

District Waterways Advisory Commission

Wednesday, May 20, 2026



AGENDA

1. Call Meeting to Order
2. Commission Logistics
3. Review Meeting Objectives
4. Topic Area #3: Coordinated Economic Growth
5. Topic Area #4: Public/Private Use of Property and Infrastructure
6. Next Steps
7. Adjourn



Commission Logistics



Meeting Objectives



Meeting Objectives

Today's meeting is the second of four meetings focused on the eight topic areas.

	Mar 2026 <i>In-Person</i>	Apr 2026 <i>Virtual</i>	May 2026 <i>In-Person</i>	June 2026 <i>Virtual</i>	July 2026 <i>In-Person</i>
Kickoff & Topics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introductions and Plan Objectives and Visioning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Boating and Recreation Uses • Environmental Conservation and Management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic Growth • Public/Private Uses of Property and Infrastructure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safety and Security • Transportation Gaps 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interagency and Regional Coordination • Opportunities for Local Control
	Sept 2026 <i>In-Person</i>	Oct 2026 <i>In-Person</i>	Jan 2027 <i>In-Person</i>	Mar 2027 <i>Virtual</i>	
Plan Development and Approval	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review Decision Matrix and Discuss Goals and Strategies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review Draft Implementation Analysis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and Approve Draft Advisory Plan for Public Comment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final Plan Approval • Virtual • Safety and Security and Transportation Gaps 	

Meeting Objectives

The goal of these topic-specific meetings is to:

1. **Identify existing conditions and key challenges and opportunities.**
2. **Discuss a set of *preliminary* goals** for topic areas:
 - Coordinated economic growth
 - Public / private uses of property & infrastructure

Waterways Advisory Plan

Vision

Today's
Meeting

Three Goals Per Topic Area

Three Strategies Per Goal

Preliminary Goals

Boating and Recreation

Goal 1

Increase recreational opportunities and access points along the waterfront

Goal 2

Foster a safe and accessible boating environment for all users

Goal 3

Establish zones for safe swimming in the Potomac and Anacostia Rivers

Environmental Conditions

Goal 1

Reduce sediment, bacterial, chemical, and trash pollution of the waterways

Goal 2

Improve resilience of the waterways to sea level rise, flooding, stormwater, and sedimentation

Goal 3

Restore aquatic vegetation, wetlands, and native fish and shellfish populations

Topic Area #3: Coordinated Economic Growth



Context

Successful economic growth along the waterfront, including **real estate development, tourism** and **commercial activity**, requires effective strategic coordination.

Guiding Questions

Benefits of Water

Is waterfront economic growth fully maximizing the benefits enabled by proximity to water?

Environmental Needs

Are waterfront developments sufficiently considering the environmental needs of the shoreline and waterways?

Regulations

Are there regulations, or a lack of District authority to regulate, that inhibit economic growth opportunities?

Untapped Opportunities

Are there untapped opportunities to promote waterfront or water-based economic growth?

Organizations Impacting Waterfront and Water-Based Economic Activity

District
Mayor is the Chief Executive overseeing agencies. DC Council establishes policies.

DMPED

Drives District planning and economic policy development, including for major projects, execution of District-owned developments, and efforts to grow tax base and support business growth.

Department of Energy and Environment (DOEE)

Permit and regulate stormwater systems, storm sewer systems, floodplain development, and green building. Administers the Brownfield Revitalization Act, net-zero energy codes, and Building Energy Performance Standards.

Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR)

Manages District-owned parkland along the waterways.

Department of Transportation (DDOT)

Manages and oversees use of some public spaces, streets, and trails along the waterfront.

Department of Buildings (DOB)

Approves building permits, enforces compliance with the Green Building Act and Green Construction Code, and issues and floodplain permits.

Office of Planning (OP)

Reviews development and zoning proposals. Supports long-term waterfront planning. Zoning Commission approves development and zoning.

Mayor's Special Events Task Group

Approves waterfront and waterways event proposals. Comprised of both federal and District departments.

Department of Licensing and Consumer Protection (DLCP)

Administers business and professional licenses, including tour guides.

Department of Small and Local Business Development (DSLBD)

Supports small businesses; administers CBE program, including compliance for subcontracting on District-supported development projects.

Department of Employment Services (DOES)

Coordinates workforce development services and enforces local hiring requirements for District-supported projects.

MPD Harbor Patrol

Enforce the legal use of District or private docks, marinas, and vessels. Issues and enforces vessel titles and registration for watercraft in DC.

Organizations Impacting Waterfront and Water-Based Economic Activity

Federal	National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC) Approval authority for projects on federal land in National Capital Region. Advisory authority for projects on District land.	Army Corps of Engineers Issue and execute construction of docks, piers, wharves, marinas, and other projects.	Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Oversees cleanup or cleanup funding for brownfield sites.	National Park Service (NPS) Owns and manages large segments of land along the waterways as well as the river bottom. Enforce NPS land and dock regulations.	Other Federal Landowners Department of Defense (DoD) Federal Aviation Administration (FAA)
Non-Profit/ Other Orgs	Business Improvement Districts Support development and programming at waterfront sites.	EventsDC Operates major District event venues including the RFK Stadium campus and DC Armory, and promotes DC as a sports, entertainment, and special events destination.	Private owners of water-adjacent land Exercise authority over their property.	DestinationDC Markets DC to tourists and convention planners and serves as the sales and marketing arm for the Walter E. Washington Convention Center.	Washington DC Economic Partnership (WDCEP) Promotes business attraction and retention in DC and publishes market research on DC's economy.

Key Assets and Trends

DC's waterfront economy is anchored by established and emerging hubs, as well as a strong pipeline of new development.

Evidence



Existing economic and commercial assets span the DC waterfront, with **major nodes at Georgetown, Navy Yard, Buzzard Point, and the Wharf.**



From 2018-2024, the Capitol Riverfront and Southwest DC have accounted for **over 25% of all new apartment units** delivered in the District and **1.9M square feet of new commercial space.**



Numerous large-scale, waterways-adjacent projects are in the development pipeline, including the **RFK Stadium Campus, the Bridge District, the Hill East Campus, 11th Street Bridge Park, Kingman/Heritage Islands, and Poplar Point.**

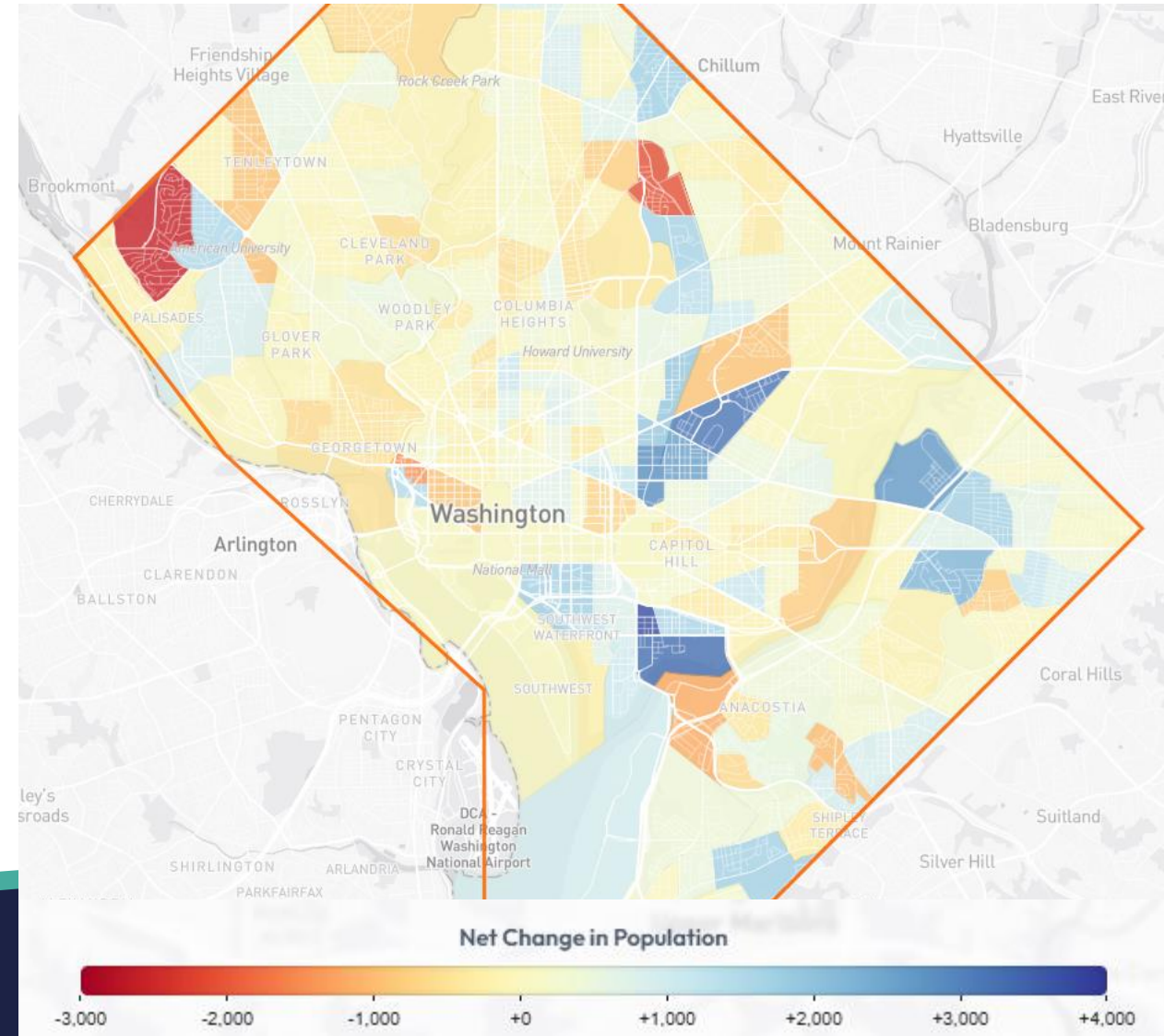
Actions To Consider

1. Assess how planning processes maximize benefits of water proximity and identify room for improvement.
2. Identify new opportunities to generate commercial activity and spending through water-based and water-adjacent events.
3. Leverage waterfront momentum to create new economic opportunities for DC residents and businesses.

Coordinated Economic Growth – Development

The Southwest Waterfront and Navy Yard areas are **major drivers of District population growth** from 2014 to 2024, highlighting the large-scale redevelopment of the area.

Population Change by Census Tract (2014 to 2024)



Key Challenges

Regulations and a lack of commercial coordination create challenges for economic growth.

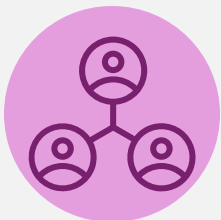
Evidence



Stakeholders reflected that **construction is more burdensome** near the waterfront due to **additional regulations and involvement from additional District and/or federal departments.**



Stakeholders suggest there is a **lack of coordinated waterfront- and waterways-focused marketing and wayfinding** in neighborhoods adjacent to the rivers.



Stakeholders identified an increase in private and commercial vessel operators **who are operating without proper registration.**

Actions To Consider

1. Determine whether there is a need to add or revise development regulations that affect waterfront development to better balance growth and environmental protection.
2. Improve marketing and wayfinding for commercial activity and tourism on the waterfront and waterways.
3. Improved licensing/registration and/or enforcement for commercial activity on the water.

Discussion Questions

Benefits of Water

Is waterfront economic development fully maximizing the benefits enabled by this proximity?

Environmental Needs

Is waterfront economic development sufficiently considering the environmental needs of the shoreline and waterways?

Regulations

Are there regulations, or a lack of District authority to regulate, that inhibit economic growth opportunities?

Untapped Opportunities

Are there untapped opportunities to promote waterfront or water-based economic growth (including tourism and commercial activity)?

Topic Areas #4: Public/Private Property and Infrastructure Uses



Context

The District has invested in above- and below-ground infrastructure to support development. **Additional investments are needed** to enable economic growth and safe public use of the waterways.

Guiding Questions

Infrastructure Enhancements

What waterways-related infrastructure enhancements should be prioritized (e.g., seawalls, docks/piers, trails, sewer)? Where are the biggest opportunities to expand public access to the waterways?

Expansion And Education

To what extent does this topic area need to focus on expanding infrastructure versus educating the public about usage of the waterways?

Organizations Impacting Waterfront and Water-Based Infrastructure

Federal	National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC) Approval authority for projects on federal land in National Capital Reg. Advisory authority for projects on District land.	Army Corps of Engineers Issue and execute construction of piers, wharves, marinas, and other projects.	Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Oversees cleanup or cleanup funding for Superfund and brownfield sites.	National Park Service (NPS) Owns and manages large segments of land along the waterways, incl. East Potomac Park and Roosevelt Island, and the river bottom. Enforce NPS land and dock regulations.	Other Federal Landowners Department of Defense (DoD) Federal Aviation Administration (FAA)	U.S. Coast Guard Permit events on the water.	
District <i>Mayor is the Chief Executive overseeing agencies. DC Council establishes policies.</i>	Department of Energy and Environment (DOEE) Permit and regulate stormwater and sewer systems, floodplain development, and green building.	Office of Planning (OP) Oversees development and zoning proposals. Supports long-term waterfront planning. Oversees historic preservation planning and designations. Zoning Commission approves development and zoning.	Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) Manages District-owned parkland along the waterways.	Department of Transportation (DDOT) Manages and issues permits for the use of some public spaces, streets, and trails along the waterfront. Oversees development of transportation along and over the waterways.	MPD Harbor Patrol Enforce the legal use of District or private docks, marinas, and vessels. Enforces vessel titles and registration for watercraft in DC.	DC Water Operates the combined sewer overflows and the Clean Rivers tunnel project. Manages but does not own shoreline at HQ and Blue Plains facility.	Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development (DMPED) Drives District planning and economic policy development, including for major projects, execution of District-owned developments, and efforts to grow tax base and support business growth.
Non-Profit/ Other Orgs	Private owners of water-adjacent land Exercise authority over their property (e.g., The Wharf).						

Key Assets and Trends

In the last two decades, DC has invested in new public infrastructure, enabling increased waterfront and waterway activity and improving safety.

Evidence



Over **1,700 acres of public park land, 23 facilities, 11 playgrounds, and nearly 20 miles of a continuous riverwalk trail** have been created along the Anacostia since 2018.



The **Anacostia River Tunnel contributed to a 98% reduction of sewer overflows** to the Anacostia River since 2023 (pre-Potomac interceptor collapse). **Construction of the Potomac River Tunnel is expected to be completed in 2030.**

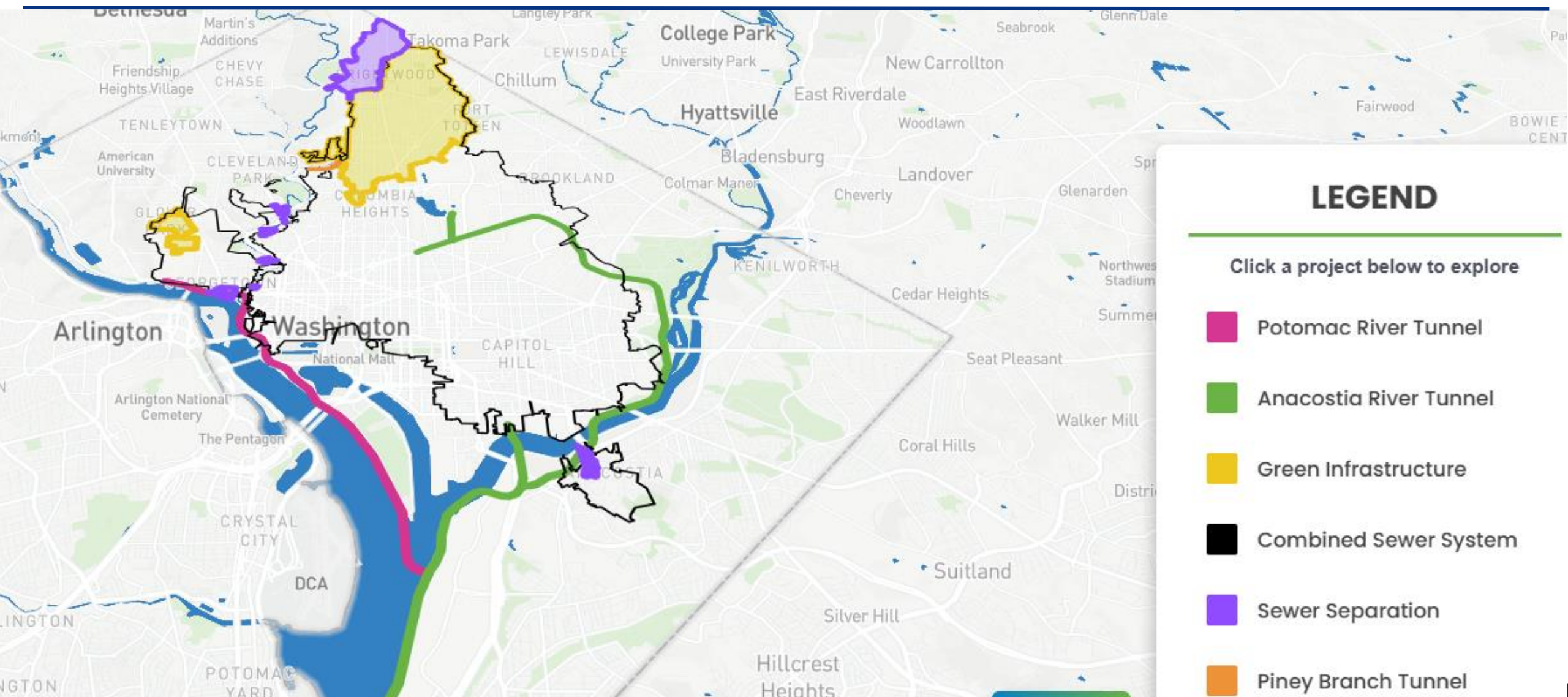


Major recreational projects will drive additional visitation around the waterways upon opening, including the 11th Street Bridge Park, Arboretum Bridge and Trail Project, and the Georgetown Waterfront Boathouse.

Actions to Consider

1. Ensure proper maintenance of and funding for public waterfront infrastructure, and enforcement of private infrastructure regulations, as demand increases
2. Enable access to existing and future waterfront sites and trails, particularly for populations with limited exposure to the waterways.

Geographic Centers of Infrastructure



LEGEND

Click a project below to explore

-  Potomac River Tunnel
-  Anacostia River Tunnel
-  Green Infrastructure
-  Combined Sewer System
-  Sewer Separation
-  Piney Branch Tunnel



Private Ownership on the Waterfront

Legend



Privately-owned waterfront lot



Federal government lot



DC government lot

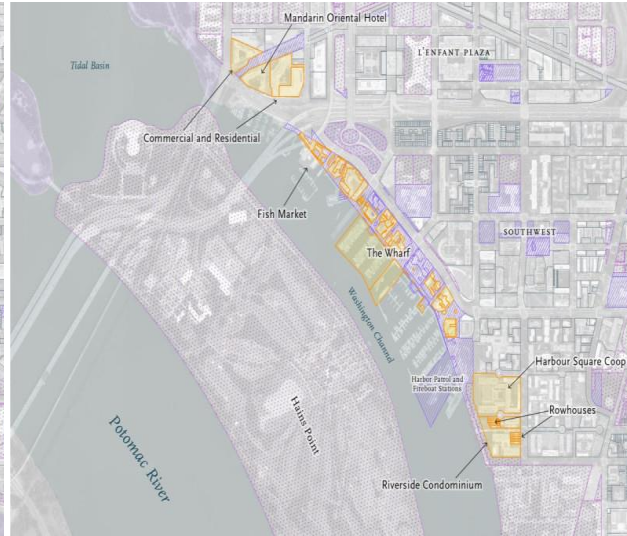


Federal Reservation

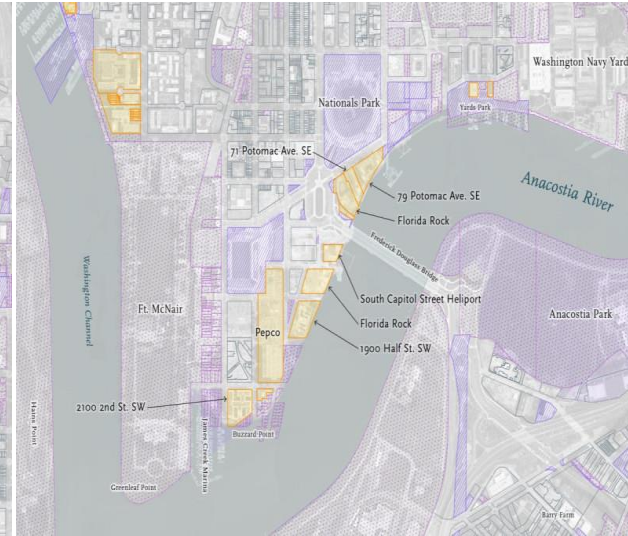
Georgetown & Foggy Bottom



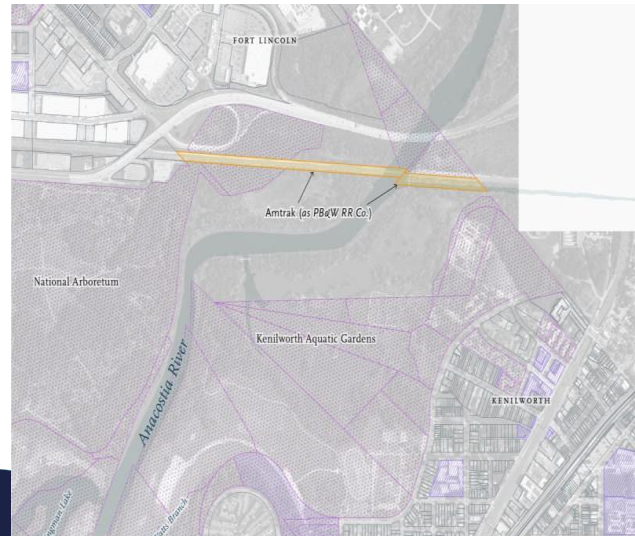
The Wharf & Southwest Waterfront



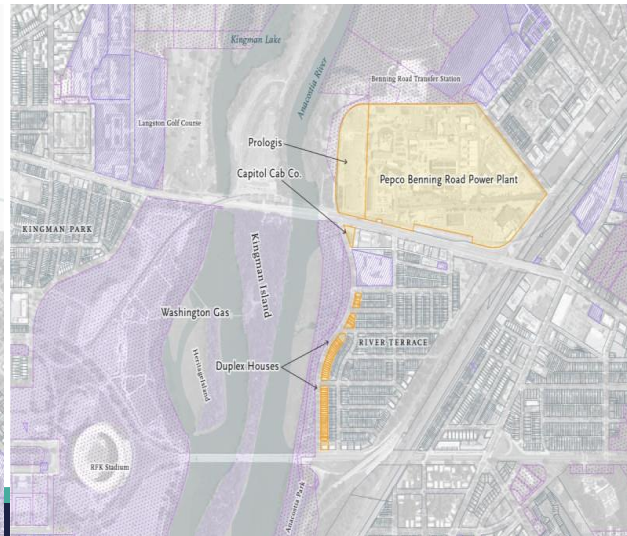
Buzzard Point & Navy Yard



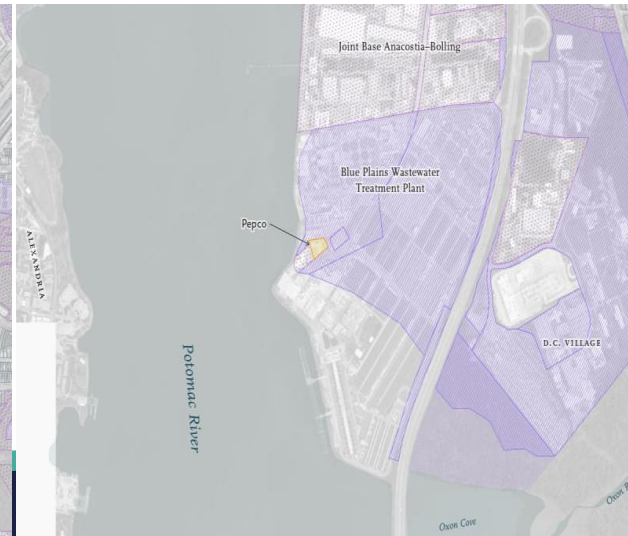
Anacostia River near Kenilworth



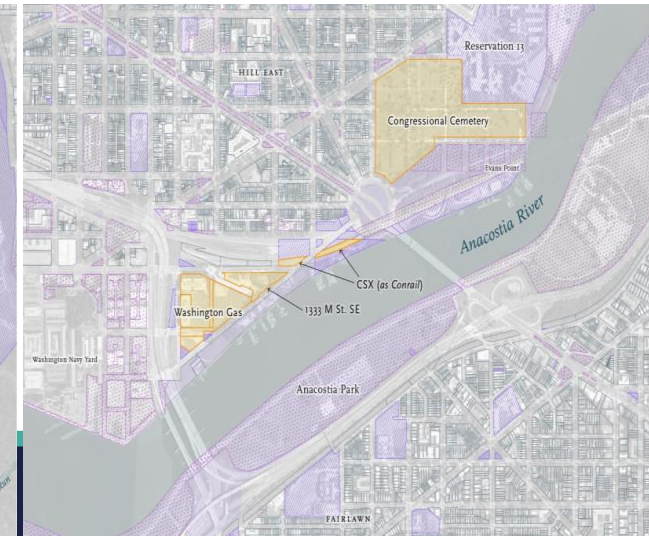
River Terrace & Benning Road



Blue Plains



Hill East & the Sousa Bridge



Sources: David Ramos in Greater Greater Washington. "Mapping DC's private waterfront land on the Anacostia River" (2025), "Mapping DC's private waterfront land on the Potomac River" (2025)

Key Challenges – Desired Infrastructure Upgrades

DC has experienced increased flooding in recent years, which is expected to increase in the coming decades, driving the need to maintain and improve existing infrastructure.

Evidence



Only 63% of the Anacostia seawall is in good condition, while 30% is in fair or poor condition. **Renovations of 6,000 feet of seawalls** in the Tidal Basin and parts of the Potomac River were recently complete.



Stakeholders testify that physical infrastructure, like the Anacostia Freeway, **limit the access of surrounding neighborhoods to the waterfront.**



The Potomac Interceptor collapsed in January 2026, resulting in **millions of gallons of wastewater** entering the Potomac River.

Actions To Consider

1. Replace and maintain deteriorating seawalls, or identify sections to remove
2. Create or change infrastructure to reconnect communities to the water
3. Apply lessons learned from the Potomac Interceptor collapse
4. Enable access to existing and future waterfront sites and trails,

Key Challenges – Threats to Infrastructure and Development

Increased flooding activity threatens water-adjacent economic growth that could benefit DC's residents and businesses.

Evidence



Within a ½ mile buffer of the 500-year Anacostia River floodplain, there are approximately **86K residents and 2,300 businesses**.



The Potomac and Anacostia tidal rivers have experienced an **11-inch rise in just 90 years**, leading to a **+300% increase in nuisance flooding**.



Reports predict a sea level of rise of **1.1-1.7 feet by 2050 and 1.6-4.4 feet by 2080**. The District is projected to **sink half a foot or more in the next century** due to natural and human cause.

Actions To Consider

1. Develop proactive steps (e.g., development guidelines, raised shorelines, additional buffer zones) to reduce the negative impact of sea level rise on waterfront infrastructure.
2. Create natural and structural buffers and barriers between the shoreline and property to reduce nuisance flooding.

Key Challenges – Threats to Infrastructure and Development

The map depicts the area that the District identifies as **at risk of storm surge flooding** overlaid with the waterfront parcels that are privately owned.

Flood Zones and Privately-Owned Parcels (2025)



Discussion Questions

Infrastructure Enhancements

What waterways-related infrastructure enhancements should be prioritized (e.g., seawalls, docks/piers, trails, sewer)? Where are the biggest opportunities to expand public access to the waterways?

Prioritization Framework

What factors should drive prioritization of infrastructure enhancements? For example:

- Resolve existing weaknesses with safety implications
- Prevent/mitigate potential threats
- Create new opportunities for use of the waterways or economic growth
- Others?

Expansion And Education

To what extent does action in this area need to focus on expanding infrastructure versus educating the public about usage of the waterways?

Goals



Initial Goals

Coordinated Economic Growth

Goal 1

Ensure that waterways-adjacent developments make the most of proximity to the rivers while preventing undue environmental harm

Goal 2

Increase waterway tourism

Goal 3

Maximize opportunities for District residents to participate in the sustainable growth and development in and around the waterways

Public/Private Property and Infrastructure

Goal 1

Address existing infrastructure weaknesses to enable safe and effective use of waterways and adjacent land (e.g., replace CSOs, repair or remove seawalls)

Goal 2

Fortify infrastructure to protect against current and future climate threats (e.g., improve levees, create living shorelines)

Goal 3

Enhance property and infrastructure to create new economic opportunities (e.g., reduce trail gaps, build more public docks)

Next Steps



Next Steps



Roadshow Activations

- Attended May 12th MWCOG Meeting
- Attended Anacostia River Festival May 16th



Public Survey

- Collected over 275 responses to the survey
- Will remain open through the end of June
- **Please share with your networks**



Community Workshops

- Planning one in-person and one virtual workshop
- Targeting early June

Next Steps

During the next meeting, we will work to identify a set of goals for **Safety and Security** and **Transportation Gaps**.

	Mar 2026 <i>In-Person</i>	Apr 2026 <i>Virtual</i>	May 20, 2026 <i>In-Person</i>	June 25, 2026 <i>Virtual</i>	July 22, 2026 <i>In-Person</i>
Meeting Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introductions and Plan Objectives and Visioning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Boating and Recreation Uses • Environmental Conservation and Management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinated Economic Growth • Public/Private Uses of Property and Infrastructure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safety and Security • Transportation Gaps 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interagency and Regional Coordination • Opportunities for Local Control • Identify Potential Goals for each topic
	Sept 2026 <i>In-Person</i>	Oct 2026 <i>In-Person</i>	Jan 2027 <i>In-Person</i>	Mar 2027 <i>Virtual</i>	
Plan Review and Approval	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review Decision Matrix and Discuss Goals and Strategies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review Draft Implementation Analysis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and Approve Draft Advisory Plan for Public Comment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final Plan Approval • Virtual • Safety and Security and Transportation Gaps 	

Next Steps

1. Share the survey with your networks
2. Commission "field trips":
 - **May 28:** Potomac by water hosted by FEMS / Harbor Patrol
 - **TBD:** RFK Site & Kingman/Heritage Island
 - **TBD:** Poplar Point



Image Credit: Stephan B. Goodwin

Survey QR Code and Link



<https://bit.ly/DistrictWaterwaysSurvey>

District Waterways Advisory Commission

Wednesday, May 20, 2026

