



Small Parks Management Strategies

National Park Service
National Capital Region

FINAL April 2017

National Capital Parks East
Rock Creek Park

National Mall and Memorial Parks
National Capital Planning Commission

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A compendium of supporting materials developed during the small parks management strategies planning process is included in the Small Parks Management Strategies Supporting Documents and is provided under separate cover.

CHAPTER

01

INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this Small Parks Management Strategies document is to help the National Park Service (NPS) National Capital Region (NCR) develop consistent strategies for improving the approach to the management of small urban parks. The planning effort builds on the parks' needs for holistic, consistent, and coordinated management and partnership strategies across the small park network. Updated management for parks in the NCR will help the NPS fulfill its agenda for urban parks in the next century.

The focus of this effort is on NPS small parks ranging from 0.0045 acres to approximately seven acres in size that represent the most common park type found in the city. These parks serve multiple functions, including national and local commemoration, neighborhood parks, playgrounds, traffic circles, street medians and traffic islands. They include Washington's recognizable circles, squares, and triangles found at intersections and along diagonal streets and contribute to an urban park system that is unique within the broader national park network. While many small parks are a distinct feature of the city's urban design fabric, their number and distribution creates complex management challenges for NPS due to their diminutive size, wide distribution and physical separation from other park spaces.



Chevy Chase Circle

Small parks support a variety of activities and are an enormous untapped resource for connecting and improving Washington DC's parks and open space network. Many are located in areas devoid of green space and therefore provide the only access to neighborhood open space. Others are maintained by park partners and reflect a high level of community identity and pride. Well-designed and maintained small parks significantly enhance their surrounding neighborhoods. However, despite these positive attributes, small parks often exist in the shadow of the larger, more renowned parks (*Capital Space, 2010*). High traffic volumes on adjacent streets can pose additional challenges and can contribute to debris and other undesirable encroachments or activities into small parks.

Overview of the Planning Effort

The history of how Washington DC's parks and open spaces were planned, acquired and developed is complex and has a direct bearing on how the spaces function and are managed today. Washington DC is rich with an abundance of parks and open space resources, encompassing nearly one quarter of the city's land area, or 7,617 acres. As a result, Washington DC enjoys one of the highest rankings in overall parkland per capita and every year attracts millions of visitors who use the parks.

The overall park network includes a wide variety of park types and sizes and is subject to growing pressures to meet both national and local needs. This pressure is felt most by NPS, which holds jurisdiction over the majority of parks and open space land resources in the city – managing more than 90 percent of the parkland – covering more than 6,700 acres, or 20 percent of the city land area (*Capital Space, 2010*). While much of this area consists of large parks such as Rock Creek Park, the city's small landscapes also make an important contribution to the parks and open space network.

Figure 1 shows the 292 small parks under the jurisdiction of NPS (dark green) that are the subject of this planning effort and **Figure 2** shows the size breakdown of the parks. These parks are a subset of the overall NPS portfolio of parks shown in green. In addition, the District of Columbia's Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) and the

Figure 1 Locations of NPS Small Parks Addressed in this Study

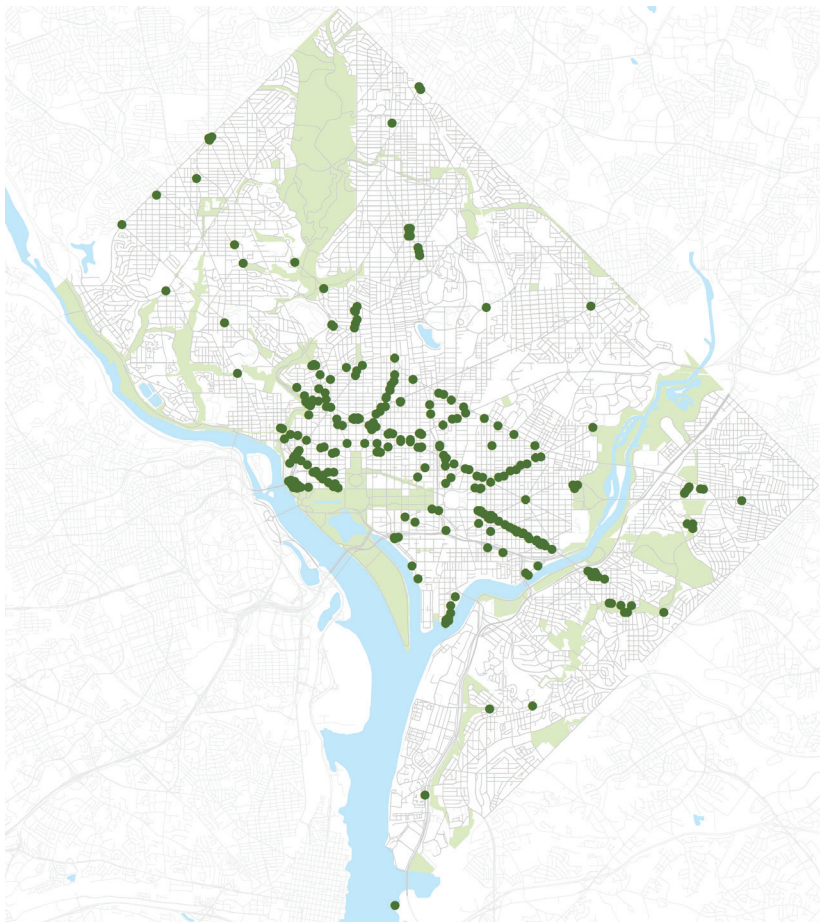
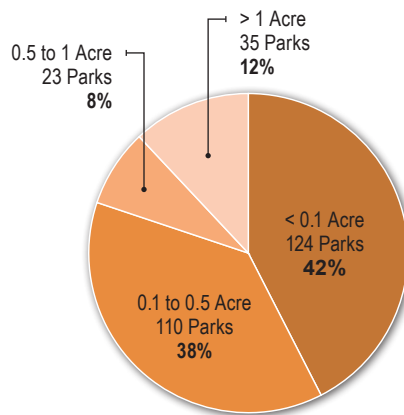


Figure 2 Size Breakdown of Small Parks (292 total parks)



This effort incorporates components of other planning documents from NPS and the National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC), including the *Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital*, *Capital Space*, the *Memorials and Museums Master Plan (2M Plan)*, *Play DC Master Plan*, *Foundation Plans*, *General Management Plans*, and other recent work addressing park management.

NPS Mission: The National Park Service preserves unimpaired the natural and cultural resources and values of the national park system for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations. The Park Service cooperates with partners to extend the benefits of natural and cultural resource conservation and outdoor recreation throughout this country and the world.

District Department of Transportation (DDOT) manage other small parks that are not included in this effort.

NPS small parks are located within three NPS park units: National Capital Parks–East (NACE), National Mall and Memorial Parks (NAMA), and Rock Creek Park (ROCR). As a result, small parks are managed by three different park superintendents often through a process that utilizes partnerships with other agencies and institutions for use and maintenance.

The Value of Small Parks

Small parks come in many forms and shapes—from designed landscapes to neighborhood open spaces and roadway medians. The condition of the parks, resource values, and overall level of improvements are often heavily influenced by the conditions of the immediate surrounding area. Commonly recognized small parks, such as Dupont Circle, are well-connected to the community and have a well-defined purpose. They have historical and cultural significance, are located in thriving commercial districts, and offer diverse programming through active and established partnerships. In contrast, other small parks are more isolated or serve as a component of the transportation network with limited resource values and limited designed landscape elements.

When viewed individually, small parks may seem disconnected from the larger urban open space network. However, together they contribute to the historic design framework of Washington DC and collectively help preserve the landscape setting that is defined by the L'Enfant and McMillan Plans (see following pages).

The NPS mission is supported through management policies and planning for the protection of each park's fundamental resources and values, often defined in General Management Plans or Foundation Documents. These documents describe the park's purpose and significance, its fundamental resources and values, other important considerations, its interpretive themes, desired visitor experiences, threats and opportunities to park resources, and the legislation, regulations, and other executive orders that control its management. These documents often provide a broad look at each park unit, without necessarily addressing the specific resources and management requirements for the smaller components within the overall park landscape, including small parks. In other words, many small parks are not directly addressed in these guiding documents.

NPS follows a comprehensive set of guidelines and standards for the management of all parks and their resources. Small parks—even those that contain minor resources—are subject to the same laws, regulations, and policies that govern larger park units with major resources. However, over time, local interests may influence the redevelopment or function of individual NPS small parks. Inappropriate uses or encroachments may have shifted a small park's historic or intended function out of alignment with standard NPS policies or the specific foundation plans for each park unit.

In addition to containing sensitive natural or cultural resources, small parks are critical components of the L'Enfant Plan. The strong geometric organization of the city is reflected in the form of many of the individual small parks that are the focus of this planning effort. Small parks occupy the triangles, squares, ovals, and circles shaped by surrounding

HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF SMALL PARKS

The City of Washington's network of parks can be traced back to the historic plan of Washington prepared by Pierre Charles L'Enfant in 1791, and later the McMillan Plan in 1901 that proposed a linked system of parks and open spaces across the city. These plans laid the foundation for the parks and open spaces in the city today.

L'Enfant Plan—Designed by Pierre Charles L'Enfant, the country's new capital was an early American experiment in the use of Baroque urbanism. The newly formed Congress established the intent for the federal district and capital city in 1790, and L'Enfant was designated the city's engineer and architect a year later due to his close relationship with George Washington. L'Enfant worked under the supervision of three Federal Commissioners as he designed the "Plan of the City intended for the permanent seat of the government of the United States."

The city's location at the confluence of two rivers and low, sloping topography allowed L'Enfant to shape the city with both an array of diagonal avenues radiating from key civic spaces and an orthogonal grid of streets organized along the cardinal directions. Following the survey of the district, L'Enfant chose some of the higher elevations for the two centers of government—the President's House and the house of Congress—which became the physical and symbolic centers of the plan. The radiating avenues emphasized the physical centrality of the government and its primary public spaces.

L'Enfant's Baroque plan used the axes of the avenues and street grid to organize movement, establish formal vistas and set aside well-defined public spaces. Streets were to be lined with a continuous row of buildings, forming channels of space that often terminated with an important building, monument, or park. Baroque planning,



embodied in the L'Enfant plan, organized a hierarchy of public space centered on the Mall and the President's house and grounds, with smaller circles and plazas located the intersections of the gridded streets and radiating avenues. Pennsylvania Avenue, the city's grandest thoroughfare, was designed as a wide boulevard with extended vistas connecting two branches of the federal government. L'Enfant also identified the location for numerous memorials, monuments, and fountains within the park reservations throughout the city.

In addition to these designed landscape spaces, many parklets were formed by leftover spaces created by the gaps between radiating diagonal avenue and the intersecting grid of streets. These triangles and other unintentional landscape spaces now contribute to the network of small parks.

McMillan Plan —As the city’s centennial approached, new ideas for the development of the Capitol Grounds and the Mall—the ceremonial core of the city—came into focus. Led by Senator James McMillan, a joint committee formed by Congress met for the first time in 1900 with the intent to examine the design of the city. The scope of the commission’s efforts included not only the park and recreation areas within the city, but also plans for future buildings and other uses of federal lands. Senator McMillan named four of the country’s most illustrious designers and artists to the commission: architects Daniel Burnham and Charles McKim, sculptor Augustus St. Gaudens, and landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr.

Inspired by the City Beautiful movement, grand European urban design, and the spirit of the L’Enfant Plan, the 1901 McMillan Plan created a new vision for the monumental core of the city with consolidated city railways, new ceremonial landscape spaces, the reclamation of the Potomac Flats area, clusters of federal office buildings, and the preservation of the Civil War forts that encircled the city. After an appeal by the American Institute of Architects, Congress established the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts in 1910 to protect the tenets of the plan, an outstanding and significant example of American urban design. In 1924, Congress established the National Capital Parks and Planning Commission (now NCPC) to oversee the implementation of the McMillan Plan. NCPC’s mission eventually grew to include the "comprehensive, systematic, and continuous development of the park, parkway, and playground systems of the National Capital and its environs."

Capper–Cramton Act—The 1930 Capper–Cramton Act authorized funding for new land acquisition and development in the District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia for the capital city’s parks and parkway system. The Act included funding for specific projects such as the George Washington Memorial Parkway, the extension of Rock Creek Park into Maryland, and the extension of parks and parkways in the Virginia environs of the National Capital. The Act also authorized the purchase of "lands in the District of Columbia as are necessary and desirable for the suitable development of the National Capital park, parkway, and playground system." The development of lands acquired through the Act was required to conform to plans approved by NCPC.

The 1952 National Capital Planning Act established NCPC as the primary planning agency in the National Capital Region, cementing their role in the management of the city’s park system. The primary responsibility for the District’s planning was shifted to the city’s mayor with the passage of the 1973 District of Columbia Home Rule Act. The Home Rule Act established self-governance for the District of Columbia and maintains NCPC’s role as a central planning agency for federal land. Some public land was transferred from the federal government to the District as a result of the Home Rule Act. Some of these transfers were of ownership; more commonly, they were transfers of jurisdiction, which retained the federal ownership but allowed the District to use the sites for specific purposes such as parks and recreation, education, or transportation (*Capital Space, 2010*). Most small parks within the city remain under NPS jurisdiction.

The varied development history of small parks in the city and the changes in management jurisdiction has at times contributed to some confusion regarding who is responsible for maintaining them. The important legacy of how small parks were envisioned, created, and managed is complex and reinforces the need for coordinated management across the NPS-held small parks so they can truly achieve their full potential.



McPherson Square

Samuel Hahnemann Monument
adjacent to Scott CirclePlayground in small park on
Maryland Avenue, NE

Many small parks contain significant natural or cultural resources and are critical components of the L'Enfant Plan. These resources contribute to the rich tapestry of local and nationally significant resources throughout the city. Through proper planning and management small parks can continue to provide places for local and national commemoration, recreation, neighborhood place-making, and other programming activities.

streets. These spaces are often reinforced by the parks' geometrical panels of lawn, curbing, restrained plantings, and walkways. This geometry emphasizes the spatial hierarchy of the urban plan, while the axial and symmetrical relationship of the park components—such as central sculptures or memorials—heighten the Beaux Arts qualities of the federal city. The harmonious arrangement of landscape components in the small parks accentuates the formality of the overall plan.

Although most small parks continue to convey their intended character, some contain new features that are not in keeping with the formal character of the city or the planned use of the park unit. For example, chain link fences and above-ground utilities are visually intrusive in the historic landscape although they may help the park fulfill contemporary needs. The diminutive size of the small parks and their greater exposure to complex urban conditions can contribute to the degradation of their features and character. Neighborhood use of small parks, while generally consistent with the intent of the parks, may include activities inconsistent with park policy. The disjuncture between the legislated use and intended character of a park, and the current use and character of certain small parks suggests that more focused planning and management will be required in the future.

Planning Methodology

NPS led the development of this planning effort in partnership with NCPC, which provided partial funding for the project.

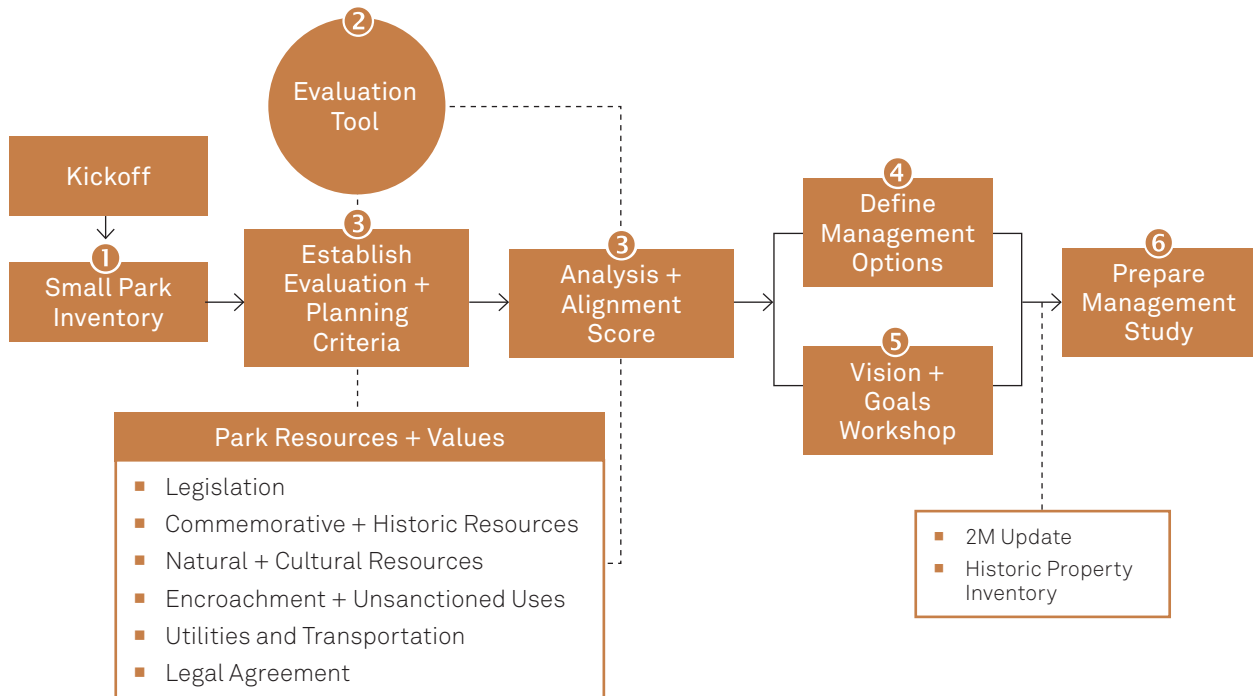
The planning process for the Small Parks Management Strategies began in October of 2014 and was completed in April of 2017. **Figure 3** outlines the six primary steps involved in the Small Parks Management Strategies process and each step is described in more detail below.

① Small Park Inventory

A significant data collection effort was undertaken to compile unrelated data sources from multiple NPS park units, the District of Columbia, and NCPC to support data analytics and spatial analysis of the parks. The collected information included, but was not limited to, Geographic Information System (GIS) data, Park Foundation documents and General Management Plans, NPS Policy and history documentation, NPS service-wide publications, cultural resources lists, and regional planning documents such as *Capital Space*, the *Memorials and Museums Master Plan (2M Plan)*, and the *Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital, Federal Elements*.

② Evaluation Tool

Data available in a GIS format was analyzed spatially and incorporated into a database which allowed for

Figure 3 Process Diagram

the development of a customized Small Parks Evaluation Tool that includes an interactive dashboard. In order to work with the various forms of data, Unique ID numbers were assigned to each park so data could be correlated to specific park parcels. This fundamental step allowed for assessment of individual park parcels that may be within the same overall NPS Reservation. Where applicable, data in a narrative or other non-GIS format was analyzed and manually entered into the evaluation tool database. The data was organized into a series of broad categories within the evaluation tool that could be filtered for analysis. (More information about the Small Parks Evaluation Tool is included in Chapter 3.)

3 Analysis and Alignment Score

Based on the data available for analysis, a series of draft alignment criteria were developed to help define how well individual small parks align with the NPS mission and underlying park purpose. The small parks planning committee refined the nine alignment criteria and associated weighting applied in the analysis. The results of the alignment scoring process are intended to inform park management decisions. (Chapter 4 provides more detail on the alignment scoring process and results.)

4 Management Options

A list of potential management options were identified and evaluated based on their ability to relate to various situations affecting small parks. Draft options were reviewed and refined based on input from the small parks planning committee.

5 Vision and Goals

An interactive workshop was held with representatives from each NPS park unit, the NCR and NCPG to develop a vision and goals for small parks. The planning work involved group exercises to document the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats for small parks and a plenary session to define a vision statement and goals.

6 Prepare Management Strategies

Findings from the Small Parks Evaluation Tool analyses, the vision and goals workshop, alignment scores, and potential management mechanisms were formulated into a document that outlines recommended actions across five broad categories. The *Small Parks Management Strategies* draft was reviewed by the small parks planning committee and comments were considered and incorporated into the final plan.

CHAPTER

02

VISION + GOALS

VISION + GOALS

NPS and NCPC convened for a workshop in October 2015 to establish a vision for NPS small parks. The workshop included a presentation about the diversity of resources, types of uses, and varied roles that small parks play both nationally and locally. An evaluation of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats facing the small parks was also included. Participants collaborated through a series of interactive exercises that culminated in a vision statement and goals for small parks. Emphasis was placed on a statement that captures the multiple roles and users of the small parks.

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

A variety of internal and external forces affect NPS's ability to manage small parks successfully. An exploration of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) was conducted in advance of developing the vision and goals to encourage innovative thinking and promote solution-oriented ideas. Due to the wide range of small park types and underlying resources, it is difficult to broadly categorize all small parks in the same manner. However, the SWOT exercise revealed a number of common concerns across all small parks. A number of points were categorized as both a strength and a weakness, such as park size and distribution. An abbreviated list of the SWOT results is included on the following page.

SWOT Questions

To facilitate the group discussion, the following questions were posted to NPS and NCPC representatives:

- What do we do well?
- What advantages do we have?
- What limitations do we face?
- What are our biggest gaps?
- What are our unique resources?
- What areas can we improve upon?
- How can we be more effective partners?
- What obstacles are in our way?
- What (negatively) affects our performance?

HELPFUL TO ACHIEVING OBJECTIVE

S

STRENGTHS

- NPS institutional commitment
- NPS technical expertise
- Variety of cultural and historical resources
- Provide recreational opportunities
- Provide green space in underserved areas
- Contribute to urban design
- Enhance quality of life as public spaces
- Widespread distribution
- Offer a wide diversity of park types
- Provide tree canopy and environmental benefits
- Collaboration and partnerships with neighborhoods and Business Improvement Districts (BIDs)

HARMFUL TO ACHIEVING OBJECTIVE

WEAKNESSES

W

- Management and maintenance is split among three NPS park units
- Competing demands and needs (residents, businesses, DC government, NPS)
- Lack of identity or branding and poor digital presence
- Lack of resource interpretation
- Lack, or inconsistent levels, of resource documentation and shared data resources
- Low funding priority/limited capacity for funding
- Unique maintenance challenges (dispersed locations and deferred backlog)
- Inconsistent law enforcement

EXTERNAL FORCES

O

OPPORTUNITIES

- Grow cooperative relationships and partners through expanded outreach and education
- Increase flexibility and responsiveness
- Expand resource sharing (NPS, other federal agencies)
- Align efforts with NPS initiatives (Urban Agenda, Centennial)
- Pursue creative funding approaches (leverage development activity and growing economy)
- Improve place making for neighborhoods
- Leverage the high level of interest in parks to raise awareness
- Establish strategic partnerships
- Elevate NPS brand and identity
- Capitalize on revisions to Director's Order 21

THREATS

T

- Inconsistent management due to administrative changes or the variety of managers that oversee the parks
- Unclear ownership and jurisdiction
- Competing use of interests and user conflicts
- Resource damage
- Societal pressures (homelessness, crime, etc.)
- Encroachment and incompatible uses
- Limited funding
- Development pressure
- Impacts from city infrastructure expansion
- Lack of identity/branding

INTERNAL FORCES



Small Parks Vision and Goals Workshop, October 2015

Vision

Building on the results from the SWOT exercise, participants developed and evaluated the merits of three different draft vision statements. The group worked together to identify suitable language that recognizes the diverse characteristics of small parks and the untapped potential they hold for elevating the overall small park experience. The NPS small park vision is noted below:

Small Parks Vision Statement

NPS manages a diverse network of small parks in the nation's capital that offers an array of natural, cultural, and recreational resources; enhances quality of life; protects the city's urban design legacy; and provides an exceptional park experience for city residents and visitors in perpetuity.



Goals

Following intensive brainstorming sessions, eight goals were developed to achieve the Small Parks Vision. These goals recognize both the complex challenges and opportunities facing small parks, and reflect a broad range of desired outcomes from resource protection to branding. While each small park is unique, its challenges are representative of the broader pressures facing the NPS in the overall management of park resources. Therefore, the goals for small parks could also have applicability across the entire NPS park portfolio. The goals listed below informed the development of actions described in Chapter 5.

- Preserve, enhance and interpret natural and cultural resources.
- Maintain and expand a diversity of appropriate uses.
- Support Washington DC's urban design framework and open space network.
- Establish strategic collaborative relationships.
- Build support and community engagement.

- Strategically invest resources that advance the NPS mission and values.
- Actively use, maintain, and update information systems.
- Advance the NPS brand.

Supporting Efforts

Several initiatives are underway, or have recently been completed, that are directly relevant to NPS small parks.

National Park Service Initiatives

As our nation's population grows and becomes increasingly urbanized and more diverse, the NPS Centennial (2016) prompted a reevaluation of the role that national parks play in our urban communities. The National Parks Second Century Commission reports, *Advancing the National Park Idea*, the *Urban Agenda Call to Action Initiative* and *A Call to Action: Preparing for a Second Century of Stewardship and Engagement* identify and document the NPS's commitment to new stewardship of the parks and opportunities for broader public enjoyment of the park system. For the NCR, these initiatives extend the focus of the McMillan Plan, which concentrated

“We must promote the contributions that national parks and programs make to create jobs, strengthen local economies, and support ecosystem services. We must leverage and support a multi-sector workforce, parks community, and volunteer network to magnify all successes. We must use the collective power of the parks, our historic preservation programs, and community assistance programs to expand our contributions to society in the next century. (A Call to Action, 2014)”

primarily on the design of the capital city’s Monumental Core. Refining the outlying system of small parks is an opportunity to serve the city’s growing and diversifying population by capturing the value of the L’Enfant Plan’s extensive urban vision.

This renewed focus will help NPS connect people to parks, promote partnerships for the conservation of park resources, and adapt the park system to a changing and urbanizing world. Urban environments present a higher density and more diverse population, lands that often have past industrial or disturbance legacies, and a complex set of overlapping jurisdictions. These challenge the NPS to look for new models, policies, and approaches that work for urban environments beyond the traditional models and experiences born of the large western landscapes.

Some of the Centennial goals for the park system include broad initiatives that help define possible approaches for the design and management of even the smallest park reservations: develop connections between the public and parks through a variety of experiences; connect urban communities to parks and green spaces; and collaborate with partners to expand the use and management of parks; among others.

The diffuse and dynamic urban nature of Washington DC’s small parks network may create opportunities to realize the NPS’s new emphasis. Small parks touch numerous neighborhoods and diverse communities, providing linkages across the city. The wide variety of resources contained in the small parks—from historic monuments to designed urban

views to playgrounds—provide visitors with diverse ways to explore the national park system. And the broad network of partnerships that currently support the parks in the NCR offers a strong constituency from which NPS can build alliances, align park program and partner resources, and serve as an urban model for activating “One NPS,” a key principal of the NPS Urban Agenda.

NCPC Initiatives

NCPC serves a critical role in Washington DC’s open space network and has been involved in several recent and ongoing planning efforts. These initiatives address memorials, parks, and open spaces.

NPS and NCPC, in collaboration with Van Alen Institute, launched *Memorials for the Future*, an ideas competition that aimed to rethink the way memorials are developed and experienced. This initiative re-imagined Washington’s traditional approach to permanent commemoration, creating new ideas for honoring our diverse histories, heritage and culture. *Memorials for the Future* is a continuation of NCPC’s past initiatives related to memorials and monuments, including the *Memorials and Museum Master Plan (2M Plan)* and the 2012 *Memorial Trends and Practice* in Washington, DC report. The *2M Plan* shows how to meet demand for museums and commemorative works while protecting the National Mall, the area set aside as a Reserve, and preserving other existing museums and memorial settings. The *Memorial Trends* report found that commemorative subjects are concentrated around military events and political leaders; the process for completing a permanent

memorial is complex, time-intensive, and costly; and memorial proposals are increasingly land-intensive. The *Memorials for the Future* competition presented opportunities for the nation to reflect on how we can fill these gaps in commemoration.

The *Parks & Open Space Element of the Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital: Federal Elements* is prepared by NCPC and provides a policy framework for the federal government to conserve and enhance the National Capital Region's parks and open space system, ensure that adequate resources are available for future generations, and promote an appropriate balance between open

space resources and the built environment. NCPC is in the process of preparing an update to the *Parks and Open Space Element*. In addition, the District Office of Planning is managing a second Amendment Cycle for the 2006 *District Elements of the Comprehensive Plan*. The *District Elements* also include a chapter that addresses parks, recreation, and open space within the city.

The *Capital Space* plan, adopted by NCPC in 2010, was developed as a multi-agency partnership initiative between NCPC, NPS, and several District agencies including the Office of Planning, DPR, and the Departments of the Environment and

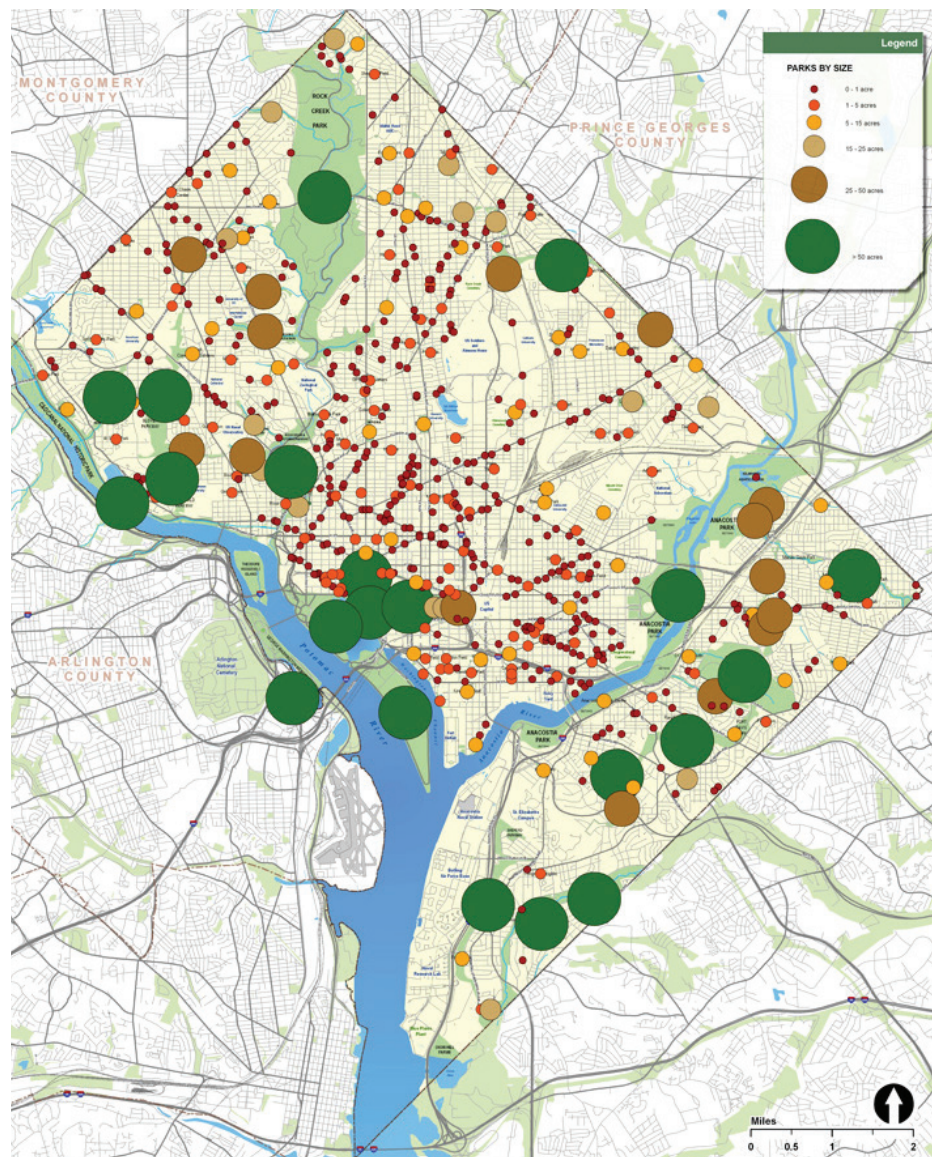


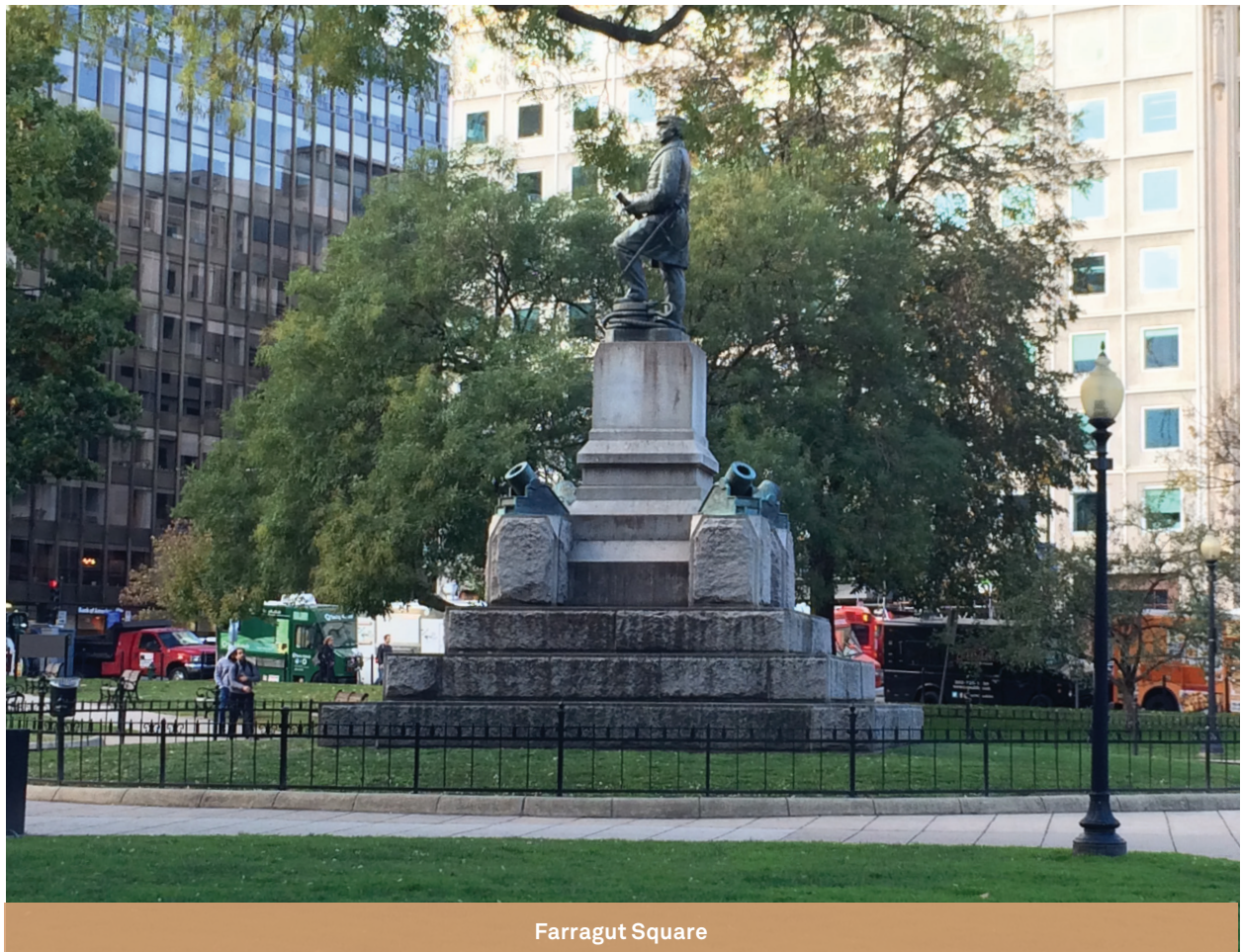
Figure 4 Parks By Size
Source: Capital Space

Capital Space evaluated park size in an effort to understand the spatial distribution of parks and the relationship of park size to community access. The map shows that small parks less than one acre in size (dark red dots) are fairly evenly distributed and are prominent along the primary corridors. The spatial pattern of small parks ensures that most neighborhoods can have access to a small park.

Transportation. *Capital Space* provides a vision for a beautiful, high-quality, and unified park system for the nation's capital and features six big ideas to implement the plan's vision. One of the six big ideas focused on small parks and how to transform them into successful public spaces, forming a cohesive urban network of green spaces. **Figure 4**, extracted from *Capital Space*, depicts parks by size and includes those parks under the ownership of NPS, DPR, and other federal and District agencies. A recommendation from Capital Space calls for the coordination of planning and management of small parks among the various park and planning agencies for efficiency and to promote investments across all small park resources. This Small Parks Management Strategies document lays out several management options for NPS to achieve that goal.

District Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR)

The *Play DC Master Plan*, completed in 2015, is a long-range plan for the District of Columbia's parks and recreation resources. It identifies five key components and 21 big moves for transforming the city's parks and recreation system, many of which have direct relevance to this planning effort. The vision for the plan is to develop an equitable, top-notch system of parks and recreation resources District-wide through big moves such as improved maintenance schedules; opening up DC Public School facilities to the community; acquiring more parkland under District jurisdiction through strategic property transfers, purchases, and private development proffers; and working with NPS to provide more opportunities to experience natural areas within the park system. In addition, the plan defines targets for tracking progress which include updating baseline data, developing partnership models, and identifying and prioritizing target areas for acquisition.



CHAPTER

03

SMALL PARK CHARACTERISTICS

SMALL PARK CHARACTERISTICS

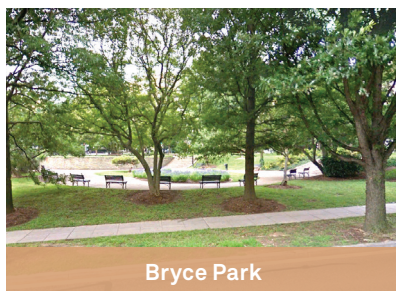
The 292 individual parks included in this planning effort represent a diverse range of spaces, from wooded areas to small concrete traffic triangles.

Examining the relative sizes, locations, types, functions, and resources of the identified small parks was essential to understanding the issues and developing solutions for their management challenges.

As part of this effort, a significant amount of data was collected to characterize and define the unique features of each park. This data included information about cultural and natural resources, commemorative resources, recreation, community context, and external encroachment. These data and the associated GIS spatial analysis served as inputs to the alignment scoring process presented in Chapter 4. This chapter further highlights some of the park characteristics in order to illustrate the diversity, issues, and significance of the NPS small parks. The SWOT analysis provided in Chapter 2 identified some of the challenges inherent in managing diverse small parks, as well as potential opportunities to elevate small parks to a more celebrated and functional status.



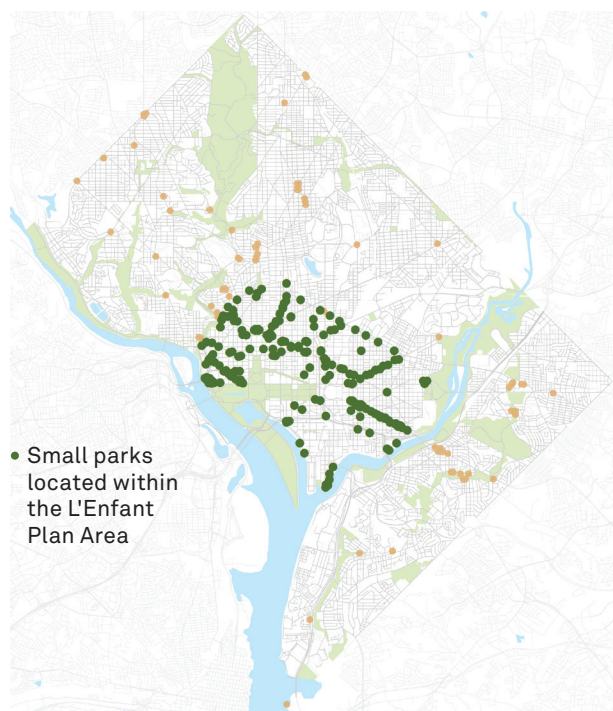
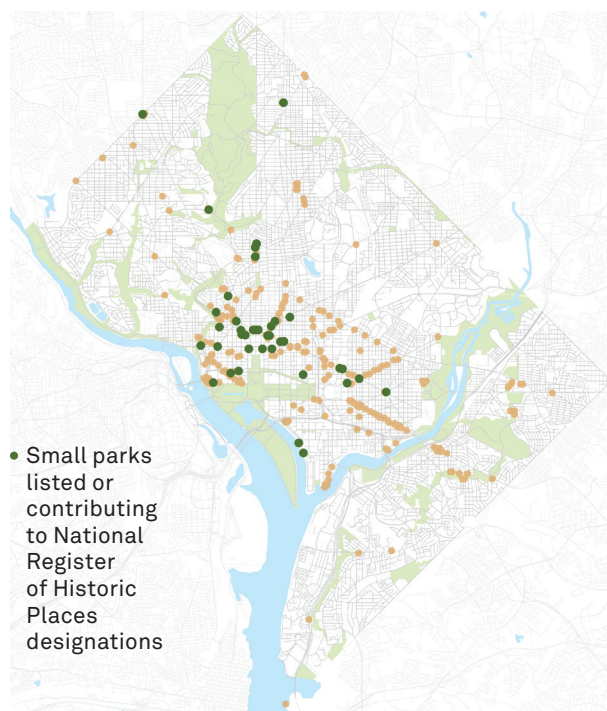
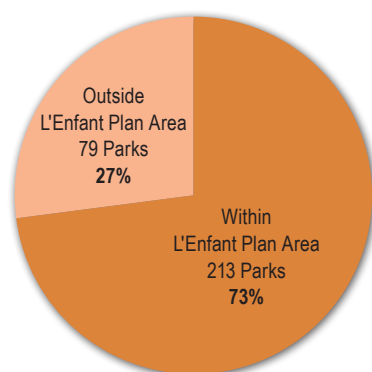
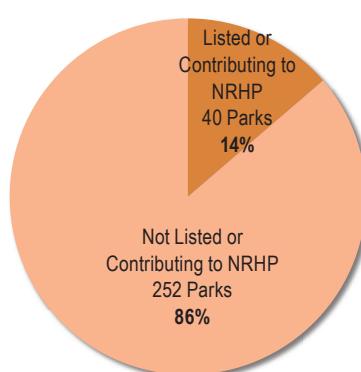
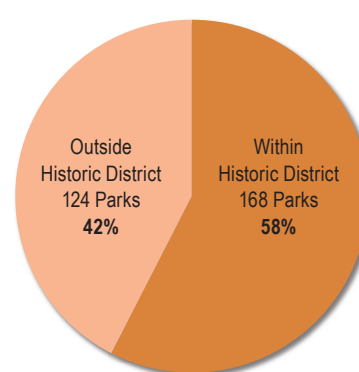
Traffic triangle at 5th Street and New York Avenue, NW



Bryce Park

Cultural Resources

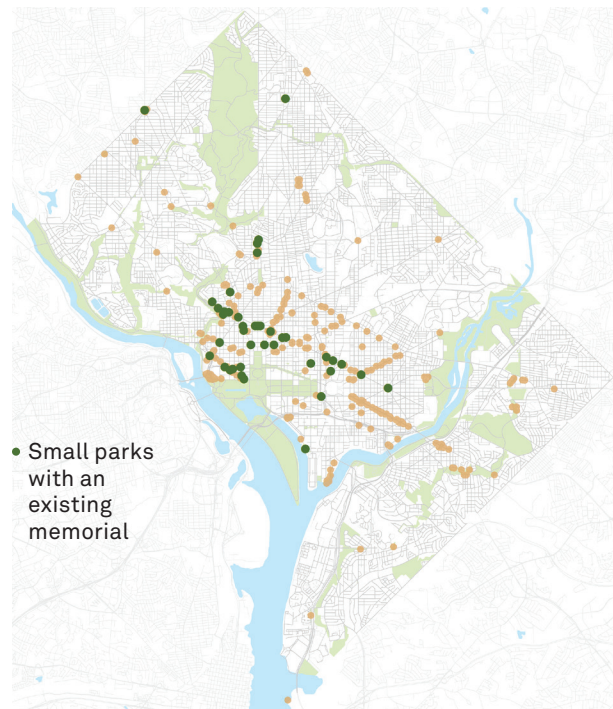
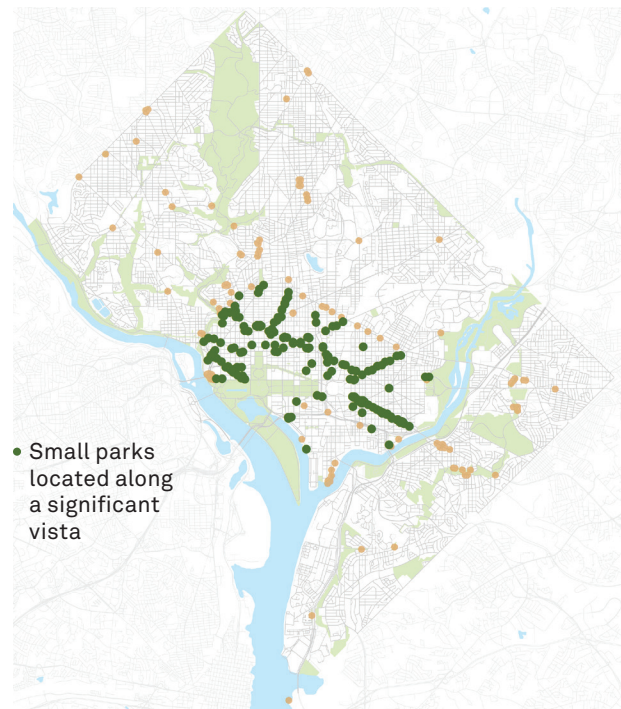
Overall, a significant number of small parks directly or indirectly contribute to the city's cultural and historical significance. This analysis considered both the presence of cultural resources and also proximity of the parks to other nearby resources. As discussed in Chapter 1, the L'Enfant Plan for the City of Washington formed the basis for many of the parks within the project scope. The vast majority (approximately 73 percent) are a part of the original L'Enfant Plan as shown in **Figure 5**. These parks include some of the most notable and important parks in the city, but some of these small parks are merely remnants of their original form due to the expansion of roadway intersections over time.

Figure 5 Small Parks within the L'Enfant Plan**Figure 6** Small Parks Listed or Contributing to National Register of Historic Places Designations**Figure 7** Percentage of Small Parks within the L'Enfant Plan Area**Figure 8** Percentage of Small Parks Listed or Contributing to the NRHP**Figure 9** Percentage of Small Parks within a Historic District

A total of 40 small parks are individually listed or contributing elements to National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) designations as shown in **Figure 6**. Among these are some of the best-known parks within downtown Washington, including Farragut Square, McPherson Square, and Franklin Square. The list also includes several parks that anchor historic neighborhoods, including Dupont Circle and Lincoln Park. Unique resources located in small parks include the Battleground National Cemetery and the Mary McLeod Bethune House.

Some parks are not individually listed on the NRHP, but are contributing elements to the Historic District in which they are located.

A total of 168 individual parks are located within a National Register Historic District, most notably the districts within the L'Enfant core of the city and the Fort Circle Parks Historic District.

Figure 10 Small Parks with an Existing Memorial**Figure 11** Small Parks along a Significant Vista

The breakdown of parks by cultural resource criteria is illustrated in **Figures 7, 8, and 9**. A total of 26 parks meet all three cultural resource criteria indicating a high degree of resource value for small parks in the central core of the city.

Commemorative Resources

The prominent locations of many of the small parks have made them obvious choices for commemorative elements such as statues and other small memorials. Many parks are located along prominent avenues and intersections with high visibility and proximity to important historic and civic buildings. A number of memorials have been installed to date, while other small parks have been identified as sites for future memorials.

A total of 40 small parks within the project scope contain an existing memorial as shown in **Figure 10**. For example, equestrian statues have been erected on McPherson Square and Washington and Logan Circles. More recent memorials include the 2007 Victims of Communism Memorial at the intersection of Massachusetts Avenue NW and New Jersey Avenue NW.

NCPC has identified significant vistas within the city for special protection. These vistas are generally along key roadways, including the major avenues that radiate from the U.S. Capitol and the White House. As shown in **Figure 11**, small parks located along significant vistas are concentrated within the L'Enfant core of the city, adjacent to Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, Virginia, Maryland, New York, Vermont, and Connecticut Avenues NW. The Pennsylvania Ave SE small parks are primarily located within the median of the avenue, helping to preserve views of the U.S. Capitol from the southeast.

The *Memorials and Museum Master Plan* (2M Plan) identified 100 potential sites for future memorials, many of which are located within significant vistas. Twelve of the small parks within the project scope of this effort were identified in the original 2M Plan, as shown in **Figure 12**. Ten of the twelve parks are located within the L'Enfant core of the city; the exceptions are Westmoreland Circle and a Fort Circle Parks' park parcel located in Southeast Washington.

Figure 12 Small Parks Listed as Candidate Sites in the Memorials and Museums Master Plan

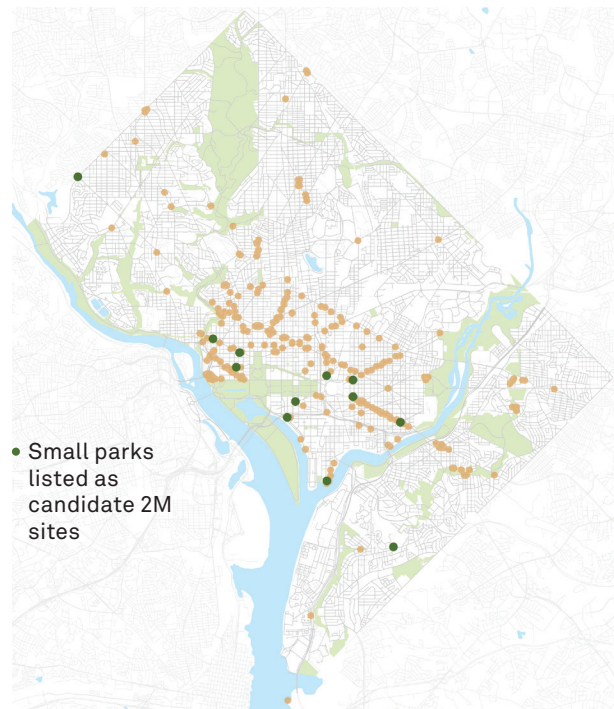
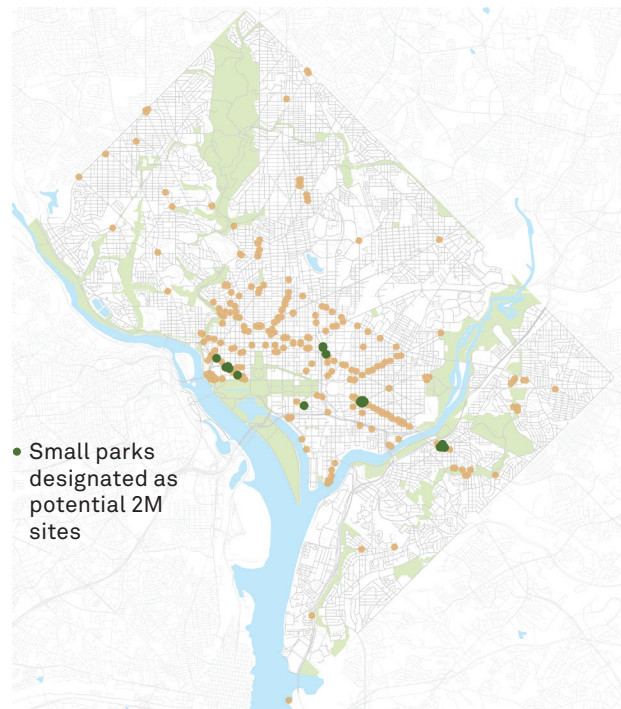


Figure 13 Potential Additional Memorials and Museums Candidate Sites



As part of this effort, small parks were evaluated for potential designation as additional 2M sites. A total of 24 small parks were selected based on criteria including proximity to significant vistas, cultural resources, and accessibility by multiple modes of transportation including Metrorail. Consideration was given to surrounding land use and other nearby memorials, along with park site variety. **Figure 13** shows the locations of the selected parks that could be considered for future memorial sites. In addition to the small parks within the project scope, the analysis identified four parcels near Independence Avenue and 12th Street SW currently outside NPS jurisdiction as potential future 2M candidate sites. NCPC will be preparing an update to the 2M Plan that will consider potential new sites that reflect the need to provide adequate and diverse sites for future commemoration, continuing development patterns in Washington DC and environs, and expanding ideas on commemoration design.



SMALL PARKS EVALUATION TOOL

To assist in the assessment of NPS small parks, an evaluation tool was developed that gives the NPS the ability to perform queries across a series of planning criteria to provide a high-level understanding of small park resources across the District. Since the initial creation of the tool, NPS has expanded and improved its functionality by integrating additional datasets and developing a new user interface. The tool is intended to be updated regularly and will be used to inform decisions on park management and partnership approaches and to detect where additional studies or research is needed.

The initial database behind the tool interface was assembled using Geographic Information Systems (GIS) spatial data, written reports, and lists/spreadsheets containing information about small park resources from a variety of sources.

The information within the tool is organized by broad criteria and by park identification. The information is presented as a dashboard and can be queried to provide data on park origin, existing cultural, natural and commemorative resources, and nearby community resources and transportation services, and other planning factors. To provide research flexibility, the tool allows park staff to search for

information in two ways: by park ID (reservation number) or by criteria. Inputting a reservation number into the database will reveal all the factors that apply to that specific reservation. Selecting criteria versus reservation will produce a list of all the reservations that meet those criteria. Query results are displayed in a map and can be exported for further analysis. The tool is a living database that can be updated as new information is generated or as GIS layers are available.

Chapter 4 provides more information on how the evaluation tool was used in the park alignment scoring process.

Small Parks Documents Finder

U.S. Department of the Interior
National Park Service

Legend

Search

1 Select search type:
Small Parks DB

2 Select one or more option(s) below, then
Click GO to run query:

Park Unit & Reservation

Park Unit:

Reservation #:

Legal Framework

Parcel Acquisition Method:

Contributes to FRV:

Cultural Resources

Individually Listed on NRHP: ☐

National Historic Landmark: ☐

Within a NR District: ☐

Located within L'Enfant Plan: ☐

Completed CLI: ☐

Within Pre-eminent View Corridor: ☐

Contributing Structures on Parcel: ☐

Natural Resources

Located within a Floodplain: ☐

Contains Wetlands: ☐

Interpretive/Commemorative Resources

Memorials & Museums Master Plan Site: ☐

Help

Map

Find address or place:

Information Panel: Reservation #014 (NACE)

Basics

Res #:	014
Park Unit:	NACE
Park Name:	Lincoln Park
Location:	Lincoln Park - East Capitol St. between 11th & 13th Sts., NE & SE

Legal Framework

Acq Method:	Purchase (Memo: 1)
Acquisition Description:	PURCHASED OF ORIGINAL GRANT; Act of July 16, 1790-1 Stat., 156
Contributes to FRV:	Yes
FRV Summary:	Capitol Hill Parks: Transportation Infrastructure (L'Enfant Plan, radiating streets and avenues, grand approaches, sightlines and views of the Capitol dome, parks along major travel corridors, Pennsylvania Ave SE median); Park Landscapes (Capitol Hill Historic District, managed landscaped areas, small triangles and parklets isolated by busy roadways, large linear corridors, simple turfed areas, formal landscapes, walkways, walls, accessible ramps, etc.)



Natural Resources

Only limited consistent, published data was available to characterize existing natural resources or habitat value of small parks. Nevertheless, a qualitative review of the parks illustrates vast differences in terms of natural features. Many of the parks within the urban core have extensive hardscape areas, while small parks within other parts of the city such as the Fort Circle Parks contain wooded areas that tie into larger urban habitat corridors. As a whole, the small parks make a contribution to the city's tree cover and create associated environmental benefits such as creating areas for habitat.

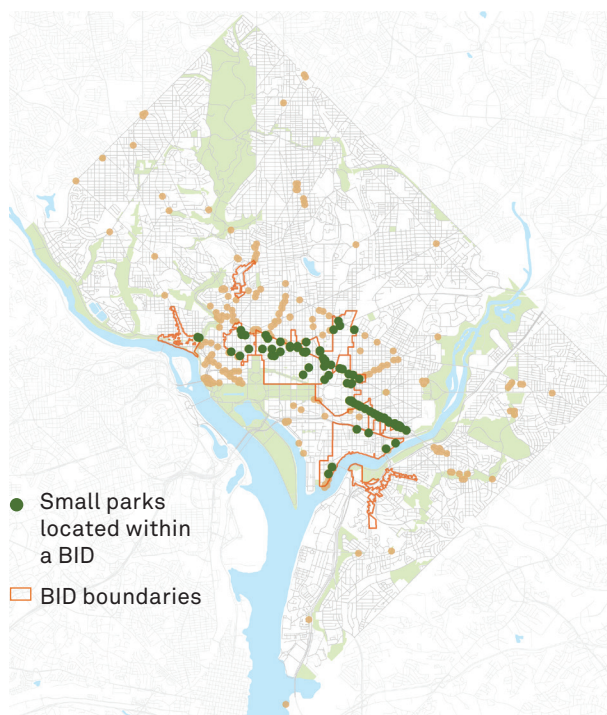
Recreation Resources

The potential for small parks to play a larger role in providing a wide variety of recreation space exists across the city. This concept was explored as part of **Capital Space** along with the idea that increased use of small parks can encourage positive behavior and a stronger sense of community. Data confirming the presence of playgrounds or other types of recreation activities occurring on NPS small parks is needed. In an effort to respond to community demand, NAMA recently identified 39 individual parks that hold the potential for playground agreements. Initiatives such as these may help NPS promote the **Urban Agenda** to better serve community needs across the city.

Community Context

Small parks are distributed throughout the city and located within a wide variety of contexts and surrounding land uses. As areas of the city redevelop and densify, pressure on the existing park network, including small parks, to provide more community recreation amenities will likely increase. A renewed

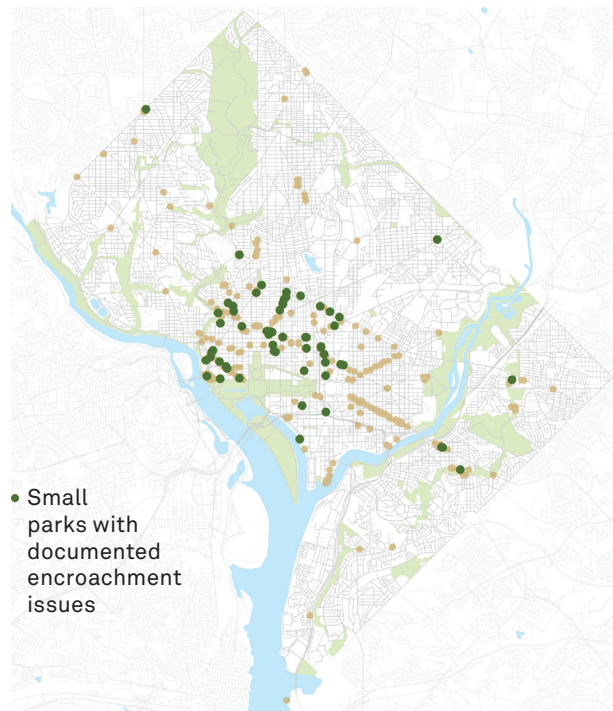
Figure 14 Parks within a Business Improvement District



mission for the small parks creates an opportunity for NPS: to fulfill goals of the **Urban Agenda** by improving the quality of life for city residents.

A number of data points were considered in order to characterize community context, including proximity to other park resources, transportation infrastructure and neighborhood resources. The immediate neighborhood context in particular can play an important role in identifying and fostering these partnerships. Chapter 4 discusses existing and potential partnerships for NPS with respect to small parks.

Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) provide important services to a number of neighborhoods within the District. As shown in **Figure 14**, a total of 80 small parks in the study are located within a BID, and several partnerships with BIDs already provide a variety of programming. As an example, the successful NPS partnership with the Golden Triangle BID has resulted in popular events in Farragut Square, including Farragut Fridays and outdoor movie screenings.

Figure 15 Parks with Documented Encroachment

Fence erected on NPS property at
Texas Avenue, SE and 29th Street SE

A number of the small parks are located in proximity to District resources such as DPR parks or schools. For example, 54 parks are located within 500 feet of a District park, and 57 parks are located within 500 feet of a school. Proximity to accessible nearby parks and open space resources and amenities can inform future programming of NPS parks should compatible uses be proposed on a particular property.

Proximity to transportation resources was also considered as part of the analysis. For instance, more than one-third of the small parks are located within a quarter mile of a Metrorail station. Most of these also have excellent access to bus and bicycle routes. Strong multi-modal access is a positive attribute when considering community accessibility, as well as 2M potential. However, access must also be properly managed to ensure transportation infrastructure such as bus shelters or signage is sensitively designed.

As an example of transportation infrastructure, 20 of the parks serve primarily a traffic management function, as evidenced by the previous example of the concrete traffic triangle. These parks possess limited resource value for NPS, as discussed in Chapter 4.

Encroachment and Unsanctioned Uses

Several examples of encroachment occur on small parks and were documented as part of this effort. Encroachment can be defined as an action that occurs on NPS property without permission or that appropriates public land for private use. The encroachment issues take many forms, from well-maintained, though unsanctioned, landscaping by an adjacent property owner to paving or construction staging. Of the NPS small parks considered as part of this planning effort, 58 had documented examples of encroachment from outside entities as shown in **Figure 15**. This assessment was based on available data, so the actual level of encroachment is likely much higher than documented. In some cases the adjacent landowner may be unaware of exact property boundaries and may unknowingly be encroaching upon NPS land.

Summary of Challenges and Opportunities

The unique characteristics of small parks present a number of challenges for effective management. At the same time, they also present opportunities for enhancing the overall urban park system in Washington by serving as "the glue of the larger parks and open space network" (*Capital Space, 2010*). A summary of some of the most pressing challenges and potential opportunities facing small parks is included below.

Challenges

- The legacy of previous planning decisions, actions by other entities, transfers, and encroachments have resulted in NPS administering a number of small parks at intersections that have diminished park resource value.
- Inconsistent resource data and documentation results in uneven assessment of resource values across the small parks, including the positive presence of natural resources and the negative effects of encroachment issues affecting resources.
- Unclear boundaries and lack of NPS branding make encroachment and unsanctioned uses on NPS property more likely to occur.
- Competing uses and diversity of users on small parks sometimes produce user conflicts.
- Urban infrastructure has made some parks inaccessible or constrained for potential programming options.

Opportunities

- In some neighborhoods, small parks are the only accessible green space available, which places increased importance on their ability to serve multiple functions.
- Small parks are a defining feature of the urban landscape in Washington and could be used to create unique gateways that celebrate local and national commemorative works, public art, or other amenities.
- Small parks can help unify a corridor or neighborhood and, if treated as a cluster, could create distinct programming opportunities within the open space network.
- Small parks can support natural resource and sustainability objectives through increased tree canopy, urban heat island mitigation, native landscapes to support habitat, and stormwater management practices.
- Their small size can be attractive for civic or business groups to provide improvements or maintenance.

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CHAPTER

04

MANAGEMENT OPTIONS

MANAGEMENT OPTIONS

Determining a management strategy for a small park is challenging; despite their intrinsic commonality, there is no one-size-fits-all solution. A variety of methods are available to NPS for protecting park resources and managing NPS lands. This section describes a framework and decision-making methodology for identifying potential management options based upon an understanding of a park's resources and values. These options support the NPS Urban Agenda initiative to build partnership alliances and interagency cooperation for programming and community building.

Management Mechanisms

For NPS, management activities for small parks are often more challenging due to the size, number and distribution of the parks, varying resource values, and wide range of existing and potential uses. NPS desires a more consistent approach to the management of small parks that focuses their management capabilities to those that best represent the resources and values of the overall park administrative unit within which a small parks is located.

A variety of management mechanisms are available for small parks. It is not the purpose of this effort to prescribe a specific management approach for each park due to the number of variables involved, including the desired level of NPS involvement, enabling legislation, and the role of park partners. However, a broad understanding of the range of management options is needed as a first step toward improved efficiencies in management.

In many cases, it may be preferable for NPS to retain complete control and management of the park. Under certain other conditions it may be preferable for NPS to convey property or interests through a land exchange or transfer of administrative jurisdiction for selected small parks. It may also be desirable for NPS to enhance the current level of management through cooperative agreements or partnerships. These options represent three broad general management categories under which specific management instruments exist:

- NPS Sole Management
- Cooperative Management/Partnerships
- Conveyance of Property or Interest

Determination of the best management technique should be driven foremost by the underlying resource values of the park. Considerations should also be given to the potential role that partnerships could play in providing more effective or efficient management of small parks.

Across the NPS, partnerships occur on many levels for a wide range of program activities and functions and certain parks have been especially successful in building and maintaining a strong, highly productive partnership culture. NPS has collected information that shows parks can readily identify both additional partnerships they need to initiate and grow, and the under-performing partnerships that need more attention and support by trained staff. The NCR should continue to welcome and actively seek partnership activities with individuals, organizations, and others who share the Service's commitment to protecting park resources and values and providing for their enjoyment.

Partnerships are encouraged as a way of leveraging resources and accomplishing more than any one group could achieve on its own. Partnerships may include nonprofit management entities, friends groups, or other fundraising entities. They may accept and administer private contributions, support community land conservation, support research and preservation, and other vital activities. In an urban environment like the NCR, partnerships are mutually beneficial as they benefit the park partners, NPS and the community as a whole.

The management options described further below and shown in **Figure 16** were derived from a number of sources, including the *NPS Agreements Handbook*, October 1, 2002; Government Accounting Office (GAO) *NPS Managed Properties in the District of Columbia*, April 2005; *NPS Management Policies* 2006; and online research.

NPS Sole Management

Under this approach, NPS retains responsibility for management and maintenance of the small park. Each small park will be managed by the respective park unit in which it is located.

Cooperative Management / Partnerships

The *NPS Agreements Handbook* (October 1, 2002) sets forth detailed guidance to those who have a role in the development, administration, and closeout of agreements such as cooperative agreements, interagency acquisition agreements, and other types of partnerships. As expressed in the handbook, determining "legal authority" is the first step in determining which type of agreement should be used, followed by determining a definition of the nature and type of relationship anticipated between NPS and the partner. In addition, enabling legislation for park units may also provide site specific

Informal and formal partnerships provide significant benefits for the NPS, and partnership management has become a core competency to carry out the NPS mission and deliver public service at a higher level. The challenge is to more effectively grow that competency by building on past partnership successes and develop new capacity service-wide.

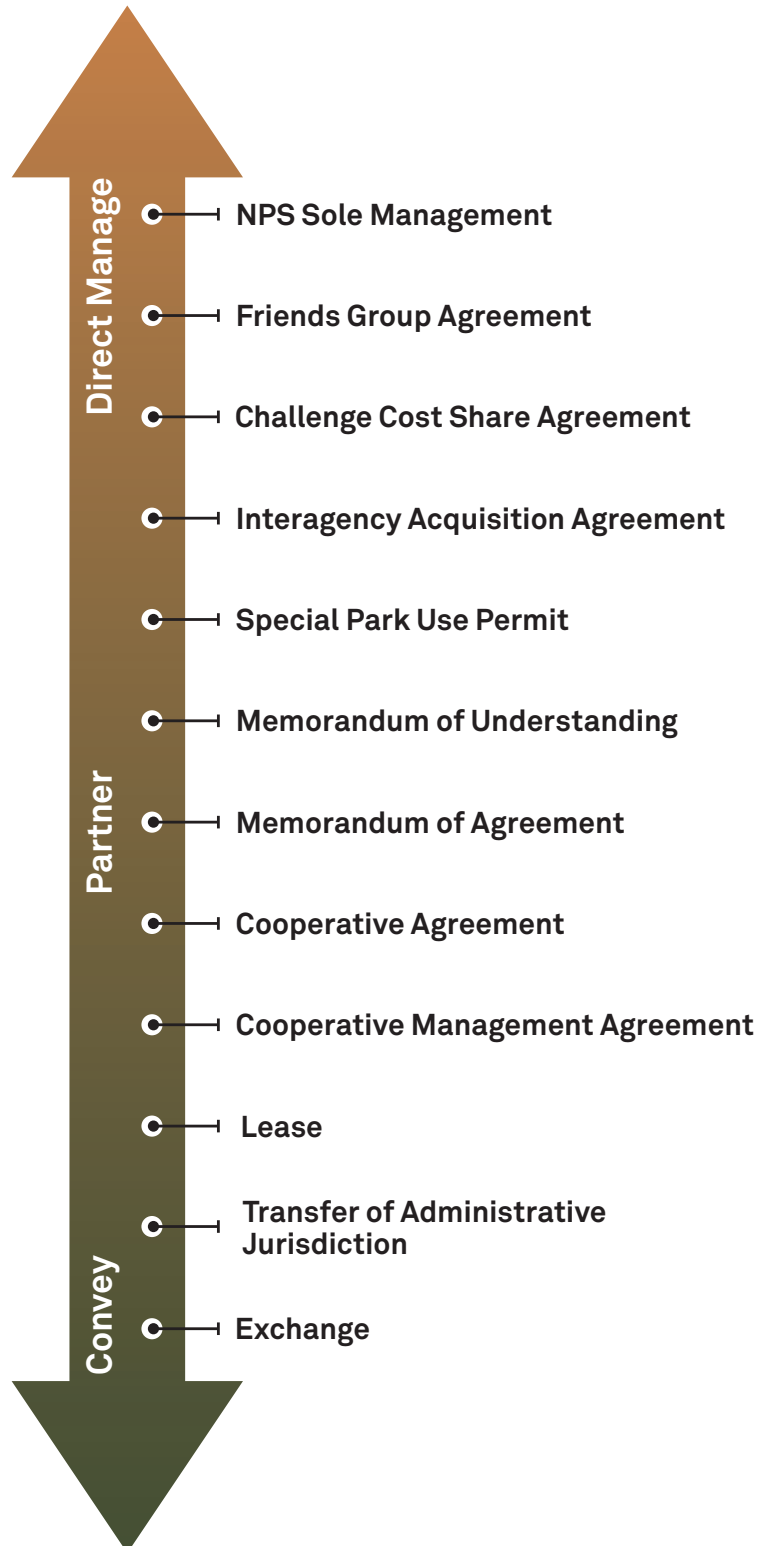
authorities that must be considered when contemplating management or partnership approaches.

In addition, emerging policy from *Draft Directors Order (DO) 21, Philanthropic Partnerships*, proposes to modify the financial thresholds for agreements, thereby giving more flexibility and authority to NPS to accept donations up to \$5 million. The *Draft DO 21* also expands and clarifies donor recognition guidance to align with best practices and to increase flexibility for fundraising. Upon finalization, *Draft DO 21* could open up new opportunities for the NPS to receive funding and attract donors that would benefit more than just small parks.

Management approaches that fall under this category include the following:

- **Friends Group Agreement**—An agreement used with non-profit organizations that are established primarily to assist or benefit a specific park area, a series of park areas, a program, or the entire National Park System. A Friends Group Agreement provides the legal and policy framework for the work done by the Park and Friends Group. This work is described in an Annual Work Plan.
- **Challenge Cost Share Agreement**—authorizes the NPS to enter into agreements with cooperators for the purpose of sharing costs or services in carrying out authorized functions and responsibilities of the Secretary with respect to any unit or program of the national park system, any affiliated area, or any designated National Scenic or Historic Trail. This authority allows the agency to negotiate and enter into cooperative agreements with any State or local Government, public or private agency, organization, institution, corporation, individual, or other entity. Challenge Cost-Share agreements may be awarded as a procurement contract or a cooperative agreement. A cooperative agreement may be utilized if there is substantial NPS involvement in the project

Figure 16 Management Approaches



MANAGEMENT ISSUE: PAPER STREETS

In certain circumstances, NPS parks are adjacent to a "paper street" – a street shown on a recorded plan but never built on the ground. Paper streets present both a management risk and an opportunity to NPS.

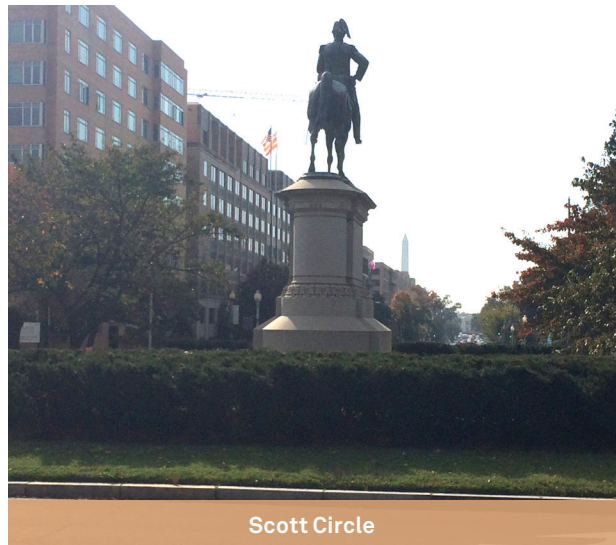
Each paper street presents unique conditions that must be understood and considered as NPS explores the value and benefits of paper streets that are adjacent to NPS property. In certain circumstances it may be desirable for NPS to pursue elimination of the paper street on record in order to regain control of the adjacent land area.

- Paper streets can serve as a landscape buffer between NPS land and adjacent private property, helping to minimize encroachment on parkland.
- Paper streets could also improve connectivity to surrounding neighborhoods and provide linkages to other parks and open space resources.
- Some paper streets may also contain existing or proposed resources, such as streams, trails, or trail heads that NPS would like to be able to control or manage.
- Elimination of a paper street could partially or wholly deny access or encumber the manner and extent of the use of the adjacent properties.
- Paper streets could potentially be developed into roadways, opening up access to landlocked parcels. Such improvements (driveways, parking areas, roadways, etc.) within the paper street could complicate future efforts to modify the recorded plan.

Chapter 1400 of Title 24, District of Columbia Municipal Regulations, sets forth regulations related to the process of closing streets and alleys. An application must be filed with the District of Columbia Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs in order to close, dedicate a street or alley, or eliminate a building restriction line. The application requirements are noted below but may be subject to change:

- A completed Surveyor's Office Application Form;
- Written statements from abutting property owners in support of the application;
- A letter describing the purpose and nature of the street or alley closing;
- A sketch of proposed closing or line to be eliminated;
- A filing fee of \$2,750;
- A complete Retail Tenant Displacement form;
- Eight (8) sets of the site development plans that meet specified requirements;
- Public hearing and recordation fee of \$1,287 paid prior to the public hearing.

- **Interagency Acquisition Agreement**—A written agreement between two or more federal agencies in which one federal agency (servicing agency) provides goods or services to the other agency (the requesting agency). These agreements are typically entered into under the authority of the Economy Act. Interagency acquisition agreements also are used for transfers of funds between DOI bureaus and offices. They are governed by FAR Part 17.5 and DOI Acquisition Policy Release Part 1417.5.
- **Special Park Uses (Permit)**—*DO 53, Special Park Uses*, 36 CFR 1-7 sets forth the policies and procedures for administering special park uses on NPS lands. Short-term activity (not to exceed 5 years) provides a benefit to an individual, group or organization rather than the public at large; requires written authorization and some degree of management control from the NPS in order to protect park resources and the public interest.
- **Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)**—A written agreement between the NPS and state and local governments, nonprofit organizations, corporations, individuals, and other federal agencies used to document mutual assistance relationships. A MOU does not obligate funds.
- **Memorandum of Agreement (MOA)**—A written agreement between the NPS and state and local governments, nonprofit organizations, corporations, individuals, and other federal agencies used to document receipt of funds, goods, and/or services by the NPS from a non-federal party.
- **Cooperative Agreement**—A written legal instrument reflecting a relationship between the NPS and a state or local government, tribal government, or other non-federal recipient in which the principal purpose is to transfer money, services, or anything of value to the state or local government or other recipient to stimulate or support a public purpose authorized by federal statute. Substantial involvement is required between the NPS and the state or local government or other recipient during performance of the contemplated activity. A cooperative agreement may be entered into to accomplish various projects or tasks anticipated and initiated over a span of one to five years. Such a cooperative agreement should establish the general scope of the agreement, as well as its essential elements and the estimated funding. Either a bilateral modification or a task agreement would then be issued to authorize specific project commencement and funding.
- **Cooperative Management Agreement**—An agreement between the NPS and a state or local government agency to provide for the cooperative management of federal and state or local park areas where a unit of the national park system is located adjacent to or near a state or local park area, and cooperative management between the NPS and a state/local agency of a portion of either park will allow for more effective and efficient management of the parks. Transfer of NPS "administration responsibilities" is not permitted under this authority. Under the agreement, the NPS may acquire from and provide to a state or local government agency goods and services to be used in the cooperative management of land. The agreement also allows for the assignment of federal, state or local employees for the cooperative management activity.



Conveyance of Property or Interest

- **Leasing**—*DO 38, Real Property Leasing*. PL 105-391, Section 802, 36 CFR, Parts 17 and 18 govern NPS's ability to enter into leasing. The issuance of leases by NPS is discretionary and may be undertaken only when the deciding official has determined that the proposed lease is in the best interests of the management of the applicable park area and is otherwise consistent with the requirements of 36 CFR Part 17 or 18 (as applicable) and *DO 38*. In general, in order for NPS real property to be eligible for leasing, the deciding official must determine that the property is not needed for park area purposes and that the lease will not result in degradation of the purposes and values of the park area.

- **Transfer of Administrative Jurisdiction**— Per 40 USC §8124, Federal and District of Columbia authorities administering properties in the District that are owned by the Federal Government or by the District may transfer jurisdiction over any part of the property among or between themselves for purposes of administration and maintenance under conditions the parties agree on. The NCPC reviews the transfer before the transfer is complete and may examine a number of factors as part of their review.

Transfer of administrative jurisdiction can be limited either temporally (i.e., a transfer for only a set term of years) or spatially (i.e., a transfer over only a part of the park). Transfer of administrative jurisdiction can also divide jurisdiction by areas of responsibility. For example, the NPS might be able to retain jurisdiction over law enforcement, special-event permitting, and interpretation, while ceding everything else (including, for example, concession management) to DC.

- **Exchange**— 54 U.S. Code § 102901 sets forth requirements for land transfers, including the exchange of land. The NPS may dispose of interest it already owns in exchange for another interest.

Small Park Alignment Score Process

National parks reveal important stories in the American past, conserve natural systems and biodiversity, advance the principles of sustainability, establish connections with diverse communities, and provide a wide array of recreational opportunities. The national park system contains important tangible cultural and natural resources and also conveys intangible stories, principles, and heritage. The NPS mission is to protect and preserve unimpaired the resources and values of the national park system and the fundamental resources and values that are unique to each park. Protecting these resources within a dynamic urban, social and ecological environment is a complex challenge.

Some small parks have recognizable and documented cultural, historic or natural resources that clearly represent the significance of the overall park. These small parks are considered to have a strong alignment with the park purpose. However, some park lands and resources suffer from deferred maintenance, overuse, or deterioration, which causes their resource integrity to diminish. Other small parks may never have contained the fundamental resources and values that were critical for the park's inclusion into the national park system. The small parks whose resources or values are diminishing or lacking may continue to provide important services to a surrounding community but may not support or strongly align with the NPS mission or park purpose. These small parks are considered to have a weak alignment.

The Evaluation Tool developed for this planning effort provides a first step to understanding preliminary baseline conditions for a park. The tool helps classify the small parks' resources and values, which are the primary driver for determining management options. The small parks evaluation tool can be used to ascertain which parks have higher concentrations of significant resources based on available data and specific criteria. This functionality was used to create an alignment score for each small park using select criteria identified by the small parks planning committee that were considered to be more critical and influential in determining appropriate management options.

In general, the criteria were selected to help evaluate park alignment with the park purpose and core values by addressing the following factors:

- What is the small park's governing legal framework, if any?
- How important are the resources at the small park?
- How important is the park's relationship to other small parks and to the federal city framework?

The select alignment criteria and associated weighting (points) used in the analysis are shown in **Table 1**. The alignment score is based upon how many of the criteria are met. To establish the weighting value at the outset of the process, the total number of possible points (100) was divided by the total number of criteria levels (17) to define a point value for each weight level. The result of this calculation (100/17) equals 5.9 which is the point value per weighted criteria (a weight of one equals 5.9 points; a weight of 2 equals 11.8 points, etc.). The point value was then multiplied by the weighting criteria value to calculate a park's alignment score, based on a yes/no response to whether the criteria was met. A higher number of "yes" responses resulted in a higher alignment score. "No" responses to the alignment criteria resulted in zero points with the exception of the traffic management function criteria. In that case, a negative point value was assigned for a "yes" response (-17.6 points) to reflect the inconsistent use and function of the site in comparison to NPS values and positive points were applied for a "no" response.

The sum of the individual weighted scores for each alignment criteria equals the small park alignment score.

Table 1 Alignment Criteria

Alignment Criteria Type	Criteria Weight Category	Weight Value	Weighted Score = Yes	Weighted Score = No
Serves Traffic Management Function	High	-3 or 3	-17.6	17.6
Parcel Acquisition Method (Purchase)	High	3	17.6	0
Individually Listed or Contributing Element to NRHP	Medium	2	11.8	0
Within L'Enfant Plan	Medium	2	11.8	0
Existing Memorial on Parcel	Medium	2	11.8	0
Within a Significant Vista	Medium	2	11.8	0
Within a National Register District	Low	1	5.9	0
Within Gateway Corridor	Low	1	5.9	0
Small Park Parcel Geographic Grouping	Low	1	5.9	0

Note: The selection of criteria and weighting was determined through collaboration between NPS and NCPG.

The Evaluation Tool is intended to help inform park managers of baseline park information that can be used for further investigation and decision-making. The alignment score process helps park managers understand key factors that could influence management decisions.

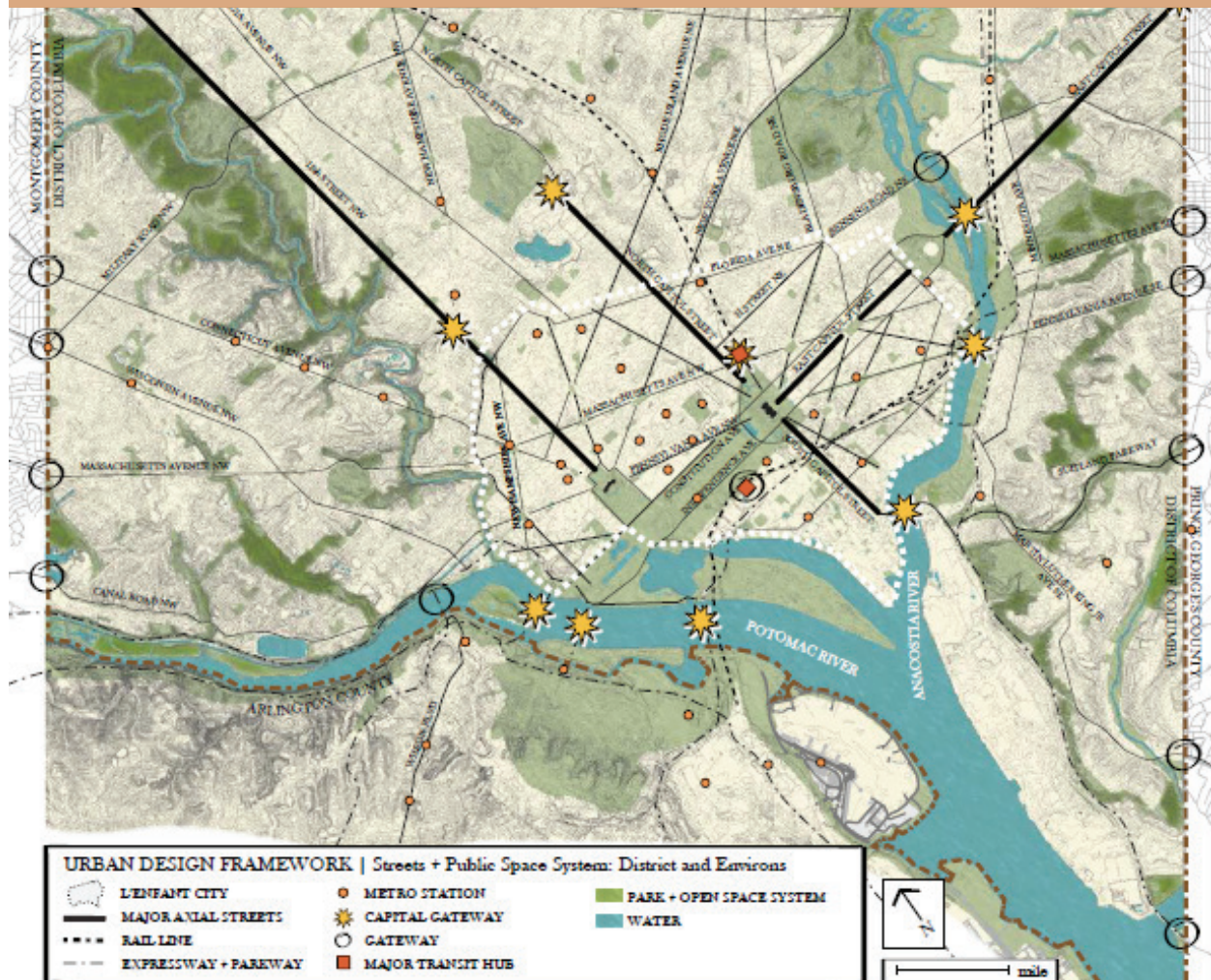
Alignment Criteria

A description of the nine alignment criteria is included below.

- **Parcel Acquisition Method** —Small parks became part of the national park system through several methods, including purchase, acquisition, transfer, or dedication. The original land grant in 1790 provided a foundation for the nation's capital and gave form to the capital's earliest parks through the L'Enfant Plan. Additional lands were purchased by various commissions such as the Rock Creek Park Commission and Potomac Parkway Commission, or were purchased through the Capper-Cramton Act. Other parks came to NPS through land transfers from the District government or other agencies or via dedications and donations. The specific enabling legislation that controlled the foundation of the parks and defined the lands within the park boundary can only be changed through an act of Congress. Therefore, lands acquired through purchase and defined in the legislation as belonging to the park units are considered foundational landscapes; other parks added through other property acquisition types may be transferred from NPS ownership more easily. Parks acquired through purchase were given a weighting factor of three (3) to signify the importance that acquisition purchase has in determining a management approach.
 - **Individually Listed or Contributing Elements to NRHP**—Resources listed on the National Register of Historic Places have been determined to be significant in our prehistory and history and represent the major patterns of our shared local, state, and national experience. They have met criteria for historical significance and retain integrity, meaning they continue to convey their significance. Many small parks are listed on the NRHP (often as historic sites) and may contain specific historic resources such as buildings or objects. Others are contributing elements to a NRHP designation. Parks meeting this criterion were weighted by a factor of two (2).
 - **Within L'Enfant Plan**—The L'Enfant plan provides the framework for the federal city and contains a large network of parks and open spaces, including the rights-of-way for streets and avenue corridors. While the specific landscape elements within many of the parks in the L'Enfant plan were never defined, their spatial configuration and alignment were critical for the definition of the city's vistas and system of open space. Many of the L'Enfant plan parks also contain significant works of art and memorials. Parks meeting this criterion were weighted by a factor of two (2).
 - **Existing Memorial**—The nation's capital contains numerous commemorative works of artistic and historic significance. Many of the small parks feature memorials that are located at critical junctures in the L'Enfant framework, or are identified as contributing resources within historic districts. The memorials take many forms, including figural statuary, structures, or design landscape spaces. Parks with an existing memorial were weighted by a factor of two (2).
- The *2M Plan* candidate designation discussed in Chapter 3 was not specifically included in the alignment criteria due to the high degree of overlap with the factors that were considered in selection of the 2M sites, including location within a significant vista or location within the L'Enfant Plan area. Designated and potential 2M sites are therefore captured by the other alignment criteria.
- **Within a Significant Vista**—Designed vistas are an essential element of the federal city. Defined for the most part by the alignment of streets and avenues, vistas connect large landscape areas across the city and provide visual focus to the city's primary buildings and structures such as the Capitol, the White House, and other smaller monuments and memorials. Height restrictions for buildings and other structures help protect the vistas. Many small parks help define the vistas, either as focal points or as landscape space within the vista rights-of-way. Parks within a significant vista were weighted by a factor of two (2).

- Within a NRHP District**—Historic Districts include a concentration of sites, buildings, structures, or objects linked by plan or development. The specific elements of the district, considered contributing elements, add to the district's historic character but may or may not have any individual distinction of their own. Small parks may contribute to a historic district. Parks meeting this criterion were weighted by a factor of one (1).
- Gateway Corridor**—Gateways are a defined element in the NCPC Urban Design Element of the *Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital: Federal Elements*. They include capital gateways that announce entry into the capital city where elements of the monumental core are visible or define the edge or major entries into the city boundary. These corridors visually connect public spaces, parks, monuments and important public buildings. Parks meeting this criterion were weighted by a factor of one (1).

Capital Gateways and Gateways as Defined in the Urban Design Element of the Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital: Federal Elements.



- **Small Park Parcel Geographic Grouping**—This criteria places importance on small parks that are geographically related. These parks were selected via a spatial analysis that identified bow tie parks, Fort Circle parks, individual parcels that comprise a circle, etc. Parks meeting this criterion were weighted by a factor of one (1).
- **Serves Traffic Management Function**—Some small parks, such as traffic islands, serve primarily a transportation function and cannot be used for another park purpose in the current configuration. Parks serving primarily transportation functions were weighted with a factor of negative three (-3) to recognize the current inconsistent use and function of the site in comparison to NPS mission and values.

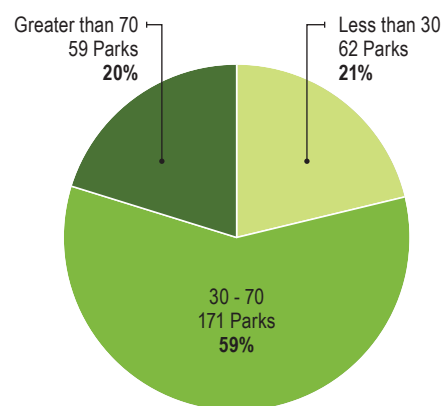
Alignment Scores

The distribution of park alignment scores for the small parks is shown in **Figure 17**. Those small parks receiving a score of 70 and above are considered to have a strong alignment with NPS mission, whereas small parks scoring less than 30 are considered to have a weaker alignment with NPS mission. Scores ranged from a high of 94 to a low of -12, with an overall average score of 50.4 across all small parks. The majority of the small parks, or about 59%, scored between 30 and 70 points and represent moderate alignment with NPS mission.

The outcome of the alignment score process could be influenced over time by a change to the criteria or through the modification of baseline conditions at a park. For example, installing a memorial on a small park or removing and/or reducing the traffic management function of a small park could increase the park's alignment score. As more consistent data is collected on small parks regarding their resources and values, how they are used, and the level of improvements, the alignment scoring process could be revisited to consider adding other criteria. Because the alignment score criteria in this process is designed to help inform a management decision, park improvements related to maintenance and design would be less influential to the alignment score.

The alignment process is based on a limited set of select criteria and is not intended to prescribe a management approach; additional analyses are recommended to verify resources and conditions prior to any management action. The methodology can provide general guidance and potential actions for NPS to consider when determining potential strategies.

Figure 17 Alignment Score Distribution



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CHAPTER

05

ACTION PLAN

ACTION PLAN

Recommended actions in this document are organized around five topics that support the small parks vision and goals. The 23 actions are intended to help NPS develop a more consistent approach toward management of small parks and achieve effective partnering.

- Assess ability to convey NPS park purpose (5)
- Explore management options (6)
- Expand funding opportunities (4)
- Standardize and simplify partnerships (5)
- Improve data management (3)

These recommendations should be considered for application across all small parks to ensure a holistic approach to management. The actions are identified and organized by timeframe in the tables that follow; preliminary timeframes have been assigned as follows:

Ongoing	Already in Progress
Short-Term	0-2 years
Mid-Term	2-5 years
Long-Term	5+ years

Table 2 Recommended Actions

Assess Each Small Park's Ability to Convey the NPS Park Purpose and to Support the NPS Identity.			Timeframe
1	Place the NPS arrowhead on significant parks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify a target list of small parks for additional signage. Determine appropriate placement for signage. 	Ongoing
2	Utilize the Alignment Score methodology and Evaluation Tool to identify small parks with national interests, those that provide local recreation services, and those that lack identifiable resources or values consistent with the park purpose.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bundle small parks (i.e. clusters) to expedite additional research and analysis needed to document resources and values. Develop consistent methodology for resource documentation and integrate findings into Small Park Evaluation Tool database. 	Short-Term
3	Investigate exceptions to governing regulations for small parks to increase flexibility for programming.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research precedents at other urban NPS parks for application in NCR. Seek modifications to regulations as applicable to support programming. 	Short-Term
4	Develop a one page value statement for each small park or clusters of small parks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify expectations for resource management in materials. Share materials with potential partners. 	Short-Term
5	Conduct natural resource surveys to collect data on small parks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop methodology for consistent data collection and ensure data entry into Small Parks Evaluation Tool. Consider utilizing summer interns to collect resource data. 	Short-Term

Explore New Management Options for Parks with Low Alignment Scores.			Timeframe
1	Explore transfer of jurisdiction or management responsibilities through easements, agreements, or covenants for small parks that function primarily as local-serving recreation and open space functions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Catalog existing recreation resources on small parks in the evaluation tool and identify parks within each park unit that could be suitable for playgrounds or other recreational uses. Coordinate meeting with DPR to discuss opportunities and needs. Pursue as unified transaction. 	Ongoing
2	Execute administrative transfers of small parks that have primarily a transportation or infrastructure function.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pursue as unified transaction. 	Short-Term
3	Document and track small park encroachment and develop strategies for consistent enforcement and monitoring.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish survey mechanism and data collection parameters to ensure consistent collection of information. Complete encroachment surveys for all small parks through site verification. Analyze information, prioritize issues and develop enforcement actions. Update information annually and input into evaluation tool. 	Short-Term
4	Retain prime sites for future monuments and memorials and continue to accept responsibility for sites in the future.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update potential 2M data in small parks database on regular basis. Flag prime future sites to ensure preservation. 	Short-Term

5	Work with NCPC to identify parks that could serve as a temporary memorial installation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Integrate findings into 2M Plan update. Develop requirement and protocols for temporary installations. 	Mid- Term
6	Identify operational and maintenance partners for the highest value parks, as appropriate (i.e. BIDs or Friends groups).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assess operational and maintenance needs. Discuss with key partners. 	Long-Term

Target and expand funding opportunities through outreach and awareness.			Timeframe
1	Develop a comprehensive small parks digital partner database to document agreement type, terms, and points of contact.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Link data to small parks evaluation tool. Use data to assess partner effectiveness and monitor adherence to agreement terms. Explore potential use of the Facility Management Software System (FMSS) as tracking tool. Track overall statistics on partnerships and benefits to NPS to ensure benefits outweigh administration of partnership. Use data to assess areas of opportunity for new partnerships or to expand existing partnerships to take on other roles. 	Short-Term
2	Pursue fundraising options with partner groups and grant providers and cultivate donor relationships.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leverage new, more flexible DO 21 guidelines to maximize funding for small parks. Participate in DO 21 training and certification. Explore potential donor recognition approaches for small parks. Develop public relations strategy to promote the need for partners (meeting with Advisory Neighborhood Commission representatives). 	Mid-Term
3	Leverage branding efforts to promote funding.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore methods for increasing visibility of NPS small parks. 	Mid-Term
4	Increase awareness about funding and partnership needs for small parks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pursue meetings with Congressional delegates. Promote partner groups in underserved neighborhoods. 	Mid-Term

Standardize and Simplify Partnership Agreements Process and Requirements Across the NCR			Timeframe
1	Develop a comprehensive Partnership Catalog documenting the range of partnership tools that NPS can enter into.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Standardize roles and relationships with existing and future partners and incorporate into catalog. Promote the catalog through various media channels and to existing partners. 	Short-Term
2	Explore approach for an 'umbrella' cooperative agreement with District government to cover all affected small parks that are partly managed or operated by DC government.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review 1949 agreement to determine need for updating (sunset clause). Draft new agreement to reflect current conditions and arrangements. 	Mid-Term
3	Streamline procedures for special use permits, event permits, rental agreements, and other mechanisms through 'master agreement templates.'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pursue a review of NCR partnerships to identify best practices based on information from partner database and a survey of park units to understand strengths and weaknesses of current agreements. Develop a suite of standardized templates for each partnership type and require adherence to templates across the NCR. Provide instructions for completion. Monitor effectiveness of templates through input from park units and partners and update templates to reflect changing needs. 	Mid-Term
4	Organize partnership seminars on a regular basis to clarify a standardized partner process and associated requirements.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop materials to clarify how to partner, methods for partnering, and requirements for different types of agreements. Introduce new partnering templates (see other action). Use partner database to develop invitee list. Seek input from partners on areas needing more clarification. Use opportunity to discuss NPS small park needs that do not have partners and to solicit support. 	Mid-Term
5	Explore alternative options for ensuring adequate ongoing maintenance of memorials and clarify preferences to Congress.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify best practices from across NPS that may be applicable to NCR. Hold discussions with park units for input. Develop materials to present persuasive message to Congress. 	Long-Term

Improve Data Management of Small Parks			Timeframe
1	Clarify property data and resolve conflicting small park parcel boundaries.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Develop comprehensive list of paper streets near small parks and prioritize list. ■ Hold meeting with DC government to review. ■ Work with adjacent property owners to pursue application for closing paper streets. ■ Update databases to reflect any parcel line changes. ■ Ensure all park agreements are documented in the system (leases, easements, etc.). 	Short-Term
2	Maintain and promote digital Small Parks Evaluation Tool to park units and provide resources to keep it updated.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Develop list of data sources included in the system. ■ Hold training sessions with park planners on how to use system. ■ Develop intake process for trouble shooting and data corrections. 	Short-Term
3	Clarify roles and responsibilities for maintaining small park digital database at park unit and NCR level.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Clarify expectations of park units in updating data. ■ Identify NCR point of contact for system updates and refreshes. ■ Ensure adequate funding for database upkeep and maintenance along with web interface upgrades, as applicable. 	Short-Term

CHAPTER

06

REFERENCES

REFERENCES

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