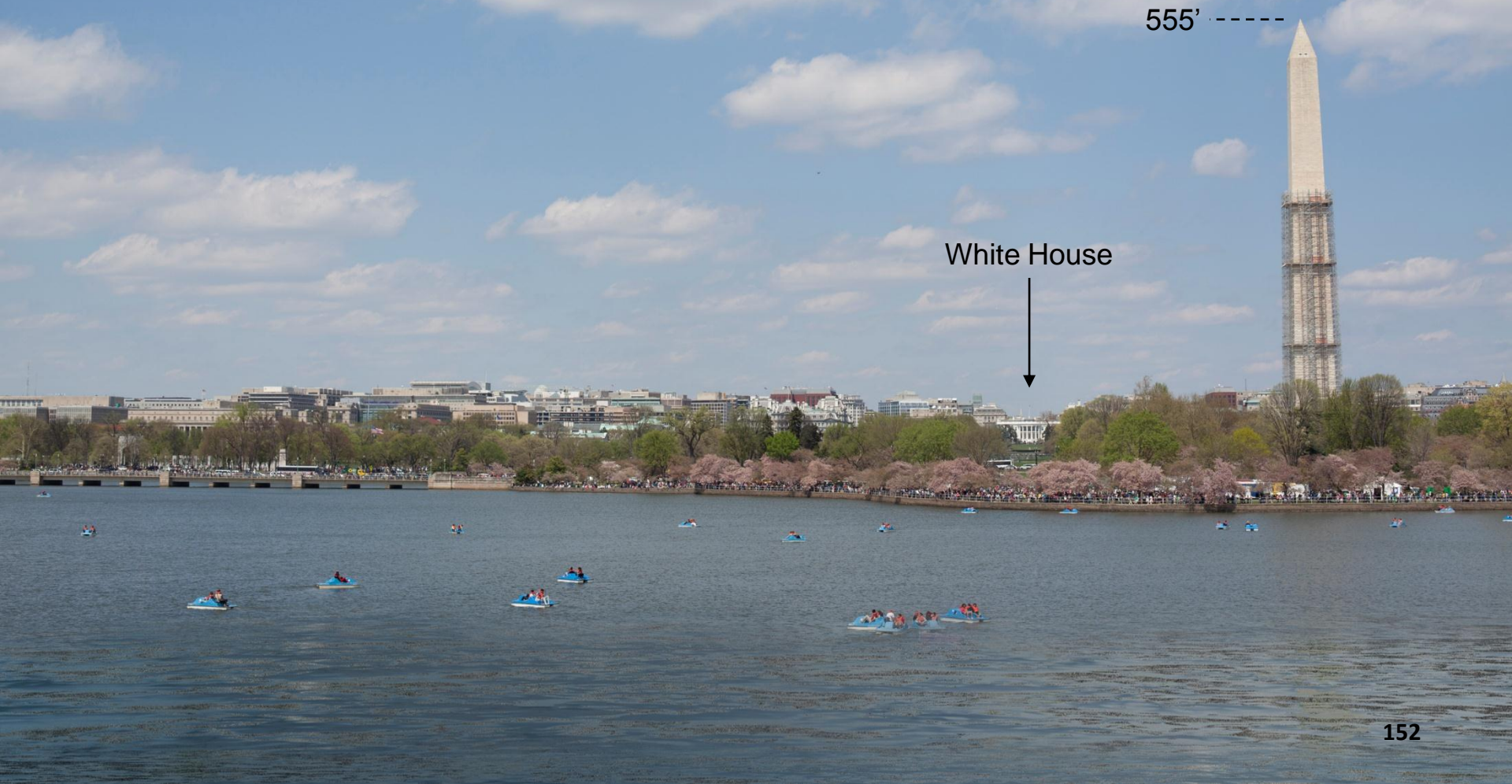
Approach 4: Uniform City Wide Height Cap

View from Jefferson Memorial



Approach 4: Uniform City Wide Height Cap

Jefferson Memorial: Existing Conditions



Approach 4: Uniform City Wide Height Cap

**Jefferson Memorial:
What if the building height
increased to**

130'



Approach 4: Uniform City Wide Height Cap

**Jefferson Memorial:
What if the building height
increased to**

160'



Approach 4: Uniform City Wide Height Cap

**Jefferson Memorial:
What if the building height
increased to**

180'



Approach 4: Uniform City Wide Height Cap

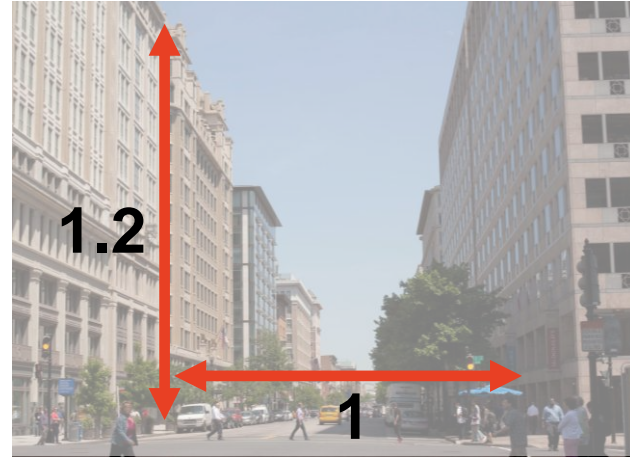
**Jefferson Memorial:
What if the building height
increased to
200'**



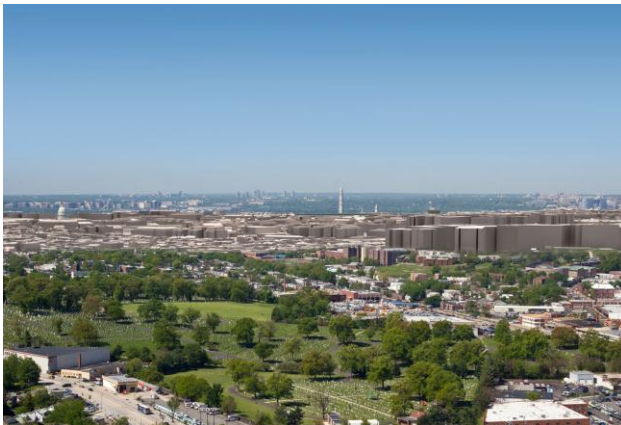
What we learned



**Approach 1:
No Change
to the Height Act**



**Approach 2:
Street to Height
Relationship**



**Approach 3:
Selective Areas**



**Approach 4:
City Wide Increase**

Goals of Managing Height

- Reinforce and strengthen the L'Enfant Planning principles
- Preserve significant views
- Maintain the light and airy quality of the city
- Support the existing commercial core
- Locate opportunities around transit
- Consider selective opportunities for taller buildings on the periphery



