



Monumental Core Framework Plan

Connecting New Destinations with the National Mall



National Capital Planning Commission
401 9th Street, NW
North Lobby, Suite 500
Washington, DC 20004

As Washington, DC grows and evolves in the 21st century, we have an unparalleled opportunity to enhance some of the extraordinary features that make the nation's capital a great place to live, work, and visit. We can ensure that Washington remains a world-class destination by focusing on the planning challenges that are unique to a national capital, while also guiding development that showcases best practices for cities across America.

Partnerships among federal, local, and private interests can enable Washington to emerge as a model sustainable city—one that supports sites for future commemoration, reduces our impact on the natural environment, allows businesses and neighborhoods to thrive, and offers a premier destination for visitors the world over.

The *Monumental Core Framework Plan: Connecting New Destinations with the National Mall* identifies ways to merge the civic qualities of America's treasured National Mall with the urban vitality of the city by revitalizing federally dominated precincts in the capital's monumental core. The plan builds upon the vision of the National Capital Planning Commission's 1997 plan *Extending the Legacy* and details specific measures to support and enhance the opportunity for office and cultural space, green areas, and gathering sites for our future generations.

While the National Mall provides an inspiring setting for some of our most cherished memorials and museums today, we can and must create destinations of similar importance to support our public space and commemoration needs of the future. The *Framework Plan* illustrates where and how to create these new sites and shows how they can be connected with the National Mall, the waterfront, and the city.

John V. Cogbill, III
Chairman



U. S. Commission of Fine Arts
401 F Street, NW
Suite 312
Washington, DC 20001

The design of Washington, DC is one of the great artistic achievements of our nation and a living symbol of our American civic culture. The image we have of Washington—its monuments, its impressive civic buildings, the great greensward of the National Mall—has become an intrinsic part of our national experience.

Great cities do not happen by accident: Washington has acquired its well-known form over two centuries through the convergence of planning, landscape and urban design, architecture, and art. Our capital city owes its success to the visionary planning efforts of Pierre L'Enfant and the Senate Park (McMillan) Commission, and to the work of many others. As the nation and this city continue to change and grow, good planning must underlie our efforts to ensure the highest quality of design in the nation's capital. In the *Monumental Core Framework Plan*, it is our hope to build upon Washington's tradition of enlightened planning with focused proposals to address modern needs.

Created in 1910 as a legacy of the McMillan Commission, the Commission of Fine Arts has a long-standing role in guiding the design of the nation's capital. As our centennial approaches, we are proud to co-sponsor this plan and look forward to ensuring that the symbolic values of Washington's monumental core will adapt and endure for future generations.

Earl A. Powell III
Chairman

National Capital Planning Commission

The National Capital Planning Commission is the federal government's central planning agency in the District of Columbia and surrounding counties in Maryland and Virginia. The Commission provides overall planning guidance for federal land and buildings in the region. It also reviews the design of federal construction projects, oversees long-range planning for future development, and monitors investment by federal agencies.

COMMISSION

John V. Cogbill, III, *Chairman*,
Presidential Appointee
Herbert F. Ames, *Presidential Appointee*
John M. Hart, *Presidential Appointee*

Arrington Dixon, *Mayoral Appointee*
Stacie S. Turner, *Mayoral Appointee*

The Honorable Dr. Robert E. Gates
Secretary of Defense
Represented by Ralph E. Newton

The Honorable Ken Salazar,
Secretary of the Interior
Represented by Peter May

The Honorable Paul F. Prouty
Acting Administrator of General Services
Represented by Michael McGill

The Honorable Joseph I. Lieberman
*Chairman, Committee of Homeland Security and
Governmental Affairs, United States Senate*
Represented by Deborah Parkinson

The Honorable Edolphus Towns
*Chairman, Committee on Oversight and
Government Reform, United States House of
Representatives*
Represented by Mark Stephenson

The Honorable Adrian M. Fenty
Mayor, District of Columbia
Represented by Harriet Tregoning

The Honorable Vincent C. Gray
Chairman, Council of the District of Columbia
Represented by Robert E. Miller,
NCPC Vice Chairman

Marcel Acosta, *Executive Director*

U.S. Commission of Fine Arts

The U.S. Commission of Fine Arts advises the federal and District of Columbia governments on matters of art and architecture that affect the appearance of the nation's capital. The presidentially appointed Commission's primary role is to advise on proposed public building projects and to review private buildings adjacent to public buildings and grounds of special importance. CFA also advises on the design of coins and medals and the design of national war memorials.

COMMISSION

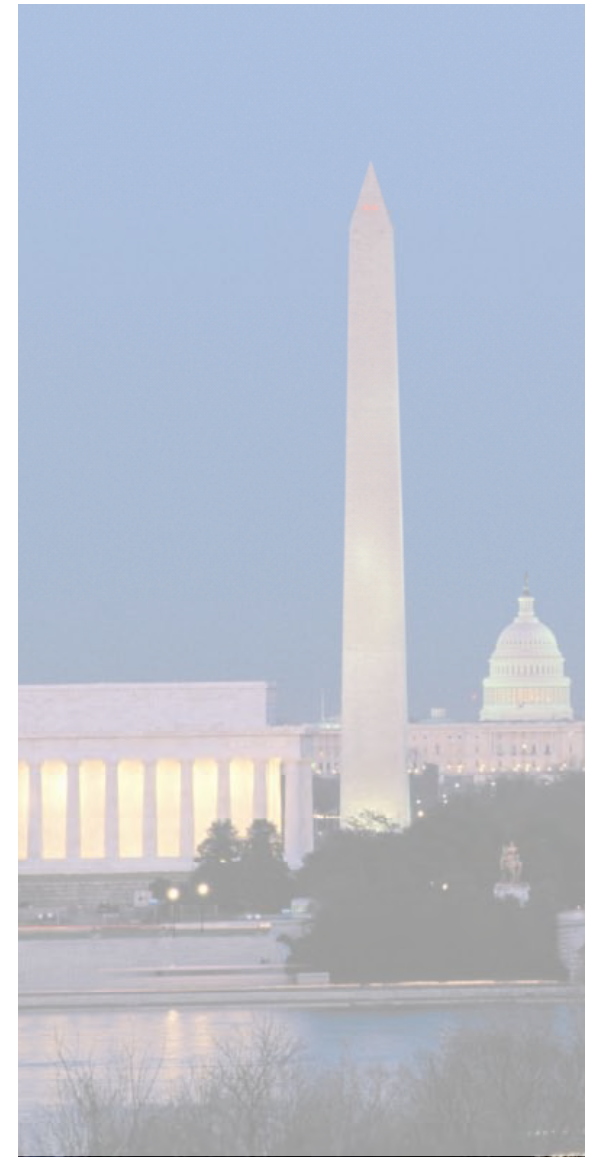
Earl A. Powell III, *Chairman*
Pamela Nelson, *Vice Chairman*
Diana Balmori
John Belle
N. Michael McKinnell
Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk
Witold Rybczynski

Thomas Luebke, *Secretary*

The Monumental Core Framework Plan was prepared through the collaboration of the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts staff and the National Capital Planning Commission and jointly funded by the two commissions. NCPC had primary responsibility in oversight of the project and its principal consultant, EDAW | AECOM. Published 2009.

Table of Contents

Introduction	1	
Overview.....	2	
Plan Summary.....	4	
Context	7	
Historical Planning	8	
Current Planning	10	
Waterfront.....	12	
Planning Coordination.....	14	
Guiding Themes and Strategies	17	
Celebrate the City as Symbol.....	18	
Overcome Barriers and Improve Connections.....	20	
Encourage Compact Mixed-Use Destinations.....	22	
Strengthen the Public Realm	24	
Facilitate Transit Use and Public Mobility.....	26	
Advance Sustainability in the Urban Environment.....	28	
Framework Proposals	33	
Connect the Mall with the Waterfront.....	34	
Enhance the Waterfront Experience	46	
Extend the Commemorative Landscape.....	58	
Link Downtown with the National Mall	66	
Action Agenda	75	
Sequencing	76	
Next Steps.....	78	
Tools for Action	83	
Applicability	85	





Introduction

Washington, DC is one of the world's great cities, designed as the physical expression of our nation's democratic ideals. From its beginnings more than two hundred years ago as a planned city symbolizing our collective civic culture, Washington has evolved over time—and will continue to evolve as the nation does, both by grand plan and by incremental change.

The heart of Washington's symbolic fabric is its monumental core. Much of the monumental core—old and new—is a cherished part of our national heritage and deserving of protection, though parts of this extraordinary civic composition are disrupted by unwelcome physical barriers that should be remedied. In 1997, NCPC's *Extending the Legacy* vision plan proposed to re-center the city on the U.S. Capitol by mixing public and private uses and extending new public buildings, memorials, and museums into all quadrants of the city. Today, new opportunities exist to create settings where the values of this and future generations may be expressed.

The Monumental Core Framework Plan: Connecting New Destinations with the National Mall is a proposal to project the civic qualities of the Mall into the city and to integrate the city's vitality into adjacent federal precincts. The National Mall, with its green expanse framed by iconic buildings and monuments, is a primary stage upon which our civic identity is played out. But while the National Mall is the physical center of Washington, it cannot support all the needs of a city that has more than a half-million residents, a workday

population nearly double that, and 20 million visitors per year. The *Framework Plan* identifies how to transform the architectural monumentality of the core to more contextual place-making, proposing new destinations that will be prestigious locations for future cultural attractions, distinguished settings for government offices, and inviting places to enrich the experience of people who live, work, or visit the capital city. Where connections between these destinations do not exist, they will be established; where they do exist, they will be reinforced.

As stated in one of President Obama's first executive orders, the economic health and social vitality of our urban communities are critically important to the prosperity and quality of life of all Americans. Vibrant cities foster innovation, economic growth, and cultural enrichment through the businesses, universities, and civic, cultural, religious, and nonprofit institutions they attract. Forward-looking policies that encourage wise investment and development will create opportunities to make our cities competitive, prosperous, and strong. For the nation's capital, the *Framework Plan* has been prepared in coordination with other current local and federal planning initiatives and contributes to a larger effort to transform center city Washington and its monumental core—an effort that requires the full partnership of the federal government and District of Columbia to ensure that Washington stands as a 21st-century model for outstanding urban design, livability, and sustainability.

The purpose of the *Monumental Core Framework Plan*—a practical tool to guide decisions and investment over the next thirty years—is to transform the federal precincts surrounding the National Mall into vibrant destinations and to improve connections between the city, the National Mall, and the waterfront, while achieving the highest levels of livability and sustainability in central Washington.

“Vision is the art of seeing the invisible.”

- Jonathan Swift

The *Monumental Core Framework Plan* was initiated to help preserve the historic landscape of the National Mall as a place for national gatherings and a place to honor our country's heroes and cultural heritage. While the *Framework Plan's* initial purpose was to improve the settings for future museums and commemorative works located off the National Mall, it expanded in scope to address broader needs, including the demand for federal office space and the planning and economic interests of the city.

Civic Vitality

The *Framework Plan* focuses on key streets and federally owned property in the areas around the National Mall. It examines Washington's extraordinary but often undervalued assets such as its waterfront, historic public buildings, civic spaces, and parkland. It includes recommendations for integrating the special civic qualities of the National Mall and the dynamic vibrancy of downtown into the adjacent federal precincts to enrich the urban experience for all Americans and our international visitors.

The *Framework Plan* addresses the needs of our nation's citizens, the federal government and its workers, city residents, and the local economy by proposing improvements to important sites, intersections, and

corridors, making these areas more accessible, more sustainable, and better integrated into the fabric of city life. It proposes linking new destinations, the National Mall, the waterfront, and the rest of the city with bold urban design gestures—symbolic connections that make new civic places possible. It also proposes more localized repair of the urban fabric and focused infusions of public and private development.

These *Framework Plan* goals can be achieved by strengthening each precinct around the National Mall with a dense mix of uses; walkable, friendly streets; well-connected and vibrant public spaces; publicly accessible buildings of distinguished architecture; and an easy-to-use multimodal transit system.

A Framework for the 21st Century

The *Framework Plan* is a flexible tool to inform future planning and development decisions. It is neither a prescriptive master plan nor an implementation program; rather, it identifies immediate and long-term opportunities to coordinate land use, urban design, public space, and transportation improvements, and to improve environmental management. Illustrations are provided to communicate planning ideas and design principles as a guide for future design proposals. The *Framework Plan* seeks to maintain federal ownership

of land and buildings and retain federal agencies in the District of Columbia in locations appropriate to their missions, while capitalizing on opportunities to integrate a mix of services, hotel, and residential uses throughout the federal and local city.

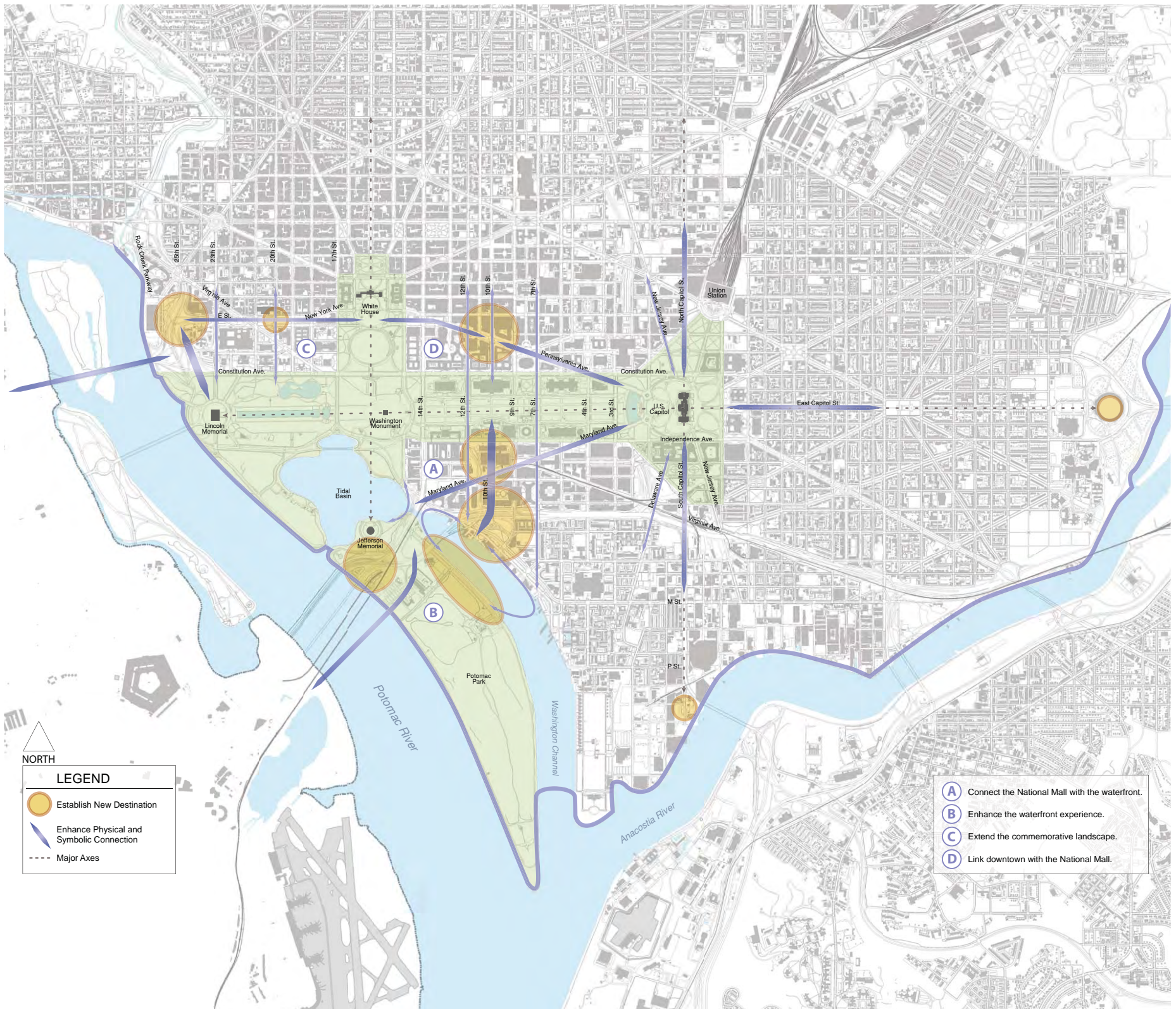
The *Framework Plan* contains a variety of large and small initiatives, some easily achieved in the next few years, and others that will require a longer time frame. Many recommendations will need additional detailed planning before projects are funded or constructed. Federal and city stakeholders, with input from the public, will further define, plan, evaluate, and design specific initiatives. This process will ensure compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act, the National Historic Preservation Act, and other requirements. Individual initiatives could be led by one or more federal, District, or private entities; funding mechanisms such as federal appropriations, partnerships, private financing, and other strategies should all be considered. For example, since some initiatives exceed the scope of an individual agency's mission approval by the Administration and Congress will be required for the necessary capital investments. The *Framework Plan* lays out an action agenda for the detailed planning work necessary to evaluate the feasibility, costs, funding sources, and benefits of site-specific initiatives, as well as possible legislative tools and organizational approaches.

Framework Plan Goals

- Protect the National Mall from overuse
- Create distinctive settings for cultural facilities and commemorative works
- Improve connections between the National Mall, the city, and the waterfront
- Transform the monumental core into a vibrant and sustainable place to visit, work, and live



Linking places that mix culture, commerce, and public gathering spaces with the National Mall will enhance the visitor's experience and contribute to Washington's livability and sustainability.



Physical and symbolic links to new cultural and commemorative destinations will expand the image of the capital city to areas beyond the National Mall.

PLAN SUMMARY

The *Framework Plan* envisions the precincts near the National Mall as distinctive new city destinations. It identifies opportunities to enhance existing areas and to guide development to address federal needs and enrich the city's economy and its public realm.

These rejuvenated precincts will accommodate museums, memorials, federal offices, and other uses in a manner that is animated by a variety of day, evening, and weekend activities, including working, sightseeing, shopping, and playing. Mixed-use destinations will be connected with one another by a cohesive network of streets, bridges, green spaces, walkways, transit routes, bicycle paths, and water connections.

In some cases, establishing new destinations and connections will require removing barriers and filling in the gaps in the urban street and block pattern caused by intrusive highways, rail lines, bridges, buildings, and dead zones of single-use office buildings that are inaccessible to the general public. In other cases, it means building upon the existing character of the nation's capital by establishing symbolic relationships between prominent sites and enhancing their settings, including the corridors that connect them. Lively, walkable, urban neighborhoods with a mix of uses and a choice of travel options will transform the way residents, workers, and visitors experience the nation's capital.

Cornerstone Initiatives

The *Framework Plan* proposes four primary initiatives to transform the federal precincts. While each precinct

has a unique character and its own set of challenges, the objectives and the urban design, planning, and policy strategies for each area are similar. These strategies promote places that have unique identities, yet result in a unified vision to accomplish the goal of the *Framework Plan*: to link vibrant destinations in a manner that enhances the sustainability of the monumental core.

CONNECT THE MALL WITH THE WATERFRONT

Extend the civic qualities of the National Mall into the Southwest Rectangle, restore the urban fabric, and improve connections between the Mall and the Southwest Waterfront and between the U.S. Capitol and the Jefferson Memorial. Transform the area into a distinguished and pedestrian-friendly workplace, a cultural hub, and an exciting and welcoming visitor destination. The primary strategies for this precinct include: redefining 10th Street, SW as a mixed-use corridor between the National Mall and the waterfront; establishing the 10th Street terminus at the overlook as a premier cultural and mixed-use site; and reclaiming Maryland Avenue, SW as a grand boulevard.

ENHANCE THE WATERFRONT EXPERIENCE Establish Potomac Park as an easily accessible destination that offers expanded opportunities for recreation, leisure, commemoration, and celebration in a setting of scenic beauty showcasing environmental stewardship. The primary strategies for this precinct include: developing Potomac Harbor along the Washington Channel; establishing multiple connections for park visitors arriving by boat, Metro, car, bicycle, or foot; increasing

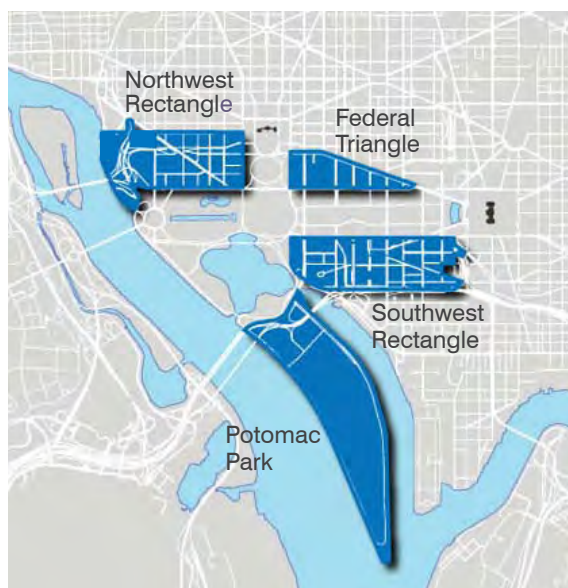
recreational opportunities; and creating multi-purpose festival grounds near the Jefferson Memorial.

EXTEND THE COMMEMORATIVE LANDSCAPE

Forge connections between the Northwest Rectangle's major civic and cultural destinations—including two presidential memorials and the White House—and establish the precinct as an accessible, walkable cultural destination and high-quality workplace. Build upon its prestigious location and existing open space to expand cultural and diplomatic facilities and create an interconnected system of beautiful parks to extend the commemorative landscape. The primary strategies for this precinct include: creating a new ceremonial boulevard between the Kennedy Center and the Lincoln Memorial; reclaiming the E Street corridor as an urban parkway connecting the Kennedy Center and the White House and President's Park; and decking highways to accommodate new parks and buildings.

LINK DOWNTOWN WITH THE NATIONAL MALL

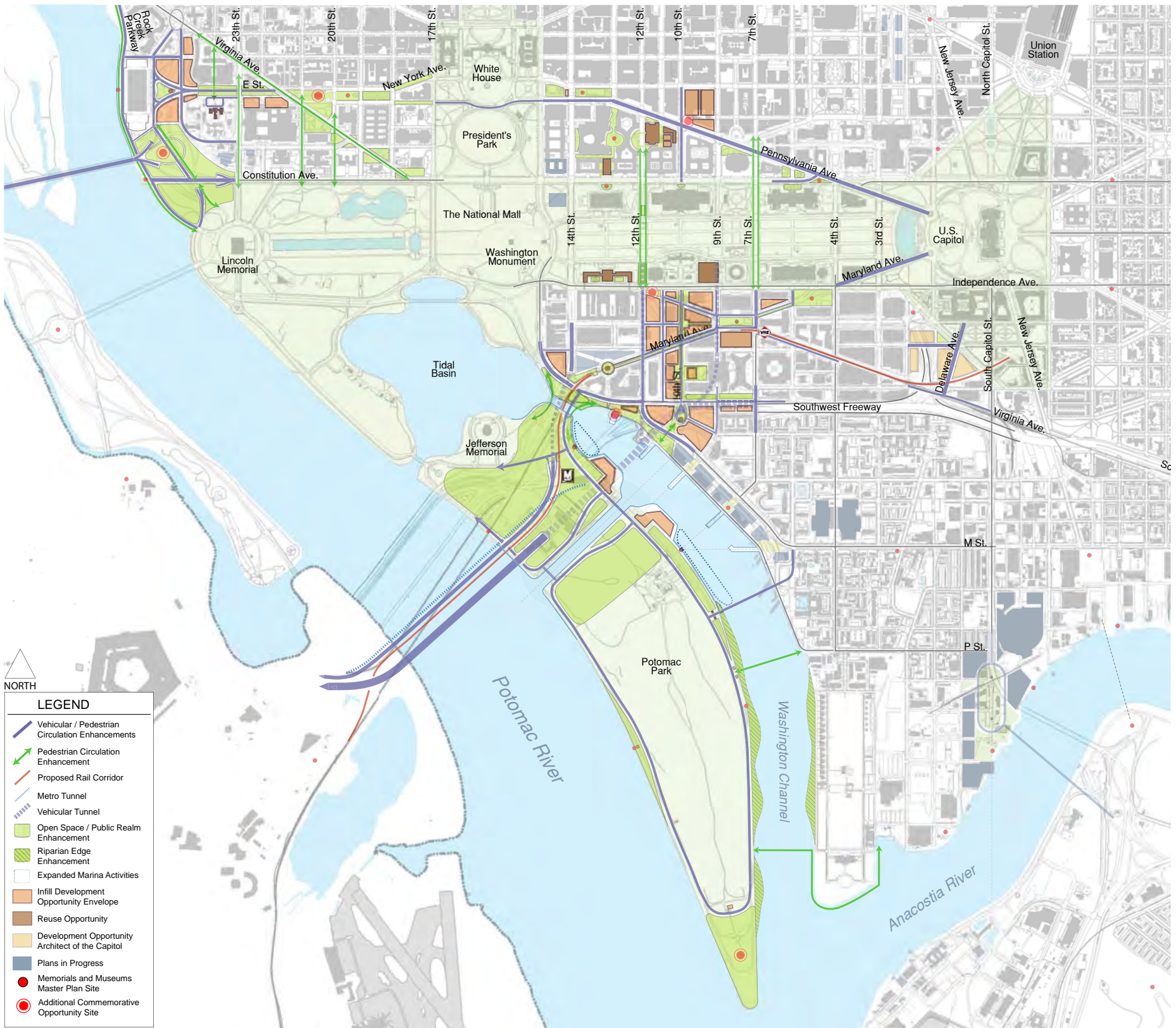
Develop new destinations along Pennsylvania Avenue, enhance the public realm, and improve connections along Pennsylvania Avenue and throughout the Federal Triangle to strengthen the avenue as a grand urban boulevard and support the area as a preeminent workplace and visitor destination. Showcase the art, architecture, and civic ideals of the nation with a lively mix of urban activities in a sequence of animated and distinguished public spaces. The primary strategy for this precinct is to establish a mixed-use destination on Pennsylvania Avenue between 9th and 12th Streets.



The *Framework Plan* study area.



The *Framework Plan* complements the National Park Service's *National Mall Plan* by focusing on the federal precincts surrounding the National Mall.



The *Framework Plan* identifies strategies to transform central Washington by establishing new vibrant mixed-use destinations and linking them to the National Mall and improving connections between downtown Washington and the waterfront.