

Preserving Washington's civic and ceremonial heart, while renewing its adjacent neighborhoods, waterfronts and commercial centers, is the goal of *Extending the Legacy*. It is a daunting challenge because Washington is still two cities, one federal and one local, divided by conflicting policies and priorities.

Much of the confusion stems from what President Clinton has called the "not quite factor." Washington, he explained, "is not quite a state, not quite a city, not quite independent, not quite dependent." It is instead subject to congressional oversight and control, including even the spending of its own tax revenue.

This is not a healthy situation for a great city, but neither is it an occasion for pointing fingers. It is a time for solutions.

THE PLAN AND THE DISTRICT

Jobs, transportation and housing are among Washington's most urgent social and economic problems. If *Legacy* is to be more than a technical exercise, it must help the city solve them. It must create an urban environment that delights residents and visitors, attracts investment and puts the District on an equal footing with the suburbs. It must be a source of optimism rather than another excuse for cynicism. None of these changes will occur quickly or painlessly, but if even a few of them happen, Washington could once again be a model national capital.

Suburban flight is a major source of the District's distress. Its population has dropped from 757,000 in 1970 to 543,000 in 1996, with smaller declines projected for the next decade as the middle class continues to depart for the suburbs of Maryland and Northern Virginia. Population gains of 50 percent per decade are common in these areas; they are creating jobs two to three times faster than the District, which has lost 39,000 government and service jobs since 1994 and absorbed the brunt of federal downsizing. Two-thirds of the District's workers now live outside its borders and therefore pay no local taxes. Approximately 50 percent of its land is owned by the U.S. and foreign governments and nonprofit institutions, which pay no taxes either.

Washington's neighborhoods are among its greatest strengths.



Revitalized neighborhoods will attract families back to the city.



Many American cities have seen their centers decline as the middle class retreats to the suburbs for better jobs, lower taxes and more dependable public services. Even as the suburbs spawn the problems for which they were supposedly the solution, the exodus continues, leaving many American downtowns to the poor and the politically disenfranchised.

What makes the District's situation unique is its double life as America's capital and a hometown. The Home Rule Act of 1973 gave it control of its prisons, courts, welfare and other services. While this made it more like other cities, it also nearly broke it. From 1991 to 1997 the District accumulated a \$520 million operating deficit, prompting Congress to appoint a Control Board to manage its finances. In July 1997, Congress transferred additional authority from the mayor to the board. Whether this governance change is merely temporary, like many others in the District's history, or the beginning of the end of Home Rule is unclear. Yet even if the District were the best-managed city in America, it could not flourish without new appropriations, new tax policies and a compelling vision of the future. *Legacy* provides that vision.

Unlike previous federal plans, which focused on the Mall and surrounding ceremonial enclaves, *Legacy* proposes using public money to generate private investment in neighborhoods, waterfronts and commercial districts. The redevelopment of South Capitol Street, one of the most blighted areas of Washington, combines federal, District and private funds to rebuild streets and parks, attract businesses and create jobs. The redevelopment of the Southeast Federal Center and Navy Yard alone could provide 6,200 construction jobs and a total of 15,000 permanent jobs in an area crippled by disinvestment.

Legacy also treats Washington as one city instead of a collection of discrete enclaves by proposing new attractions — civic, cultural, recreational — for all quadrants. It reinforces the District government's recommendation for an enhanced arts and entertainment district between 7TH and 9TH streets, NW. For East Capitol Street at the Anacostia River — another area in need of revitalization — the plan proposes a new environmental park containing wetlands, an aquarium and a regional education center focused on making the river part of Washington's daily life. The park would replace RFK Stadium and adjacent institutional buildings with gardens, fountains and waterfalls connected to playing fields, marinas and a riverside nature preserve. New housing and commercial development would complete the redevelopment of the area.

At the same time, *Legacy* provides a vision for Washington's expanded Monumental Core 50 to 100 years from now that combines strategic local initiatives with long-range capital improvements. Just as Frederick Law Olmsted's Central Park transformed Manhattan, and Daniel Burnham's sweeping public lakefront made Chicago the jewel of the Midwest, so *Legacy* proposes removing freeways and railroad tracks to reknit central Washington and frame it with 22 miles of public waterfront. This mixture of big and little, grand and ordinary is central to L'Enfant's plan and critical to a prosperous 21st-century capital.

THE PLAN AND THE REGION

Renewing Washington is impossible without a recognition that the District and its suburbs are one, a kind of city-state with resources greater than the sum of its parts. As the National Capital Chapter of the American Planning Association noted in reviewing a draft of *Legacy*, "Washington will not survive unless its region, with its incomparable intellectual, managerial and financial resources, can be made one with the city and the federal establishment."

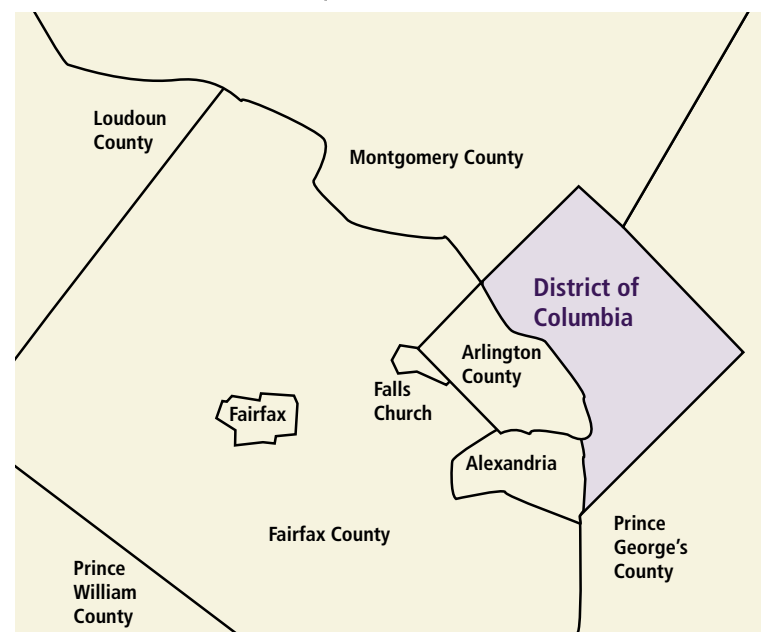
The District depends on the suburbs for two-thirds of its workers and some of its most popular tourist attractions, including Mount Vernon and the Civil War battlefields. Conversely, every dollar spent in the District generates \$1.50 in the suburbs, where two-thirds of the retail spending by tourists occurs. Federal contracts are a major part of the suburban economy. Even a modest improvement in the District's economy would produce a windfall for the suburbs, whereas the District's continued economic decline can only damage the region's prosperity.

This critical synergy is rarely acknowledged or nurtured. With no regional growth plan and no coordinated policies for land use and job creation, the suburbs continue to battle over who can siphon the most jobs, investment and tourists from the District. (Some counties have already zoned themselves to accommodate 75 years of commercial growth.) Whether it's developing a history theme park, a regional mall or a sports stadium, each suburban community invariably — and sometimes understandably — put its interests ahead of the region's. Their residents identify more with their local communities than with Washington, which, to them, appears to be just one more big city with big problems.

Washington offers a broad range of urban housing.



District and regional economies are intertwined.



Legacy's transportation proposals offer solutions to suburban gridlock.



Yet these intense rivalries also conceal mutual needs. In the simplest terms, the District needs at least 100,000 new jobs, while the suburbs need relief from the sprawl and congestion that are threatening mobility, security and the environment. The regional transportation proposal outlined in *Legacy* not only addresses congestion and pollution problems, but it also provides the basis for rational land-use policies that will prevent their recurrence.

If the future belongs to cities where people can move around quickly and inexpensively, metropolitan Washington is stuck in reverse. It is currently the second most congested urban area in America, right behind Los Angeles, and first in per capita cost of wasted fuel and time, some \$820 a year. A projected 70 percent increase in traffic over the next 25 years will occur almost entirely in the suburbs, with barely a 20 percent increase in highway capacity. Left uncorrected, this trend will plunge the Washington region even deeper into gridlock.

Legacy calls for extending rail service to Dulles and Baltimore-Washington International airports. The trains will carry more people into the city without increasing traffic congestion. As more commuters leave their cars at home, air quality will improve, and Washington will at last comply with federal clean air standards.

The new rail lines will likely spark development along their rights-of-way, particularly around new regional transit centers. Located along I-95, the Beltway and other key arteries, these centers will permit thousands of commuters to transfer quickly from cars to trains and buses and back again. Bikers and joggers may also find them convenient. Places of transfer usually become places of commerce. Like the rail corridors, transit centers will attract businesses and developers, who could make them the new main streets and town squares of the 21ST-century regional city.

But new rail lines and transit centers must be accompanied by changes in regional transportation policy. Everything from taxation to parking ratios for office buildings and rules governing the location of federal agencies must be reexamined. The latest transportation technology, from electronic fare cards to computerized cars and highways, should be studied and selectively incorporated into the system.

If transportation is the leading regional imperative, the environment is close behind. It is no accident that Washington sits at the confluence of two rivers, surrounded by abundant developable land. L'Enfant envisioned a green city spreading outward from a sheltered harbor and exploited the natural topography in locating key government buildings. Just as America looks to Washington for lessons about science, government and the arts, it should also be able to find examples of outstanding environmental stewardship.

One of these examples could be the Anacostia River from East Capitol Street south, another area of enormous potential and shocking neglect. A major tributary of the Potomac watershed, the Anacostia is one of the most polluted rivers in America, gasping under decades of sewage, chemicals and contaminated runoff. Cleaning it up would offer a national example of responsible remediation, while returning a priceless natural resource to the community.

But that is only the beginning. *Legacy* calls for a revived Anacostia River to become the centerpiece of an environmental park featuring gardens, an aquarium and a nature preserve. This center could be a regional education resource, a destination for tourists and the site for a major national memorial. It could itself be a memorial representing the marriage of urbanity and ecology, as well as an inducement for environmentally sensitive companies to move into the District. Of the 1,200 high-tech firms in the region, only 70 — barely 5 percent — are in the District. It is not too fanciful to imagine the next century's Microsoft or IBM making its home on the banks of the Anacostia. This is certainly the kind of aspiration and commitment that the District will need to compete in the 21st century.

Barriers to enjoying the river will be removed.





*Even though Legacy looks ahead
50 to 100 years, the first decade
will be decisive.*

