

FRANKLIN PARK
**SITE ANALYSIS + EXISTING
CONDITIONS REPORT**



INTRODUCTION

In the realm of urban landscapes, few projects offer a more enticing challenge than that of the historic urban park. Honored for its heritage and re-imagined to embrace its contemporary context, Franklin Park will have an opportunity to become the best version of itself--sustainable, beautiful, active and socially engaging.

The District of Columbia Office of Planning, in partnership with the National Park Service, the District of Columbia Department of Parks and Recreation, and the DowntownDC Business Improvement District have initiated the Franklin Park Vision and Transformation Plan to explore the possibility of implementing bold improvements to the physical design and programming of the park to attract and serve a diversity of park users.

The District continues to experience significant population growth in Center City and the transformation of Franklin Park needs to respond to this shift by offering a quality public space that connects with the community and enhances urban living. The changing demographics within a half-mile radius of Franklin Park indicate that there has been an influx of neighborhood residents since 2000. Statistics show an increase of over 11% in children under the age of 5, while the population of college-age students has remained constant in the past decade. The population of prime working-age individuals has increased 64% within this radius, since 2000.

Given the sustained growth in downtown employment, the growing population of Center City residents, and the continued investment in public transportation, the goals for this planning

effort as set out by the Project Team are outlined below:

- Celebrate and respect the park's historic character and sense of place
- Provide active and passive recreational opportunities, essential services and events and programs for the existing and potential users of Franklin Park
- Create an enhanced streetscape and public realm integrated with multiple modes of transportation
- Design a sustainable, maintainable and ecologically sensitive place that serves a diverse group of users
- Utilize a public/private management structure to fund, program and maintain the park

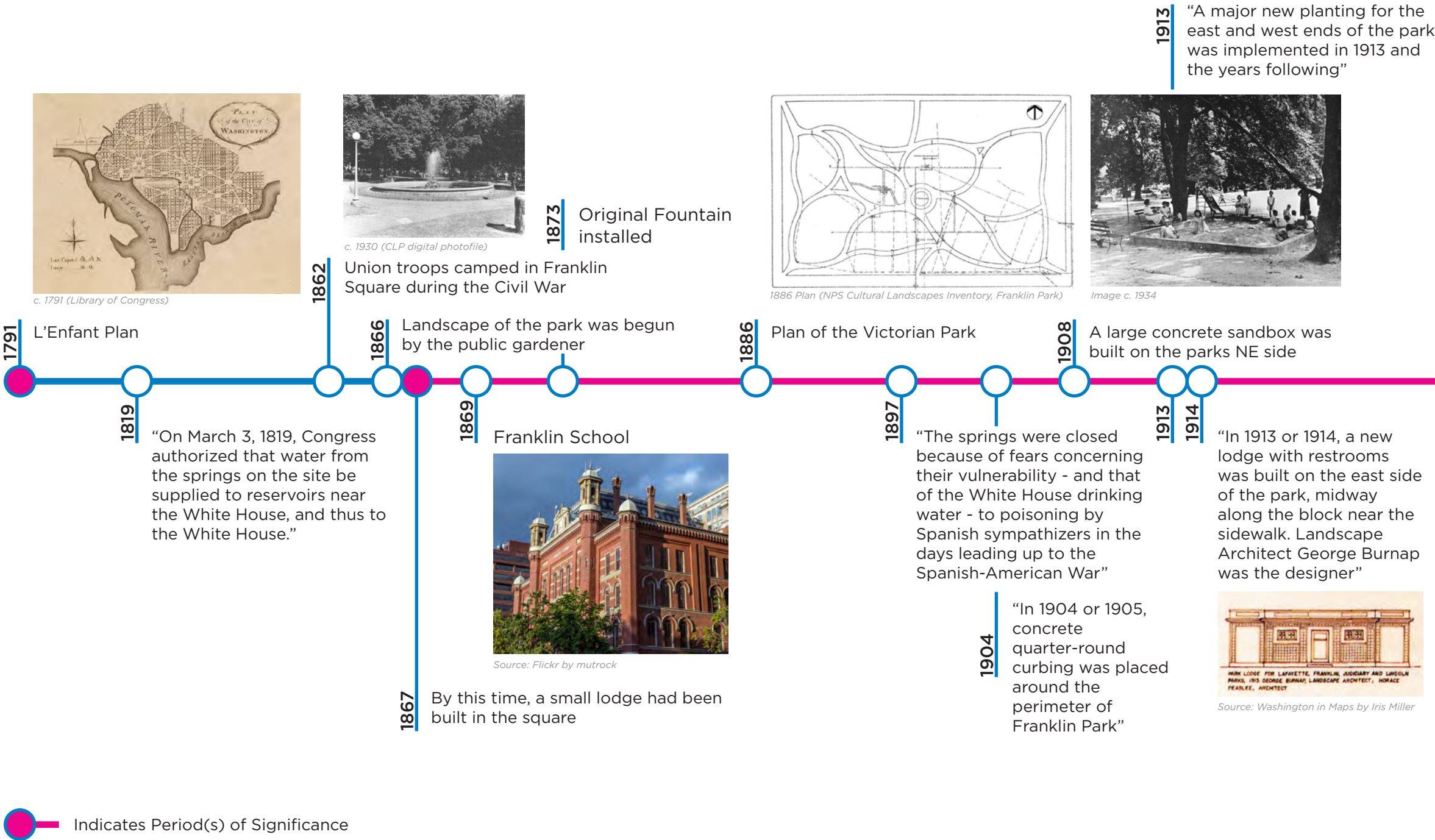
In the following pages, OLIN has illustrated the observations and analysis of the current conditions of Franklin Park and its urban context. Through this design process and continued public engagement, the team will consider the challenges and opportunities for the transformation of Franklin Park and use these findings to develop design options that respond to the evolving needs and desires of the park users. In concert with the review of the history, existing conditions and analysis of the site, the Project Team has researched and studied successful urban parks across the nation. This report outlines the physical characteristics and programming of these signature parks, to be used as comparative studies for the vision and transformation of Franklin Park.

BRIEF SITE HISTORY*

The site, now known as Franklin Park, appears on the 1791 L'Enfant plan as a standard city square, this marks the date of the site's first period of significance. This reservation differs from others in the city, as it is not located within an avenue right-of-way, nor was it part of the original 1791 purchase of property overseen by President Washington and Thomas Jefferson. The low and marshy site was originally designated for private development, but the land was set aside by Congress in 1819 to protect the natural springs on the site that were used to supply water to the White House, the Treasury Building and other federal buildings. Originally called "Fountain Square," it was not until the 1830s that for unknown reasons it became known as "Franklin Square." The timeline to the right illustrates a brief site history that demonstrates how the park has evolved since its inception in order respond to its changing context over time.

The second period of significance is between 1867 and 1936, a period which includes at least two distinct designs; the Victorian landscape garden and the redesign of 1936. Halfway into the 19th century, Franklin Park was the center of a fairly prominent residential community. By 1866, the public gardener had begun landscaping the park; in the following years, a small lodge was built, gravel walks were laid out, and a fountain bowl was placed near the center of the park. Within several years the park featured meandering paths and an undulating topography, enclosed with a substantial iron fence. In 1875, the fountain bowl was enhanced with a red, granite coping imported from Scotland. The fountain also featured a pile of rocks in the middle with a water jet. The park soon became a popular neighborhood destination for families who would rest on park benches and play in the fountain.

Franklin School, which opened in 1869, also contributed to the life of the park by holding summer classes there. As children and families were the primary user group of the park, the introduction of play equipment took place in 1908 when a large sandbox was built. This effort to accommodate the needs of children was later furthered by the installation of a small play area with swings and a slide. Changes continued to be



* For a more complete history of the site, refer to the National Park Service Cultural Landscapes Inventory 2005, Updated 2011



George Burnap, c. 1914
(Library of Congress)

“The Commodore John Barry statue was installed and dedicated in May 1914”



Franklin Park c. 1935

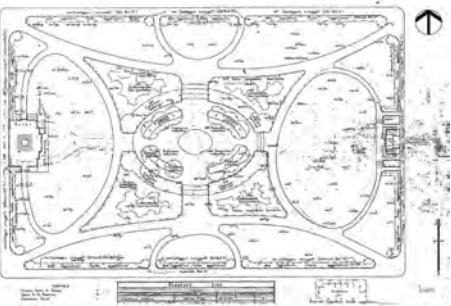


Image c. 1932, showing golden privet plantings

“Franklin Park, was transferred to the jurisdiction of the National park Service”



c. 1938, Children playing in the fountain



1936 Plan (NPS Cultural Landscapes Inventory, Franklin Park)

“Rehabilitation of Franklin Park was begun in winter 1936 under a WPA grant. Trees were removed and new trees and shrubs planted; land was graded and topsoil was added; new walks were paved; and a new fountain replaced the old”



c. 1943, Library of Congress



Franklin Park c. 1938, showing azaleas and daffodils with the hornbeam hedges in the background



Aerial photo showing Y-paths, c. 1992 (HABS No. DC-673)

“In conjunction with the Franklin Square Association, the NPS carried out rehabilitation work at the Park”

“NPS rehabilitated Franklin Park as part of the Bicentennial Downtown Parks program. Work included resurfacing of all walks, replacement and repair of benches and trash receptacles, new and replacement plantings and a new irrigation system”



This plan, prepared by the DowntownDC Business Improvement District in 2003, depicts the conditions existing in Franklin Park in 2005, except for the flower beds around the plaza which were not installed. Source: NPS Cultural Landscapes Inventory, Franklin Park

“To create open, sunny lawns at the east and west ends, several trees dating from after the period of significance were removed. The Y-shaped walk and iron railings on east were also removed. Repairs were made to walks and the stones of the plaza were replaced in-kind”



Lunch hour at Franklin Park, c. 2013

FRANKLIN PARK

VISION AND TRANSFORMATION PLAN

made to Franklin Park’s plantings and furnishings throughout the late nineteenth century; specimen trees were removed, transplanted, or replaced within the park and along the streets. The iron fence was also removed. Towards the end of the nineteenth century “the lush plantings of the Victorian era gave way to sparser plantings...”

Fine hotels, theaters, and restaurants were built in the neighborhood in the early decades of the twentieth century. Beginning in 1904, Franklin Park began to host regular concerts by military bands during the summer months. The bands used portable band stands and camp stools, and lamps were provided for nighttime concerts.

George Burnap, a landscape architect for the Office of Public Buildings and Grounds from 1910 to 1917, advised on the placement of the Commodore Barry statue, and designed its original planted setting. When this statue was erected, the existing lodge was removed and a new lodge containing public restrooms was built on the east side of the park. The new structure was also designed by Burnap, and he likely selected its new location. In 1915, new landscaping projects were executed in conjunction with the building activity at Franklin Park.

After 1920 not many details are available about work taking place in the individual reservations, but in 1925, Congress created the Public Buildings and Public Parks of the National Capital, and moved responsibility for DC parks and reservations from the Army’s Chief of Engineers to this office. Less than ten years later, on June 10, 1933, these duties were transferred back to the Department of the Interior, to the Office of National Parks, Buildings, and Reservations, now known as the National Park Service. By then, Franklin Park was considered on the city’s most rundown reservations, where the park’s conditions prompted complaints by residents and visitors alike.

In spring 1935, planning for the complete rehabilitation of Franklin Park began with a grant from the Public Works Administration. The work began in the winter of 1936 and included the removal of trees, grading, construction of a new circulation system, a new central plaza and fountain, and the planting of new trees and shrubs. This work was completed by the summer of the same year. In the early part of the 20th century,

the neighborhood began to experience a shift in character. Homeowners had begun to move out of the downtown and homes were being replaced by commercial uses. However, the memory of Franklin Park as a neighborhood amenity held strong. As late as the 1950s, people could be found sitting around the plaza, socializing, reading, and enjoying the outdoors. Local religious groups would also hold services in the park.

After World War II, the downtown entered a period of economic decline. The Franklin Park neighborhood became plagued by drug use and prostitution. In the 1980s, changes in national policy regarding the treatment and housing of the mentally ill helped lead to increasing numbers of homeless in the District, and many began to flock to the downtown parks, including Franklin Park. In the midst of this turmoil, local developers and adjacent building tenants formed the Franklin Square Association. By 1991, this group had raised enough money to restore the fountain, and replace the lights with Saratoga fixtures.

Over the last 20 years or so, downtown DC has undergone revitalization. Hundreds of new businesses, hotels, and institutions including the District and federal governments, have moved there, and dozens of new office and high-rise residential buildings have been constructed. The area continues to develop today. 2004 dates the last substantial change to Franklin Park. The National Capital Parks-Central, in partnership with a Downtown Parks Task Force, worked to refine the park by removing the Y-shaped paths, as well as magnolia and crabapple trees. At this time, the flagstone plaza was rehabilitated and repairs to the walks were also made.

Franklin Park’s extensive layers of history provide a wealth of opportunities for the 2013 Vision and Transformation Plan.

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SITE CONTEXT & ANALYSIS

FRANKLIN PARK AS A GATEWAY

8-HOUR NEIGHBORHOOD

24-HOUR NEIGHBORHOOD

CULTURAL DESTINATIONS

CHILD CARE CENTERS

TRANSPORTATION SYSTEMS

The approach to the design of a public space begins with developing an understanding of its physical and cultural history, in addition to its present-day surroundings and user groups. This site is one of the largest public spaces in Center City, and therefore has the ability to play several roles within its contemporary context as a neighborhood park, a local destination, and a green oasis in the city.

Considering a site's context is valuable to the design process because this basic knowledge helps to reveal the many factors that may influence the success of a design transformation. Contextual factors such as, existing cultural resources, adjacent land use, proximity of residential neighborhoods, and transportation networks are used as a basis for the Concept Design phase and help the design team answer the questions of "Who are we designing for?" and "How can we improve their experience?"

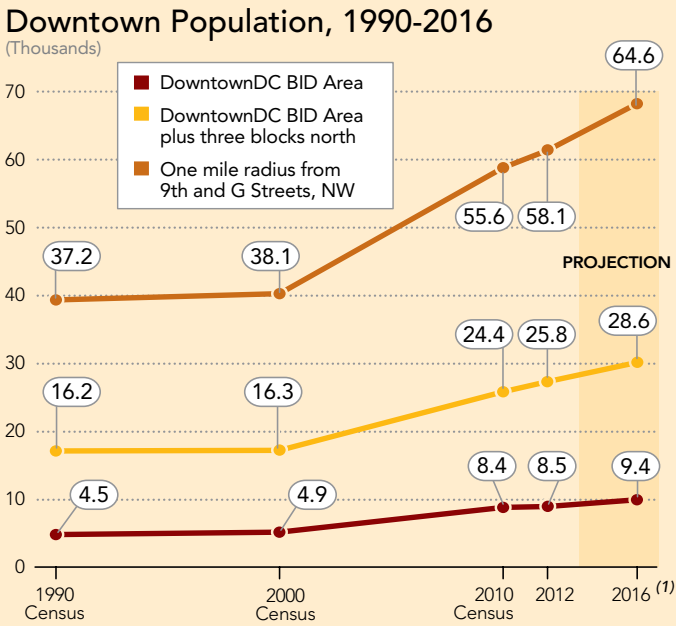


THE NEIGHBORHOOD

The area is currently experiencing a shift in demographics caused by a substantial increase in downtown residents, and therefore, has a diversity in park users varying in age, race, and socioeconomic profiles. The downtown population is steadily on the rise and is projected to reach over 64,000 residents in the DowntownDC BID area by 2016.

The area employment is also projected to rise steadily between now and 2017. According to the 2012 State of Downtown report by the Downtown DC Business Improvement District, 25% of the jobs in DC are located in the DowntownDC BID area.

The visitor draw to the Downtown DC BID area is also enhanced by the available cultural destinations and destination restaurants. Looking ahead, downtown visitor numbers are also expected to increase over the next several years as residents and tourists continue to flock to the



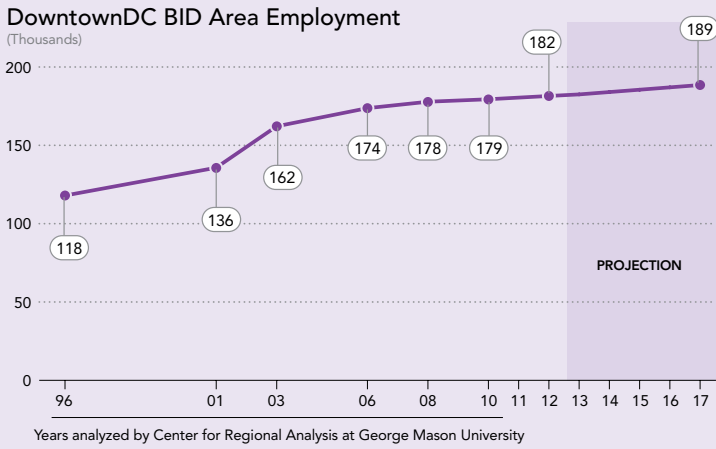
(1) 2016 estimates based on 1.3 residents per units to be completed by 2016.
Sources: 1990, 2000 and 2010 US Census and DowntownDC BID

DowntownDC BID Area Demographic Profile, 2012

(From 7th and H Streets, NW)

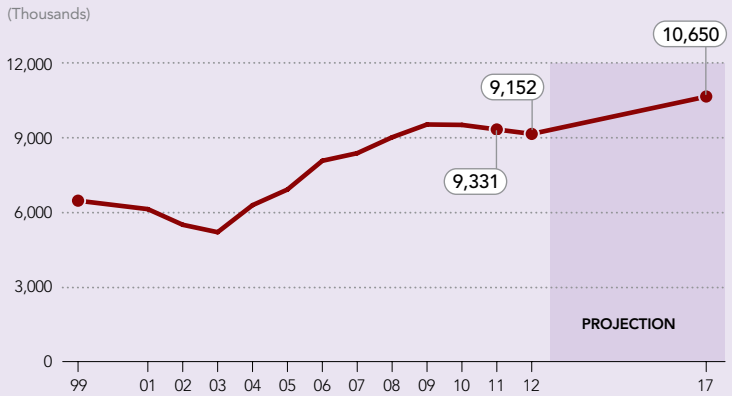
Population	0–0.5 mi	0-1 mi	0-3 mi
Total number	13,604	41,051	317,473
Male	6,845	21,195	157,393
Female	6,758	19,856	160,080
Households			
Total Number	8,163	22,640	148,950
Average Household Size	1.6	1.8	1.9
Owner Occupied	25%	25%	33%
Median Home Value	\$336,665	\$379,748	\$416,051
Household Income			
Average Household Income	\$64,284	\$66,752	\$89,749
Median Household Income	\$36,451	\$40,298	\$59,786
Share of households with \$75,000 or more	28.5%	29.5%	42.1%

Sources: ESRI forecasts courtesy of the Washington DC Economic Partnership



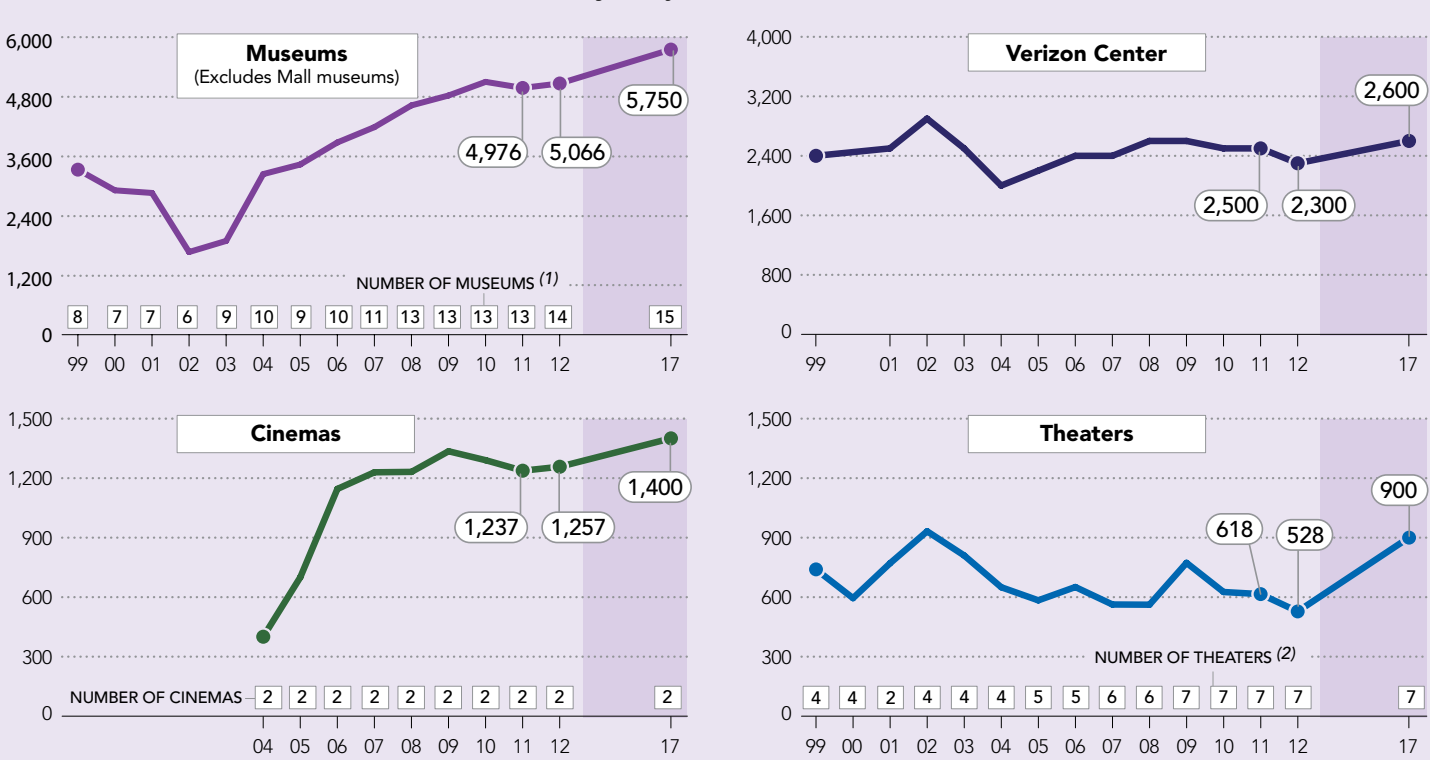
Sources: Center for Regional Analysis at George Mason University for 1996, 2001, 2003, 2006, 2008, 2010 and 2012. DowntownDC BID for 2013-2017.

Visitors in the DowntownDC BID Area, 1999-2017



Source: DowntownDC BID

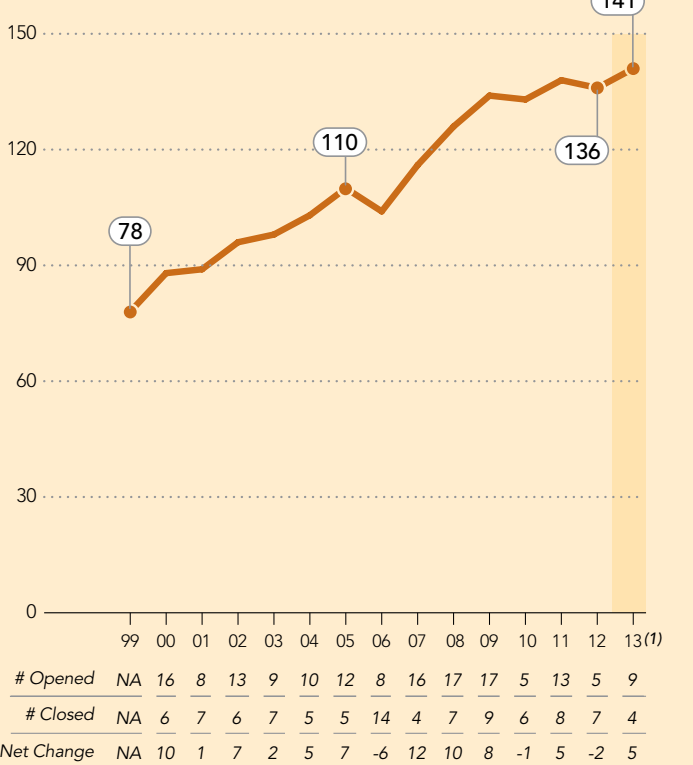
Visitors in the DowntownDC BID Area By Major Sector, 1999–2017



Source: DowntownDC BID

(1) Between 2001 and 2005, one or more venues were closed for renovation. In 2007 and 2008, one museum did not report attendance. In 2009-2011, two museums did not report attendance. In 2011, attendance for one museum is a DowntownDC BID estimate. In 2012, two museums did not report attendance, and attendance for two museums is a DowntownDC BID estimate.
(2) In 2001 and between 2007-2008, one or more theaters were closed for renovation.

Destination Restaurants in the DowntownDC BID Area, 1999–2013



Source: DowntownDC BID

(1) Projection.



A GATEWAY

amenity rich neighborhood.

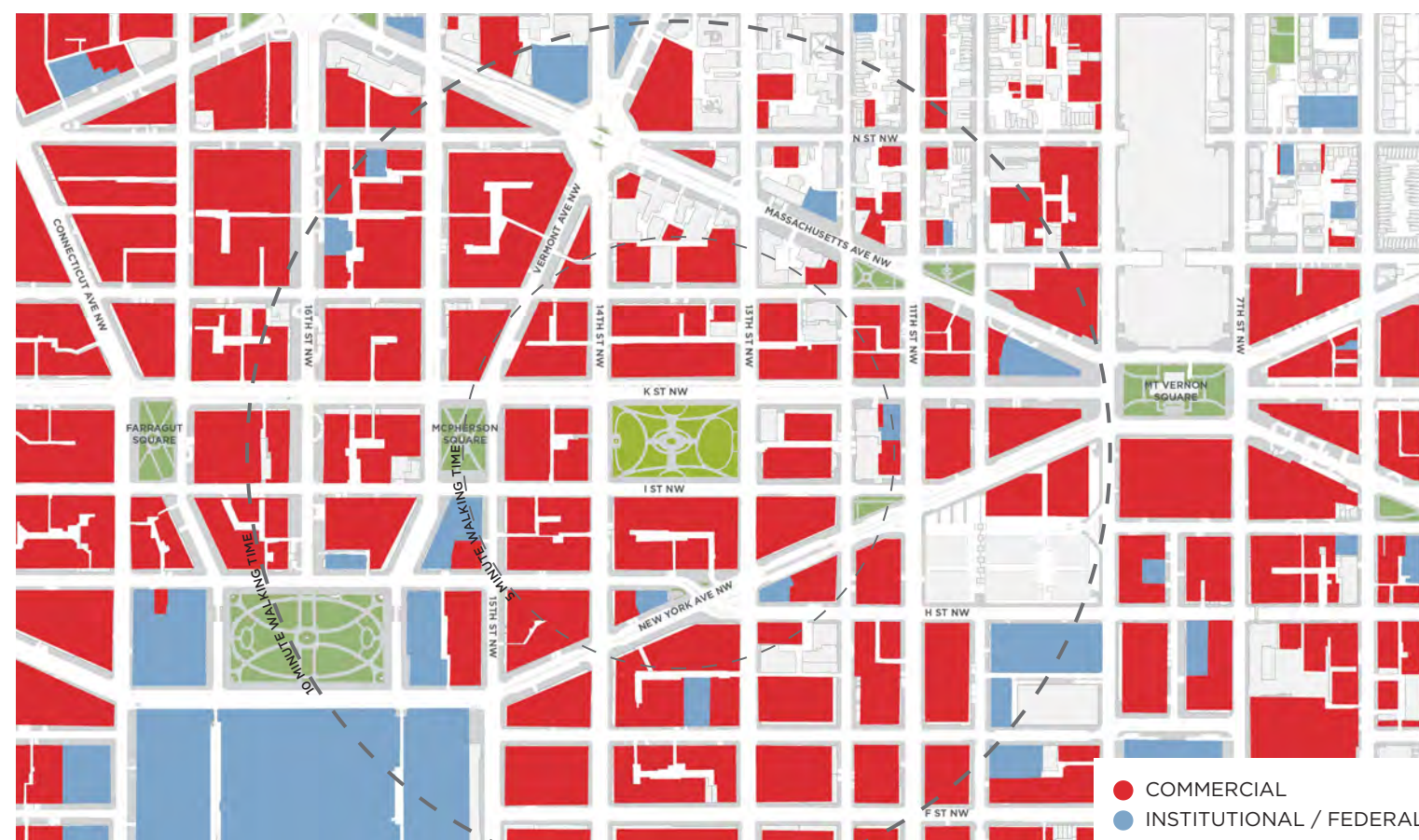
As you will note in the “Gateway” diagram, Franklin Park is nestled within this commercial district and acts as a threshold between an established residential neighborhood and the National Mall.

During the work week, Franklin Park is surrounded by a vibrant edge of restaurants, hotels, and offices which provide flows of people passing through the park, however, during the weekday evenings and weekends the park is nearly void of active park users and becomes solely populated by homeless individuals. This dilemma is partly a reflection of

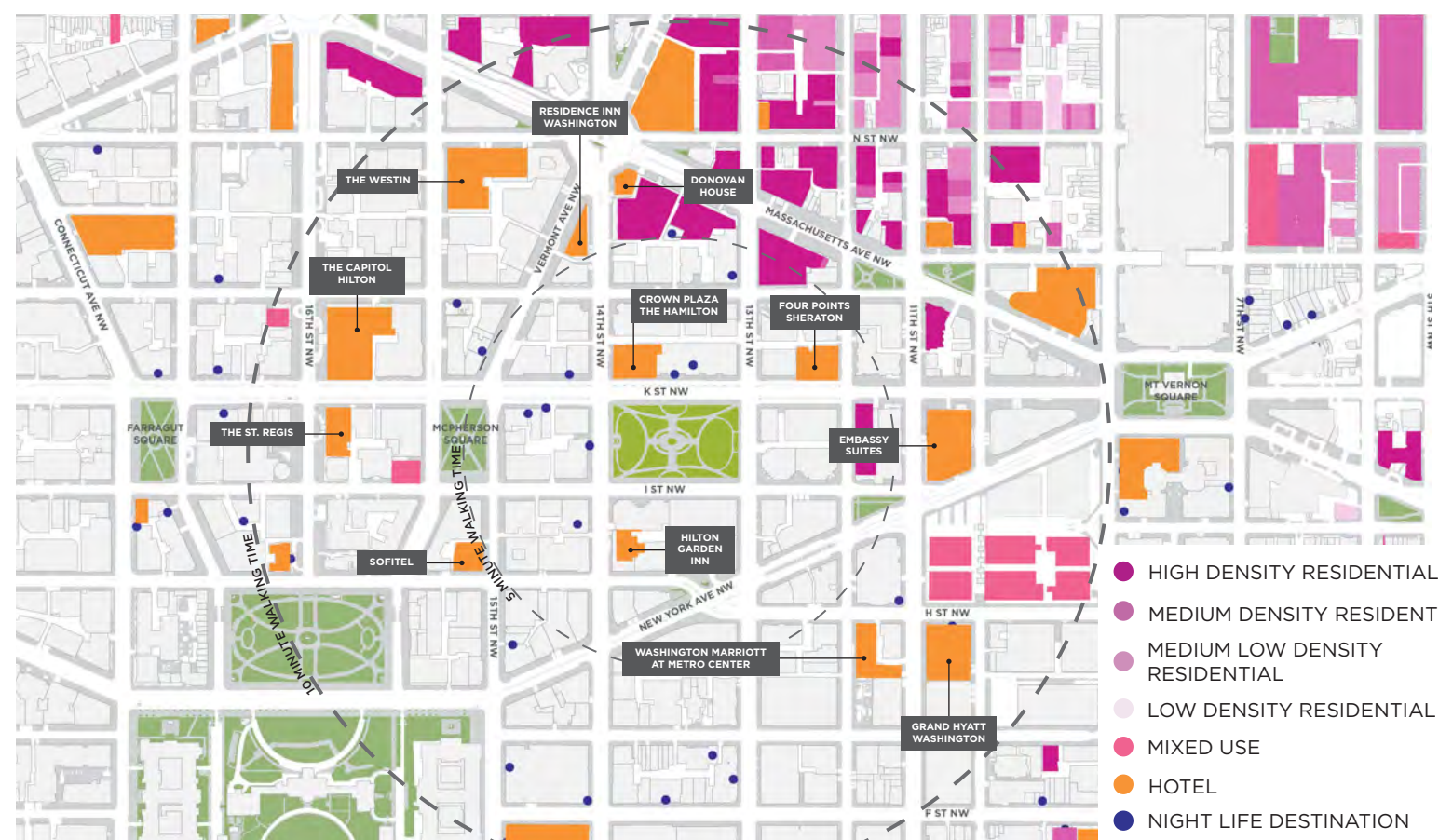
the predominately commercial and institutional land use in the area as shown in the diagram titled, “8-Hour Neighborhood”.

With the recent and on-going increase in people taking up residence in Center City, an opportunity has presented itself for Franklin Park to once again serve as a neighborhood amenity.

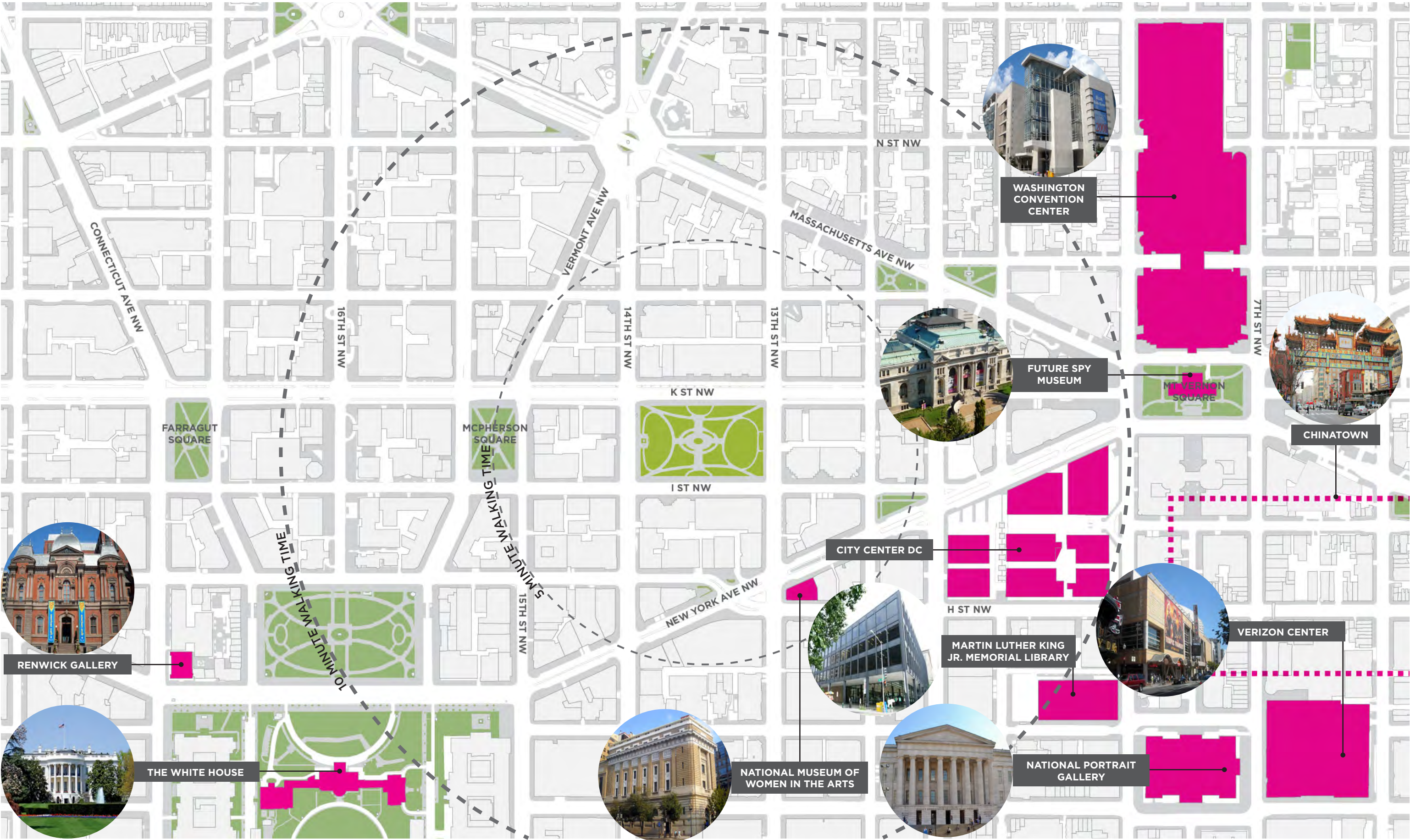
The park also has the capacity to serve as a destination for the transient population of the nearby hotel guests and tourists that frequent the area to visit the other cultural and nighttime designations in Downtown DC.



8 - HOUR NEIGHBORHOOD



24 - HOUR NEIGHBORHOOD



CULTURAL DESTINATIONS



A pre-school group playing on the west lawn at Franklin Park

As demonstrated in the “Child Care Centers” diagram, there are several centers within a 10-minute walking distance of Franklin Park, along with two public schools. Many of these institutions do not have outdoor space for the children to play and therefore rely on the public parks for access to nature.

According to representatives from these institutions, the ideal scenario for outdoor play is a location that is safe, clean, and has a level of enclosure for containment of the children.

Although Franklin Park is currently used by some of the nearby centers, teachers travel as far as the National Mall to find safer areas that are better suited for outdoor play.

CHILD CARE CENTERS



Average Non-Holiday Weekday Metrorail Ridership Exits in DowntownDC BID Area, 2012 ^{(1) (2)}

(Figures represent exit numbers only)

	Metro Center	Gallery Place	McPherson Square	Judiciary Square	Federal Triangle	Archives-Navy Memorial-Penn Quarter	Mt. Vernon Square	TOTAL
2012	28,181	26,731	17,569	9,766	9,428	9,182	4,112	104,969
2011	28,940	27,188	17,682	10,098	10,050	9,218	3,948	107,123
Change	-759	-458	-112	-332	-622	-36	164	-2,155
% Change	-3%	-2%	-0.6%	-3%	-6%	-0.4%	4%	-2%
1997	23,638	7,286	14,443	6,396	9,422	5,543	1,689	68,417
Change	4,543	19,445	3,126	3,370	6	3,639	2,423	36,552
% Change	19%	267%	22%	53%	0.1%	66%	143%	53%
Metrorail Lines	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div><div></div></div>	

(1) Exit numbers for Metro stations in DowntownDC BID Area (McPherson Square, Metro Center, Gallery Place-Chinatown, Archives-Navy Memorial-Penn Quarter, Federal Triangle, Mt. Vernon Square and Judiciary Square.

(2) The MCI (now Verizon) Center opened in December 1997 at Gallery Place.

Source: WMATA

TRANSPORTATION SYSTEMS

Another important Franklin Park user group is the commuter. Thousands of people pass through the park on their way to or from work or to the McPherson Square Metro station entrance at the corner of I and 14th Streets. During each non-holiday weekday in 2012, Metrorail had approximately 724,100 passengers, with 14% of that total exiting in the DowntownDC BID area. This year, passengers boarding the Metrorail at the McPherson Square station was measured at a daily average of 16,234 people.

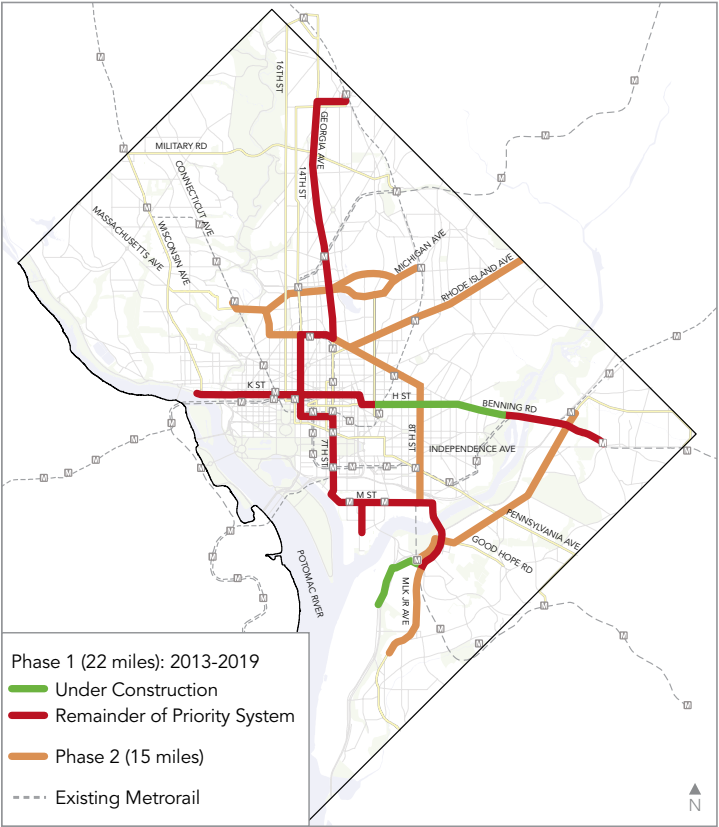
Commuters also linger along the edges of the park as they wait for the bus at one of the four shelters adjacent to the park. Franklin Park serves 32 different Metrobus lines and 2 DC Circulator routes. The Metrobus lines accounted for an average weekday ridership of approximately 96,461 commuters in 2012. I Street serves as a designated layover zone for the WMATA metrobus lines. Immediately after peak travel, the buses line up at this location before commencing the off-peak travel schedule.

Although the District-wide annual ridership of the DC Circulator is down, the ridership for the two lines that service the DowntownDC BID area remain stable.

In addition to the current public transportation options that impact Franklin Park, the District of Columbia Department of Transportation is in the development stages of a new transitway along K Street that is likely to have a stop along K Street between 14th and 15th Streets.

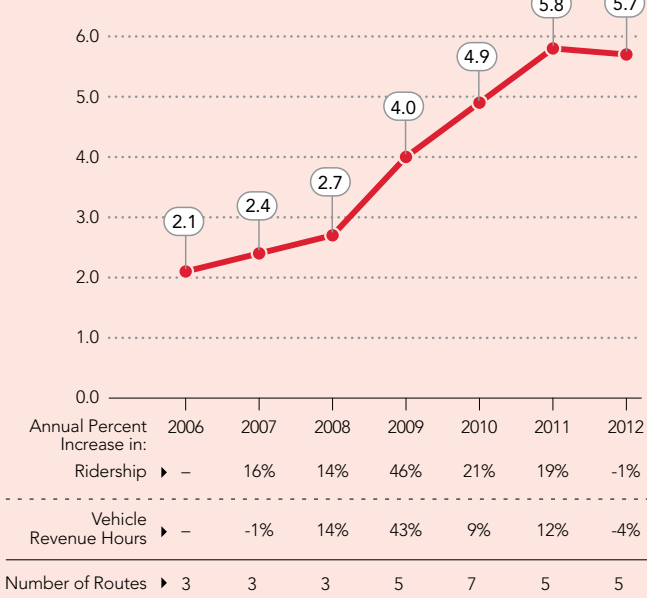
A primary consideration for the transformation of the park will be to determine mitigation methods to ameliorate the sight and sound of the public transit vehicles, while also exploring how the park might engage the commuters in a more meaningful way.

Proposed DC Streetcar System Lines



DC Circulator Annual Ridership, 2006–2012

(Millions)



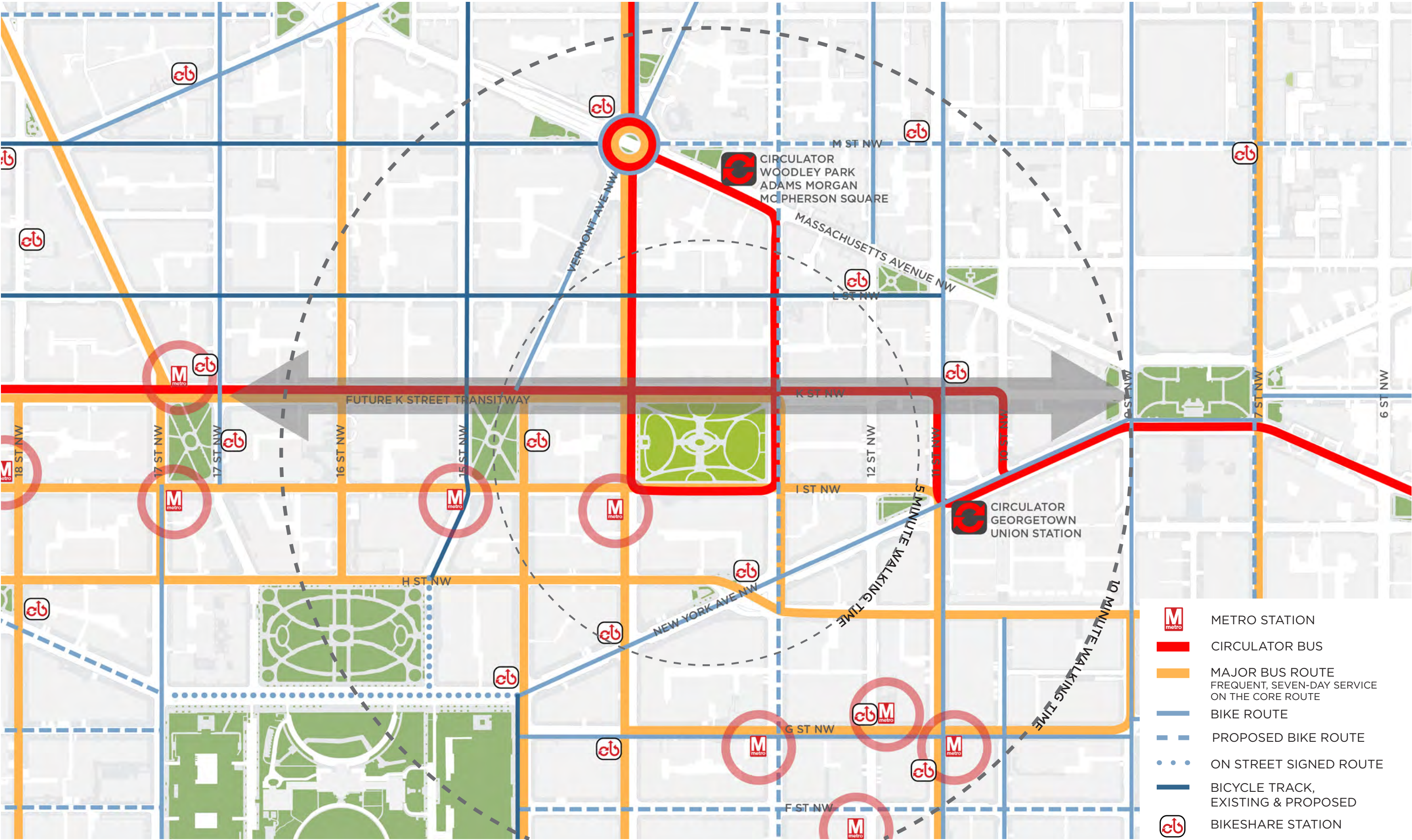
Source: WMATA

Capital Bikeshare Data: 2011-2012 ⁽¹⁾

	Jan. 2011	Jan. 2013	% Change
Number of Bicycles	1,170	1,700	45%
Number of Members	19,000	22,000	16%
Member Trips	2011 trips	2012 trips	% Change
Total System	985,700	1,664,700	69%
Ending in the DowntownDC BID Area	144,000 (14.6% of DC)	253,200 (15.2% of DC)	76%
Pass Trips			
Total System	247,000	372,700	51%
Ending in the DowntownDC BID Area	51,600 (20.9% of DC)	74,200 (19.9% of DC)	44%

(1) System opened in September 2010.

Sources: Capital Bikeshare and DowntownDC BID



TRANSPORTATION SYSTEMS

FRANKLIN PARK: CHALLENGES + OPPORTUNITIES

