

Framework for Decisions

Introduction

Washington, DC is one of the most beautiful and important cities in the world. Not only a city of monuments and historic sites, of power and politics, Washington is home to a diverse population and an increasingly diverse economy. This diversity reflects and symbolizes the city's hopes for the new millennium.

Almost 20 years ago, a visionary plan for Downtown DC, commonly referred to as the "Living Downtown Plan," foresaw much of today's downtown development and called for a diverse, mixed-use downtown. The Plan envisioned a city center with retail uses focused on F Street, Gallery Place and Chinatown; with new arts uses along 7th Street; and with significant new housing in the Penn Quarter and at Mount Vernon Square. Despite the vision of the Living Downtown Plan, the last economic boom left in its wake a strong office environment, but not a dynamic downtown.

Today, we have a rare opportunity to finally achieve this vision of a living downtown. The city finds itself in a moment where unprecedented economic prosperity, political cohesion, and development momentum have converged. The ability to shape the future is strong. This moment must be seized to create a great center for our great city; one that is a cultural as well as economic asset, and is enjoyed by a variety of users. Only a collective effort by both public and private sectors will ensure that this opportunity is not squandered. The Downtown Action Agenda is an imperative first step toward guiding collective public and private energies to achieve Downtown's potential.

At the core of the Downtown Action Agenda are three underlying goals: First, to refine the vision of a vibrant, mixed-use "living" downtown. Second, to establish direction for new growth to include emerging districts to the east and improve links to other city neighborhoods. Finally, to identify strategic actions to be taken by public and private sectors to maximize their collective resources and sustain Downtown's current economic momentum.

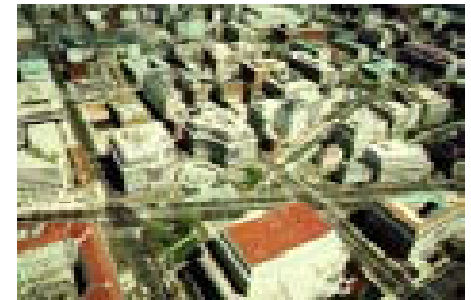
A City Center for Washingtonians

The Action Agenda aims to make central Washington not only a focal point for the region and the nation, but for the city and its neighborhoods. Downtown already plays an important role as the office and employment core for the region. It is the center of an urban office market which is the nation's second largest. It is also a center of national culture, with the country's densest concentration of museum space contained within the National Mall and surrounding area. Downtown must now be strengthened as an urban center and heart of activity within the city itself. To do this, the area's residential and retail base must be restored and recent development synergy reinforced.

Such synergy includes extending the cluster of new residential units being developed along the 7th Street corridor northward to create a new residential neighborhood in Mount Vernon Triangle. It also includes facilitating the current eastward expansion of the traditional office core to best enhance eastern districts. Finally, it involves strengthening connections to nearby assets such as the Southwest Waterfront, which is located only seven blocks from Downtown, and the National Mall.



Downtown in the region



Downtown Washington DC



Current Downtown Development Synergy



MCI Center



Washington Convention Center

Recent Successes in Downtown DC

The Action Agenda takes into account important successes that downtown has witnessed in recent years:

- The re-ignition of the downtown office market, where dozens of new class-A office buildings have been constructed in recent years;
- The construction of the MCI Center, home to the Washington Capitals, Wizards, and Mystics, and host to more than 200 events each year;
- The groundbreaking for Lincoln Square and Gallery Place, two projects that will add 30 movie screens and scores of new retail outlets into the downtown mix;
- The construction of the new Washington Convention Center at Mount Vernon Square, which will soon be the nation’s eighth largest convention facility.
- The resurgence of the downtown housing market, with more than 800 units now slated for development; and
- The announcement that the Newseum, an internationally known interactive museum of news, intends to develop a new state-of-the-art facility in Downtown DC.

These projects are changing the face of downtown. They have brought new life and energy, and they are spurring even more new development.

Downtown’s Challenges

Yet to maximize opportunity and achieve the vision outlined in this Action Agenda, a number of development challenges must be addressed:

- Downtown is almost fully built out. Within the next 5-10 years, the remaining 1.9 million square feet of developable land will be absorbed;
- The scarcity of space has created some of the highest rents in the country. These rent levels make it difficult to support a mix of retail, residential and arts uses in the downtown;
- The demand for space also threatens downtown’s remaining stock of historic buildings, which give downtown its character and sense of place;
- Steps should be taken to bolster housing development south of Massachu-

setts Avenue and create true urban neighborhoods;

- Parts of the downtown environment are cold and uninviting, and there continue to be significant impediments to downtown circulation; and
- To take advantage of the current real estate market, public officials must soon make decisions on key sites throughout the downtown, including the existing convention center site.

The Economic Potential of Downtown

Despite such challenges, Downtown Washington continues to act as the economic, cultural and social core of the city and the region. Located here are more than 70 million square feet of office space (twenty percent of the region’s total), 2 million square feet of retail, nearly 7,000 hotel rooms, 3,000 residential units, the Convention Center, the MCI Center, four national museums, and two courthouses. Approximately 120,000 people work downtown each day; 8 stations handle more than 25 percent of all Metrorail traffic; and downtown businesses generate about 30 percent of the city’s gross domestic product. A mixture of uses provides the highest economic, as well as quality-of-life benefit to the District:

- Retail uses provide 1 1/2 times the tax value of office uses to the District, on a per square foot basis;
- Each downtown resident typically contributes ten percent of his or her income to the District tax rolls;
- Attendance at live DC cultural events exceeds attendance at local sporting events. Downtown arts and sports venues together attract more than 8.9 million visitors each year.
- Occupancy and room rates at downtown hotels have risen in each of the past three years, and are the second highest in the nation.
- The downtown vacancy rate for class A office space is 5.1 percent, among the lowest in the nation.

Yet downtown’s economic potential is still largely untapped. As the table on the following page illustrates, the realization of downtown DC’s latent economic potential would generate more than 20,000 new jobs and more than \$112 million in new tax revenue annually.

Category	Goal	New Workers	Tax Benefits
Residential	7,600 new units	9,100 total new residents/ 2,500 new res. south of Mass Ave	\$30 million
Retail & Entertainment	1 million new s.f./ 700,000 repositioned	5,000	\$50 million
Arts & Culture	1,600 new seats	500	(Captured by Retail)
Hospitality & Tourism	1,500 new hotel rooms	1,000	\$12.5 million
Office Commercial	3.5-5 million new sq. ft.	15,000	\$20 million

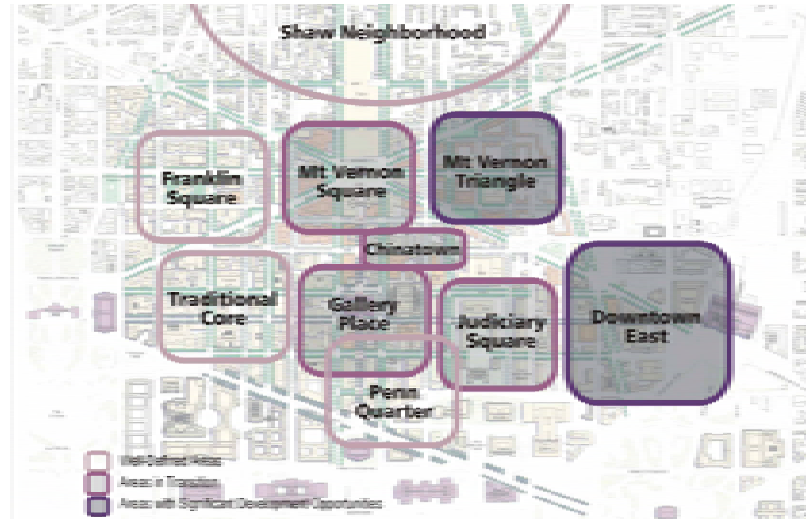
The Downtown Action Agenda is intended to provide a framework for decision-makers to begin to meet the challenges facing the city’s core and help reach its potential. It is structured around the key economic engines driving the downtown economy. These include commerce, hospitality, retailing, housing, and arts & culture. It attempts to integrate each of these economic drivers into a comprehensive land use plan, while reinforcing the identities of the various neighborhoods that comprise downtown DC.

Today’s Vision for Downtown DC

The Downtown Action Agenda is intended to guide downtown’s evolution in two ways. First, it seeks to establish a clear direction for future growth, so that emerging areas near the traditional downtown may establish their own unique identities instead of replicating existing development patterns. Secondly, it recognizes that all downtown neighborhoods need to be strengthened as vital and vibrant places.

Over the past decade, the character of downtown has rapidly evolved. Certain areas, such as Franklin Square, Penn Quarter, and Shaw are now well-defined communities - the first two are almost fully built out. Other areas, such as Mount Vernon Triangle or Downtown East, are rapidly evolving and contain significant development opportunities. The neighborhoods in between—Mount Vernon Square, Chinatown, and Gallery Place—are clearly in transition.

Because downtown is now almost fully built-out, the remaining development sites are of central importance: They represent a last opportunity to define neighborhoods and transform downtown into a true, multi-purpose destination — through the development of “preferred uses” such as housing, arts, and retail. The reuse of



the existing convention center site offers a critical, once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. Redevelopment of its 11 centrally located acres as a special destination with a dynamic mix of cultural and entertainment attractions, residential and retail uses, and civic open space would help complete downtown’s development as a living center.

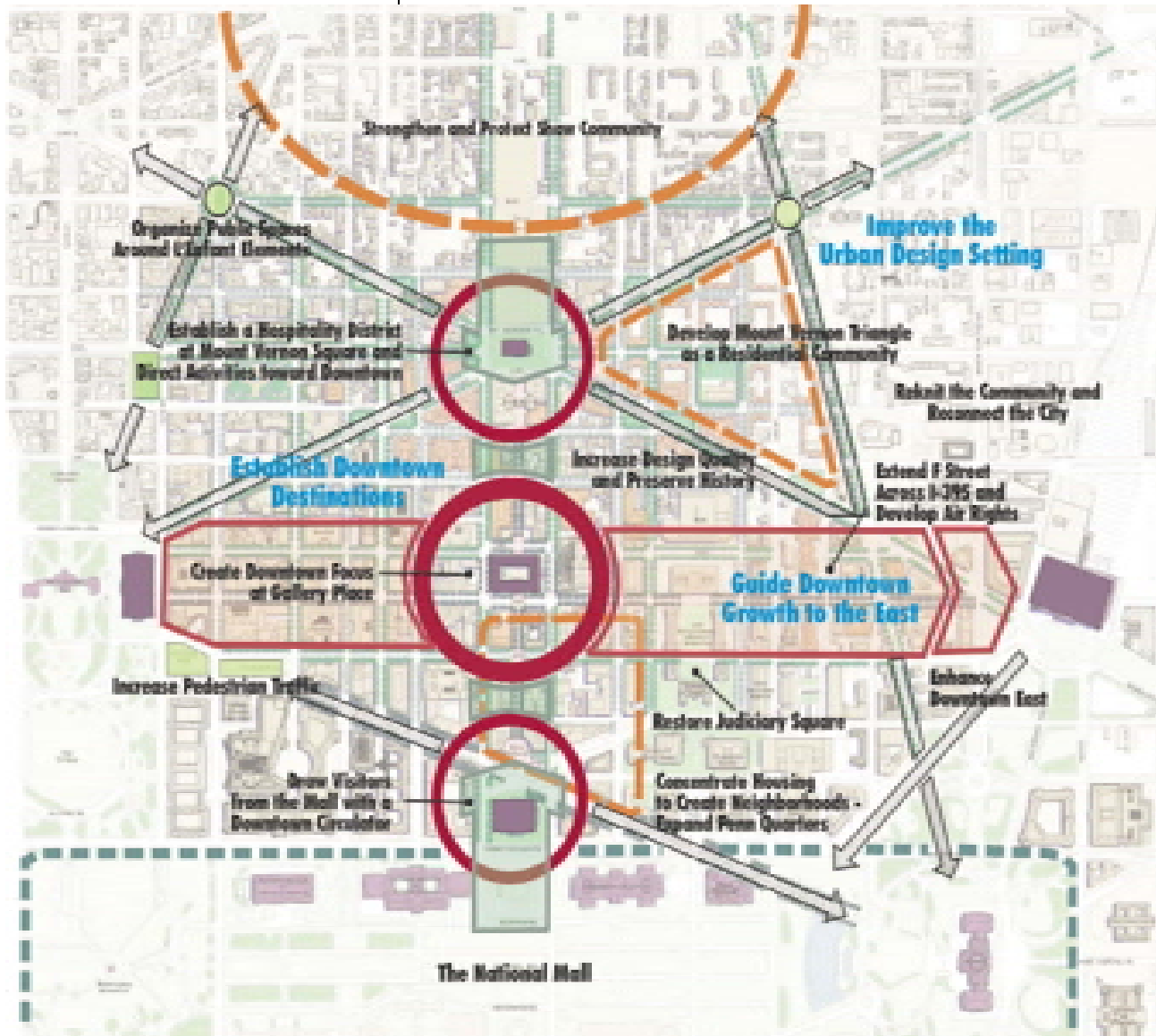
The vision of a mixed use downtown, first articulated in the 1982 Living Downtown Plan, defined downtown as:

- The heart of a world-class capital city;
- The premier office, entertainment and cultural destination in the region;
- A vibrant complement to the destinations that surround it: the Capitol, the Mall and the White House;
- A neighborhood where residents add life to the center city.
- A clean, safe and lively place, serving a diverse clientele 18 hours a day.

This vision is reaffirmed and strengthened by the Downtown Action Agenda, which sees downtown as a multi-purpose destination: It is a retail center for shoppers, a cultural district for art patrons, a convention destination for visitors, an employment center for workers, a center for sports and theatrical entertainment, and the hub of the region’s transportation network. For downtown residents, it is home.



Outdoor cafes are a colorful complement to Downtown destinations



Key Objectives

The Downtown Action Agenda has identified four objectives that must be achieved to realize this vision and to capture the full economic potential of downtown. These objectives are inter-related, and together form the foundation of the Action Agenda.

Objective One: Maximize and Concentrate Downtown Housing

Downtown housing has been an objective for many years. Center-city residents generate pedestrian traffic—especially in the evenings and on weekends. They support local businesses, and contribute significantly to the tax base. As regional congestion becomes more acute, centrally-located housing will become more valuable. Many cities, including Chicago, Denver, and Baltimore have made downtown housing a lynchpin of their redevelopment strategies. In DC, new residential developments, especially in Mount Vernon Triangle, will generate the residential base that the downtown has long needed and wanted. Several strategies support downtown housing as a clear priority in this Downtown Action Agenda.

Core Strategies:

- Strengthen and protect Shaw from commercial encroachment and support homeownership for current residents with appropriate infill
- Develop Mount Vernon Triangle as a dense residential neighborhood
- Complete housing build-out south of Massachusetts Avenue
- Maximize housing on publicly owned sites. Include housing on the existing convention center site.

Objective Two: Increase the Vitality of Street Life - Make Downtown a Great Place

High levels of pedestrian traffic are difficult to generate in a downtown as large as Washington's, but pedestrian counts are a critical barometer of success. To create a lively, active downtown, we must establish new destinations, and cluster downtown

attractions to create great streets filled with people 18 hours a day. While not every block in downtown can or should be a pedestrian destination, a strategic approach of pedestrian destinations linked by transit can create a lively, pedestrian-oriented downtown overall. Though significant, ongoing investment may be required to sustain high levels of pedestrian traffic, the larger tax revenues generated by increased street activity will be well worth the expense. Over the next 3-5 years, with new management initiatives, development incentives, and design improvements, the vitality of downtown DC's street life can be greatly improved.

Core Strategies:

- Create a focus for entertainment and retail at Gallery Place
- Strengthen the traditional retail corridor along F Street
- Improve the urban design setting through design initiatives and better public space management
- Improve the range of retail attractions, and provide ongoing support to downtown arts venues
- Create a new civic open space at the existing convention center site - a focal point for Washington residents to enjoy and celebrate downtown

Objective Three: Provide Clear Direction for Downtown Growth and Development - New Development Areas

Within the next three to five years, most observers expect that downtown—as presently defined—will approach build-out. To sustain its role as the center of the region's economic life, demand for commercial space must be accommodated in ways that retain or restore the important historic and residential resources at its boundaries. Within the next ten years, downtown will expand in two areas: Mount Vernon Square and Downtown East. These areas must be developed as vibrant places rather than single-use office districts - one primarily residential and one with a mixture of offices, retail, residential and cultural uses. The Downtown Action Agenda suggests several strategies to accommodate expansion and guide growth to connect the downtown to the rest of the city.

Core Strategies:

- Maximize preferred uses at the existing convention center site
- Establish a hospitality district at Mount Vernon Square
- Draw visitors from the Mall with a Downtown Circulator
- Extend F Street across I-395
- Encourage development of air rights over I-395
- Restore Judiciary Square to a dignified civic district
- Guide office expansion to Downtown East and residential development to Mount Vernon Square

Objective Four: Connect Growth to District Residents and Downtown Neighborhoods

Downtown growth should benefit District residents and neighborhoods. The new convention center, accompanying hotel developments, as well as new entertainment and cultural attractions all bring new service sector jobs to the city. Many of these are entry-level. Aggressive job placement and training approaches must accompany development strategies to ensure that District residents can take advantage of new opportunities. In addition to employment opportunities, a vibrant downtown with development on key sites creates tax revenues and other resources which can be used to support housing and improvements in the city's neighborhoods.

Core Strategies:

- Create a downtown job placement and training program
- Establish a downtown neighborhood housing trust fund and secure funding sources to capitalize this fund

To sustain its preeminent role in the regional economy, Downtown DC must respond to these challenges. In the following pages, the Downtown Action Agenda sets up a framework to expand the downtown economy while serving the social and economic needs of city residents. It identifies strategic actions that the public and private sectors can take to leverage their resources. Pursued in concert, these strategies will help Washington achieve its vision of an equitable, living downtown.



The Downtown Action Agenda aims to increase the vitality of street life by establishing well designed spaces (top) and by generating pedestrian traffic (bottom).



Downtown apartment buildings, such as the Lansburgh above, provide higher-density residential opportunities in the Penn Quarter area.

2 Strategies and Recommendations

The Downtown Action Agenda is based on the idea that each element of the downtown’s economy and infrastructure reinforces the others. Housing, retail, arts, hospitality and office uses are integrated into an overall strategy. While each of the following sections focuses on one economic element, the Action Agenda seeks to weave them together into a comprehensive package that leverages their individual strengths.

Downtown as Residential Center

Downtown housing can be a significant catalyst for urban revitalization. Downtown residents are especially valuable because they increase pedestrian traffic and support shops, restaurants, cultural facilities, and businesses in the evening, on weekends, and during off-seasons, when office workers and visitors have gone home. Residents’ “eyes on the street” increase neighborhood security and their incomes bolster city tax revenues.

Within the Downtown Action Agenda study area, there are currently about 3,300 downtown housing units. This is just 26% of the 1982 Living Downtown Plan’s 12,500-unit target. The most pronounced shortfall is in the area south of Massachusetts Avenue.

Under current zoning, 2,100 new units south of Massachusetts Avenue and 5,500 units to its north could be built. Given this potential, and assuming the implementation of several new zoning incentives, downtown could accom-



There are many medium-density housing units adjacent to Downtown in the Shaw neighborhood.

Residential Units	Total Downtown	South of Massachusetts Avenue	North of Massachusetts Avenue
Existing (Current Supply)	3,300	1,500	1,800
New Planned ¹	850	850	0
New Required ²	4,350	650	3,700
New Public ³	2,400	600	1,800
Total (Future Supply)	10,900	3,600	7,300
Original Goal (total units)	12,500	5,400	7,100
Shortfall/Surplus	-1,600	-1,800	200

Note ¹ Units in projects that have been programmed or publicly announced; ² Units required by existing zoning or overlay requirements (including 500-unit residential bonus for FAR calculations in Mt. Vernon Triangle); ³ Units located on District-owned properties. These figures do not include an additional 400 potential housing units north of M Street in the Shaw community.
Source: D.C. Office of Planning, D.C. Office of Tax and Revenue, EDAW, Inc.

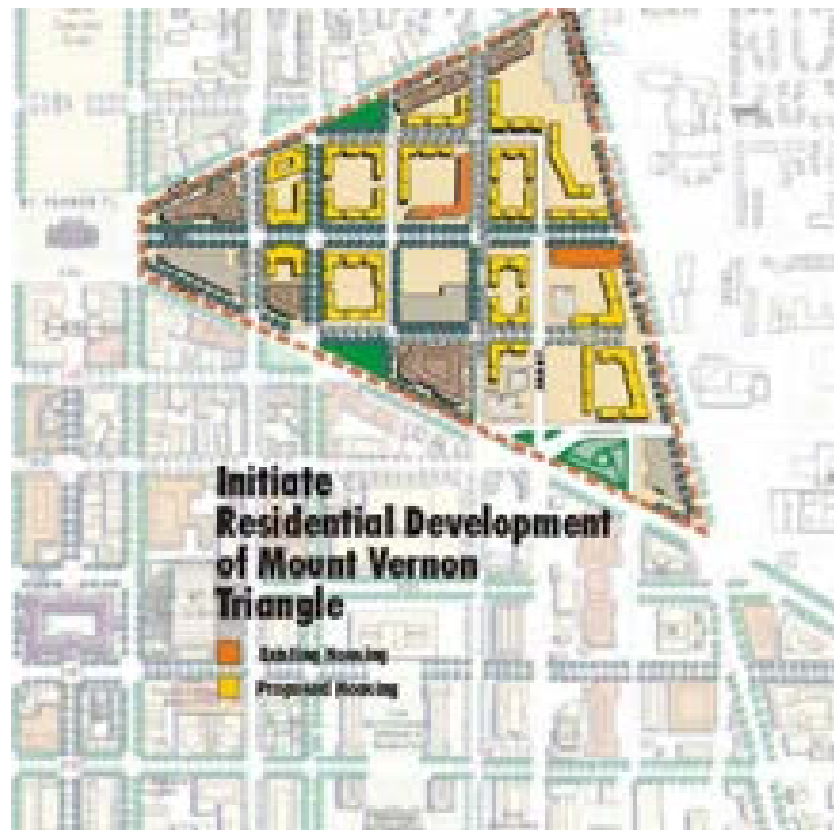
modate a total of nearly 11,000 total housing units. While this section addresses special areas in which to concentrate new residential communities, one key location for new housing south of Massachusetts Avenue is the existing convention center site, which offers three blocks of redevelopment opportunities. Based on conservative estimates, the 7,600 new units could produce a total return of more than \$30 million annually to the District.

Across the country, downtown living has become increasingly appealing to a new demographic seeking proximity to the jobs and cultural offerings of urban centers. In Washington, a number of major new residential projects reflect a growing sense of confidence in the downtown housing market. However, several impediments to housing development have been identified. These include technical difficulties in executing combined lot provisions of the zoning regulations, the need for large sites which provide a critical mass of units, and the significant cost of land and capital required for residential development.

Strategy One: Create an Urban Residential Neighborhood in Mount Vernon Triangle

Mount Vernon Triangle should be developed primarily as a new downtown residential neighborhood. As the last available and most appropriate location for a significant concentration of new Downtown housing, Mount Vernon Triangle has the potential to accommodate approximately 5,500 new housing units. Here, a lively, high-density neighborhood with a critical mass of residents would support nearby Downtown retail uses and serve as a transitional buffer to lower-density residential areas to the north.

Various land use plans and policies currently support the concentration of housing in Mount Vernon Triangle. However, the current density permitted here for commercial uses (3.5 FAR) is too intense to encourage appropriate residential development. (Once commercial office space is envisioned as a viable use, it becomes difficult to encourage residential development, which is viewed by financial institutions and developers as less proven in the downtown area). A number of actions are required to achieve the appropriate mix of residential and commercial space. First, new incentives should be made available to encourage private residential development and lessen institutional resistance. In addition, publicly owned land in the area should be developed for residential use at the maximum density permit-



ted. Finally, public space improvements should be authorized, the DDD overlay consistently applied, and the amount of commercial office development allowed in Mount Vernon Triangle reduced. With a concerted effort, a projected 5.5 million square feet of residential space and 1.9 million square feet of commercial space could be developed within the Mount Vernon Triangle neighborhood.

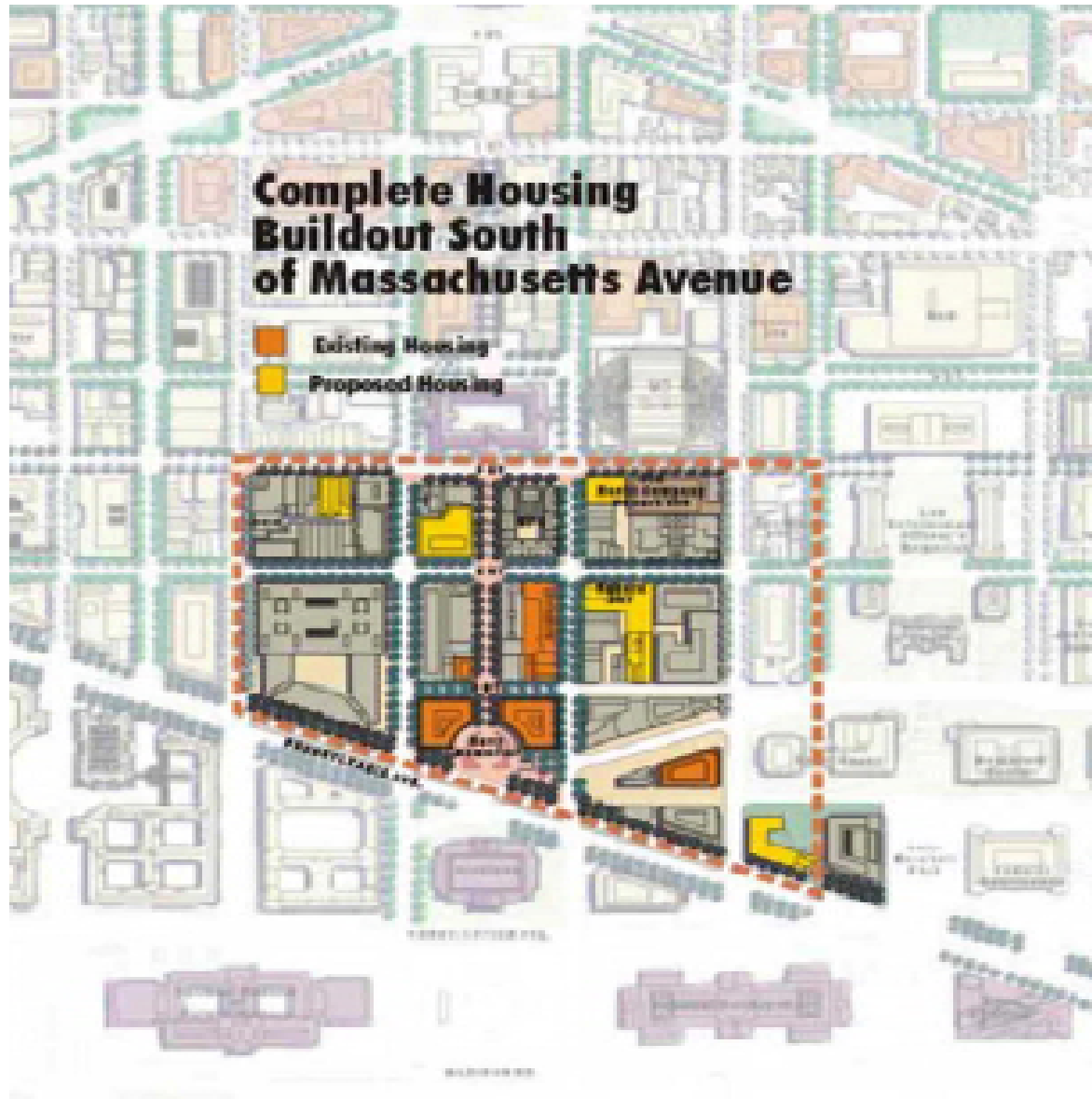
The Downtown Action Agenda envisions Mount Vernon Triangle as a residential area containing primarily apartments and condominiums, with ground floor retail centered along the broad expanse of K Street. A locally oriented residential land use pattern would support a broad mix of commercial uses, including convenience retail, small offices and commercial arts uses. Larger uses could locate at the outer edges of the Triangle, especially along New York Avenue. Adaptively reused historic buildings should enrich the streetscape

and well designed new parks and open spaces should provide focal points within the Mount Vernon Triangle neighborhood

Key Actions: Develop a set of housing criteria - density, height, footprint - to create a premiere urban neighborhood; Issue RFPs for key sites to set a standard of excellence for residential development; Adopt tax abatements; Recommend Comprehensive Plan amendments to support housing Downtown.



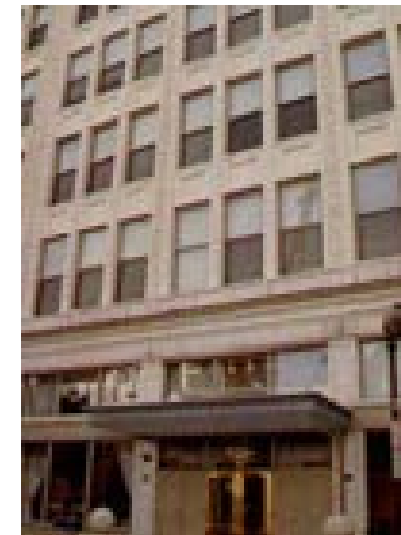
Residential and retail uses (top) and apartments with ground-floor retail (above) on Wisconsin Avenue



Strategy Two: Complete Housing Build-Out South of Massachusetts Avenue

Downtown housing should be concentrated in key locations to strengthen existing Downtown neighborhoods and initiate new residential areas. Specifically, housing development should be directed to Penn Quarter to build upon the residential neighborhood around Market Square.

Residential development with supporting restaurant, convenience, and cultural uses should be added south of Massachusetts Avenue. This can be accomplished in part by applying residential zoning requirements on public sites and by eliminating the timing requirements for transferable development rights under the combined lot program for private sites. Publicly owned or controlled locations suitable for residential development include Square 491 (DOES building), Square 457 (former DC Space site), and the Mather Building.



Retail buildings have been adaptively reused for residences in Penn Quarter.

Key Action: Adopt a pro-housing regulatory package that includes zoning flexibility to support new residential development

Strategy Three: Strengthen and Protect the Existing Shaw Community

The neighborhood of Shaw, generally defined as the area north of M Street between New York and Massachusetts Avenue, is a vital community which contains primarily townhouses and medium-sized apartment buildings. Unfortunately, there also are approximately 400 vacant housing units and numerous empty lots scattered throughout the area. With the arrival of the new convention center and associated increases in property value and development pressure on vacant sites, the Shaw community is likely to experience change.

To strengthen the existing community and help buffer the effects of new development forces, infill development, physical improvements to housing stock, historic preservation tax credits, and retail enhancement programs should be implemented. A strategic plan should be developed to utilize historic preservation and community development funds made available by the new convention center development. New construction should be sensitive in use, scale, and density to the existing residential fabric. At the edge of Shaw closest to Downtown, in the blocks located between Mount Vernon Square and M Street (including Squares 341, 369, and 450), approximately 500 housing units could be constructed as part of a mixed-use development. To minimize effects of increased housing costs on current and long-time residents, home ownership assistance and low-cost home improvement programs should be quickly expanded and aggressively promoted.

Key Actions: Expand Enterprise Zone for Housing; Create a strategic plan to utilize historic preservation and community development funds available in Shaw.

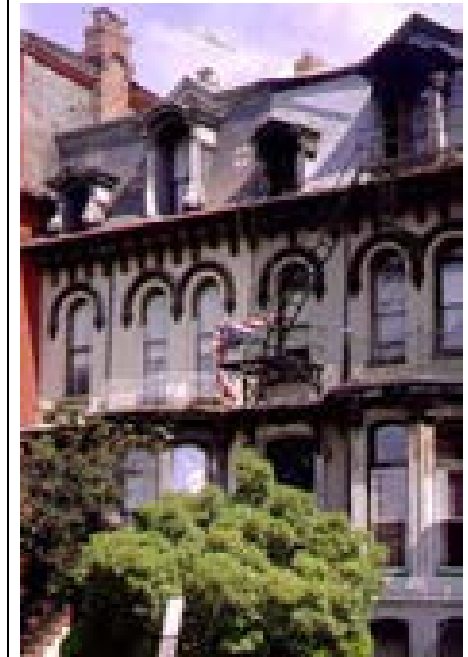
Strategy Four: Connect Downtown Economic Growth to Local Residents



The benefits of an expanding downtown economy include new jobs and a stronger tax base. New retail, entertainment, the convention center and hotel developments create service-sector jobs, many of them entry-level. Job placement and training activities should be implemented to link residents to new opportunities.

In addition to encouraging preferred uses on key sites, resources generated by development can be harnessed to contribute to housing and other improvements to local neighborhoods.

Key Actions: Dedicate funds for a downtown job training and placement program; Establish a downtown neighborhood housing trust fund.



Shaw residences require protection from intrusive commercial uses.

Downtown as the Center for Retail and Entertainment



The Hecht's Company operates the sole remaining Downtown department store.

Washington's re-emergence as a dynamic entertainment destination and retail center has begun. Since the opening of the MCI Center in 1997, the number of visitors to Downtown attractions and events has grown from 3 million to 8 million, and more than 29 new restaurants have opened. The growing strength of Downtown as an entertainment and dining destination is fueling complementary retail development. It also sets the stage for the arrival of national name, large-format stores and specialty retailers such as Barnes and Noble, Borders Books, Ann Taylor, and Banana Republic. There is currently approximately 2 million square feet of retail space in the Downtown area, including the following existing and programmed retailers:

Name	Location	Estimated Sq. Feet	Specialty
Hecht's Company	12th Street & G Street	200,000	Only Downtown department store
Shops at National Place	F St between 13th & 14th Streets	124,000	More than 50 stores/restaurants
Old Post Office	12th St & Pennsylvania Avenue	101,140	Retail/entertainment/eatery
ESPN Zone	555 12th Street	107,000	Sports-related entertainment
Gallery Place	North of MCI Center	400,000	Retail/entertainment with 25 screen movie theater (incl. residential component)
Hamilton Square	Formerly Garfinkels	56,000	Retail
Historic buildings	F St between Woodies & 9th; 7th St between Penn Avenue & Chinatown	Unknown	Four buildings are seeking approval for restaurants

Source: Downtown, D.C., Business Improvement District

Downtown retail presently draws from three market segments which generate substantial demand: District residents, Downtown workers, and day and overnight visitors. Based on market demand estimates, it is projected that Downtown can currently

Projections of Supportable Retail Space in Downtown

Year	New Space ^{\1}	Total Space ^{\1}
2000	0.5 to 1.2 msf	4.7 to 5.2 msf
2005	1.5 to 2.3 msf	5.5 to 6.3 msf
2010	2.8 to 3.8 msf	7.8 to 8.9 msf

\1/ Figure ranges include conservative and optimistic projections in millions of square feet (msf). Source: ERA

support from 500,000 to 1.2 million square feet of additional retail space, with an additional 1.5 to 2.3 million square feet by 2005, and an additional 2.8 to 3.8 million square feet by 2020.

Retail uses are highly lucrative for the District. With a 5.75% sales tax (10% for food and beverage) combined with a commercial property tax, retail produces one-and-a-half times the tax value per square foot of office uses. An additional 1 million square feet of high quality national or large-space retail uses would generate between \$20-\$25 million of additional tax revenue annually.

For downtown to fulfill its potential as a retail center, a number of challenges must be met. The existing mix of retailers on F Street and 7th Street should be concentrated into retail clusters which, over time, could be connected in an unbroken chain to cover several blocks. New sites need to be identified to house large space users, which act as anchor attractions for Downtown, and additional financial incentives provided to spur retail development. In addition, a high quality retail environment can be bolstered with better management of vending, the creation of sidewalk cafés, and improved streetscape elements in public spaces. The limited availability of short-term parking spaces adjacent to desirable locations is also a continuing concern which must be resolved.

Strategy One: Establish Gallery Place and 7th Street as a Center for Entertainment and Retail

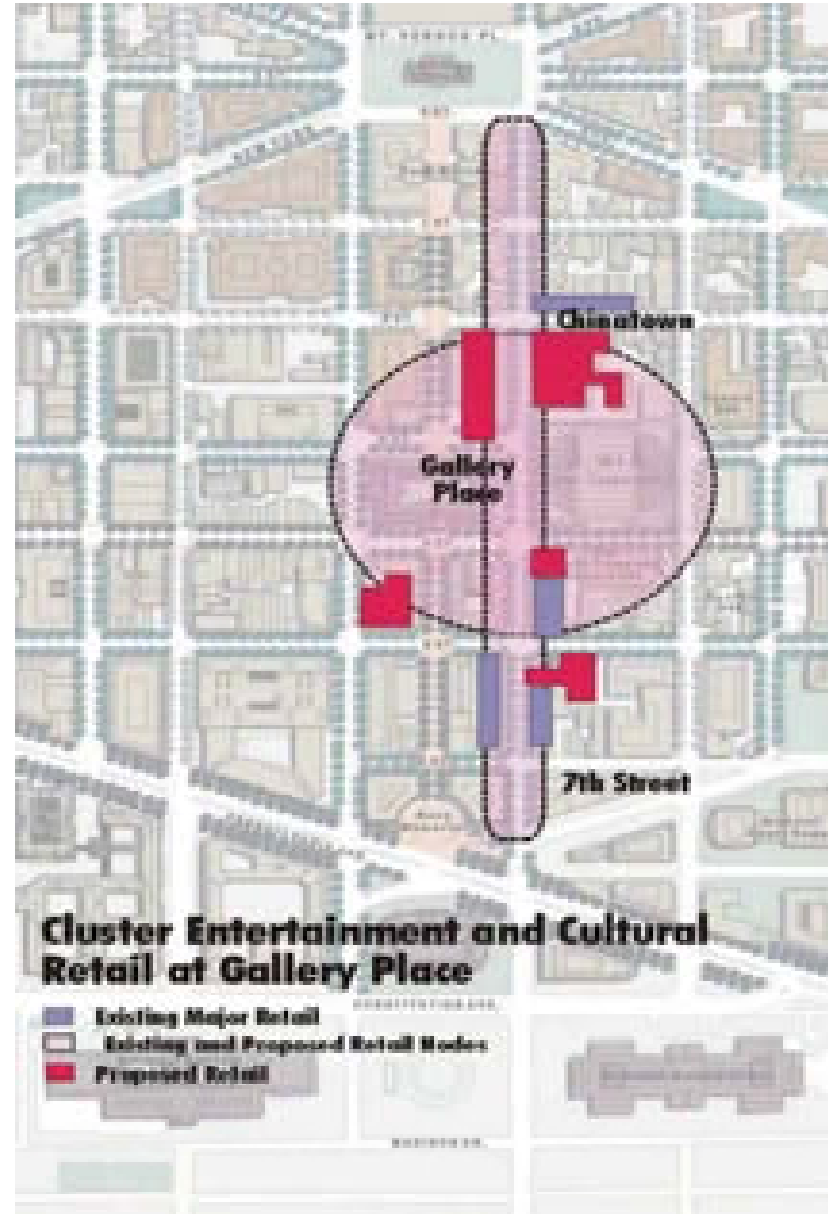
Approximately 1 million new square feet of new retail space should be strategically clustered at specific Downtown locations. The Gallery Place area, centered at the intersection of the F Street and 7th Street corridors, should be the primary destination for regional and one-of-a-kind retail, entertainment, and cultural uses in Downtown. The Gallery Place project on Square 454 will serve as one anchor for the area. It will offer 356,000 total square feet of retail and entertainment, with a 25-screen movie theater, numerous large entertainment restaurants and retailers, 160 residential units, and five levels of structured parking. A second anchor could be created through a mixed-use redevelopment of the old Hecht's Company building at 7th and F Streets, with residential and ground-floor entertainment and/or cultural uses. Just north of Gallery Place, Chinatown should be preserved and enhanced as one of Downtown's most unique districts - offering special cultural and retail experiences.

The southern segment of 7th Street, with its major attractions, historic buildings, Arts Walk, and proximity to the E Street Theater Row, provides a unique setting for distinctive restaurants, art galleries, and independent retailers. While these smaller retailers may not generate the per-foot sales of their larger counterparts, they are crucial as they provide a distinct image and authentic environment for Downtown. An overall strategy to encourage additional national-chain restaurants, retailers, and combined entertainment uses will help the Gallery Place and 7th Street area continue to emerge as the center of nightlife in Downtown.

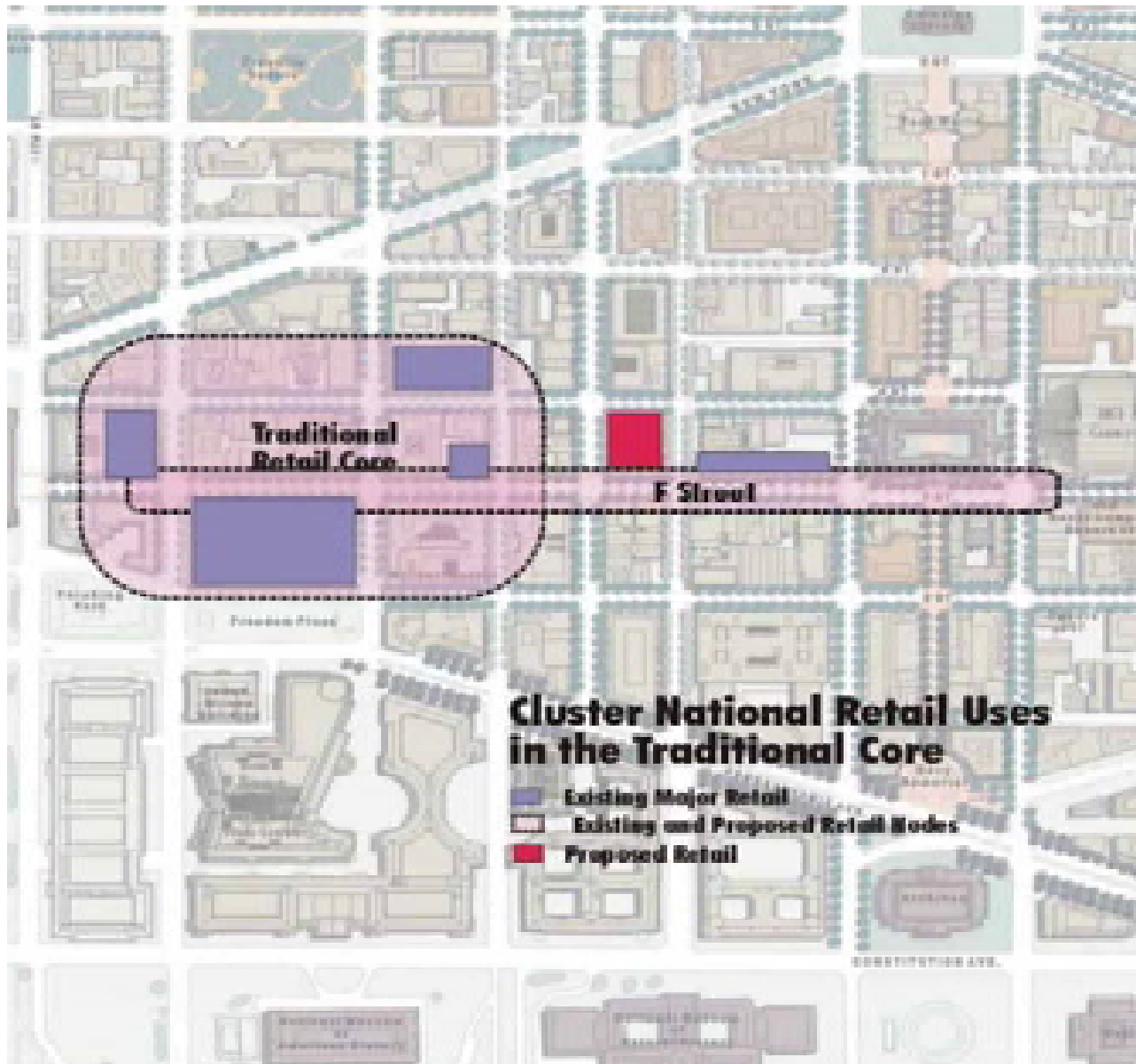


700 block of 7th Street

Key Action: Institute a Downtown Development Corporation that would facilitate retail development and promote Downtown as part of its mission.



The Gallery Place area surrounding the MCI Center is an appropriate location for restaurants and retailers.



Strategy Two: Strengthen the Traditional Retail Core and F Street as a Center for National Retail

The traditional retail core, centered by the Hechts Company department store at 12th and G Streets, generally extends along F and G Streets from 15th to 12th Streets. This core includes national tenants such as Ann Taylor and Banana Republic, with a Border's Books to open soon. Retail development should be encouraged, at infill sites within this corridor, to ultimately extend along F and G Streets to 7th Street.



Downtown's traditional retail core includes national tenants.



The Woodward & Lothrop building can accommodate large-footprint retail uses and anchor the F Street corridor.

Specifically, large-scale retail and entertainment development of the Woodward and Lothrop Building would provide an important destination component on F Street, uniting existing office and retail development west of 11th Street with the more entertainment-oriented retail of Gallery Place to the east. Over time, G street and the E Street Theater Row should be strengthened with additional cultural uses and retailers to further enliven the F Street retail corridor.

Key Action: Develop an area-wide tax increment financing program

Strategy Three: Encourage an Appropriate Mix of Retail Uses at Mount Vernon Square

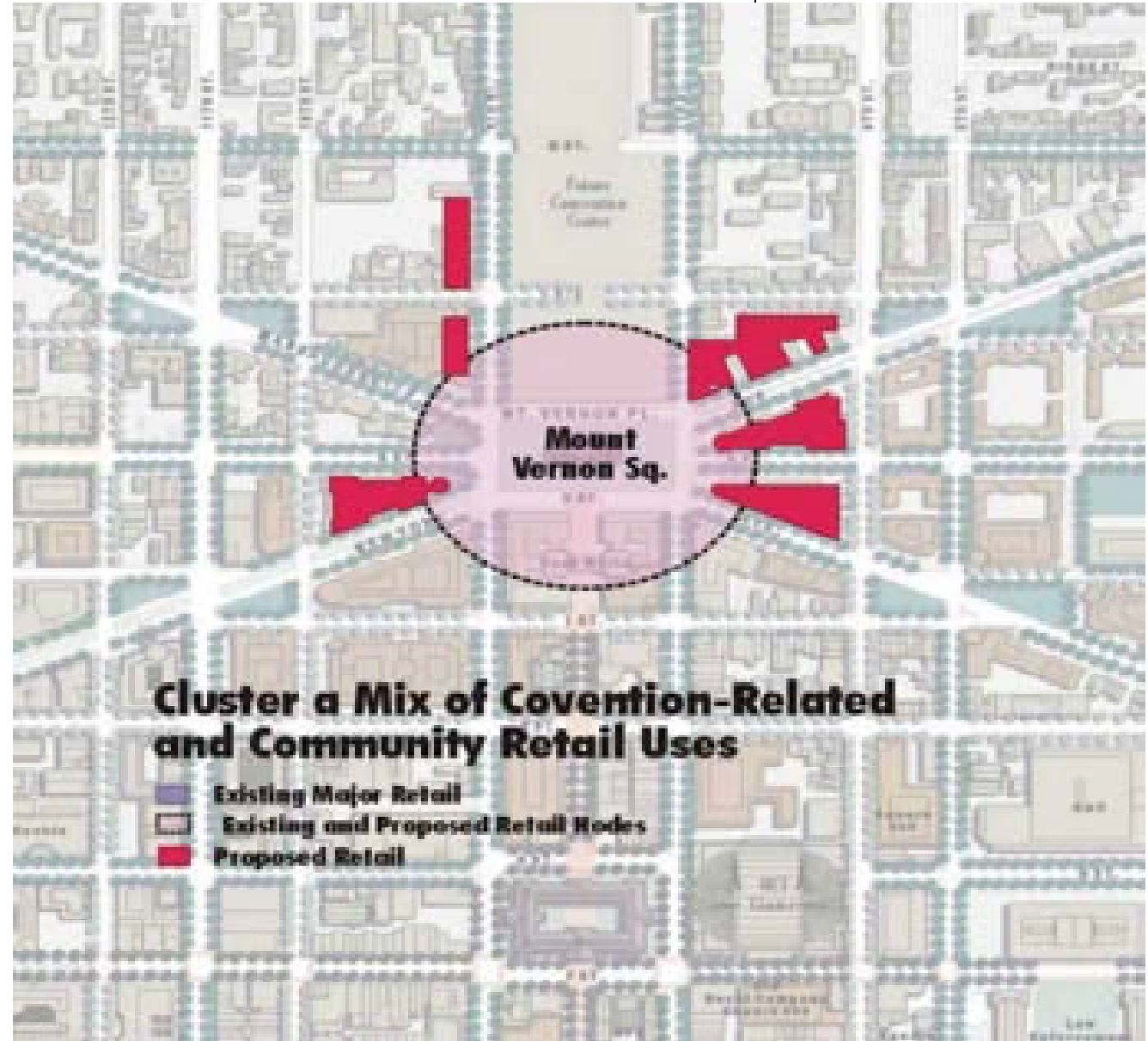
The new Washington Convention Center will create a demand for the larger restaurants and retailers often provided by national establishments. The area just south of Mount Vernon Square is an appropriate location for such national retail and entertainment uses. However, to the north of M Street, more neighborhood-oriented retail uses should be encouraged to locate in the the Shaw community.



In addition to retail uses, business services are appropriate for the Mt. Vernon Square area.



Retail uses and sidewalk cafes enliven the street



Downtown as a Center for Culture

One of Downtown’s most unique aspects is its cultural heritage. Set among the great destinations of the Federal city--the Capitol, the National Mall, and the White House--Downtown has a wealth of cultural attractions of its own, including renowned theaters, galleries, museums, and libraries.

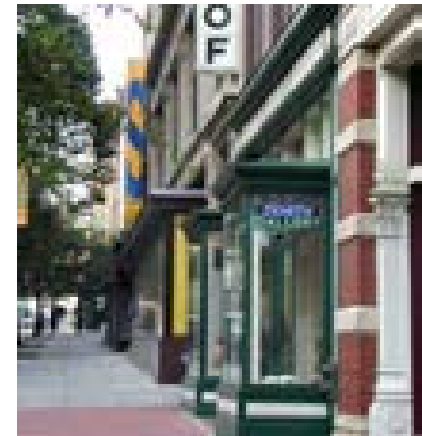
Cultural activities and facilities complement office, retail, and entertainment uses and are a key aspect of a comprehensive revitalization strategy. For almost twenty years, civic leaders have advocated a stronger role for the arts downtown. Cultural institutions often act as urban “pioneers”, or catalysts which directly and indirectly generate revenues and increase interest in the urban core. Such activities can increase sales tax



Art galleries are a blend of retail and cultural uses.

revenues, increasing demand for office space, raising property values, and enhancing the public image of the city. Aggregate data from studies in other major urban centers determined that each theater patron spends at least \$50 per visit outside of the theater on parking, transit, food, beverages and retail items. Therefore, the development of 1,600 new theater seats could generate over \$25 million in spin-off sales and \$2 million in tax revenue annually to the District.

Planning for Downtown as a center for arts and cultural is not simply a matter of advocacy and programming; it is also a matter of physical space and economics. Strong growth in the Downtown office market is putting upward pressure on land prices and has made cultural development more difficult. The Action Agenda recommends ways to increase the amount of space available for arts uses beyond those required under existing zoning regulations, and suggests a new set of arts incentives.



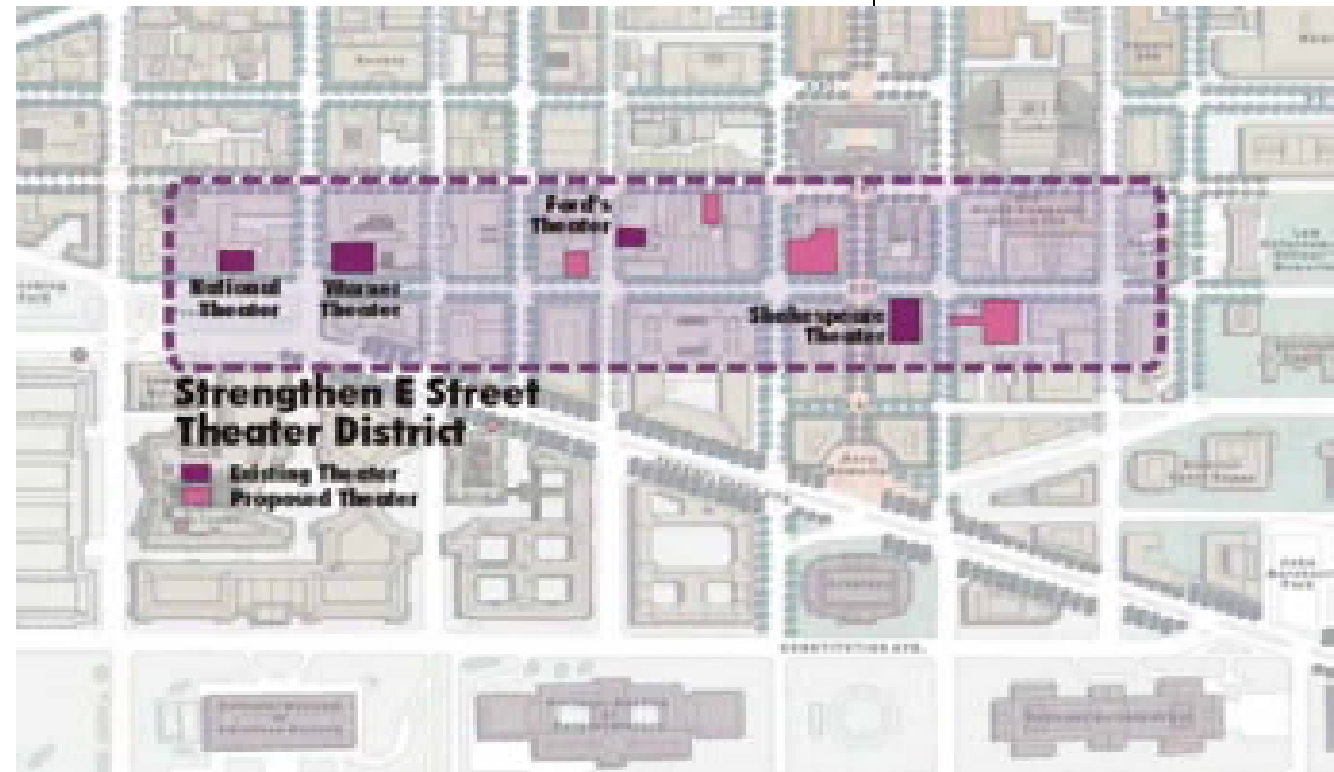
Galleries are attractive additions to the urban streetscape.

Strategy One: Retain and Expand the E Street Theater District

Although more than 720,000 people went to a live theater performance at one of the E Street Theater Row venues (including the National, Warner, Ford's, and Shakespeare Theaters), booking constraints restrict many of the theaters' attendance; 1998 attendance figures represent only 60% of their overall house capacity. At the same time, studies suggest that sufficient demand exists to accommodate the development of 1,600 new seats in four new venues. New theater venues, including performing arts space similar to the Lansburgh, homes for expanding theater companies, and a flexible "black box" space for smaller, emerging companies, can transform E Street into a dynamic "theater district" destination, second only to Times Square in New York.



Theaters attract visitors to Downtown that patronize restaurants, nightclubs, stores, and parking and transit facilities.



Key Actions: Establish a direct mechanism to appropriate capital funds for arts. Adhere to current policy to commit one percent of capital budget for arts uses.



The Arts Walk on 7th Street is a key amenity to Downtown.

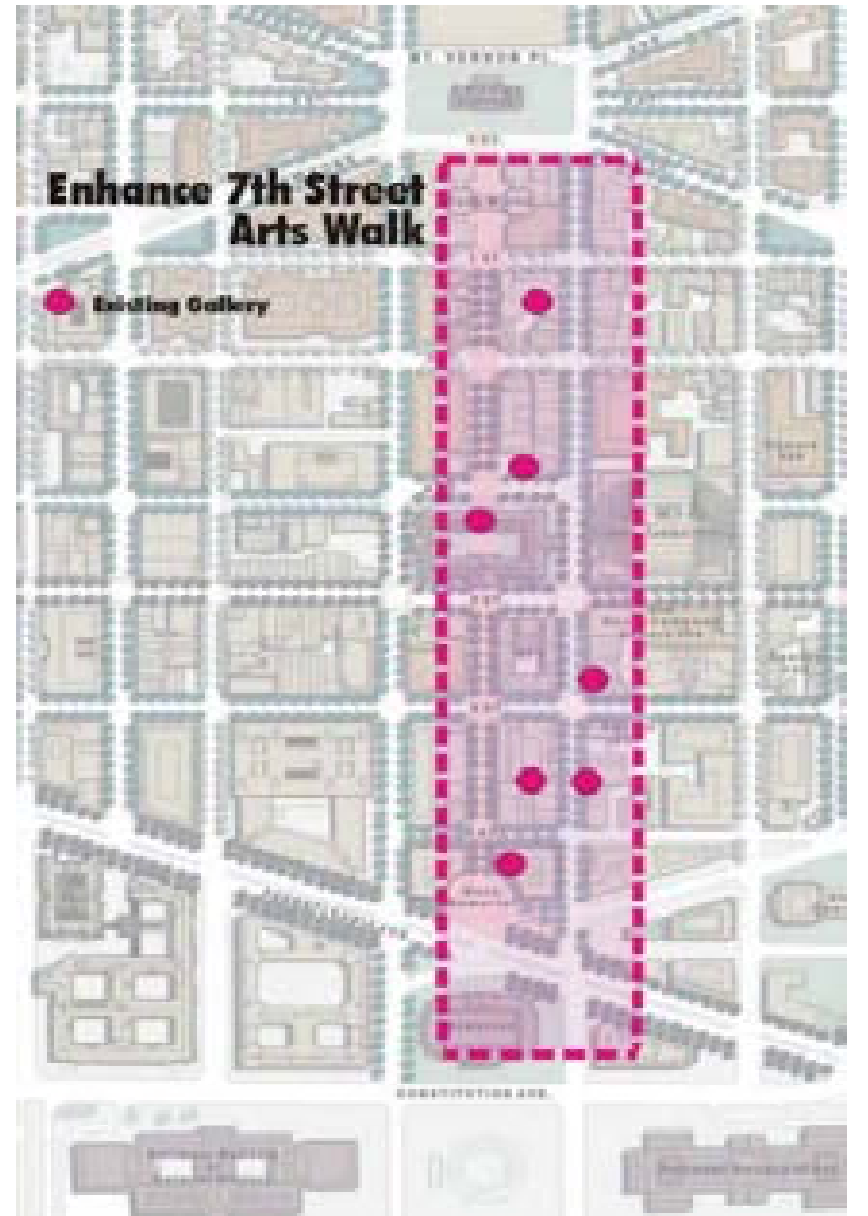
Strategy Two: Cluster Art Galleries along 7th Street to Enhance the Arts Walk

The Seventh Street Arts Walk links the museums and cultural exhibits on the National Mall with close to a dozen art galleries in the Pennsylvania Quarter neighborhood. Even though the Seventh Street Arts Walk is well located and in the Downtown Development District (which grants bonus densities for additional arts spaces), Downtown art galleries are in a precarious state. In the very near future, escalating rents may force many of the private commercial and non-profit galleries near 7th Street to either close or relocate out of Downtown. Since galleries provide economic opportunities for area artists and benefit the cultural perception of the city, it is important to ensure their continued existence by creating a strong, coherent arts corridor. Where feasible, galleries and artists' live/work spaces should be included in developments on publicly owned sites.



Ideally, an expanded cluster of arts-related uses should be located along 7th Street in the Gallery Place area. Redevelopment of historic buildings as art galleries and exhibition spaces, indoor and outdoor art installations, and the proposed Downtown Circulator would each help transform 7th Street into an "18-hour" arts destination.

Key Action: Aggressively market the arts district



Strategy Three: Attract Major Cultural Venues to Downtown

It is paramount that major facilities for cultural arts be located Downtown. One-of-a-kind venues, such as performing arts spaces, the MCI Center, and major museums, draw people to the Downtown area from the National Mall and the Convention Center. Marketing, financial, and regulatory incentives can help Downtown become the region's focus for cultural arts performances and exhibitions.

Downtown needs a multi-use facility that can serve as a cultural information hub for the District. A redeveloped and expanded Martin Luther King, Jr. Library could be adapted to serve as a dual-purpose cultural center and headquarters library. This site is ideal as it is near Gallery Place and is large enough to accommodate exhibits, performances, and other events. Another key opportunity is the existing convention center site, which can be redeveloped with a mix of cultural attractions and other uses.

Studios or apartments with living space as well as flexible exhibit, performance, and working spaces should be developed in city-owned properties near 7th Street and north of Massachusetts Avenue. The Mather Building on G Street and the Franklin School at 13th & K Streets could offer ideal settings for affordable studios and flexible exhibit/rehearsal space that will help create new energy for the arts in Downtown.

Key Actions: Develop tax abatements to expand or attract arts uses wherever possible; Initiate a new facilities plan for the MLK Library to make it a focal point for cultural and civic activity; Encourage gallery and arts uses wherever possible.



Downtown as a Destination for Tourists and Visitors

Washington D.C. is one of the top tourism and business destinations in the country due to its concentration of national attractions and historic sites, its importance as the seat of the federal government, and its emerging role as a high-tech center. The hospitality industry is an important economic generator for the District, second only to the federal government in its creation of jobs and taxes for the city. Downtown is poised to capture a larger share of the region's \$3.6 billion hospitality market with 7,000 hotel rooms (most within a half mile of the new convention center), a state-of-the-art convention center slated to open in 2003, the new MCI Center, numerous major attractions, and an emerging entertainment and retail economy.

The new Convention Center, which will offer a 2.1 million square feet of exhibition and meeting space for the national conventions of professional associations, will be the centerpiece of the hospitality market. It will double the number of conventions held in the city, thereby placing pressure on the 2,650 rooms that currently are "committable" for use during conventions. The Office of Planning is currently conducting a study to



The new Washington Convention Center



Specialty hotels offer alternative accommodations for Downtown visitors

assess the potential demand for additional downtown hotel rooms, and to determine possible sites and financing mechanisms necessary to meet the demand for convention hotel facilities.

With coordinated marketing, the new retail, entertainment and convention developments in downtown DC will keep Washington competitive as a visitor and convention destination for years to come.

Strategy One: Establish a Hospitality District to Support the New Convention Center

A “hospitality district” should be established in the Mount Vernon Square area to accommodate the approximately 3,000 new hotel rooms that may be needed to serve the new convention center. This district should be centered along the 9th Street corridor, south and west of the new convention center. This location would build upon the existing cluster of hotels, encourage convention-goers to explore the various retail, entertainment, and cultural offerings of the Gallery Place area, and help guide larger density development away from the largely residential Shaw community. In addition to establishing an attractive setting for convention hotels, the hospitality district would also allow the market to determine the most suitable location and number of additional Downtown hotels. This new hotel development could generate 4,000 jobs and \$25 million in sales and property taxes for the District.



Strategy Two: Encourage Convention Hotels within the Hospitality District

Convention planners prefer a small number of large hotels located as close as possible to convention facilities. To meet the expected room demand in Washington, should include approximately 3,000 new rooms: 1,200 to 1,500 rooms in the primary headquarters hotel and 1,000 to 1,200 rooms in a second convention-oriented hotel. Both convention hotels should have a significant amount of meeting rooms, exhibit space, banquet facilities, and parking to give meeting planners greater flexibility for conventions and meetings and to improve the marketability of Washington as a meeting site. Hotels located near the convention center’s “head house”, which includes the main entrance and registration area, would be easily accessible for convention-goers.



Former office buildings can become hotels through adaptive reuse.

Key Action: Determine potential headquarters hotel locations and establish new zoning to ensure sufficient space for hotel development.



Convention hotels typically have several hundred rooms, as well as meeting and exhibit spaces.

Strategy Three: Support the Mount Vernon Square Hospitality District with Retail and Commercial Services

While the new Convention Center is expected to pump \$1.1 billion into the region's economy in its first year of operation, it can only do that if convention goers have opportunities to spend money nearby. Therefore, the hospitality district should be a vibrant and safe environment that is active during all times of the day and all days of the week. Increasing the level of activity during non-business hours can be achieved through retail initiatives, restaurants, entertainment options, special events, and improved pedestrian connections to the Gallery Place area.

To capture the visitor spending generated by the Convention Center, the hospitality district and the 7th and 9th Street corridors near Mount Vernon Square should be developed with a mix of convention center-oriented, national-chain restaurants, retail, and entertainment uses. The success of the new Convention Center and the hospitality district will also depend upon its integration into the Downtown environment. Pedestrian connections, transportation linkages, and streetscapes between the Convention Center district and Downtown attractions must be improved.



Retail, entertainment, and restaurant uses are important supplements to hotels.



The Evening Star Building

Downtown as the Center of Commerce

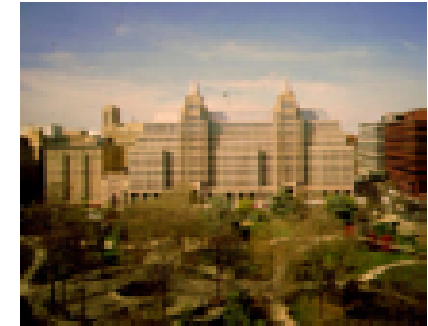
Downtown’s commercial office buildings house the core industries that anchor the city’s economy. With more than 70 million square feet of office space and approximately 200,000 workers, the downtown office market is one of the largest and strongest in the country. Vacancy rates have steadily declined over the last three years and some new developments are achieving rents in excess of \$50 per square foot, among the highest in the nation. After rebounding from the recession of the early 1990s, the Downtown office market now has approximately 3.7 million-sq. ft. of office space under construction or programmed.

Downtown’s competitive advantage is its location and its sense of place. But Downtown faces many future challenges, including regional competition and physical constraints to growth. Based on projected job growth of 10,000 new office employees between 2000 and 2005, there will be demand over the next five years for approximately 2.1 million square feet of additional office space in the “Downtown” area. Long-range projections suggest that over the next 20 years, there will be demand for an additional 13-18 million square feet of office space.

District Office Market Total Supply 1993-1998 (in Thousands)							
Submarket	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	Total Change
Total Washington	85,449	88,095	91,466	91,701	92,471	93,511	8,062
East End (Downtown)	25,009	26,199	27,782	27,993	28,101	28,520	3,511

Note: Does not include approximately 11.9 million square feet of GSA owned property.
Source: Spaulding & Slye; Economics Research Associates

Based on the development potential of Downtown and adjacent subareas shown in the table below, there will be a shortage of space available to meet the 20-year demand.



Franklin Square

New commercial areas are emerging to accommodate the demand: the expanded Downtown East area, NoMa, the Southeast Federal Center, and the Anacostia waterfront. Although the office market is strong today, it is important that Downtown remain competitive relative to the outlying suburbs and it is important to integrate and coordinate the development of future commercial centers.

Development Potential	
Location	Square Feet
Remainder of Downtown (Squares 285,343,370,372,406,452,456)	1,900,000
I-395 Air Rights	850,000
Remainder of Downtown East (Squares 571, 626, 628)	550,000
H Street Area (Squares 622,W623,W624) ²	1,500,000
Mount Vernon Triangle ¹	1,900,000

^{1/} recommended limit of 1.9 msf to accommodate increased housing
^{2/} generally considered to be located outside of the traditional downtown area
Source: D.C. Office of Planning, D.C. Office of Tax and Revenue, EDAAW, Inc.

Strategy One: Guide Downtown Commercial Growth Eastward



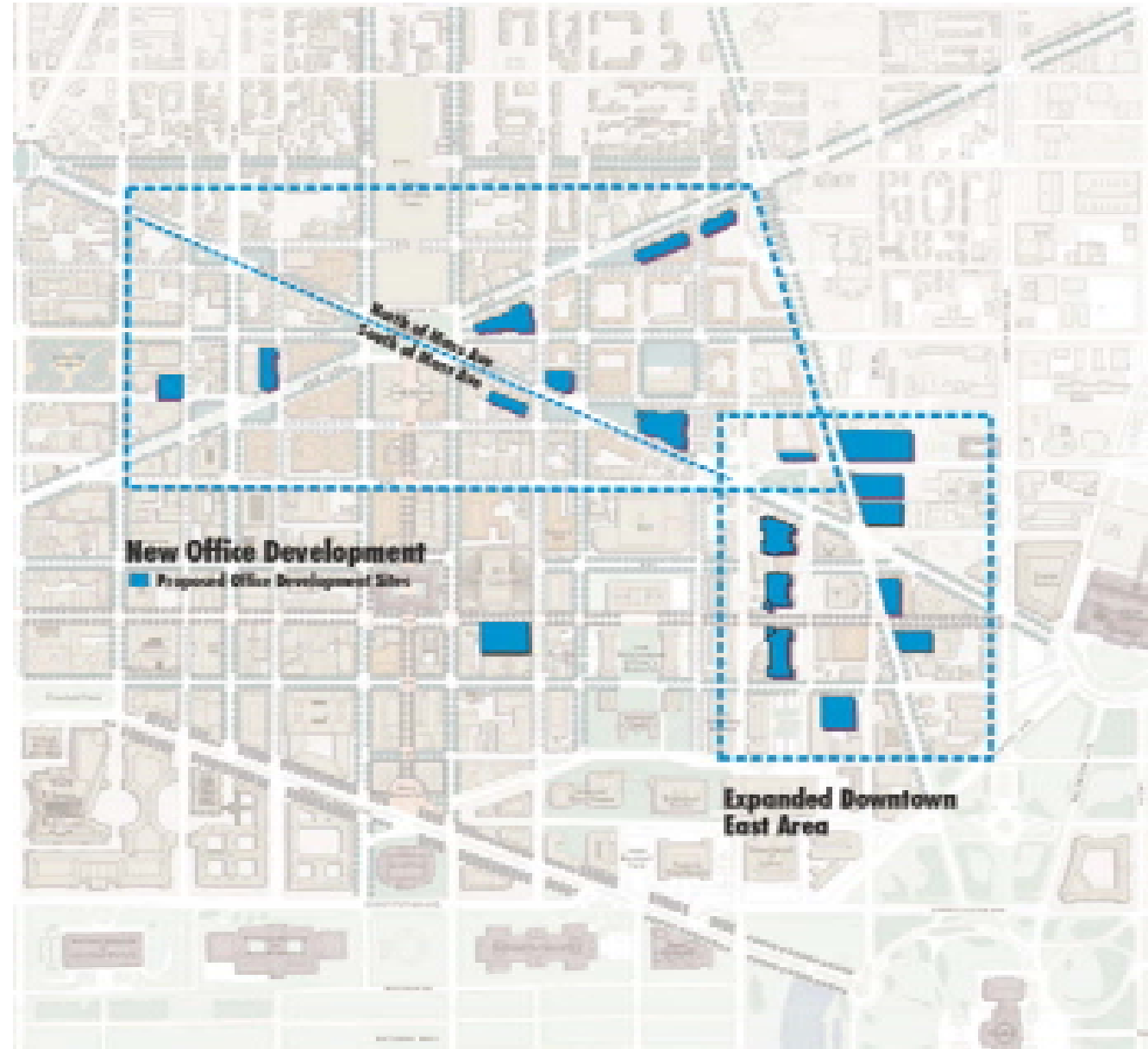
Federal agencies occupy an estimated 11.9 million square feet of office space.

The scarcity of land within the conventional Downtown area has begun to push office development to the fringes of the central business district. Since the commercial land in Downtown can accommodate only 2 million square feet of additional office space south of Massachusetts Avenue before reaching build-out, new locations for employment growth must be identified.

The Downtown Action Agenda recommends that downtown commercial growth be encouraged to move eastward and connect with the emerging commercial corridor on North Capitol Street. This strategy is intended to encourage the utilization of approximately 3 million square feet which is available east of 3rd Street, and to protect the residential areas north of Massachusetts Avenue. Through strategic growth, Downtown's role as the premier employment center of the region will continue.



Office building at 4th and F Streets



Strategy Two: Reknit the Urban Fabric by Extending the F Street Corridor

Office development with active street-level uses should be encouraged to extend eastward along F Street and span the air rights over I-395. Approximately 850,000 square feet of development could be accommodated in three air rights parcels between E Street and Massachusetts Avenue. This infill office development is the most economically viable approach to creating a continuous corridor of development from Downtown to Union Station.



Connecting Downtown with Downtown East will expand the commercial core eastward to Union Station, rather than to Shaw.

Key Action: Plan for Extension of F Street and Air Rights Development Over I-395



The air rights above I-395 provide opportunities to increase the amount of developable space.

Strategy Four: Complete Commercial Buildout with Sensitivity to Residential Areas

As the conventional area of Downtown approaches build-out, the remaining sites for office development are located generally toward the edge of the commercial core, including parcels near Mount Vernon Square. In these locations, office design should be sensitive to residential areas by providing buildings which step down, by orienting service functions away from residences, and using other appropriate design techniques.

The Downtown Action Agenda envisions the Mount Vernon Triangle as a residential and mixed-use area with approximately 2 million square feet of new office space. A limited amount of commercial space would allow the area to reach the critical mass of housing necessary to create a neighborhood. Furthermore, the Action Agenda encourages the development of small-scale, street-level retail uses to serve both workers and residents and to help provide a more sensitive transition to residential areas.



The remaining commercial sites in the traditional Downtown area are often located in the middle of blocks, adjacent to historic buildings, or near residential uses.



Historic buildings exhibit a number of interesting design details

Urban Design and Public Space Management: Make Downtown a Great Place for People

The broad avenues, dramatic vistas and inviting public spaces conceived by Pierre Charles L'Enfant 200 years ago form the foundation for downtown DC. Today, the L'Enfant Plan continues to guide downtown's growth and development. With proactive management, the wide avenues, public squares, and small plazas in Downtown DC can become the stage for a lively and exciting urban environment.

With strong demand for space and a relatively low building height limit, downtown has spread out and its buildings have bulked up. While the horizontal emphasis has created a unique urban environment, it also requires pedestrians to travel great distances and overcome various obstacles to reach downtown destinations. Physical barriers and closed streets impede the flow of traffic for pedestrians and motorists. Vacant lots, blank walls and poorly designed crosswalks make the pedestrian environment unattractive, uncomfortable, and contribute to concerns about safety. Poorly organized vending, inadequate lighting, and inconsistent street furniture suggest that downtown sidewalks lack a consistent level of quality. New initiatives are needed to create great streets in Downtown DC. With coordinated management and better design, the streets and public spaces in downtown DC can become true destinations for workers, residents, and visitors to our Nation's Capital.



Historic View Down Pennsylvania Avenue

Downtown's historic buildings, landmarks, and monuments have been well-sited under the L'Enfant Plan. The visual richness, variety, and evocative quality of downtown's

historic environment distinguish it from its suburban counterparts. Intact and restored historic buildings also serve as architectural templates for the kinds of development that present pedestrians with an "authentic downtown experience."

The 7th Street corridor is a great example. A stroll down the street reveals layers of history. Nineteenth century buildings provide architectural richness and a pedestrian-friendly, low-rise profile and scale. These buildings, built with high-quality materials and rich detailing, are visually interesting. Their storefront design elements create a sense of "urban vitality", a subtle quality achieved partially through historic detailing, and partially through the design relationships between the street width and building heights, the sidewalk widths, the undulating storefront bays, the transparency of the storefronts, the building materials, and the vitality of the signage.



Good urban design, such as the 800 block of 7th Street, blends old with new and large with small.

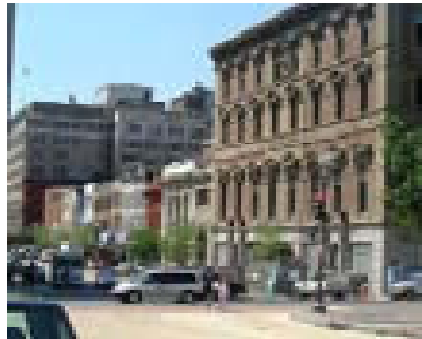
These factors create the impression that 7th Street is a dynamic place where interesting things happen; it contrasts sharply with some of the more modern buildings and streetscapes in other parts of the city.

Given the strong demand for space downtown, the challenge is to preserve the historic scale, character, and heritage of these areas, while encouraging sensitive, compatible new development throughout the downtown. The goal is to enhance the physical setting and improve the pedestrian experience—to make downtown pedestrian in scale, colorful, and lively. The design principles that create great streets are well known. Those principles should guide the development and management of public spaces in DC.

Strategy One: Create Great Streets

The great cities of the world are known for having great streets and urban neighborhoods where people gather to relax, socialize, shop, to see and be seen. The key elements that make these streets great are well-known: They are “walkable”. They feature a mix of uses, which generate high levels of pedestrian traffic during the day, evenings, and weekends. They offer great stores and great food, and provide many opportunities for outdoor dining. The buildings and storefronts are architecturally dynamic, but at the ground level, they are designed at a pedestrian scale. Several challenges must be met to establish great streets in Downtown DC:

Simplify Public Space Regulation: There are at least a dozen elements that require some form of regulation or oversight on downtown sidewalks: food and merchandise vending, outdoor dining, sign and storefront design, publication distribution, public performers and public art, street furniture, street lighting, landscaping, trash management, public safety, and public signage. In Washington, there are at least four federal and six District agencies that provide some level of regulation and oversight over these elements. In this environment, it is difficult to make any changes or improvements to the current program. A task force should be established to develop a comprehensive plan and simplify the procedures for public improvements in downtown DC.



900 block of F Street

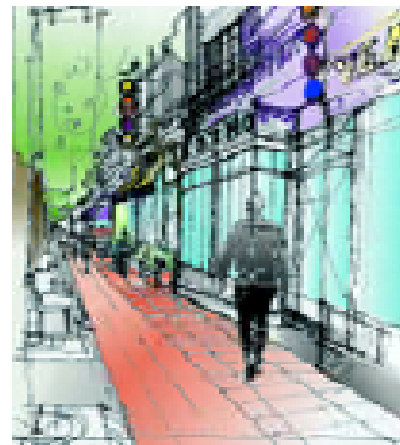
Develop a set of Downtown Design Guidelines: Guidelines which address the relationship of new development to the street and surrounding urban contexts can help ensure that the public realm is active and visually defined.

Provide for Active Public Space Management: In addition to a clear and simple set of regulatory guidelines, there is also a need for active public space management assis-

tance to help achieve high quality public space amenities. This assistance includes communication, coordination, education and facilitation. Creating a vibrant street life requires high levels of interaction between many interests on a daily basis.

Implement the Downtown DC Streetscape Plan: In 1999, the Downtown DC BID commissioned a streetscape plan, key elements of which have now been adopted by the District government. To improve design quality in downtown DC, a multi-year program to install new streetlights, bike racks, trash receptacles, and benches should be pursued jointly by the District government and the Downtown DC BID. While downtown lighting and street furniture now conform to a common standard, it should be installed on a block-by-block basis to complement existing businesses. Street furniture should change over time to reflect a changing Downtown environment.

Study Programs to Improve Storefronts and Facades: Existing sign regulations and storefront design guidelines may no longer be effective tools for promoting creative design in downtown DC. The current regulations should be reviewed to make sure



they are effective, and provide the flexibility that retailers and restaurants need in today’s competitive environment. As a part of the regulatory review, the establishment of mandatory site review for new projects or substantial rehabilitations should also be addressed. Finally, the existing palette of incentives for downtown design improvements should be considered, and new tools should be established to encourage property owners to increase design quality in Downtown DC.

Key Action: Implement the Downtown BID’s Public Space Management Program; Organize \$3-5 million annual program for streetscape improvements;



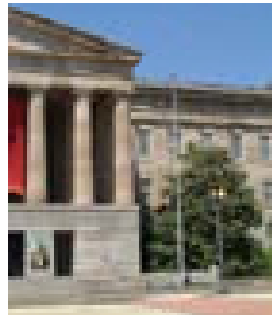
Great streets have interesting building facades and storefronts that are attractive to pedestrians.



This bow-tie park at Massachusetts Avenue and 5th Street will be the site of the new Chinatown Park.

Strategy Two: Provide High-Quality Public Open Spaces

Washington’s unique street layout creates a range of public spaces with potential to become distinct destinations that complement the grand and formal character of the National Mall. If appropriately planned and managed, these public spaces could become “outdoor rooms” for workers, visitors and residents to enjoy. To improve the quality of the open space in downtown DC, a coordinated plan for capital improvements and ongoing management needs to be established, and several important issues addressed.



[Program the Open Space at the National Portrait Gallery:](#)

With its southern exposure, wide sidewalks and unimpeded views of Union Station, the National Archives and the Treasury Building, the public space at the Portrait Gallery has the potential to become one of the most active pedestrian areas in Washington. The current sidewalk alignment provides a unique opportunity to reconstruct the historic steps at the gallery entrance and to create a “festival market” where local artists and vendors could sell their wares, and outdoor cafes could add to the ambiance. A managed vending program could dramatically strengthen the environment at the Portrait Gallery, as well as at other key areas throughout Downtown DC.

[Plan for Better Use of Triangular Parks as Gathering Spaces:](#) The L’Enfant Plan has created dozens of small slivers of land that provide an important opportunity for Downtown. In particular, the triangular “bow-tie” parks along Massachusetts and New York Avenues provide an opportunity to connect downtown to adjacent neighborhoods. These parks should be developed as gathering places, as well as sites for sculpture, fountains, and civic art.



Judiciary Square can be restored to a dignified civic district.

[Create Dynamic Public Spaces around Mount Vernon and Judiciary Squares, as well as at the Site of the Existing Convention Center:](#)

The new City Museum, which is scheduled to open in 2003 at Mount Vernon Square, will be a magnet for visitors. However, the green space surrounding the building will be heavily used and needs significant improvement. Similarly, the open space around the District Court buildings at Judiciary Square is now used primarily for surface parking. The Office of Planning should work with the National Park Service to develop small area plans to study the potential of strengthening these two key sites.

The existing convention center site offers an opportunity to create a new civic space - a focal point for Washington residents to enjoy and celebrate Downtown.

Key Actions: Encourage streetscape design competitions; Develop Open Space at National Portrait Gallery; Create a significant civic space upon redevelopment of the existing convention center, to serve as an active focal point for the new downtown.

Strategy Three: Preserve Historic Resources

Downtown must preserve its historically significant building inventory and ensure that new development and/or redevelopment complements its historic buildings and open spaces. Specific historic preservation recommendations include:

Revise property tax assessments to reflect actual building sizes: Currently, historic structures that do not fill the entire zoning envelope are taxed as if they do occupy the entire allowable area. Revising this tax policy to reflect actual building sizes would lower operating costs. Likewise, revising the tax policy would help alleviate the pressures on historic structures from a strong Downtown office market, high land costs, the city's height restriction limit, and a preference for buildings with large floor plates.

Alterations and additions to historic landmarks should be compatible with the design, height, proportion, massing, configuration, materials, texture, and colors within historic areas: The District of Columbia Historic Preservation Guidelines, available from the DC Historic Preservation Division should be followed. Residents in newly created historic districts (particularly those neighborhoods north of Mt. Vernon Square) should especially be encouraged to reference the Guidelines.

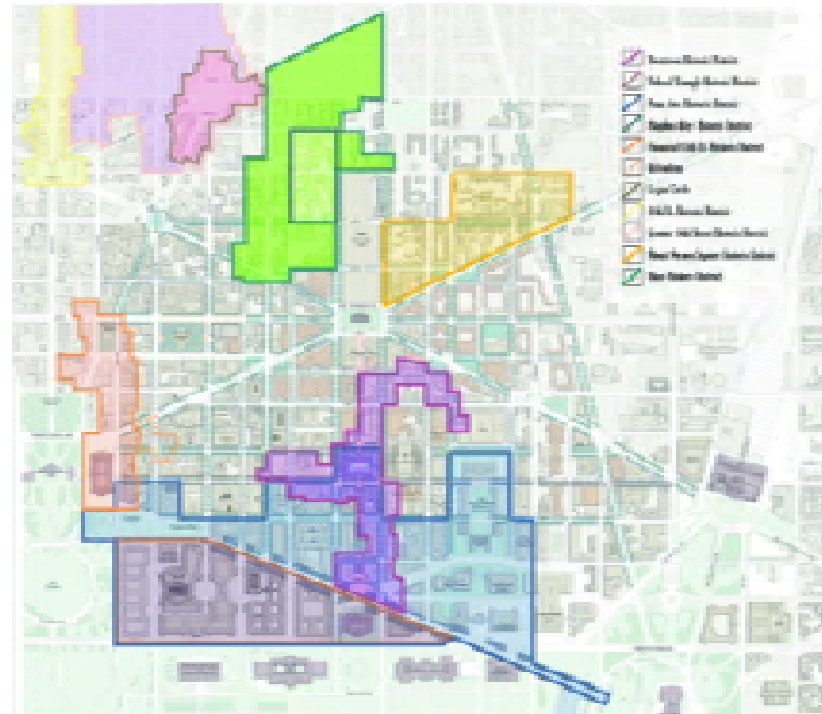
Preserve the original pattern of streets and alleys in downtown DC: The L'Enfant street pattern in Downtown should be preserved and strengthened by reconnecting blocked streets. The 1995 DC Historic Landmark Designation for the L'Enfant Plan of the City of Washington provides guidance for decisions regarding the return of original street patterns and any removals of elements. Alleys that provide off-street service and transportation should be maintained as critical to the understanding and functioning of each city block.

Retain the neighborhood character near the new downtown Convention Center: Development around the new convention center should be designed to maintain the

sense of neighborhood in the adjacent communities. Historic buildings should be preserved and the scale of new construction should be limited on historic sites.

Nominate and designate buildings of merit to the D.C. Inventory of Historic Sites: These buildings include several sites that have already been determined eligible for listing on the National Register, such as: Seventh Street Savings Bank, Tudor Hall, Immaculate Conception Church, Stong John Thomson School, and the Carpenter's Building.

Secure owner consent for proceeding with the nomination of the 15th Street Financial and Downtown Historic Districts to the National Register of Historic Places: Listing of these two historic districts will officially recognize their significance, as well as provide maximum benefit to local property owners.



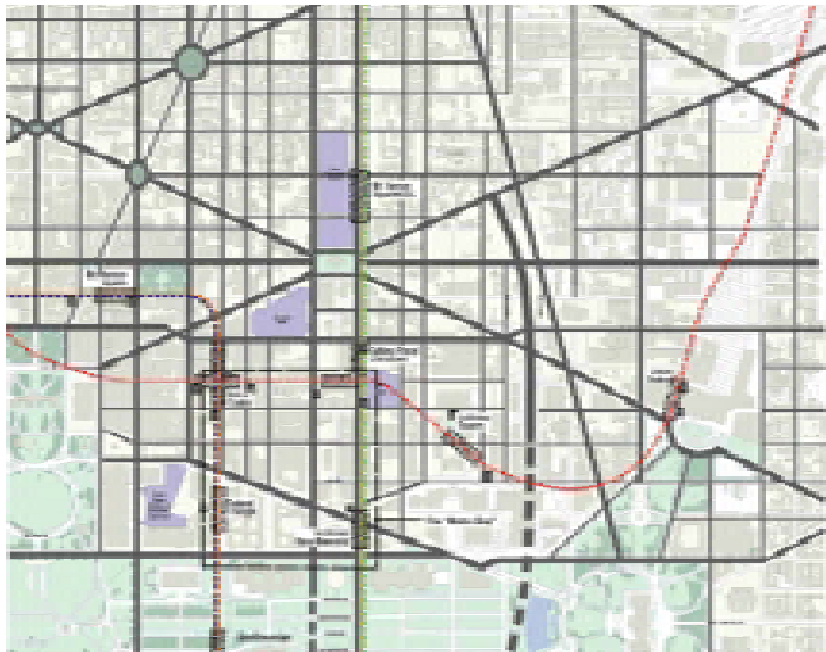
There are ten historic districts located within or near Downtown, providing protection for identified areas.



The avenues, streets, squares, circles, and vistas of the L'Enfant Plan are historic resources that should be protected.

Transportation: Strengthen Downtown Circulation

Downtown is the focus of the metropolitan region's transportation system. Downtown has a strong network of local and arterial roadways that can accommodate a high volume of automobile and pedestrian traffic. Union Station, to the east of Downtown, serves as a hub for commuter rail, inter-state rail, and inter-city bus service. Downtown is also the center of the Metrorail system with nine stations. Together, the rail transit and bus system transport more than 75,000 riders each day, while more than 80,000 cars arrive downtown during the peak morning rush hour. While existing downtown transportation resources are strong, the system faces real challenges in several areas.



Downtown is well-served by roadways, Metro, and other forms of transportation.

Transportation Design / Internal Circulation

- Automobile and pedestrian linkages between the National Mall and Downtown are weak;
- Recent street closures hamper vehicular movement throughout the Downtown area and constrict east-west connections across the city;
- The Metrorail system is designed for commuters traveling to the city and is less conducive for short trips within Downtown;

- The price structure and hours of operation under the current system of on street and off-street private parking fail to meet the needs of residents, visitors and shoppers;

Transportation Capacity

- The major Metrorail transfer stations at Metro Center and Gallery Place/Chinatown are reaching 100 percent of their design capacity;
- Inefficient use of curb space for security barriers and travel lanes minimize opportunities to develop additional preferred short-term parking, loading, bus, and taxi stand usage.

Information

- The transportation system is complex and confusing. Washington's 22 million visitors frequently find it difficult to drive, park, and find their destinations;
- Lack of information about routes and services hinders use of the bus system;

Over the next 20 years, the shortfall for basic maintenance of streets and bridges is expected to reach \$ 1 billion in the District of Columbia. In order for downtown to continue to serve as the center of the regional economy, new sources of funding must be found to improve the transportation infrastructure.

Key Action: Establish inter-agency partnership for development and funding of a downtown circulator

Strategy One: Strengthen Connections Within Downtown and to the Rest of the City

Reopening streets that have been closed to traffic is an essential step to improve the transportation network within Downtown and to link downtown to the rest of the city. Highways and superblocks that interrupt land use patterns tear urban fabric, impede pedestrian and vehicular traffic, distort the historic street plan, and create areas of deterioration and blight. Eliminating barriers and restoring the street grid will increase vehicular accessibility, improve the pedestrian environment and restore the connections between Downtown and surrounding areas.

East-West Connections: Especially important is the extension of F Street across I-395 to the east, to connect the Downtown office core with the emerging employment center near Union Station. Linkages to the east can also be strengthened through improvements to the intersection of H Street and Massachusetts Avenue, with attractive streetscape treatments and improved signage. Redevelopment of the old convention center site will allow I Street and 10th Street to be reopened, thereby reducing traffic on H Street. Downtown and commercial areas to the west should be connected primarily along K Street.

Reopen Pennsylvania Avenue: This Action Agenda strongly encourages the reopening of Pennsylvania Avenue at the end of the year 2000, as an essential step to strengthen east-west connections across the city.

North-South Connections: Improvements should also be made to help connect Downtown to the rest of the city. To draw visitors into the downtown from the National Mall, pedestrian linkages need to be improved. Currently, 7th, 8th and 9th Streets are the main north-south pedestrian connectors that link Downtown and the National Mall. Other connections that need to be enhanced include 13th Street at the Ronald Reagan Building, 10th Street to connect the old Convention Center site, and the park

corridor between 4th and 5th Streets to further link Judiciary Square and the National Mall. In addition, vehicular routes to and from Downtown along 7th, 9th, 12th and 14th Streets should be improved.

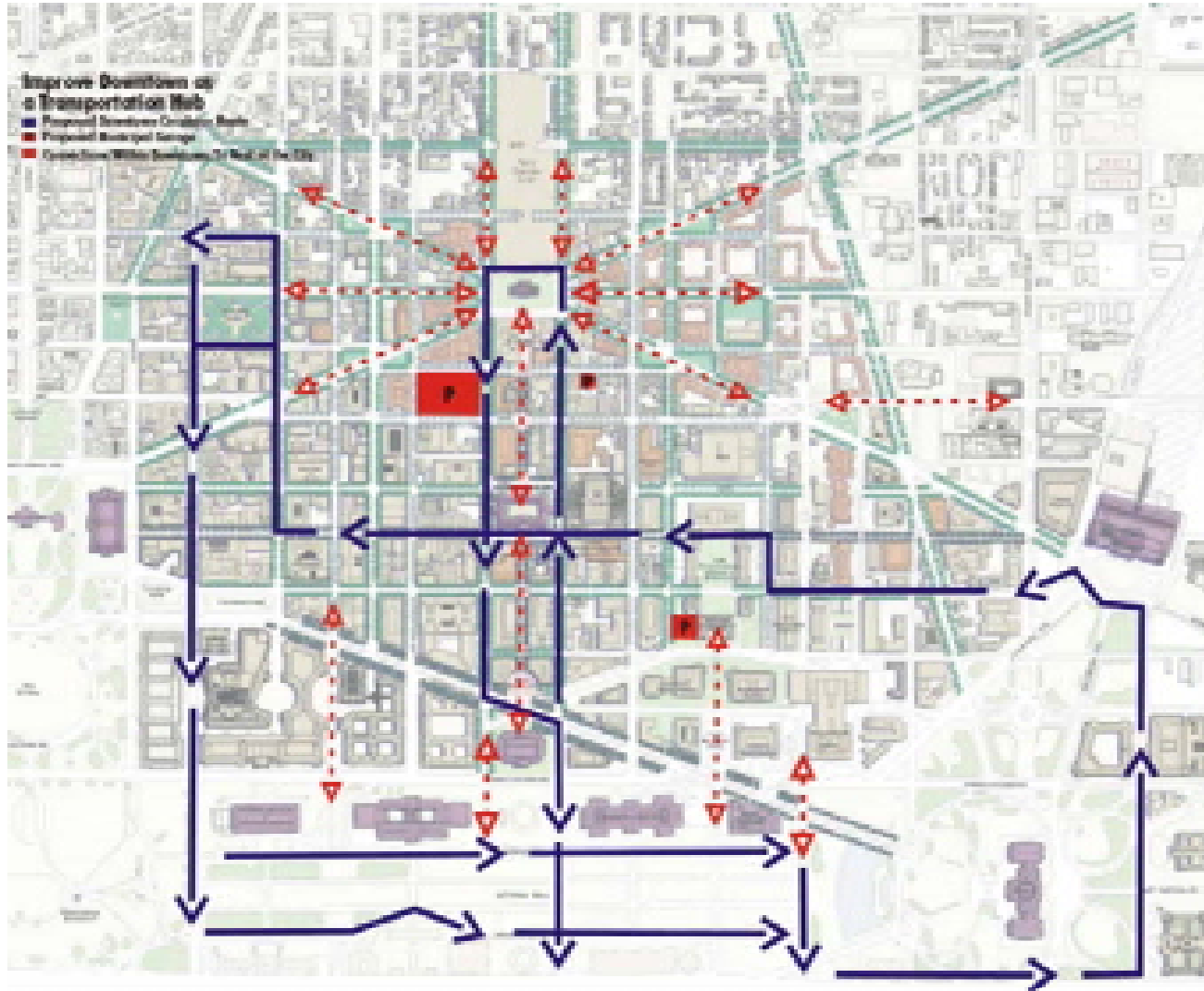
Uniform signs and attractive landscaping, lighting, signage and information kiosks can help with these connections with Downtown and to the rest of the city. Wayfinding systems and kiosks can provide information on travel routes, parking locations, and transit operations, as well as sightseeing information for tourists. Crucial Downtown sites for information kiosks installation include Union Station, Pennsylvania Avenue at 8th Street, H Street at 7th Street, and I Street at 13th Street. In addition, signage and streetscape improvements north of Mount Vernon Square near the new convention center would facilitate visitors' access to and from the Shaw community and Howard University.

Pedestrian and Vehicular Signage: Uniform Wayfinding signs and attractive landscaping, lighting, signage and information kiosks can help foster connections between Downtown and the rest of the city. Wayfinding systems and kiosks can provide information on travel routes, parking locations, and transit operations, as well as sightseeing information for tourists. In addition, signage and streetscape improvements north of Mount Vernon Square near the new convention center would facilitate visitors' access to and from the Shaw community and Howard University.

Key Actions: Establish gateways along New York, Massachusetts, and New Jersey Avenues; Study potential reopening of I and 10th Streets on old Convention Center site.



The treatment of intersections to accommodate pedestrians is critical to strengthening connections to areas adjacent to Downtown.



Strategy Two: Develop a Downtown Circulator System

While the Metrorail system qualifies as one of the great commuter services in the world, Washington lacks a comparable surface transit system to serve the 250,000 daily downtown population and the 22 million annual visitors to downtown from within the region. A clean-fuel Downtown Circulator would fill this void.

The Downtown Circulator would improve connections between Downtown employment centers and the restaurants, shopping, and entertainment attractions located along F and 7th Streets. It would help tourists and visitors travel Downtown from adjacent areas and could help make jobs accessible to existing and potential workers with limited transportation options.

In accordance with adopted District policy, supported by the Downtown BID, the Circulator system should follow at least two service loops. A north-south route could follow 7th and 9th Streets linking Mt. Vernon Square to the National Mall. An east-west route could connect the Union Station/Capitol Hill area to the White House/Treasury area along E and F Streets.

The feasibility of implementing a trolley system to circulate throughout the Downtown should be studied. Such a system could provide significant benefits. Because Downtown's large size makes internal circulation a challenge, a trolley would make it convenient for workers to travel longer distances to shop, eat, or enjoy a cultural attraction. The trolleys themselves would provide an added attraction for visitors to enjoy. Finally, in addition to being convenient and fun, a trolley is efficient: such systems are some of the most effective means to move large numbers of people, and a downtown trolley could ease the rush-hour overcrowding that occurs at certain Metro stations.

Strategy Three: Implement the Park Once Concept

To facilitate movement and circulation within Downtown, an effective and efficient transportation system would reduce the number of automobiles, either parked or in motion. If visitors would “...park once and travel about Downtown by transit, bicycle, and walking”, there would be substantially less automobile traffic on Downtown streets. The “park once” goal can be accomplished by intercepting vehicles in parking facilities both in Downtown and on the fringes of Downtown, and then by providing internal circulation through a Downtown circulation system.



Implementation of the “Park Once” Concept would require a significant level of investment in two areas. New studies should be undertaken to identify appropriate sites for municipal parking garages, and to map out a strategy to improve internal circulation.

[Develop a Short-term Parking Plan and Study the Feasibility of Constructing Municipal Garages:](#) Municipal parking facilities at the following locations would support the land use and urban design plans for Downtown:

- an underground garage at Judiciary Square would allow unsightly surface parking areas to become attractive green spaces;
- a large garage constructed under new uses at the existing convention center site would help meet the parking demand generated by the new convention center; and
- a well-designed, above-grade garage in the Gallery Place/ Chinatown area would provide off-street parking in an area characterized by smaller historic buildings that cannot provide adequate subsurface parking without demolition.



Municipal garages, such as this one, would support the Park Once concept.



The Downtown Action Agenda provides specific recommendations and incentives for implementation.

3 Implementing the Downtown Action Agenda

This Downtown Action Agenda has presented a land use strategy and a comprehensive development program for the next several years. To implement the Downtown Action Agenda, an aggressive timetable has been developed. By moving quickly, public actions can leverage private investment to spur long-term growth in Downtown DC. Pursued in concert, public and private initiatives called out in this Action Agenda will:

- Encourage additional preferred uses – arts, housing and retail—in the downtown;
- Increase home ownership opportunities, promote neighborhood stability, strengthen community institutions, and improve the quality of life;
- Create job opportunities for District residents;
- Sustain and strengthen the District’s tax base;
- Identify key short-term actions and provide a long-term planning context which reinforce the vision and goals for downtown.

The end result will be a mixed use downtown with a balance of diverse activities, which generates the greatest energy and highest value for the District government, for District residents, and for visitors to the Nation’s Capital.

To achieve these aims, a broad range of activities needs to be pursued by the public sector and by the private sector within the next 12 months. Each of these actions reinforces the others; together, they form a comprehensive downtown development strategy that will culminate twenty years of effort to create-- “A Living Downtown.”

First Actions and Responsibilities

Key Recommendation	Timeframe	Responsible Agency
Organize \$3-5 million Annual Program for Streetscape Improvements	Ongoing	DC Business Improvement District
Allocate Funds for the Downtown Circulator	12 months	Department of Public Works
Implement the BID’s Public Space Management Program	12 months	DC Business Improvement District
Institute a Downtown Development Corporation	3 months	Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development
Dedicate Funds for Downtown Job Training and Placement Programs	12 months	Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development
Establish and Capitalize Neighborhood Housing Fund	12 months	Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development
Increase Flexibility in Zoning Regulations to Support Housing	3 months	Office of Planning
Adopt Tax Abatement for Housing	6 months	Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development
Expand Enterprise Zone for Housing	6 months	Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development
Determine Development Program to Maximize Preferred Uses on Existing Convention Center Site	4 months	Office of Planning; Mayor’s Convention Center Redevelopment Task Force
Develop an Area-Wide Tax Increment Financing Program	12 months	Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development
Determine Preferred Uses on Public Sites	9 months	Office of Planning
Initiate Residential Development at Mount Vernon Square	6 months	DHCD/RLA/Office of Planning
Plan for Extension of F Street Across I-395 to Develop Air Rights	12 months	Office of Planning/DPW
Establish Hospitality District at Mount Vernon Square	6 months	Downtown Development Corporation
Evaluate MLK Library for Cultural Center and/or New Library	12 months	Library/Office of Planning
Determine Site for Headquarters Hotel	4 months	Office of Planning
Designate New Civic Space as Part of Existing Convention Center Redevelopment	4 months	Office of Planning

Strategy One: Strengthen and Solidify Downtown Leadership

Leadership to implement the initiatives called out in this Downtown Action Agenda comes from several sources:

Strengthen the capacity and coordination of existing organizations:

- District Government: Many of the key recommendations identified in this report require action by the District government. Regulatory changes, administrative changes, planning initiatives, and capital improvement projects create a long agenda for the city to pursue. Many of these initiatives fall broadly under the scope of the agencies headed up by the Deputy Mayor of Economic Development.
- Business Improvement District: This Action Agenda suggests that the responsibility of the Downtown DC Business Improvement District be expanded in ways that are consistent with its original charter. The Downtown DC BID is the logical entity to take the lead to establish the Downtown Circulator, to promote public space improvements, to coordinate efforts to improve short-term parking and to pursue other management improvements to help Downtown function more effectively.
- Federal Government: Through its many institutions and agencies, the Federal government is an important force in shaping the direction of the downtown. The General Services Administration, as property developer and manager, plays a primary role. The Federal government can be a contributor to this Action Agenda through its decisions about government office space, its willingness to support transportation improvements including the Downtown Circulator, and by giving consideration to extending enterprise zone tax exemptions for housing purposes in Washington.

Key Action: A New Public Private Organization for the New Millennium -The Downtown Development Corporation:

In 1997, the Downtown DC Business Improvement District was established to create a clean and safe downtown environment. With this initial goal now substantially achieved, the next evolutionary step is to create a new organization to facilitate and market opportunities for development-particularly preferred use development-in Downtown.

Building on cooperative models, the new organization would include representatives from the city government, the federal government, private business and development interests, as well as civic interests who would work together to carry out the appropriate portions of the Downtown Action Agenda which call for development coordination and facilitation.

A public/private Downtown Development Corporation, organized as a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit entity, could pursue the development of housing and encourage retail development in and near the downtown. A Downtown Development Corporation would work collaboratively with the existing Cultural Development Corporation to support arts development, and with the DC BID to support the existing safety, maintenance and marketing initiatives.



Construction activity for development and public infrastructure requires strong leadership and commitment of resources.

Strategy Two: Invest in Capital Projects

Capital investments in public improvements and infrastructure will be necessary to attain the vision of downtown set forth in this Action Agenda. These physical improvements are mutually reinforcing. In combination, they will dramatically improve the quality of the downtown environment and will set the stage for downtown to achieve its full economic potential.

- **Downtown Circulator**—The Downtown Circulator is intended to provide downtown workers, visitors and residents with an inexpensive and efficient supplement to Metrorail and Metrobus. The Circulator will encourage visitors to travel downtown from the National Mall and Union Station, and it will provide additional transportation options to downtown workers.
- **Streetscape Improvements**—The sidewalks and public spaces in downtown DC can be significantly improved with new investments in lighting, street furniture, landscaping, public art, and other pedestrian amenities.
- **Downtown Signage**—Implementing a comprehensive “wayfinding system” will make downtown more “pedestrian friendly” for the 8 million people who visit each year. A District-wide system will improve vehicular and pedestrian movements in downtown and throughout the city.
- **F Street Extension**—Extending F Street across the Center Leg Freeway (I-395) would connect downtown with areas to the east. Office uses could occupy the air rights between D Street and G Street, while more active uses could be supported at street level.
- **New Cultural Center/Library**—Downtown public libraries serve as anchors in many cities across the country. The publicly-owned Martin Luther King Jr. Main Library is extremely well-located and has an excellent redevelopment potential as a multi-use, library/cultural facility.
- **New Theaters**—The potential exists to add 1,600 new theater seats at key sites in downtown DC, including Square 457; the 900 block of F Street; the 500 block of 10th Street. The addition of new arts venues is necessary to create a true cultural arts district in Downtown DC.

- **Parking Structures**—New municipal parking garages at Judiciary Square, the existing convention center site, and near the Gallery Place/Chinatown area may be necessary to implement the “park once” program for visitors and downtown commuters.
- **Artist Live-Work Space**—Renovating older, city-owned properties, such as the Mather Building, Webster School and Franklin School to provide live/work apartments and other working spaces would ensure a continuing arts presence in downtown DC.



Public improvements add value to Downtown and adjacent uses.

Strategy Three: Develop Incentive Programs for Preferred Uses

Downtown's success as a commercial office district creates challenges for other, less profitable downtown uses. Even today, many cultural uses and independent retailers are being priced out of downtown. In the past, zoning has been the only tool available to encourage a wide range of residential, cultural, and retail uses. The Downtown Action Agenda suggests that new, targeted financial incentives also need to be developed to level the economic playing field, and encourage the development of new retail, residential, and cultural uses in downtown DC.

Retail Incentives: Retail uses should be clustered by market segment and type: Entertainment retail at Gallery Place, comparison retail in the traditional Downtown core, and visitor-serving retail at Mount Vernon Square. Particular attention should be given to the F and 7th Street corridors. Possible incentives for retail include:

- Creation of an area-wide Tax Increment Financing Program;
- Increased use bonus density and Transferable Development Rights (TDRs);
- Use of publicly owned sites to write down land costs and leverage retail development;
- Sales tax holidays;
- Improvements to the downtown streetscape;
- Improved management of Downtown parking to support retail.

Housing Incentives: New housing development should be concentrated to establish and strengthen residential neighborhoods at Penn Quarter, Shaw, and Mount Vernon Triangle. Receiving sites for combined residential lots and/or TDRs should be located within or adjacent to the designated housing areas. Residential development will require special efforts to achieve, which may include:

- Revised timing requirements for Combined Lot Development;
- Increased density within existing height limits;
- Application of DDD Zoning requirements for housing on publicly owned sites;
- Site assembly assistance through condemnation powers;
- Use of area-wide TIF program and Tax Exempt Financing to create affordable housing;
- Freezes on tax assessments for a period of years on new residential projects;
- Revision of EZ Bond Program to include rental housing.

Gallery Incentives: Sites appropriate for gallery development include Le Droit Row, Square 454, the Old Hecht Company complex, and Square 457. In order to develop a gallery cluster and arts destination at these sites, a program of incentives to support arts galleries and other creative ventures is crucial. Possible programs to subsidize small-scale galleries include:

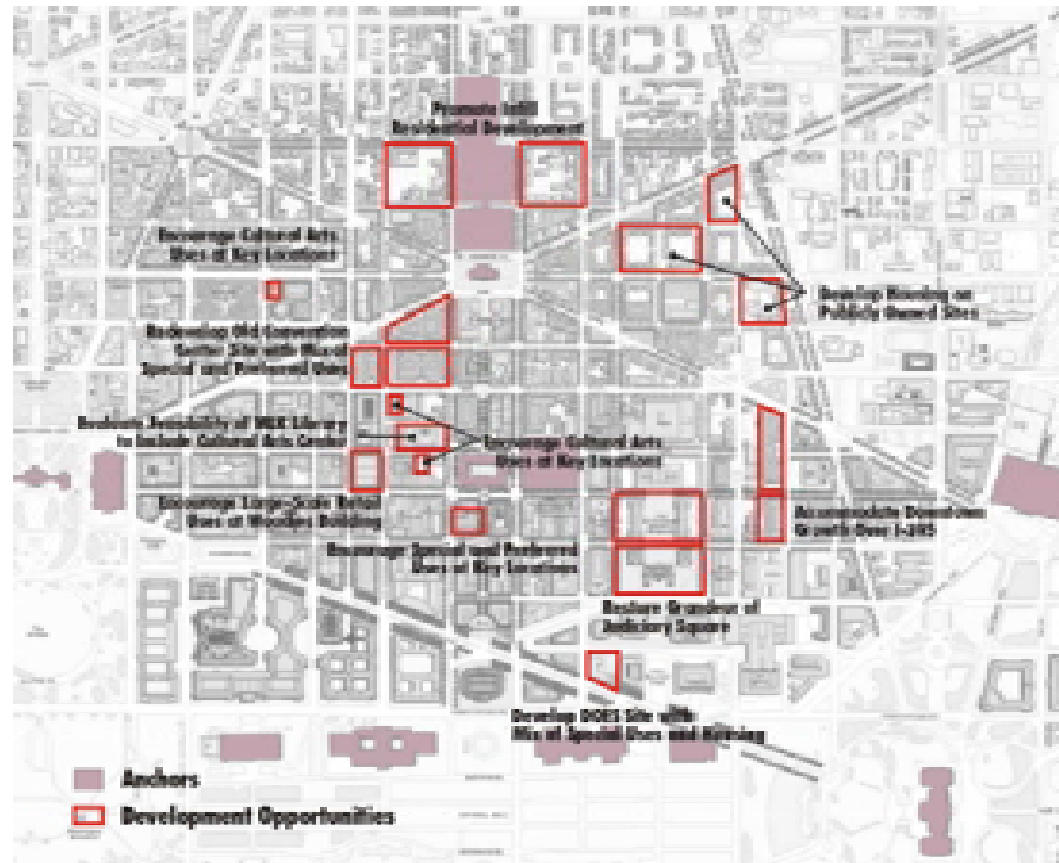
- Revisions to the existing transferable development rights policy;
- Increased use incentive zoning;
- Development of an area-wide tax-increment financing district;
- Property tax abatement on arts uses;
- Establish a 1% DC capital budget set-aside for the arts;
- Lower-rate mortgages and low-interest loans for arts uses
- Increased utilization of grants from various sources, including convention and tourism bureau annual grants, federal cultural funding organizations, major gifts, annual giving, challenge grants from private sponsors, corporations, and the Sports and Entertainment Commission;
- Empowering the Cultural Development Corporation to build and manage arts facilities;
- Increased promotion of the arts district through marketing and programs.



Incentives for preferred uses capitalize on the market strength for commercial development.

Strategy Four: Capitalize on Key Opportunity Sites

Over the next 18 months, a number of decisions will be made regarding the disposition of key publicly and privately owned sites. The development of these parcels presents the final opportunity to establish downtown as a high-quality, mixed use destination.



Publicly Owned Sites	Recommended Uses	Strategy Achieved
Old Convention Center (Squares 373, 374, 344)	Mix of Special and Preferred Uses	Supports Downtown as Destination, Housing, and Civic Space
DOES Site (Square 491)	Special Uses and Residential	Expands Penn Quarter
Mount Vernon Triangle	Residential with Retail	Develops Housing on Public Sites
Square 562	Residential	Initiates Residential in Mount Vernon Triangle
Square 516W	Residential	Initiates Residential in Mount Vernon Triangle
Mather Building	Residential	Expands Downtown Housing and Arts
I-395 Air Rights	Commercial with Retail	Directs Downtown Growth
Privately Owned Sites	Recommended Uses	Strategy Achieved
Woodies Building	Large-scale Retail/Entertainment	Strengthens F Street and Traditional Downtown Core
Evans Property (Square 406)	Arts, Retail	Expands Penn Quarter/Strengthens E St Theater Row

Existing Convention Center Site: This key site offers a special opportunity to complete the vision of a living downtown. The Mayor has established a task force of business and community leaders to create a development program to complement and strengthen surrounding downtown areas. This site has the potential to:

- Create a great civic space
- Maximize downtown housing
- Create a destination to enjoy and celebrate Downtown
- Complement and complete the retail/entertainment focus at Gallery Place
- Restore the city grid and view corridors
- Create a gateway for the New Convention Center

With strong leadership, new investment in capital projects, and new incentive programs, the development of key sites will reknit downtown DC into a vital, living district, and lay the foundation for growth and development for years to come.

Strategy Five: Utilize Diverse Funding Sources

To successfully implement the Downtown Action Agenda, the initiatives must move ahead simultaneously—even those that can't pay for themselves—because each reinforces the others. Existing and potential revenue streams must be pursued proactively to support and subsidize these initiatives. These sources include:

Public Sources:

- Transportation and Commerce Departments; Metro
- District's Economic Development Finance Corporation and localbanks
- Social service and employment programs of the Justice, Housing and Urban Development, Commerce, Health and Human Services (HHS), and Labor departments
- Federal programmatic and financial “enterprise community” assistance and competitive and discretionary grants.



With proper funding initiatives, publicly owned sites (like the DOES building above) can be maximized.

- Department of Commerce (Economic Development Administration) for construction of public works and capital financing of facilities that promote creation and retention of jobs.
- White House Conference on Tourism/Department of Health and Human Services for build-out, lease, sponsorship of Tourism Center, and human resources, minority/female (resident) training, employment and entrepreneurship program funding

Private Contributions:

- Equity (hotel/ restaurant industry);
- % TIF bonds;
- Non-profit payments-in-lieu-of-taxes (PILOT) grants

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 Toni Griffin, Deputy Director
 Ellen McCarthy, Deputy Director
 Lara Belkind
 John Fondersmith
 Art Rodgers

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Rich Bradley, Executive Director
 Matt Hussman

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Downtown Action Plan Coordinating Committee

Tersh Boasberg
 Vanessa Burns
 Anne Corbett
 Ed Daniels
 Charles Docter
 Brad Edwards
 Gail Edwards
 Mark Ellin
 Greg Fazakerly
 Robert Gladstone
 Ben Jacobs
 Douglas Jemal
 Daniel Karchem
 Darius Mann
 John McGraw
 Skip McKoy
 Alvin McNeal
 Jo-Ann Neuhaus
 R. Peebles
 Marshall Purnell
 Molly Raphael
 Chris Reutershan
 Richard Ruben
 Beth Solomon
 Joe Sternlieb
 Tom Wilbur
 Yeni Wong

Downtown Action Plan Task Force

Maybelle Taylor Bennett, Chair
 Roberto Alvarez
 Sharon Ambrose
 John Asadoorian
 David Ball
 Camille Cates Barnett
 Derrick Barnes
 Susan Berk
 Cel Bernadino
 James Berry, Jr.
 Terri Bishop
 Elizabeth Blakeslee
 John Boardman
 Scott Bolden
 Richard Bradley
 Morris Britt
 Dorris Brooks
 Earl Cabbell
 Robert Carr
 Phil Carr
 Carol Thompson Cole
 W. Kent Cooper
 Ralston Cox
 Linda Cropp
 Lewis Dawley
 Arrington Dixon
 Charles Docter
 Tom Downs
 Pat Elwood
 Jack Evans

Rodney Foxworth
 Barbara Franco
 James Gibson
 Cynthia Giordano
 Anthony Gittens
 Robert Goodson
 Kingdon Gould III
 Fred Greene
 Linda Grigsby
 Reginald Griffith
 Nate Gross
 Lawrence Guyott, Jr.
 William Hall
 Michael Heyman
 Kawsii Holman
 Charlene Drew Jarvis
 Douglas Jemal
 Marie Johns
 Susan Henshaw Jones
 Tip Kendrick
 James Kerr
 George Koch
 Patrick Lally
 Peter Liu
 Natalie Ludaway
 Terry Lynch
 Gladys Mack
 Patricia Matthews
 Herb Miller
 Leslie Miles
 Richard Monteilh

Jerry Moore III
 Abraham Mumin
 George Oberlander
 Dale Ostrander
 Rodney Palmer
 John Parsons
 Wil J. Parker
 Robert Peck
 Larry Ponsford
 Scott Price
 Marshall Purnell
 Dwight Reeves
 Wayne Quin
 Molly Raphael
 Christopher Reutershan
 Harry Robinson III
 Michael Rogers
 Molly Ruppert
 Eric Rubin
 Jane Shister
 Barry Silberman
 Ira Stohlman
 Brian Tate
 Lawrence Thomas
 Thomas House Rep
 Art Turowski
 Emily Vetter
 Duane Wang
 Tom Wilbur

Contributors

Consultant Team

EDAW, Inc.

Alan Harwood, Project Director
Paul Moyer
Amy Probsdorfer
Avi Srivastava
Lisa Siriamnuaypas
Demiko Richardson
Su Hang Liu
Laura Wiberg

KCF-SHG

Mark Maves
Charlotte Kosmela

ERA

Patrick Phillips
Patty Folan

A.G. Dobbins & Assoc.

Al Dobbins

Traceries

Laura Hughes

Gorove-Slade

Lou Slade

AEPA

Alfred Lui

HNTB

Dick Friedson