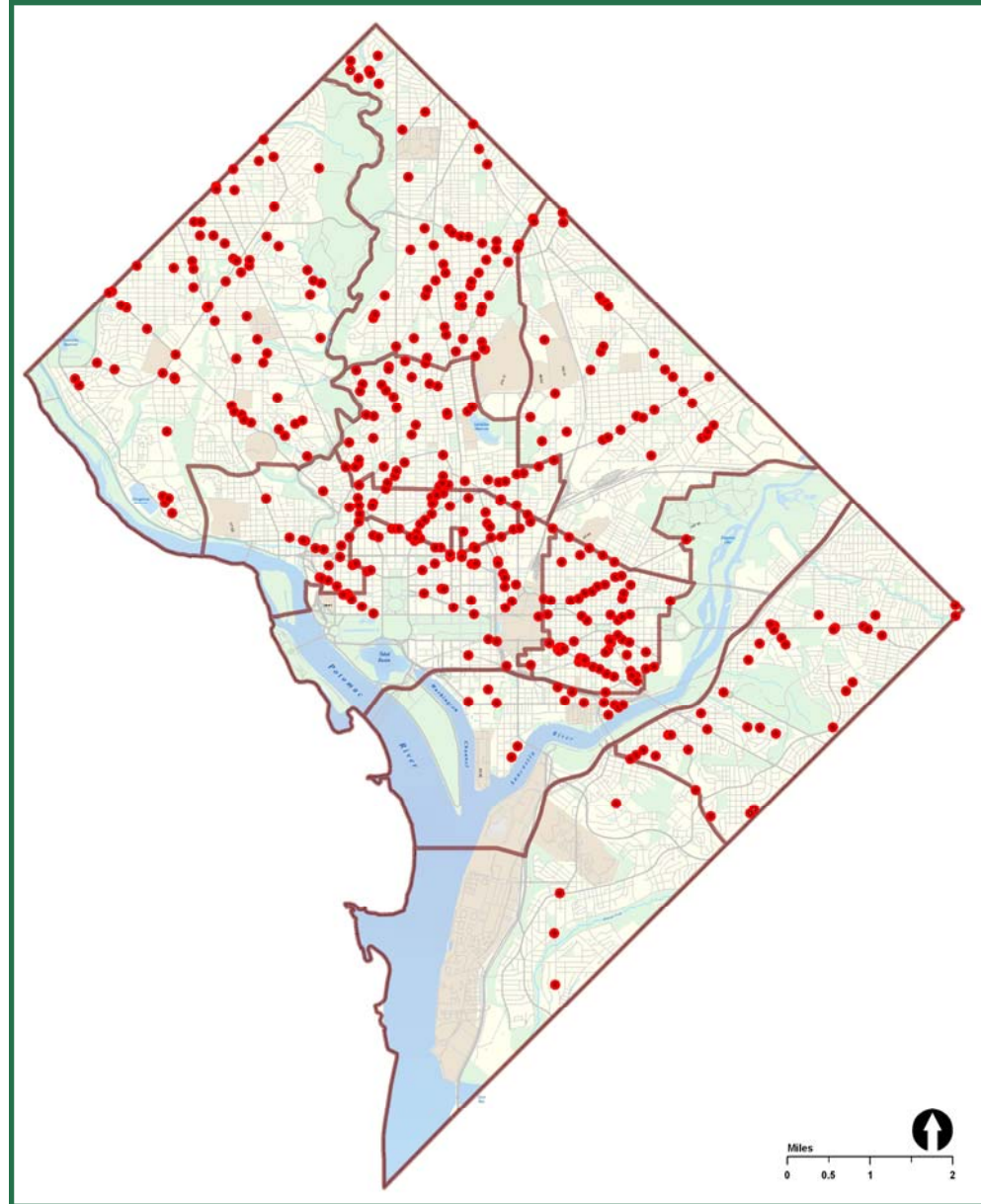


# Small Parks

Small parks in Washington, DC consist of the triangles, squares and circles that are less than an acre in size and are mostly located within the public right-of-way. The L'Enfant Plan for Washington DC created these small parks by the intersection of diagonal and orthogonal streets and recognized their value as open space for public use. As the city grew beyond its original boundaries, these designs were further extended into the new communities. Today, the small parks primarily function as street medians, traffic circles, and pocket parks in the neighborhoods, often with commemorative works. While the National Park Service owns the majority of these small parks, it has transferred jurisdiction of many of them to various District of Columbia government agencies for park, transportation and other community uses. There are approximately 425 small parks which are distributed throughout Washington, DC, as shown in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1. Distribution of parkland in Washington, DC by Size (Red dots are the small parks)



## Issues

Sixty-seven percent of parks in the District are small parks, but their total area account for less than 2 percent of all open space. Parkland and open space are not equally distributed in size and number throughout the neighborhoods of Washington, DC. As such, there are neighborhoods where the only open spaces available are these small parks. Furthermore, these small parks are the most widely dispersed throughout the neighborhoods, making them the most visible and most accessible on foot by the local residents. These small parks are managed by different agencies and are at different levels of use and upkeep. Although they are small, their relative proximity to each other allows for system-wide planning in meeting various park needs at a neighborhood level.



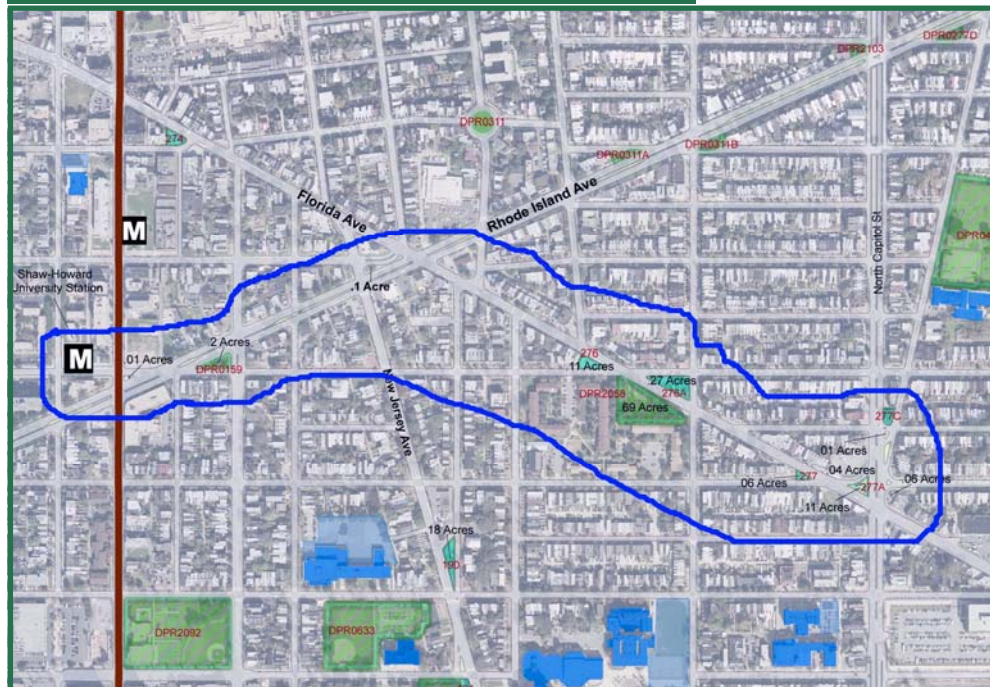
Fig 2. Reservation 309 G at 16th St. NW



Fig. 3. Reservation 159 at Rhode Island

As DC neighborhoods increase in population, and demand for open space increases, these small parks will play a greater role in the city's livability. CapitalSpace will focus on three potential ways small parks can contribute to livability: placemaking, ecological sustainability, and neighborhood revitalization.

Figure 4. Shaw/Rhode Island/Florida Avenue Cluster



## Actions

- **Develop small park guidelines to create a walkable, green network of parks that can help shape community identity. These parks could provide recreation and cultural or historic commemoration that respect the park steward's mission.**
- **Develop a strategy for coordinated improvements and maintenance.**

The CapitalSpace Initiative will conduct a case study of a cluster of small parks at the Georgia Avenue Metro train station and develop concept plans for clusters located in Mt. Pleasant and 16<sup>th</sup> Street NW, and along the corridor of Rhode Island and Florida Avenue in the Shaw neighborhood.

The Shaw/Rhode Island/Florida Avenue cluster was selected because the District government has designated the area for revitalization efforts and the cluster is within the L'Enfant City. Furthermore, non-park uses have encroached on some of them. These conditions are ideal for tackling issues of ownership, coordinated management and creation of useable parkland within a historical framework of an emerging neighborhood. The 16<sup>th</sup> Street/Mt. Pleasant cluster was selected because the triangles, though within walking distance of each other, are in varying degrees of maintenance and use. Furthermore, the parks are located in an area of the City that has seen a significant growth in population, warranting a plan for increasing the availability of passive recreation opportunities by increasing access to these parks and redefining their uses. The Georgia-Petworth case study will look at the dynamics of existing partnership mechanisms among DC government agencies and private partners, and identify opportunities for streamlining coordination, communication and funding processes among the different partners. The District government recently formed an interagency taskforce for innovative storm water system planning that selected 4 triangles at the vicinity of Georgia Avenue – Petworth Metro station to demonstrate that road and sidewalk storm water run off can be used to water rain gardens in triangle parks. **DDOT has an approved Transportation and Streetscape Improvement Plan for the same cluster of triangles, which was vetted through a community process. The CapitalSpace partners are coordinating with the project managers of DDOT and DDOE to study how LID elements can be incorporated into the existing plan.**

Figure 5. Mt. Pleasant/16th Street NW Cluster

