

COMMUNITY PLANNING CHARRETTE SUMMARY

POTOMAC AVENUE METRO STATION AND LOWER PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE AREA

AMERICAN PLANNING ASSOCIATION - AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF CERTIFIED PLANNERS - DC OFFICE OF PLANNING - NATIONAL CAPITAL AREA CHAPTER APA
SATURDAY, APRIL 24, 2004

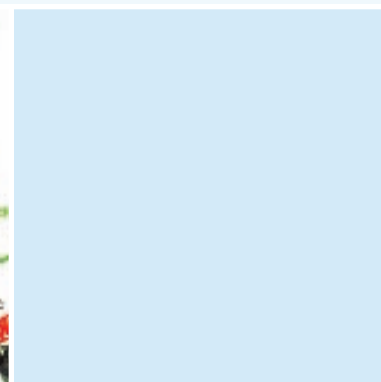
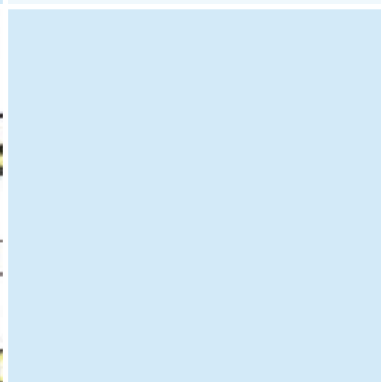


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ABOUT THE AMERICAN PLANNING ASSOCIATION PRO-BONO CHARRETTES

The American Planning Association is a nonprofit public interest and research organization committed to urban, suburban, regional, and rural planning. APA and its professional institute, the American Institute of Certified Planners, advance the art and science of planning to meet the needs of people and society.

The 2004 American Planning Association Annual National Conference was held in Washington, DC April 24 - 28, 2004. As a component of the conference and a service to both certified planners and the local community, the Conference organized a pro-bono Community Assistance Program community planning charrette. The Charrette is annually sponsored by APA and the American Institute of Certified Planners in collaboration with the host community.

The Charrette component is a professional development opportunity for conference participants and a way for the conference to provide service back to the host city. The Charrette typically investigates an important planning challenge identified by local planners and community members. The Charrette provides APA members the opportunity to expand their professional experience through collaboration across planning disciplines with planners from around the country and internationally. In addition, the charrette provides local communities with pro-bono planning services from professionally certified planners drawn from a diversity of areas, experiences, and areas of expertise.



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Watkins Elementary School Custodial Staff



Study Area

The area studied extended from 11th Street, SE on the west to the Anacostia River and Congressional Cemetery on the east; from D Street SE on the north to the Southeast/ Southwest Freeway on the south. The area centered on the Potomac Avenue Metro Station and encompassed residential areas, open space, and the central commercial corridor of Pennsylvania Avenue.

Problem Statement

The neighborhoods on the east end of Capitol Hill, though possessing numerous significant environmental, locational, and infrastructure assets, have not yet achieved the community's vision of a livable neighborhood offering a range of housing and retail options and opportunities in a safe and interesting public environment.

The challenge to the Charrette participants was to determine key planning principles in economic development, housing, and place-making that establish a focused framework for revitalization and identify priority strategies and best practices for implementation.

Charrette Process and Extent

The charrette was limited to a one-day, 8-hour Saturday session held in conjunction with the 2004 American Planning Association National Conference. Charrette participants included over 40 professional planners and 10 citizen planners. The diverse gathering offered a wealth of experience, perspectives, and talent across a range of topics from zoning to design to affordable housing and finance.

The charrette commenced with a broad overview of the planning and policy framework of the District as a whole, followed by a presentation by the local citizen planners of the assets, challenges, and existing conditions of the study area neighborhoods.

After a brief walking tour of the study area, charrette participants divided into focus groups based on three areas of discipline: economic development, housing, and placemaking in the public realm. Guided by experienced facilitators, charrette participants evaluated the local and city-wide objectives, existing conditions, local assets resources and opportunities.

Participants first determined a set of guiding principles of a vision for neighborhood improvement within their topic area. Based on this vision, the working groups developed a framework plan for the study area. Drawing from their experiences from around the country and internationally, the planners outlined a strategic approach for implementation.

Participants presented their rapidly developed principles, plans and implementation strategies before the larger community at the end of the day. Observers were generally enthusiastic in response to the plan.

Although much additional work remains to be done to further refine the plan, the concepts resulting from the charrette provide a solid foundation for community and public actions toward improvement of this important civic corridor and dynamic neighborhood center.

THE POTOMAC AVENUE METRO STATION/LOWER PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE AREA IS A NEIGHBORHOOD-SERVING TRANSIT VILLAGE ON THE WATERFRONT. ITS HAS A STRONG CENTER AND UNIQUE CHARACTER. A MIX OF SHOPS, HOUSING OPTIONS, OFFICE SPACES, AND ACTIVE PUBLIC SPACES SERVE ITS DIVERSE POPULATION OF FAMILIES, SINGLES AND SENIORS. EXCEPTIONAL NEW INFILL BUILDINGS COMPLEMENT THE WELL-PRESERVED HISTORIC CHARACTER AND PROVIDE STRONG EDGES TO IMPORTANT NEW PUBLIC SPACES. IT IS A PEDESTRIAN-ORIENTED PLACE WHERE FAMILIES PLAY ON THE WATERFRONT, VISITORS TOUR HISTORIC GRAVESITES AND NEW MONUMENTS, AND RESIDENTS MINGLE IN ECLECTIC, INDEPENDENT SHOPS AND CAFES.



Housing: Create communities of choice by providing a variety of housing types available to a wide range of incomes.



Economic Development: Create compact centers of activity that are easy to walk around and inviting to pedestrians.



Place-making: Plan places for people to gather, visit and relax.



Place-making: Celebrate the waterfront location by completing connections from the community to the water's edge.

PLANNING PRINCIPLES

COMPACT FOR IMPACT

Retail should be focused into compact nodes at critical points along the corridor rather than a continuous string with no defined center(s).

SMALL IS BEAUTIFUL

Smaller, eclectic independent (preferably local) entrepreneurs are more reflective of neighborhood preferences and should be encouraged and supported.

ANTICIPATE EVOLUTION

Neighborhoods change. Recognize local trends and take action to manage change to protect existing residents, neighborhood character and assets. Maximize infill opportunity to relieve demand pressures. Establish design guidelines.

CREATE COMMUNITY OF CHOICE(S)

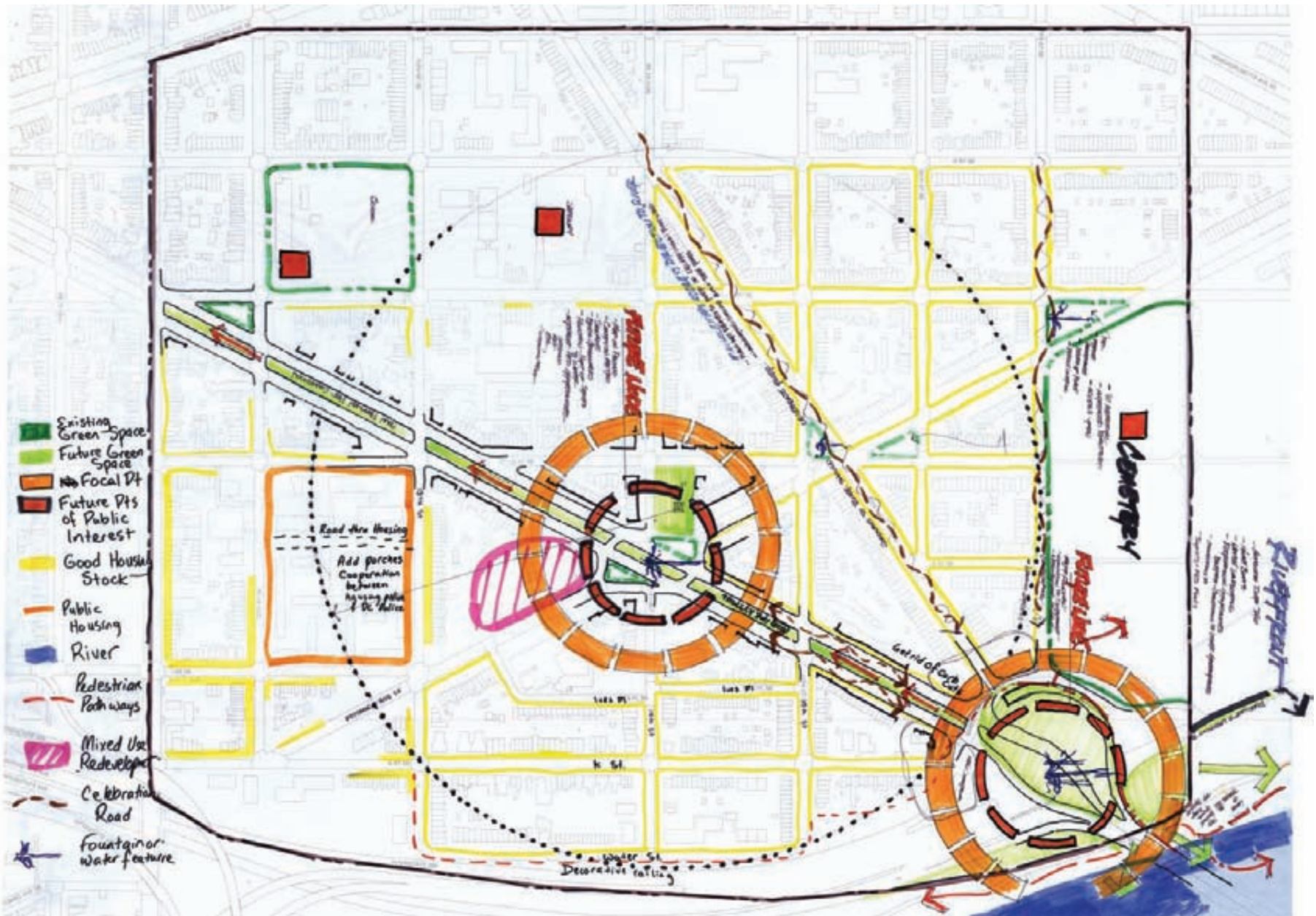
Provide a diversity of housing choices for residents at a range of income levels, ages, and physical abilities. Deconcentrate subsidized housing units by reintegrating across the neighborhood. Maintain overall number of affordable units.

PLAN PLACES FOR PEOPLE

Develop great public spaces that draw residents, visitors and merchants to active, vibrant, and safe places to gather and play.

MAKE THE CONNECTIONS

Knit the community together with clear, convenient, and well-marked pathways between significant neighborhood destinations. Give priority to pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit riders.



Framework Concept For Revitalization

Develop Potomac Avenue Metro area as the neighborhood "Town Square". The fragmented triangular parks and median in front of the station should be visually reconnected as a single square through a comprehensive landscape plan. Pedestrian connections to and across the square should be safe and easy. Mixed-use buildings of modestly greater height should line the square and provide new retail spaces at the ground floor with new residential opportunities above. Important available infill opportunities include the JPI site, Metro plaza site, and former Pizza Hut site.

Create retail sub-nodes centered around "Antique Row" and Barney Circle gateway. Encourage and support strong, compact sub-centers of retail at 11th and Pennsylvania anchored by Frager's Hardware and the Antique Row and a second at the intersection of Pennsylvania Avenue and the circle taking advantage of waterfront views and access to open space. Encourage independent (locally - owned) new businesses.

Reintegrate low-income housing throughout the neighborhood. Redevelop public housing sites as new mixed-income residential housing. Maximize limited redevelopment sites for mixed-income, mixed-use development. Develop policies to maintain affordability of existing residential row-house stock. Diversify housing types available in the neighborhood to include apartments, condominiums, accessory units, and senior housing in addition to existing rowhouses.

Preserve, protect, and reinvest in historic building stock. Preserve and rehabilitate buildings within the historic district and prevent further neglect. Explore options for protecting traditional building stock outside of the historic district through tax incentives, public assistance, design guidelines, conservation districts, or expansion of historic district protection.

Redesign Barney Circle as a signature space and gateway to the river and neighborhood. The redesigned park should be an inviting public space that is more than an auto-dominated traffic circle. The park should feature a major focal element (monument, public art, civic structure or other) on axis with the U.S. Capitol. Elegant stairs or ramps should provide a natural and gracious link from the circle and neighborhood to the waterfront below.

Create well defined linkages. Important corridors to strengthen and develop include connections from the Metro station along E Street to Safeway and the Congressional Cemetery, Pennsylvania Avenue down to the waterfront trails and 14th and/or Potomac Avenue to Maritime Plaza. Strengthen the important corridors to local neighborhood destinations through good public realm design, signage, and public art. In addition to the main corridor of Pennsylvania Avenue, key corridors include Potomac Avenue from the Navy Yard to Public Reservation 13, E Street SE from Pennsylvania Avenue to Congressional Cemetery, and 14th Street SE from Safeway to Maritime Plaza (including new pedestrian connections across the freeway).

Create a common identity. Unite the neighborhoods within the study area with a common identity, streetscape strategy, and commercial center. "The "new" neighborhood name should be marketed with signs, banners, and art.

Celebrate the waterfront. Create new waterfront trails and parks along the river to provide recreational opportunities for residents and visitors. Utilize the waterfront as an asset for economic development as well as recreation. Improve connections to the waterfront to facilitate access and enjoyment. Take advantage of key waterfront views.



Observations, Obstacles and Opportunities

The Economic Development Focus Group examined the Pennsylvania Avenue commercial corridor. Immediately it was noted that many basic services were missing including a bank, post office and medical offices as well as a range of desired retail options. Many of the existing storefronts were small and oddly configured for retail activities. There appeared to be an overall lack of high quality retail space. Oddly shaped, angular parcels presented unique challenges for new development or reuse.

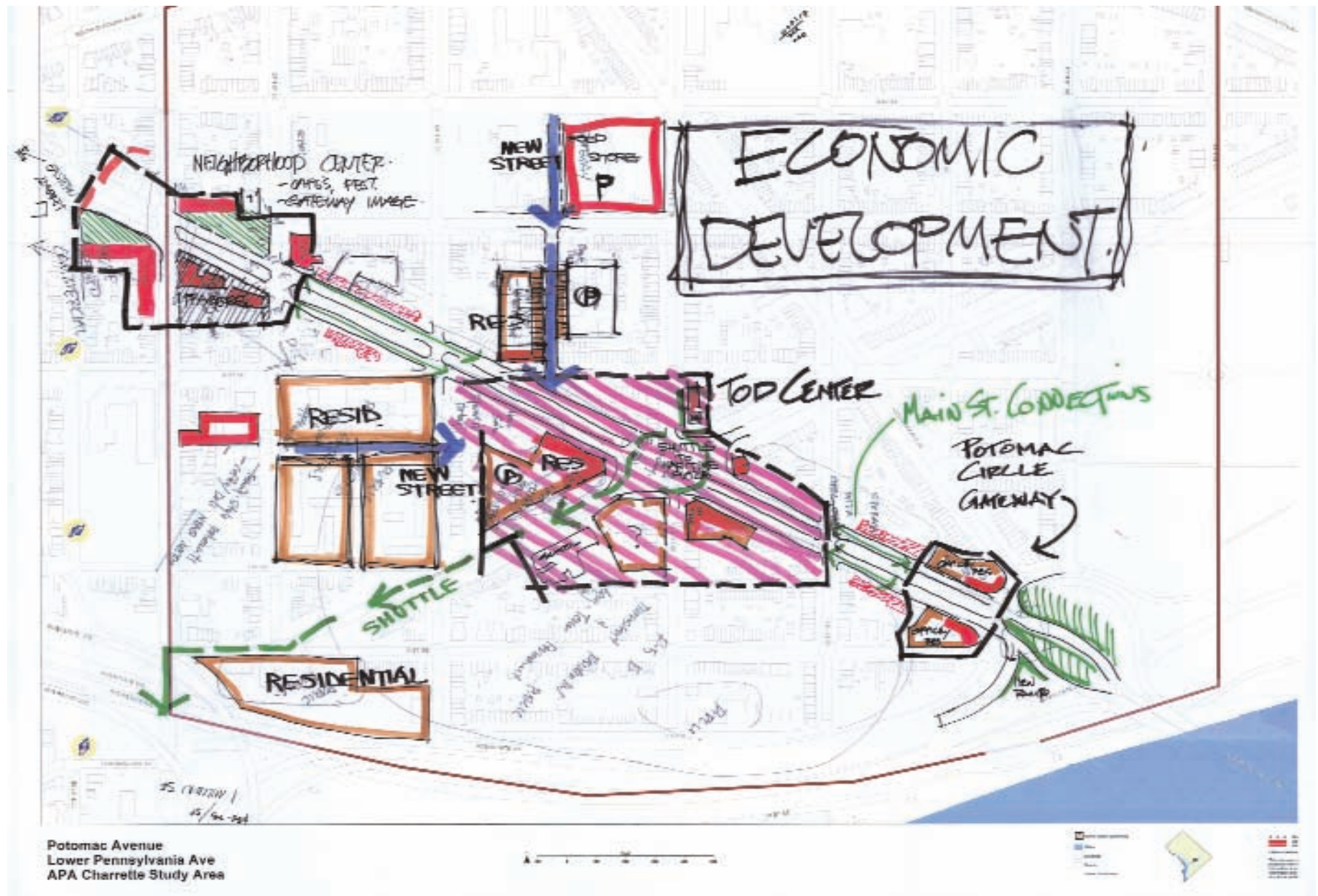
Citizen planners identified a number of unmet wants and needs of neighborhood residents. A new major grocery store, a sit-down family restaurant, art galleries, stationers, coffee shops, and other sundries were all desired uses. Residents had a strong desire to shop (and spend money) in their own neighborhood instead of needing to leave the neighborhood to take care of basic daily errands and purchases.

Residents emphasized the need to keep, expand, and grow new local, eclectic, independent retailers and wished to carefully manage the number of chain retailers. The wide diversity of local incomes indicated that retail or commercial services be appropriate to the income levels and needs of the existing local residents.

Role-models for new retail currently existing in the neighborhood included Frager's Hardware, an expanding local independent hardware store that meets a direct community needs. Large vacant parcels along the Pennsylvania Avenue main street offer opportunity for new infill development that will provide modern retail space.

Ideas and Objectives

- Grow from the base. The corridor already has a number of unique, strong local businesses from which to build the strongest foundation. The plan should include strategies to retain the existing businesses and help them grow and adapt to demands of new residents and visitors.
- Walkable retail. Shoppers don't want to walk far between stores. Smaller, more compact retail districts tend to be more "user friendly" and more easily identifiable as a neighborhood center than retail strung out along the length of the corridor.
- Cultivate local entrepreneurs. Offering grants, training, and financing assistance may help to grow more local businesses that will help with neighborhood reinvestment and improvement.
- Make a name for yourself. Lower Pennsylvania Avenue is distinct from Eastern Market, yet it lacks a distinct identity that can convey a kind of "brand recognition" for the neighborhood.
- Increase local buying power. Explore ways to invest in local human capital to increase income, purchasing power, and prevent future displacement of residents.
- Parks help profits. Community parks and green spaces were also recognized as an economic asset. Program parks with active uses that reconnect the retail center to nearby marinas and the Anacostia River.
- Transportation means business. Create a business-oriented transportation strategy to strengthen pedestrian and transit connections between Maritime Plaza and the transit center. Improve pedestrian and bike connections across and along Pennsylvania Avenue.



Economic Development Framework Concept

Economic Development Framework Plan

- **Strong neighborhood-serving retail center at the metro station.**

Develop JPI/Boys Town site to provide higher-density mixed use including apartments or condominiums, ground floor retail and possible small scale office uses;

Develop the Metro Site above the Potomac station with ground floor neighborhood-serving retail services below upper floor residential units;

- **Destination retail and a visual gateway at Barney Circle.**

Encourage redevelopment of parcels adjacent to Barney Circle at the base of Pennsylvania Avenue to provide appropriate gateway buildings that establish a distinct image, include a mix of uses, and take advantage of waterfront views and vistas.

Improve circle to provide linkages connecting the neighborhood, cemetery and waterfront trails.

- **Expanded 11th Street node building off of existing businesses.**

Market Fragers Hardware and "Antique Row" to attract complementary businesses.

Improve streetscaping in the area to further define the node.

- **Redevelopment of other underutilized sites in the neighborhood.**

Redevelop the Safeway site as an urban, mixed use store.

Utilize DPW properties to provide needed public parking via a new street linking the Safeway and Metro sites.

Redevelop Public Housing sites for mixed income housing

- **Increased connections to retail destinations.**

Break up "super blocks" with new streets.

Action Plan

Immediate (NOW! - 12 months)

- Apply for reSTORE DC Main Street designation
- Build relationship with JPI to catalyze economic development

Short (0 - 24 months)

- Survey needs and status of current businesses
- Plan activities to promote local existing businesses
- Organize volunteer landscaping/streetscaping/facades improvements
- Produced shared marketing (directories, flyers)
- Create a local business association
- Investigate funding sources to pay for further planning
- Begin communicating vision to land owners and developers

Medium (12 - 48 months)

- Hire consultants and organize community to develop the master plans
- Fund and conduct a market study
- Develop marketing plan to attract new businesses
- Consider possibilities of cemetery as tourist site
- Work with government to develop timelines and plans for rehab of school at 13th and E Streets and new library



Observations, Obstacles and Opportunities

The Housing Focus Group noted a range of housing opportunities and challenges in the study area.

The housing stock is primarily single family, with the exception of some large, higher density and gated public housing complexes concentrated on large blocks within the study area. A handful of smaller, market-rate garden apartments exist in the neighborhood, but many need significant reinvestment. Some ancillary housing was provided by garden/basement apartments in some of the traditional single-family row homes.

Citizen planners pointed out the increasing housing prices in the neighborhood and decreasing affordability. Rising property values also resulted in dramatically increased property taxes and housing costs for existing residents.

Residents identified a strong desire to upgrade the neighborhood, but there was general concern for the livability for existing residents versus gentrification by newcomers.

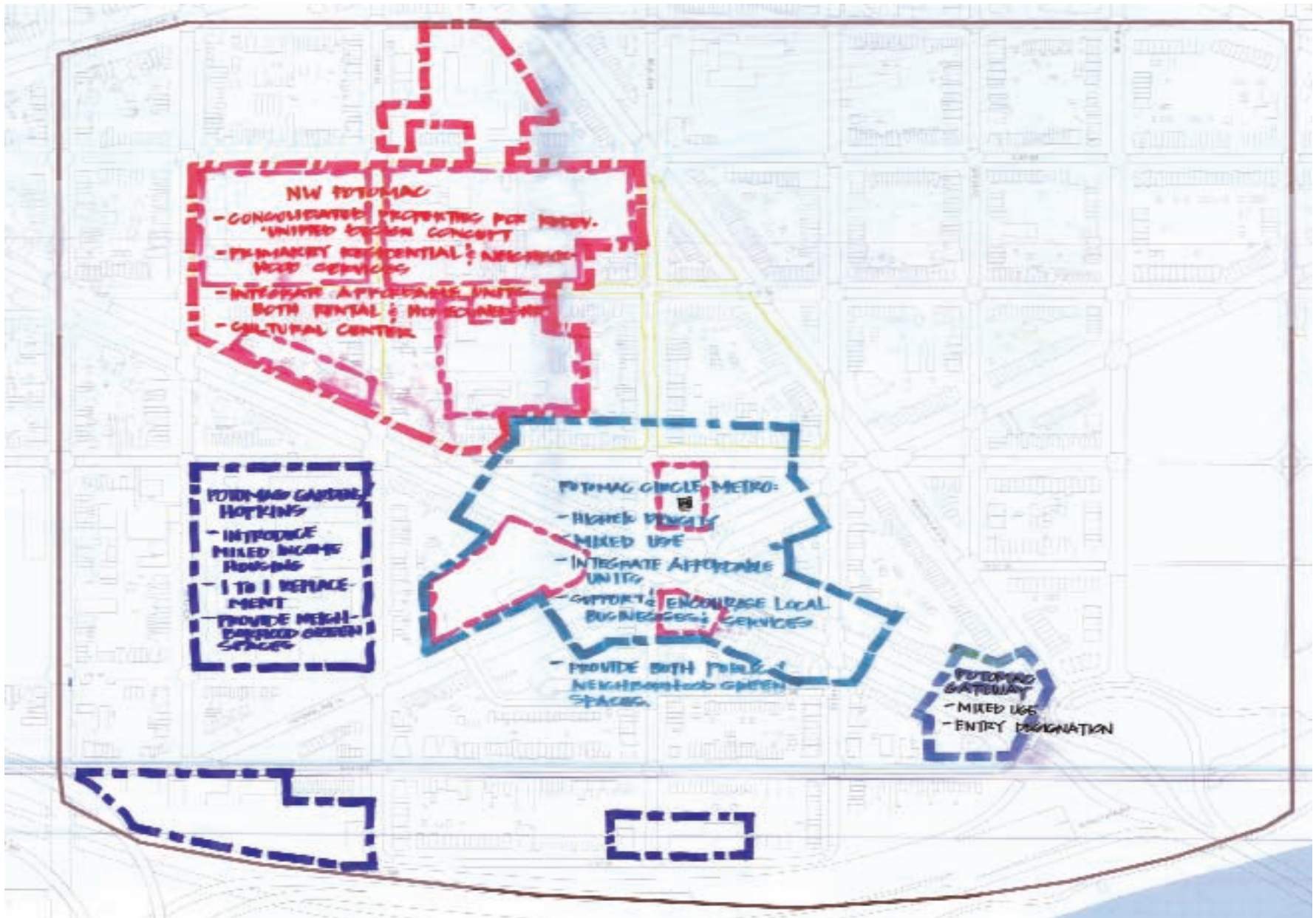
Ideas and Objectives

Objectives:

- Establish a process for community review of projects;
- Maintain existing residents and affordability;
- Encourage and expand homeownership;
- Discourage teardowns but encourage infill and reuse;
- Reintegrate low-income units to eliminate concentrated poverty.

Ideas:

- Include affordable housing as part of any new development in the area to maintain diversity of units and residents;
- Retain existing residential character through preservation of existing buildings and design guidelines for new buildings;
- Provide residential amenities critical to a livable community including green space and access to transportation;
- Take advantage of the limited infill opportunities to add more housing opportunities at a range of income levels;
- Communicate with community via ANCs and other neighborhood organizations and encourage community service learning partnerships between schools and agencies and developers;
- Increase housing budget by decreasing household transportation costs through partnership with transit agency or car sharing company.



Housing Framework Concept

Housing Framework Plan

- **Maximize redevelopment of limited infill sites.**
 - Consider establishing minimum densities for specific sites to maximize housing opportunities on limited development sites.
 - Encourage a mix of housing unit types in each development site (1-, 2-, or 3-bedroom units, rowhouses, English basements, etc.)
 - Require mix of housing prices to provide affordable units.
- **Mixed-use development on retail redevelopment sites.**
 - Include residential units above new retail space on commercial sites.
 - Promote "live above the store" opportunities.
- **Maintain (or increase) number of affordable units in area.**
 - Require one-for-one replacement of affordable units within the local neighborhood in redevelopment of public housing.
 - Increase overall number of housing units in the neighborhood achieve affordability goal.
 - Maintain affordability of single-family houses (i.e. rowhouses), especially for existing residents and seniors.
- **Expand homeownership.**
 - particularly south of Pennsylvania Avenue, through home purchase assistance, education, and support.
- **Safe streets.**
 - Neighborhood livability is improved through a distinctive streetscape and high-quality public realm.
- **Enhance green space.**
 - Additional green space amenities strengthen the local housing market and community livability. LEED (green building) standards are strongly encouraged in new developments.

Action Plan

- **Establish Developer Incentives:** Create a tax abatement structure for developments with a significant segment of affordable units; allow density bonuses only with provision of affordable units Target and manage loan guarantees, low income housing tax credits, and other tools to encourage affordable housing in any new housing project in the neighborhood.
- **Create consistent regulatory requirements:** Require inclusion of affordable housing with density bonus or other zoning relief. Consider inclusionary zoning regulation.
- **Lower development costs in exchange for affordable housing:** Since parking is a major cost of development, allow or encourage reduced parking in concert with transit subsidies, car sharing programs, and other incentives to reduce auto use in exchange for more affordable units.
- **Establish local community development corporation:** Explore the opportunity for and/or need to create a local community development corporation to assist with redevelopment-particularly for affordable units.
- **Guide design:** Establish local design considerations to inform and guide area developers and retain the human-scale of the neighborhood, historic sense of place, and architectural character. Guide appropriate treatment of parking. Consider expansion of historic district and/or creation of a local conservation district.
- **Encourage design competitions for key redevelopment sites:** Encourage and assist major property owners-such as the Housing Authority-to hold design competitions as part of any RFP for redevelopment of larger sites in the area.



Observations, Obstacles and Opportunities

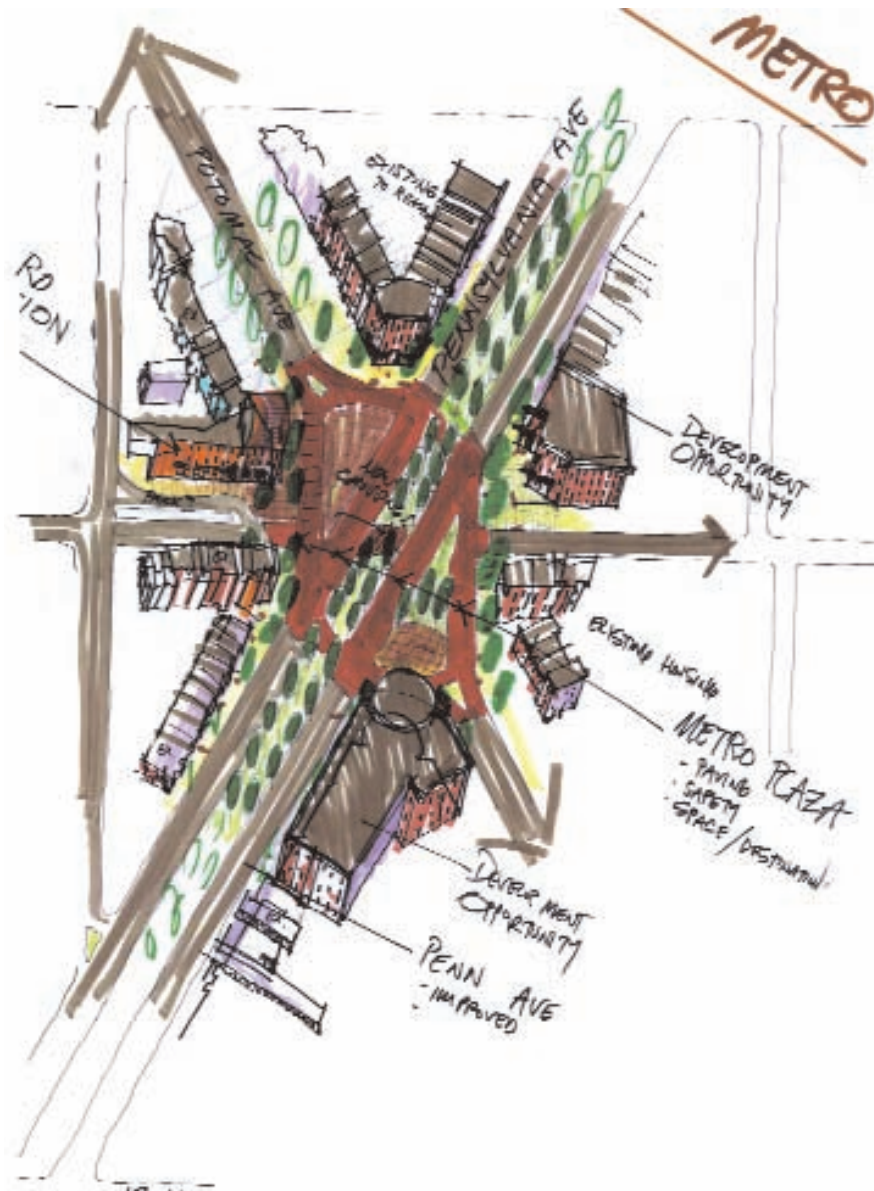
The Place-Making Focus Group saw tremendous opportunity to utilize the many existing public spaces to link the neighborhood together, establish it as a gateway to the Anacostia river, and create a pedestrian and bicycle network linking the many destinations around the neighborhood to the metro station and the neighborhood's central retail area.

The study team noted, however, that although abundant open spaces- triangle parks, plazas, and generous medians-exist in the area, these spaces are largely underutilized, disconnected, and unprogrammed. The public spaces do not unite the neighborhoods around them with a common identity or characterize them as a unique place. They are not well signed or identified and presently do not draw many visitors outside of the neighborhood joggers, dog-walkers, or adventurous fishermen.

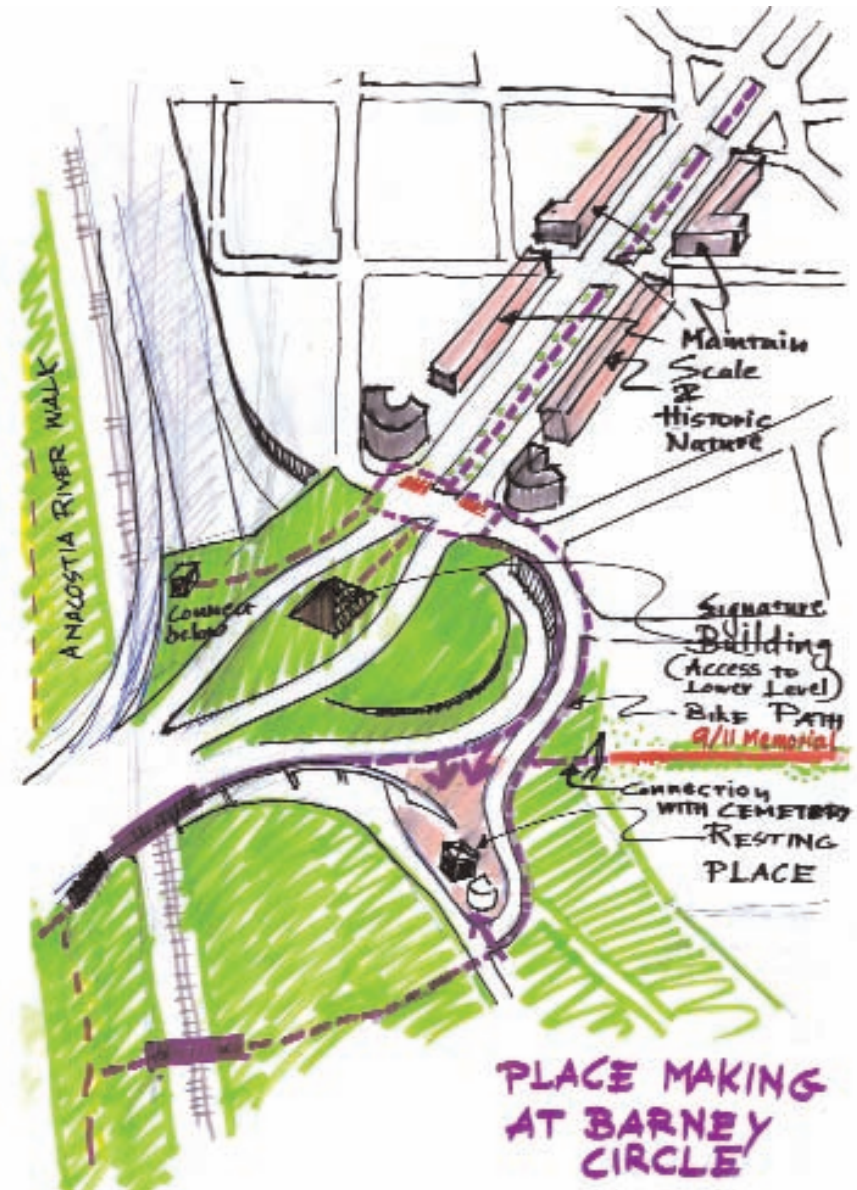
Safety posed a significant challenge in making the available public spaces accessible and inviting. Loitering was seen as a potential negative. In addition, the heavy commuter traffic in the area presented an obstacle to connecting pedestrians and bicycles to the metro station, Barney Circle green space, the Congressional Cemetery and Anacostia waterfront. The Freeway presented an imposing barrier between the newly developed Maritime Plaza office complex and the Potomac Avenue Metro Station-the closest metro station to the many hundreds of employees working at the complex.

Ideas and Objectives

- Link the many points of local public interest including area churches, the Safeway grocery, neighborhood schools, and the metro station.
- Strengthen a common identity for the diverse neighborhoods in the area to help to unify the area.
- Foster the development and promotion of destinations of regional or national interest including the waterfront, Maritime Plaza, and Congressional Cemetery.
- Create a framework and guidelines for great public spaces including streets, parks and plazas.
- Provide guidelines for private development that promote defined and active public spaces.



Concept of Metro plaza square



Concept of Barney Circle gateway

Place-Making Framework Plan

- **Create major new public spaces at Barney Circle and the Potomac Avenue Metro station.**

- These two areas should be well defined by buildings of relatively greater height and continuous streetwalls to define the edges of the public spaces.
- Require active ground floor uses such as cafes, restaurants or retail stores oriented toward the open spaces to provide observation and activity.

- **Improve Pennsylvania Avenue as a well-defined corridor and gateway to both the U.S. Capitol and the Anacostia waterfront.**

- Design streetscape treatments, signature lighting, landscaping, and infill development along the corridor in a consistent palette.

- **Link area destinations.**

- Install easily understood and interesting way-finding signage.
- Designate well-maintained and clear pedestrian and bicycle pathways.
- Establish missing connections between the neighborhood and waterfront and transit station and Maritime Plaza.

- **Create a unified and distinctive identity for the neighborhood(s).**

- Identify a single name for the area that can help "brand" it as a unique place.
- Install public art, sidewalk or plaza pavings, and other elements that reinforce and convey that identity.

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Concept of Pennsylvania Avenue Right-of-Way at Potomac Avenue metro station plaza



ABOVE: Design guidelines should be established for key infill opportunities to facilitate quality urban development that defines important public spaces.

RIGHT: Pennsylvania Avenue should be the unifying element tying together the diverse public spaces in the neighborhood: from waterfront to Cemetery to Metro Plaza to school yards and Capitol.



Action Plan

- **“Potomac Circle” transit center.**

- Develop design guidelines for vacant or underutilized parcels to encourage development that defines the square and creates a visible public space.
- Install new paving in intersection to slow drivers and identify it as a place.
- Landscape all islands to unite the square as a single public space.
- Create a focal point in the square.
- Enhance pedestrian connections to and across the square.

- **Barney Circle.**

- Redesign the Circle as a real place and destination (i.e. with comfort station, refreshment stand, interpretive signage and places to rest).
- Redevelop underutilized parcels along Pennsylvania at Kentucky and Water Streets as gateway buildings accommodating a mix of uses that take advantage of waterfront views and public space.

- **Riverfront trail.**

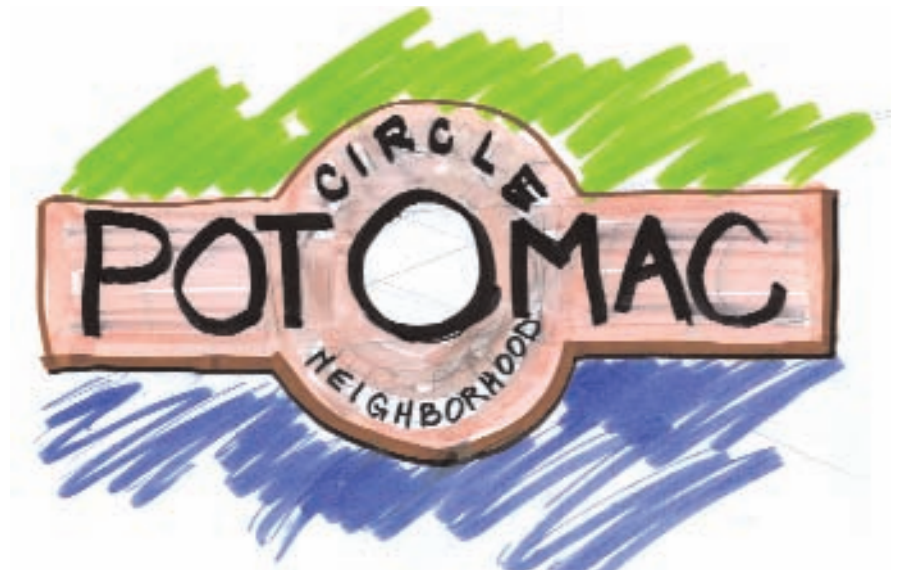
- Complete “interim” trail to connect neighborhood to river.
- Highlight visual connections (view corridors) to the river.
- Create “Sousa Steps” for pedestrians and/or a circular ramp for bikes down from Barney Circle to the waterfront trail.
- Explore options for pedestrian and bike access over the rail tracks.
- Explore additional access points between the river and Cemetery.

- **Pennsylvania Avenue Corridor.**

- Enhance medians, sidewalks, and landscaping.
- Tame Traffic - Utilize streetscape elements to signal drivers they are entering a neighborhood center and pedestrian priority zone.
- Install marked bicycle lanes, high-visibility crossings, and lighting.
- Install wayfinding signs indicating routes to area destinations.

- **Make visible improvements.**

- Focus on improvements that will be highly visible to residents, investors, visitors, and businesses.



“Brand” the neighborhood with a unifying but unique identity



QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

The one-day only charrette raised many questions for further study. Charrette participants recommended further exploration and planning in the following areas in order to create a more concise and implementable plan:

Economic Development

- How much quality retail can the local neighborhood alone support? Is there enough population or local income to add additional stores or are there too many already?
- Is office development a viable and desirable market to promote? If so, how will office development change the character of the overall neighborhood and how can it be managed?
- What if Potomac Avenue was another corridor for retail or commercial development linking Maritime Plaza to the Metro? How would this help or hurt retail on Pennsylvania Avenue? How would it affect the residential areas?
- How much parking is needed to support the desired retail? How can parking be created and where? How can it be managed?
- Are there cultural elements (theaters, museums, etc.) that would complement local retail that could be supported in the community?
- Should there be a separate local business association unique from Capitol Hill?

Housing

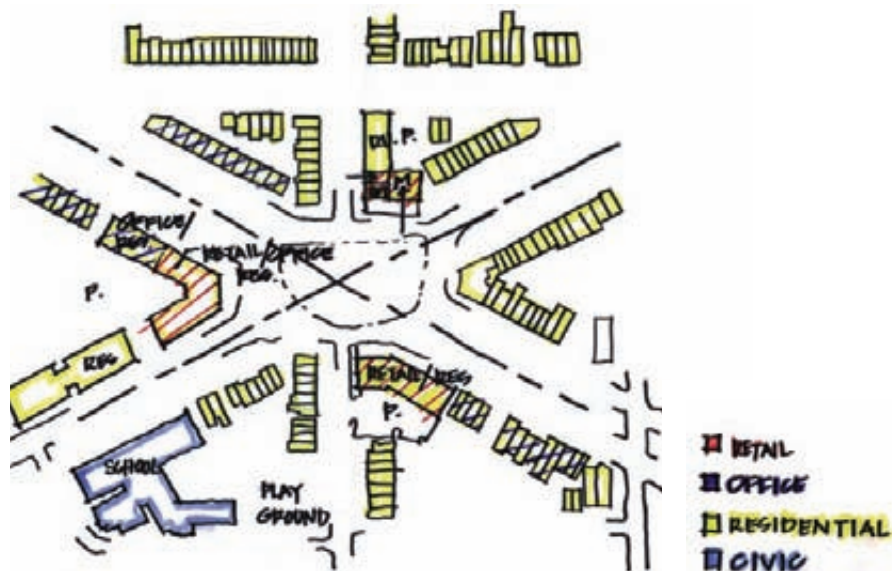
- What is the residential density needed to support the retail the neighborhood wants? If additional density is needed, is it worth it? What is the appropriate balance between the two? Can the density be focused and bounded? If so, would that make it ok?
- How can the historic character be protected if the historic district is not expanded? How would preservation or conservation change the cost of development and the desire to invest/build in the neighborhood? How can we ensure architectural excellence in new development?

- What kind of transportation will the households demand and how will this affect housing costs and development? How does parking impact affordable housing and what is the appropriate balance?
- How are the schools in the neighborhood? Are proper public investments being made to address the needs of families as well as childless households?
- How will better retail services-and a more convenient community-affect housing affordability?
- Is there sufficient open space for community needs? What is the trade-off between more open space and more housing? Which is the greater need?
- Who manages low-income housing tax credits and how can they be targeted?
- What are the risks and benefits of utilizing Eminent Domain to promote maximum use of under-developed properties?
- Can a webpage be established - similar to the Los Angeles Land Opportunity Tracking System - to track available development sites and recent development projects?

Place-Making

- Can Pennsylvania Avenue be changed at Potomac Avenue to reunite the pieces of the square literally or visually?
- What should serve as the focal point within Barney Circle? Should it be national, local, or both in its significance?
- What changes will be made to the Southeast Freeway? Will the freeway go away? Are pedestrian connections across it possible?
- Can the E Street gate into the Cemetery be opened to the public? Can additional access points be provided along the river's edge?
- Is the Safeway store likely to be redeveloped? If so, what public realm guidelines could improve E Street as a connecting corridor?
- Is the metro plaza above the Potomac Avenue Metro escalators a viable development site? Can the bus plaza adjacent also be redesigned with development?

APPENDICES



Charrette Agenda: Saturday, April 24 -- Watkins Elementary School

8:30am	Meet at Hilton Hotel - board buses
8:45am	Arrive at Watkins Elementary (10th & D Streets SE) Coffee meet and greet
9:00-9:30am	Study Area Overview Policy Framework (DC Office of Planning) Neighborhood Overview (citizen planners)
9:30-10:30am	Issue break out groups (maps, trace, and flip charts) Place-making, public realm and connectivity Economic Development and retail Housing
10:30-11:15am	Neighborhood walking tour (in issue groups)
11:15 - 2:00am	Charrette 12:30pm Check-in - Guiding principles/objectives
2:00-2:30pm	Pin-up and presentation of individual issue groups
2:30-3:00pm	Refinement of framework/preparation for presentation
3:00-4:00pm	Presentation to community
4:30pm	Closing - board buses

Anticipated Outcomes:

- 1) 3-5 Key Objectives / Principles for each issue area
- 2) Illustrated framework strategy map

Issue Area Guiding Questions

Place-making, Public Realm, and Connectivity

What is the unique identity of this place /these neighborhoods?
 What elements or features can or do convey this identity?
 What are the major corridors and pathways?
 Where are people coming from and going to?
 What modes of travel are used to move through this area?
 Are routes safe, attractive, interesting and inviting?
 Where are opportunities for unique public gathering places?

Economic Development and Retail Main Street

What areas compete with lower Pennsylvania Avenue?
 How much retail can this area of Pennsylvania Avenue support?
 What are the types of retail or services to focus on attracting first?
 Are retail spaces on Pennsylvania Avenue appropriate for modern retail?
 Is there sufficient parking for the type of retail desired?
 Is Pennsylvania Ave too wide to be a vibrant retail main street?
 What retail uses might find this area particularly appealing?
 Should office be encouraged in this neighborhood?
 Are sidewalks wide enough for retail activity?
 How can transit be used to boost retail?
 What streetscape improvements would enhance retail success?

Housing

What affordable housing currently exists (beyond public housing)?
 Should the public housing properties be redeveloped?
 Should there be additional housing units and different housing types?
 Where might additional residential units be added in the neighborhood?
 How does more housing this affect the character of the neighborhood?
 What is the relationship between housing density and retail success?
 Are higher densities acceptable if there is superior design?
 What might be the unintended consequences of increased density?
 Who needs housing (i.e. singles, families, seniors, special needs)?
 What housing types are missing in the neighborhood?



Anacostia Waterfront Initiative (AWI) Framework Plan

Several major public initiatives provide policy guidance in developing a framework plan for the Potomac Avenue Metro Station Area.

Anacostia Waterfront Initiative: Led by the DC Office of Planning, the goal of the AWI is to coordinate public and private planning actions to revitalize the Anacostia Waterfront. The Anacostia Waterfront Initiative (AWI) Framework Plan envisions a rejuvenated public waterfront that provides opportunities for a vibrant and active urban waterfront lined with residential, recreational, retail, and cultural activities.

The AWI improves multi-modal connections to the waterfront and transit and pedestrian access between the waterfront and waterfront neighborhoods—connections currently lacking throughout most of the waterfront area.

AWI envisions the Pennsylvania Avenue corridor as an important waterfront gateway and potential neighborhood main streets that could have a mutually supportive connection to the waterfront-serving waterfront tourists and visitors who will help to bolster vibrant neighborhood retail centers. As one of the closest subway access points to the waterfront, the Potomac Avenue Metro Station will serve an important function in bringing residents and visitors to the waterfront if adequate pedestrian connections can be established to provide that linkage.

reSTORE DC: Mayor Williams established the reSTORE DC program in January 2002 with the mission of supporting, promoting and building neighborhood retail districts within the city, reSTORE DC helps revitalize neighborhood business districts and small businesses through organization, design, promotion, and economic restructuring of commercial areas. Locally Barracks Row Main Street, on 8th Street SE, was designated as one of the city's first main street districts.

Transit-Oriented Development: Under Mayor Anthony A. Williams, the District of Columbia adopted a transit-oriented development policy to optimize land resources served by high quality transit; encourage communities to grow in ways that allow more trips to be made with transit, bicycle or by walking to reduce auto impacts and pollution; and create communities of choice where housing and goods and services are appropriate to a range of income levels to encourage mixed-use, mixed-income livable neighborhoods within the city.

The Potomac Avenue Metro Station has been identified as a location where transit-oriented development presents a real opportunity to support neighborhood revitalization and growth, create a compact neighborhood center that meets local needs, and accommodate some of the coming residential growth in a transit rich area.



Population

Neighborhood retail districts rely primarily on support from the very local population - those living within a half mile of the retail center. Supplemental support is also drawn from adjacent neighborhoods including daily auto commuters, visitors, and others in the region drawn to the attractions of the area.

The study area includes roughly 6,600 individuals in just under 3,000 households. The larger neighborhood cluster - Cluster 26 - includes over 17,500 persons in 7,600 households. According to the 2000 Census, 75% of the study area population is African American, 20% are White, and 5% are of other or multiple races. In the larger neighborhood cluster, the races were nearly evenly divided between black and white.

Household incomes varied across a wide spectrum from very low to quite high. Within the study area, household incomes averaged \$52,481 while in the larger cluster area incomes averaged \$67,832 - both well above the city average of \$43,000 per household. Despite the relatively high average incomes, the study area also has a high percentage (~30%) of residents living below the poverty level, many of whom are children under 16.

Educational achievement also varied widely in the study area. Although 27% of the population had not graduated from high school, nearly half had attended some college and 29% had earned a higher education degree.

These statistics indicate that the study area is a very diverse and well-integrated neighborhood where residents of different races, incomes, and household types live as neighbors within a very small community. The population includes very high income households as well as those struggling economically. It includes salaried professionals, hourly workers, and the unemployed. It also includes some very concentrated poverty. The charrette team was challenged to provide a revitalization strategy that would provide retail, housing, and public realm amenities appropriate to the wide variety of needs required by the diverse members of this neighborhood to provide adequate opportunities for all.



Housing

Of the nearly 3,000 households living within a half-mile radius of the Potomac Avenue Metro station, 53% are renters according to 2000 U.S. Census figures.

Housing vacancies are quite low in the study area. Of the 2,857 housing units in the area, only 261 were classified as vacant. Neighborhood residents reported sharply increasing housing prices, property tax assessments, and monthly rents indicating a very tight local housing market.

The dominant housing unit type in the neighborhood is the Washington rowhouse. Over 62% of housing units in the study area were of this building type. Two sizable public housing properties account for a large proportion of units in multi-family dwellings. Potomac Gardens and Hopkins Apartments together contain over 500 housing units concentrated on roughly two square blocks within the study area. Both properties are presently fully occupied. Other multi-family housing types available in the neighborhood include a handful of small 4 to 12 unit garden apartments scattered throughout the study area, but primarily located south of Pennsylvania Avenue.

In the last three years, roughly 100 homes were sold annually within the study area. Home prices have crept up consistently each year. In 2002, the average home sales price was \$272,000. In 2003, average price rose to just under \$300,000. In the first quarter of 2004, home prices averaged over \$315,000.

Most of the housing stock is in good to excellent condition, although a handful of blighted properties were observed in the study area. The majority of the study area is not presently designated as a historic district. Over 70% of the housing stock dates from 1950 or earlier.





Transportation

The study area is rich with transportation resources. At the center, the Potomac Avenue Metro Station serves over 6,000 riders daily. In addition, several heavily used bus lines shuttle back and forth along the corridor at relatively short intervals.

Over 49,000 vehicles pass through the study area on an average day, however parking resources are severely limited. On-street parking is available on both sides of the corridor, however off-street parking is limited to a handful of small private lots serving individual commercial establishments. Significant amounts of pedestrian and bicycle traffic were observed in the study area both along Pennsylvania Avenue and along neighborhood streets.

The Sousa Bridge, at the east end of the study area, is one of only 5 bridge crossings over the Anacostia River. The bridge carries very high traffic volumes. Poor pedestrian conditions exist along the Bridge and across Barney Circle. Connections to the waterfront and comfortable neighborhood-to-neighborhood connections across the river are difficult or non-existent.

Commercial/Retail Services

Within the study area, commercial activity is primarily found only along the Pennsylvania Avenue corridor with some retail extending south on the 11th Street cross-street and the occasional corner store.

The area presently competes with the upper Pennsylvania Avenue area for retail activity. An eclectic and thriving mix of retail establishments can be found along Pennsylvania Avenue from 2nd to 8th Street SE, in the 8th Street/Barracks Row main street area and near the Eastern Market on 7th Street.

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Retail density and strength drops substantially east of 9th Street SE. The lower portion of Pennsylvania Avenue is filled with deli's, carry-outs, salons, and mom and pop groceries that alternate with residences, a few vacant lots or storefronts, and small office uses. A handful of commuter-oriented, suburban-style establishments dot the lower reaches of the corridor.

Among the existing local assets is Frager's Hardware on the 1100 block which provides a neighborhood anchor and frequent destination for local patrons and Mangialardo & Son's Italian Deli on the 1300 block cited by residents as the best Italian Deli in the District.

Commercial building stock consists primarily of low-scale one- to three-story buildings, many originally constructed as residential dwellings and adapted over time to commercial purposes. Most buildings are in good condition. Parking is limited to on-street spaces and a few private lots. Loading occurs in alleys or from the street.

Most commercial buildings were constructed prior to 1950 with a few newer suburban-style infill uses including a Domino's Pizza and former Pizza Hut building. Three sizable potential redevelopment sites exist along the Pennsylvania Avenue frontage





Public Realm

The study area has tremendous potential to attract residents and visitors through superior parks and public spaces. Area assets include the nearby Anacostia waterfront, Congressional Cemetery, Barney Circle, Pennsylvania Avenue, and the Metro Station area itself.

Sidewalks in the area are generally pleasant and in good condition. Mature trees line the majority of streets and create an intimate neighborhood feel. Pennsylvania Avenue itself is a very wide street with a generous grassy median running the length from the Sousa Bridge to the Capitol Building. Recently planted with a double row of saplings, the corridor will grow to become an attractive gateway to the city. Sidewalks along the Avenue are generous, but the limited retail and destination attractions do not attract large volumes of sidewalk traffic.

Barney Circle is an underdeveloped resource for the neighborhood. The green space at the western foot of the Sousa Bridge has been identified repeatedly as an opportunity for a significant public monument or memorial, but to date the site remains unadorned with only limited flower plantings. Heavy traffic volumes make the circle unattractive as a recreational resource or destination despite the stunning waterfront views it offers.

In contrast, Congressional Cemetery is a well-used neighborhood destination heavily utilized by local dog owners, joggers, and residents out for a stroll. The historic Cemetery, however, is difficult to find for those unfamiliar with the local area and attracts a limited number of visitors and tourists.

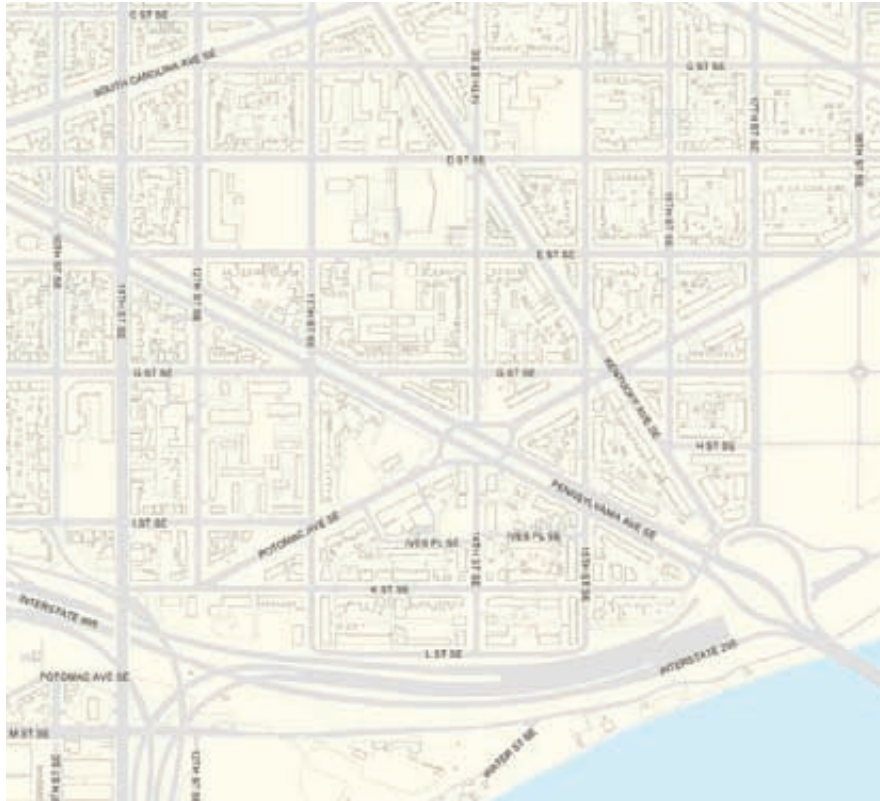
Finally the Anacostia Waterfront although physically very close to study area neighborhoods is isolated from them. Steep grade changes, an active rail corridor and bridge, limited street connections, few established trails, and personal safety issues present barriers to greater neighborhood access to and use of the waterfront area, which could be one of the area's greatest assets.



McMILLAN PLAN - c. 1900



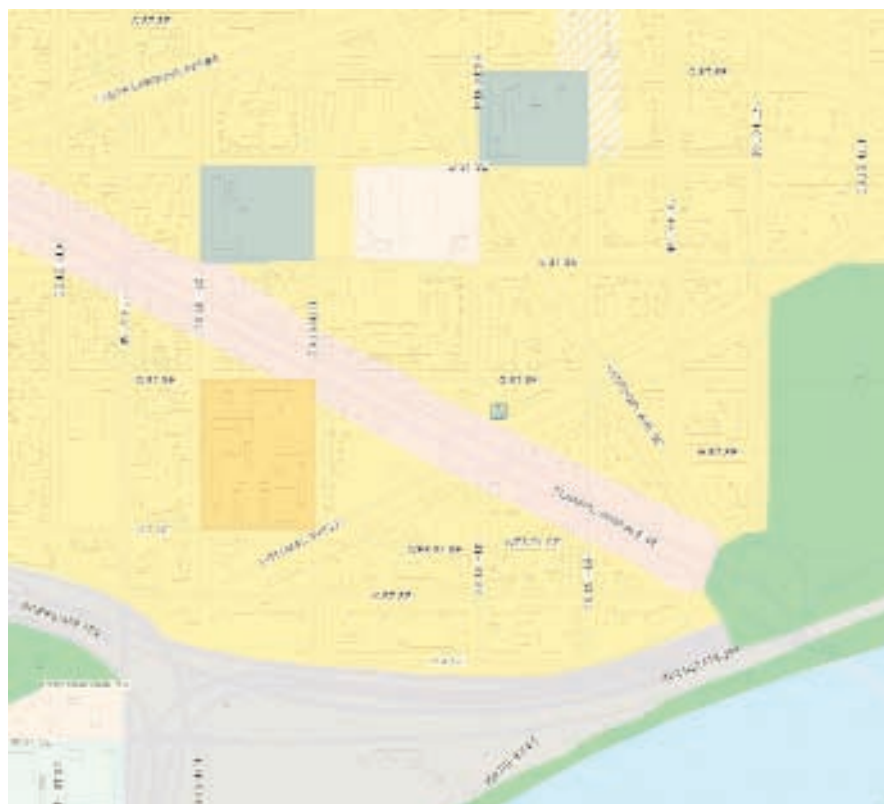
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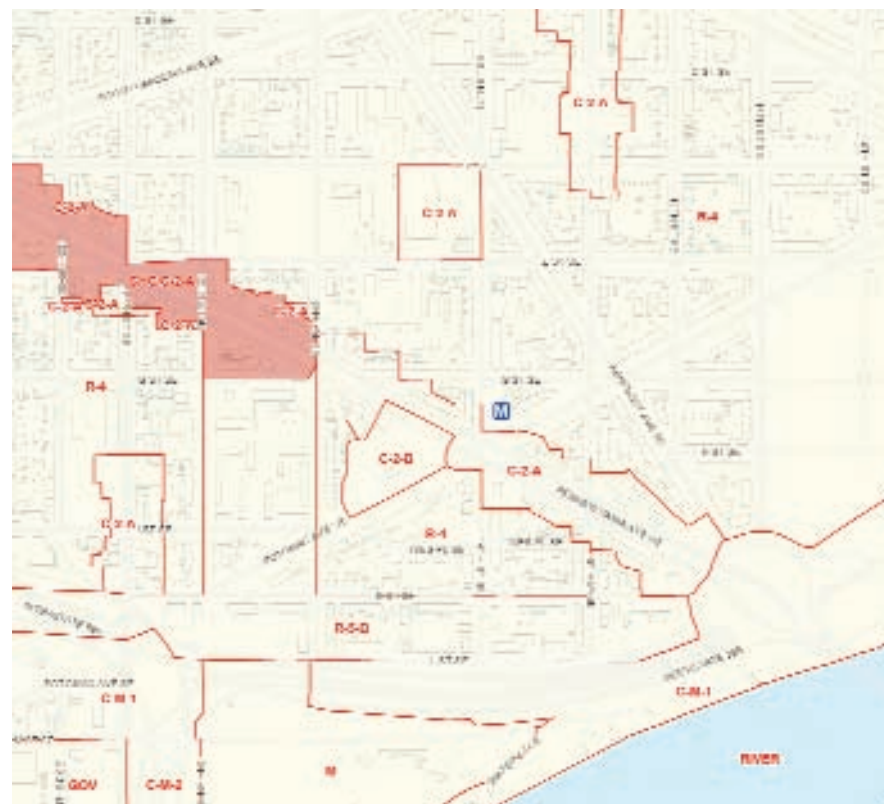
Study Area Figure Ground



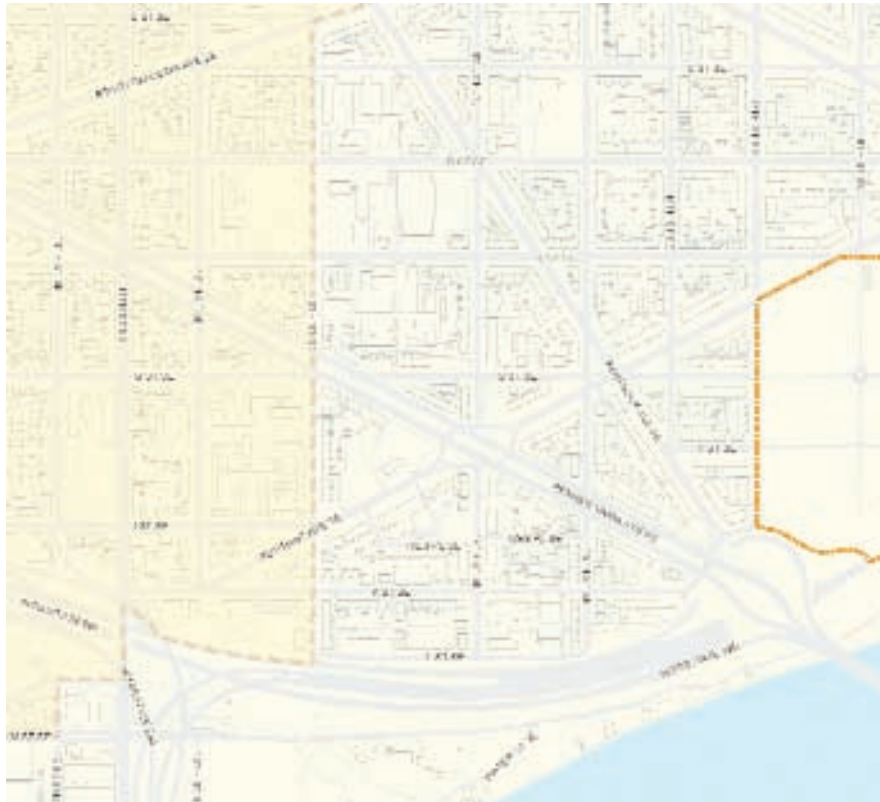
Study Area Context Map



Comprehensive Plan Generalized Land Use



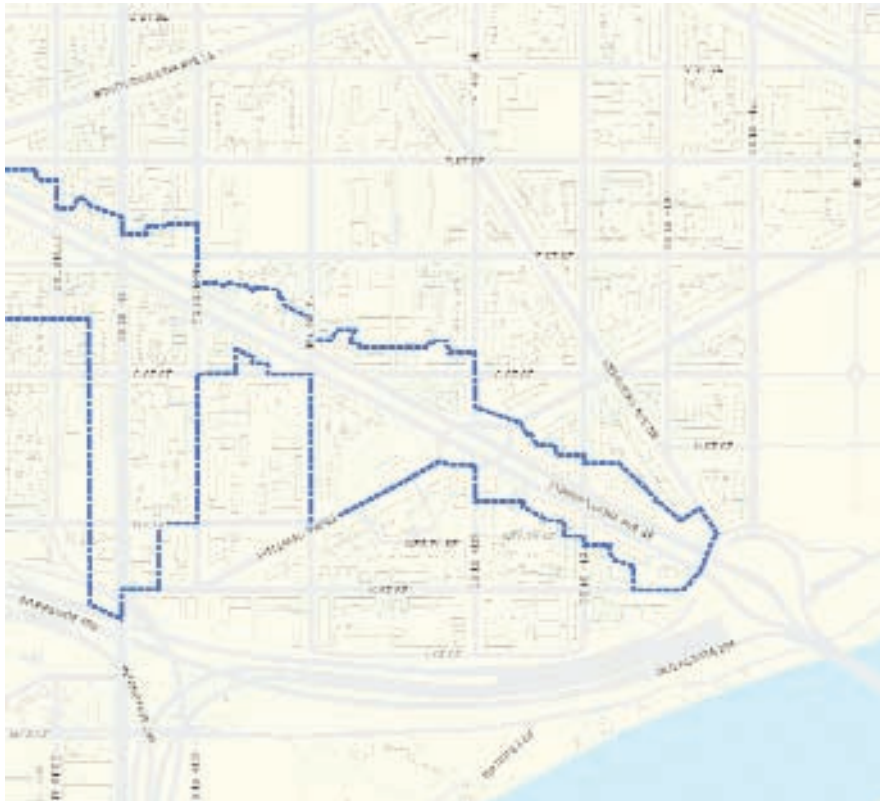
Existing Zoning and Overlay



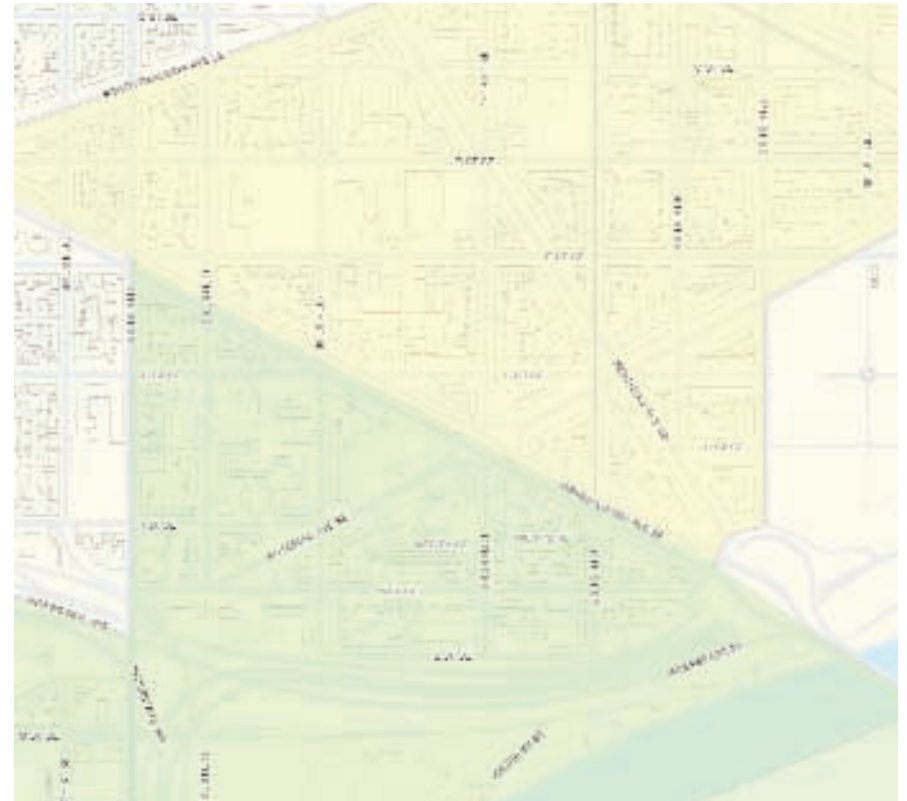
Designated Historic Districts and Landmarks



Potomac Avenue Priority Development Area



Capitol Hill BID Boundaries



Designated Enterprise Zone Areas



Study Area Topography



Census Tracts and Block Groups



Area developments (January 2003)



OrthoPhotography



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