Feasibility Assessment for a Main Street Program
For Foggy Bottom and West End

Prepared for the Department of Small and Local Business Development
Completed by Jon Stover & Associates | June 2023

DSLBD
DEPT. OF SMALL & LOCAL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

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Study Purpose

This report assesses the feasibility of developing a new DC Main Street program in the Foggy Bottom and West End areas in Washington, DC. Funded and overseen by the DC Department of Small and Local Business Development (DSLBD), this study outlines how a DC Main Street program could be implemented to benefit businesses throughout several retail nodes within the study area. The study also includes an evaluation framework to assess the feasibility of future and existing DC Main Streets moving forward.

Stakeholder Engagement Methodology

Stakeholder outreach played a critical role in this feasibility assessment, as community buy-in and support are essential to a successful Main Street. This outreach includes small group conversations with local community organizations, one-on-one interviews with key stakeholders, interviews with Advisory Neighborhood Commissioners, and a survey of local business owners and operators. Through these conversations and observations, we assessed the need for additional business support services, support and interest for a Main Street program, and the capacity and experience of local nonprofits.

Main Street Feasibility Evaluation Criteria

To help assess the viability of the Foggy Bottom-West End area, as well as other programs, this study developed an evaluation tool to assess whether the economic and physical conditions of an area align with the goals and strategies of the Main Street model and mission. These conditions are grouped into five categories: (a) Need for Retail Support, (b) Main Street Model Suitability, (c) Organizational Capacity, (d) Stakeholder Champions, and (e) Coverage Area.

Summary of Findings

Existing Conditions: There is a Need for Business Support Services in the Study Area.

The study area spans multiple distinct neighborhoods, with retail dispersed throughout several clusters and corridors. Foggy Bottom has a higher vacancy rate and share of locally owned businesses than the rest of the study area.

Most businesses in the study area have yet to recover from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and the ensuing changes in area foot traffic, heightening the need for additional business support in the area.

Businesses in The Watergate and Columbia Plaza have a notable need for technical assistance, as both complexes have seen a significant decline in customer traffic and storefront occupancy in recent years.

A Main Street is a More Suitable Near-Term Economic Development Model than a BID.

To date there has not been a clear local champion to support the development of a business improvement district nor is there evidence that commercial property owners are receptive to approving a BID assessment. In addition, much of the study area lacks the necessary density of taxable commercial property to support a traditional, standalone BID.

DC Main Street Context & Program Boundary Implications

The full study area is too large for a single Main Street program and the geographic size and number of businesses in the area far exceed the typical size of a Main Street program. Excluding the Downtown West area reduces the overall business count to a suitable size.

Stakeholder Receptivity

There is strong community interest and support for a new Main Street program in the study.

Foggy Bottom Association (FBA) was commonly cited by community leaders as an organization well suited to oversee a Main Street program, reflecting its history in the neighborhood, existing relationships with local businesses, and respected leadership. FBA also expressed interest in applying for Main Street accreditation.

Businesses were receptive for additional assistance from the City to support their operations. The types of assistance businesses most commonly cited a need for align with core Main Street services.

THE CITY SHOULD OFFER MAIN STREET DESIGNATION TO A PORTION OF THE FOGGY BOTTOM-WEST END AREA.

There is a strong opportunity for the development of a Main Street program that serves the Foggy Bottom and West End neighborhoods.

There are two geographies within the study area that are feasible as Main Street program areas. The first geography encompasses businesses only within a portion of the Foggy Bottom neighborhood. The second geography spans a combination of Foggy Bottom and a portion of the West End neighborhood.

A program serving this second, larger area would likely have a greater overall impact, serving more businesses and tapping into a larger base of stakeholder capacity.

Recommendations for the City

- **The City should support the creation of a Main Street program that serves one of the two program boundaries identified within this study area.**

- As part of the Main Street Grant RFA process, the City should allow applicants to choose which boundary they plan to represent. The final program boundary should align with the area chosen by the selected organization.

- Foggy Bottom Association (FBA) is the ideal recipient of accreditation, given the organization's capacity, experience, and local presence (see p. 40 for additional detail).

- The City should use this study's evaluation framework to assess the feasibility of future and existing Main Streets moving forward.

Evaluation Criteria for Program Area That Includes Foggy Bottom & West End

Feasibility Evaluation Criteria	Feasibility for a Main Street	Summary of Conditions	Strengths and Opportunities	Weaknesses and Threats
Need for Retail Support	**Strong**	A total of 63% of businesses report sales below pre-pandemic levels. Area features high vacancy rate; particularly at Watergate and Columbia Plaza.	Most surveyed businesses are in favor of a Main Street. There is a lack of similar support services.	Multiple retail areas with differing needs require strong vision and capacity.
Main Street Model Suitability	**Moderate**	There is a need for marketing, events, façade improvements, and other technical assistance.	Area features historic district, key historic assets, and is highly walkable.	Retail is dispersed across multiple nodes within large study area.
Organizational Capacity	**Strong**	Area features one nonprofit organization, FBA, that already serves the study area and is strongly positioned to oversee Main Street.	FBA has similar mission, strong stakeholder relationships, and interest in program oversight.	FBA has not fundraised at a level needed to support a Main Street. Except for FBA, no suitable organization is located within study area.
Stakeholder Champions	**Strong**	Strong support from community groups, large set of existing nonprofit volunteer bases, and anticipated support from key local institutions.	George Washington University and Kennedy Center have potential to be key partners and supporters.	Need for Main Street board and committees to represent both Foggy Bottom and West End.
Coverage Area	**Moderate**	Area includes two distinct neighborhoods and multiple retail nodes with differing customer bases and building conditions.	Area has optimal number of businesses. West End and Foggy Bottom have strong brand synergies.	Large geographic size. Inclusion of two neighborhoods may pose branding challenges.

02 Project Background

STUDY CONTEXT AND PURPOSE

Study Purpose

This report assesses the feasibility of developing a new DC Main Street program in the Foggy Bottom and West End areas in Washington, DC.

Funded and overseen by the DC Department of Small and Local Business Development (DSLBD), this study outlines how a DC Main Street program could be implemented to benefit businesses throughout several retail nodes within the study area. The study also includes an evaluation framework to assess the feasibility of future and existing DC Main Streets moving forward.

Project Scope

This study includes the following components:

- Assessment of existing real estate and business conditions within the study area and how conditions vary between different neighborhoods within the area

- Assessment of business needs and business owner receptiveness to, and capacity to support, a Main Street program

- Engagement of community groups, institutions, and local leadership regarding their receptiveness to, and capacity to support, a Main Street program

- Assessment and recommendations regarding the overall feasibility of a new Main Street program in the study area given neighborhood conditions and stakeholder needs

- Assessment of the preferred program boundary deemed to have the highest likelihood of launching a successful Main Street program

- Development of an evaluation framework designed to assess the feasibility of proposed, existing, and potential future DC Main Street programs

STUDY PARTICIPANTS

Department of Small and Local Business Development (DSLBD)

DSLBD supports development, economic growth, and retention of local businesses and promotes economic development through local commercial corridors. DSLBD oversees the DC Main Street Program. Visit www.dslbd.dc.gov to learn more.

Jon Stover & Associates

Jon Stover & Associates (JS&A) specializes in economic analysis, retail revitalization, and helping public, private, and nonprofit organizations collaborate to meet economic development objectives. JS&A has helped a wide range of clients implement plans and programs that have successfully enhanced urban neighborhoods and corridors. Visit www.jonstoverandassociates.com to learn more.

03 Existing Study Area Conditions

STUDY AREA OVERVIEW

The study area spans multiple distinct neighborhoods.

The study area assessed for this study spans from 17th Street NW to the east, M Street NW to the north, Rock Creek Parkway to the west, and Constitution Avenue NW to the south. This area includes three distinct areas: Foggy Bottom, West End, and the western portion of Downtown ("Downtown West"). This is an uncommon circumstance as most of the existing Main Street programs in DC are defined within one distinct neighborhood.

The Downtown West portion of the study area overlaps with the Golden Triangle BID. The rest of the study area is not currently served by any place management or economic development organizations. Georgetown BID borders the study area to the west, while Dupont Circle BID is located two blocks to the north.
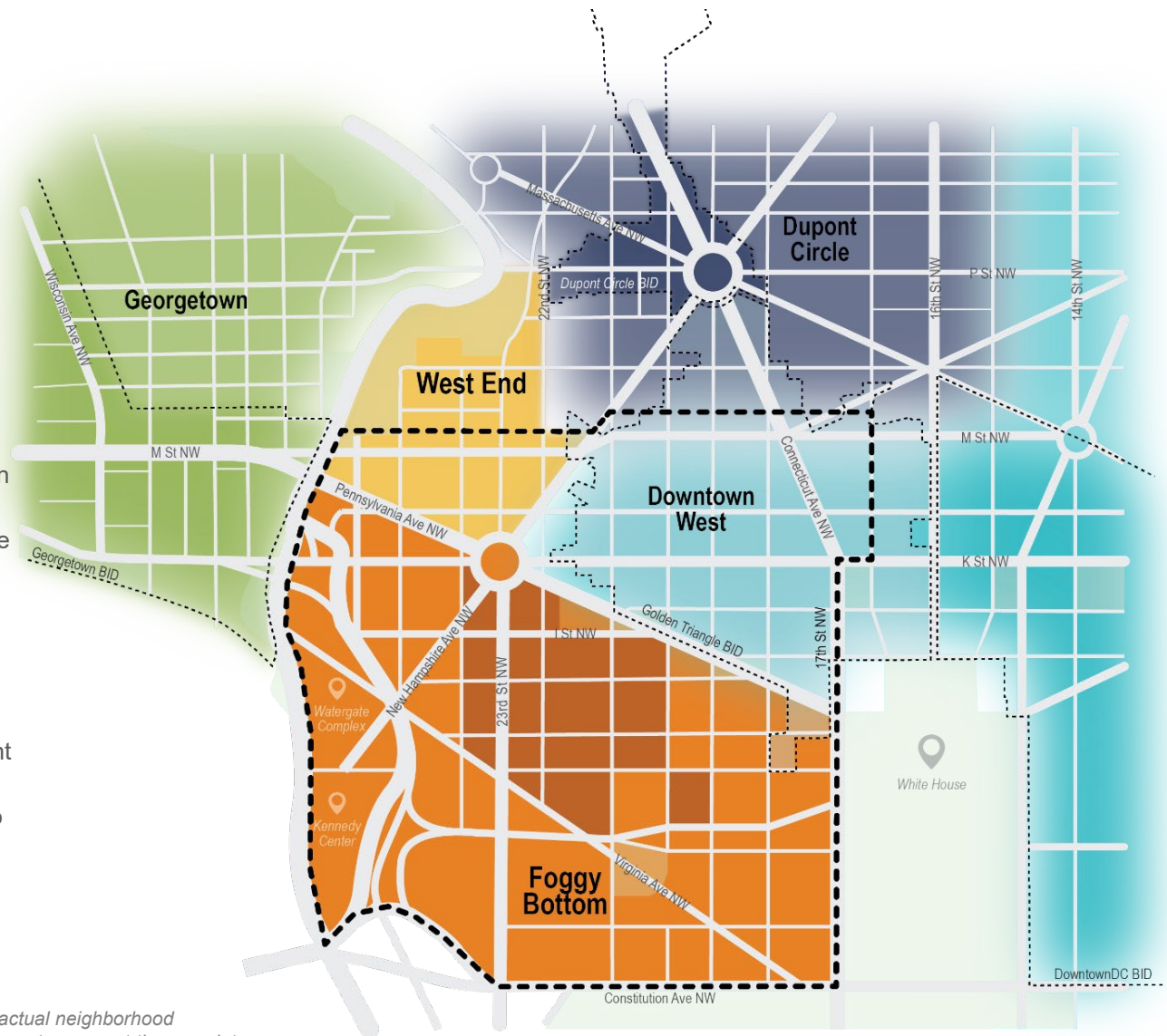
Note: This map is for illustrative purposes only. The actual neighborhood boundaries differ from the map. These boundaries do not represent the complete or official boundaries of the Foggy Bottom or West End neighborhoods. The "Downtown West" area was titled for purposes of this study and does not represent an official name for the area.

STUDY AREA NEIGHBORHOODS

For purposes of the study, the study area was broken down into three major sub-areas as described below.

West End Sub-Area

West End, located north of Pennsylvania Avenue NW and west of New Hampshire Avenue NW, features a mix of dense residential, office, and hospitality uses. Notably, it features a cluster of luxury hotels and high-end restaurants along M Street NW, as well as a Trader Joe's on 25th Street NW.

Downtown West Sub-Area

The northeastern portion of the study area, east of New Hampshire Avenue NW and north of Pennsylvania Avenue NW, covers the westernmost portion of Downtown DC. This area is primarily made up of large office buildings with ground-floor retail. It has a very small residential population and limited customer traffic during the weekend or weekday evenings—standing in contrast to the typical Main Street area. Notably, this area is currently served by the Golden Triangle Business Improvement District.

Foggy Bottom Sub-Area

Foggy Bottom features a mix of office workers, college students, and full-time residents. It includes several notable institutions and landmarks, including George Washington University, the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, and The Watergate complex. Retail is dispersed throughout the neighborhood, with clusters along Pennsylvania Avenue, I Street NW, and within the Watergate and Columbia Plaza complexes.
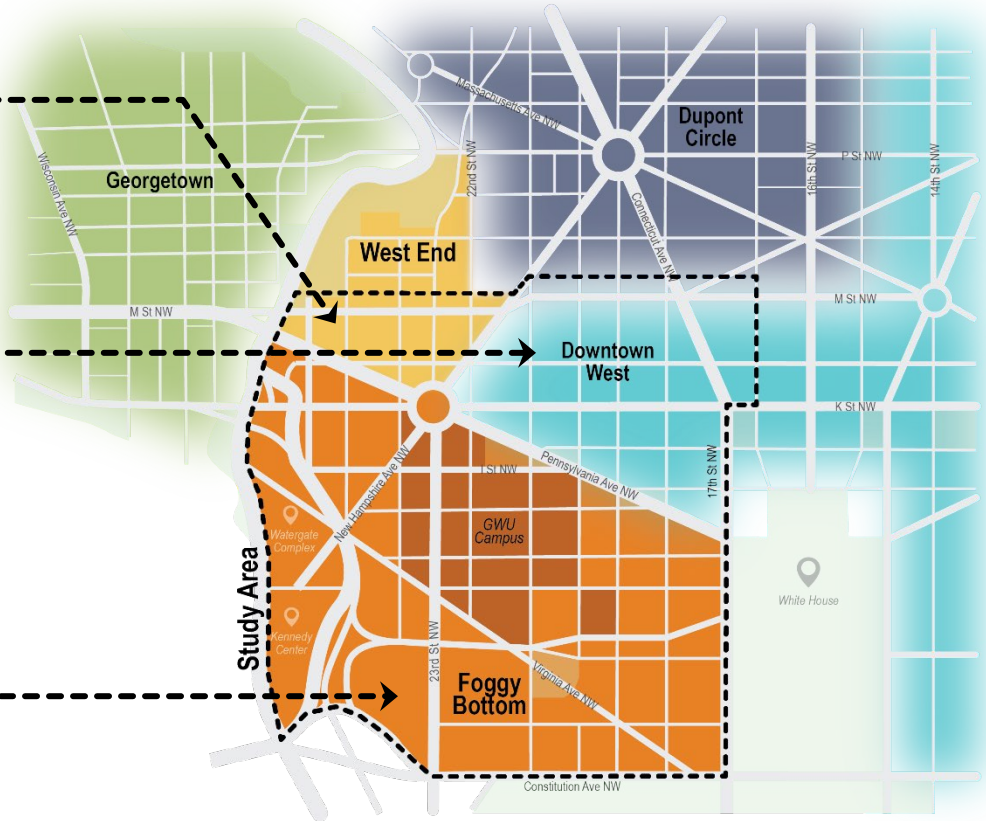
Note: This map is for illustrative purposes only. The actual neighborhood boundaries differ from the map. These boundaries do not represent the complete or official boundaries of the Foggy Bottom or West End neighborhoods. The "Downtown West" area was titled for purposes of this study and does not represent an official name for the area.

STUDY AREA DEMOGRAPHICS

Spanning multiple neighborhoods, the study area's demographics vary widely depending on location—with a mix of relatively affluent homeowners, college students from George Washington University, hotel guests, and office workers.

The overall area is very young, with a median age over a decade younger than the DC average—a reflection of its large student population. The eastern portion of the study area is predominantly composed of large office buildings and features a very small residential population. The area has seen relatively modest population growth since 2010.

Study Area Demographic Snapshot

In 2022, 17,773 people lived within the boundaries of the study area. Over three quarters of these residents live on the Foggy Bottom side of the site, south of Pennsylvania Avenue.

West End residents have higher household incomes than Foggy Bottom and DC overall. The median household income in West End ($108,040) far exceeds the Foggy Bottom median of $82,779, largely a reflection of Foggy Bottom's large student population.

The study area, particularly Foggy Bottom, has seen **lower rates of residential population growth** than the District overall in the past decade.

Population & Income Summary

	Washington, DC	Study Area	Foggy Bottom	West End	Downtown West
Total Population (2022)	706,367	17,773	14,345	2,608	748
Population Growth (2010–2022)	17%	10%	9%	20%	5%
Median Age (2022)	36.3	25.4	24.0	33.1	28.3
Median Household Income (2022)	$104,140	$90,416	$82,779	$125,427	$83,338
Median Home Value (2022)	$659,443	$818,035	$777,687	$924,460	$701,923

CITYWIDE RETAIL CONTEXT
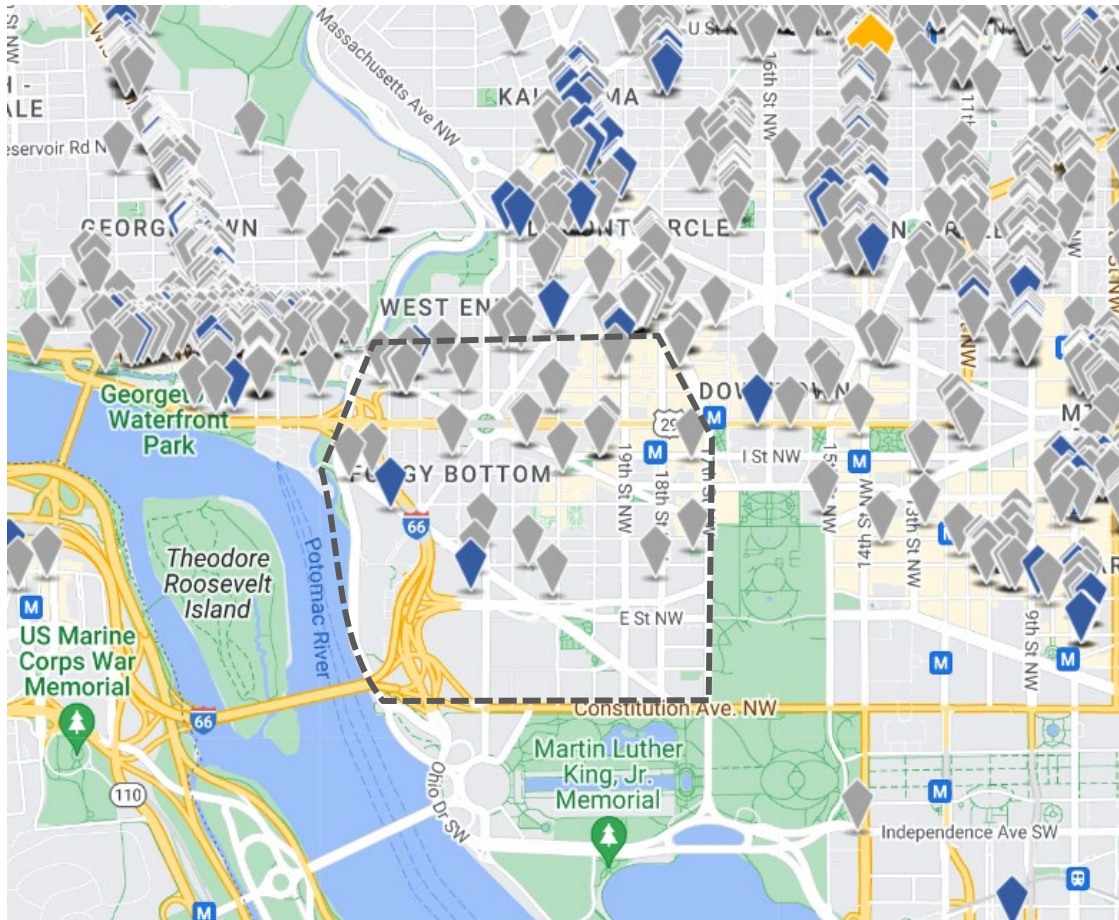
Note: Each diamond indicates a property with at least one retail tenant. This map is for illustrative purposes and does not reflect every property with retail businesses.

The study area is in a highly commercial region of DC—sandwiched between Downtown to the east, Dupont Circle to the north, Georgetown to the west, and the National Mall to the south.

As such, there is a wide range of commercial orientations within the study area. The area's eastern portion has high number of offices, like the rest of Downtown. The northwestern portion of the study area, West End acts as a bridge between Downtown and Georgetown, with many hotels bearing the "Georgetown" brand. Foggy Bottom has as a more insular retail orientation, primarily serving GWU students and nearby residents.

The southwestern portion of the study area, including the Watergate complex, Columbia Plaza, and the Kennedy Center, is less connected to the greater commercial fabric, with the Potomac River Freeway and heavily trafficked Virginia Avenue NW limiting foot traffic from the north and east.

RETAIL NODES WITHIN THE STUDY AREA
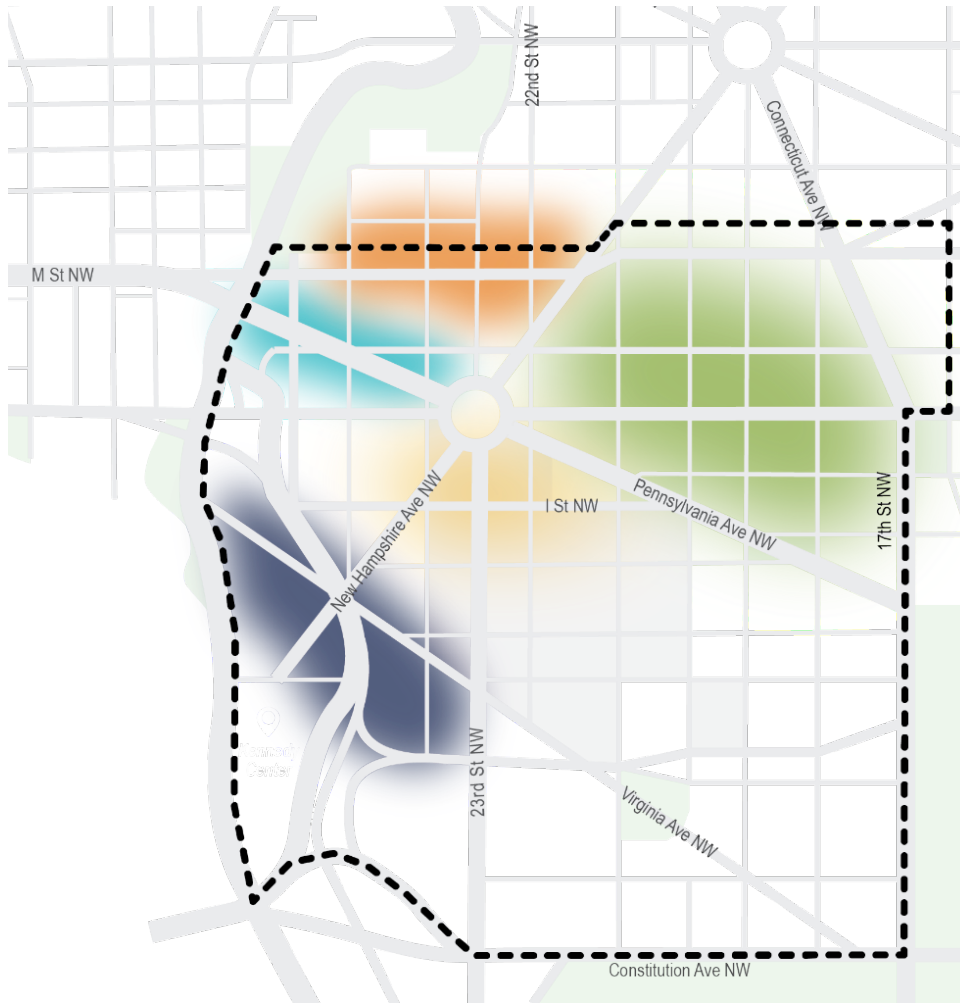
Note: This map is for illustrative purposes only.

The study area has several clusters of retail activity, spread across different corridors and neighborhoods.

Central Foggy Bottom

Retail is concentrated around the Foggy Bottom Metro station, primarily along I Street NW, with some additional businesses along Pennsylvania Avenue and New Hampshire Avenue. Western Market is a neighborhood retail anchor, primarily featuring locally owned, fast-casual dining concepts.

Western Pennsylvania Avenue

The portion of Pennsylvania Avenue NW between Washington Circle and Rock Creek Parkway features a mix of ground-floor retail (primarily restaurants), and hotel and residential uses.

West End

Retail in West End is primarily along M Street NW, with a heavy concentration of fine dining—a reflection of the large cluster of luxury hotels located in the neighborhood.

Watergate & Columbia Plaza

The Watergate and Columbia Plaza both feature insular clusters of retail spaces that are difficult or impossible to see from the street. Both have had significant retail challenges in recent years (see p.19). This node also includes Boathouse, an apartment building with a ground-floor storefront that has been vacant since the project was built in 2020.

Downtown West

This area is predominantly composed of office buildings with ground-floor retail uses catered to daytime office workers. Notably, this area is within the boundaries of the Golden Triangle BID.
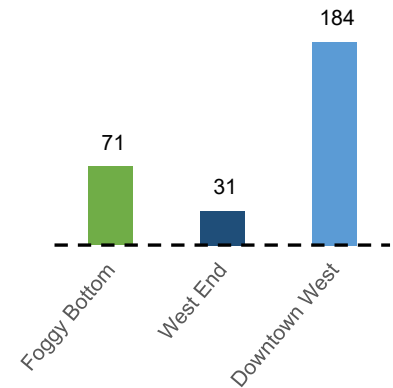
NEIGHBORHOOD RETAIL CONDITIONS

The study area features 286 retail businesses. Foggy Bottom has a notably higher vacancy rate and share of locally owned businesses than the rest of the study area.
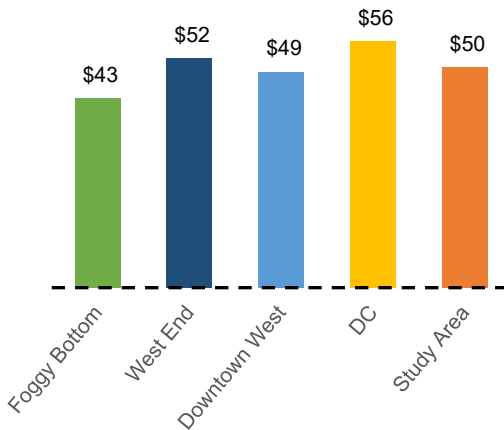
In addition to its comparatively high vacancy rate, Foggy Bottom also has a lower average retail lease rate—indicating lower overall tenant demand than West End or Downtown West. West End and Downtown West both feature healthier overall retail conditions, with lease rates around $50/SF and vacancy rates just above 10%.

The number of businesses within each neighborhood varies widely. Downtown West has a supply of 184 businesses—far higher than the typical Main Street, particularly for a new program. Foggy Bottom has 71 total retail businesses—close to the current median of existing DC Main Streets. West End has just 31 retail businesses—far lower than the typical DC Main Street.
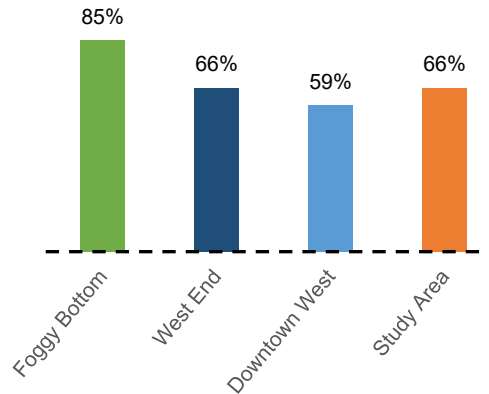
Number of Retail Businesses

(Chart: Foggy Bottom 71, West End 31, Downtown West 184)

Average Retail Lease Rate

(Chart: Foggy Bottom $43, West End $52, Downtown West $49, DC $56, Study Area $50)

% of Locally-Owned Businesses

(Chart: Foggy Bottom 85%, West End 66%, Downtown West 59%, Study Area 66%)

Average Retail Vacancy Rate

(Chart: Foggy Bottom 22%, West End 13%, Downtown West 11%, DC 23%, Study Area 14%)
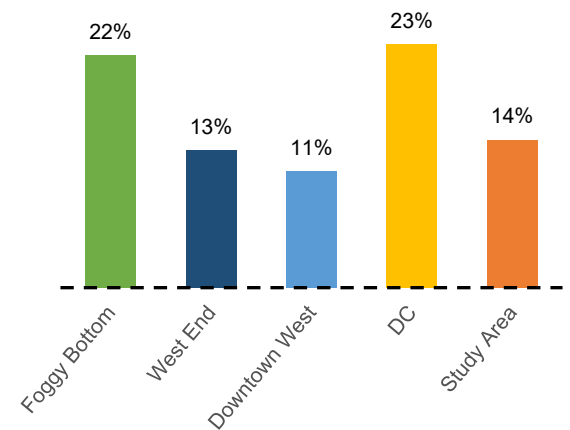
Note: Foggy Bottom data represents the entire neighborhood boundary of Foggy Bottom, not the recommended program boundary identified in this study.
Source: JS&A, CoStar

BID SUITABILITY ASSESSMENT

There is no evidence to suggest that there is the local stakeholder will nor capacity to support the formation of a new Business Improvement District within the study area.

To date there has not been a clear local champion to support the development of a business improvement district nor is there evidence that commercial property owners are receptive to approving a BID assessment. In addition, much of the study area lacks the necessary density of taxable commercial property to support a traditional, standalone BID. Importantly, no existing neighboring BIDs – Georgetown BID, Dupont Circle BID, and Golden Triangle BID – have expressed interest in expanding their geographic coverage into the study area

BID Formation Viability Checklist

- **Local champion** to lead the stakeholder engagement and education process and oversee a BID formation process.

  Not Demonstrated

- **Expressed interest** of commercial property owners including receptivity to pay BID tax assessments in favor of receiving BID services.

  Not Demonstrated

- **Volunteer capacity and support** to undertake the outreach and signature collection process.

  Not Demonstrated

- **Expressed need for BID services** including cleanliness, safety, public realm improvements, marketing, branding, and placemaking programs.

  Somewhat Demonstrated

- **Appropriate commercial density** and continuous concentration of BID assessment-eligible properties.

  Not Demonstrated

04 DC Main Street Context

# OVERVIEW OF DC MAIN STREET PROGRAM & NEED FOR UPDATED EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

DC's Main Street program has experienced rapid growth over the past decade.

The DC Main Street Program has expanded from **5** programs in 2014 to **28** programs in 2023. This growth has allowed a wide range of neighborhoods and corridors to receive Main Street services, across all eight wards of the District. This includes several non-traditional program areas that cover multiple neighborhoods and/or non-continuous stretches of commercial uses. There is also a wide range of program area sizes, ranging from a Main Street that nearly covers an entire neighborhood (Shaw) to programs that serve a single, compact retail node.

As the program grows, it is increasingly important for the City and local stakeholders to efficiently evaluate the feasibility of new and existing programs.

There are few cities that have a comparable set of Main Street programs to DC, given its rapid growth and highly urban context. As such, there are currently few resources to help DSLBD and stakeholders assess the feasibility of Main Streets in the city. To help assess the viability of the Foggy Bottom-West End area, as well as other programs, this study developed an evaluation tool to help ensure that Main Street resources are being spent in an efficient, equitable manner and that the economic and physical conditions of program areas align with the goals and strategies of the Main Street model and mission.

Map of DC Main Street Programs
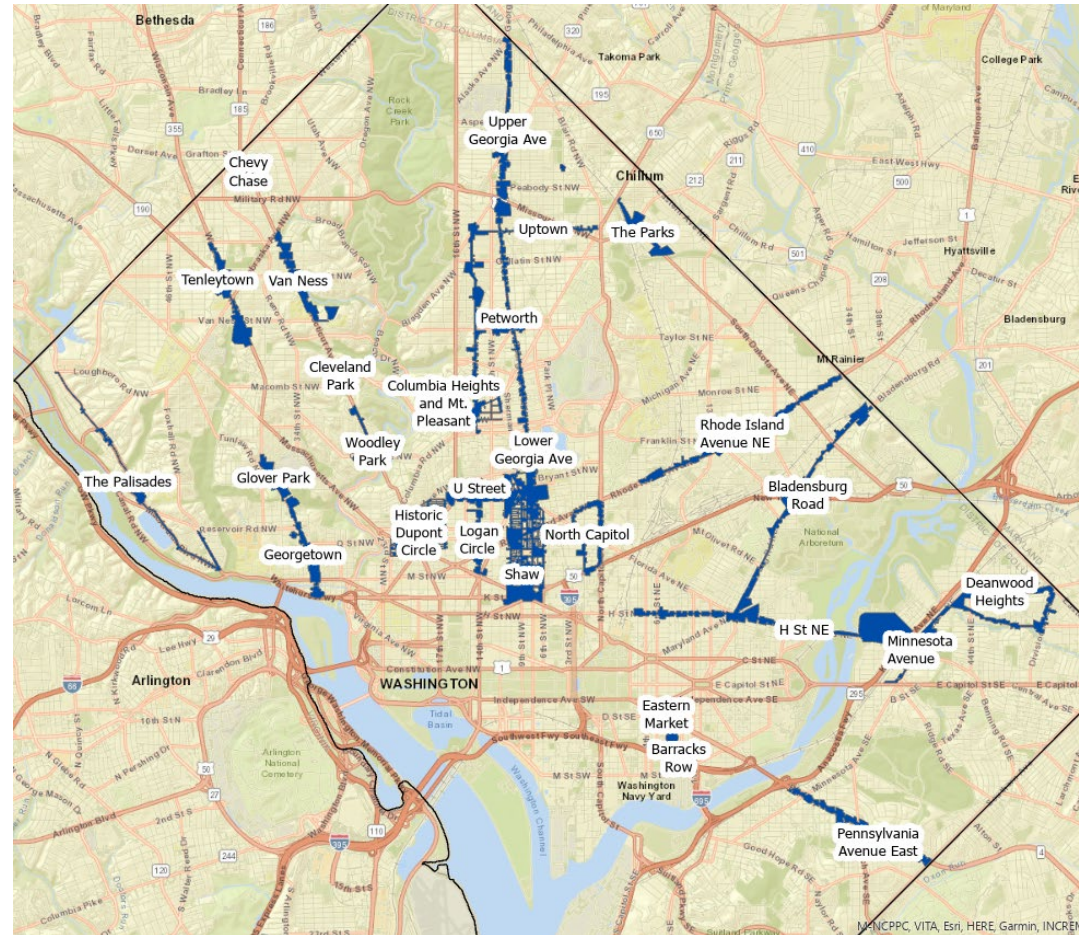
Source: OpenData DC

COMPARISON TO EXISTING DC MAIN STREETS

Program	Size of Corridor*	Population**	Median Household Income**	Non-storefront blocks (%)	Avg. Retail Lease Rate (Rent/SF)	Total Retail Space	Retail Business Count
Study Area	**112 blocks**	**17,773**	**$90,416**	**56 blocks (50%)**	**$49.92/SF**	**544,345 SF**	**286**
DC MS Average	**17 blocks**	**48,660**	**$119,653**	**28%**	**$41.18**	**475,998 SF**	**108**
Barracks Row	6 blocks	47,067	$143,254	-33%	$46.65	333,860 SF	77
Bladensburg Road	17 blocks	17,664	$76,915	29%	$24.59	238,569 SF	51
Chevy Chase	6 blocks	28,764	$172,851	16%	$49.25	217,760 SF	49
Cleveland Park	3 blocks	29,588	$154,776	0%	$42.22	190,525 SF	64
Columbia Heights/Mt. Pleasant	24 blocks	89,938	$117,416	29%	$58.15	1,114,697 SF	349
Congress Heights	13 blocks	32,764	$42,118	44%	$31.46	112,819 SF	37
Dupont Circle	55 blocks	87,384	$127,127	65%	$56.32	604,458 SF	300
Eastern Market	4 blocks	56,492	$150,388	25%	$43.30	149,957 SF	71
Georgetown	16 blocks	34,130	$160,429	6%	$66.24	1,300,624 SF	207
Glover Park	5 blocks	36,066	$155,060	20%	$42.76	245,249 SF	56
H Street	32 blocks	36,053	$97,841	13%	$32.34	1,247,795 SF	208
Logan Circle	11 blocks	91,961	$126,780	8%	$50.67	773,784 SF	102

(Table continues on the following page.)

*Size refers to the number of retail street segments served. A segment is defined as a stretch of street – including both sides of the street—between the intersections of two cross streets.
**Population and median household income figures reflect the demographics of a 1-mile radius of the center of each Main Street geography.

COMPARISON TO EXISTING DC MAIN STREETS (CONTINUED)

Program	Size of Corridor*	Population**	Median Household Income**	Non-storefront blocks (%)	Avg. Retail Lease Rate (Rent/SF)	Total Retail Space	Retail Business Count
Lower Georgia Avenue	22 blocks	78,435	$109,173	9%	$33.66	645,330 SF	153
Minnesota Avenue	12 blocks	29,133	$47,022	6%	$32.92	180,867 SF	58
North Capitol	13 blocks	72,021	$117,529	23%	$32.30	277,091 SF	51
Palisades	16 blocks	12,112	$191,482	56%	$36.96	136,257 SF	53
Pennsylvania Avenue	13 blocks	24,717	$60,266	69%	$37.82	286,742 SF	46
Petworth	18 blocks	48,642	$101,085	22%	$31.23	501,072 SF	116
Rhode Island Avenue	22 blocks	26,366	$87,885	27%	$30.79	590,405 SF	106
Shaw	60 blocks	99,724	$126,298	47%	$46.20	955,436 SF	255
Tenleytown	9 blocks	33,887	$167,266	11%	$48.15	570,214 SF	72
The Parks	10 blocks	35,289	$82,655	30%	$26.34	151,317 SF	29
U Street	9 blocks	109,269	$126,391	0%	$51.08	437,481 SF	97
Upper Georgia Avenue	13 blocks	31,883	$91,384	46%	$35.94	685,429 SF	118
Uptown	35 blocks	48,541	$101,019	54%	$32.55	513,835 SF	157
Van Ness	7 blocks	28,591	$156,390	50%	$38.76	242,873 SF	65
Ward 7 Business Partnership	17 blocks	35,5127	$51,312	70%	$28.00	147,000	27
Woodley Park	5 blocks	47,339	$139,842	40%	$53.08	147,501 SF	54

*Size refers to the number of retail street segments served. to A segment is defined as a stretch of street – including both sides of the street – between the intersections of two cross streets.
**Population and median household income figures reflect the demographics of a 1-mile radius of the center of each Main Street geography.

IMPLICATIONS FOR POTENTIAL MAIN STREET BOUNDARY

Program Boundary Implications from Comparison to Other DC Main Street Programs

- **The proposed study area is too large for a single Main Street program.** The geographic size of the full study area (112 blocks) far exceeds the typical size of a Main Street program (17 blocks). In addition, there are far more retail businesses in the study area (286 businesses) than the median DC Main Street (72 businesses).

- **Excluding the Downtown West area reduces the overall business count down to a suitable size.** Including only the Foggy Bottom and West End neighborhoods, the total business count (102) is more aligned with the typical DC Main Street. While the geographic size of this reduced program area is still quite large, it is more in keeping with a viable Main Street program.

- **The study area has a relatively high proportion of blocks without storefronts, as retail is dispersed throughout several nodes.** This is a minor risk factor, as it makes it somewhat more difficult for a Main Street to efficiently serve businesses and address the varying needs of different retail nodes. However, the amount of retail interruption is in keeping with many other DC program areas. The high portion of non-storefront blocks indicates that a future Main Street will need to pay particular attention to the capacity necessary to build relationships across the program area.

05 Stakeholder Need & Receptivity

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STAKEHOLDER OUTREACH & METHODOLOGY

Stakeholder outreach played a critical role in this feasibility assessment. Community buy-in and support are essential to a successful Main Street.

To gain the perspective of the community, 127 businesses in the study area were visited and engaged on the need and interest in a new Main Street. In the Foggy Bottom and West End neighborhoods, 83% of businesses were visited. In total, 58 businesses completed business surveys. In addition, interviews were conducted with 15 community leaders from across the study area as listed to the right. Stakeholder outreach and engagement included:

Business Survey

Door-to-Door In-Person and Digital Surveys with Local Business Owners and Operators

Local Community Organizations

Conducted Small Group Conversations with Local Community Organizations

Advisory Neighborhood Commissioners

One-on-One Interviews with Local ANC

Key Stakeholders

One-on-One Conversations with Key Stakeholders

Site Visits & Corridor Walks

Multiple Site Visits to the Study Area

Interviewed Stakeholders

Foggy Bottom Association

John George | President

Sadie Cornelius | Communications Chair

Golden Triangle Business Improvement District

Leona Agouridis | Executive Director

Pat Powell | Chief of Staff

Andrew Huff | Associate Director of Member & Government Relations

West End Citizens Association

Sara Maddux | President

Barbara Kahlow | Secretary-Treasurer

Terry Lynch | Board Member

John Seichter | Board Member

George Washington University

Renee McPhatter | Assistant Vice President for Government and Community Relations

Kevin Days | Director of Community Relations

Advisory Neighborhood Commissioners

Jim Malec | ANC 2A02

Trupti Patel | ANC 2A03

**Ed Comer** | ANC 2A04

Jordan Nassar | ANC 2A08

BUSINESS SALES COMPARED TO PRE-PANDEMIC LEVELS

Most Foggy Bottom businesses have yet to recover from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, heightening the need for additional business support in the area.

This decline in customer traffic can be attributed to the increased levels of remote work from nearby office buildings and GWU faculty, as well as the ongoing struggles of The Watergate and Columbia Plaza to attract customers (see p. 18).

West End, on average, has experienced a stronger retail recovery than Foggy Bottom, likely due to the consistent foot traffic generated by nearby hotels and Class A office buildings. Half of West End businesses reported that customer traffic has exceeded pre-pandemic levels as of Q2 2023.

Share of Businesses That Have Not Regained Pre-Pandemic Levels of Customer Traffic

77%

30%

■ Foggy Bottom ■ West End
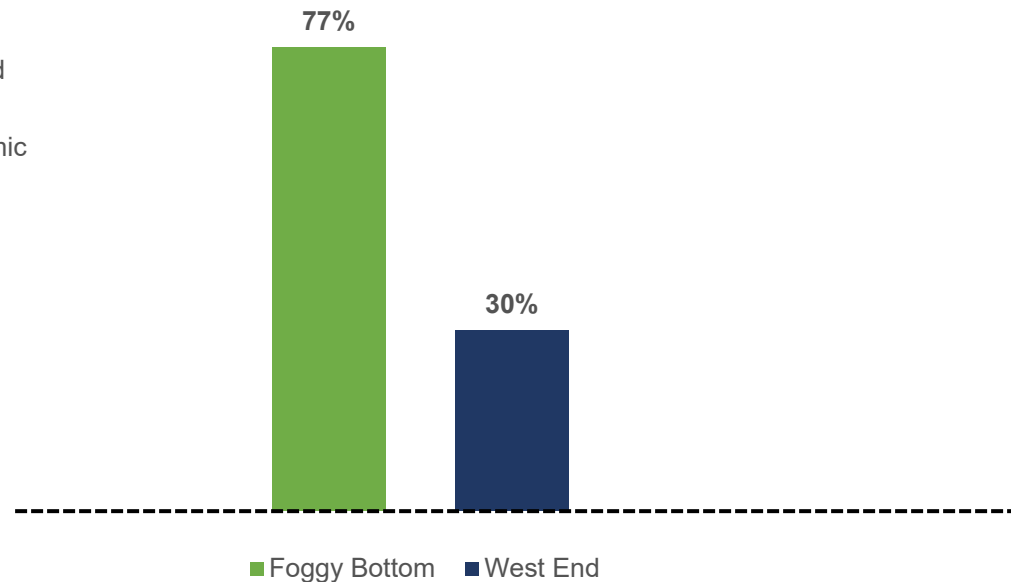
BUSINESS NEEDS DETAIL: WATERGATE & COLUMBIA PLAZA

Businesses located in The Watergate and Columbia Plaza have a notable need for technical assistance, as both complexes have seen a significant decline in customer traffic and storefront occupancy in recent years.

Conditions within these complexes have been on the decline over the last decade and were accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Following several recent business closures, the Watergate now has a retail vacancy rate of 60%.

The struggles of these complexes reflect a broader nationwide decline of insular retail complexes (such as indoor malls) that lack street-facing storefronts or strong transit accessibility. The Watergate and Columbia Plaza are also challenged by their distance from a Metro station and lack of easy pedestrian accessibility from several directions.

Several community stakeholders identified these two complexes as priority areas for any potential Main Street in the area. Business owners and community stakeholders alike reported a need for additional support in improving the marketing, leasing, and building conditions of both complexes.
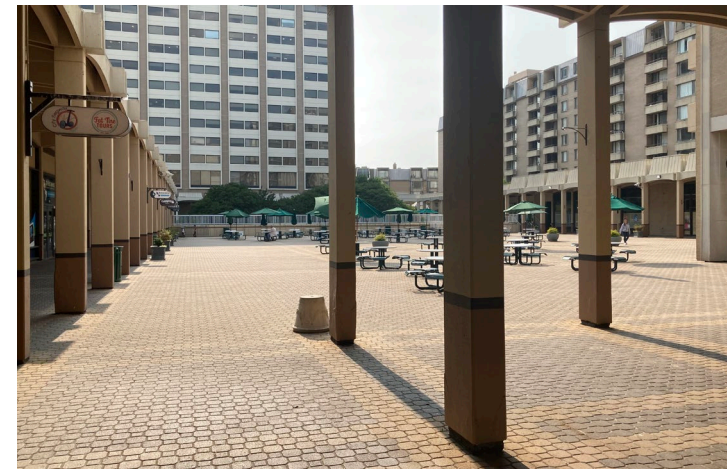

The Watergate Retail Plaza

Business Condition Detail

	Vacancy Rate	Total Businesses	# Business Closures Since 2019
Watergate	60%	10	4
Columbia Plaza	28%	7	3

Source: Business count and vacancy rate based on site visit. Business closure insights via various online sources.
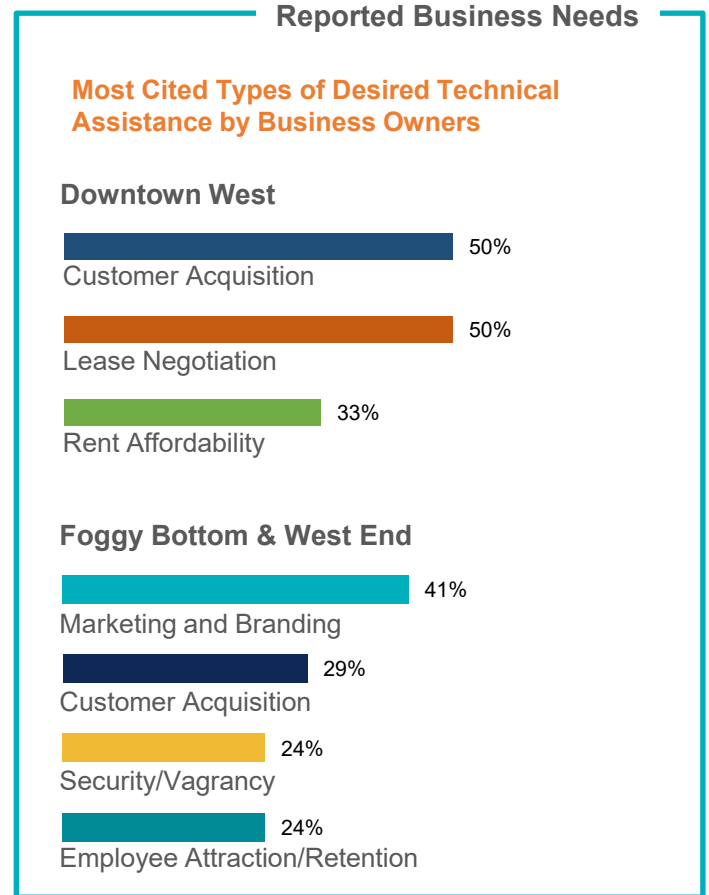

Columbia Plaza Outdoor Mall

BUSINESS NEEDS AND RECEPTIVITY

As part of this analysis and engagement, businesses in the study area were surveyed to understand businesses' needs and receptivity to a new Main Street in the area. Overall, businesses expressed receptivity toward additional assistance from the City to support their operations. The types of assistance businesses most requested closely align with the core services provided by Main Streets.

In Foggy Bottom and West End, marketing and branding support was cited by businesses as their largest need, reflecting the decline in customer traffic and perceived opportunity to significantly boost the citywide brand of the neighborhood as a place for people from outside the area to visit. Customer acquisition, security/vagrancy, and employee attraction/retention were also commonly cited as major needs.

Several businesses reported a need for more coordination and strategic partnerships between local businesses to build stronger connections with nearby residents and between small business owners in the neighborhood. In Downtown West, customer acquisition, lease negotiation, and rent affordability were the most commonly cited areas of desired assistance.

Reported Business Needs

Most Cited Types of Desired Technical Assistance by Business Owners

Downtown West

Customer Acquisition	50%
Lease Negotiation	50%
Rent Affordability	33%

Foggy Bottom & West End

Marketing and Branding	41%
Customer Acquisition	29%
Security/Vagrancy	24%
Employee Attraction/Retention	24%

Note: A total of 58 businesses completed the survey conducted as a part of this study. Response includes both in-person surveys conducted door-to-door in the Study Area as well as a digital version of the survey provided to retail businesses in the Study Area. An overview of Main Street programs was provided to respondents. Business owners/representatives were asked about their views on the need for such an organization, their wiliness to volunteer, and the types of needed assistance most applicable to their establishment. Source: Business Survey conducted by JS&A in Q2 2023.

STAKEHOLDER RECEPTIVITY TO A MAIN STREET

There is strong community interest and support for a new Main Street.

Community leaders expressed a strong need for more economic development and business support coordination and resources for the neighborhood. There is specific support for a Main Street program, given an unsuccessful prior attempt at the formation of a business association and limited capacity or interest in the formation of a Business Improvement District. Foggy Bottom community leaders frequently cited a long-running decline of retail amenities, with particularly strong support for additional resources going toward attracting and retaining businesses at The Watergate and Columbia Plaza.

Community leaders also expressed strong confidence that Foggy Bottom and West End would have the volunteer interest and capacity to effectively support a new Main Street program. Leaders cited a dedicated base of year-long residents, with the potential to leverage the area's student population.

Foggy Bottom Association (FBA) was commonly cited as a potential organization to oversee a Main Street program.

Community leaders cited Foggy Bottom Association's long history in the neighborhood, existing relationships with local business owners, and respected leadership as key reasons why the organization is well-positioned to oversee a Main Street program. In an interview conducted for this study, FBA leadership also expressed direct interest in applying for Main Street accreditation.
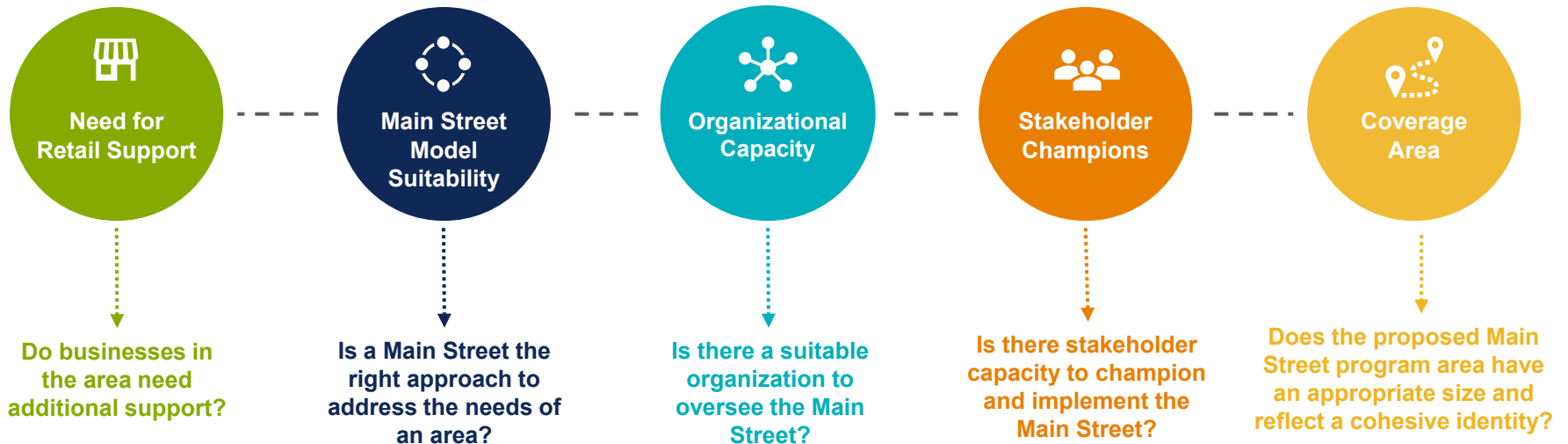
06 Main Street Evaluation Framework

JS&A

Economic
Development
Consulting

FEASIBILITY EVALUATION CRITERIA

This analysis summarizes the necessary neighborhood conditions that allow a Main Street program to be successful. These conditions are grouped in five categories. If a program area fulfills the criteria within each of the five categories, the area would be considered to have the conditions necessary to support a successful Main Street. If an area does not fulfill the criteria within a category, it would not be recommended for Main Street accreditation or funding.

This criteria can be used by DLSBD to help determine whether a new area should be awarded Main Street funding or whether an existing area should continue receiving funding. The criteria can also be used as a road map to help neighborhood stakeholders build the groundwork that would make a new Main Street program successful in their community. The "Organizational Capacity" category can also be used to identify which organization is the most suitable to receive a Main Street grant. More broadly, this criteria can communicate the fundamental conditions necessary to make a DC Main Street program sustainable and impactful to community stakeholders.

Need for Retail Support	Main Street Model Suitability	Organizational Capacity	Stakeholder Champions	Coverage Area
Do businesses in the area need additional support?	Is a Main Street the right approach to address the needs of an area?	Is there a suitable organization to oversee the Main Street?	Is there stakeholder capacity to champion and implement the Main Street?	Does the proposed Main Street program area have an appropriate size and reflect a cohesive identity?

FEASIBILITY EVALUATION CRITERIA

This analysis summarizes the necessary neighborhood conditions that allow a Main Street program to be successful. These conditions are grouped in five categories. If a program area fulfills the criteria within each of the five categories, the area would be considered to have the conditions necessary to support a successful Main Street. If an area does not fulfill the criteria within a category, it would not be recommended for Main Street accreditation or funding.

	Need for Retail Support — *Do businesses in the area need additional support?*	Main Street Model Suitability — *Is a Main Street the right approach to address the needs of an area?*	Organizational Capacity — *Is there a suitable organization to oversee the Main Street?*	Stakeholder Champions — *Is there stakeholder capacity to champion and implement the Main Street?*	Coverage Area — *Does the proposed Main Street program area have an appropriate size and reflect a cohesive identity?*
Criteria #1	Established receptivity among business owners for a Main Street program.	Neighborhood conditions that align with the Main Street Four-Point Approach	Existing organization with a similar or complementary mission to a Main Street program that has expressed interest in receiving Main Street accreditation to serve the area.	Established interest from residents and/or other stakeholders in joining a Board of Directors and Executive Committee for a Main Street program.	Neighborhood, corridor, or district with a cohesive identity.
Criteria #2	Lack of other entities already providing similar services as a Main Street (excluding any organization that would be overseeing the new Main Street).	Walkable commercial corridor with a concentration of ground-floor commercial storefronts.	Existing nonprofit organization that represents the same or proximate geographic area as the study area.	Established financial support and/or the presence of a local anchor institution and other key partners who could be expected to provide financial support.	Appropriate number of retail businesses within the study area.
Criteria #3	Notable supply of underutilized ground-floor commercial spaces that are vacant or in visibly poor condition.	Large portion of local businesses.	Existing nonprofit organization that has a track record of operational success.	Established base of volunteers within the study area, as demonstrated by participation in prior community events or initiatives.	Appropriate geographic size of study area
Criteria #4	None	Supply of historic assets worthy of preservation.	Existing nonprofit organization that has strong ties with local businesses in the study area.	Established track record of strong event attendance at prior events or festivals within the study area.	Contiguous study area, with no major barriers to pedestrian traffic.

METHODOLOGY SUMMARY

How To Use This Evaluation Criteria

The following criteria categories were developed to evaluate the feasibility of potential new DC Main Street programs and the suitability of existing programs. This criteria is designed to be used to assess a single "study area"—the program boundary of a proposed or existing program.

The criteria are grouped within 5 categories:

1. Need for Retail Support

2. Main Street Model Suitability

3. Organizational Capacity

4. Stakeholder Support

5. Coverage Area

When to Use This Evaluation Criteria

This evaluation rubric can be applied by DSLBD and local stakeholders at five separate points in the Main Street program formation and evaluation process:

1. Evaluating whether a Main Street is the right entity to serve a particular area before the creation and distribution of a Request for Applications for an organization to oversee a program.
2. Identifying which organization is the most suitable to receive a Main Street grant.
3. Evaluating whether an existing Main Street program's funding should be maintained or removed during formal program review.
4. Creating a road map to help neighborhood stakeholders build the groundwork that would make a new Main Street program successful in their community.
5. Communicating the fundamental conditions necessary to make a DC Main Street program sustainable and impactful to community stakeholders.

Scoring

These categories each include three to four criteria, with a specific number of points assigned for each. Each category has a scoring threshold to measure whether the study area satisfies these criteria. If an area **meets** the scoring threshold of every category, then it would be expected that the area has the fundamental conditions necessary to have a successful, sustainable Main Street program. Conversely, if an area **does not meet** the scoring threshold for every category, then it would not be considered to have the fundamental conditions necessary to have a successful, sustainable Main Street program.

NEED FOR RETAIL SUPPORT

Do businesses in the area need additional support?

An area should have a clear need for business support services to receive Main Street funding.

Most fundamentally, there should be a clear demonstration that business owners within the study area are supportive of a Main Street program and desire such support services. Without an initial base of support from businesses, a new program would likely struggle to establish relationships and demonstrate immediate value. For existing programs, business owners should be aware and supportive of the Main Street and its programming. Business receptivity for a program can be demonstrated through a business survey and/or testimonials from business owners/operators.

Another key metric to evaluate an area's need for Main Street services is the presence (or lack thereof) of any other entities that provide similar business support services, such as a Business Improvement District or business association. Overlap with similar entities creates risk of programmatic redundancies and stakeholder confusion.

Criteria #	Criteria Description	Total Points
1	**Established receptivity among business owners for a Main Street program**[1]	4
2	**Lack of other entities already providing similar services as a Main Street (excluding any organization that would be overseeing the new Main Street)**[2]	3
3	**Notable supply of underutilized ground-floor commercial spaces that are vacant or in visibly poor condition**	3
Scoring Total	**Needs at least 7 out of 10 to demonstrate sufficient need for assistance**	**Max Score: 10**

[1] *Receptivity among business owners can be demonstrated through a survey or testimonials from multiple business owners/operators.*
[2] *An above-average vacancy rate can be used as evidence for this criteria. For context, DC's citywide retail vacancy rate is 7%, as of Q2 2023.*

MAIN STREET MODEL SUITABILITY

Is a Main Street the right approach to address the needs of an area?

The needs of the study area should align with the core mission of DSLBD and core elements of the Main Street program model.

The core mission of DSLBD is to support the growth of District's small and local businesses. The mission of the DC Main Street program is to support traditional retail corridors in the city. As such, all Main Street program areas should clearly align with both core missions—serving walkable commercial corridors with ground-floor storefronts and a high concentration of independently owned businesses. Areas with historic building stocks should be prioritized for accreditation, to align with another fundamental component of the Main Street model—historic preservation.

[1] The alignment between community needs and the Main Street model can be assessed through conversations with ANCs or other community leaders and insights from recent Small Area Plans or other relevant studies.

[2] A walkable commercial corridor could be demonstrated by having multiple blocks that are predominantly composed of ground-floor storefronts.

Criteria #	Criteria Description	Total Points
1	**Neighborhood conditions that align with the Main Street Four-Point Approach[1]** • 1 pt if needs exists for additional community events and other promotional activities (Promotion) • 1 pt if needs exist to help businesses navigate regulatory or licensing issues, secure City resources, gain access to capital, and other technical needs (Economic Vitality) • 1 pt if needs exists for physical enhancements to storefront facades, streetscapes, or business signage (Design) • 1 pt if need exits for area to have additional support in cultivating strategic community partnerships and securing additional public or private resources (Organization)	4
2	**Walkable commercial corridor with a concentration of ground-floor commercial storefronts[2]** • 3 pts if all or nearly all retail storefronts are located within the same retail node or corridor • 2 pts if high concentration of retail activity but businesses dispersed across a large study area • 1 pt if retail businesses are highly dispersed throughout study area but are accessible by transit and located in a pedestrian-friendly atmosphere	3
3	**Large portion of local businesses** • 2 pts if over 80% of retail businesses are independently owned, operated, and controlled • 1 pt if over 70% of retail businesses are independently owned, operated, and controlled	2
4	**Supply of historic assets worthy of preservation**	1
Scoring Total	Needs at least 8 out of 10 to demonstrate sufficient alignment with the Main Street Model	Max Score: 10

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

Is there a suitable organization to oversee the Main Street?

Organizational Capacity

There needs to be at least one nonprofit organization with the capacity and interest in overseeing a new Main Street program before funding is awarded to an area.

The Main Street model is hyper-local in nature, with the success of a program highly dependent on quality stakeholder relationships. As such, it is vital that any parent organization of a new Main Street program has a strong existing knowledge of the study area and established relationships with business owners, residents, and local anchor institutions. While a parent organization does not need direct experience providing Main Street services, it should have a mission aligned with the Main Street model and an established track record of operational competence.

This evaluation criteria for this category should be used to assess any prospective organizations within a study area, to help DSLBD determine whether there is at least one organization that could adequately oversee a Main Street grant. If at least one organization meets this criteria, then the study area would successfully pass this evaluation category.

Criteria #	Criteria Description	Total Points
1	**Existing nonprofit organization with a similar or complementary mission to a Main Street program that has expressed interest in receiving Main Street accreditation to serve the study area**	4
2	**Existing nonprofit organization that represents the same or proximate geographic area as the study area** • 4 pts if the organization's registered address is within the study area • 2 pts if the organization's registered address is outside the study area, but within a one-mile radius from the study area • 2 pts if the organization's registered address is outside the study area, but it provides services within the study area	4
3	**Existing nonprofit organization that has a track record of operational success** • 1 pt if organization has established experience securing private funding from corporate, institutional, or individual sources • 1 pt if organization has established experience managing volunteers for events or other programmatic activities	2
4	**Existing nonprofit organization that has strong ties with local businesses in the study area** • 1 pt if organization has existing relationships with business owners and/or operators in study area • 1 pt if organization has partnered with businesses within study area on prior events, marketing initiatives, or other programs	2
Scoring Total	**Needs at least 9 out of 12 to demonstrate sufficient organizational suitability**	**Max Score: 12**

Note: This criteria is meant to evaluate the capacity of a single organization.
Multiple organizations may be assessed for a given study area

STAKEHOLDER CHAMPIONS

Is there stakeholder capacity to champion and implement the Main Street?

A strong base of volunteer and financial support from the local community is fundamental to the long-term success of a Main Street program.

In addition to the identification of a suitable parent organization to oversee the Main Street program, there must also be strong community support behind any successful Main Street program. As a program model highly dependent on volunteering, there must be a base of residents who can volunteer at events, serve on the board and executive committees, and spread the word about the Main Street throughout the greater community. Without this strong foundation, a Main Street would struggle to execute quality programming, grow its capacity, and establish its value to stakeholders.

Prospective new Main Streets should also demonstrate anticipated financial support from local institutions, such as universities, churches, supermarkets, banks, or other anchor establishments. Without the support from these key entities, a Main Street would likely struggle to grow operationally and programmatically.

Criteria #	Criteria Description	Total Points
1	**Established interest from residents and/or other stakeholders in joining a Board of Directors and Executive Committee for a Main Street program**[1]	4
2	**Established financial support and/or the presence of a local anchor institution and other key partners who could be expected to provide financial support**	3
3	**Established base of volunteers within study area,** as demonstrated by participation in prior community events or initiatives	2
4	**Established track record of strong event attendance at prior events or festivals within the study area**	1
Scoring Total	**Needs at least 7 out of 10 to demonstrate sufficient stakeholder support**	Max Score: 10

[1] DSLBD can evaluate the strength of stakeholder support by speaking with local ANCs, City Council community liaisons, and community group leaders.

COVERAGE AREA

Does the proposed Main Street program area have an appropriate size and reflect a cohesive identity?

Main Streets should reflect a clear, cohesive neighborhood or corridor identity.

Main Streets that serve multiple neighborhoods or commercial nodes and lack a clear brand identity can struggle to effectively brand itself or generate strong buy-in from stakeholders who do not feel there are adequately represented by the program.

In addition to having a cohesive identity, the optimal program area also has an appropriate geographic size and number of retail businesses. Its ideal size is small enough for an Executive Director to easily walk through and have frequent interactions with businesses. Furthermore, a program area with too many businesses (the median DC Main Street serves 72 businesses), may be overwhelmed by such a large constituent base.

On the other end of the spectrum, program areas that are too small also create risks. Main Streets with too few businesses can struggle to secure sufficient private funding or business interest in technical assistance, event participation, or other partnerships. From a City perspective, Main Street funding also needs to be equitable, avoiding areas where resources are overly concentrated within a small number of businesses.

Criteria #	Criteria Description	Total Points
1	**Neighborhood or corridor with a cohesive identity** • 6 pts if study area covers or reflects a single neighborhood or corridor that is widely associated with a single name and identity. This may include the coverage of a neighborhood with a clear identity, such as Tenleytown Main Street or Glover Park Main Street. This may also include the coverage of a commercial corridor with a clear brand and identity, such as Barracks Row Main Street or Lower Georgia Avenue Main Street. • 3 pts if study area has multiple, yet contiguous corridors or commercial nodes with distinct identities, such as H Street Main Street (which serves H St., Bladensburg Rd., and Benning Rd.), and Eastern Market Main Street (which serves Eastern Market and Pennsylvania Ave.) • 3 pts if study area has two or more distinct neighborhood nodes that are not contiguous if (a) one or more nodes are too small to sustain its own Main Street; (b) they are in the same Ward and are in relative proximity; or (c) if there is a commonality that can bridge separate identities into a cohesive brand. An example of this would be Parks Main Street	6
2	**Appropriate number of retail businesses within the study area** • 3 pts if study area has 35–99 businesses • 2 pts if study area has 25–34 or 100-149 businesses • 1 pt if study area has 150–200 businesses	3
3	**Appropriate geographic size of study area** • 2 pts if study area has 3–19 street segments • 1 pt if study area has 20–29 street segments	2
4	**Contiguous study area, with no major barriers to pedestrian traffic**	1
Scoring Total	**Needs at least 8 out of 12 to demonstrate an optimal coverage area size and orientation.**	**Max Score: 12**

07 Main Street Feasibility Findings

FEASIBILITY SCORING DETAIL FOR PROGRAM AREA THAT ONLY SERVES FOGGY BOTTOM

A Main Street program area that only covers the Foggy Bottom neighborhood meets the scoring threshold under each evaluation category within this framework. This indicates that the area has a strong opportunity for an effective and sustained Main Street program.

Criteria	Need for Retail Support	Main Street Model Suitability	Organizational Capacity*	Stakeholder Champions	Coverage Area**
1	Score: 4 out of 4 Established receptivity among business owners for a Main Street program	Score: 4 out of 4 Neighborhood conditions that align with the Main Street Four-Point Approach	Score: 4 out of 4 Existing organization with a similar or complementary mission to a Main Street program that has expressed interest in receiving Main Street accreditation to serve the study area	Score: 4 out of 4 Established interest from residents and/or other stakeholders in joining a Board of Directors and Executive Committee for a Main Street program	Score: 6 out of 6 Neighborhood, corridor, or district with a cohesive identity
2	Score: 3 out of 3 Lack of other entities already providing similar services as a Main Street (excluding any organization that would be overseeing the new Main Street)	Score: 2 out of 3 Walkable commercial corridor with a concentration of ground-floor commercial storefronts	Score: 4 out of 4 Existing nonprofit organization that represents the same or proximate geographic area as the study area	Score: 3 out of 3 Established financial support and/or the presence of a local anchor institution and other key partners who could be expected to provide financial support	Score: 3 out of 3 Appropriate number of retail businesses within the study area
3	Score: 3 out of 3 Notable supply of underutilized ground-floor commercial spaces that are vacant or in visibly poor condition	Score: 2 out of 2 Large portion of local businesses	Score: 2 out of 2 Existing nonprofit organization that has a track record of operational success	Score: 2 out of 2 Established base of volunteers within the study area, as demonstrated by participation in prior community events or initiatives	Score: 2 out of 2 Appropriate geographic size of study area
4	N/A (This evaluation category has only 3 criteria.)	Score: 1 out of 1 Supply of historic assets worthy of preservation	Score: 2 out of 2 Existing nonprofit organization that has strong ties with local businesses	Score: 0 out of 1 Established track record of strong event attendance at prior events or festivals	Score: 1 out of 1 Contiguous study area, with no major barriers to pedestrian traffic
Total Score	✓ Passes 10/10 (Min. 7)	✓ Passes 9/10 (Min. 8)	✓ Passes 12/12 (Min. 9)	✓ Passes 9/10 (Min. 7)	✓ Passes 12/12 (Min. 8)

Total Score: 52 out of 54

Scores reflect the capacity of Foggy Bottom Association, the organization most well-suited to oversee the Main Street program area. These criteria can be used as a framework to assess other organizations that have an interest in overseeing the Main Street.

** Analysis uses the geography of 19th St. NW to the east, Rock Creek Parkway to the west, Pennsylvania Avenue NW to the north, and I Street NW to the south, along the 800 block of New Hampshire Avenue NW and the Columbia Plaza and the Watergate complexes. This area covers approximately 58 retail businesses.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS:
MAIN STREET FEASIBILITY FOR PROGRAM AREA THAT ONLY SERVES FOGGY BOTTOM

There is a strong opportunity for the development of a Main Street program that serves the Foggy Bottom neighborhood. Foggy Bottom Association is well-positioned to oversee the Main Street program, given its strong existing relationships with local business owners and established network of local partners and volunteers. The supply of businesses within the recommended program area boundary would include approximately 58 businesses, within the ideal range for a new program. The area's dispersed locations of retail (with clusters along I Street, Pennsylvania Avenue, The Watergate, and Columbia Plaza) is the largest risk factor for a new program.

Feasibility Evaluation Criteria	Feasibility for a Main Street	Summary of Conditions	Strengths and Opportunities	Weaknesses and Threats
Need for Retail Support	Strong	A total of 77% of businesses report sales below pre-pandemic levels. Area features a high vacancy rate; particularly at Watergate and Columbia Plaza	Most surveyed businesses are in favor of a Main Street. There is a lack of similar support services.	Multiple retail areas with differing needs require strong vision and capacity.
Main Street Model Suitability	Strong	There is a need for marketing, events, façade improvements, and other technical assistance.	Area features historic district, key historic assets, and is highly walkable.	Area has large gaps of non-commercial uses in between retail nodes.
Organizational Capacity	Strong	Area features one nonprofit organization, FBA, that already serves the study area and is strongly positioned to oversee Main Street.	FBA has a similar mission, strong stakeholder relationships, and an interest in program oversight.	FBA has not fundraised at a level needed to support an MS. Except for FBA, no suitable organization is located within study area.
Stakeholder Champions	Strong	Strong support from community groups, large set of existing nonprofit volunteer bases, and anticipated support from key local institutions	GWU and Kennedy Center have potential to be key partners and supporters.	Main Street would need to avoid jurisdictional issues with the GWU campus.
Coverage Area	Strong	Area covers a single neighborhood with a clear brand. Area has multiple retail nodes with differing customer bases and building conditions.	Area has optimal number of businesses. Foggy Bottom has a clear, cohesive brand.	Dispersed locations of businesses increase difficulty of streamlined engagement and TA efforts.

FEASIBILITY SCORING DETAIL FOR PROGRAM AREA THAT INCLUDES BOTH FOGGY BOTTOM & WEST END

A Main Street program area covering both the Foggy Bottom and West End neighborhoods is meets the scoring threshold under each evaluation category within this framework. This indicates that the area has a strong opportunity for an effective and sustained Main Street program, though the overall score is slightly lower than a program area only spanning the Foggy Bottom neighborhood, given the larger geographic size, smaller share of local businesses, and less cohesive brand and identity (spanning two distinct neighborhoods instead of one).

Criteria	Need for Retail Support	Main Street Model Suitability	Organizational Capacity*	Stakeholder Champions	Coverage Area**
1	Score: 4 out of 4 — Established receptivity among business owners for a Main Street program	Score: 4 out of 4 — Neighborhood conditions that align with the Main Street Four-Point Approach	Score: 4 out of 4 — Existing organization with a similar or complementary mission to a Main Street program that has expressed interest in receiving Main Street accreditation to serve the study area	Score: 4 out of 4 — Established interest from residents and/or other stakeholders in joining a Board of Directors and Executive Committee for a Main Street program	Score: 3 out of 6 — Neighborhood, corridor, or district with a cohesive identity
2	Score: 3 out of 3 — Lack of other entities already providing similar services as a Main Street (excluding any organization that would be overseeing the new Main Street)	Score: 2 out of 3 — Walkable commercial corridor with a concentration of ground-floor commercial storefronts	Score: 4 out of 4 — Existing nonprofit organization that represents the same or proximate geographic area as the study area	Score: 3 out of 3 — Established financial support and/or the presence of a local anchor institution and other key partners who could be expected to provide financial support	Score: 3 out of 3 — Appropriate number of retail businesses within the study area
3	Score: 3 out of 3 — Notable supply of underutilized ground-floor commercial spaces that are vacant or in visibly poor condition	Score: 1 out of 2 — Large portion of local businesses	Score: 2 out of 2 — Existing nonprofit organization that has a track record of operational success	Score: 2 out of 2 — Established base of volunteers within the study area, as demonstrated by participation in prior community events or initiatives	Score: 1 out of 2 — Appropriate geographic size of study area
4	N/A (This evaluation category has only 3 criteria)	Score: 1 out of 1 — Supply of historic assets worthy of preservation	Score: 2 out of 2 — Existing nonprofit organization that has strong ties with local businesses	Score: 0 out of 1 — Established track record of strong event attendance at prior events or festivals	Score: 1 out of 1 — Contiguous study area, with no major barriers to pedestrian traffic
Total Score	✓ Passes 10/10 (Min. 7)	✓ Passes 8/10 (Min. 8)	✓ Passes 12/12 (Min. 9)	✓ Passes 9/10 (Min. 7)	✓ Passes 8/12 (Min. 8)

Total Score: Passes (47 out of 54)

Scores reflect capacity of Foggy Bottom Association, the organization most well-suited to oversee the Main Street program area. This criteria can be used as a framework to assess other organizations that have interest in overseeing the Main Street.

** See p. 43 for specific "Foggy Bottom/West End" program area geography used for analysis. This geography covers approximately 99 businesses.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS:
MAIN STREET FEASIBILITY FOR PROGRAM AREA THAT INCLUDES BOTH FOGGY BOTTOM & WEST END

There is a strong opportunity for the development of a Main Street program that serves the Foggy Bottom and West End neighborhoods. Foggy Bottom Association is well-positioned to oversee the Main Street program, given its strong existing relationships with local business owners and established network of local partners and volunteers. The supply of businesses within the recommended program area boundary would include approximately 96 businesses, within the ideal range for a new program. However, the study area's large geographic size, dispersed locations of businesses, and varying commercial orientations are risk factors for a new program.

Feasibility Evaluation Criteria	Feasibility for a Main Street	Summary of Conditions	Strengths and Opportunities	Weaknesses and Threats
Need for Retail Support	Strong	A total of 63% of businesses report sales below pre-pandemic levels. Area features high vacancy rate; particularly at Watergate and Columbia Plaza.	Most surveyed businesses are in favor of a Main Street. There is a lack of similar support services.	Multiple retail areas with differing needs require strong vision and capacity.
Main Street Model Suitability	Moderate	There is a need for marketing, events, façade improvements, and other technical assistance.	Area features historic district, key historic assets, and is highly walkable.	Retail is dispersed across multiple nodes within large study area.
Organizational Capacity	Strong	Area features one nonprofit organization, FBA, that already serves the study area and is strongly positioned to oversee Main Street.	FBA has similar mission, strong stakeholder relationships, and interest in program oversight.	FBA has not fundraised at a level needed to support an MS. Except for FBA, no suitable organization is located within study area.
Stakeholder Champions	Strong	Strong support from community groups, large set of existing nonprofit volunteer bases, and anticipated support from key local institutions.	GWU and Kennedy Center have potential to be key partners and supporters.	Need for MS board and committees to represent both Foggy Bottom and West End.
Coverage Area	Moderate	Area includes two distinct neighborhoods and multiple retail nodes with differing customer bases and building conditions.	Area has optimal number of businesses. West End and Foggy Bottom have strong brand synergies.	Large geographic size. Inclusion of two neighborhoods may pose branding challenges.

08 Recommendations

FEASIBLE PROGRAM BOUNDARY OPTIONS

There are two geographies within the study area that are feasible as Main Street program areas. The first geography encompasses businesses only within a portion of the Foggy Bottom neighborhood. The second geography spans a combination of Foggy Bottom and a portion of the West End neighborhood. Both boundaries pass the evaluation criteria developed for this study.

Option #1: Foggy Bottom

This geography includes the majority of retail in Foggy Bottom, including both sides of Pennsylvania Avenue, and the Watergate and Columbia Plaza complexes—covering approximately 58 businesses. Notably, the GWU campus is excluded to avoid jurisdictional issues.

Total Feasibility Score: 52 out of 54

Option #2: Foggy Bottom & West End

This geography includes the full geography of Foggy Bottom, with the addition of West End, extending to the north side of M Street NW and east to New Hampshire Avenue NW This expanded program area increases the overall business count to approximately 96 businesses.

Total Feasibility Score: 47 out of 54

RECOMMENDED PROGRAM BOUNDARY

The recommended boundary for a Main Street program in the study area should encompass both the Foggy Bottom and West End neighborhoods; covering the full area highlighted in the map to the right. The larger program area is expected to have a greater overall impact, serving more businesses and tapping into a larger base of stakeholder capacity.

- Business owners and community stakeholders in each of the two neighborhoods support the prospect of a Main Street in this area.

- There are strong synergies between the neighborhoods, with a history of collaboration and shared branding, making "Foggy Bottom-West End Main Street" a logical, intuitive brand.

- Foggy Bottom Association (FBA) already serves both neighborhoods. The exclusion of West End would fail to leverage FBA's relationships and experience in the neighborhood.

- Both West End and Foggy Bottom are on an island of place management and local economic development nonprofit support, with Georgetown BID directly to the west of the study area, Dupont Circle BID directly to the north, Golden Triangle BID to the east, and the National Mall to the south.

- The two neighborhoods combine for a high, but still manageable number of businesses.

- The area includes some properties owned by George Washington University. Having a major university campus partially overlapping with a program area is somewhat unique to a DC Main Street and should be further considered within its programming and structure.

STUDY RECOMMENDATION: THE CITY SHOULD OFFER MAIN STREET DESIGNATION TO A PORTION OF THE FOGGY BOTTOM-WEST END AREA

This study recommends that the City support the designation of a Main Street program that covers either of the two viable program coverage areas.

Recommendations for the City

- The City should offer accreditation to a Main Street program that serves either program boundary identified in this study (see p. 43).

- As part of the Main Street Grant RFA process, the City should allow applicants to choose which boundary they plan to represent. The final program boundary should align with the area chosen by the selected organization.

- Foggy Bottom Association (FBA) is the ideal recipient of accreditation, given the organization's capacity, experience, and local presence (see p. 40 for additional detail).

- The City should use this study's evaluation framework to assess the feasibility of future and existing Main Streets moving forward.

Recommendations for a Potential Main Street Program in Foggy Bottom-West End

- A Main Street that serves both Foggy Bottom and West End should feature a board that equitably represents both neighborhoods.

- A Main Street in the Foggy Bottom-West End area should develop strong partnerships with the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts and George Washington University—leveraging each institution's potential capacity to contribute financially and/or serve on the board.

- Washington Circle should be utilized as an ideal space for Main Street events.

- A future Main Street program should target at least 25% business owner representation on the board.

A Appendix: Case Studies

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CASE STUDY: DOWNTOWN ALBUQUERQUE MAIN STREET

The Downtown Albuquerque MainStreet Initiative (Downtown ABQ) is a community redevelopment organization that received New Mexico Main Street designation in 2008. The program has undertaken various programming and projects to support economic development, enhance the arts and cultural district, promote placemaking, and conduct a downtown livability study. These efforts include a farmer's market, art walks, placemaking to reimagine the Civic Plaza, addressing storefront vacancies, enhancing lighting, and creating engaging spaces for the community.

Organization Name: Downtown Albuquerque Main Street Initiative (Downtown ABQ)

Location: Albuquerque, New Mexico

Program Formation: 2008

Executive Director: Danielle Schlobohm

Contact Info: info@abqmainstreeet.org

Key Program Initiatives

- **Leveraging Proximity to Nearby University:** The DowntownABQ Main Street Initiative (DowntownABQ) has tapped into the resources that the University of New Mexico (UNM) has to offer that helped the Main Street program gain valuable insights, data, and expertise to inform revitalization efforts.

- **Downtown Farmer's Market.** The Main Street organizes a weekly farmer's market every Saturday morning from mid-April through November to help bring fresh food to a traditional downtown environment. The program hires "Market Ambassadors" to support the market's operations and provide opportunities for nearby residents and students to become more engaged with the Main Street.

- **Engaging Local University Students with Community Planning Efforts:** The collaboration efforts have involved providing opportunities for UNM students to participate in community engagement activities for various projects and program initiatives. UNM students, specifically the CityLab, participated in Main Street-led stakeholder meetings that helped guide improvements on a local plaza where participants identified strengths and weaknesses toward transforming the space into a stronger community gathering space.

CASE STUDY: WASHINGTON GATEWAY MAIN STREET

The Washington Gateway Main Street (WGMS) program has successfully implemented various projects to enhance the district's vibrancy and community engagement. The program serves Boston's South End and Lower Roxbury neighborhoods providing a range of programs from technical assistance, reducing high costs of energy utilities, clean streets initiative, and several arts and culture projects.

Organization Name: Washington Gateway Mainstreet (WGMS)

Location: Boston, Massachusetts

Program Formation: 1997

Districts: South End and Lower Roxbury Neighborhoods

Executive Director: Michael Sanchez

Contact Info: edirector@gatewaymainstreet.com

Key Program Initiatives

- **Connecting Businesses with Energy Programs:** Boston Buying Power and Renew Boston are examples of programs that allow small businesses to benefit from competitive utility rates and receive technical assistance and financial incentives to lower the impacts of high energy costs.

- **Clean Streets Initiative:** WGMS and Project Place's "Clean Corners... Bright Hopes" social enterprise have formed a partnership to address the complex issues surrounding homelessness and promote economic development. Through this collaboration, Clean Corners employees not only receive job training and support services, but also learn valuable skills that can be applied to multiple sectors such as custodial services, facilities maintenance, waste management, and landscaping. This initiative aims to empower homeless individuals by equipping them with the necessary tools to maintain a professional work schedule and achieve self-sufficiency.

- **Lighting the Parks:** Washington Gateway Main Street and Blackstone Franklin Square Neighborhood Association have partnered to bring artistic light installations to their district's parks. The project includes "Nimbus" in Franklin Square, with 26 illuminated orbs above the fountain, and "Lights On The Square" in Blackstone Square. These installations aim to enhance safety, promote community engagement, and create a visually appealing environment after dark.

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