



CapitalSpace

A Park System for the Nation's Capital

Washington, DC is recognized the world over for its broad open spaces and beautiful vistas. Residents and visitors alike cherish the city's parks and open spaces, which serve as home to many of our nation's treasured icons as well as hubs of neighborhood life.

While Washington's parks are beloved, they face numerous challenges, including maintenance, connectivity, accessibility, and overall quality. To address these issues and to help ensure that Washington's parks reach their full potential, federal and local agencies have formed an innovative partnership called CapitalSpace.



Dupont Circle





CapitalSpace: A Park System for the Nation's Capital

Washington has more public parkland per capita than almost any other densely populated U.S. city—16 acres for every 1,000 residents—offering natural areas, formal parks, and recreation amenities. In total, Washington has approximately 9,300 acres of diverse parks and open space.



Marie Reed Learning Center



Rock Creek Park

Washington has more public parkland per capita than almost any other densely populated U.S. city.

Several local and federal agencies with distinct missions share responsibility for planning and managing the city's parks. For the first time in 40 years, these agencies are working together to plan for the challenges and opportunities facing our open spaces. The National Capital Planning Commission, the National Park Service, the District Office of Planning, and the District Department of Parks and Recreation have joined forces to create CapitalSpace, a partnership to improve all parks and open spaces.

The CapitalSpace initiative will provide a framework and a means to consider the parks as an overall system. Each of the partner organizations is undertaking exciting new projects across the city, ranging from the creation of waterfront parks to recreation centers and nature trails. CapitalSpace will demonstrate how these efforts should fit together and identify key areas where the partners and other groups can collaborate to achieve the full potential of all of Washington's treasured open spaces.

CapitalSpace Partners

During the last 200 years, Washington’s park system has been shaped by many forces—prominent plans, legislation, public works, and private initiatives—and a variety of agencies have been charged with developing and managing these open spaces. Today, several District and federal agencies oversee the planning, development, operation, and maintenance of these lands. Through CapitalSpace, these agencies have joined together to coordinate existing management plans, maximize limited resources, and create a stronger park system for the city.

The District’s primary recreation provider is the Department of Parks and Recreation whose mission is to maintain the city’s parks and open spaces and provide diverse recreational opportunities to residents and visitors. Other District agencies including the Office of Planning, the Department of Transportation, and the Department of the Environment also play key roles in planning, building, and maintaining parks and open space through broader community development strategies.

Almost 90 percent of the city’s parkland—more than 6,900 acres including Rock Creek Park, the National Mall, Anacostia Park, and the Fort Circle Parks—is part of the National Park System. The National Park Service, whose mission is to preserve the nation’s natural and cultural resources for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of all generations, is responsible for managing these parks. Two other federal agencies, the National Capital Planning Commission and the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts, plan for and review proposed development that might impact Washington’s parks and open spaces.

The city’s parks are diverse and include stream valley corridors, urban pocket parks, ball fields, formal commemorative sites, and lively gathering places.



Pershing Park

The CapitalSpace partners are working closely with the D.C. Public School (DCPS) system and the General Services Administration (GSA). DCPS actually provides 30 percent of the city’s playgrounds and fields, and GSA oversees many of the open spaces at federal facilities that are not part of the park system.

Many nonprofit organizations and private citizens also contribute to Washington’s parks and open spaces by providing financial support and volunteers to help maintain the parks. They also assist in providing technical expertise to plan new parks and to make improvements to existing parks. The CapitalSpace partners are coordinating their efforts with these important stakeholder groups.



A community playground on Capitol Hill



Cleveland Park Community Garden



Barnard Hill Park

CapitalSpace Partners:

- District of Columbia Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR)
- District of Columbia Office of Planning (DCOP)
- National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC)
- National Park Service (NPS)

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In Collaboration With:

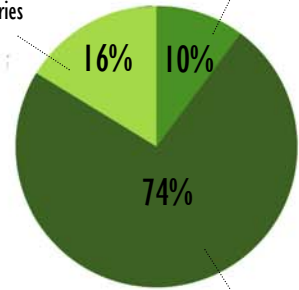
- District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS)
- District Department of Transportation (DDOT)
- District Department of Environment (DDOE)
- U.S. Commission of Fine Arts (CFA)



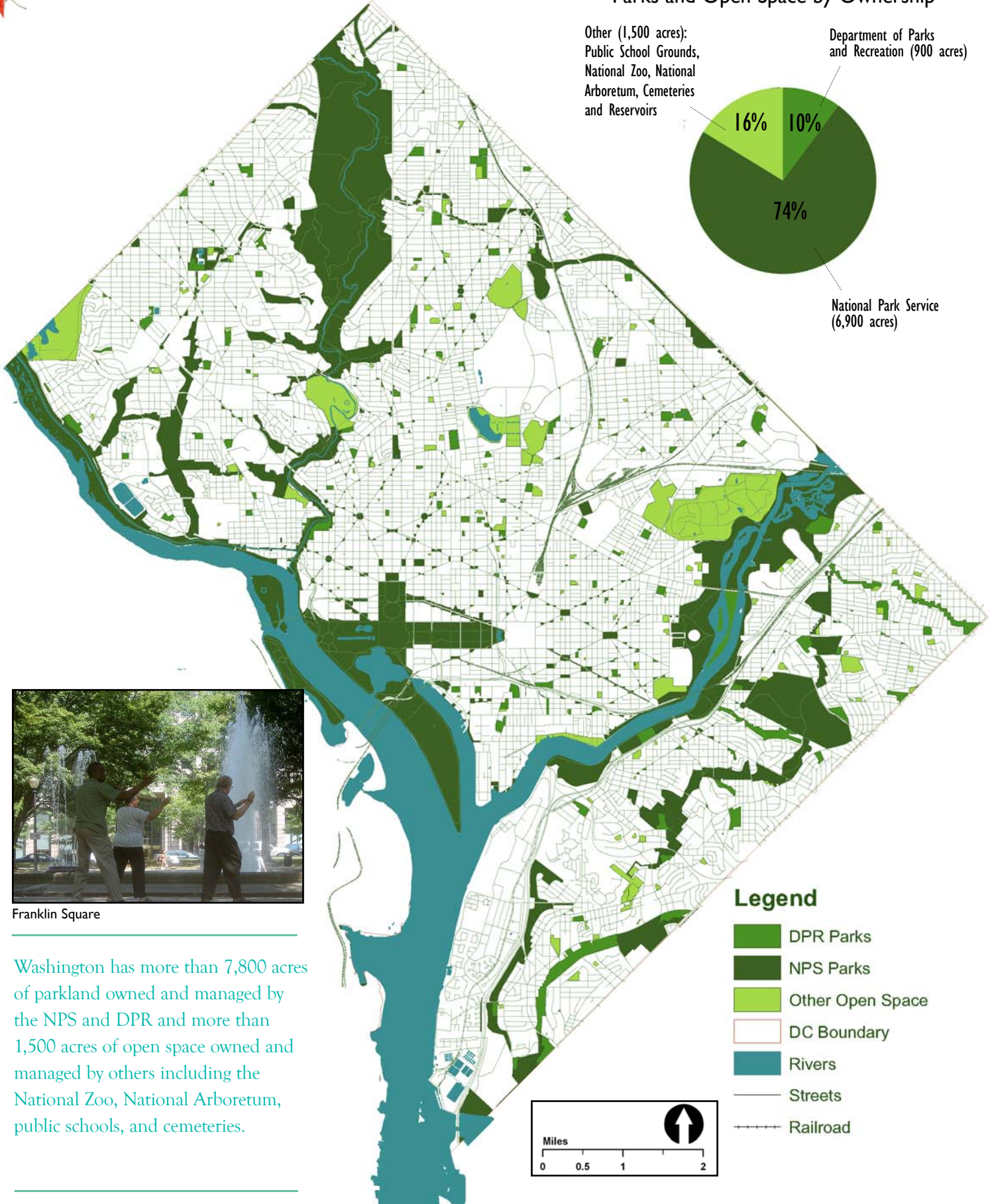
Parks and Open Space by Ownership

Other (1,500 acres):
Public School Grounds,
National Zoo, National
Arboretum, Cemeteries
and Reservoirs

Department of Parks
and Recreation (900 acres)



National Park Service
(6,900 acres)

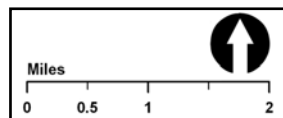


Franklin Square

Washington has more than 7,800 acres of parkland owned and managed by the NPS and DPR and more than 1,500 acres of open space owned and managed by others including the National Zoo, National Arboretum, public schools, and cemeteries.

Legend

- DPR Parks
- NPS Parks
- Other Open Space
- DC Boundary
- Rivers
- Streets
- Railroad





Triangle park at New Hampshire Avenue and T Street, NW

Twenty-six percent of Washington’s parkland is located within designated historical districts.



Kenilworth Aquatic Gardens

Washington’s parks protect 70 percent of the city’s wetlands or floodplains, 68 percent of the city’s wooded areas, and 72 percent of land with steep slopes.

Large parks of 50 acres or more account for 80 percent of the city’s parkland. The majority of Washington’s parks, however, are small. Of more than 600 parks, 425 are less than one acre.



Langdon Park

Conditions at existing parklands sometimes restrict their access and use. These include: physical barriers such as highways and busy roadways, fences and steep slopes; unsafe conditions and restricted operating hours; and missing or incomplete connections between parks and trails.





A Framework for Achieving the Full Potential of the Parks System

Washington’s population is projected to grow from 581,000 to nearly 700,000 by 2025. Clearly, demand for parks will increase.

Today, changing demographics and growing interest in health and sustainability encourage consideration of new ways to design and use parks. Skateboarding and dog parks for example were not considered when many parks were established. Further, it is critical that Washington reserve space for commemoration and public events. Our parks and open space must meet all of these demands.

The CapitalSpace partners envision a **BEAUTIFUL, HIGH QUALITY, and UNIFIED** park system for the nation’s capital that:

- Is **SAFE** and **ACCESSIBLE** to everyone who lives in, works in, or visits the city.
- Includes a variety of parks and open spaces that **CONNECT** communities.
- Incorporates **STEWARDSHIP** and **CELEBRATION** of natural, cultural, commemorative, and historic spaces.
- Provides a **DIVERSITY** of passive and active recreation.
- Contributes to a **HEALTHY, SUSTAINABLE, and LIVEABLE** city.
- Serves as a national and international model of citizen **ENGAGEMENT** and parks and open space management and **COLLABORATION**.

The following illustrations reflect planning concepts to realize this vision. They are the first step toward developing a city-wide framework to achieve the full potential of our parks system.

Increase Access to Great Local Parks

A safe, accessible, and walkable green network connects neighborhoods to nearby open space and recreation. This network becomes an integral part of each community’s identity and character.



Weave Greenway through Neighborhoods

A continuous greenway connects the city’s outer neighborhoods. The Fort Circle Parks become destinations attracting residents and visitors to historic sites, the natural environment, and many recreational opportunities.





Celebrate the Urban Parks

The rich tapestry of urban parks are enhanced to create unique places, offering historical, commemorative, cultural, and recreational experiences that meet the needs of dense and growing neighborhoods.



Connect with the Rivers

Washington's vibrant parks along the Anacostia and Potomac are linked together. Improved access and sustainable, diverse attractions draw people to and along the rivers.



Protect, Connect, and Restore Natural Environments

Natural resources within the city's parks and open spaces, including wetlands, floodplains, wooded areas, and streams and rivers offer habitats and provide beneficial ecological functions that support a sustainable and liveable city.



Link the City with Green Corridors

Leafy streets, winding parkways, and natural trails connect residents and visitors to major parks as well as enhance the regional transportation network.



Expand Park System Capacity

Our existing parks are maintained and enhanced, and new open spaces are identified to meet the city's expanding needs for accessible recreation and green spaces, with special attention focused on growing and underserved neighborhoods.





Six Big Ideas

The Capitalspace partner agencies have identified six “big ideas” that will link back to the planning concepts and help make the vision a reality. These ideas were identified as projects that can best be accomplished if these agencies work together. They are intended to maximize existing assets, address current and future needs, and seize opportunities.

To successfully implement these ideas, the partners will address issues related to sustainability, safety, and access. In addition, new funding approaches and creative partnerships will be required. The CapitalSpace partners intend to draw upon innovative models used in Washington, in communities around the nation, and throughout the world.



Fort Drive/40th Street at Chesapeake Street, NW



Fort Stevens

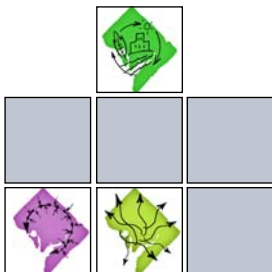


Link the Fort Circle Parks

FINDINGS: In 1902, the McMillan Plan designated these former defensive Civil War forts as parkland, a belt of green space around Washington. Today these parks present opportunities for recreation, leisure, natural resource protection, and historic interpretation in many local Washington communities. The Fort Circle Parks located in upper Northeast and in the southeastern portion of the city across the Anacostia River should serve areas of the city that have limited access to parkland.

ISSUE: The Fort Circle Parks system has yet to meet its full potential as a connected greenway surrounding much of Washington, DC and as a cultural destination highlighting many historic Civil War resources.

PROPOSED ACTIONS: Implement the existing Fort Circle Parks General Management Plan and create destinations within local communities; promote the parks’ cultural and natural resources; create recreation, interpretation, and education opportunities; link the parks through a system of walkable, greened streets and trails that also connect to the surrounding communities and waterfronts, and to local, regional, and national trail systems.



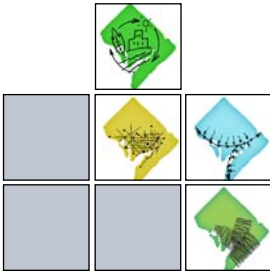
Provide Facilities that Meet Active Recreation Needs

FINDINGS: Washington’s open space system already contains more than 1,000 fields, playgrounds, and courts that are operated by three agencies. However, with an existing shortage of open space designated for active recreation, a growing interest in new types of recreation, and population projected to reach nearly 700,000 by 2025, the demand for active recreation and playing fields will remain strong.

ISSUE: Washington needs to increase the capacity and amount of outdoor recreational facilities, especially regulation-sized playing fields.

PROPOSED ACTIONS: Get more out of our existing active outdoor recreational facilities by making them better, safer, and more accessible. Identify opportunities for developing one or more active outdoor recreation complexes to serve the entire District.

RELATED CONCEPTS



Walker Jones Elementary School

Seaton Elementary School



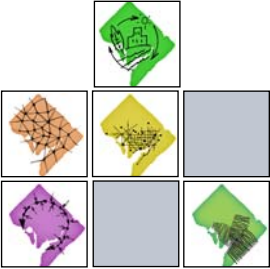
Develop a Schools Strategy

FINDINGS: D.C. Public Schools (DCPS) manages 30 percent of the city’s playgrounds, fields, and courts and plays a crucial role in meeting recreation and open space needs. East of the Anacostia River, schools provide 40 percent of all active recreation facilities.

ISSUE: The condition of the facilities and hours of operation vary, particularly east of the Anacostia River, sometimes resulting in discrepancies in access and quality.

PROPOSED ACTIONS: Develop a strategy with the DCPS for retaining and improving existing recreational facilities and open spaces, especially in areas where DCPS is the primary recreational provider and where school closures could lead to a loss of park and recreation facilities. The partnership could address extending hours of operation, providing safer access to facilities, and increasing the capacity and improving the quality of facilities through capital improvements and maintenance.

RELATED CONCEPTS





Downtown Art Walk



McPherson Square

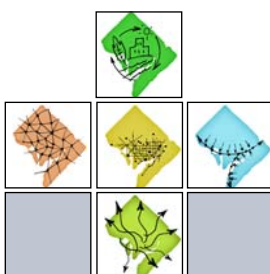
Develop a Center City Parks Strategy

FINDINGS: The historic L'Enfant city offers workers, tourists, and residents a variety of historical, cultural, and commemorative parks. However, it is projected that 30 percent of the city's future housing growth and 70 percent of job growth will occur downtown and nearby along the Anacostia River.

ISSUE: These parks have the potential to be placemakers, serving as the centers of emerging neighborhoods and adding vibrancy to the city. The expected increased demand for these spaces will require creative solutions to balance their historic and commemorative character with the demand for new and more active uses.

PROPOSED ACTIONS: Develop strategies that recognize the value of historic downtown parks (north, south, and east of the National Mall) while making them centers of activity for the areas that surround them. Transform street corridors by greening groups of parks. Develop partnerships between the park stewards and surrounding businesses and organizations to ensure these parks are active and attractive places.

RELATED CONCEPTS





Carter G. Woodson Park (9th Street and Rhode Island Avenue, NW)

Riggs Road and South Dakota Avenue, NE



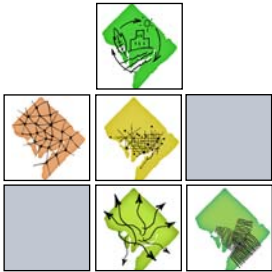
Identify Opportunities for Small Parks

FINDINGS: Sixty-seven percent of the city's parks are small (less than one acre), but small parks account for less than two percent of the city's total parkland. In some neighborhoods, these small parks are the only open space that are closely accessible.

ISSUE: These small parks are managed by different agencies and are used differently by various groups. Some of the small parks are community assets while others have had few, if any, improvements.

PROPOSED ACTIONS: Develop small park strategies to create a walkable, green network or corridors of parks that can help shape community identity. These parks could provide recreation (passive and active) and cultural or historic commemoration that respect the park steward's mission. Develop strategies for coordinated improvements and maintenance.

RELATED CONCEPTS



Green space at the Lowell School contributes to Washington's parks and open space system.



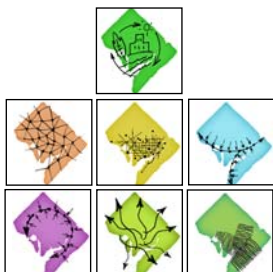
Incorporate Ecological Sustainability into Park Planning

FINDINGS: Urban parks not only provide recreation opportunities but also preserve important natural features and ecological functions. When managed with this in mind, parks can help protect the biological diversity of local plants and animals while serving as a place for recreation, nature study, and contemplation. Further, connected natural areas, parks, and other urban green spaces provide greater ecological value than isolated natural areas because they can provide pathways for wildlife to move within the city. They also can provide stormwater management benefits, among other things.

ISSUE: There are existing federal and local methods for protecting ecological functions, but they are not always sufficient or effectively applied. We need to ensure ecological functions are preserved and in some cases restored, while still allowing our parks to serve people.

PROPOSED ACTIONS: Select a natural resource area to serve as a case study to evaluate the challenges these areas face in the city. Identify opportunities to improve the environmental functions and protect ecological functions within a traditional park system.

RELATED CONCEPTS





Marvin Gaye Park

Your Help Is Needed

CapitalSpace is the development of a framework for the city's parks and open spaces.

The National Capital Planning Commission, the National Park Service, the District Office of Planning, and the District Department of Parks and Recreation have assessed the assets, needs, and opportunities of our parks and open space system. Our next step is to prepare a physical plan focused on shared goals and specific actions. The plan is intended to be a framework that will coordinate agency involvement and prevent duplicated efforts.

Our greatest resources for achieving the CapitalSpace vision are the many people and organizations that care about Washington's parks and open spaces.

Public input is essential to the success of the plan. We want to hear your questions and ideas about CapitalSpace. Please contact us at 202.482.7265 or at info@capitalspace.gov. You can also visit our website at www.capitalspace.gov.

