

# SOUTHWEST ECODISTRICT

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RENDERING OF SOUTHWEST ECODISTRICT

## NEIGHBORHOOD OVERVIEW

Located in the nation's capital just south of the National Mall, the 110 acre Southwest (SW) Ecodistrict comprises 15 blocks predominately used for the federal government. The SW Ecodistrict Plan examines how to manage federal assets and natural resources to transform the federal office enclave into a walkable high-density, mixed-use urban neighborhood, workplace, and visitor destination. The plan also establishes targets for effective asset and resource management to reach the goal of improving Washington's economic vitality and environmental health. The plan achieves these goals by using district-scale sustainable practices to integrate land use, transportation, and environmental planning with high performance infrastructure, buildings, and landscapes.

The SW Ecodistrict will: connect the National Mall with Washington's southwest waterfront; be a national showcase of sustainable district-scale urban development; provide sites for major new museums, memorials, and events; accommodate the federal government's future space needs; and include housing, commercial services, and new or improved public parks.

The SW Ecodistrict Plan was completed in 2013 by the National Capital Planning Commission (NCP), in coordination with 17 federal and local agencies. Land within the planning areas is either federally or privately owned, or consists of infrastructure under the jurisdiction of the District of Columbia, the Federal Highway Administration, or the CSX Rail Corporation.

## SNAPSHOT

**PROJECT TYPE:** Urban Revitalization

**SITE SIZE:** 110 acres

### ECONOMY:

- Reduce federal operating expenses and federal lease expenses
- Generate new tax revenue for the District of Columbia

### CURRENT LAND OWNERSHIP:

- 56% federally owned land supporting 8 federal buildings and 3 parks
- 46% privately owned land with eight commercial buildings
- 18% infrastructure (streets, freeways, and rail)

### ANTICIPATED IMPROVEMENTS:

- 14.3 acres of new or improved parks, with space for up to five memorial sites
- 1.8 million square feet of residential or hotel development
- 100,000 square feet of retail
- Improve 7.9 million square feet of existing federal office space
- Reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 51%
- Reduce potable water use by 70%
- Divert between 35% and 80% of waste from landfill

### ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES:

Increase commuter transit capacity; enhance walkability, arts and culture, connectivity, placemaking, resource efficiency, and living infrastructure.

### KEY STAKEHOLDERS + PARTNERS:

- SW Business Improvement District
- District of Columbia: Department of Transportation and Office of Planning
- Private commercial property owners
- General Services Administration
- National Park Service
- National Capital Planning Commission
- ZGF Architects, LLP



SUSTAINABLE STORMWATER INFRASTRUCTURE

The Plan demonstrates how planning, implementing, and operating buildings and infrastructure on a district scale results in more environmental and economic benefits than a traditional building-scale approach. The Plan proposes a development scenario that prioritizes projects over a 20-year implementation period as they become economically viable and align with federal and local investment priorities.

Achieving the Plan's urban development and environmental goals will require retrofitting existing energy, stormwater, and transportation infrastructure and improving access to public transit systems. It will also require increasing efficient use of federal buildings; repurposing unused federal assets for private mixed-use development; renovating private development; and supporting small business and housing development. NCPIC has begun the detailed planning to create and sustain partnerships among key stakeholders, whom will contribute to leading the way as to achieving sustainable district-scale urban redevelopment.

## SOUTHWEST ECODISTRICT + TARGET CITIES: ADVANCING URBAN REVITALIZATION

The partnership between the SW Ecodistrict and EcoDistricts began in June 2014 when several projects in Washington, D.C. entered EcoDistricts' two-year Target Cities pilot program. The program was designed to advance sustainable, district-scale development and create replicable models for change. Target Cities was an opportunity for a group of exemplary and diverse projects to advance through peer learning and shared experience. The program focused on collaborative governance training, technical assistance, and peer networking to align stakeholder interests and responsibilities, establish a district governance model, create a roadmap, and implement catalytic projects. EcoDistricts assembled a team of staff and experts to support the SW Ecodistrict project team, who met six times in eighteen months to advance each of the team's urban regeneration goals.

### ABOUT THE ECODISTRICTS TARGET CITIES PROGRAM

Target Cities was a two-year immersion program that has benefited 11 districts across nine North American cities. Launched in 2014 as a Clinton Global Initiative Commitment, the program was designed to advance sustainable, district-scale development while creating replicable models for change. By providing peer learning and technical assistance, Target Cities helped participating teams elevate their sustainability strategy with an emphasis on project governance, performative roadmapping and EcoDistricts Certified readiness.

Together, the cohort of 30 practitioners from 11 industry sectors participated in four peer learning workshops and a series of best practice webinars.

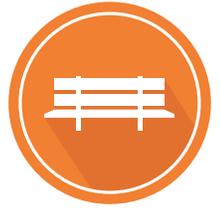
Key program partners included Enterprise Community Partners, Global Green, USGBC, Reshape Infrastructure Strategies, Biohabitats, McGuire Woods, Neighborworks America and iSEED. A key outcome of the program was the production of the EcoDistricts Protocol and certification program, EcoDistricts Certified.

Learn more at:

[www.ecodistricts.org/target-cities](http://www.ecodistricts.org/target-cities)

## EARLY WINS

**PLACE:** The SW Ecodistrict has a unique opportunity to establish and enhance its identity by leveraging its location in Washington D.C., the seat of the nation’s capital, through redevelopment, placemaking, and wayfinding. Formed in 2015, the SW Business Improvement District (SWBID), a key player in fostering near-term improvements within the Ecodistrict, is developing several placemaking initiatives. These include a comprehensive wayfinding system throughout the Ecodistrict to inform residents and visitors of key destinations. The SWBID is also working on programming of 10th Street, SW to host festivals, concerts, and outdoor public art exhibitions.



The JBG Companies is building a new, high-performing 220,000 sq ft. office building, scheduled for completion in 2018. Designed by ZGF Architects LLP, the building will achieve a LEED Gold certification standard. Nearby, the 140,000 sq ft. Spy Museum, designed by Rogers Stirk Harbour + Partners, is the first new major development fronting 10th Street, SW, and is scheduled to open in 2018. This development is the catalyst for interim placemaking improvements currently being planned for 10th Street, SW. In addition, as part of an effort to dispose of excess and unneeded federal properties, GSA recently sold the historic U.S. Department of Agriculture Cotton Annex building to a private landowner who may build a hotel or residential development on the 1.4-acre site. These projects are important steps in economic revitalization and building a mixed-use community.

A Heritage Trail already weaves through the district, highlighting individual neighborhoods of local and national significance. The SW Ecodistrict Plan proposes a heritage trail link to provide pedestrians with a seamless network of safe, walkable connections that offer cultural and historical enrichment. The heritage trail link will feature interpretive information about the landscape, historical figures, the area’s planning history and historic buildings.

**CONNECTIVITY:** Released in March 2015, the 10th Street, SW Programmatic Design Concept describes the future design of the EcoDistrict’s main corridor as an urban garden promenade with space for daily activities and special events, such as festivals and exhibitions. 10th Street, SW will also serve as the SW EcoDistrict’s sustainability spine. The visibility and educational value of the district-scale infrastructure strategies will increase through the improvement of pedestrian and bike connections and by enhancing the streetscape with wayfinding, lighting, public art, and street furniture.



LANDSCAPE PLAN FOR BANNEKER PARK



RENDERING OF BANNEKER PARK



Permanent improvements on and along 10th Street, SW will likely be phased because of the complex redevelopment and infrastructure conditions. However, in the near term, interim placemaking improvements are planned to support both the opening of the Spy Museum and connections between the National Mall and SW waterfront.

To enhance the SW EcoDistrict's vibrancy and protect the National Mall from over-development, Banneker Park, at the terminus of 10th Street, SW on axis with the Smithsonian Castle, is proposed as the next preeminent national cultural destination. Managed by the National Park Service, this eight acre park sits 45 feet above Maine Avenue. Despite its location less than a half mile from the National Mall, poor pedestrian conditions disconnect the plaza from the city and contribute to its lack of use.

In April 2017, the NCPD approved plans for the interim Banneker Park pedestrian and bicycle connection. Scheduled for completion in 2018, this connection will provide safe, functional, and aesthetically pleasing pedestrian and bicycle connections between 10th Street, SW and Maine Avenue, SW. Features will include shade trees and new lighting to enhance accessible pedestrian stairways and walkways, low-maintenance groundcover to replace riprap to stabilize slopes, and bio-retention areas to capture all stormwater runoff. These improvements, in addition to the existing seating and grand central fountain within Banneker Park, will provide visitors, workers, and residents with a meditative space to engage nature in the city, improve physical and mental health, and enhance community identity.

**LIVING INFRASTRUCTURE:** Completed in April 2014, the 10th Street, SW Stormwater Infrastructure Study identifies opportunities to increase water efficiency through buildings and infrastructure. The study addresses how 10th Street's stormwater infrastructure can capture and reuse all of the neighborhood's rainwater and reduce potable municipal water use by 70% per person. The mix of uses, current population density, and projected 33% development growth in the SW EcoDistrict creates a unique demand for both potable and non-potable water. Investing in shared rainwater collection infrastructure is critical to capture and store stormwater from the district in order to reduce operational costs and to balance water supply and demand. Vegetated systems for treating stormwater, as well as green roofs, new parks, and streetscapes will reduce the urban heat island effect, provide pedestrian comfort, and enrich community life. This system will also provide connected habitat corridors to the Washington Channel and improve the visual character of the district.



**RESOURCE REGENERATION:** The SW EcoDistrict Plan has an ambitious goal to reduce energy use by 62% per person in existing and new buildings by generating and distributing energy efficiently, and using decarbonized fuel that is supplemented with renewable power. This is achieved by using the existing central utility plant to heat and cool all federal and new or rehabilitated buildings. Using micro-grids for federal and clustered private development will allow for more flexible generation and distribution of renewable energy.



Most buildings and some infrastructure will support solar arrays and ground source heat production. Using these strategies, the SW EcoDistrict can achieve a 75% per person energy use reduction as measured in carbon, with a 51% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions. Achieving zero net energy, as measured by carbon, is most achievable and cost effective if all buildings connect to the central utility plant, and the fuel source switches to a zero-carbon renewable fuel source.

## LESSONS LEARNED + CONTINUED CHALLENGES

At the completion of the two-year Target Cities program, the EcoDistricts board and staff evaluated each district. The comments below reflect assessments shared by all parties and describe challenges that the SW EcoDistrict will likely face, similar to other communities' efforts to regenerate neighborhoods.

1. With 17 federal and district agencies involved with the initiative, it is important to align stakeholder expectations through clear governance and decision-making processes.
2. With 1.8 million new square feet of residential and hotel accommodations, a continuing challenge is ensuring that new development is compatible with the adjacent historic landscape of the National Mall.
3. To implement the SW EcoDistrict goals, stakeholders must establish the right public-private partnerships to capitalize on development opportunities in order to make infrastructure improvements.
4. Since the study area consists solely of office, hotel, and cultural land uses, the lack of residential uses limits the amount and the type of stakeholder involvement in the process.



RENDERING OF TENTH STREET



RENDERING OF L'ENFANT STATION

## NEXT STEPS

1. Continue to work with key partners: the SWBID, DC Department of Transportation, DC Department of Energy and Environment, DC Office of Planning, the National Park Service, and where appropriate, the General Services Administration and private sector, to advance district-scale infrastructure projects as building reuse, rehabilitation, or redevelopment opportunities occur.
2. Continue to advance interim placemaking work on 10th Street, SW, Independence Avenue, and other key streets.



**“Participating in the Target City Program has been exciting. It has helped us tap a larger body of knowledge and connect with other EcoDistrict projects in Washington and across the nation. It has been helpful and motivating to compare, share, and learn with EcoDistrict projects similar to ours.”**

- MEGHAN SPIGLE, NATIONAL CAPITAL PLANNING COMMISSION

## ABOUT ECODISTRICTS

EcoDistricts is nonprofit that advances a new standard for community development. Through its programs and certification standard, EcoDistricts helps create equitable, sustainable, and resilient **neighborhoods for all**.