

**Place, Parks and Open Space
Working Group Meeting Summary
November 2, 2006**

Introduction

Patricia Zingsheim gave an overview of the Center City Action Agenda process to date. A number of common themes have emerged after the first round of working group meetings and a subsequent steering committee meeting. They fall into three broad categories:

- Creating Great Places
- Promoting Economic Health and Competitiveness
- Strengthening Transportation and Infrastructure Systems and Services

There was a short presentation – “A View from 2012” that has been created to help visualize what can be accomplished in the next year within the next 5 years. This presentation will be refined with new images to portray emerging themes from the Action Agenda.

Finally, the Office of Planning has hired a consultant team to help with parts of this project. Alex Krieger of Chan Krieger Sieniewicz will be preparing an urban design analysis and images to visualize the potential of the Center City. Basile Baumann Prost and Associates will preparing a market analysis and Gorove/Slade Associates will provide expertise in transportation planning.

The vision statements and action items will be refined based on the working group discussion. A large Stakeholder’s Meeting is scheduled for December 6 to present the proposed strategies and actions and preliminary urban design concepts. This public meeting will be followed by another public meeting in January to present the draft Action Agenda. Invitations will the meeting details will be sent out to all Steering Committee and Working Group members as well as a long list of stakeholders.

Issue Discussion

Need to improve landscape practices to improve the health and longevity of landscape.

The L'Enfant Plan creates a distinctive urban design based on climate, street widths, and landscaping. Trees are an integral part of the plan – they should overarch the street to provide shade.

There is need for a Capital City Urban Design Agenda – a document that explains the urban design principles of the District. There also is a need for a Design Review Commission.

The public realm needs dramatic changes that parallel or are equivalent to the private development. Building and streetscape design needs more emphasis on the pedestrian experience. Curitiba, Brazil achieved dramatic results with the transformation of a pedestrian street. Dupont Circle is another example of changes of perception regarding the street. Mid-town has some examples with art in display windows in empty space. Public art should be integrated into the streetscape to enhance the pedestrian experience and create unique features.

The Federal City needs to be better integrated into the local city. In the Center City, the federal complex and National Mall are at the center of the area. There is a need to bring back the philosophy of living space. At the same time, there is a need to respect the federal presence. For example, the primary purpose of federal reservations is to provide future opportunities for growth and expansion of the federal government. The federal government is not always a good neighbor in terms of security requirements, design and use considerations. Each side needs to enter into a dialogue.

The National Park Service has been working with the BIDs on improvements. Thomas Circle was a collaboration with DDOT. At Logan Circle NPS is working with the surrounding community to re-design the space. In Pershing Park, the Willard Hotel volunteers for maintenance. Improvements to Farragut Square include new sidewalks and light posts that included electrical outlets for music performances. There are lots of opportunities for collaboration. The Capital Space project is a collaboration between NCPC, NPS, and District agencies to look at all of the open space as a single system. DC Parks and Recreation has a unit responsible for fostering collaboration with “Friends of” groups. There is a lot of synergy and are heading in the right direction.

The collaboration needs to include lobbying Congress for more funds. There is a need to re-engage the nation to boost ownership and pride in the Capital City. There needs to be more effort to embed pride in the citizens through tree plantings and school curriculum (like Chicago plan book). These programs will strengthen the connection to the city and places.

The goals need to be stronger, more ambitious. Need to look at opportunities to create a sense of place. The parks or space is there, but it does not define a neighborhood. Not many people recognize or are aware of the ownership.

Priorities for Possible Strategies & Actions

Temporary public art and events can be dramatic and radically transform a space and provide some freshness.

Private developers seeking recreation variances need a vehicle to fund public park improvements. Need private participation without corporate control.

Need to improve north-south links across the Mall as part of multi-modal links between neighborhoods.

NCPC Framework Plan steering committee should coordinate with the Center City Action Agenda steering committee.