

Agenda

ANC 6A Transportation & Public Space Committee Meeting

Monday, June 15, 2026 at 7:00 pm

For those attending via Zoom, use this link: <https://dc-gov.zoom.us/j/87168648397>

Call-in Number: 1 301 715 8592

Webinar ID (access code): 71 6864 8397

One tap mobile: +13017158592,,87168648397#

Public Meeting – All are welcome

Community comment welcome; may be limited to two minutes to provide opportunity for all to speak. Community comment time will be opened after each Old and New Business item.

- I. Call meeting to order.
- II. Introductions & Announcements.
- III. Old Business
 - A. Lovejoy Park - Duilio Passariello will join to discuss his proposed art installation and potential grant to build it.
 - B. Micromobility - DDOT and Council Committee on Transportation and Environment staff will join to discuss solutions to problems related to micromobility
 - C. 1400 Block G Street NE - The TPS Committee has previously requested that DDOT convert this to a one way to cut down on Chik-Fil-A and rush hour cut through traffic. That has not come to pass and neighbors still have the same issues.
 - D. 11th Street SE Cycletrack - Committee Member Mark Sussman will provide an update on 6A's joint efforts with 6B to secure funding to build the full plan.
 - E. Gold Line - Holding time to discuss in case new updates come out before the TPS meeting this month.
 - F. DC Office of Planning H Street Land Use and Market Study - DC OP released their report and Chair Bloomstine will provide a brief overview.
- IV. New Business
 - A. DDOT PSRA Permit Tracking# 11209259 Review# 885671 - New Sidewalk Cafe Enclosed at 732 MARYLAND AVENUE NE. Public space permit was filed on this issue.
- V. Additional community comment (time permitting).
- VI. Adjourn meeting.

H STREET LAND USE AND MARKET STUDY



Findings And Preliminary Recommendations
June 10, 2026



PROJECT BACKGROUND

The H Street Land Use and Market Study looks at the segment of H Street NE between 3rd Street NE and 15th Street NE. The study examines how land uses, storefronts, public spaces, and connectivity work today, and where changes could better support the people who live, work, and spend time along the corridor.

H Street NE is one of Northeast DC's most recognizable corridors. It features local businesses, arts and culture, entertainment, and housing that reflect the corridor's legacy as a cultural destination.

H Street NE has experienced significant changes since it last received a planning study in 2004. Over the last two decades, H Street has experienced growth in mixed-use development; however recent economic shifts have revealed challenges, such as retail vacancy and stalled development projects, that signal a need for updated land use strategies.

The study focuses on key places along the corridor where improvements could make a meaningful difference. Topics include strengthening public spaces, improving access and safety, supporting small businesses, and addressing long vacant storefronts. Connecting it all together, the plan also looks at making H Street NE more walkable, welcoming, and easier to navigate.

This interim summary shares what we've learned so far and outlines early themes and draft ideas for discussion. These findings are not final. They are meant to gather feedback and help refine future recommendations.

What's presented here is based on analysis and community input, including public meetings, focus groups, stakeholder conversations, and coordination among District agencies. Community feedback will continue to shape the study. The DC Office of Planning (OP) will refine the analysis and recommendations and release a final report later in 2026. Information about next steps and upcoming engagement opportunities is included at the end of the report.

PROJECT VISION AND GOALS

H Street is a resilient, evolving main street that encourages reinvestment and housing, strengthens local businesses, improves access and walkability, and creates welcoming public spaces where arts, culture, and everyday gatherings anchor community life.



Support dynamic and resilient retail with existing and new businesses.



Create a land use strategy that guides growth.



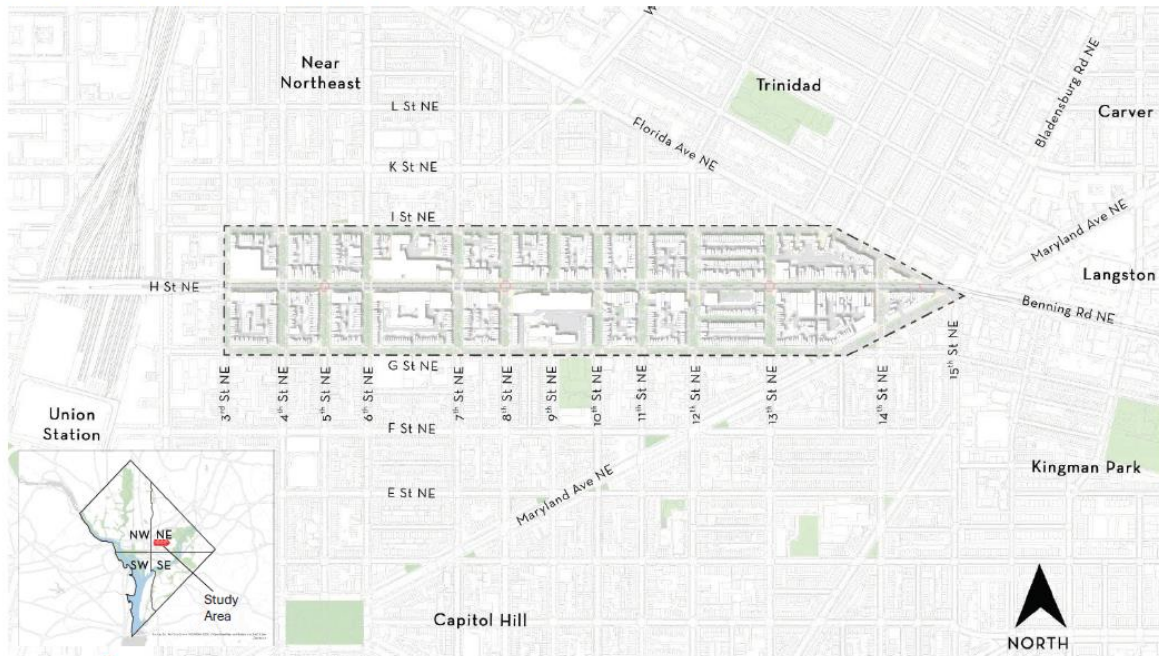
Bolster the corridor identity as a destination for arts and culture.



Design people-centered public spaces in strategic locations.



PROJECT STUDY AREA



PLANNING CONTEXT

H Street NE is shaped by a layered set of District planning and zoning policies that date back two decades and continue to evolve.

H Street NE Strategic Development Plan

The corridor's foundational policy document is the H Street NE Strategic Development Plan, adopted in 2004, which established a comprehensive framework and thematic districts reflecting different character and development priorities. These recommendations were subsequently implemented through the H Street Northeast Overlay District, which applies corridor-specific zoning and design standards and formally divides H Street NE into the Housing, Retail, and Arts sub-districts.

The District's Comprehensive Plan

OP is working alongside DC residents, community-based organizations, businesses, and elected officials to develop DC 2050, the District's next Comprehensive Plan. This plan will shape the city's growth and development long-term.

Ongoing Transportation Studies

Initiatives around H Street NE include DDOT's study of future transportation improvements and a WMATA transit study for RFK Stadium.

H Street NE Strategic Development Plan (OP-2004)

This small area plan established a land use framework with thematic sub-districts, design guidelines, and recommendations for land use, zoning, development, retail, transit, parking, and the public realm.

H Street Northeast Neighborhood Overlay District

These zoning regulations (first adopted in 2006) implement recommendations of the 2004 plan. The overlay includes three sub-districts – Housing (H-H), Retail (H-R), and Arts (H-A) – which permit different zoning districts and ground floor uses, along with design standards.



H STREET NE IN CONTEXT



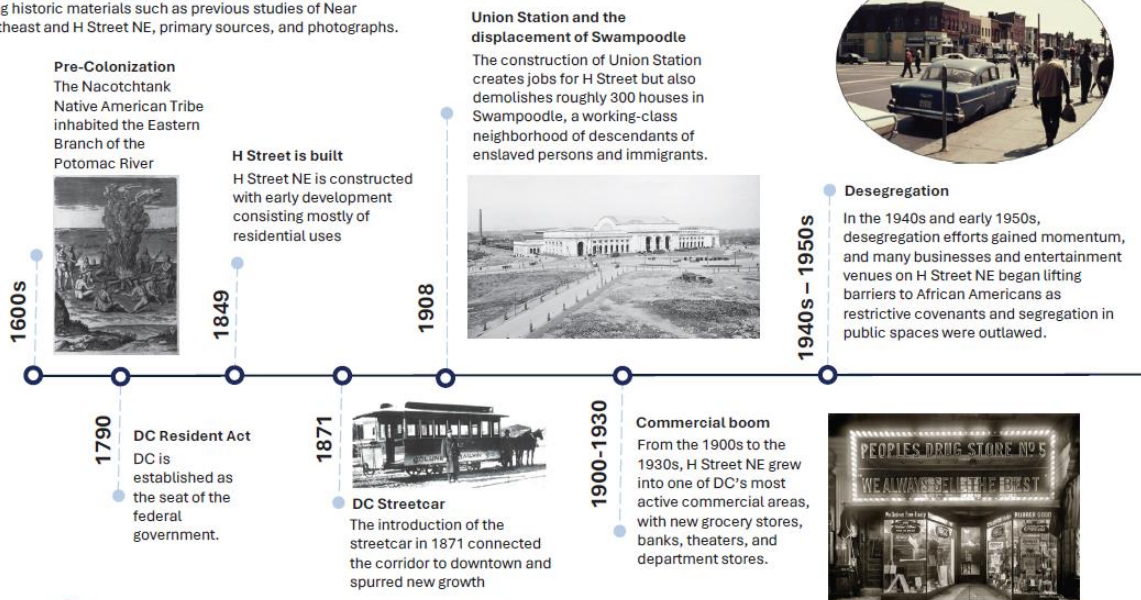
- H Street NE sits between two significant nodes – Union Station to the west and the future RFK campus to the east – linking regional transit, downtown, and emerging redevelopment areas.
- At the eastern end, the Starburst intersection brings five major streets together, and is adjacent to the Hechinger Mall site, a future redevelopment opportunity.
- Farther east, the planned redevelopment of the RFK campus represents a major destination, with H Street NE serving as the most direct, active urban connection between this site and the rest of the city.
- H Street NE functions as both a destination and a connector, combining retail, dining, cultural venues, and neighborhood-serving uses with through-movement across the city.

Map of the H Street Study Area showing links to Union Station and the Future RFK Redevelopment

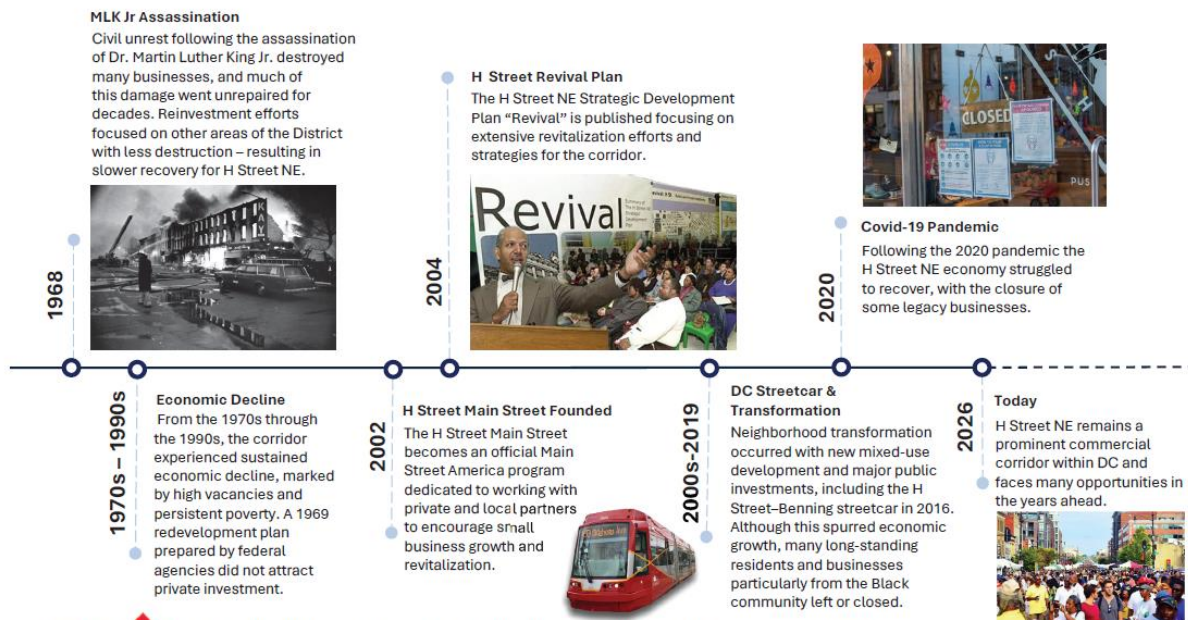


HISTORY

Research was conducted in coordination with the Historic Preservation Office to understand the history of H Street NE, using historic materials such as previous studies of Near Northeast and H Street NE, primary sources, and photographs.



HISTORY (continued)



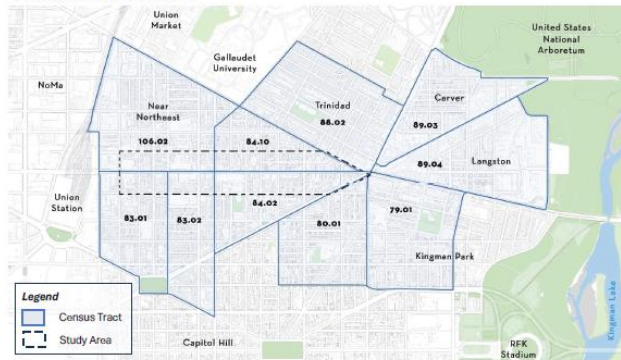
DEMOGRAPHICS

Community Profile

The community profile provides a snapshot of the people who live near the H Street Land Use and Market Study area. To better understand the community, OP used US Census Bureau data to learn about the area and its residents. Data presented in this section helped inform the recommendations of the study.

The study area lies within eight census tracts; 79.01, 80.01, 83.01, 83.02, 84.02, 84.10, 88.02, and 106.02. Two additional census tracts, 89.03 and 89.04 were included as part of this study due their proximity to the study area. Demographic data was collected from the Census Bureau’s 2020-2024 American Community Survey, 5 Year Estimates along with historical trends to analyze how the study area changed over time.

Census Tracts in Study Area



Population

- The study area currently has a total population of 37,488, representing a 33% growth rate, significantly higher than the District-wide 17% growth rate over the same period (2010-2024).
- 45% of residents within the study area are between the ages of 25 to 44 years old, indicating a slightly younger population when compared to the District’s 38% of total residents for the same age bracket.
- 33% of married or cohabitating couple households have children under the age of 18 years living with them – consistent with the District’s.



Population
37,488



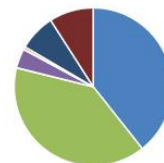
Median Age
35 Years



Couple Households with Children
33%

Hispanic or Latino and Race

- Asian (4%)
- Black (40%)
- Hispanic (9%)
- Two or More Races (8%)
- Some other Race (1%)
- White (39%)



DEMOGRAPHICS (continued)

Population Over Time

Population trends show H Street NE is diversifying over time. The 2010s saw a major demographic shift: a decrease (total population and percent) of Black residents and increase in white residents. The racial makeup today has roughly equal populations of Black and white residents. Over this time, the corridor has seen steady growth in Hispanic, Asian, and two or more race populations.

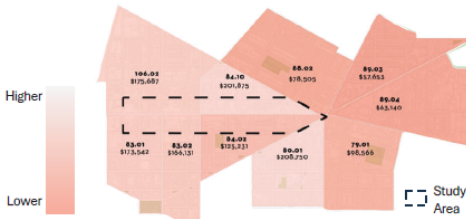
Households

The combined census tract area has a total of 17,340 households.

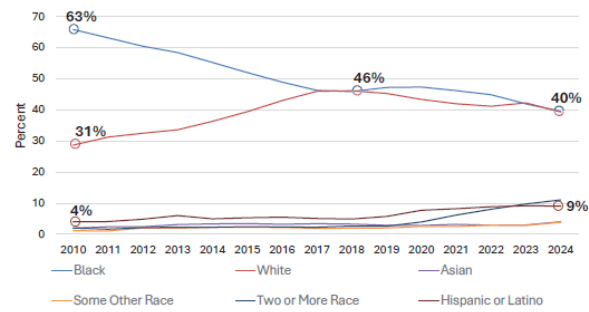
The Median Household Income (MHI) for the study area is \$125,319, which is significantly higher than the District's MHI of \$109,870. However, when each census tract is analyzed, there are significant disparities that are illuminated within the study area. For example, Census Tract 89.03 (Carver/Langston area) has a MHI of \$57,653 as opposed to Census Tract 80.01 (Capitol Hill area) which has an MHI of \$208,750.

Furthermore, there is a distinct wealth gap among races within the study area. White households made up 70% of households who earned more than \$150,000 in 2024. In contrast, Black households made up 77% of those who earned less than \$25,000 and accounted for only 12% of households who earned \$150,000 or more.

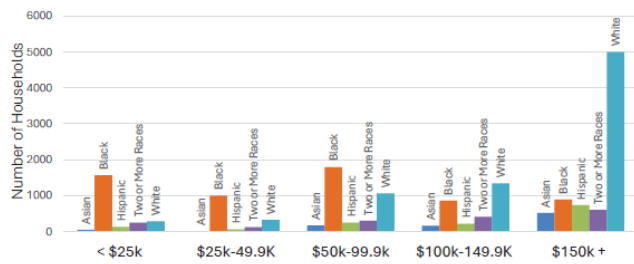
Median Household Income by Census Tract



Race & Ethnicity Over Time



Household Income Distribution by Race Across Five Income Ranges



FINDINGS: CORRIDOR VISITATION

After a period of robust investment and retail growth during the 2010s, H Street's retail market is in transition as it recovers from pandemic-related business turnover and resulting declines in foot traffic and storefront occupancy.

- Total visitation has dropped by 1.2 million visits, or 20%, between 2019 and 2025, straining retail viability. In 2025, the corridor saw 4.7 million visits, down from 5.9 million in 2019.
- U Street experienced a similar drop over this period. Like H Street NE, it has a concentrated nightlife business cluster heavily affected by pandemic-related challenges and has seen limited recent development. Over the same period, Union Market saw a sharp rise in visitation, attracting 67% more visitors than in 2019 due to growing residential population and a strong mix of dining, retail, and nightlife.
- The eastern end of H Street NE faced the steepest decline in foot traffic compared to pre-pandemic levels relative to other corridor segments. Visitation to H Street's eastern segment dropped 36% between 2019 and 2025 – more than double that of the western segment (-15%) and central segment (-10%).
- This decline on the east end is likely attributable to limited residential development (with just 183 new units built since 2015, compared to 1,353 on the rest of the corridor), zoning, and transit access, along with rising competition for nightlife activity.

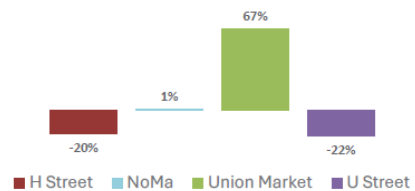
H Street NE Corridor Segment Comparison

Node	2019 to 2025 Visitation Change	Total 2025 Visits	Retail Vacancy Rate	Multi-Family Units
Western (3 rd to 8 th St)	-15%	2.8M	18%	1,151
Central (8 th to 12 th St)	-10%	1.1M	27%	692
Eastern (12 th to 15 th St)	-36%	1.4M	31%	364

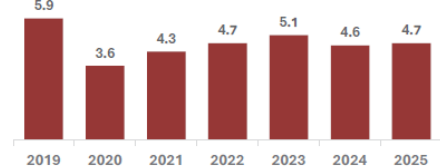
Source: PlacerAI, Costar

20%
Decline in Annual Visitation from 2019 to 2025

Change in Overall Visitation from 2019 to 2025



Annual Visitation (in millions) 2019-2025



Source: PlacerAI



FINDINGS: RETAIL MARKET

Storefront vacancy along the corridor is high, reflecting a high rate of business turnover, and limited complementary land uses and accessibility.

- Demand for retail space along H Street NE has notably declined since 2020, while the overall retail square footage along the corridor has remained stable. The corridor's ground-floor vacancy (26%) is double its 2020 levels (11%) and nearly double the regional average for major retail clusters (14%), and higher than most comparable commercial corridors in the District.
- This declining demand has resulted in an approximate 5-10% drop in asking rents since 2019, when rents ranged closer to \$35-\$55/SF, compared to \$30-\$50/SF in 2026.
- This uptick in vacancy reflects the severe economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and corresponding shifts in consumer behavior and business operating conditions that have limited retail viability. Increased competition from Union Market and NoMa has also contributed to declining demand for retail space along H Street NE.
- The corridor's lack of any major new residential development since 2020 has also hurt retail viability. Additional development would expand local spending capacity and help reduce vacancy, as for every 100 new residential units, those new residents can support approximately 600-1,600 SF of retail space.
- Storefront vacancy along H Street is more prevalent on the central and eastern segments of the corridor, compared to the western segment, which benefits from proximity to Metro and Union Market and more new ground floor tenant spaces.
- Despite these challenges, leasing momentum has picked up since 2025, with demand primarily driven by food and beverage and health/wellness tenants.

\$30-\$50 Retail Asking Rent/SF

DC Average: \$43/SF
 Union Market: \$50-\$70/SF
 U Street: \$35-\$65/SF

Demand for H Street NE retail space has declined since 2019, with many asking rents falling around the District average of \$43/SF. Nearby Union Market, which offers more consistent foot traffic and a strong regional brand, features rents approximately \$20/SF higher than H Street NE, as of Q2 2026.

26% Storefront Vacancy Rate¹

Compared to 14% Regional Avg.
 Compared to 11% in early 2020.
 Compared to 6.9% Costar rate

Retail Vacancy Rate



Source: JS&A, Dochter & Alexander DC Retail Market Report, Winter 2026

Retail Vacancy Rate by Corridor Segment¹

Segment	Western (3 rd to 8 th St)	Central (8 th to 12 th St)	Eastern (12 th to 15 th St)
Vacancy Rate	18%	26%	31%

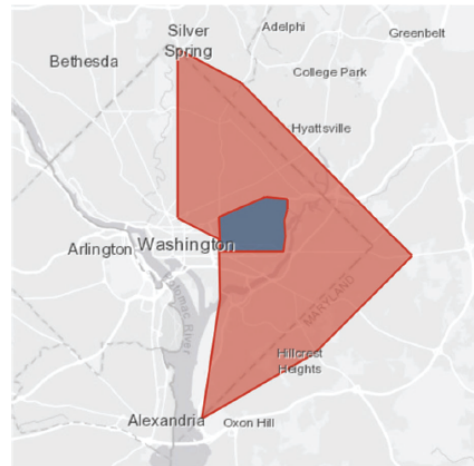
¹ 26% vacancy rate includes spaces with active leases that are not occupied ("shadow vacancies"). Rate based on ground-floor inventory conducted by JS&A in March 2026. 20% of commercial buildings in study area have no active leases, as of April 2026 (DC DOB).



FINDINGS: TRADE AREA SUMMARY

H Street NE functions as both a local-service commercial corridor and as a regional destination.

- Around 25% of corridor visitation is composed of residents from adjacent neighborhoods.
- An additional 35% of visitors originate from Northeast and Southeast DC, as well as nearby portions of Prince George's County, Maryland. Approximately 40% of customers originate from other areas of the DC region.
- Since 2019, the corridor's market draw has remained largely stable, with a modest shift toward more local visitation, reflected in a 0.9% uptick in the share of visits from the Primary Trade Area.
- The corridor has lost market capture of both nearby residents and destination visitors since 2019, reflecting a broad decline in the overall visitor experience. This broad decline amongst local and non-local patrons indicates a need to address the core building blocks of a healthy commercial corridor: **improving the overall experience of spending time along the corridor** (through streetscaping, placemaking, art, etc.), **expanding the number of reasons patrons have to visit the corridor** (new businesses, events, cultural activities, etc.), and **expanding the size of its local customer base** (through additional residential development).



● Primary Trade Area ● Secondary Trade Area

H Street's Primary Trade Area spans adjacent neighborhoods within walking and short driving distance, while its Secondary Trade Area spans across Northeast DC, Southeast DC, and nearby Prince George's County.



FINDINGS: ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DISTRICT

H Street's dense cluster of performance venues and nightlife establishments in its eastern node serves as a key asset for the corridor, positioning it to re-emerge as an arts and cultural destination.

- H Street's eastern Arts District (between 12th and 15th St NE) remains a strength for the corridor, but visitation has declined since 2019 due to several factors including limited Metro access, rising competition for dining and nightlife from other areas, a national drop in alcohol consumption, high business turnover, and pandemic-related disruptions.
- Despite these challenges, the number of arts and entertainment businesses has nearly returned to pre-COVID levels. Leasing momentum has strengthened, driven by food and beverage users. Notable recent openings, such as Henceforth and Transmission, have reactivated former high-profile cultural spaces.
- Visitation remains below pre-pandemic levels, with average Saturday foot traffic in the Arts District down 37% from 2019 to 2025. Future demand will likely continue to center on restaurants and bars, while growth in other arts and cultural uses may remain limited without additional support.
- Restrictions on live music and operating hours currently limit the node's ability to serve as a vibrant cultural hub. Discretionary ABCA approval processes for liquor licenses can limit restaurants and bars operating hours and allowable indoor and outdoor music and become barriers to new bars and venues locating along the corridor or existing ones choosing to host live music.
- The Atlas Performing Arts Center and the upcoming Nesso Plaza position the 1300 block to reaffirm its role as an arts and cultural hub. Continued success will depend on providing an exceptional visitor experience; enhanced marketing, branding, and cultural programming; increased support for live music; and improved connectivity that can compete with more transit-accessible destinations.



The combination of a strong performing arts anchor (Atlas, pictured above), two smaller music venues (Pie Shop and Transmission), and a dense cluster of complementary restaurants and bars provides the eastern end of the corridor with the core assets needed to serve as a robust entertainment hub.



FINDINGS: LOCALLY-OWNED BUSINESSES

The H Street NE corridor has a brand closely associated with locally-owned businesses, particularly restaurants and bars. However, rising costs, declining foot traffic, and safety concerns have challenged business operations since 2020.

- Over 80% of retail businesses along the H Street NE corridor are locally-owned. This share is especially high among food and beverage establishments (88%) and merchandise retail/clothing stores (85%).
- Recent leasing activity has also been driven primarily by local operators. 89% of businesses that have opened since the start of 2024 have been locally owned.
- Notably, H Street NE also has an enduring legacy as a hub for small, Black-owned businesses, and the corridor still features numerous Black-owned businesses – particularly restaurants, bars, and nightclubs.
- Operational challenges cited by local business owners on the corridor include cleanliness, public space, safety, and customer access (including parking, transit, and pedestrian connectivity). These are key priorities for enhancing corridor-wide business conditions.

80.4% of retail businesses along the H Street corridor are locally-owned, including:

- 87.5% of food and beverage establishments
- 85.0% of merchandise retail and clothing stores
- 89.3% of businesses that have opened since 2024



Sidamo, a locally owned and established small business along the corridor.



FINDINGS: RETAIL OUTLOOK

H Street NE retail has significant assets to build on, including its mix of restaurants and bars, nightlife, arts and cultural uses, and local business presence.

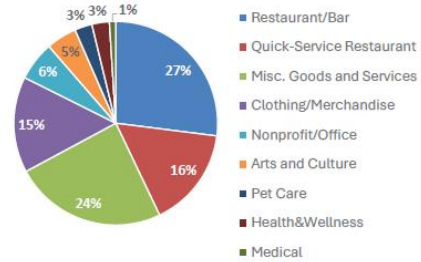
- The eastern end of the H Street NE corridor is well positioned to serve as a stronger cultural and entertainment hub with the right interventions, though it currently has the highest vacancy rate and lowest foot traffic.
- Leasing momentum has picked up over the past year, with growth driven by food and beverage and health/wellness tenants, and local operators. Future leasing demand is expected to continue to be driven by dining and nightlife uses.
- Several sit-down and bar concepts have opened since 2025, and the upcoming indoor-outdoor marketplace Nesso Plaza could become an additional destination driver to complement Atlas Performing Arts Center.
- Improved market capture will likely depend upon offering a better pedestrian experience, improved safety and cleanliness, and creative programming and marketing to introduce (or re-introduce) new visitors to the corridor businesses. Unlocking growth of mixed-use residential development will also boost retail viability by increasing customers and foot traffic.



Dining and nightlife uses will likely continue to drive near-term retail demand, complemented by fitness/wellness uses, given strong citywide demand for both retail segments.¹

¹ WDCEP Retail Strategic Plan, 2026

Retail Business Mix



Most Common New Business Types Since 2025

- Restaurant/Bar
- Fast-Casual Dining
- Health/Wellness



FINDINGS: MULTIFAMILY MARKET

Demand for multifamily units along H Street NE has declined relative to the rest of the District.

- The corridor still has a healthy multifamily occupancy rate of 94%, above the citywide rate of 90%.
- The corridor no longer commands the premium rents it did in the late 2010s. As of Q2 2026, its average multifamily rent is 11% above the citywide average, compared to 22% in 2019. In total, effective multifamily rental rates have dropped 5% since 2019, compared to a citywide increase of 5% during the same period.
- A particularly large drop-off in demand has occurred since Q4 2024, reflected in a decline in rental rates. Effective average rents along the corridor fell 6.3% between Q4 2024 and Q4 2025, the largest reduction of any residential submarket within DC. Notably, nearly all DC saw a decline in rents over this period, but typically closer to 1-3%.
- This decline in demand has been partially driven by large supply growth in nearby Union Market and NoMa, safety concerns, and slower growth of complementary retail amenities.



Since the delivery of the Avec (pictured above) in 2020, H Street has not seen the delivery of a multifamily project with 10 or more units.

Effective Multifamily Rent/SF



Source: CoStar

The gap between H Street rents and the citywide multifamily rental average has narrowed since 2019, as residential demand has been increasingly captured by other emerging neighborhoods.



FINDINGS: DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITY

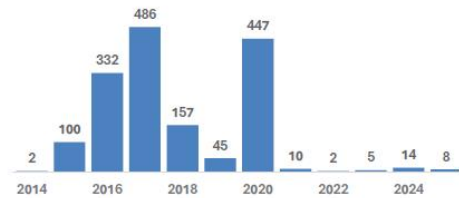
Multifamily and mixed-use development along the corridor has significantly slowed since 2020, influenced both by macro-level economic factors and development barriers specific to H Street NE.

- After adding 1,567 multifamily units between 2015 and 2020, the corridor saw a delivery of just 39 multifamily units between 2021 and 2025.
- H Street is no longer attracting residential rents or retail rents at the top of the market, and there is currently more retail supply than demand.
- A financial analysis of three conceptual development sites along the corridor found that, given weakened demand, layered regulatory requirements, high financing and construction costs, building over seven stories is highly challenging to finance on the corridor. Therefore, zoning changes that allow for increased height or building area will likely have a limited impact in the short-term, as external factors limit investment interest.
- In the current real estate market, an occupied residential unit can generate a similar rent per square footage as an occupied retail use. However, storefront vacancy (26%) is significantly higher than multifamily vacancy (6%). Mandatory ground-floor retail uses therefore force prospective developers and investors to factor in the risk of extended ground-floor vacancy, which lowers projected operating revenues and overall project viability.
- In the H Street Overlay District, developments on a lot size over 6,000 SF require special exception approval by the Board of Zoning Adjustments (BZA). This requirement, combined with multiple overlay districts, bonus density requirements, and/or Planned Unit Development (PUD) processes, adds uncertainty, cost, and risk that further limit interest from developers and commercial tenants.



Progress at several planned redevelopment sites has stalled, due to rising construction costs, high interest rates, and slowed rental growth. These factors have also driven a citywide decline in new residential construction since 2022. (1207 H St. and 1000 H St. sites pictured above)

New Multifamily Units on H Street



Source: CoStar



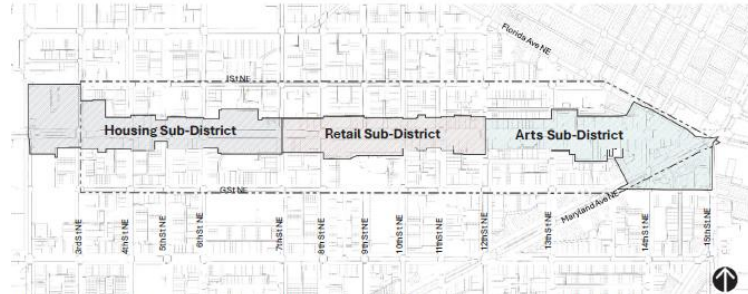
EXISTING LAND USE

Thematic Sub-Districts

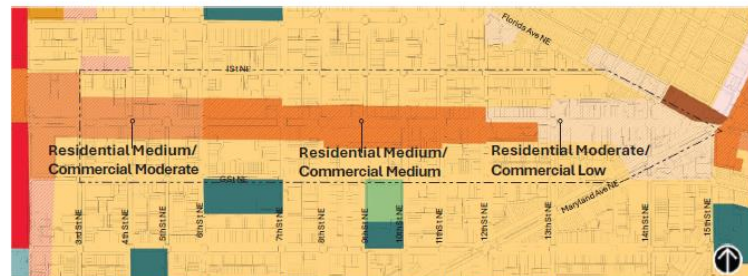
The 2004 Strategic Development Plan organized the H Street NE corridor into three thematic sub-districts—Housing, Retail, and Arts & Entertainment—to focus different types of activity in places best suited to support them. The Housing sub-district, near Metrorail, was intended to concentrate new housing. The Retail sub-district was designed to cluster shops and services in a central area to create a stronger commercial destination. The Arts & Entertainment sub-district built on existing venues to foster a cultural destination supported by arts uses, restaurants, and nightlife. This study evaluates how well they function today and whether changes are needed to better align with market realities and the community's vision.

Future Land Use Map

The Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use Map establishes policy guidance for how areas of the city should develop and informs corresponding zoning designations. Along H Street NE, designations are primarily mixed use but vary in their commercial and residential components. These designations are intended to align with the corridor's thematic sub-districts, for example, higher commercial intensity in the Retail sub-district and lower overall intensity in the Arts sub-district. Increasing residential density in the Arts sub-district would bring more people to the eastern end of the corridor, supporting street activity and strengthening demand for ground floor retail. A larger residential presence can also improve perceived safety by increasing "eyes on the street" and extending activity throughout the day and evening.



Map showing the sub-districts, including the Housing sub-district on the western segment, Retail sub-district in the center segment, and Arts sub-district on the eastern segment.



Current Future Land Use Map designates both the western and central segments as Residential Medium/Commercial Moderate, and the eastern segment as Residential Moderate/Commercial Low.



ZONING OVERLAY

Design Requirements

The H Street zoning overlay has regulations that apply to all H Street sub-districts. These design standards are intended to support a continuous, pedestrian-oriented retail corridor. Requirements include:

- **Street wall.** At least 75% of a building must be located at the property line, to a minimum height of 25 feet.
- **Parking.** Above-ground parking structures must provide at least 65% active commercial frontage at street level and curb cuts on H Street are not permitted.
- **Storefront transparency.** New buildings must provide clear windows on at least 50% of the ground floor frontage.
- **Pedestrian access.** Commercial uses must have direct sidewalk entrances. Multifamily buildings must include a primary entrance on H Street. Buildings must be designed to allow frequent entrances averaging every 40 feet.
- **Ground-floor height.** Ground floors must have a 14-foot floor-to-ceiling height. This is supported by an additional 5 feet of allowable building height.
- **Signage.** Limits apply to projecting signs and window-blocking signage; rooftop signs are prohibited.

Zoning Overlay

The H Street overlay sub-districts have specific rules relating to required and regulated uses on the ground floor of buildings.

- The Housing overlay is the only sub-district that lists residential as a defined ground floor use.
- In the Retail overlay, retail is required to occupy at least 50% of the ground floor.
- The Arts overlay is the most restrictive, with ground floor uses limited to those in the arts, design, creative, and eating and drinking establishments.

The Arts sub-district does not allow general retail, services, and other commercial uses while also having the highest percentage of ground floor vacancies within the study area.

This suggests there may be a connection between the restriction on allowable ground floor uses and the high storefront vacancy rate.



Diagram of mixed-use buildings calling out clear glass as a percentage of the ground-floor facade.

Development Approval

- On any lot larger than 6,000 SF, a new building or enlargement of an existing building by more than 50% requires approval of a special exception by the BZA.
- This requirement, added to the overlay in 2023, is intended to ensure projects fit the intent of the zoning rules and character of H Street. The special exception process can add uncertainty and complexity to a project's timeline and feasibility. Broadly applicable design guidelines that can be reviewed administratively could promote design quality while reducing approval time and complexity.



Some storefronts are designed with clear glass, but cover them with graphics, negating storefront visibility requirements.



FINDINGS: LAND USE

Vacancy

- Ground floor vacancies are lowest in the Housing sub-district, which also allows the greatest range of ground-floor uses.
- The Arts sub-district combines the highest ground floor vacancy rates with the most restrictive use limitations, suggesting that allowable use constraints may be contributing to long-term vacancies.

Ground Floor Vacancy			
Housing Sub-District	Retail Sub-District	Arts Sub-District	Total Vacancy Rate
9 (16%)	20 (26%)	29 (31%)	49 (25%)

Preservation

- Because the District's 1958 Zoning Regulations introduced significantly different controls for urban form, it is used as the cutoff date to define the previous era of historic urban fabric.
- The share of pre-1958 buildings increases moving east, with each sub-district containing roughly twice the share of older buildings as the one to the west.
- To incentivize the preservation of H Street's character, the zoning overlay includes a 0.5 FAR density bonus for preserving the facade of pre-1958 buildings.
- **In practice, the bonus has seen very limited use, likely because height limits – rather than allowable floor area – are the binding constraint for many sites.**

Share of Pre-1958 Buildings			
Housing Sub-District	Retail Sub-District	Arts Sub-District	Total Buildings
38 (17%)	62 (28%)	118 (55%)	218

What is FAR?
 FAR stands for "Floor Area Ratio." It is a measure of density, comparing how big a building is compared to the size of the lot it sits on. For example, a 10,000 SF building on a 10,000 SF lot is 1.0 FAR. FAR limits are sometimes used to regulate building size.



Map showing vacant storefronts and pre-1958 buildings overlaid on H Street corridor.



FINDINGS: PUBLIC REALM

H Street NE operates as a heavily used pedestrian corridor, but its public realm is largely designed for movement, rather than pausing. While some segments support street life, the corridor lacks the spaces, amenities, and comfort features needed to function as a cohesive public space.

Key findings include:

- **There is little dedicated public space along the corridor.** H Street NE has no intentional plazas, pocket parks, green spaces, or locations designed for gathering. The absence of dedicated gathering spots limits the corridor's ability to draw pedestrian activity, increase dwell time, and support retail. It may need an identifiable gathering space that serves as the image of the place in people's minds.
- **Opportunities to sit or linger are limited.** Seating is scarce and sidewalks are generally treated as pass-through spaces rather than places to spend time. This limits everyday use by families, older adults, and people waiting for transit.
- **Transit waiting areas are under-equipped.** Bus stops lack seating, shade, and weather protection.
- **Streetscape comfort varies and declines eastward.** Limited tree canopy, shade, and greenery, especially in the central and eastern segments, reduce comfort. Narrow and uneven sidewalks further constrain pedestrian use.

- **Materials and sidewalk design influence perception.** Cobblestone strips in sidewalks were often cited as uneven, difficult to walk on, and causing repair issues.
- **Arts and culture shape identity but lack physical support.** Murals, venues, and programming are central to H Street's character, yet the public realm provides few spaces that can accommodate performances, gatherings, or cultural activity without significant coordination or closures.
- **Access and transportation remain incredibly important, especially for the central and eastern end of the corridor.** Coordinating with DDOT to understand and potentially influence transportation plans and street design is essential.



Narrow sidewalks complicate outdoor dining and shopping



Cobblestone sections have proven difficult to maintain and cause difficulty for pedestrians.



Bus stops at 8th and H need more seating and shade for riders waiting for transfers.



FINDINGS: HOUSING SUB-DISTRICT

The Housing sub-district represents the most recently redeveloped and physically consistent segment of the H Street NE corridor. Newer mixed-use buildings, wider sidewalks, and lower vacancy rates contribute to a more stable retail and pedestrian environment.

Key findings include:

- **Newer development defines the sub-district.** The Housing sub-district contains the most new buildings, including several larger mid-rise residential buildings, typically ranging from six to nine stories.
- **Sidewalk conditions are comparatively better.** Newer buildings generally provide slightly wider sidewalks (approx. 16 feet), offering more pedestrian space than older portions of H Street, where sidewalks are often narrower and interrupted by bay windows.
- **Retail conditions are the most stable along the corridor and support daily activity.** Retail is oriented toward services and everyday needs, including two grocery stores.
- **Urban design quality is mixed.** While newer buildings generally meet zoning requirements, some facade designs – such as irregular window spacing and long frontage segments – feel out of step with H Street's historic pattern and reduce visual rhythm at the street level.

- **Preservation incentives have seen little use.** Only one building appears to have used the facade preservation FAR bonus, indicating limited effectiveness.
- **The western gateway experience is weak.** The arrival sequence from Metrorail – passing through a parking garage and walking over the Hopscotch Bridge – creates a poor pedestrian experience. This location presents an opportunity to establish a clearer gateway at 3rd Street that celebrates the entrance to H Street and improves first impressions.



Some newer buildings use irregular rhythms and massing elements that can feel out of character with H Street.



Only one project on H Street (corner of H and 4th St NE) appears to have used the facade preservation bonus.



Newer buildings have slightly larger sidewalks, giving the Housing sub-district some of the widest sidewalks on H Street.



FINDINGS: RETAIL SUB-DISTRICT

The Retail sub-district was intended to be the commercial core of H Street NE but is currently fragmented. While food and beverage uses remain prevalent, elevated vacancy rates, narrow sidewalks, and uneven streetscape conditions interrupt continuity and limit performance as a cohesive retail destination.

Key findings include:

- **Retail activity is concentrated but discontinuous.** Ground floor uses are heavily oriented toward food and beverage, which comprises roughly one-third of occupied storefronts. However, these are frequently interrupted by vacant storefronts, causing activity to feel isolated rather than continuous.
- **Vacancy is a defining condition.** Approximately 26 percent of storefronts are vacant, substantially higher than in the Housing sub-district. This fragments the retail experience and weakens pedestrian momentum along the corridor.



The Retail sub-district has a character made up of historic buildings, mid-century commercial, new infill, and vacancies.

- **Transit activity is not supported by the public realm.** The intersection of 8th Street NE and H Street NE is a busy bus transfer point with consistent foot traffic, yet lacks adequate shade, seating, and amenities to support people waiting.
- **Urban form reflects layered development.** The sub-district includes a mix of historic buildings, mid-century commercial structures, and some newer development, with building heights ranging from one to eight stories. Older buildings vary in width and scale, contributing to a fine-grained, varied street character.
- **Narrow sidewalks limit outdoor uses.** A higher concentration of older buildings results in generally narrower sidewalks than the Housing sub-district, limiting opportunities for outdoor dining, seating, and street activity.



High percentage of vacant storefronts create a fragmented retail street.



Narrow sidewalks complicate outdoor dining and shopping

FINDINGS: ARTS SUB-DISTRICT

The Arts sub-district functions as H Street's primary arts, entertainment, and nightlife destination with a strong concentration of performance venues, restaurants, and bars. While the sub-district has the most cohesive identity of the three, it also has the most significant challenges related to vacancy, sidewalk constraints, and limited public realm support for arts and cultural activity.

Key findings include:

- **Arts and nightlife define the sub-district's identity.** Ground floor uses are heavily oriented to food and beverage, which account for approximately 55 percent of occupied storefronts. Roughly 10 venues offer live performances, either regularly or on a recurring basis.
- **Vacancy is the highest along the corridor.** Approximately 31 percent of storefronts are vacant, creating a pattern of cultural and nightlife nodes interrupted by prolonged inactive frontage.
- **Retail mix is narrow.** The Arts sub-district allows only limited ground floor uses in the arts, creative, and food and beverage categories. Without general retail, services, or other commercial uses, daytime activity is limited, and resilience is reduced with shifts in nightlife demand.
- **Public art and placemaking are limited.** Given its designation, the sub-district has relatively little visible public art, wayfinding, or streetscape elements that reinforce the arts and cultural identity.
- **Historic building fabric shapes the streetscape.** The Arts sub-district has the highest concentration of pre-1958 buildings in the study area. Urban form is characterized by a fine-grained urban increment and visually diverse street edge.
- **Sidewalk constraints affect pedestrian comfort.** Sidewalks are generally the narrowest along the corridor, particularly where building bays project into the right-of-way, which limits space for walking, queuing, or gathering.
- **Opportunity for eastern gateway.** Coordination with DDOT on design of the "starburst" intersection is necessary to create a marker for the eastern end of H Street.



Map showing vacant storefronts in the Arts sub-district



Existing buildings have a variety of scale, material and colors



Corner at Maryland and H Street offers open space opportunity



The eastern end of H Street has very narrow sidewalks

PRELIMINARY RECOMMENDATIONS

This section shares a series of different ideas for discussion and feedback from the community. These ideas include key objectives and potential strategies to support the H Street NE corridor and its community to thrive.

These preliminary ideas have been informed by:

- Community and stakeholder feedback received thus far;
- Research findings;
- The overall goals of the H Street Land Use and Market Study.

The ideas presented on the following pages are grouped by key objectives and generally move from more immediate, straightforward actions to longer-term efforts that may require additional study, coordination, or policy changes.

Please note, these ideas and recommendations are preliminary and will be refined over the next phase of the project based on community feedback and coordination with District agencies.



Streetlight-mounted banner signage with H Street NE branding



PRELIMINARY RECOMMENDATIONS: PUBLIC REALM

Key Objective: Create a High-Quality Public Realm to Improve Walkability, Boost Corridor Visitation, and Strengthen H Street’s Market Positioning within the Regional Context. Strategies to explore include:

REC 1: Expanding support for Clean & Safe teams to ensure consistent street cleanliness.

REC 2: Increasing green infrastructure, tree canopy, and landscaping throughout the corridor and replacing any missing street trees in order to support resilience and pedestrian comfort.

REC 3: Investing in streetscaping improvements to enhance pedestrian experience, encourage increased visitation, and support local businesses.

REC 4: Replacing sidewalk materials to increase corridor greening and support accessibility, including replacing cobblestones with a landscaped buffer.



Rec. 4: Existing Streetscape Design – featuring cobblestones between sidewalk and street.



Rec. 4: Conceptual Streetscape Redesign – proposed landscape buffer with gaps for access.



PRELIMINARY RECOMMENDATIONS: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Key Objective: Support a healthy mix of businesses and reduce storefront vacancy to sustain long-term corridor vitality. Strategies to explore include:

REC 15: Studying the feasibility of different place management models, such as Business or Community Improvement Districts.

REC 16: Leveraging existing grant programs – such as Great Streets Retail Grant, Emerging Retail Initiative, Robust Retail Grant, and the H Street Northeast Corridor Marketing Grant – to provide financial support to locally-owned businesses, including legacy businesses on the corridor.

REC 17: Expanding permitted business types in the Arts and Retail sub-districts' zoning regulations to help reduce storefront vacancy. In the Retail sub-district, explore expanding permitted uses to allow ground floor residential uses, if ground floors are designed as storefronts and are convertible to retail in the future. In the Arts sub-district, explore expanding permitted uses beyond arts, entertainment, creative uses, food, beverage, and nightlife.



Image Credits: LoopNet, Solid State Books

Summary of Applicable DC Grant Programs to Support H Street Economic Development Objectives

Grant	Agency	Funding Use	Applicant Type
Great Streets Retail Grant	DMPED	Facade/interior renovations, space build-outs, and other capital improvements	Retail or service businesses and arts and humanities non-profits within designated commercial corridors
Robust Retail Grant	DSLBD	Capital improvements, equipment, technology, and other investments to boost visibility, stability, and customer experience.	Retail businesses
H Street Northeast Corridor Marketing Grant	DSLBD	Marketing efforts to increase foot traffic and support businesses	DC-based non-profit
CAH General Operating Support Grant	CAH	Salaries and wages, travel, materials, overhead costs, and other operating costs	Arts, humanities, and arts education non-profits
Public Art Building Communities Grant	CAH	Design, fabrication, and installation of new permanent or temporary works of public art that connect artists and their artwork with communities.	Individual artists, non-profits, and BIDs



PRELIMINARY RECOMMENDATIONS: LAND USE AND ZONING

Key Objective: Adjust land use and zoning requirements to better support feasible development patterns and long-term growth along the corridor. Strategies to explore include:

REC 18: Considering changes to the minimum square footage threshold (currently 6,000 SF) that requires special exception approval by the BZA to shorten development timelines and boost overall viability.

REC 19: Allowing greater building height and FAR through permitting additional zones in the Retail and Arts sub-districts to improve long-term development viability, boost foot traffic, and expand the local customer base. Evaluating a spectrum of potential building heights – including up to 9 stories (105 feet) in the Retail sub-district and up to 6 stories (75 feet) in the Arts sub-district – for feasibility and design quality.

REC 20: Updating the Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use Map to reflect any recommended modifications to height and density, and to align the land use designation of the Arts sub-district with the rest of the corridor.



A photo of the Delta Towers building at the eastern end of the corridor.

Image Credits: DCMud

Increasing By-Right FAR and Height to Enhance Long-term Development Viability

While current market rents along H Street do not justify high construction costs necessitated by building over seven stories (typically requiring more expensive Type I or Type II concrete or steel construction), upzoning will allow the corridor to efficiently accommodate more housing and investment once market conditions shift.



PRELIMINARY RECOMMENDATIONS: LAND USE & ZONING

Key Objective: Ensure new development reinforces H Street’s existing character while maintaining a high standard of design quality. Strategies to explore include:

REC 21: Refining design standards in the H Street Overlay to ensure new buildings fit the look and feel of the corridor while still allowing growth.

- For example, ground floors should include small-scale storefronts, large windows, and frequent entrances to keep the street active and welcoming.
- Building massing should also reflect the existing pattern of fine-grained fabric and align with neighboring structures. Standards should allow flexibility so new projects can add housing and adapt to changing needs without losing the character that makes H Street distinctive.

REC 22: Expanding incentives for new developments to preserve pre-1958 facades by providing a height bonus in addition to the existing FAR bonus, to more effectively maintain the corridor’s architectural character.

REC 23: Enforcing clear glass requirements post-occupancy to maintain an active and engaging retail streetscape.

REC 24: Expanding clear glass requirements onto side streets that front onto enhanced public spaces.



Rec. 21: Diagram of large new building that uses multiple setbacks, cornice heights, and facade segments to preserve scale and character of H Street.



Rec. 21: Photo of building at street level to show pedestrian experience and variety of scale in large, new building.



ENGAGEMENT TO DATE

Process

Community feedback summarized in this section reflects outreach conducted to date through multiple engagement formats designed to reach a broad range of corridor stakeholders. Efforts included:

- an in-person open house,
- a virtual open house survey,
- three targeted focus groups addressing open space, business, arts, culture, and development,
- four Advisory Neighborhood Commission (ANC) meetings,
- door-to-door canvassing along the corridor, and
- two pop-up engagement events

Together, these activities provided opportunities for residents, business owners, and visitors to share experiences, priorities, and concerns related to land use, development, retail, and the public realm along H Street NE.

Summary

Across public input to date, participants consistently described a corridor with strong cultural identity and latent demand, but where day-to-day comfort, cleanliness, and perceived safety limit how long people stay and how often they return.

Feedback thus far points to a short-term priority on visible improvements (maintenance, lighting, shade, crossings, and activation of vacant spaces) paired with longer-term actions to improve access, support small businesses, and unlock reinvestment.

While there has been broad alignment around a greener, safer, more inviting public realm and a stronger focus on arts and culture branding, several topics require additional study and policy direction as indicated in the preliminary recommendations.

OP has engaged more than 200 people for the H Street Land Use and Market Study so far.

- **800+ Comments** across In-person and Virtual Open House #1 Survey
- **120 Attendees** at Open House #1
- **68 Participants** for Virtual Open House #1 Survey



Photographs of boards with public comments from Open House #1.



KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM ENGAGEMENT

Public Realm & Streetscape

Make the corridor greener and more comfortable. Expand street trees, shade, planters, pocket parks, and small plazas at corners.

Create places to linger, not just pass through. Add benches, parklets, outdoor dining, and small gathering spaces while remaining aware of concerns about management and safety.

Maintenance & Operations

Keep the corridor clean and well-maintained. Increase trash and recycling receptacles, improve pickup frequency, and ensure ongoing maintenance of streets and amenities.

Safety & Mobility

Improve walking and crossing safety. Slow traffic, enhance lighting, and evaluate mid-block crossings.

Strengthen access and connections. Improve transit access, particularly in the central and eastern segments of the corridor, to encourage more foot traffic and reduce storefront vacancy.

Arts, Culture & Identity

Reinforce arts, culture, and corridor identity. Support murals, public art, creative lighting, live music, events, wayfinding, and protection of existing cultural anchors.

Business & Retail Vitality

Support small businesses and everyday retail. Encourage daytime and family-friendly offerings alongside nightlife uses, and explore grants, incentives, and process improvements to support local businesses.

Address vacant storefronts and stalled sites. Use accountability tools, incentives, technical assistance, and short-term activations to keep spaces active.

Development & Market Alignment

Align policy with market realities. More housing on the corridor can boost foot traffic to help stabilize retail and encourage a vibrant street life. Encourage thoughtful building design to complement the existing neighborhood character.



Photographs of boards with public comments from the first open house.



CENTERING EQUITY

The Office of Planning is anchoring this planning study in the District's commitment to accessible and impactful community engagement, breaking data down by race and ethnicity, as well as focusing on resident outcomes in alignment with guidance from the Mayor's Office of Racial Equity. The study's preliminary recommendations also align with the Comprehensive Plan's racial equity guidance, which states that equity exists where all people share equal rights, access, choice, opportunities, and outcomes, regardless of characteristics, such as race, class, or gender.

The study incorporates racial equity principles by understanding the area's history and people, conducting inclusive community engagement, and identifying strategies that meet community needs.

Understanding History and Demographics

The first stage of this project included research into the history and demographics of the corridor, through a racial equity lens.

A look back at the evolution of H Street NE shows that H Street NE is a resilient, historically Black and immigrant neighborhood and a commercial corridor with a strong legacy of arts and culture. However, cycles of economic decline and revitalization have created racial inequities.

In the past two decades, the racial demographics of residents has shifted, with an increase of the share of white, Hispanic, Asian, and multiracial residents and decrease in the share of Black residents. Today, there are roughly equal populations of white and Black residents, but a higher share of Black residents with lower economic wellbeing. For example, median household income is significantly higher among white residents when compared to Black residents, at \$190,606 versus \$62,312, respectively. White residents in the study area also have a higher home-ownership rate than their Black neighbors, at 49% versus 33%, respectively. Overall, the area is becoming more racially diverse while experiencing persistent economic inequities, which increases the importance of embedding racial equity in all policies.

Inclusive Community Engagement

Understanding inequities that existing within the study area, OP has made it a priority to provide inclusive and accessible engagement. The first phase of the study included an in-person public open house and an online survey, which sought to understand the communities' general priorities and concerns. While many residents and stakeholders participated in these activities, there was a disproportionately higher representation of white residents over their Black neighbors. OP supplemented these large-scale engagement activities with focus groups, including with local small businesses and residents, and tabling along the corridor to increase the diversity of participants. Moving forward into the next phase of the study, OP will continue to track demographics of engagement participants and look for ways to meet residents where they are through additional tabling and outreach.

Strategies that Meet Community Needs

The study examines unmet community needs as a way to address inequities along the corridor. It is also informed by consideration of the potential benefits and burdens that planning decisions may place on different stakeholders. For example, early community feedback highlighted inadequate public space and poor walkability, issues that affect residents, visitors, and businesses alike. In response, this report explores strategies to improve and expand public spaces by creating more opportunities for seating, shade, public art, and safe pedestrian access. As H Street continues to evolve, it will be especially important to support public space improvements that foster a sense of belonging for long-standing community members and reflect the corridor's legacy as a historically Black and immigrant-serving area.

The preliminary recommendations also aim to balance the corridor's future growth with the need to preserve its identity as a hub for locally owned businesses. This includes dedicating funding and technical support for small local businesses and promoting arts and cultural uses, particularly along the eastern portion of the corridor.



NEXT STEPS

Final Report Development

OP will develop a final report with further analysis and recommendations for release in September 2026.

The final report will be supported by:

- Continuing community engagement efforts to gather feedback and inform the final recommendations.
- Assessing the appropriate density and types of development to support housing, commercial, and arts activities along the corridor.
- Identifying land use policy recommendations to include in DC 2050, the District's next Comprehensive Plan.
- Identifying design recommendations for new development.
- Creating illustrative renderings of key open spaces and infill development sites that show the potential development and public space improvements.

Community Open House #2

Please join us at the next interactive open house to view progress and provide feedback on the project:

Wednesday, June 24, 2026, 5:30-7:30 pm, at 1207 H Street NE (former Autozone site).

Register to attend on the project website: PublicInput.com/HStreetStudy

Community and Stakeholder Feedback

This report can be viewed on the project website.

OP is soliciting public feedback on this report through an online survey, opening on June 15, also available on the project website.

Contact the Project Team:

HStreetStudy@dc.gov

Visit our website for updates on the project:

PublicInput.com/HStreetStudy

Timeline

PHASE 1: RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS

PHASE 2: PLAN DEVELOPMENT

