

Summary of draft recommendations for Center City parks and open space

The following draft recommendations have been developed to address issues for the entire system of parks and open space within the Center City. Implementation of any recommendation would need to consider each park's unique functions and character, including their historical and cultural qualities.

Placemaking and programming

Create unique places for neighborhoods

Identify specific parks and adjacent streets and sidewalks to create a public space that celebrates the unique qualities of existing and developing neighborhoods. Focus on specific placemaking efforts that will encourage public use, including physical improvements and programming.

Potential parks include Washington Circle, Farragut Square, McPherson Square, Franklin Square, Mount Vernon Square, 5th and K Streets NW, 1st Street NE, Lansburgh Park, and Washington Canal Park.

Strengthen the overall identity of parks and open space

Use sustainable design features, including low impact development techniques and other greening practices, when developing new parks and park improvements. Consider sustainable building materials when refurbishing parks; where historical and cultural resources may be negatively affected, utilize adjacent rights-of-way to provide sustainable features around these parks.

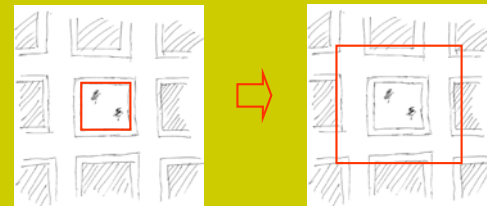
Celebrate key street corridors by creating unique design guidelines for each streetscape and reinforcing existing regulations that strengthen the visual openness and continuity between parks. The focus should be on corridors where plans are not in place.

Potential corridors include K Street NW and NE, M Street SE and SW, 7th Street NW and SW, 4th Street SW, Massachusetts Avenue NW and NE, Connecticut Avenue/17th Street NW, and North and South Capitol Streets.

Identify specific L'Enfant parks for focused improvements to their unique historic features. While respecting a parks' period of significance, improvements could include new or replaced/repared physical elements (such as walks and curbs, benches, trash receptacles, lamp posts, drinking fountains, fencing, other park furniture such as movable chairs, and trees and plantings including appropriate seasonal plantings).

Potential parks include Murrow, Monroe, Washington Circle, Farragut Square, McPherson Square, Franklin Square, Mount Vernon Square, and Lansburgh Park.

Use parks and public spaces around parks to expand programs and amenities



Redefine what we think the park space is

Expand programming, events, and activities within the parks and the streets and sidewalks surrounding them; in particular use the rights-of-way for those events and activities that are restricted on NPS parks.

Where allowed, include public gardens, fountains, public art, street furniture, and landscaping in the parks and the streets and sidewalks to help express the unique identity and character of the place; provide sidewalk concessions and outdoor seating for restaurants to help enliven the spaces.

Creatively use special paving in the streets and sidewalks to express the public space and further identify the pedestrian zone and improve pedestrians and bicyclist safety through signal and light enhancements.

Use historic parks and commemorative sites as assets for tourism and community building.

Provide signs that build an understanding and appreciation of each park's and neighborhood's history. Signage could be placed on the sidewalks on opposite sides of the streets from the parks to encourage park use.

Respect and advance the L'Enfant street grid and open spaces by restoring, to their original configuration, historic rights-of-way and reservations that have been inappropriately disrupted or closed. Where this is not feasible, utilize design elements that provide visual cues to convey the original configuration.

Promote via tours, websites, brochures, and programming the historic, cultural and capital city aspects of parks.

Develop additional criteria for locating and designing "neighborhood-supporting" national commemoration, and identify locations for application.

The District should develop additional criteria for locating and designing "neighborhood-supporting" local commemoration, and identify locations for application.

Partnerships and resources

Through partnerships, strengthen and build constituency support

While maintaining tailored approaches within partnerships to address specific needs, coordinate efforts between partnerships to improve efficiencies in management, programming, and maintenance.

Reinforce continued coordination on safety and homelessness issues between the various security and police organizations (federal and District) and park stewards, including all the BIDs, to develop District-wide solutions to safety and homelessness that can have an effect of increasing other park users.

Improve coordination of federal and District agency review of proposed park enhancements to reduce the time and processes involved and decrease associated costs.

Maintain clear responsibilities for new park space

The District should continue to create new parks and require publicly accessible open spaces within new developments. The managing agency and responsibilities for long-term maintenance and programming these new spaces should be clearly identified at the beginning of the planning process.

For required publicly accessible open space on private sites, the District should:

- Develop management, maintenance, and programming guidelines.
- Identify one responsible agency or office to manage agreements with developers or other responsible parties.



Farragut Square

King-Greenleaf Park

Encourage more use

Pursue changes to laws, regulations and policies specific for both District and NPS parks within the Center City to allow greater flexibility in programming and appropriate concessions that would encourage additional public use within the parks and on adjacent rights-of-ways.

Meeting demands for parks and open space

Increase capacity by improving quality

Ensure that existing parks, and in particular their active recreational amenities, can be used to their full potential.

- Repair, replace or provide new amenities and improved maintenance; prioritize needs for both federal and District agency spending, as well as private sector contributions.
- Maintain and build on existing arrangements with BIDs and other partnership groups to supplement public maintenance and programming resources.

Maintain or add quantity

Ensure that the current amount of park space and amenities remains available and new parks are created.

- Explore the implementation and implications of a "no net loss" approach for outdoor active recreational amenities; so that if a field, court, or playground is removed, it is replaced with an equivalent in a nearby location.
- At redeveloping public or private sites, ensure that the quantity of any formally-designated public space is maintained or expanded by the subsequent development.
- Ensure that planning efforts for areas such as the National Mall and Potomac and Anacostia parks maintain or expand the existing quantity of active recreational amenities.
- Jointly (federal and District agencies) prioritize specific opportunities for additional active recreational amenities and park space in neighborhoods that are lacking recreational facilities. In particular, identify opportunities to repurpose publicly-owned spaces for park use (including rights of ways, school sites that are closing, and other redeveloping public properties). Use this information to effectively direct public benefit contributions where they are most needed.

Improve access and connections

Ensure that plazas and other designated public spaces in new private and public developments are oriented towards the street and remain open to the public.

Where appropriate, re-establish public access to outdoor public spaces that have been closed for safety and security reasons, including schools and federal facilities.

Connect people to a variety of uses and activities within our system of complementary parks and open space.

- Enhance specific connections between parks with green streetscapes with improved pedestrian and bicycle facilities and sufficient signage.
- Maintain jointly between all public (federal and District) and other entities a clearinghouse/one stop shop for information on recreational resources.
- Ensure parks outside underserved Center City neighborhoods that are identified to help meet those neighborhoods' recreational needs are able to do so (consider creating District-serving active recreational complexes).

Center City parks strategy

Significance

The downtown area surrounding the National Mall offers workers, residents, and visitors a variety of park spaces, many of which serve historic, commemorative, cultural and recreational purposes.

The same area is also the focus of significant residential and workforce growth. 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.

Identified as an area with an overall limited access to parks, open spaces, and recreational amenities, pressure upon existing park and open space resources is expected to rise.

Most park and open space resources within the Center City are under the jurisdiction of the National Park Service. However, the District owns and the Department of Parks and Recreation manages a number of larger parks within the Southwest Waterfront area.

General Issues

Park and open space issues vary across the center city sub regions but can be summarized as follows.

- The majority of parkland in Center City is found in small parks. The deficiency of medium and large sized parks puts pressure on the National Mall, East and West Potomac Parks, school properties, and areas outside Center City to provide fields and other active recreational facilities.
- Many Center City parks contain commemorative features and historic landscapes and are associated with the L'Enfant Plan, an important planning consideration.
- Given the high cost of land, it is important to explore alternative ways to create parkland.
- Some parts of the city are at or approaching build out while other areas are undergoing transformation that could yield new park opportunities.
- Center City parks could offer increased programming and activities to support daytime office workers and a growing residential population.
- Difficult issues such as homelessness and drug dealing plague some Center City parks.
- Existing open space assets are not sufficiently maintained and enhanced to meet demand.
- Resources are insufficient to enhance and maintain our urban parks at the desired level.



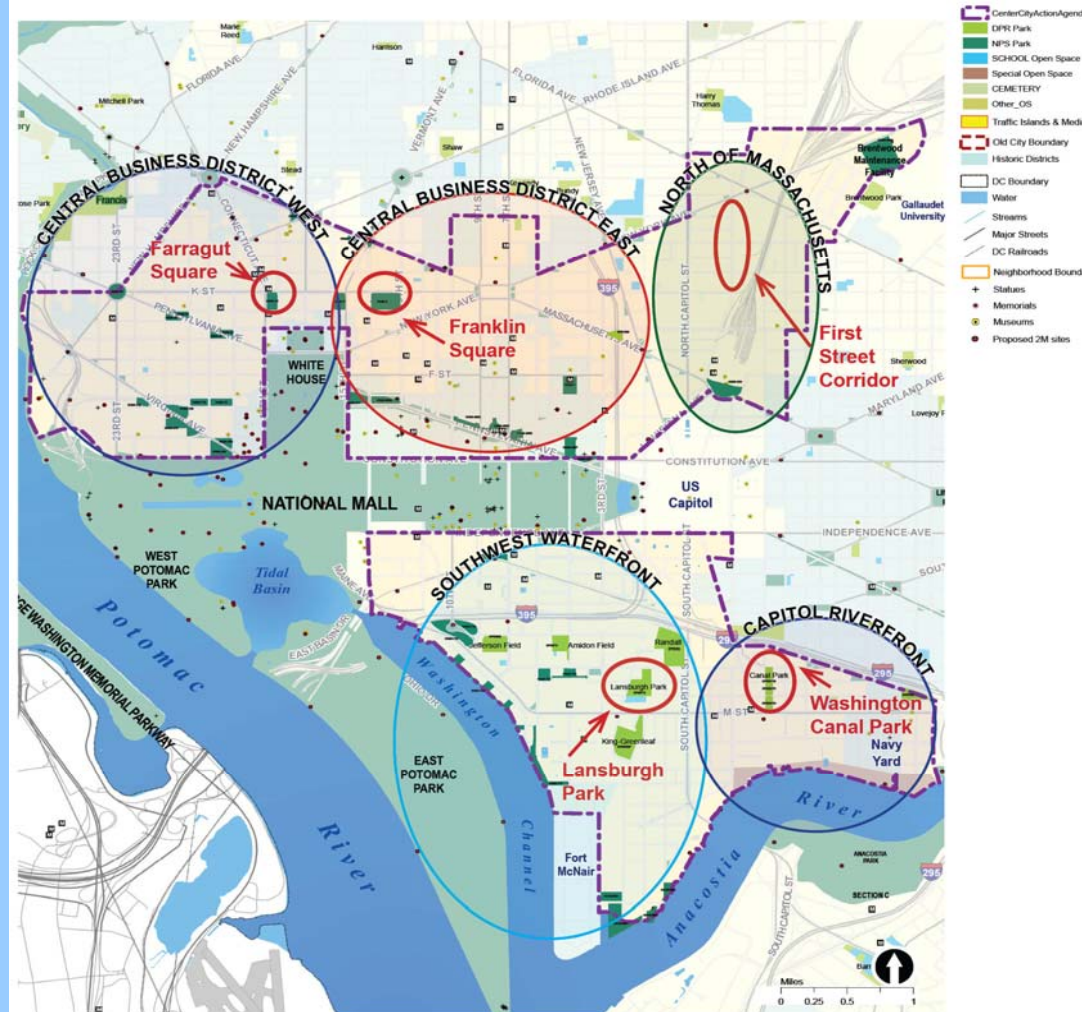
Farragut Square

Randall Park

Washington Circle

Study area

The Center City, as defined for CapitalSpace, is the dense urban area surrounding the National Mall and U.S. Capitol. Sub regions within Center City, as identified below, have their own distinct character, issues, and opportunities related to parks and open space. A case study analysis was completed for one park in each sub region. Case studies include: Franklin and Farragut Squares, Washington Canal Park, First Street corridor, and Lansburgh Park.



Case studies

In NoMA, CapitalSpace examined the District's effort to require new developments to contribute to the creation of a linear park within the wide public rights-of-way along **First Street NE**.



First Street NE linear park (illustrated)

Key lessons:

- Be innovative and strategic in using public assets for parks and open space in growing and increasingly dense neighborhoods where it is limited.
- Create standards for private development and maintenance of public space to promote community identity.

In Downtown, CapitalSpace examined opportunities and constraints in partnerships between the Business Improvement Districts and the NPS formed to enhance programming and caring for parks with historic resources in **Franklin and Farragut Squares**.



Franklin Square

Key lessons:

- New design elements can be introduced into NPS parks if they do not dishonor the park's period of historical significance.
- Programming, vending, and the availability of supporting resources are important elements that add vitality to a "place" and can be developed for historic and cultural parks within the context of existing legislation, policies and regulations.
- A variety of partnership structures are available to support NPS park improvements and maintenance.

In the Capitol Riverfront neighborhood in Southeast, CapitalSpace examined how the planned **Washington Canal Park** highlights opportunities to re-use public properties creatively to create parks and incorporate sustainable design.



Washington Canal Park (illustrated)

Key lessons:

- Programming and amenities should complement available recreation in the surrounding areas; and connections to other parks should be made to develop a complementary system of parks.
- A range of experiences in a park and along the streets immediately surrounding it can make a park more meaningful to its community and contribute to the park's sense of "place".
- New parks or amenities can be designed to showcase and educate through functional and artistic elements the relationship between our urban and natural environments, and support efforts to make the District more sustainable and livable.