

Central Business District Washington, D.C.

A ULI Advisory Services Panel Report

November 17–19, 2020



 **Urban Land
Institute**
Advisory Services

Central Business District Washington, D.C.

Strategies for Recovery and Economic Resilience

A ULI Advisory Services Panel Report

November 17–19, 2020



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About the Urban Land Institute

THE URBAN LAND INSTITUTE is a global, member-driven organization comprising more than 45,000 real estate and urban development professionals dedicated to advancing the Institute's mission of shaping the future of the built environment for transformative impact in communities worldwide.

ULI's interdisciplinary membership represents all aspects of the industry, including developers, property owners, investors, architects, urban planners, public officials, real estate brokers, appraisers, attorneys, engineers, financiers, and academics.

Established in 1936, the Institute has a presence in the Americas, Europe, and Asia Pacific regions, with members in 80 countries.

The extraordinary impact that ULI makes on land use decision-making is based on its members sharing expertise on a variety of factors affecting the built environment, including urbanization, demographic and population changes, new economic drivers, technology advancements, and environmental concerns.

Peer-to-peer learning is achieved through the knowledge shared by members at thousands of convenings each year that reinforce ULI's position as a global authority on land use and real estate. In 2020 alone, more than 2,600 events were held in cities around the world.

Drawing on the work of its members, the Institute recognizes and shares best practices in urban design and development for the benefit of communities around the globe.

More information is available at uli.org. Follow ULI on Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, and Instagram.

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About ULI Advisory Services

THE GOAL OF THE ULI ADVISORY SERVICES program is to bring the finest expertise in the real estate field to bear on complex land use planning and development projects, programs, and policies. Since 1947, this program has assembled well over 700 ULI-member teams to help sponsors find creative, practical solutions for issues such as downtown redevelopment, land management strategies, evaluation of development potential, growth management, community revitalization, brownfield redevelopment, military base reuse, provision of low-cost and affordable housing, and asset management strategies, among other matters. A wide variety of public, private, and nonprofit organizations have contracted for ULI's advisory services.

Each panel team is composed of highly qualified professionals who volunteer their time to ULI. They are chosen for their knowledge of the panel topic and are screened to ensure their objectivity. ULI's interdisciplinary panel teams provide a holistic look at development problems. A respected ULI member who has previous panel experience chairs each panel.

The agenda for a two-and-a-half-day virtual Advisory Services panel (vASP) is tailored to meet a sponsor's needs. ULI members are briefed by the sponsor, engage with stakeholders through in-depth interviews, deliberate on their recommendations, and make a final presentation of those recommendations. A written executive summary report is prepared as a final deliverable.

Because the sponsoring entities are responsible for significant preparation before the panel's visit, including sending extensive briefing materials to each member and arranging for the panel to meet with key local community members and stakeholders in the project under consideration, participants in ULI's vASP assignments are able to make accurate assessments of a sponsor's issues and to provide recommendations in a compressed amount of time.

A major strength of the program is ULI's unique ability to draw on the knowledge and expertise of its members, including land developers and owners, public officials, academics, representatives of financial institutions, and others. In fulfillment of the mission of the Urban Land Institute, this vASP

executive summary report is intended to provide objective advice that will promote the responsible use of land to enhance the environment.

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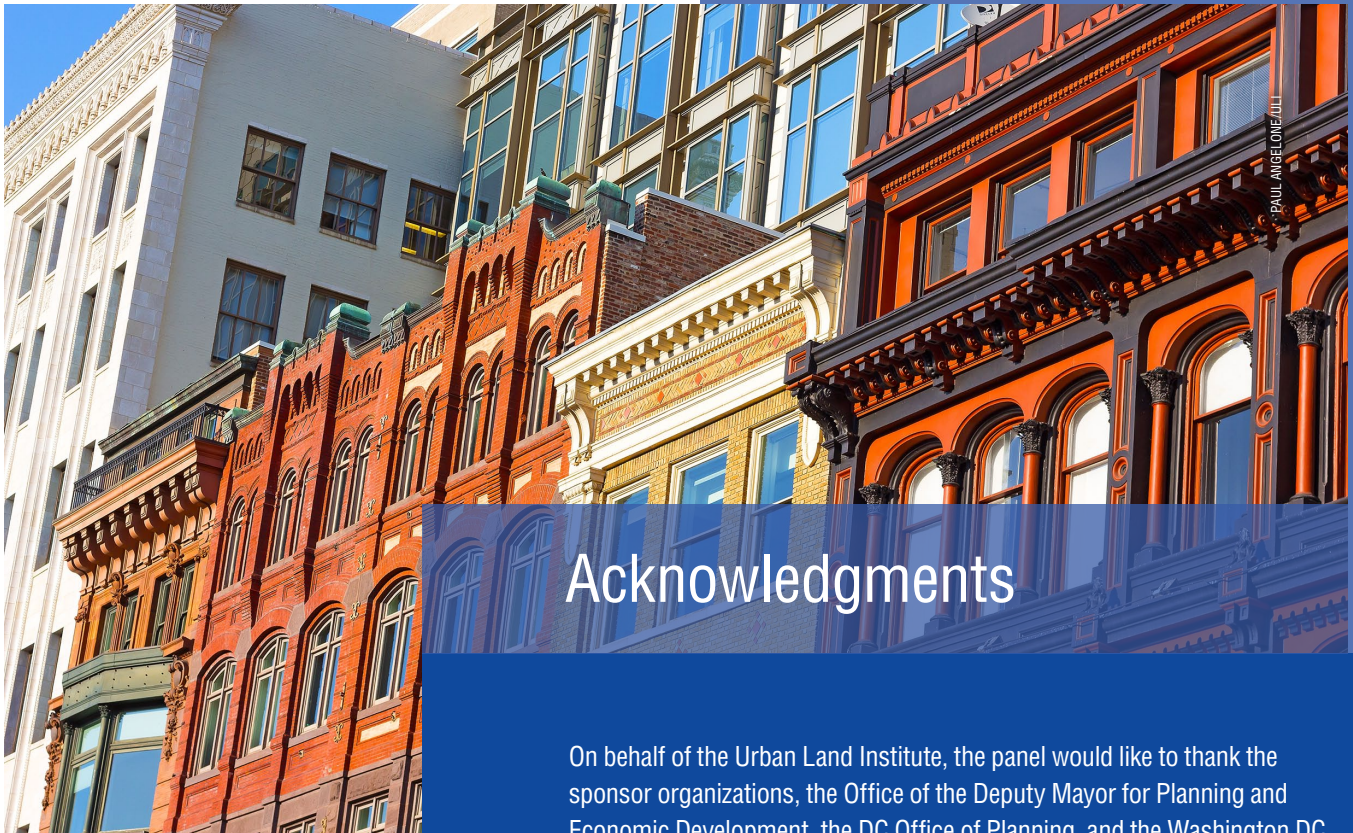
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Washington DC Economic Partnership

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Introduction, Scope of Work, and Key Strategies

THE ECONOMY OF WASHINGTON, D.C.'S CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT (CBD) has for many decades relied heavily on its location adjacent to the historic, symbolic, and operational presence of the federal government in the nation's capital. Historically this has included a sizable concentration of bureaucratic, professional, and business services focused on the government's day-to-day operations. This sector has attracted a significant concentration of hotels, convention facilities, and hospitality venues, including the convention center and the sports arena, as well as an enviable array of cultural, retail, leisure, and entertainment uses. Downtown D.C. also serves significant national and international tourism and is home to many noted academic and research institutions.

In recent years it has also become a location for mixed-use and residential development. But in current markets, downtown D.C. is now facing significant competition from newly developing districts on the Southwest Waterfront, along North Capitol Street, and in Crystal City (Arlington, Virginia).

Like the rest of the United States, the District of Columbia has seen severe impacts on the hospitality, convention, and visitor sectors from the COVID-19 pandemic, evidenced in the deep declines in visitation, hotel occupancy, jobs, and tax revenues. Retail and entertainment businesses, including small businesses, have suffered devastating losses. Many private businesses and organizations are experiencing a preference

for remote working during the pandemic. The combination of the pandemic, the loss of jobs, and the precipitous drop in economic activity has revealed and amplified existing underlying community stresses and racial inequities.

As everywhere, communities of color have shouldered a disproportionately heavy burden from these public health, economic, and environmental challenges as well as long-embedded discrimination and systemic biases. These communities remind us daily of longstanding discrimination and lack of access to the education, health care, jobs, homes, and opportunities that build assets and wealth. The following section identifies the key actions the panel recommends to

catalyze recovery and generate a more diverse and resilient downtown D.C. economy.

Nonetheless, downtown Washington, D.C., remains an extraordinary asset as an economic, cultural, and intellectual center of global significance. It hosts one of the world's greatest collections of cultural institutions, top academic institutions and research centers, formal and informal parks, open spaces, and an expansive network of walkable streets and city blocks as laid out in 1791 by Pierre L'Enfant. It has also become a prime location for residential and mixed-use development.

Among the challenges and opportunities the CBD faces as it works to recover from these multiple crises is the need to promote both its singular economic position, based on visitation, convening, and workplaces and small businesses, as well as the cultural and community assets that offer a more inclusive and distinctly Washington experience.

The immediate need is to advance the recovery of business, tourist, and neighborhood activity as soon as possible, while changing the role of the CBD over the longer term. This strategic thinking must address the disproportionate impact on communities of color and the need for new commitments to job creation and investments that advance essential goals of equity and social justice and aspire to create a broader and transformational downtown D.C. The outcome can be a more diverse downtown economy, one that is more adaptable and resilient and has a greater capacity to "bounce forward" from the impacts of the pandemic, the distressed economy, and the challenges of social injustice.

Panel's Scope

The sponsoring agencies from Washington, D.C., approached ULI's Advisory Services program to consider specific issues and impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the CBD and to identify recommendations aimed at minimizing vacancy, catalyzing vibrancy, bolstering the tax base, and creating new opportunities for underserved small businesses and entrepreneurs.

The ULI virtual Advisory Services panel (vASP) reviewed existing data compiled by the DC Office of Planning in coordination with its sponsoring partners and conducted approximately 50 stakeholder interviews to provide recommendations focused on the following objectives identified by the Washington, D.C., sponsor team:

- Consider the cumulative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on office, hotel, retail, hospitality, and entertainment in the CBD.
- Reimagine the traditional CBD model through an equity-forward lens to include residential and small-scale commercial spaces for underserved entrepreneurs.
- Examine the roles of public space, placemaking, design, and civic infrastructure in supporting vibrancy and equity.
- Seek to increase the economic resiliency, equity, and vibrancy of the CBD through innovative approaches and recommendations that rethink or catalyze commercial, residential, retail, hospitality, cultural, and entertainment uses and civic infrastructure.

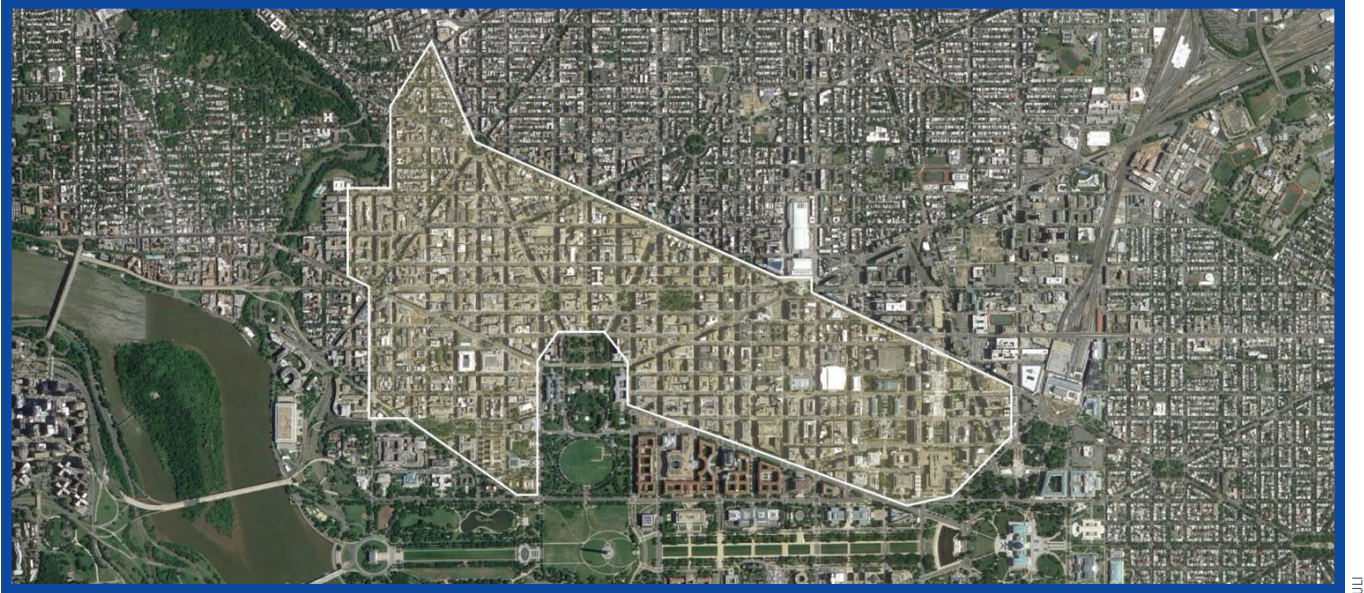
Study Area

The D.C. CBD is a large commercial district and major regional employment hub with a mix of office, retail, hospitality, residential, and cultural and entertainment uses in the heart of Washington, D.C. The CBD consists of 2.6 square miles, bordered approximately by Massachusetts Avenue, N.W., and Connecticut Avenue, N.W., to the north; North Capitol Street and Louisiana Avenue, N.W., to the east; Virginia Avenue, N.W., H Street, N.W., bordering the White House, and Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W., to the south; and 22nd Avenue, N.W., to the west.

The CBD features two important business improvement districts (BIDs), both founded in 1997: DowntownDC and Golden Triangle. These two BIDs receive their funding from a portion of property taxes collected within their boundaries, which supports multifaceted, place-based economic development. Through collaboration, they can do much more.



Downtown Washington, D.C., has long been a major regional employment hub, hosting a mix of primarily retail, hospitality, and cultural and entertainment uses in the heart of the city.



The study area in downtown Washington, D.C., north of the National Mall.

Key Strategies

In response to the questions posed, the vASP proposes these high-level strategies for immediate recovery and long-term resilience in downtown D.C.

- Downtown D.C. needs to change in response to the competition of new, mixed-use districts by diversifying its economy, attracting technology and innovation enterprises, and shifting the existing office supply to broaden its offerings to attract post-pandemic firms and workers.
- D.C. has an opportunity to approach a new vision for downtown that is for everyone. Now is the time for the city to focus on building equity, ownership, and asset value in this part of the city, where it has not existed before.
- A robust plan for welcoming and sustaining small businesses is essential to grow diverse experiences as well as to generate a broader range of jobs for District residents and investors.
- Employers seeking talent need to expand their training initiatives to partner with business entities, academic institutions, civic organizations, and philanthropic entities, to coalesce around the immediate and future need for workforce training and development.
- Now is the time to envision and invest in the distinctive and active public realm of downtown D.C., collaborating with the city to support safe streets, convenient transit choices, and public places for a sustaining and more diverse live/work CBD while showcasing its past, diversifying its present, and creating memorable experiences and enduring vibrancy.



Envision and Catalyze a More Diverse and Resilient Downtown Economy

THE CBD WAS ALREADY CHANGING BEFORE COVID-19 ARRIVED, with new competition from the dense, mixed-use districts emerging at the Southwest Waterfront, Capital Riverfront, and other regional locations. The data make clear that office real estate in downtown D.C. was already experiencing comparatively high vacancy rates. Although D.C. real estate leaders with whom the panel spoke are generally optimistic about the return to work, they also indicated that their assets will need to change. This can be done in ways that diversify the market while also creating a broader workforce that gravitates to this prime location. This market weakness needs to be addressed head-on with strategies to attract additional and high-growth business sectors.

Therefore, the office product will need to change. Although some workspaces may return to full occupancy, many industry sectors will invent new ways of working. Essential workers, particularly those in government, may remain five-days-a-week occupants. Most professional firms will not. Hybrid schedules blending office, home, and “third place” workspaces are likely to become an attractive new way of working. Attracting a larger pool of business types is of utmost importance for the city, as is reconsidering the CBD as a place that integrates traditional office culture with a more distinct character that draws in more people and presents greater opportunities for small and minority-owned businesses. The following section identifies the

key strategies the panel recommends the District advance to generate a more diverse and resilient downtown economy.

Create a Downtown Where More People Want to Live

Increasing the residential population in or near downtown is essential to the initiatives aimed at diversifying the CBD, increasing workforce skills, and providing for a more resilient downtown economy. The presence of a critical mass of residents who identify with the downtown will support a wider array of small business services, food and beverage companies, retailers, and cultural experiences—community-based

offerings that otherwise might not be financially viable in a locality dependent on office workers and tourists.

However, at present, the highest and best use of downtown real estate is by far commercial office space, which limits the opportunities to spur new ground-up residential development. This position is further compounded by the city's heavy dependence on the tax revenues from commercial office space. Commercial property owners will be scrambling, creating prototypes and strategizing to adapt or reinvent workplaces that are safe and dynamic in response to the needs of workers. As part of this effort, they must work together to complement the public realm with accessible and enjoyable activities in their entries, courtyards, and ground floors. In the near term, to provide a stock of less-expensive rental space, class B and C buildings should be adapted to encourage the presence of startups and small businesses and to attract new users to the CBD. In addition, mixed-use buildings can become cost-effective in some locations.

This does not mean the city should not support residential conversion in the long term, or proposals for one-off residential conversions that may arise in the coming years. However, this initiative faces challenges associated with the conversion of office space to residential space. Reusing buildings and incentivizing residential uses can be hard to “pencil out” for developers and the city. The panel believes the city should wait on making sweeping changes to promote and incentivize residential uses where offices currently exist and where new workplace models can be tested.

Prioritize Personal Safety and Experiment with Active Uses on the Ground Floor

The city needs to partner with business and building owners to build a sense of personal safety and welcome on downtown streets and in the lobbies, elevators, and business spaces that bring people inside. The decision to come back to work is a personal one that entails becoming comfortable in the public realm as well as in the workplace.

The city also needs to collaborate with building owners and businesses to help take responsibility for reestablishing active retail, food and beverage, services, and activities on the ground floor. Incentives will be needed to encourage those people who have returned to work to use the ground-floor businesses. This could take the form of a coordinated placemaking campaign on the street to help street traffic identify places that are open and



Outdoor dining, such as outside this restaurant in Greenwich Village, New York City, encouraged continued use of ground-floor retail during the COVID-19 pandemic.

safe for business. Opportunities may exist to feature different businesses weekly or monthly to encourage local patrons to visit these venues.

Develop a Back-to-Work Campaign

To further bolster these recommendations, the city needs to partner with the two downtown BIDs as well as real estate owners and tenants, residents, businesses, anchor institutions, and other stakeholders to develop a back-to-work campaign, in coordination with the marketing and education efforts to support residents in getting back to work by the D.C. government's Women, Infants, and Children program (WIC), Department of Employment Services, and Office of the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development. The decision on when and how to return to the office will be challenging for those who have a feasible alternative to work at or near home. Once safe from a public health standpoint, choices on returning will be heavily influenced by the quality of the welcome offered by lively streets and great places to gather at various scales. Safe and reliable transit will also be key, even as cities face deep funding deficits.

Consider Opportunistic, Alternative Uses for Class B and C Office Space

Class B and C office sites offer an opportunity for new and emerging business sectors to find a new home in downtown D.C. The following sections of this report feature panel recommendations for the city to consider regarding ways to inventory and develop a strategy to attract new business uses, such as innovation firms, a workforce development hub, offices for nonprofits that focus on community needs, and small businesses and businesses run by persons of color (POC).

Bring Innovation Firms Downtown

The District should strategize on ways to attract to downtown an innovation district cluster composed of academic institutions, startups, research and development firms, and entrepreneurial support agencies that together begin to form an innovation ecosystem that leverages the many resources in the city, using class B and C office space. The panel recommends that the city position downtown as a central hub providing premier office space opportunities for expansion of these businesses and the sector, which is growing in the surrounding region.

Innovation clusters can be linked with expanded educational and workforce programs serving low- and moderate-income communities that have been disproportionately affected by recent crises, better linking these communities with career paths in the knowledge economy.

The innovation clusters do not have to be cloistered within one hermetic campus but instead can be interstitially spread across many buildings and blocks. Depending on the type of business that may be contemplated as the anchor investment for such an in-town cluster, a combined strategy both for community-based workforce development and entrepreneurial investment could be compelling. In fact, if such a cluster-based model for investment were ever considered, an essential measure of its efficacy must be the opportunities it offers to decrease racial disparities, as measured by employment and business startups.

D.C.'s Competitive Advantage

Startup Genome, a global leader in quantitative and qualitative ecosystem analysis, ranked Washington, D.C., as the 11th-most-competitive startup environment in the world and fifth most competitive in the United States (as of 2020). D.C.'s position was driven by the metropolitan area's exceptional corps of talent, the availability of early-stage funding, and the presence of key anchors, including the federal government and private-sector giants such as Amazon.

According to CBRE's annual Tech Talent Scoring Index, Washington, D.C.'s pool of talent is one the largest and fastest growing in the country, with more than 263,000 employed in tech-based occupations as of 2019 (up 10 percent from 2014). What is more, the number of students completing degrees in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) fields in the D.C. area has increased by 34 percent in the past five years. In addition to its size and rate of expansion, D.C.'s talent pool is also among the most inclusive. In a recent analysis, Washington was rated the best city in the United States for women in tech and one of the top 10 in overall STEM diversity.

The Bowser administration has undoubtedly played a role in enhancing the inclusiveness of the Washington, D.C., startup ecosystem through measures such as the establishment of the DC Inclusive Innovation Fund in 2018.

According to an analysis conducted by the D.C. Policy Center, Washington's startup rate was nearly double that of the national average in 2017 (one of the latest years for which this data is available). This is arguably because D.C. entrepreneurs have been raising venture capital funding of between \$2.3 billion and \$2.7 billion annually in recent years, indicating the availability of early-stage funding. D.C.'s base of funding was the fourth fastest growing globally in 2020 (even amid the pandemic). Moreover, it has a robust and expanding network of incubators and local co-working spaces, including 1776, SEED Spot, Halcyon, Peace Tech Accelerator, the Hatchery, Canvas, Bunker Labs, and a branch of the Founder Institute, among others.

D.C.'s proximity to major public, private, and nongovernmental anchors underpins both its base of talent and available funding. The Washington area is home to the densest concentration of publicly funded research and development in the United States. Four of the five largest life sciences research funders are located in the Washington area, and the number of spinouts from federal research laboratories is expanding, thanks in part to the National Science Foundation's I-Corps program. Furthermore, the Dulles Technology Corridor has established Northern Virginia as a hub of innovation—one that is poised to grow exponentially with the introduction of Amazon's HQ2 at National Landing.

Recommended Partnerships

As noted previously, the volume of STEM graduates from the 16 universities in the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area has grown substantially in recent years. This is likely a product of concerted efforts (both financial and programmatic) undertaken by these institutions to develop stronger technology-oriented portfolios. However, these institutions' activities in the innovation and entrepreneurship space remain quite siloed, contrary to ecosystem-building best practices and the experiences of other innovation districts, which thrive on proximity and density.

George Washington University (which is partially included in the western end of the study area) invested \$275 million to develop a new 500,000-square-foot Science and Engineering Hall, the largest academic building dedicated to STEM in D.C., to house state-of-the-art research facilities, wet labs and nanofabrication centers, and classroom space outfitted with technology funded by grants from Siemens. The university's innovation and

entrepreneurship programming has also greatly expanded, providing initial funding to high-growth startups including Quorum and Loop.

Howard University has also become a hub for and a thought leader in building an ecosystem that nurtures minority-owned business enterprises, receiving funding from organizations such as the Kauffman Foundation for its work. In addition, Howard partnered with Mayor Bowser to launch the Inclusive Innovation Incubator (In3DC), a facility that offered tech training, entrepreneurial coaching, and networking opportunities before closing in November 2020 and moving all of its programming to a virtual medium.

Georgetown University's McDonough School of Business has an in-house accelerator program and Venture Lab that operate out of a WeWork on G Street. However, Georgetown's programs are expanding, thanks to major contributions from wealthy individuals, including D.C. mogul Ted Leonsis, and may soon exceed the space's 90-person capacity. As a result, Georgetown's innovation and entrepreneurship programs may also be in search of new or additional facilities in the near future.

Innovation districts or clusters that prioritize inclusion often incorporate workforce development partnerships and strategies. The University of the District of Columbia's Community College (UDC-CC) is located just outside the study area on North Capitol Street. One of UDC-CC's five "career pathways" is information technology, making it an excellent potential partner to ensure that the jobs generated by nearby startup activity go to individuals from a variety of socioeconomic backgrounds.

These four institutions could co-locate some of their innovation, entrepreneurship, and workforce development programming in underused class B and C office space downtown (ideally using assets under the control of the D.C. government), establishing a focal point from which an innovation district could grow there. The enhanced presence of educational institutions in the CBD (and by extension, their students and faculty) could drive consistent (and generally countercyclical) demand to nearby businesses, supporting recovery efforts.

Target Sectors

D.C.'s cybersecurity sector is one of (if not) the most competitive in the country, with 2.5 times more cyber startups than the average ecosystem. This is likely because the Washington metropolitan area has a sizable concentration of cyber-related engineers working at public-sector agencies such as the U.S. Department of Defense, government contractors,



George Washington University, including the university's hospital system, occupies multiple buildings in Washington, D.C.'s CBD.

CASE STUDY: UNIVERSITY CITY DISTRICT, PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA

With the University of Pennsylvania, Drexel University, and the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, University City has long been a hub of research and development activity. The area's transformation into what is today recognized as an "innovation district" began when the University City Science Center (UCSC), the nation's first urban research park, was established. UCSC has evolved into a 2.5 million-square-foot office, laboratory, and business incubation space shared by 31 institutions who are headquartered throughout Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Delaware.

In recent years, UCSC member institutions have also increasingly focused on actively engaging nearby neighborhoods, cultivating more of a live/work environment, and both Drexel and Amtrak are pursuing transit-oriented development opportunities around 30th Street Station, just east of University City District's core. Notably the district's governing organization established a workforce program called the West Philadelphia Skills Initiative to prepare local talent to meet the job opportunities created by this innovation activity.



SOUTH LAKE UNION, SEATTLE, WASHINGTON

Whereas University City District primarily leveraged and amplified the presence of public and nongovernmental anchor institutions, Seattle's South Lake Union (SLU) was built around the momentum and critical mass of talent and capital generated by major private-sector players. After establishing Microsoft as a software giant and Seattle/SLU staple, cofounder Paul Allen helped facilitate the location of the University of Washington's medical and bioscience campus nearby in the early 2000s.

Later that decade, Amazon decided to locate its global headquarters in SLU, not only accelerating entrepreneurial activity but also putting Seattle's housing and infrastructure under immense pressure. The growth of SLU since the introduction of Amazon has been sustained by a series of public/private partnerships that have made key investments to build transit, address congestion, and enhance energy solutions. The city of Seattle also pursued a parallel incentive zoning program in the neighborhood to encourage greater production of affordable housing and alleviate concerns related to displacement.



and the like. D.C. has a native cyber startup, Tenable Network Security, which had its initial public offering in 2018, and a local venture capital firm, Lavrock, which launched a dedicated fund to invest in early-stage cyber startups. D.C.'s education technology ecosystem is also widely considered robust because of the active procuring presence of the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Education Technology. Notable companies in this space include 2U, Parchment, EverFi, Blackboard, and the Capital Education Group. Like cybersecurity, the D.C. education technology scene has a key funder in Novak Biddle Venture Partners.

Other potential target sectors include geospatial software and mobility companies. Mapbox, one of the largest web mapping

service providers that boasts several major clients including Facebook and the Weather Channel, was founded in D.C. in 2010 and retains a major presence there. The company has grown to more than 500 employees and \$1 billion in valuation. Although no sizable mobility companies were founded or are headquartered in D.C., the local government has been ahead of the curve in crafting regulations that will allow innovative last-mile mobility solutions to grow sustainably.

Diversify Leadership in Business Community Organizations

Many of the preceding recommendations depend on the willingness of the business community to diversify its representation in terms of people and business types to ensure that all groups have a seat at the table. Smaller businesses need an advocate and strong representative, and the following groups should all play a role in helping elevate their voices.

- **The DowntownDC and the Golden Triangle BIDs.** The two BIDs are very influential in shaping perceptions of downtown and in promoting its economic and physical development. They have contributed significantly to the development boom in downtown in pre-COVID-19 days and can be expected to engage actively in reviving it now.

Both should work with the city to identify ways in which they can diversify the voices they listen to, which will in turn amplify those voices. Pursuant to D.C. law, a BID is established by a vote of property owners, who are taxed to fund it and who constitute most of the BID board's leadership. That structure does not provide seats at the BID table for small businesses and particularly minority-owned businesses, which usually lease space rather than own it. It is those businesses that are needed not just to diversify development, but also to provide the vibrant street-level activity that marks a successful downtown. If represented on the BID boards, they could provide essential knowledge of what is needed to attract and retain these essential activities.

- **The D.C. Chamber of Commerce.** The chamber, though focused on the entire city, is another key business institution that needs to play a role in reenergizing downtown. The chamber plays a key role in advocating for business with D.C. government and has diverse and small business members. Here, too, giving them a voice in the chamber's decision-making could make the chamber a great advocate for D.C. government actions that would attract and sustain those businesses in downtown.

- **Greater Washington Board of Trade.** Over the years, the Board of Trade has not included a significant number of small businesses in its membership. The panel recommends that the city, with the support of the BIDs, discuss this missing voice in response to the current economic environment and essential changes in downtown D.C.
- **Washington DC Economic Partnership.** The Washington DC Economic Partnership should consider ways to include representation from small business owners, including those of color, on its leadership board to ensure adequate advocacy for these businesses as a key to the District's long-term economic success.

Empower the Downtown BIDs to Evolve

The panel recommends that the BIDs active in the study area, especially DowntownDC, consider taking a more holistic approach to creating a sense of place through activities and physical improvements that draw residents to public spaces and the surrounding businesses. The North of Massachusetts Avenue (NoMa) and Capital Riverfront BIDs are very engaged in placemaking projects and activities, as was DowntownDC when it started. Reestablishing downtown as a place to be may require reviving more such activities, in addition to the annual Christmas Market and BID involvement in the redevelopment of Franklin Square.



Build Equity, Ownership, and Asset Value

SEVERAL OF THE STAKEHOLDERS INTERVIEWED BY THE PANEL discussed how the current CBD is not welcoming to people of color, whether they work there or are visiting. As a result, the area is starting with a credibility deficit when others consider how genuine the effort is to create an inclusive economy for the area.

“We need more public places in downtown that make local residents feel comfortable, where they can see themselves present in art, in public events.”

—Panel stakeholder

Any initiatives must create opportunities for long-term wealth creation and ownership for those coming into the business community. For example, could a “condominium” approach be taken for retail spaces to allow retailers ownership in the actual building, offering access to value appreciation as the market

changes in four to seven years? Although many pending factors may mean this is not the ideal structure, flexible and innovative partnerships like this are representative of the desire to ensure long-term benefits from investing in a neighborhood.

There is no one-size-fits-all approach in building equity for small and POC-owned businesses downtown. The city will have to be nimble in how it provides assistance to these businesses.

Seek Equity-Driven Initiatives and Reposition Assets for Community Needs

In reevaluating and repositioning the CBD’s existing assets, the city can add much-needed value to the larger D.C. business

community by increasing opportunities and integrating community needs into the CBD. This would allow D.C. to reimagine how community-serving anchors and small and POC-owned businesses can thrive in the downtown market, intertwining office and retail space across many buildings and over many blocks like in-town business clusters.

In response to the economic challenges for smaller businesses as the sole tenant in ground-floor spaces, it may be possible to allow co-location of multiple tenants in some street-level retail stores and adoption of design standards that allow window showcases to render a coherent aesthetic that complements the character and sense of place for specific districts. By allowing concentration of smaller-scale businesses in strategic locations and providing urban design elements in the public domain to brand a district, this moment of adversity may offer a new model of reinvestment and increased place vibrancy that encourages a similar strategy well after the COVID crisis.

Create Centers of Activity across Multiple Buildings and Blocks in Downtown

This revitalization approach could also serve to accentuate nodes that connect the CBD to adjacent districts. Such an urban design strategy, particularly applied at transit hubs serving both the CBD and surrounding districts, could create distinct place-based transit nodes as part of a retail revitalization strategy.

The District's new use of streets as additional space to allow safe social distancing while dining prompts contemplation of how the demarcations and street furnishings setting up these spaces can change the streetscape. A deliberate and cohesive design intent can allow differentiation for seating and gathering while branding a district with a signature aesthetic complementing—or in some cases helping create—a vibrant mix with its adjacent architecture and landscape.

For this approach to be successful, significant analysis would be required of unmet demands in the study area for products that smaller business and retailers provide. This may also serve as an opportunity for businesses that have been unable to participate in the downtown market to be present, again through possible co-location. The potential of this approach to redress inequity from historic restraint of access to these downtown locations must also be explored. Such a program can be explored through organizations in the District market that seem to have both the data and acquaintance of ethnic chambers of commerce.

Align Existing Opportunities with Affordable Options

The availability and affordability of class B and C office space in the CBD opens a strong opportunity to build on the trend of nonprofits and other socially oriented businesses locating offices in the District. Workplace hubs could be created to support the growth of social entrepreneurship in the market and businesses that place inclusion and social impact at the forefront of their operations. Although this is not an original idea, these types of uses may have struggled to establish themselves in the CBD previously. Now, building owners and management companies are more likely to consider leasing options and alternatives they may not have considered before.

Elevate Partnership Opportunities

Any workforce development strategy must align with the existing fabric of the area. Notably, with 7,000-plus workers in the hospitality and service sectors either unemployed or underemployed, it is important to align space availability and coordinate key stakeholders to put stronger resources in service of existing strategies. For example, co-locating resources that benefit the District's Make Food Work strategy provides another node for collaboration that services industries hard hit by COVID-19. As noted in the panel's briefing book, the *Make Food Work* strategy report "outlines key ways for the District to support frontline food workers and promote career growth, workforce development, and broader environmental support for low-wage workers."

Promote Collaboration for Small and POC Business Growth

Small and POC-owned businesses do not often have equitable access to spaces they can lease in the CBD. However, depressed rents, increased vacancies, and the need for additional tenants position new players to enter the CBD market because owners may relax their standards for tenants. While noting the opportunity, the panelists also acknowledge that for most entrepreneurs/small businesses, the barriers to locating in buildings that are looking for credit tenants persist because of a limited balance sheet, the inability to provide a guarantee, the inability to prove themselves in the market, or all of these. Opportunities to address these barriers include the following:

- Foundations/community development corporations (CDCs) serving as guarantors on leases.
- Foundations/CDCs taking on master leases for businesses such as retailers or child care providers. This can provide

stability for the landlord while opening opportunities for small businesses to prove themselves in the market through shorter leases or reduced expenses—possibilities opened by the opportunity to share administrative and operational resources. For example, a component of a BID’s business retention and attraction strategy can be the accessibility and affordability of high-quality child care near workplaces. A model for consideration is San Diego–based Mission Driven Finance’s most recent real estate investment structure, which helps finance high-quality space for child care providers that they can rent and then eventually own.

- Partnerships with community development finance institutions (CDFIs) or POC accelerators to work with pipelines of businesses.
- Ownership models that focus on aligning equity capital with POC investors (e.g., Chicago TREND, which facilitates shopping center acquisitions).

For this approach to be successful, the panel recommends that the city undertake a significant analysis of the existing business and residential community in the study area to determine the unmet demands and representation of minority business owners. The city needs to look at what partners exist in the community and where collaboration opportunities are being overlooked.

Highlight the Business Value Proposition

The BIDs and property owners in the CBD should rethink the value that businesses and resources bring to creation of a neighborhood. When an area is considered new or in flux, the value that those taking the early risk bring to the community should be considered in how the partnership is structured. Although this perspective depends on one’s vantage point, it is important that the local government act as an intermediary between the BIDs and property owners.

For example, Black Lives Matter Plaza is already a piece of civic infrastructure that has increasing value in the D.C. community. Yet many people may now be wondering, “What’s next for this space?”

As the community rethinks inclusive spaces, what opportunities exist to expand public art, discuss the history of other communities, and create new spaces to renew a sense of community. Ideas offered by the panel include the following:

- Creating additional plazas for other groups of color, incorporating permanent art displays, street murals, and other elements; and
- Creating a Black history tour that visits markers in the CBD. These can be walking, bike, or scooter tours.

A strong and valid concern also exists that promotion of inclusive development should be performative. Though important, the tangible connection of inclusive development to the lives of everyday people is missing. There must be a mindset of community-led initiatives developed by working *with*—not *for*—the community.

In fact, the broad avenues that frame downtown are too easily understood as barriers to access rather than a welcome. From signal timing to long crosswalks to, in many locations, the absence of trees, downtown too often stands apart from the rest of the city. Removing traffic lanes at intersections, making crosswalks safer, and adding shade are among the strategies that would reduce the real and perceived barriers to entering downtown. In addition, communities, including those in Anacostia, should be given improved access to downtown with bike lanes, on-street transit, and safe street crossings.



Take Action to Support and Elevate Small Businesses Downtown

DOWNTOWN D.C. MUST ACT NOW with its stakeholders, including the federal government, tenants, residents, foundations, and small businesses and entrepreneurs, to diversify business and employment opportunities.

Over the past decade, the District has invested in and prioritized many of the resources for small businesses in priority areas outside the CBD. These investments have been valuable and have contributed to the success of many of the emerging mixed-use districts, such as NoMa, the Southwest Waterfront, and the Southeast Waterfront (Navy Yard) neighborhoods. The current attention to the CBD highlights a new opportunity for the city to focus investment and resources into this section of the city to begin to shift the nature of this area to a 24-hour neighborhood.

Support Small Business Owners

It is essential to provide robust support for small business owners, focusing on people of color, and particularly those

whose businesses draw people downtown. Not only do these businesses add life to the street, but they also increase employment opportunities. The presence of small businesses is also what makes D.C. unique. The city's neighborhoods are filled not with franchises, but with local shops, restaurants, and businesses that contribute to the sense of place.

D.C.'s robust efforts to assist small businesses, such as the Bridge Fund Program, launched in November 2020, as well as the previous grant dollars for small businesses from Microgrants and Winter Ready Grants, are great steps forward in providing resources and funding for restaurant, hotel, entertainment, and retail businesses, many of which are located in the CBD.

Small business owners likely need more attention from the city in addition to the Bridge Funds now available to them. The city should work with these business owners on improving place quality and vibrancy and their contributions to neighborhood identity to determine ways to help them stand out in the downtown and to pair them with programming that can attract more patrons to their businesses. In the CBD, the city should focus on leveraging existing assets, such as the educational institutions located directly adjacent to the study area, to provide intellectual resources to assist small businesses with strategies to help their owners get their ideas off the ground and provide assistance in planning long-term growth strategies.

Support for small businesses will require that the District make difficult financial decisions and work collectively with the BIDs and property owners to ensure that businesses have access to federal and financial system resources, such as CDFIs. The District should also consider ways in which the federal government can lend support, because many of these businesses ultimately serve the government's downtown employees.

Encourage and Elevate Entrepreneurship

Many of the stakeholders who met with the panel stressed the importance of diversifying the city and the downtown economy. An example cited is the opportunity to diversify business sectors in western blocks of the Golden Triangle and the West End in coordination with George Washington University and with other academic and philanthropic institutions located in or near downtown.

TWO KINDS OF ENTREPRENEURISM

When looking from an equity perspective at strategies to support entrepreneurs, two different types of entrepreneurs can be considered: *opportunity entrepreneurs* and *necessity entrepreneurs*. Individuals who want to become entrepreneurs because of unemployment are considered necessity entrepreneurs because their business formation is associated with the need to find work to replace a job that may not return soon or at all. In contrast, those who are employed and yet see a new and more productive product or service are opportunity entrepreneurs.

Entrepreneurs are key catalysts who can drive change in the economy, and together with small businesses they can contribute to creating thriving, vibrant places.

The COVID-19-induced economic downturn has landed at a point in the economic cycle corresponding with an increase in necessity entrepreneurship, triggered by loss of employment and other financial opportunities. It also clears the way for opportunity entrepreneurs to emerge in response to the disruption of people's lives and the development of new business and service ideas that address these changes.

Supporting entrepreneurs comes at many levels. In addition to capital, which D.C. has addressed to an extent through the creation of its many grant programs, entrepreneurs need space. Given vacancies and the changing nature of the office market discussed throughout this report, the CBD has many space opportunities that should be opened to entrepreneurs and startup companies. The city should specifically consider spaces on the ground floor of buildings, which can provide temporary solutions for emerging businesses and allow them to gain exposure through a combination of street presence and presence to building users as people return to work. Class B and C office space should be available for these innovators through coordinated messaging and eventually through a workforce training and opportunity hub, addressed later in this report.

The city and its partners need to work together to increase opportunities for funding, space, and investment in the CBD at a broader level to ultimately create an environment where new ideas and businesses can thrive. Although much of the investment will need to come from the public sector, other partners such as research institutions, foundations, real estate owners and developers, and investors will need to contribute as well. The two downtown BIDs should be considered as the starting point for this initiative.



Advance Workforce Training

ONE OF THE MOST CRITICAL DISCUSSIONS affecting equitable participation in the future of the CBD is a cornerstone strategy focused on workforce training and capacity building. To achieve these goals, a coherent strategy must be aligned to dramatically expand access to opportunities for the District's unemployed and underemployed to enter a reemerging job market.

Scale Up Current Programs

Noteworthy accomplishments have been achieved in workforce training to date, reflecting the coordinated efforts of the Workforce Investment Council, the Department of Employment Services, and the Greater Washington Community Foundation, as well as engagement of potential employers. This alliance has leaned into training workers from the community, acknowledging how critical these initiatives are to addressing equity in the workplace.

The District has also considered coordinating with employers and community partners, such as the BIDs, to pilot and support in-seat training and upskilling opportunities to elevate

existing workers into higher-skilled positions, thereby creating greater vacancies in entry-level jobs, which aligns with the job opportunity needs of the unemployed D.C. population. This effort is necessary to create the workforce that will attract new business sectors and should be continued.

Create a Downtown One-Stop Central Employment Hub

Given the potential breadth of opportunity and the urgency to reinvigorate the CBD, a robust and centralized initiative should augment the strong program foundation that already exists. One approach to establishing an institutionalized training program that prepares workers across a range of employment

CASE STUDY: NOLABA NETWORK PROGRAM, NEW ORLEANS

The New Orleans Business Alliance (NOLABA) program was formed in 2010 by Mayor Mitch Landrieu and local business and civic leaders as the city's first public/private partnership for economic development. In 2014, the mayor integrated the Network of Economic Opportunity program into NOLABA to create a new path for providing economic and workforce development in the city.

Since its inception, NOLABA has generated 20,000 new jobs, and more than 140 new retail businesses and restaurants have opened. The city has also seen the underemployment rate for African American males decrease from 52 to 44 percent. (Learn more about the NOLABA network program at <https://www.nolaba.org/nolaba-network-economic-opportunity/>.)



opportunities might be structured to broaden this existing organization, while also creating a place for employers to locate potential workers.

This could be achieved by adding multiple anchor employers, foundations, and government agencies that provide financial and technical support through a central training hub—serving as an effective “one stop” for District residents seeking to participate in employment opportunities, for employers to seek employees of various skill sets, and for potential employers

and investors to engage as they formulate their business development strategies. This model can sustain economic opportunity investments and create a new way to provide both economic and workforce development in the city.

Such an approach will require the dedication of government, not-for-profit, and business entities to a partnership. By building on the current successes, the District can launch this model in the study area then expand it across the city, building on established business relationships seeking a trained workforce and providing a necessary component in a broad equity strategy for economic opportunity.

Focus on the Technical Assistance Needs of Small Businesses and Startups

Under this training-hub business model, the organization would be responsible for providing a single point of entry for business attraction, retention, and workforce development in the District, as well as establishing a place-based economic development strategy by promoting high-impact neighborhoods. In addition, this organization could expand and coordinate initiatives with the local small business community, including new financing for startups and technical assistance for small and disadvantaged businesses. The organization can also be a clearinghouse of information about programs and incentives, consolidating the administration of incentives to provide consistency and predictability to local and national developers.

While this model implies an oversight group of stakeholders—anchor employers, not-for-profit partners, workforce training constituents, and public agencies—the city would still be the principal entity for setting policy priorities to ensure equitable access to city employment, and contracting would be achieved under its own programs. The city could also monitor equity goals, local-hire efficacy, and living-wage objectives across city and private projects receiving local incentives.



Create Inclusive Vibrant Spaces, Culture, and Identity for Downtown D.C.

JUST AS THE CITY NEEDS TO DIVERSIFY BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES IN THE CBD, an equal need exists to match and catalyze those strategies with investment in the public space—including publicly accessible spaces in private buildings—in order to restore and maintain the vibrancy of life on adjoining the streets and build resiliency. The success of the preceding initiatives and strategies will depend on the city’s ability to stitch together the different areas of the CBD to allow opportunity or investment sites to flourish and relate to their surroundings. The city asked the panel to explain the role the public realm would play in supporting equitable outcomes, inclusive spaces, and vibrancy.

Make Downtown a Magnet

Downtown’s economic makeup and location are ideal for drawing more people from inside and outside the city. Although the office market continues to face challenges, many of which are exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, the CBD remains a critical piece of the District’s fabric and of the region that has grown up around it.

The city needs to identify and sustain the transit services that interconnect the neighborhoods within downtown and connect downtown with other city neighborhoods, in coordination with

and with the support financially and strategically of the federal government. As shown on the map on the following page, the CBD’s location within the larger context of the city and region makes it a core connector. In thinking about the CBD, it will be important for the city to consider how to stitch together the different areas of the CBD and how to orient them to increase access to the one-of-a-kind cultural amenities the city has to offer, as well as to the other economic hubs in the city and neighborhoods where barriers to access exist. In this same vein, the city will need to analyze the geography and determine where opportunity areas exist to spur and support new and compatible uses.

“Downtown belongs to all of D.C. But without transit in place to connect us, particularly the neighborhoods in the east that do not have equitable access to downtown Washington, everybody loses.”

—Panel stakeholder

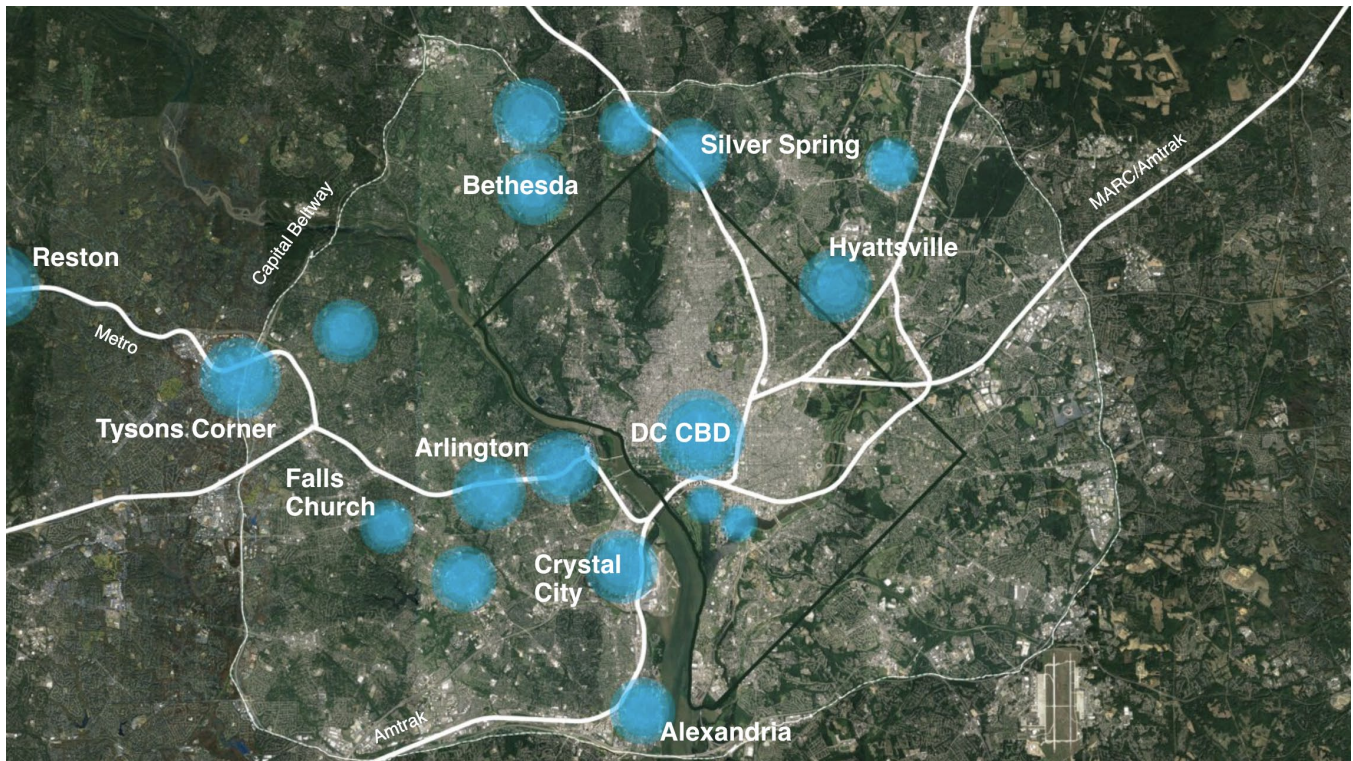
Execution of the District’s plan to focus on attracting residents from the region as well as visitors from nearby states and cities, planning on a slow return of national and international tourism, is essential—now. Visitors are critical in maintaining street life downtown as well as in supporting the city’s key hospitality sector. This plan should address two distinct types of visitors—those who come to see the federal city and those who come to participate in the lively neighborhoods, arts and culture, music, and food of downtown D.C. and the city’s distinct neighborhoods.

Get People Back on the Street

As a result of COVID-19, the need for flexible open space has increased in response to the renewed appreciation people have for gathering in public in a safe and responsible way. Getting people back outside and on the street in downtown is critical, and the city can create and help others create outdoor spaces where people can safely gather and even participate in events and programming.

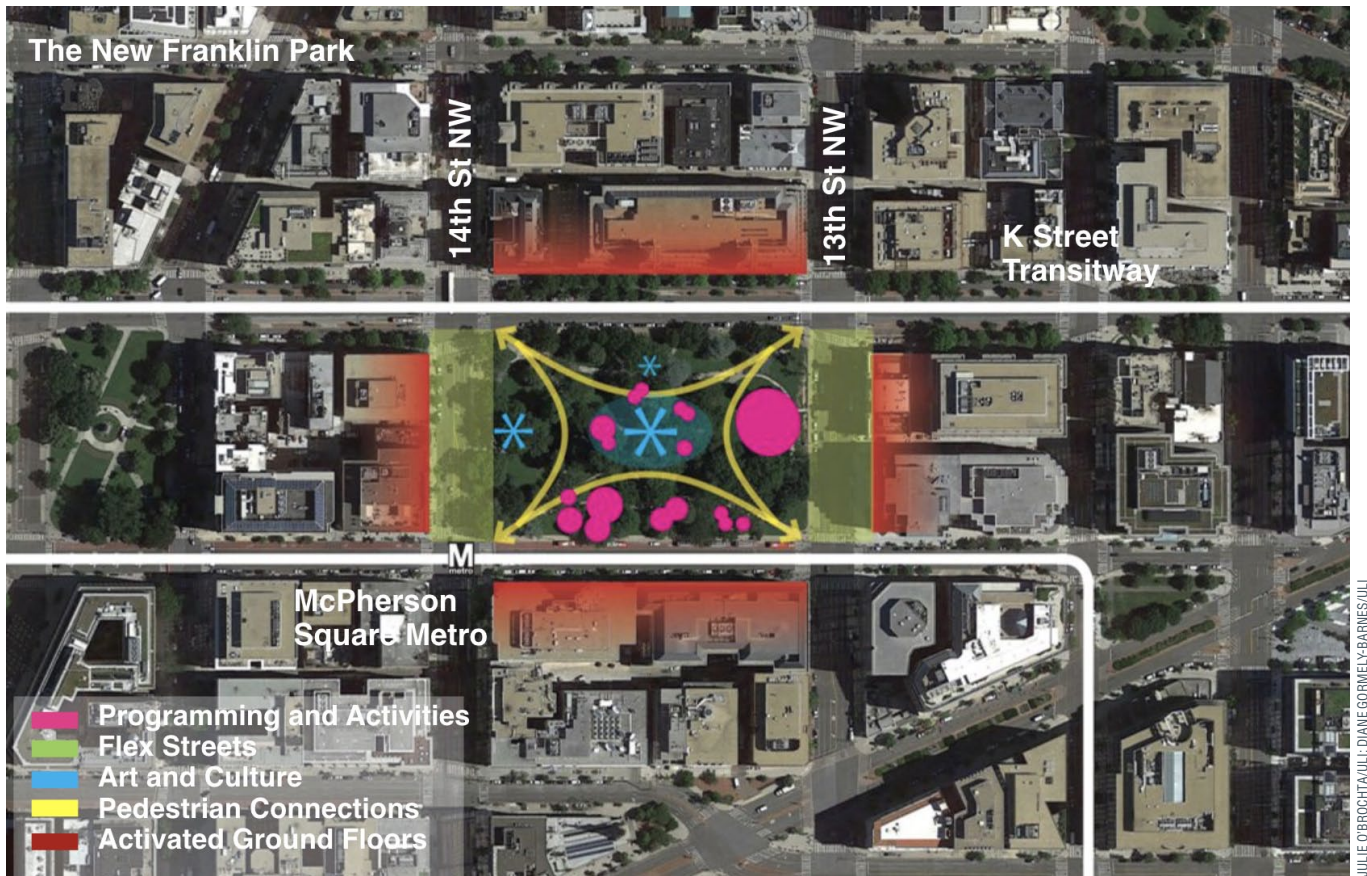
The District can build on what its communities and stakeholders have tried and learned from temporary and pilot projects, as well as the changes in the use of streets and parks over the past 10 months, to develop a long-term strategy for maintaining flexibility regarding where people can gather. It also should identify new areas of opportunity where flexible outdoor gathering space is viable and continue to strengthen its partnership with the federal government, which controls many of downtown’s open spaces. The presence of both longstanding and experimental arts and culture organizations should be supported by both public and philanthropic resources.

Expanding on this idea, the city could consider broadening the footprint of major parks or gathering locations through designation of flexible public space, extending to changes in



The CBD is a destination and core connector among regional transit-oriented mixed-use centers.

JULIE O'BROCHTA; DANIE GORMELY-BARNES/ULI



JULIE O'BROCHTA/ULI; DIANE GORMELY-BARNES/ULI

Adding flexible uses to the public realm surrounding Franklin Square can broaden the park's footprint and encourage activity.

the use of adjacent city streets. One example of this approach is already underway at Franklin Square. As shown on the map above, the current investment in the transformation of this park centrally located in the CBD presents an opportunity for the city to maximize opportunities for social connections and public gatherings. The panel suggests that the city consider adding flexible use standards to the surrounding streets to allow their closing for public life on weekends to expand the public realm and allow more people to gather safely. This will require that the city continue to seek opportunities to partner with the federal government to improve these spaces.

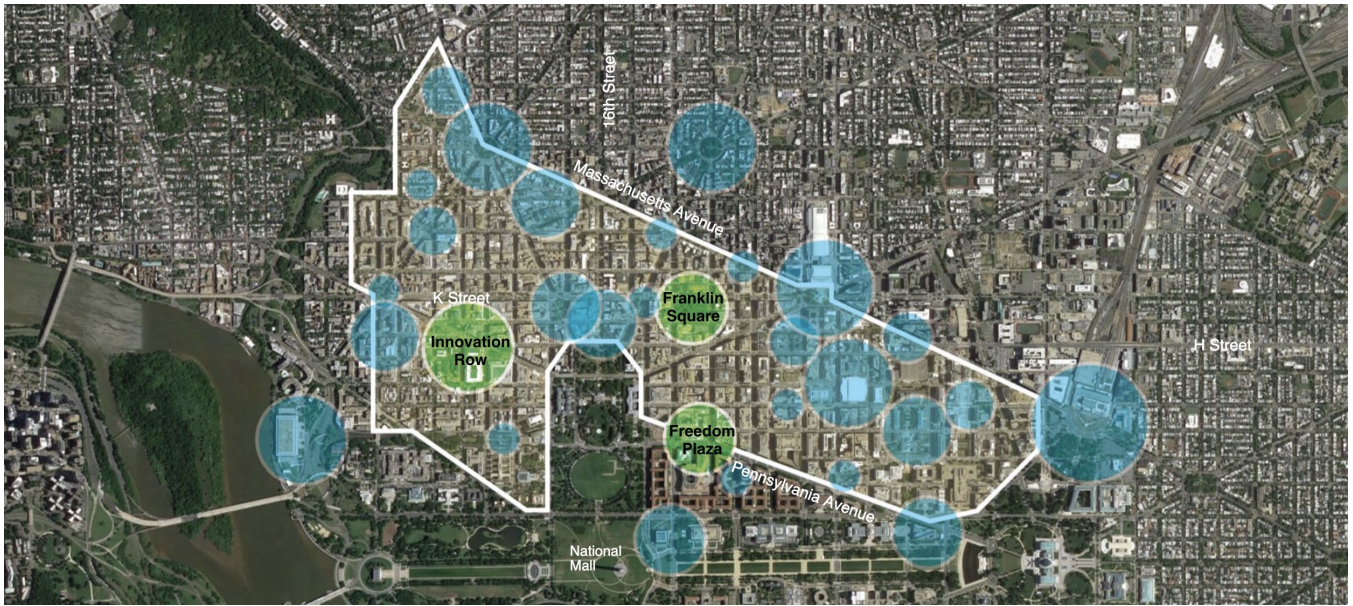
Capitalize on the Diversity of Urban Character within Downtown

The CBD is not one place but a series of places, each of which has distinctive spaces and character. Public investment will need to be coordinated to support the areas where new businesses or initiatives are taking root in the project area. The panel recommends organizing the physical CBD through designation of CBD nodes.

The map on the following page illustrates opportunity areas where the city could focus investment on public spaces and civic infrastructure in tandem with efforts to bring new and contributing businesses into the CBD. One example is an innovation district cluster, described earlier. Another example is the existing nightlife industry downtown. To attract users to these locations, it is essential to generate a lively public realm, served by frequent and safe transit, with open spaces that encourage relaxation and social activities that are critical to workers and residents alike.

Mobility within and outside the CBD is also key. On-street connections to other areas of the city, including other economic hubs and Anacostia, will be crucial. The District has a strong public transit system with additional infrastructure on the way. However, the city will need to continue to evaluate who can access the CBD in a timely manner and from where and whether that supports the equity goals of lowering barriers to small business and POC-owned businesses in the CBD.

The figure represents just a few examples of what the key transit nodes and services could be; the city will need to



JULIE O BROCHTA; DIANE GORMELY-BARNES/ULI

Nodes within the study area that lie at the intersections of cultural amenities, transportation hubs, and public space can be areas of focus for future investment in the CBD.

conduct a more in-depth analysis of where these points of concentration should be located.

Use the Streetscape to Create a Sense of Place

The city might consider a citywide competition or perhaps a collaborative exercise among artists to celebrate CBD parks or plazas with a range of installations. The artistic media may include illuminated installations that not only punctuate the areas with light, but also provide a greater sense of security when activated. The city should lean on the existing nightlife industry as well as visual and performing arts groups and entertainment companies such as Washington Performing Arts, Lindner Global, and Monumental Sports & Entertainment to collaborate on strategies to activate downtown during the day and at night, through programming and events. This strategy must include the opportunity for local community artists to shape the artistic face and local experience of the CBD, which is everyone’s neighborhood.

Identify Unique and Underused Spaces

The District’s unique street configuration creates many small, unique, and underused open spaces throughout the study area. As the city evaluates the nodes in which to focus investment, the panel recommends it leverage the work of the Commemorative Works Committee, which has conducted an open-space inventory to identify the underused community spaces and assets, and begin the process of prioritizing areas

“The downtown needs to be easier to navigate by foot—in and out—so it connects to great surrounding neighborhoods.”

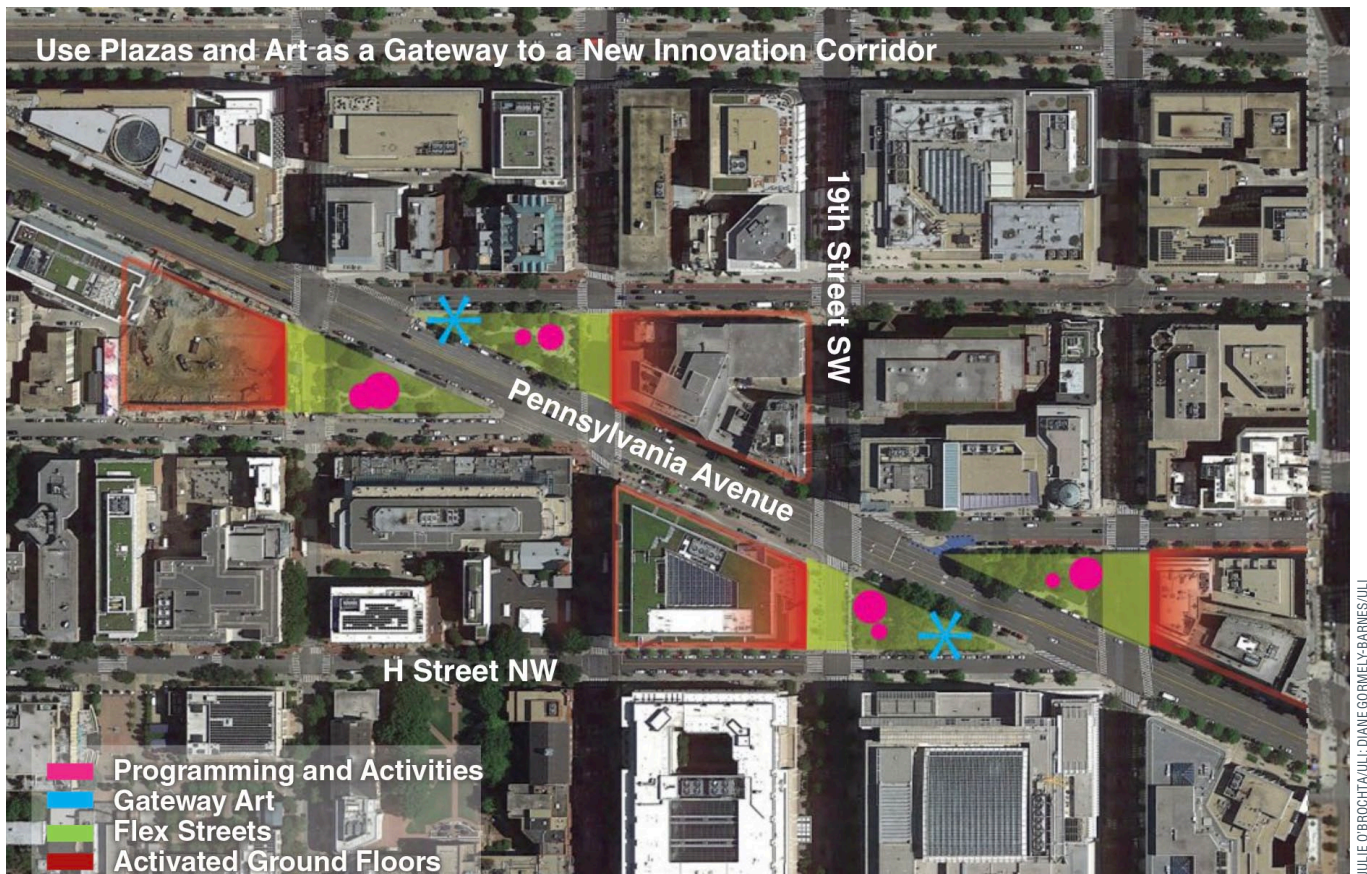
—Panel stakeholder

for programming and investment as key features in attracting users to the CBD.

Connect Federal and City Spaces and Governance

One of the District’s most distinctive features is the “federal city,” which attracts millions of visitors each year. Though most of these federal assets are within a short walk from the CBD, with its hotels and restaurants, a perceived and real boundary exists between the north and south sides of the National Mall.

The panel recognizes the restrictions governing some of the federal properties, but the city could consider partnering with the National Capital Planning Commission, the National Park Service (NPS), and other federal agencies to help bridge the gap between the National Mall and other sightseeing features and the CBD as the city begins to redefine the daily activities of the study area.



JULIE O'BROCHTA/ULI; DIANE GORMELY-BARNES/ULI

Investing in underused public spaces can create strategic nodes of interaction in the CBD. For example, activating plazas along Pennsylvania Avenue can act as a gateway to a future innovation corridor.

One key opportunity site the panel identified is Freedom Plaza, a prime location designated for providing space to the public. However, the plaza today is not welcoming: it lacks character or attraction for passers-by. Given the prime location of this space, the panel recommends that the city work with the NPS to create one of the city's most visited places, just as London now enjoys a wonderful, dynamic, "pedestrian-first" Trafalgar Square. The top map on the following page offers an illustration of what such a place could look like.

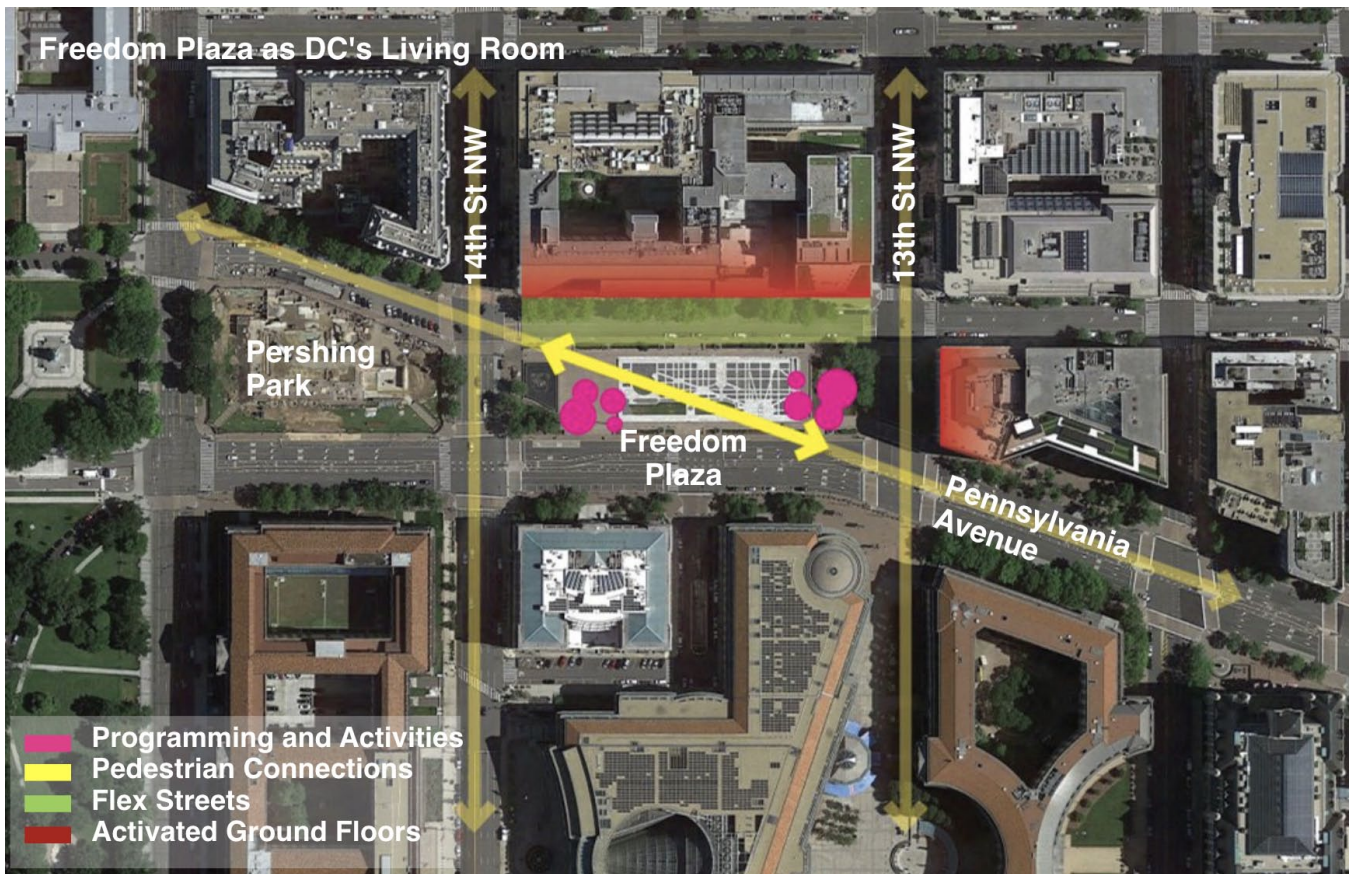
Building on a potential partnership to reimagine Freedom Plaza, the NPS and the city can strengthen their cooperation in the management and programming of federal space within the city's urban fabric. Given the city's long-term vision for the CBD and its activation beyond the traditional office environment, it is important that the NPS and the city coordinate on the enhancement of CBD parks and open spaces. Franklin Square should stand as an example for future investment in public space for this area and spur future investment in other federally owned and operated properties that serve the D.C. community and its

visitors. A ceremonial but pedestrian-oriented Pennsylvania Avenue could be a great starting project for such an initiative.

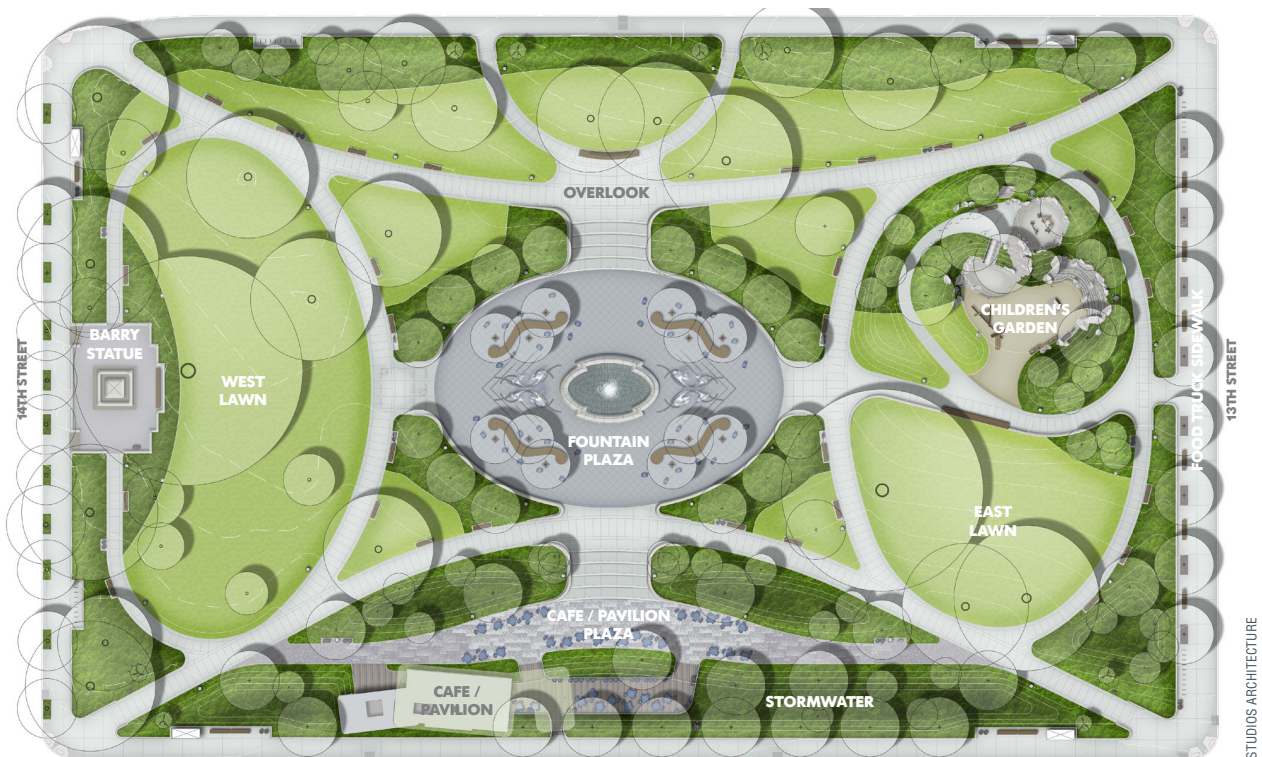
Recognize That Parks Are Destinations

To further bolster the recommendation for partnership with the NPS and allocating funds to the reprogramming and enhancement of public open spaces in the CBD, the panel noted that parks on their own can serve as key destinations for residents and tourists. Using Franklin Park as a model for future parks in the CBD, the panel noted that creating open gathering spaces where people can meet and, in the longer term, enjoy local food and entertainment will continue to support the vibrancy of the study area. Even when not directly adjacent to residential uses, parks can be successful destinations when programmed correctly.

The panel recommends the city, in coordination with the NPS, look to other urban parks located in CBDs as models for future



Activating Freedom Plaza can attract tourists visiting the National Mall and federal properties to the CBD.



The planned Franklin Square transformation is an example of an effective partnership between local and federal partners to improve public space in downtown D.C.

park investments, including Klyde Warren Park in Dallas, Bryant Park in New York City, and Millennium Park in Chicago.

Rethink the Regulatory Environment

The city has already relaxed the regulatory environment to allow businesses to operate during the COVID-19 pandemic. This pattern of flexible and hybrid uses of space should be continued beyond the pandemic, particularly in the CBD, where street life and activation of public space are keys to increasing vibrancy of underused spaces.

The city could consider adopting long-term standards for the study area, establishing a more predictable set of rules that allow businesses to rethink their operating procedures and even

footprints. Although the local business community appreciates the tactical solutions offered by the city during the pandemic, the solutions that worked for businesses should come with some predictability in the future because restaurants or other venues need to be able to prepare for changes in the regulatory environment.

The city also should consider increasing its investment in supportive infrastructure to enable long-term activation, such as lighting, power, and traffic control measures. These more permanent investments will also assure businesses considering coming into the CBD that the city is committed to assist in attracting users and potential customers to the area.

CHINATOWN PARK, WASHINGTON, D.C.

Chinatown Park, located downtown in northwest Washington, D.C., is bordered by Sixth Street, Eye Street, Fifth Street, and Massachusetts Avenue. The park sits within the boundary of the DowntownDC BID and abuts the Mount Vernon Triangle Community Improvement District (CID). This triangle-shaped “pocket park,” created by the District’s unique street grid, is a small open and underused space owned by the National Park Service. In 2017, the D.C. Mayor’s Office on Asian and Pacific Islander Affairs asked ULI Washington to convene a technical assistance panel (TAP) to recommend strategies for activating Chinatown Park.

Though the park sits on federal land, the ULI Washington panel recommended several strategies for the city to consider:

- Strengthen relationships with the National Park Service, DowntownDC BID, Mount Vernon CID, the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development, and other stakeholders to align their interests and resources.
- Form a “friends of the park” organization, and focus on programming activity in the park.
- Focus on design improvements and programming for the edges of Chinatown Park; the edges are not NPS park space and are in the street right-of-way. The panel suggested that the city program uses that increase activity, such as turning a bordering street into a *woonerf*, installing a game table row along the right-of-way, and



making landscaping improvements to shield visitors from a busy avenue.

- For programming of the NPS park space, explore the NPS tools available for shared control and management of parks, including permits, licenses, leases, transfer of jurisdiction, exchange of land, and cooperating agreements.

Learn more in the TAP report, *Realizing a New Vision for Chinatown Park*.



Conclusion

THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC CREATED AN OPPORTUNITY for the city to reevaluate the value, character, and inclusiveness of the CBD and to determine which planning, urban design, and investment strategies are needed to create a more equitable and vibrant future for the district. Pairing new strategies for creating business opportunities with public investment in and activation of the physical space will be necessary to shift the direction of the CBD. Inclusive governance is also essential for creating a business environment where new players will be not only be welcomed, but also encouraged to contribute to the larger business community.

It is indeed time to reimagine downtown D.C., to kickstart its recovery, and to rebuild its critical and dynamic role in the region and in the world. The CBD's success will come only to the extent that the strategies to rebuild and transform the economy also include the disadvantaged and excluded communities without which the city cannot achieve a just recovery.

Implementation Matrix

Envision and Catalyze a More Resilient Downtown Economy

Suggested time frame	Recommendation	Responsible party
Short term	Adapt class B and C buildings to provide less-expensive rental space, to encourage the presence of startups and small businesses, and to attract new users to the CBD. In addition, mixed-use buildings can become more cost-effective in some locations.	City, small business representatives, real estate owners and developers
Short term	Wait on making sweeping changes to promote and incentivize residential uses where offices currently exist and where new workplace models can be tested.	City
Short term	Partner with business owners and building owners to build a sense of personal safety and welcome on downtown streets and in the lobbies, elevators, and business spaces that bring people inside buildings.	City, BIDs, D.C. Chamber of Commerce, real estate owners and developers
Short term	Collaborate with building owners and businesses to help take responsibility for reestablishing active retail, food and beverage, services, and activities on buildings' ground floors.	City, BIDs, D.C. Chamber of Commerce
Short to medium term	Consider a coordinated placemaking campaign on the street to help street traffic identify places that are open and safe for business. There could also be opportunities to feature different businesses weekly or monthly to encourage local patrons to visit these venues.	City, BIDs, D.C. Chamber of Commerce, real estate owners and developers
Short term	Assemble the two downtown BIDs, real estate owners and tenants, residents, businesses, anchor institutions, and stakeholders to develop a back-to-work campaign.	City, BIDs, small business representatives, research institutions, foundations, real estate owners and developers, D.C. Chamber of Commerce
Short to medium term	Inventory class B and C office vacancies and develop a strategy to attract new business uses such as innovation firms, a workforce development hub, offices for not-for-profits that focus on community needs, and small and POC businesses.	City, BIDs, D.C. Chamber of Commerce, real estate owners and developers, small business representatives
Short to medium term	Strategize ways to attract an innovation district cluster to downtown, composed of academic institutions, startups, research and development firms, and entrepreneurial support agencies that together begin to form an innovation ecosystem that leverages the many resources in the city, using class B and C office space.	City, BIDs, D. C. Chamber of Commerce, real estate owners and developers, small business representatives
Medium term	Link innovation district clusters with expanded educational and workforce programs serving low- and moderate-income communities that have been so disproportionately impacted by recent crises, better linking these communities with career pathways in the knowledge economy.	City, BIDs, D.C. Chamber of Commerce, real estate owners and developers, small business representatives
Medium to long term	Work with George Washington University, Howard University, Georgetown University, and the University of the District of Columbia Community College to co-locate some of their innovation, entrepreneurship, and workforce development programming in underused class B and C office space downtown (ideally using assets under the control of the D.C. government), establishing a focal point from which an innovation district could grow there.	City, BIDs, real estate owners and developers, educational institutions
Medium to long term	Focus innovation district clusters on the cybersecurity, educational technology, and the geospatial software and mobility sectors.	City, BIDs, real estate owners and developers, educational institutions

Envision and Catalyze a More Resilient Downtown Economy (cont.)

Suggested time frame	Recommendation	Responsible party
Short term	The DowntownDC BID and Golden Triangle BID should amend their regulations to allow small and minority-owned businesses, who may not be property owners, to have representation on the BID boards.	City, BIDs
Short term	Engage the D.C. Chamber of Commerce to play a role in reenergizing downtown and to diversify its membership to include small and minority business owners.	City, D.C. Chamber of Commerce
Short term	With the support of the BIDs address the missing voice of small business owners with the Greater Washington Board of Trade given the current economic environment and changes in downtown D.C.	City, BIDs, Greater Washington Board of Trade
Short term	The Washington DC Economic Partnership should consider ways to include representation from small business owners, including those of color, on its leadership board to ensure adequate advocacy for these businesses as a key to the District's long-term economic success.	City, Washington DC Economic Partnership
Short term	The BIDs within the study area, especially the DowntownDC BID, should consider taking a more holistic approach to creating a sense of place through activities and physical improvements that draw residents to public spaces and the surrounding businesses, like the NoMa and Capital Riverfront BIDs.	City, BIDs

Build Equity, Ownership, and Asset Value

Suggested time frame	Recommendation	Responsible party
Medium to long term	Support partnership-focused initiatives that assist in creating opportunities for long-term wealth creation and ownership for those coming into the business community. For example, consider options to allow condominium conversions for retail spaces so, so as the market changes (four to seven years) there is equal access to value appreciation.	City, BIDs, small business community, property owners
Short to medium term	Support allowing multitenant co-location in some street-level retail stores.	City, BIDs, small business community, property owners
Medium term	Adopt design standards that allow window showcases to render a coherent aesthetic that complements an overall character and sense of place for these specific districts.	City, BIDs, small business community, property owners
Short term	Determine how the demarcations and street furnishings now set up in the public realm reflect deliberate and cohesive design intent to allow differentiation for seating and gathering while also branding a district with a signature aesthetic complementing, or in some cases, helping create a vibrant mix with adjacent architecture and landscape.	City, BIDs, small business community, property owners
Short term	Initiate an analysis of the unmet demands within the study area for the products that smaller business and retail provides.	City, BIDs, small business community, property owners
Medium to long term	Leverage existing educational anchors that are adjacent to the CBD via research or innovation centers for job creation and business opportunities, aligning an Innovation District with resources from neighboring universities and community colleges.	City, BIDs, local educational institutions, startups, small businesses

Suggested time frame	Recommendation	Responsible party
Short to medium term	Support the trend of nonprofits and other socially oriented businesses to locate their offices in the CBD, given the prevalence and affordability of class B and C office space, to create workplace hubs that help support the growth of social entrepreneurship in the market and help provide an alternative to support businesses that have inclusion and social impact at the forefront.	City, BIDS, building owners, foundations, nonprofit groups
Short to medium term	Elevate partnership opportunities for service workers in hospitality and the service industries that are either unemployed or underemployed, aligning the availability of space and coordination of key stakeholders to put stronger resources around existing strategies.	City, BIDS, Make Food Work, building owners, foundations, service industry representatives
Short to medium term	Develop avenues for lease and ownership opportunities for small and POC businesses by addressing barriers to access by supporting and facilitating the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foundations/CDCs serving as guarantors on leases; • Foundations/CDCs taking on master leases for businesses such as retailers or child care providers; and • Partnerships with CDFIs/POC accelerators to work with pipeline of businesses. Encourage ownership models that focus on aligning equity capital alongside POC investors (i.e., Chicago TREND with shopping center acquisitions).	City, BIDS, CDCs, foundations, building owners
Short to medium term	Work with BIDS and property owners in the CBD to rethink the value that businesses and resources bring to creating a “new” or “revived” neighborhood.	City, BIDS
Short to medium term	Rethink inclusive places where there are opportunities to expand public art, discuss the history of the community, and create new spaces for a renewed community.	City, BIDS, arts and culture organizations
Short to medium term	Reduce the real and perceived barriers to entering downtown by removing lanes at intersections, making crosswalks safer, and adding shade. In addition, communities, including those in Anacostia, should be improved with bike lanes, on-street transit, and safe crossings.	City, BIDS

Advance Workforce Training

Suggested time frame	Recommendation	Responsible party
Short to medium term	Coordinate with employers and community partners, such as the BIDS, to pilot and support in-seat training and upskilling opportunities to elevate existing workers into higher-skilled positions, thereby creating greater vacancies in entry-level jobs, which align with the job opportunity needs of the unemployed D.C. population.	City, Workforce Investment Council, Department of Employment Services, Greater Washington Community Foundation, local employers
Short to medium term	Institutionalize a training program in downtown that prepares workers across a range of employment opportunities, adding multiple anchor employers, foundations, and government agencies who provide financial and technical support through a central training hub, serving as an effective “one-stop shop” for Washington, D.C.’s residents.	City, Workforce Investment Council, Department of Employment Services, Greater Washington Community Foundation, local employers

Create Inclusive Vibrant Spaces, Culture, and Identity for Downtown D.C.

Suggested time frame	Recommendation	Responsible party
Short to long term	Identify and sustain the transit services that interconnect the neighborhoods within downtown and connect downtown with other city neighborhoods, in coordination with and with the support financially and strategically of the federal government.	City, federal government
Short term	Consider how to stitch together the different areas of the CBD and how to orient them to increase access to the one-of-a-kind cultural amenities the city has to offer, as well as to the other economic hubs in the city and neighborhoods where barriers to access exist.	City, BIDs
Short term	Analyze the geography and determine where opportunity areas exist to spur and support new and compatible uses.	City, BIDs
Short to medium term	Execute the District's plan to focus on attracting residents from the region as well as visitors from nearby states and cities, planning on a slow return of national and international tourism.	City, BIDs
Short to medium term	Build on what D.C.'s communities and stakeholders have tried and learned from temporary and pilot projects, as well as the changes in the use of streets and parks over the past 10 months, to develop a long-term strategy for maintaining flexibility regarding where people can gather.	City, BIDs
Short term	Identify new areas of opportunity where flexible outdoor gathering space is viable, and continue to strengthen partnership with the federal government, which controls many of downtown's open spaces.	City, BIDs
Short term	Consider adding flexible use standards to the surrounding streets to allow their closing for public life on weekends to expand the public realm and allow more people to gather safely. This will require that the city continue to seek opportunities to partner with the federal government to improve these spaces.	City, BIDs
Short term	Organize the CBD into designated nodes to guide public investment and coordinate with new business and local initiatives to start to distinguish the various "places" within the CBD.	City, BIDs
Short to medium term	Continue to evaluate who can access the CBD in a timely manner, where they are coming from, and whether that supports the city's equity goals of lowering barriers to small businesses and POC-owned businesses in the CBD.	City, BIDs
Short to medium term	Collaborate with local arts groups and organizations to activate the streets downtown through programming and events.	City, BIDs
Short term	Conduct an open-space inventory to identify underused assets and begin the process of prioritizing areas for programming and investment as key features in attracting users to the CBD.	City, BIDs, National Park Service (NPS)
Medium term	Partner with National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC), the NPS, or other federal agencies to help bridge the gap between the National Mall/sightseeing features and the CBD, as the city begins to redefine the daily activities of the study area.	City, BIDs, NCPC, NPS
Medium term	Consider Freedom Plaza as an opportunity to work with the NPS to create one of the city's most visited places.	City, BIDs, NPS
Short to medium term	Strengthen the city's partnership with NPS in the management and programming of federal space within the city's urban fabric to enhance parks and open space throughout the CBD.	City, BIDs, NPS

Suggested time frame	Recommendation	Responsible party
Medium to long term	Use Franklin Square as an example for future investment in public space for the CBD, and spur the future investment into other federally owned and operated properties that serve the D.C. community and its visitors. Consider starting with a pedestrian-oriented Pennsylvania Avenue project.	City, BIDs, NPS
Medium to long term	Model future park investments in coordination with NPS to create “destination” parks located in the CBD.	City, BIDs, NPS
Short to medium term	Adopt long-term flexible and hybrid standards for the study area that allow a more predictable set of rules in which businesses can rethink operating procedures and footprints.	City, BIDs
Medium term	Increase investment into supportive infrastructure for long-term activation abilities, such as lighting, power, and traffic control measures to assist with tactical activation and to signal the District’s long-term investment downtown.	City, BIDs

About the Panel

Marilyn Jordan Taylor

Panel Chair
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Taylor is professor of architecture and urban design and former dean of the University of Pennsylvania, Stuart Weitzman School of Design. She is recognized worldwide as a thought leader in city design and the public realm, as well as a woman pioneer in the fields of architecture, planning, and construction, with proven ability to interact easily with constituencies across communities, government, industry, and academia, both locally and internationally. She is a leader with intellectual breadth, but also deep enthusiasm and compassion in her dedication to use design thinking to enhance the vitality and diversity of urban communities.

During her decades of professional practice, Taylor led teams on assignments that focused on urban design and transportation and was the first woman elected as the chair of Skidmore Owings & Merrill LLP. She was also the first architect and the first woman to serve as the global chair of ULI, where she championed a renewed focus on cities, sustainable and resilient communities, and equitable infrastructure investment.

An expert in using public space and infrastructure to shape urban districts and civic places, Taylor led Skidmore Owings & Merrill's Urban Design & Planning practice in such projects as Columbia University's Manhattanville Master Plan, the East River Waterfront Master Plan, the reclamation of Con Ed's East River sites for mixed-use development, the new research building at Memorial Sloan-Kettering, and the new urban campus for John Jay College. She also founded and led Skidmore Owings & Merrill's Airports and Transportation practice, working on U.S. airport projects such as Terminal 4 at JFK, Continental Airlines at Newark, and the expansion of Washington, D.C.'s Dulles International Airport. Her international airport projects included SkyCity at Hong Kong International Airport and the Ben Gurion Airport in Tel Aviv, as well as the new Terminal 3 at Singapore's Changi Airport.

Her transit work has been equally diverse, ranging from the award-winning Changi Airport Station in Singapore to the *Transit-Friendly Land Use Handbook* for New Jersey Transit.

Her train projects include all 15 intercity rail stations from Washington, D.C., to Boston. She also led Skidmore Owings & Merrill's planning and transportation design for reuse of New York's Farley Post Office as the Moynihan Station.

Taylor is distinguished as well for her civic leadership, having served as a David Rockefeller Fellow of The Partnership for New York City, president of the American Institute of Architects (NYC Chapter), visiting professor at the Harvard Graduate School of Design, and as subject matter expert in both the White House "Rebuild by Design" initiative to respond to Storm Sandy and in the Rockefeller Foundation initiative 100 Resilient Cities.

William A. Gilchrist

Oakland, California

Gilchrist is the director of planning and building for the city of Oakland, California. His career has spanned both public and private sectors.

In his previous roles as director of place-based planning in New Orleans, Louisiana, and director of the Department of Planning, Engineering & Permits in Birmingham, Alabama, he oversaw the coordination and merger of city-departments including capital projects, engineering, public works, planning, urban design, and building and inspection services, as well as integrating permitting processes to improve efficiency and customer service. His work has been recognized by the Urban Land Institute (ULI), the American Institute of Architects (AIA), the National League of Cities, the American Planning Association (APA), and the National Trust for Historic Preservation. Gilchrist also was the director of the Urban Design Studio in the Atlanta Office of EDAA/AECOM. He has consulted internationally in the arena of land use policy and urban design.

Gilchrist has engaged academic centers of excellence in design and planning as resources for local and regional development, serving on advisory organizations to MIT, Carnegie Mellon University, Tulane University, and Auburn University. For over a decade he was a member of the board of the National Association for Olmsted Parks. He is a ULI trustee and past

chair of the Public/Private Partnership Council, where he was a contributor to the ULI publication *The Ten Principles of Public/Private Partnership*; past chair of ULI Committee on Community; and past chair of the Hines Student Competition jury.

He was a founding member of the Birmingham chapter of the National Association of Minority Architects. He was a contributing opinion-piece writer on urban development and design for the *Birmingham News* Pulitzer Prize-winning editorial page. He served as an editor for the AIA *Handbook on Professional Practice* and John Wiley and Sons series on architecture and urban design. He has been a spokesperson for the AIA concerning topics of urban design, neighborhood engagement, and architecture and appeared on National Public Radio and *PBS News Hour*.

He is an alumnus of MIT's Architecture and Planning School as well as the Sloan School of Management and of Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government. He received MIT's Karl Taylor Compton Award and Chandler Prize for Design. He was also among Harvard and MIT's first Aga Khan Fellows, documenting the historic Swahili settlements along the coast of Kenya. As part of the International Celebration in 2018 of its 150th Anniversary, MIT's Department of Architecture bestowed on Gilchrist its Alumni Recognition for Civic Design.

Among his noted projects are the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute, the Birmingham Railroad Park, which received the 2012 ULI Open Space Award, and the New Orleans Riverwalk. He was inducted into the AIA College of Fellows in 2006 for his distinction as an architect in public service.

Diane Gormely-Barnes

Chicago, Illinois

Currently a principal planner in HNTB's Chicago office, Gormely-Barnes has professional experience in urban planning, urban design, and architecture, including consulting for municipal and public agency clients, nonprofit real estate development, and architectural design focused on transit and public facilities. Her planning consulting work over the past 20-plus years has

addressed a wide range of project types, including land use and transportation planning; transit-oriented development; transportation analysis and funding support; corridor, downtown, and neighborhood planning; comprehensive and regional planning; site planning and review; economic development planning; and design guidelines and development standards.

Her experience covers the spectrum from strategic and policy planning to detailed design solutions with an emphasis on consensus-based and contextually sensitive infrastructure and land use planning for developed areas. Her work with various constituencies and communities has fostered an ability to view planning issues from multiple perspectives, work across disciplines to increase common understanding, and develop visionary yet implementable planning solutions. Since early in her career, she has understood the critical importance of transit to quality of life and economic development for neighborhoods, cities, regions, and states.

Gormely-Barnes earned a BA in architecture and bachelor of architecture from Rice University in Houston, and she practiced architecture in Houston, San Francisco, and Chicago before returning to graduate school to pursue an interest in larger-scale site planning and working more directly with impacted communities. While earning her master of urban planning at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, her work-study involved support to the university's East Saint Louis Action Research Project, a HUD-funded outreach and planning program that provided direct assistance to community groups in East Saint Louis.

In addition to her certification from the American Institute of Certified Planners, Gormely-Barnes has earned the respected designations of Envision Sustainability Professional and LEED Accredited Professional. She also maintains her status as a licensed architect in the state of Illinois. She is active in the Chicago-Ely Chapter of Lambda Alpha International, serves on the Pro-Bono Committee of the APA Chicago Metro Section, and is a former co-chair of the Regional and Urban Design Knowledge Community of AIA Chicago. She also currently serves on the Planning and Zoning Commission of her Chicagoland suburban community.

David Greensfelder

Albany, California

Greensfelder, founder and managing principal of Greensfelder Real Estate Strategy, always focuses on real-world, implementable real estate strategies and solutions for communities and for commercial (retail and office) and mixed-use projects. He has driven more than 350 projects spanning over 7 million square feet with a finished market value estimated at over \$1.25 billion.

He is a specialist in economic development and redevelopment planning, retail resiliency, understanding retail opportunities by differentiating between commodity and specialty retail, and analyzing the impacts of competing retail channels on bricks-and-mortar storefronts. Greensfelder recently authored the Retail and Last Mile narrative in ULI-PwC's 2019 *Emerging Trends in Real Estate*, where he discussed how influencers, platforms, an evolving landlord-tenant relationship, and a new equilibrium between retail and other product types is reshaping the retail landscape, and how the "last mile" is the least understood and biggest force affecting all product types. He serves on National Academy of Sciences NCHRP research panels as an urban economics and last-mile expert.

Greensfelder has managed the corporate real estate function for Fortune 500 companies such as Longs Drugs and startup and emerging companies such as solar firm Sungevity and Community Foods Market. He has implemented preferred development programs for Fortune 10 companies such as CVS Health as well as multichannel startups. Skilled at managing organizational dynamics, and community and public meetings, Greensfelder knows how to navigate organizational dynamics and defuse opposition, and he values transparency and open communication.

He frequently lectures at UC Berkeley's Fisher Center for Real Estate and Urban Economics and MRED+D programs (where he is a Distinguished Visiting Fellow), the Haas Graduate School of Business, at USC's Lusk Center for Real Estate Development, and he teaches ULI's Mixed-Use Development Best Practices Professional Development program. He is a director of Satellite Affordable Housing Associates and the Center for Creative Land Recycling, is an active ULI member (Urban

Revitalization Council, Advisory Services, Education programs, and UrbanPlan and UP4PO steering committee, instructor, and trainer), and is on ICSC's P3 National Steering Committee. Greensfelder graduated from Pitzer College (The Claremont Colleges) with a degree in business economics and the SciARC Foundation Program.

James Lima

New York, New York

Lima has been actively engaged in complex matters of real estate, economic development, and public policy since 1986, with extensive private- and public-sector experience in the planning and revitalization of urban places at a variety of scales.

He founded JLP+D in 2011 after leading redevelopment strategies for numerous large-scale sites as a partner at a major national economic and real estate advisory firm. Previously, he was senior director of development in the New York City office of residential REIT AvalonBay Communities Inc. In addition, Lima was appointed by New York City mayor Michael Bloomberg as founding president of the Governors Island Preservation and Education Corporation, overseeing the redevelopment of a 172-acre former military facility in New York Harbor. He also served as senior vice president for special projects at the NYC Economic Development Corporation, where he managed initiatives focused on growth of the city's central business districts, including Downtown Brooklyn, and increasing public access to the city's waterfront. His prior work as assistant commissioner at the NYC Department of Housing Preservation and Development and at Forest City Ratner Companies centered on new construction of affordable housing and retail development throughout New York City.

Lima has served as assistant adjunct professor in the Columbia University Master of Science in Real Estate Development (MSRED) program, where he has led a course titled Public-Private Partnerships in Real Estate Development. He earned a BA from Columbia College with a major in architecture and urban studies and stayed on at Columbia to complete the MSRED program. At the Harvard Kennedy School, Lima participated in the program for Senior Executives in State and

Local Government as a Fannie Mae Fellow. He is a frequent speaker at Urban Land Institute and other conferences; has served on advisory panels throughout North America; and has lectured on urban redevelopment at Harvard, Princeton, Yale, Columbia, Penn, and Syracuse, as well as in Rotterdam, Amsterdam, and São Paulo.

He serves on the Economic Development Committee of the Fourth Regional Plan for the Regional Plan Association in New York. He is a member of the Design Trust for Public Space's Design Trust Council and is on the Advisory Council to public art innovator ArtBridge. He is also secretary of the New York Harbor Foundation.

Julie O'Brochta

Chicago, Illinois

O'Brochta is a Chicago-based associate urban designer and architect in the City Design Practice at Skidmore, Owings & Merrill (SOM). SOM's City Design Practice is a collective of design studios throughout the world that share a commitment to achieving a more urban and a more balanced relationship between our larger built world and our natural systems, making influential contributions to urban design approaches such as transit-oriented development, overbuild strategies, and sustainable urbanism.

As a designer, O'Brochta considers ways in which holistic and interdisciplinary thinking can enhance design output. Her expertise focuses on urban infill and neighborhood revitalization, all oriented toward creating livable, mixed-use environments. Her career has focused on projects that intimately interact with their surrounding city context. She specializes in bridging the gap between planning and architecture with her knowledge of building systems, zoning, and architectural design. Through planned developments, mixed-use buildings, and affordable housing projects, she has worked to rethink underutilized areas. Her interest lies in working on challenging projects with community stakeholders, developers, and city governments to achieve design consensus.

O'Brochta served in a central design and technical leadership role for the 78 project, a 62-acre master plan and entitlements for a mixed-use, postindustrial development in Chicago's South Loop. The site will anchor a new neighborhood with a curated mix of uses, including 40 percent green and open space and a half mile of developed riverfront that will expand the city's existing Riverwalk. Before SOM, she worked for Torti Gallas + Partners of Silver Spring, Maryland, on mixed-use buildings, affordable housing, and planning projects in Washington, D.C., including Avec on H, Park Morton, and Stanton Square.

She holds a bachelor of architecture degree from the University of Notre Dame. She is LEED accredited and a registered architect in Illinois. She is a member of the AIA and ULI, collaborates with Habitat for Humanity Chicago on pro bono work, and leads the SOM Chicago Women's Initiative group. O'Brochta has served on design juries for the University of Notre Dame, Illinois Institute of Technology, University of Illinois, and Tecnológico de Monterrey.

Maggie Parker

Dallas, Texas

Raised in Dallas, Parker is the managing partner and founder of Innovan Neighborhoods LLC, a community-oriented development and consulting firm. Through her partnership with Matthews Southwest, the team leverages the 30-year track record of an international, full-service private real estate company alongside community development strategies to build and strengthen neighborhoods in concert with community stakeholders.

Innovan Neighborhoods partners with nonprofits, faith-based organizations, and neighborhood associations to implement their vision. From joint ventures for affordable single-family homes to leading phased, master-planning development strategies in transitioning neighborhoods, Innovan Neighborhoods supports catalyst projects in the Dallas–Forth Worth metroplex.

Before forming Innovan Neighborhoods, Parker was the director for the Real Estate Council Community Fund, a CDFI providing access to capital and technical assistance for real estate projects serving low-to-moderate-income neighborhoods.

During her four years in this role, she closed 13 loans since 2015, totaling \$3.1 million, serving low-to-moderate-income communities, including financing Recipe Oak Cliff, an award-winning healthy food option, as well as providing affordable rental and homeownership options with several nonprofit developers. In addition, Parker secured \$4.42 million in lending and operational capital since 2015, including two federal CDFI awards for financial and technical assistance, alongside a nationally competitive JPMorgan Chase PRO Neighborhoods grant award. During her tenure, TREC Community Fund provided technical assistance and community training to more than 500 community leaders through one-on-one professional services and community training programming. This included launching three new programs: Real Estate Bootcamp, CRE Accelerator, and the faith-based Community Development Initiative.

Parker completed her graduate studies at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, with dual master's degrees in city and regional planning and public administration. While at UNC-Chapel Hill she served local governments and nonprofit organizations in assessment of leveraging public and private financing for real estate development in disadvantaged communities.

Bob Peck

Panel Adviser
Washington, D.C.

Peck is a principal and senior workplace strategist at Gensler, a global architecture and design firm. He is co-leader of the firm's Government and Defense industry practice. He helps public- and private-sector clients get the maximum performance out of their workplaces, whether a leased space, a building, or an entire portfolio. An experienced commercial real estate, nonprofit, and public-sector executive, he is a nationally recognized advocate for high-quality design, active

work environments, smart growth, and sustainable building. His expertise includes leading complex real estate portfolio strategy and public/private development projects.

For five years in the Clinton administration and nearly three in the Obama administration, Peck was commissioner of GSA's Public Buildings Service (PBS). With an annual budget of more than \$9 billion and a workforce of 7,000, PBS conducts nationwide asset and property management, design and construction, leasing, and disposals for 375 million square feet of space accommodating more than 1.1 million federal workers. He is known for being instrumental in launching the Design Excellence program, instituting real estate metrics and contemporary workplace design, and creating a Green Proving Ground sustainability program.

In the federal government, Peck has also worked at the Office of Management and Budget, the National Endowment for the Arts, the White House, and the Federal Communications Commission. On Capitol Hill, he was associate counsel to the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works and chief of staff to the late U.S. Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan (D-NY). He was a Special Forces officer in the U.S. Army Reserve. In the private sector, Peck has been a land use attorney, a real estate investment executive, and a commercial real estate broker. He was also the full-time president of the 125-year-old Greater Washington Board of Trade and vice president for public affairs at the American Institute of Architects.

He received his BA cum laude with distinction in economics from the University of Pennsylvania and his JD from Yale Law School. He was a visiting Loeb Fellow at Harvard University's Graduate School of Design and a visiting lecturer at Yale College.

The AIA and American Society of Landscape Architects have both named him an honorary member. He has received the annual achievement awards of the Washington regional Coalition for Smarter Growth and the DC Building Industry Association. In 2011, he won the Henry Hope Reed Award from the Driehaus Foundation and the University of Notre Dame and in 2012 the Thomas Jefferson Award for Public Architecture from the AIA.



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