



**DC Small Parks Project  
Fort Drive  
(Fort Slocum to Fort Totten)  
REAP Analysis**

**Urban Heritage Project  
PennPraxis / Graduate Program in Historic Preservation  
University of Pennsylvania  
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# 1 Project Background

This Rapid Ethnographic Assessment Procedures (REAP) analysis was conducted as part of the Small Parks Cultural Landscape Overview and Ethnographic Assessment (aka DC Small Parks Project), a collaboration between the Graduate Program in Historic Preservation at the University of Pennsylvania and the National Capital Area office of the National Park Service.

The purpose of the DC Small Parks Project is to help the National Park Service develop a consistent approach to evaluate and manage change at small parks throughout Washington, D.C. This project builds on previous efforts to develop holistic, coordinated management strategies across the small park network, to help fulfill the NPS agenda for urban parks in the 21st century.

In the summer of 2017, the National Park Service began an analysis and evaluation of Washington, D.C.'s network of small parks under its ownership and control. Building on the Small Parks Management Strategies Report, finalized in April 2017, the analysis and evaluation used the Cultural Landscape Inventory model to assess NPS-managed small parks as a whole, and several prototype parks/groups of parks in depth:

(2018 - 2019)

- Virginia Avenue NW
- Bryce Park
- Maryland Avenue NE

(2019 - 2020)

- Marion Park
- Titanic Memorial Park
- Fort Drive, between Fort Slocum and Fort Totten

Another intention of the project was combining CLI and REAP methods to produce integrated documentation packages for groups of urban parks. This REAP analysis was conducted for the third prototype park, capturing an ethnographic understanding of the avenue's small parks to complement the objectives and findings of the Cultural Landscape Inventory for the Fort Drive component cultural landscape (Fort Slocum to Fort Totten).

In order to understand this REAP analysis in its fullest context, it should be interpreted alongside

the Cultural Landscape Inventory for the Fort Drive cultural landscape (Fort Slocum to Fort Totten), as well as the DC Small Parks Project's other reports, all of which were prepared by the Graduate Program in Historic Preservation at the University of Pennsylvania:

- Virginia Avenue NW: Cultural Landscape Inventory (2018)
- Bryce Park: Cultural Landscape Inventory (2019)
- Maryland Avenue NE: Cultural Landscape Inventory + REAP Analysis (2019)
- Marion Park: Cultural Landscape Inventory + REAP Analysis (2020)
- Titanic Memorial Park: Cultural Landscape Inventory + REAP Analysis (2020)

The goal of the overall project, and of this REAP analysis specifically, is to provide park managers with data and strategies to help identify, evaluate, and manage change for the nearly 300 small parks within Washington, D.C.

This REAP coincided with the COVID-19 global pandemic, which severely restricted the opportunities for on-site fieldwork and data collection. This situation was unusual and unfamiliar; in consultation with our NPS colleagues, we chose to respond with a deliberately experimental approach. (See page 9 for more on our methodology.)

As the coronavirus has illuminated new roles for public space in modern life, we hope that this REAP provokes new ways to understand and manage Washington, DC.'s universe of small parks.

## 2 Summary Observations

Our team has spent a year studying the Fort Drive landscape between Fort Slocum and Fort Totten, building an understanding of both its history and its current value for the community that surrounds it. We have conducted extensive archival research to understand the landscape as it took shape over several centuries, and we have undertaken a rapid ethnographic assessment to learn how that landscape is used and shaped by park visitors today. Based on this research, we offer some overarching observations:

**This parkland does not feel like a park.** Despite their geographic proximity, the segments of Reservations 497 and 451 are cut off from each other by busy roads and have no connective tissue to link them as public space in terms of identity, association, wayfinding, or experience.

**This section of Fort Drive functions as No Man's Land.** These segments of parkland feel like leftover space: they are generally overgrown, and the heavily forested areas apparently discourage most use.

**There are no physical remnants of the Civil War-era history that helped shape this landscape.** Without any other associational or interpretive links with its eponymous forts (as a portion of Fort Drive), the parkland misses an opportunity to bear out its name and acknowledge how the current landscape came to be.

**As the area around the parkland becomes wealthier, many existing gardeners are displaced.** As gardeners are priced out of these neighborhoods, they move farther away from the gardens and must drive to the site. This introduces new conflicts of use and pressures for space with respect to parking.

**The parkland remains an accessible public space in densifying, developing DC, but it offers little respite.** The large-scale construction projects at Fort Totten Metro Station are a jarring neighbor to the parkland's southern sections, as they generate noise, construction traffic, debris, etc. In that context, the Fort Drive parkland could offer respite from the development activity in the area. Yet, without features such as benches or walking trails, the park offers little opportunity for breathing room or rest from the surrounding hubbub.

**Other than the two community gardens, there are very few features in the Fort Drive cultural landscape to encourage recreational use, and no features with historical associations or other clear cultural affiliations.** There is only one picnic table in Reservations 497/451a. The remaining parkland is generally forested, with few trails and no features to encourage activity as recreational public space. The Blair Road Community Garden is linked with a historic World War II-era Victory Garden in the same location, but its legacy and historic significance is known by only a few long-time gardeners.

**The community gardens are physically and functionally distinct from the parkland around them, and operate independent of any Fort Drive identity.** Each of the two community gardens has its own identity and stakeholders, but the gardens are not integrated in any way with the parkland around them.

**The community gardens have loyal followings, but these groups are associated with the gardens, not the parkland that hosts the gardens.** We interviewed and surveyed the community gardeners at Blair Road and Mamie D. Lee Gardens, but there was a clear distinction in their responses between their observations about the gardens (they had many thoughts) and the parkland around the gardens (to which they have given little thought). The parkland was generally irrelevant to their use and experience of the gardens.

**The gardeners are generally aware of the National Park Service's ownership and management presence, but they are consequently also more aware of any conflicts with NPS stewardship.** The community gardeners demonstrated awareness of NPS' role in this landscape—more so than at the other cultural landscapes where we've conducted REAPs—this could instill a deeper appreciation for the National Park Service's importance as a steward of public parkland. However, it also means that the gardeners are more aware of any perceived issues with respect to deferred maintenance, challenges in securing permits, etc.

**The park has few identifiable stakeholders beyond the gardeners.** We uncovered very few distinct stakeholders or organizations that use this parkland. This has implications for the stewardship of this public space.

# 3 Methodology

This analysis began with a research scan of relevant literature about analyzing public space, REAP methodologies, and other National Park Service ethnography projects. In particular, the 2002 REAP of Independence National Historical Park conducted by Dana H. Taplin, Suzanne Scheld, and Setha M. Low offered a useful model for this type of REAP analysis for urban parks (although the Fort Drive REAP analysis was conducted over a shorter period of time).

## Virtual Ethnographies (COVID-19 Methodology)

For our previous REAP for the Maryland Avenue NE cultural landscape (as part of this same project), our team used the following methods from the National Park Service's traditional ethnographic research approaches:

- Context mapping
- Behavior mapping
- Transect walk(s)
- Intercept interviews
- Expert/Stakeholder interviews

However, in determining the appropriate scope and strategy for this REAP analysis, the project team and NPS officials grappled with the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on our data collection and analysis. The Fort Drive cultural landscape is an outdoor space, and so it continues to be used during the pandemic (arguably, it has been used even more). However, our team is based in Philadelphia, studying this landscape in Washington, DC. (It is important to note that we were familiar with the site based on pre-COVID fieldwork for the Cultural Landscape Inventory.) Due to shifting stay-at-home restrictions, social distancing protocols, and other precautions, we decided to conduct this REAP using entirely virtual methods. This precluded the use of behavior mapping and transect walk(s) in particular, requiring us to create new methods or work-arounds in order to learn from the landscape's visitors in the same way.

Our team evaluated different methodological approaches within the framework of a matrix (see pages 87-89). One axis evaluated the **Scale** of the approach, from **Site** to **Context**. The other axis evaluated the **Insight** that the approach could offer, from **Individual** to **Social / Pattern**. We brainstormed and mapped a range of options, beginning with the methods listed above from the Maryland Avenue NE REAP, and extending into more experimental

approaches that are not typically deployed in traditional REAPs. We filtered the matrix for opportunities that were available remotely (due to the pandemic), and then filtered once more based on the remote methods that were most appropriate for the Fort Drive cultural landscape, based on the opportunity to reach targeted samples of stakeholder audiences and perspectives while building an understanding of the full spectrum of affiliations.

The cultural landscape has stakeholders in the form of the community gardeners at Blair Road and Mamie D. Lee Community Gardens (which function separately). This constituency made the cultural landscape a strong candidate for a targeted online survey. However, the park does not have clear boundaries or a defined identity (in name or neighborhood), or an unobstructed landscape design; it was not, therefore, suitable for a virtual walk-through or a photo mapping analysis. (For examples of these methodologies, see the Marion Park REAP or the Titanic Memorial Park REAP.)

Thus, the project team established a REAP methodology based on these remote methods and objectives:

1. Context mapping to understand the geographic, social, and policy-making context for the small parks;
2. Stakeholder interviews, to gain first-hand perspectives about the park's community value, perception, and use;
3. Stakeholder survey, administered online, to gain broad-based perspectives about the park's community value, perception, and use in relation to the community gardens.

## Context mapping + Park Service Area/WalkScore Mapping

In order to understand the cultural landscape within its broader neighborhood context, the project team gathered spatial data related to demographics, land use/management, public transportation, and civic institutions nearby. Sources of the datasets include

- District of Columbia Office of Zoning
- District of Columbia Office of Planning
- Social Explorer Tables (SE), Census 2000, U.S. Census Bureau and Social Explorer
- Social Explorer Tables (SE), Census 2010, U.S. Census Bureau and Social Explorer

- Social Explorer Tables (SE), American Community Survey (ACS) 2014-2018 (5-Year Estimates), U.S. Census Bureau and Social Explorer

### **Stakeholder interviews**

This method solicits community members' and officials' first-hand perspective of the values, use, and perception of the park. Team members prepared a shortlist of interviewees in consultation with National Park Service officials. We identified these interviewees based on their affiliation with the park (e.g. members of the cultural landscape's community gardens), or their responsibility for park-related issues in a professional capacity. Stakeholder interviews were conducted by phone in July and August 2020. Our interviews focused on research themes (e.g. activity and use, stewardship, etc.), rather than pre-determined questions.

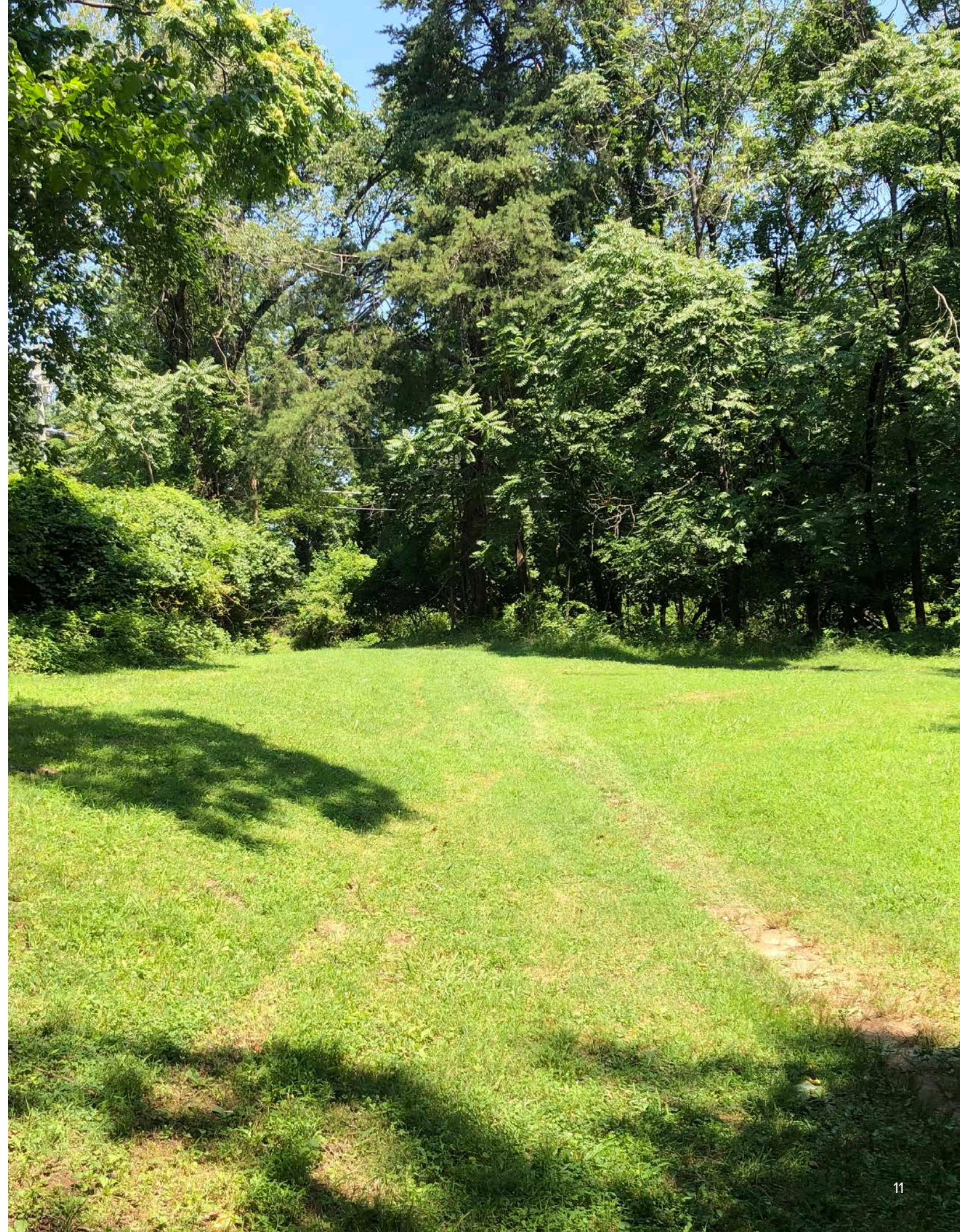
A list of interviewees is included in the appendices of this report.

### **Stakeholder online survey**

This method solicits a cross-section of community feedback from park users. In consultation with NPS officials, we prepared an online survey exploring the following areas of inquiry: identity and association, access, activity and use, and stewardship.

We distributed this survey to park users and neighbors via leadership of the community gardens. The community gardens distributed the survey to their membership via email and Facebook. We received 23 responses overall, with 18 responses from Blair Road gardeners and 5 responses from Mamie D. Lee gardeners. These responses are combined for the stakeholder survey findings, beginning on page 51.

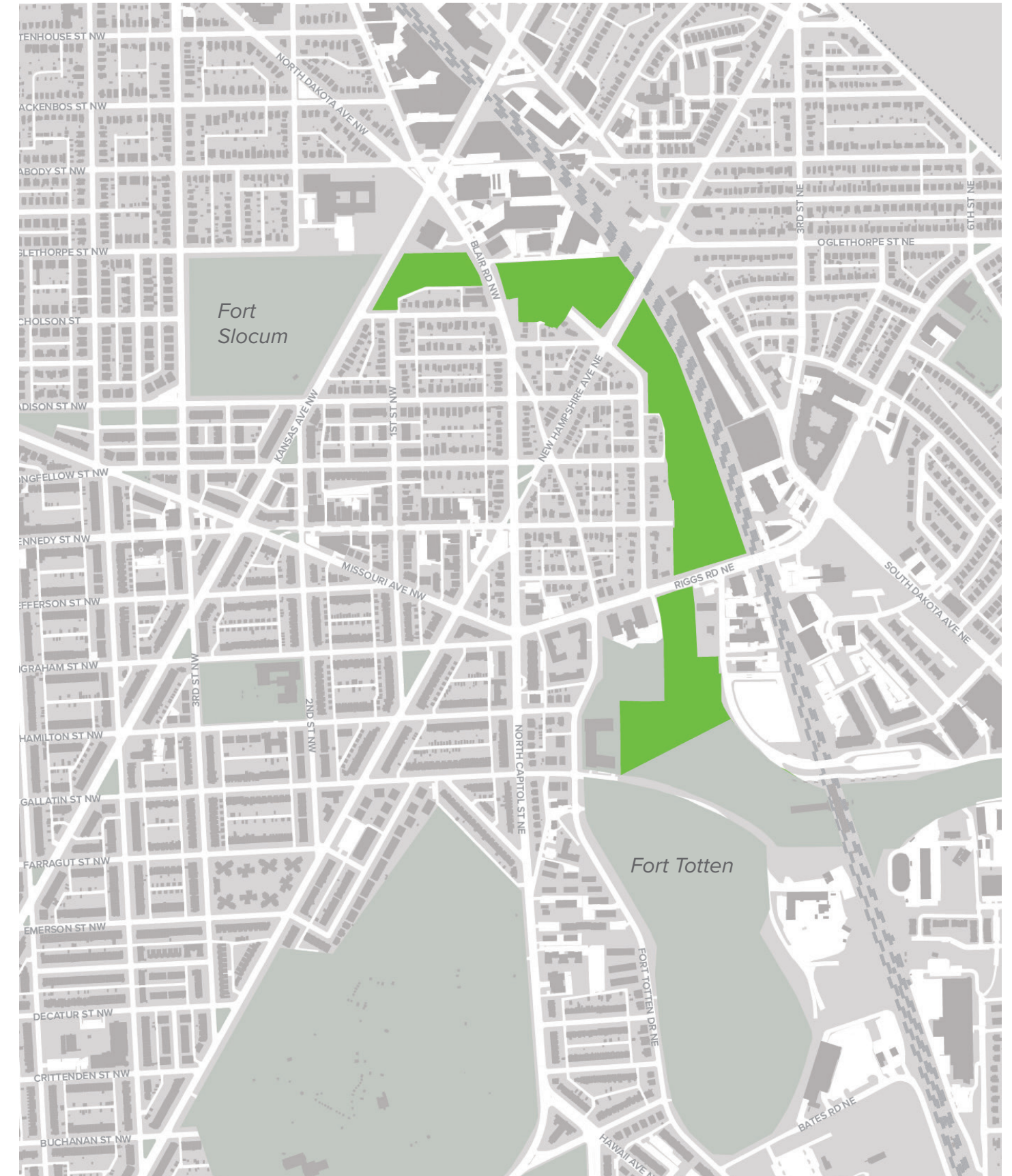
A list of survey questions is included in the appendices of this report.



# 4 Context Mapping

## Fort Drive (Fort Slocum to Fort Totten)

The Fort Drive cultural landscape is a discontinuous stretch of parkland, linking Fort Slocum to the northwest with Fort Totten to the southeast. The park includes four segments, and is referred to as Reservation 497 (sections a, b, c, and d) and Reservation 451a. The reservations span several U.S. Census tracts.



# Site Photographs



Reservation 497a, general conditions



Reservation 497a, vegetation



Reservation 497c



Reservation 497c



Reservation 497a, boundary



Reservation 497b / Blair Road Community Garden



Reservation 497d



Reservation 451a



Reservation 497b / Blair Road Community Garden



Reservation 497b / Blair Road Community Garden



Reservation 451a / Mamie D. Lee Community Garden



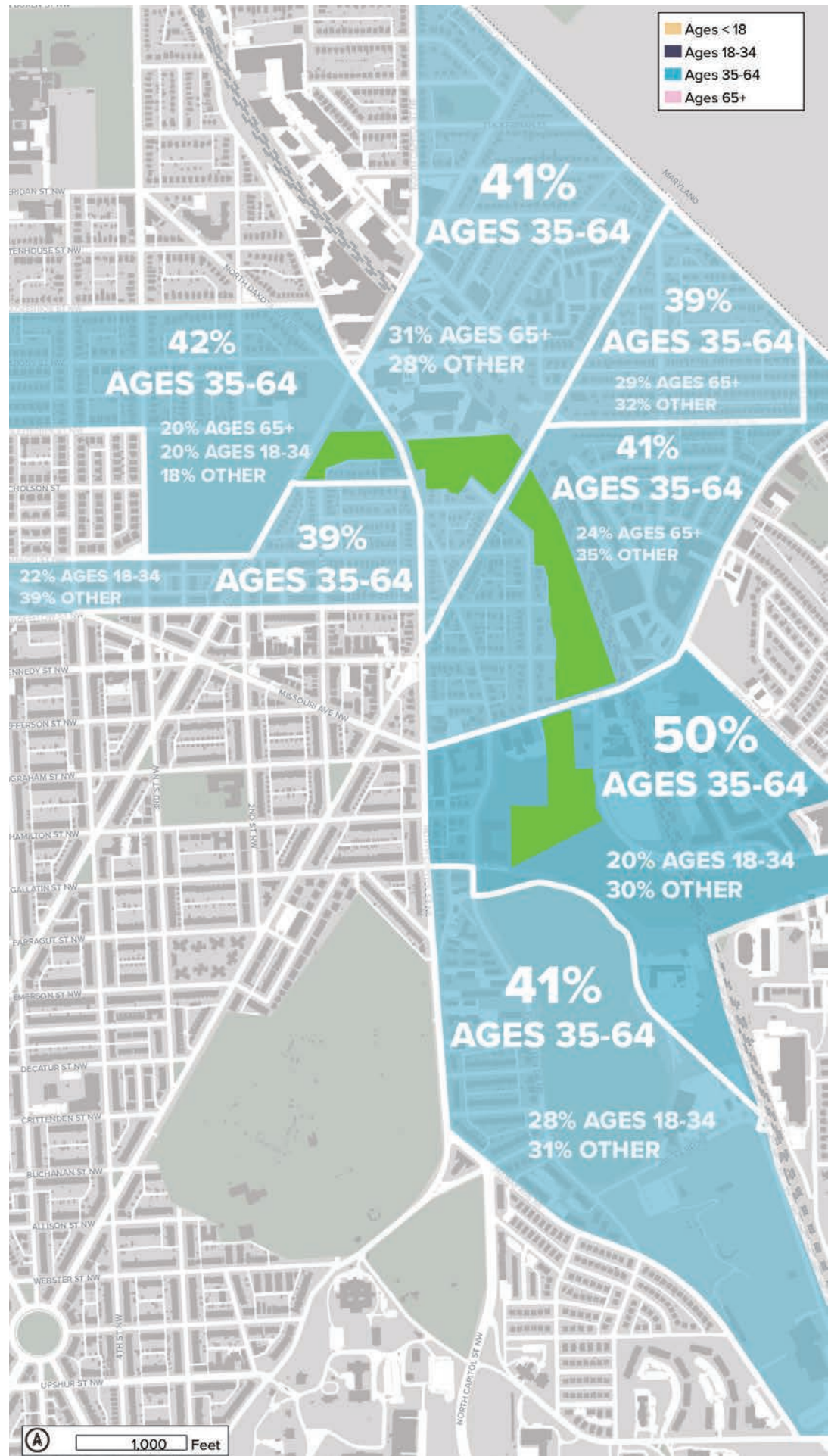
Reservation 451a / Mamie D. Lee Community Garden



## Age by Census Tract, 2000

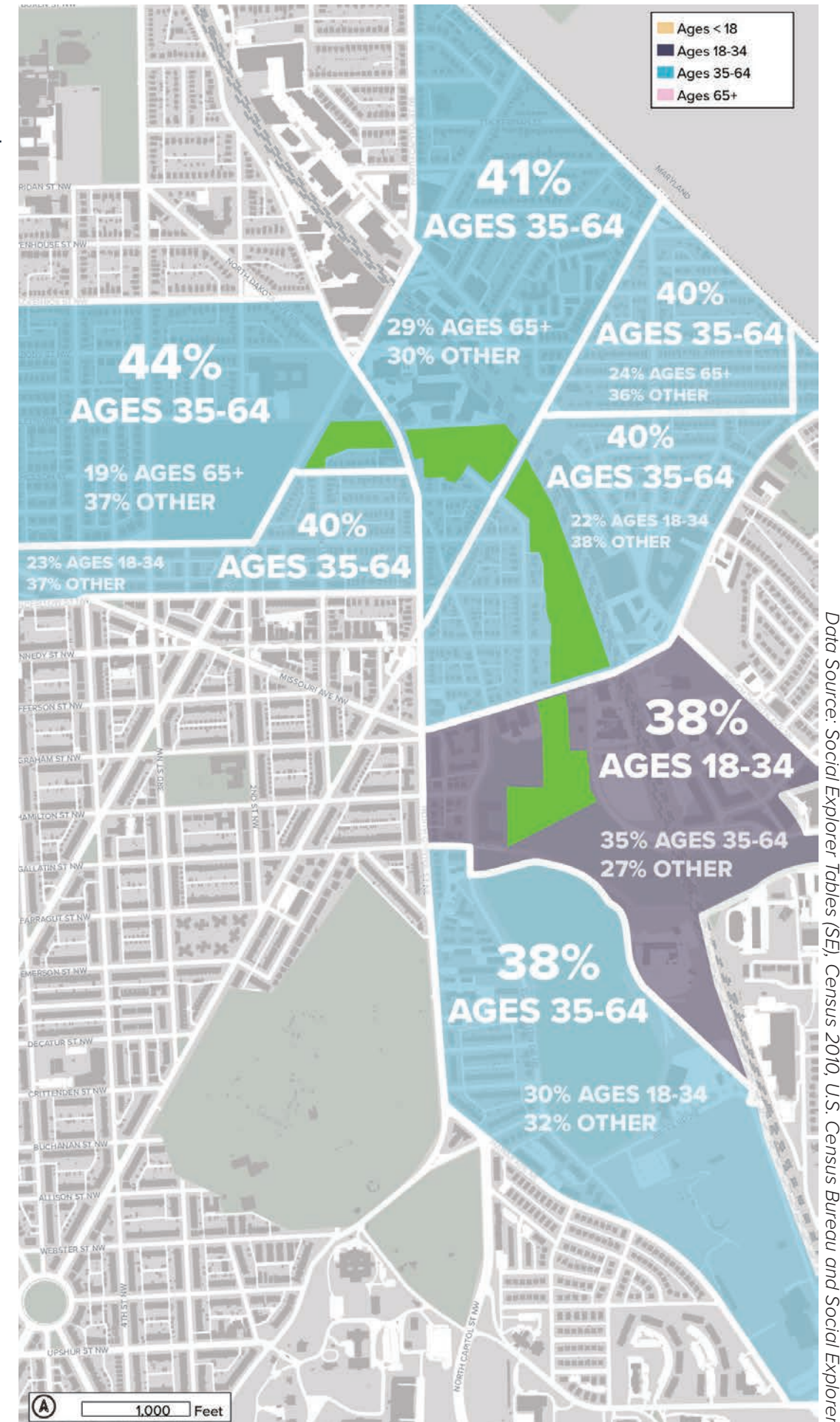
Represents dominant age group; color distinguishes between age groups. Transparency based on propensity of population.

The largest age group around the cultural landscape has consistently been 35-64, yet the share of this age group has decreased over time. The greatest change has taken place in the southernmost geography of tract 95.01 block group 1 (at the southern end of the cultural landscape), where the population trended younger between 2000 and 2010. People over 65 and under 18 make up large shares of the population in several areas, indicating overall age diversity in the area surrounding the cultural landscape.



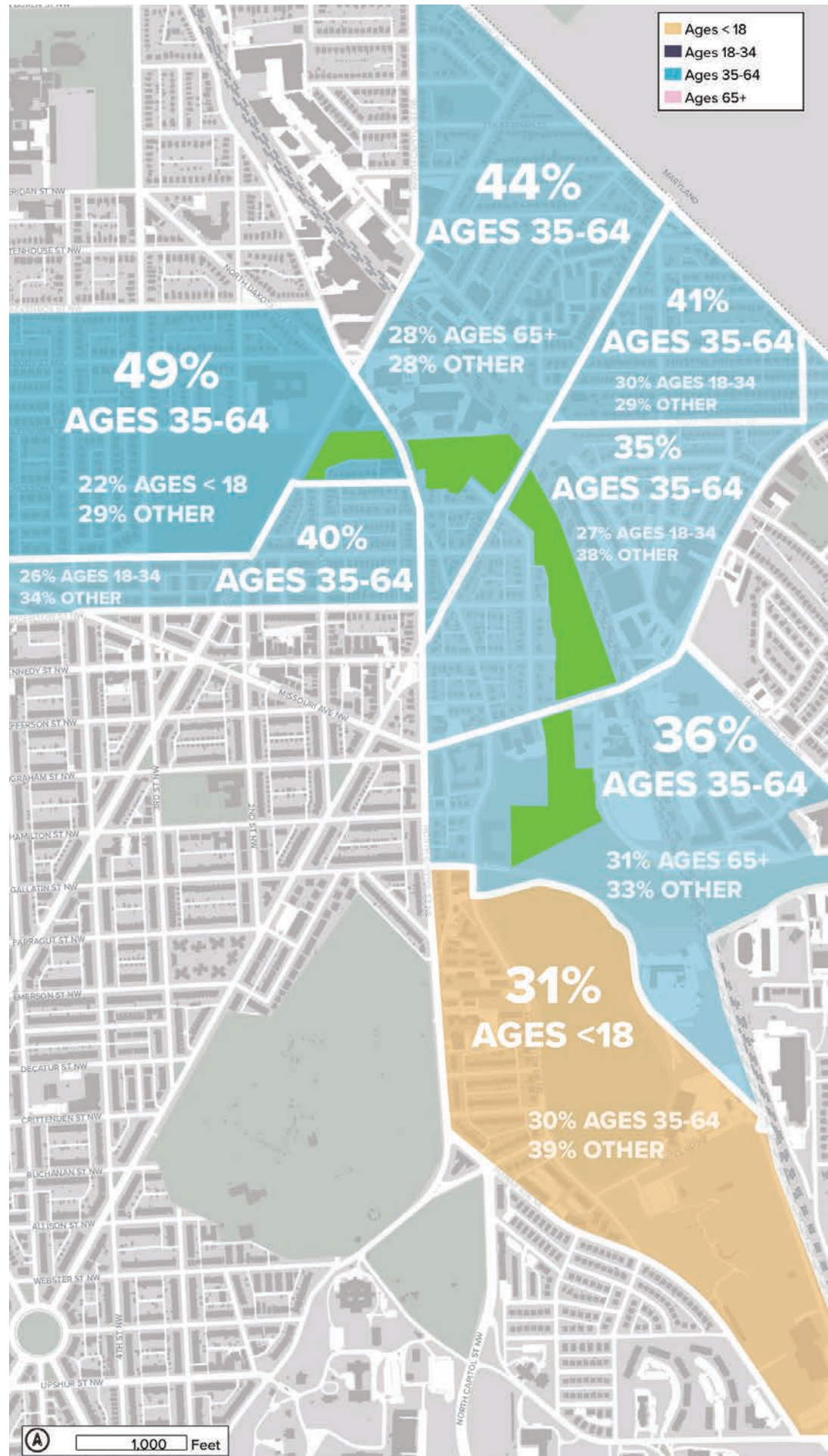
## Age by Census Tract, 2010

Represents dominant age group; color distinguishes between age groups. Transparency based on propensity of population.



## Age by Census Tract, 2018

Represents dominant age group; color distinguishes between age groups. Transparency based on propensity of population.



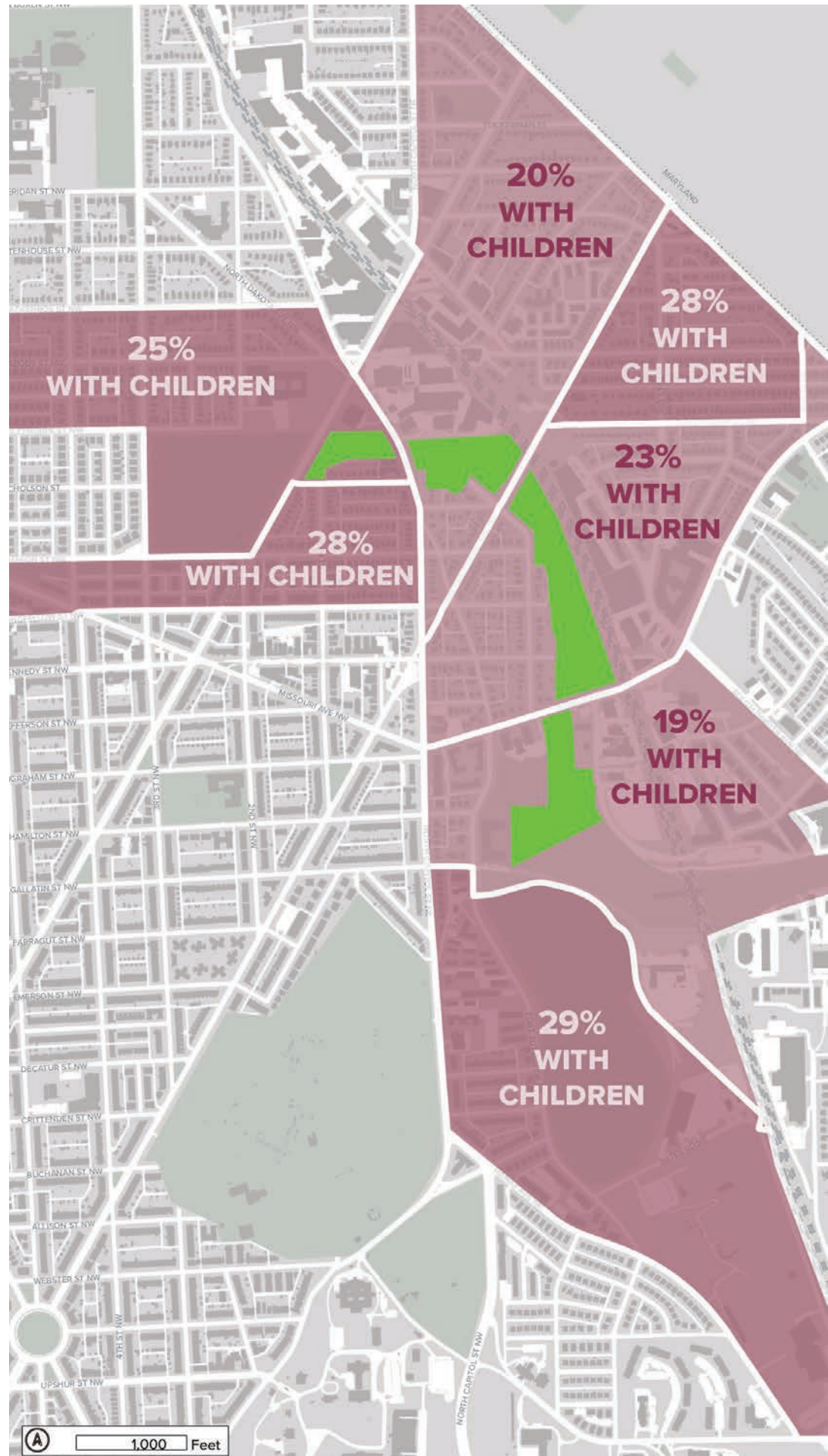
Data Source: Social Explorer Tables (SE), American Community Survey (ACS) 2014-2018 (5-Year Estimates), U.S. Census Bureau and Social Explorer



## Households with Children by Census Tract, 2000

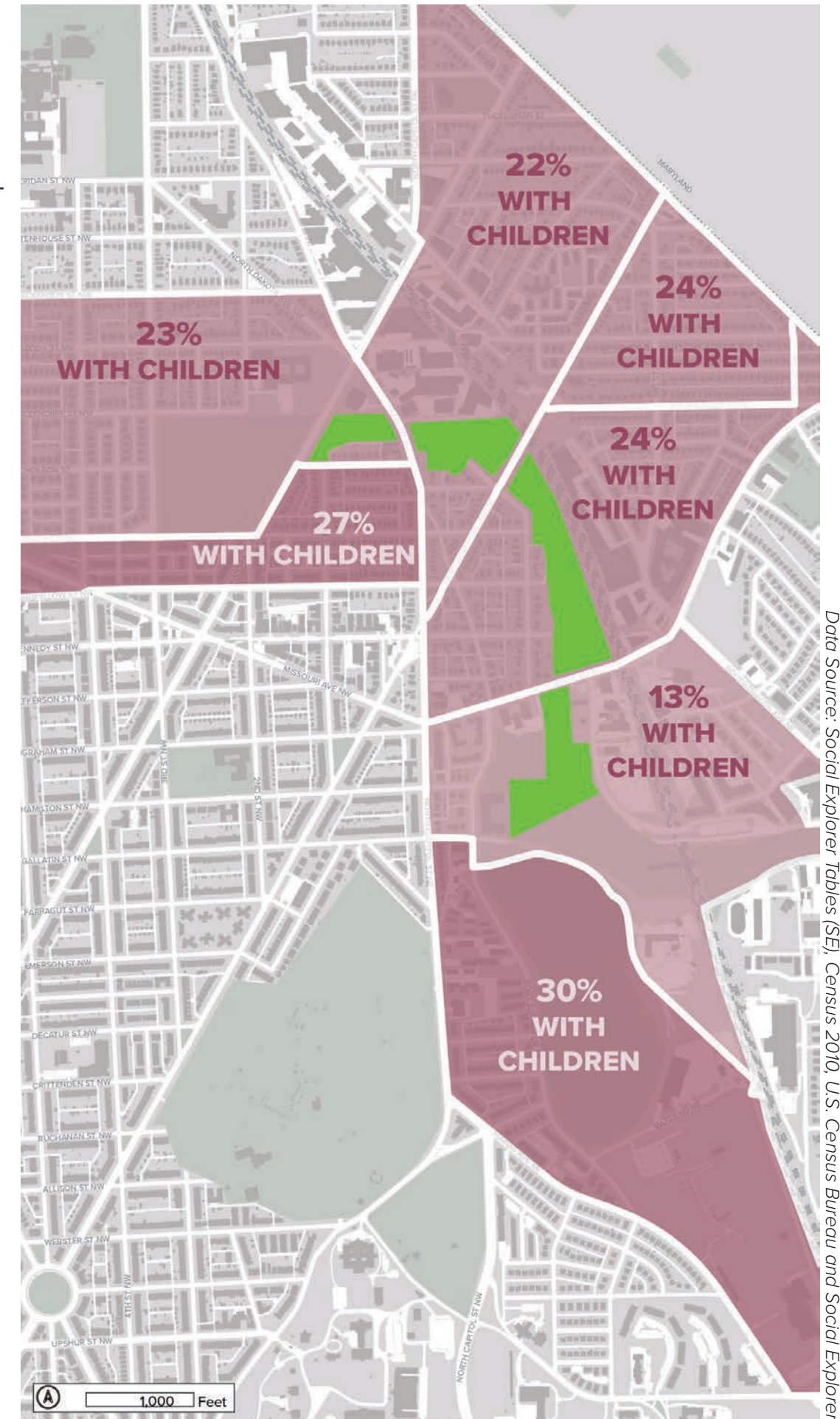
Transparency based on propensity of population.

According to Decennial Census and American Community Survey data, the number of households with people under 18 has increased in certain geographies and declined in others. Of note are tract the tract at the northwestern edge of the cultural landscape (19.02 block group 1) and the southernmost tract (95.01 block group 1), which both gained significant numbers of families with children between 2000 and 2018.



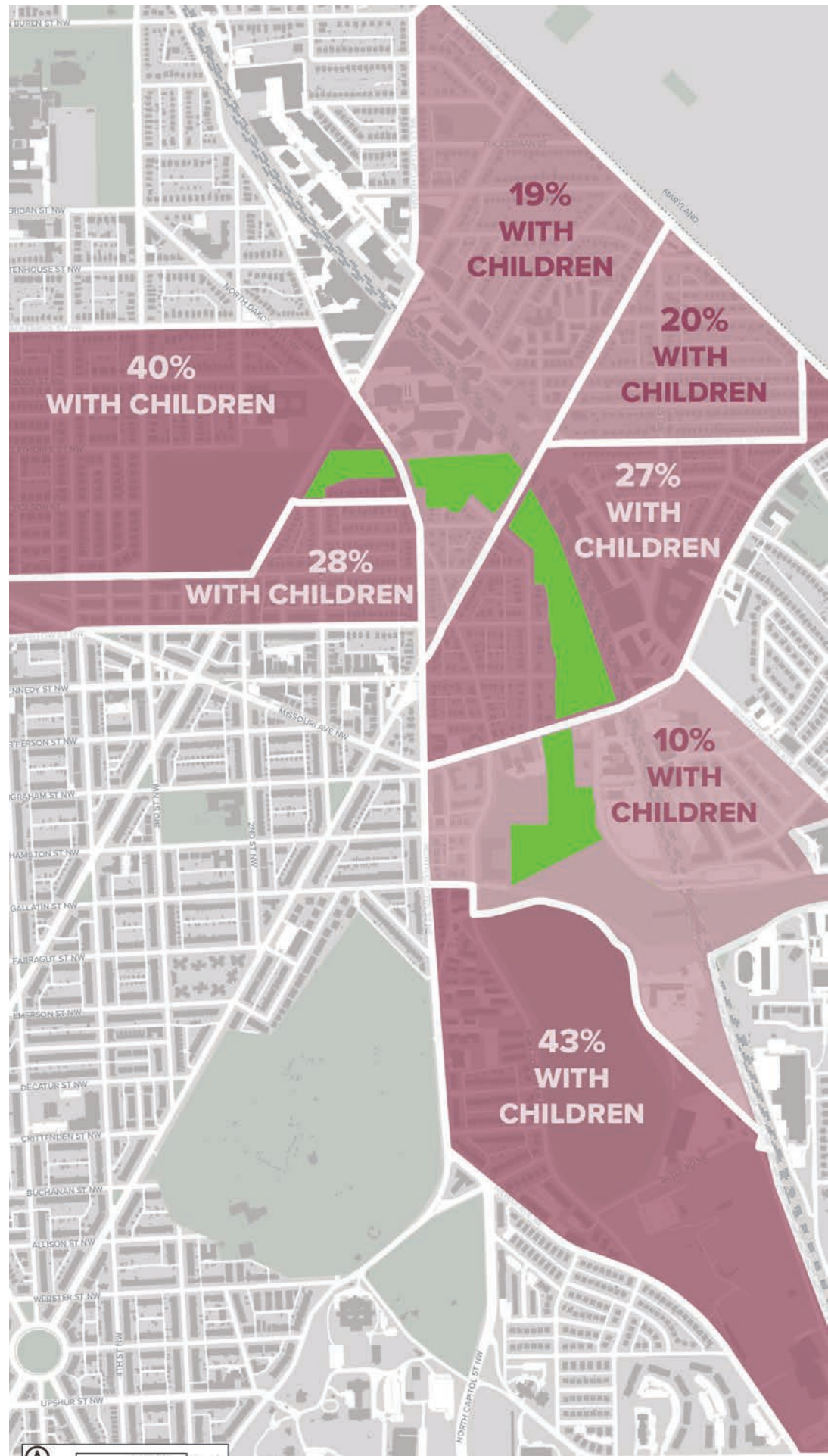
## Households with Children by Census Tract, 2010

Transparency based on propensity of population.



# Households with Children by Census Tract, 2018

Transparency based on propensity of population.



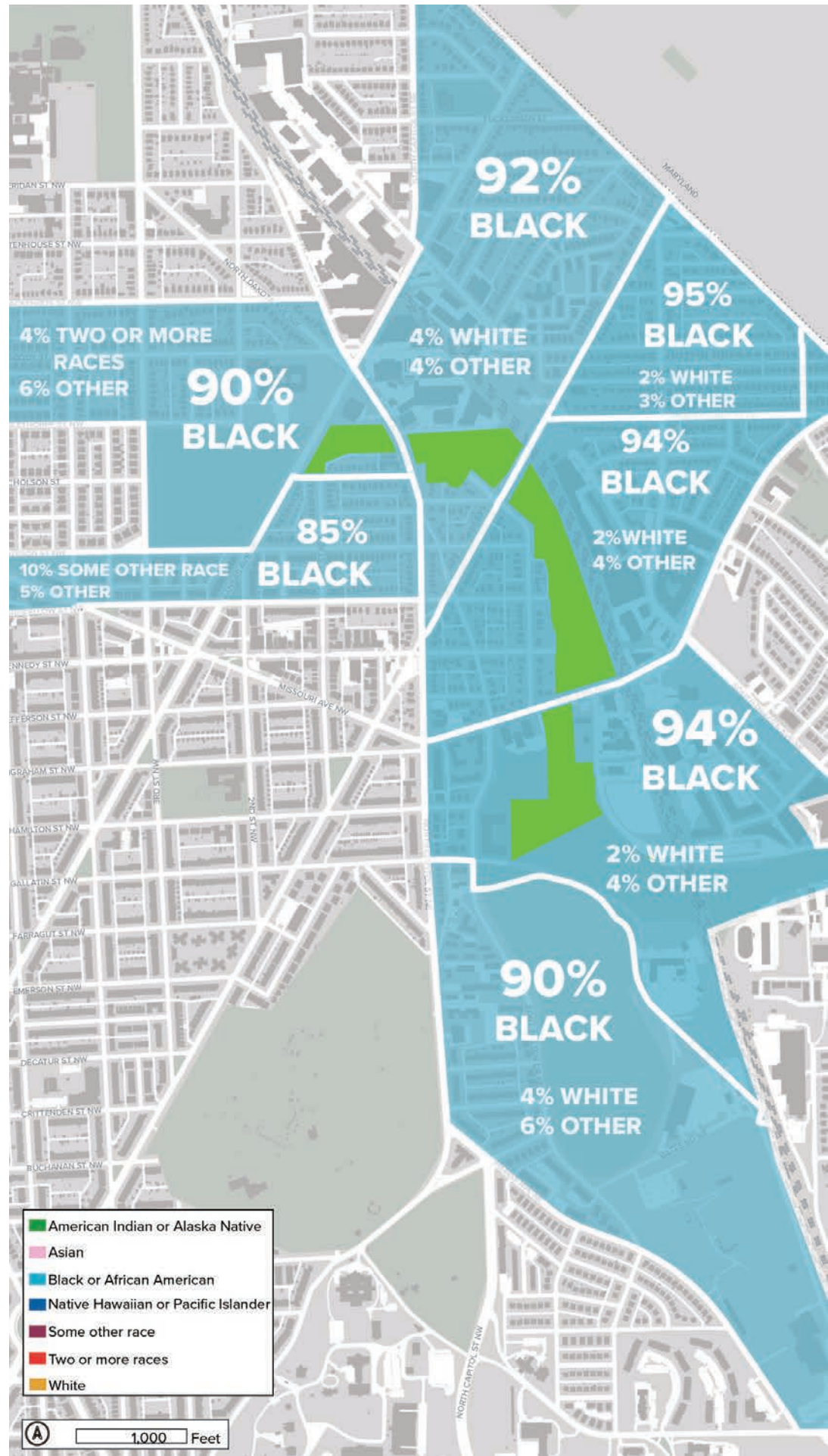
Data Source: Social Explorer Tables (SE), American Community Survey (ACS) 2014-2018 (5-Year Estimates), U.S. Census Bureau and Social Explorer



## Race by Census Tract, 2000

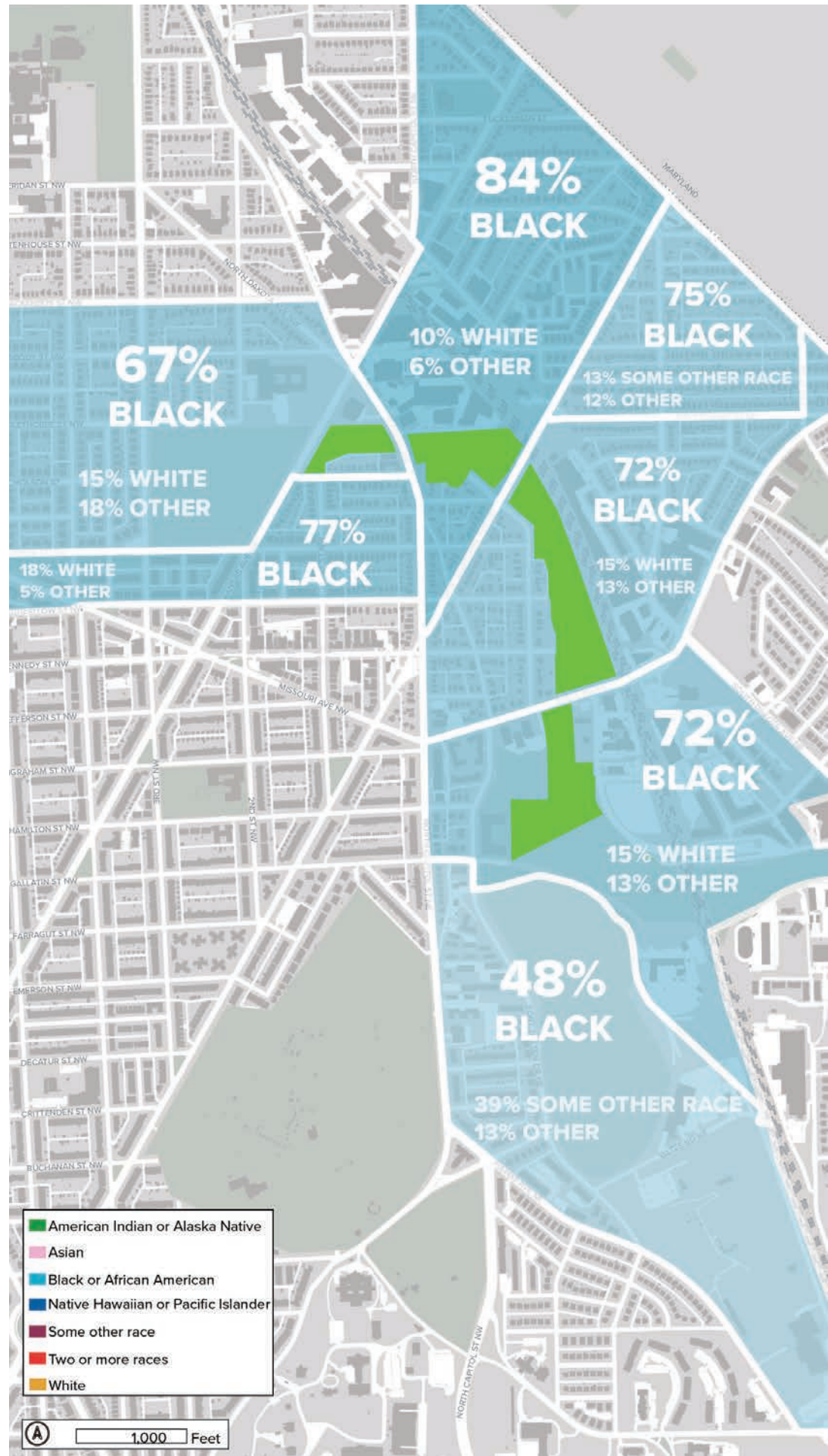
Transparency based on propensity of population.

The area around the cultural landscape is predominantly made up of Black or African American residents. However, the share of white residents has increased over time, although white residents are still a small minority of the total population. Of note is tract 95.01 block group 1, the southernmost tract on this map—between 2000 and 2018, the residents who identify as some other race increased from 6% to nearly 40%. This area's Hispanic population has grown significantly over time, from just 81 residents in 2000 to 1,502 residents in 2018.



# Race by Census Tract, 2018

Transparency based on propensity of population.



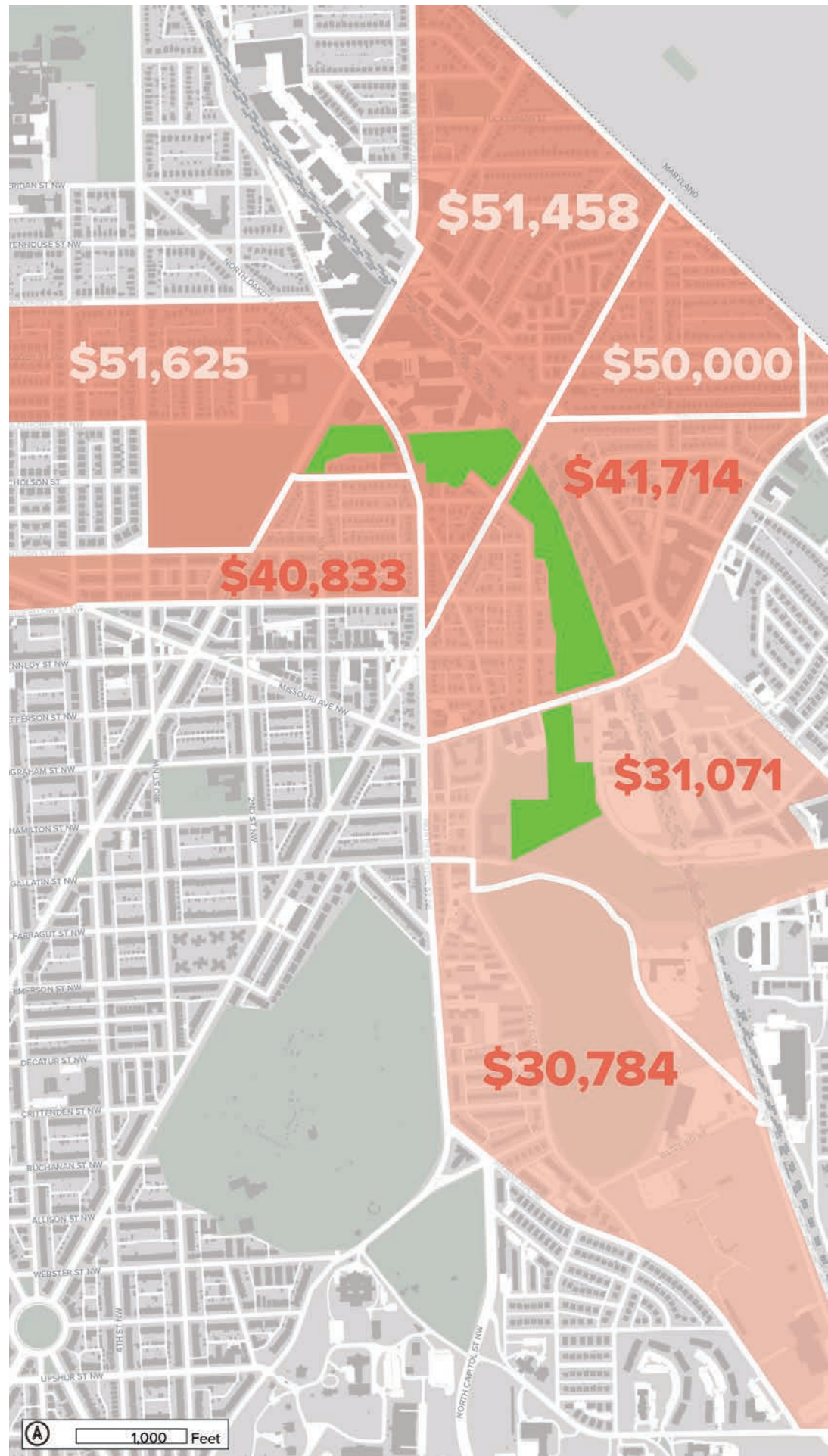
Data Source: Social Explorer Tables (SE), American Community Survey (ACS) 2014-2018 (5-Year Estimates), U.S. Census Bureau and Social Explorer



## Household Income by Census Tract, 2000

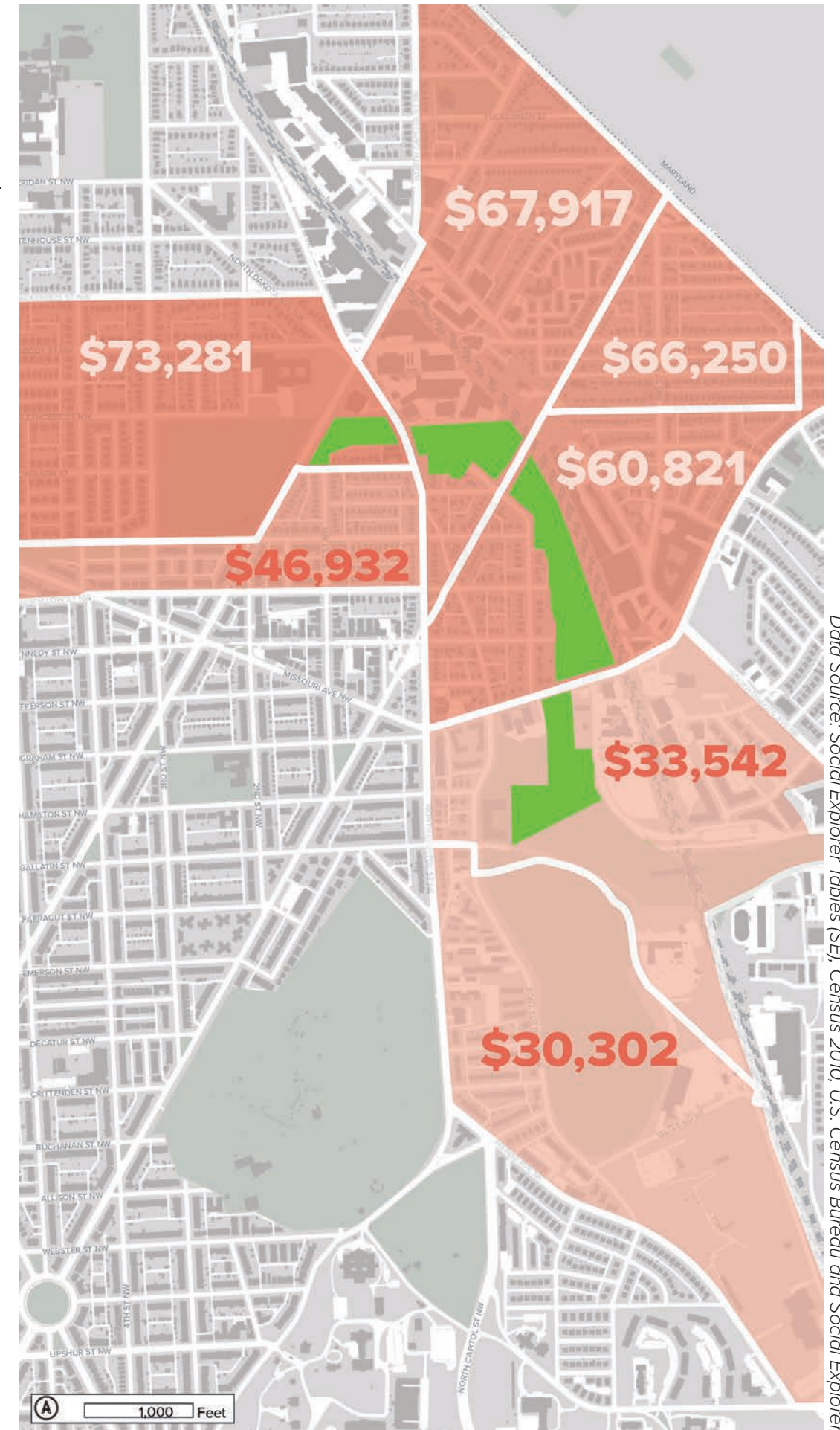
Transparency based on income level.

The median household income of residents around the cultural landscape has increased significantly between 2000 and 2018, although most of this growth has taken place in the northernmost parts of the study area, where household incomes were already higher than in the southern tracts.



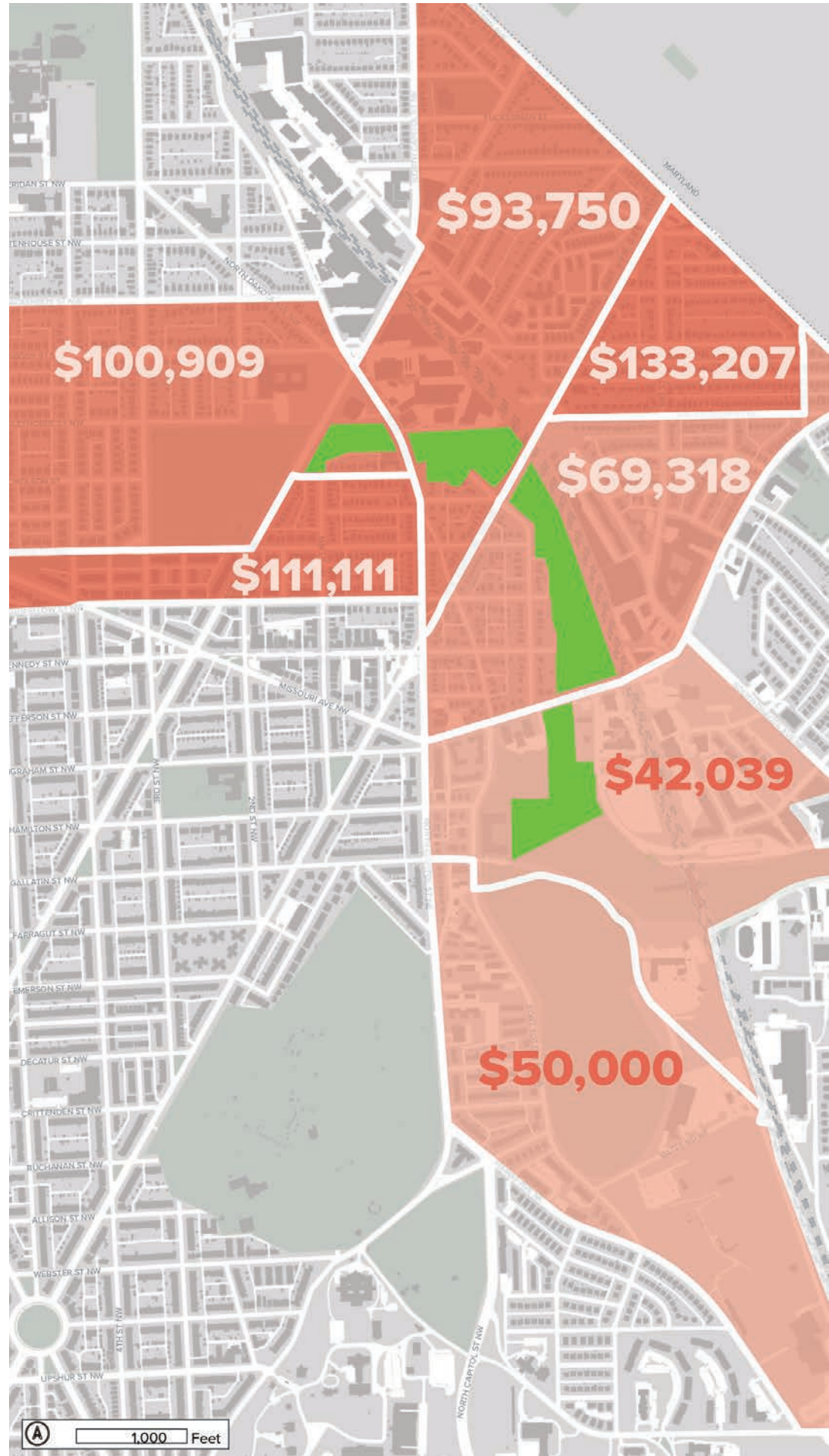
## Household Income by Census Tract, 2010

Transparency based on income level.



# Household Income by Census Tract, 2018

Transparency based on income level.



Data Source: Social Explorer Tables (SE), American Community Survey (ACS) 2014-2018 (5-Year Estimates), U.S. Census Bureau and Social Explorer

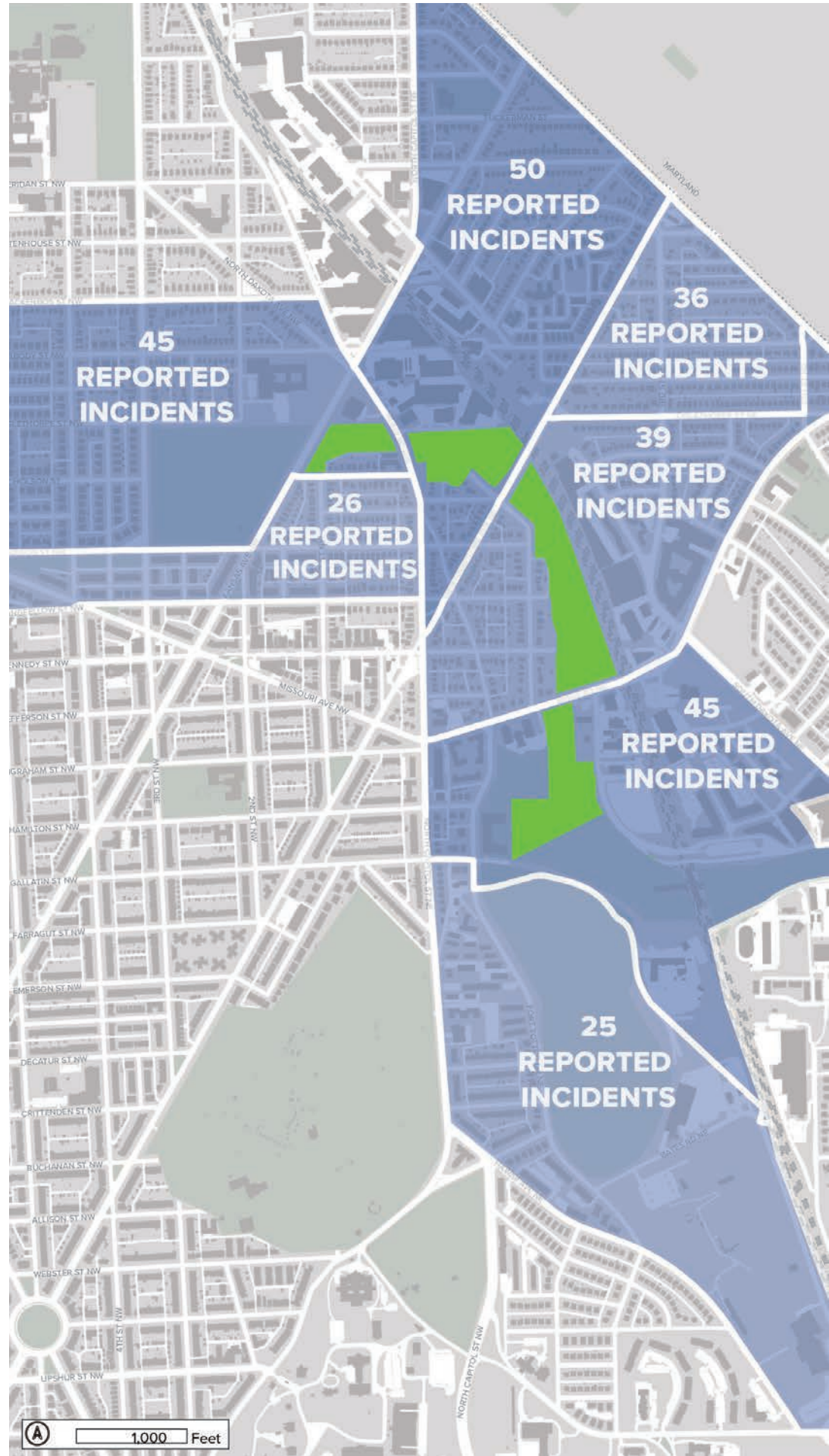




## Reported Incidents by Census Tract, 2010

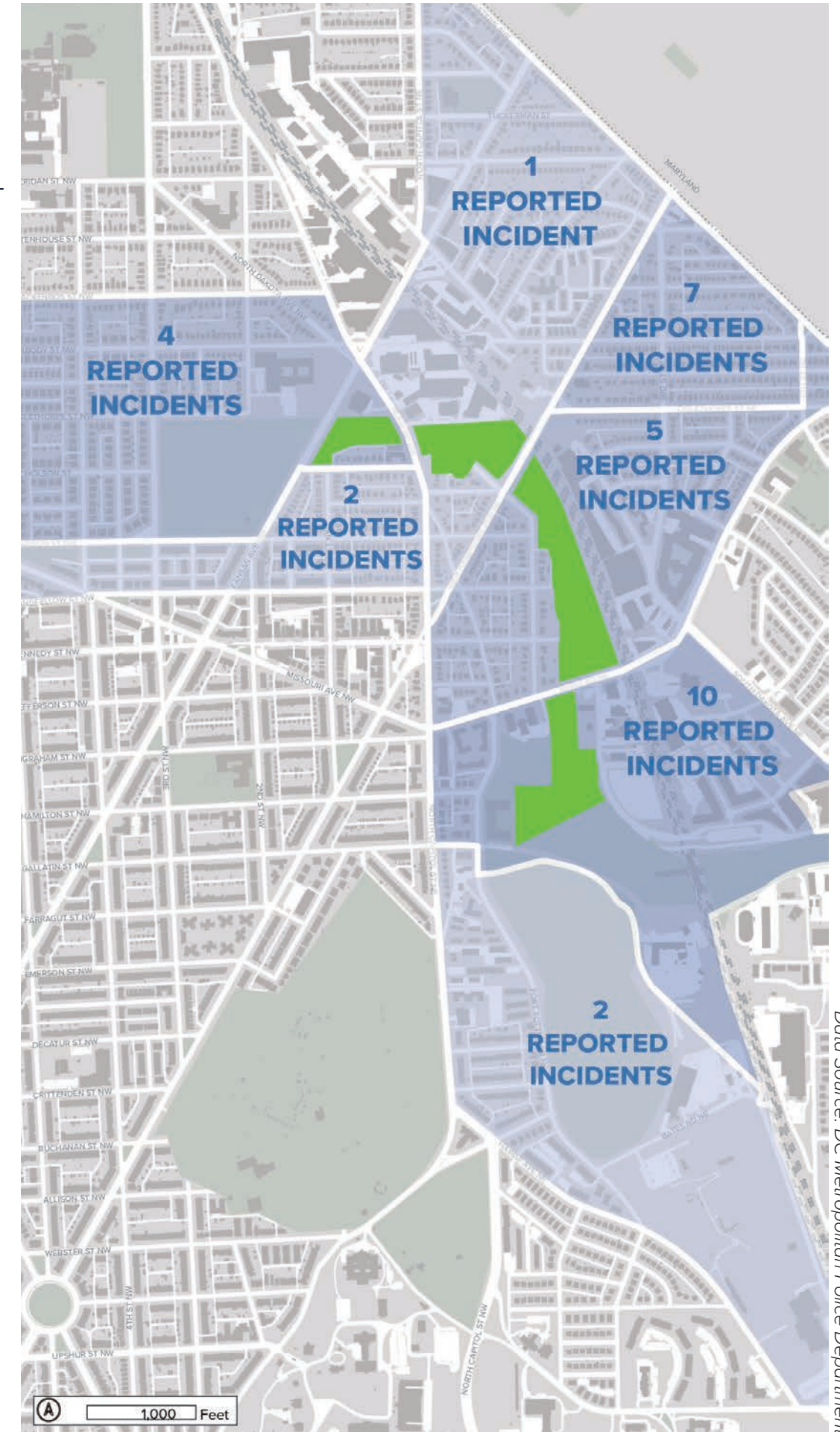
Transparency represents number of incidents.

This data from the DC Metropolitan Police Department's crime database describes the number of reported crime incidents in the Census block groups around the cultural landscape in 2010 and 2019. (It does not include data from U.S. Park Police, which has jurisdiction over the park itself.) In that nearly ten-year span, the number of reported incidents dropped dramatically. Of particular note is tract 95.05 block group 2, at the northern end of the study area: it had the highest number of reported incidents in 2010 and the lowest in 2019.



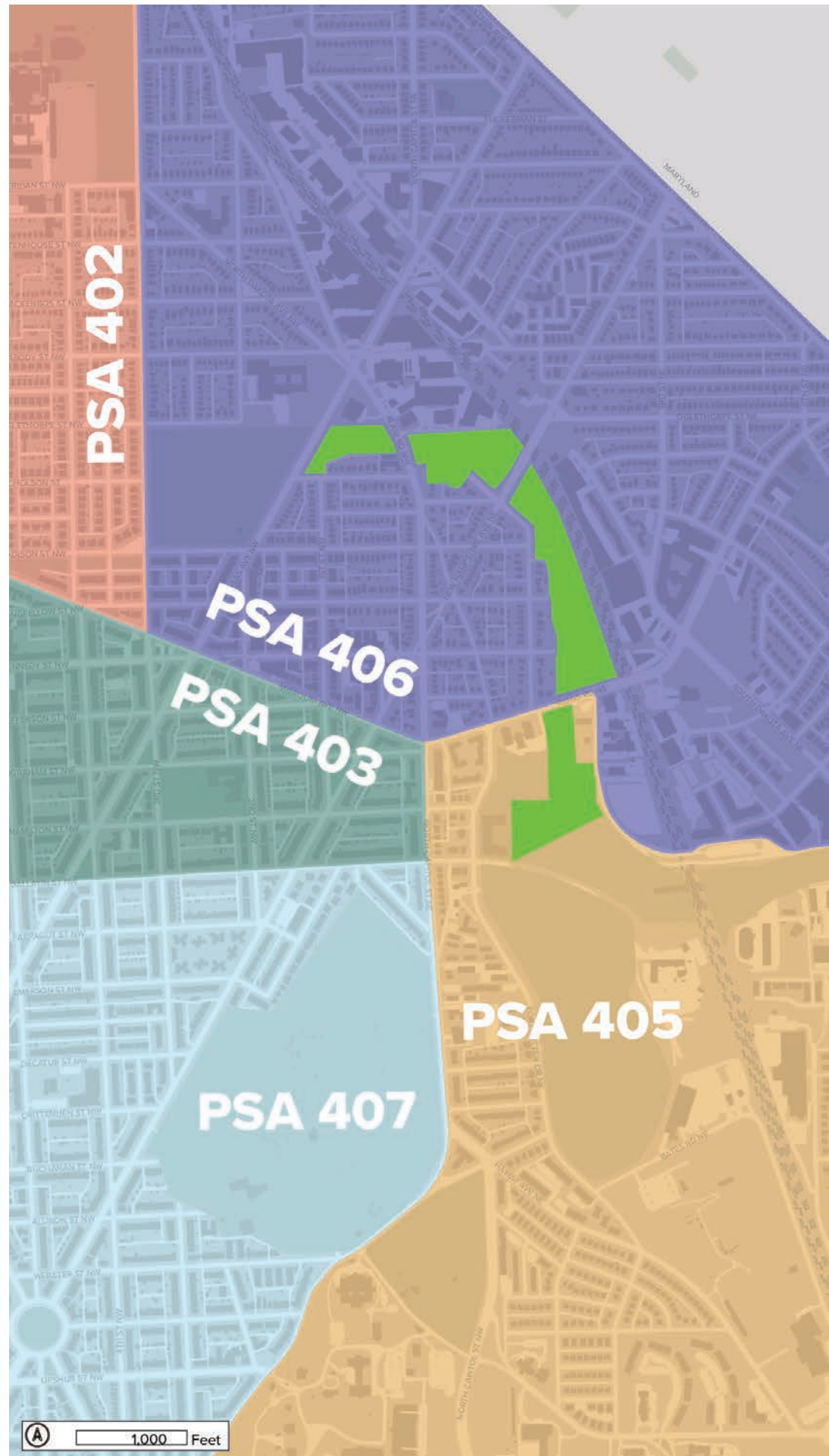
## Reported Incidents by Census Tract, 2019

Transparency represents number of incidents.



## Police Service Areas

The cultural landscape is in both Police Service Area (PSA) 406 and 405.



## Parks, Libraries, and Green Space

The community hubs and assets that constitute civic infrastructure are generally concentrated along the major thoroughfares around the cultural landscape—of which there are several. The area has several schools in particular, including the Bridges and Briya Charter Schools immediately adjacent to the cultural landscape and historically associated with at least one of its community gardens. The cultural landscape comprises several segments within the larger Fort Drive greenbelt through DC, so it is unsurprising that this area is well-served by public space; it features several large-scale parks, including Forts Slocum and Fort Totten, immediately adjacent to the cultural landscape, as well as Rock Creek Cemetery to the southwest.



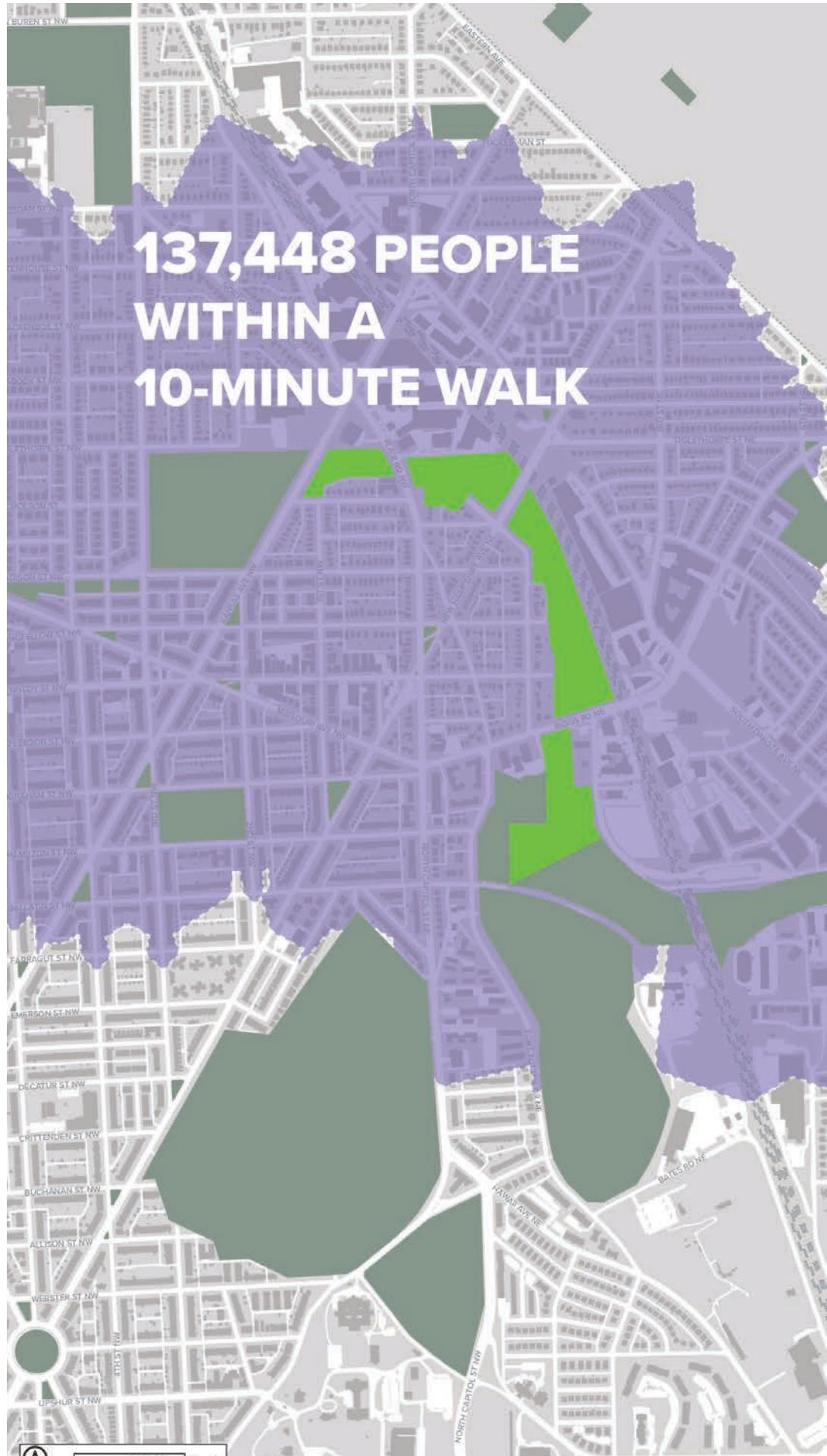
## Public Transportation + Capitol Bikeshare Docks

The area surrounding the cultural landscape is well-connected to public transit. Several of the major thoroughfares adjacent to or passing through the cultural landscape—including Kansas Avenue NW, New Hampshire Avenue NE, Blair Road NW, and North Capitol Street NE—have several bus stops and a Capitol Bikeshare docking station. Elsewhere in the surrounding area, bikeshare docking stations are not plentiful, and the area also lacks bike trails, indicating that biking is not a major mode of transit for area residents.



## Park Service Area

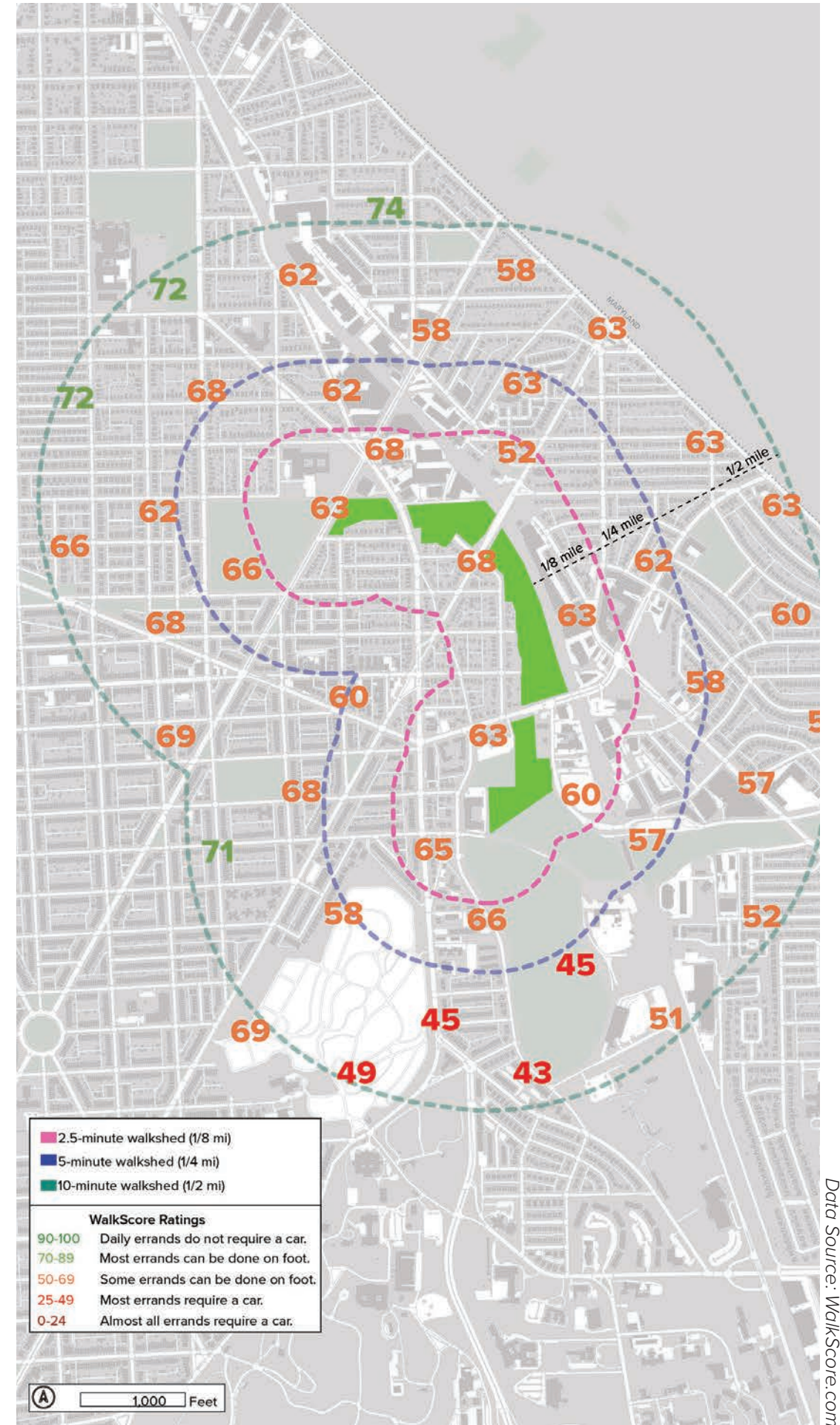
Developed by The Trust for Public Land, Park Serve maps the service areas of parks across the country to better understand the number of people within a ten-minute walk (“the service area”) of a park. This map indicates the area served by the Fort Circle Parks that include the cultural landscape. There are approximately 137,500 people served by the broader Fort Circle Park network—it was not possible to isolate the data to the specific reservations included in this study area. It is also important to note that residents in the area benefit from numerous other parks within walking distance—each of which has its own service area—indicating that residents are very well-served by green space, especially to the west and north of the cultural landscape.



## Walk Score

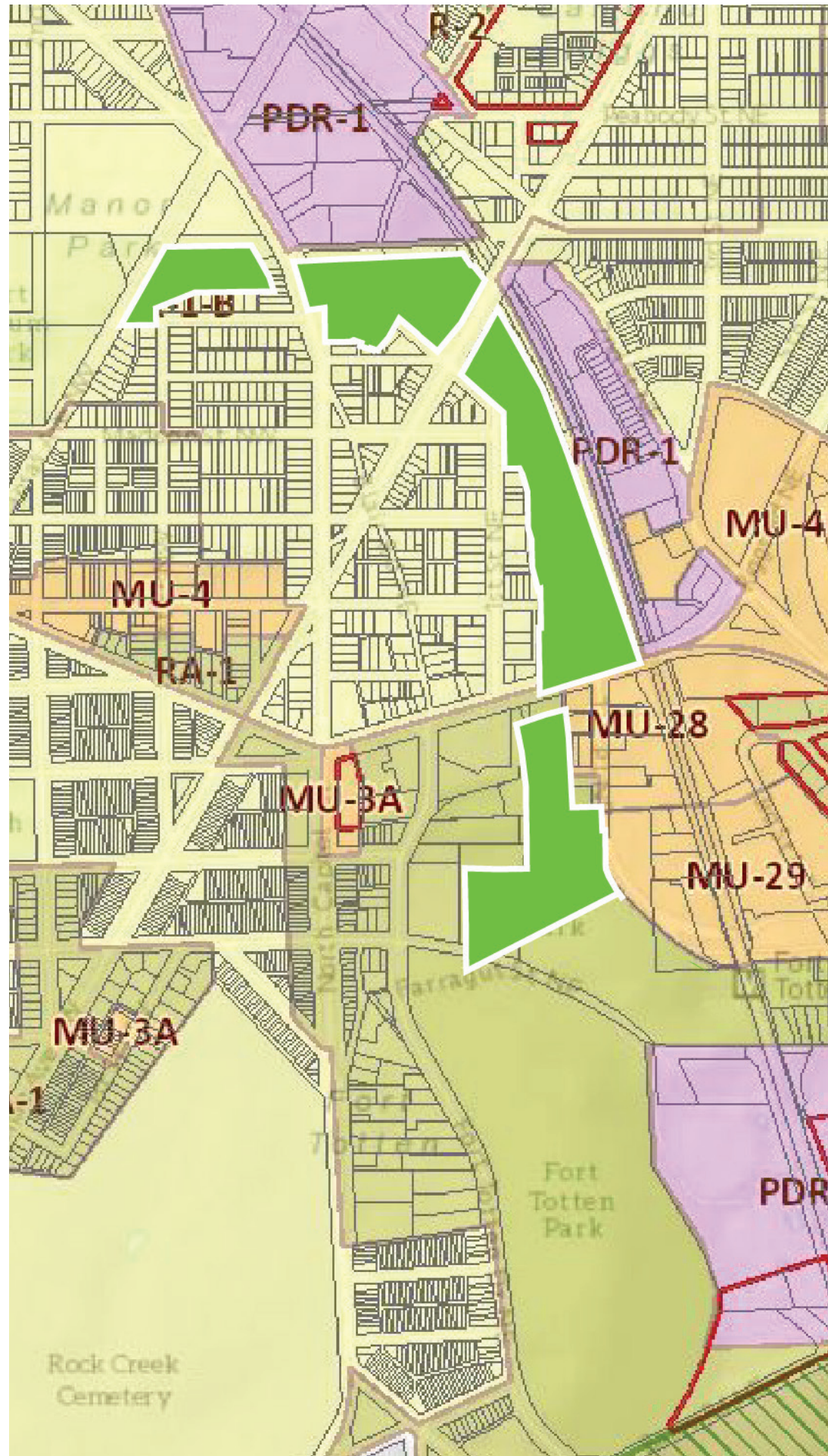
Walk Score measures the walkability of specific locations by analyzing hundreds of walking routes to nearby amenities, such as grocery stores, schools, workplaces, and public spaces. Amenities within a five-minute walk (1/4 mile) are given maximum points, and a decay function is used to give points to more distant amenities. A Walk Score of 90 or above indicates that daily errands can be accomplished on foot, whereas a score of 0-24 denotes minimum walkability and that few or no errands can be accomplished on foot.

In the 1/8-mile, 1/4-mile, and 1/2-mile walksheds surrounding the Fort Drive cultural landscape, walk scores are relatively consistent throughout—some errands can be accomplished on foot, but a car may be necessary for others. The northwest, outer portions of the 1/2-mile walkshed are the most walkable areas in the vicinity, whereas the southern outer areas are the least walkable and mostly require access to a car. These relatively low walk scores may indicate that engagement with the cultural landscape is conducted mostly by near neighbors who can easily access the space.



## Zoning Context

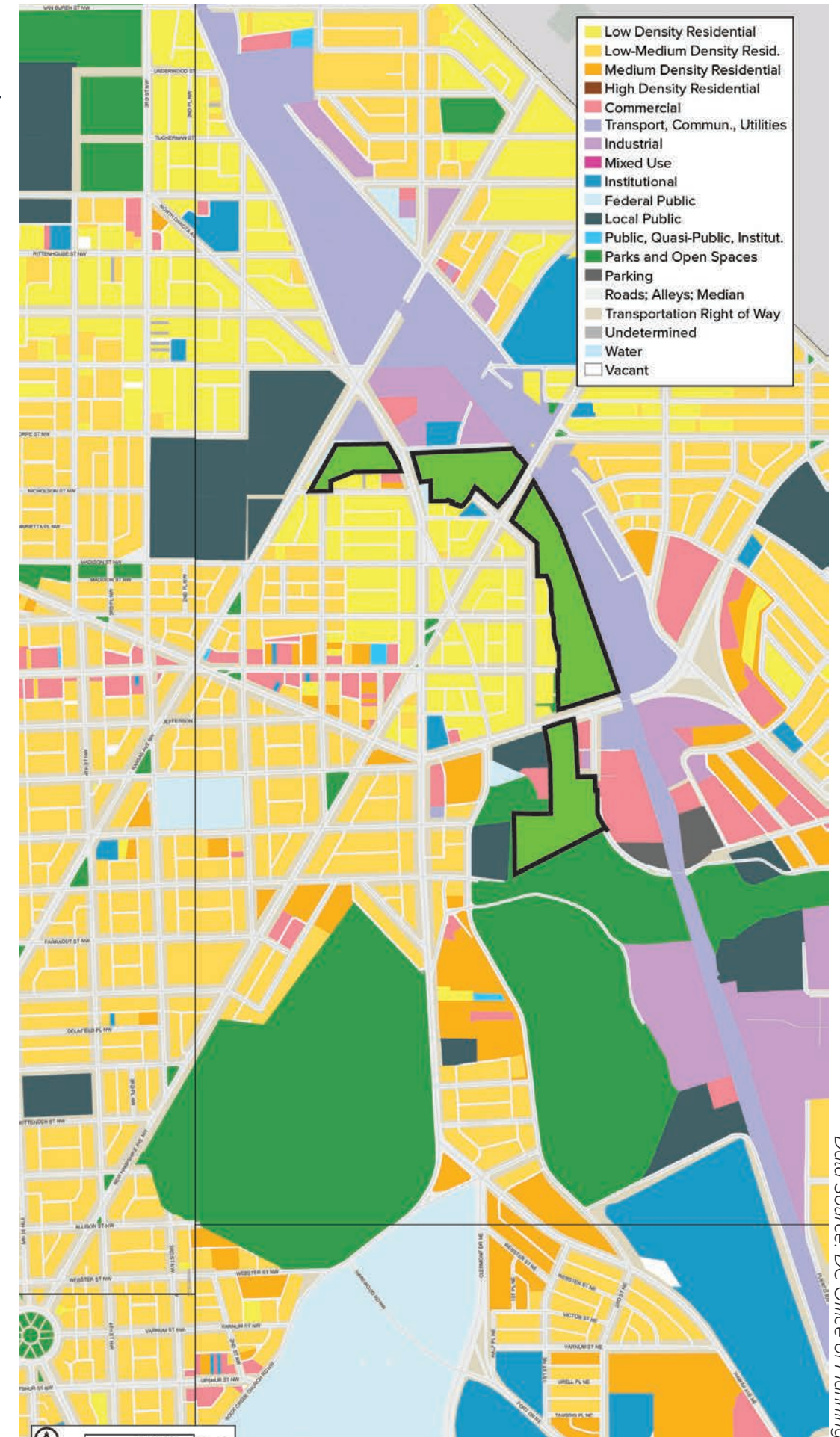
This map's zoning overlay was developed by the DC Office of Zoning.



Data Source: DC Office of Zoning

## Land Use Context

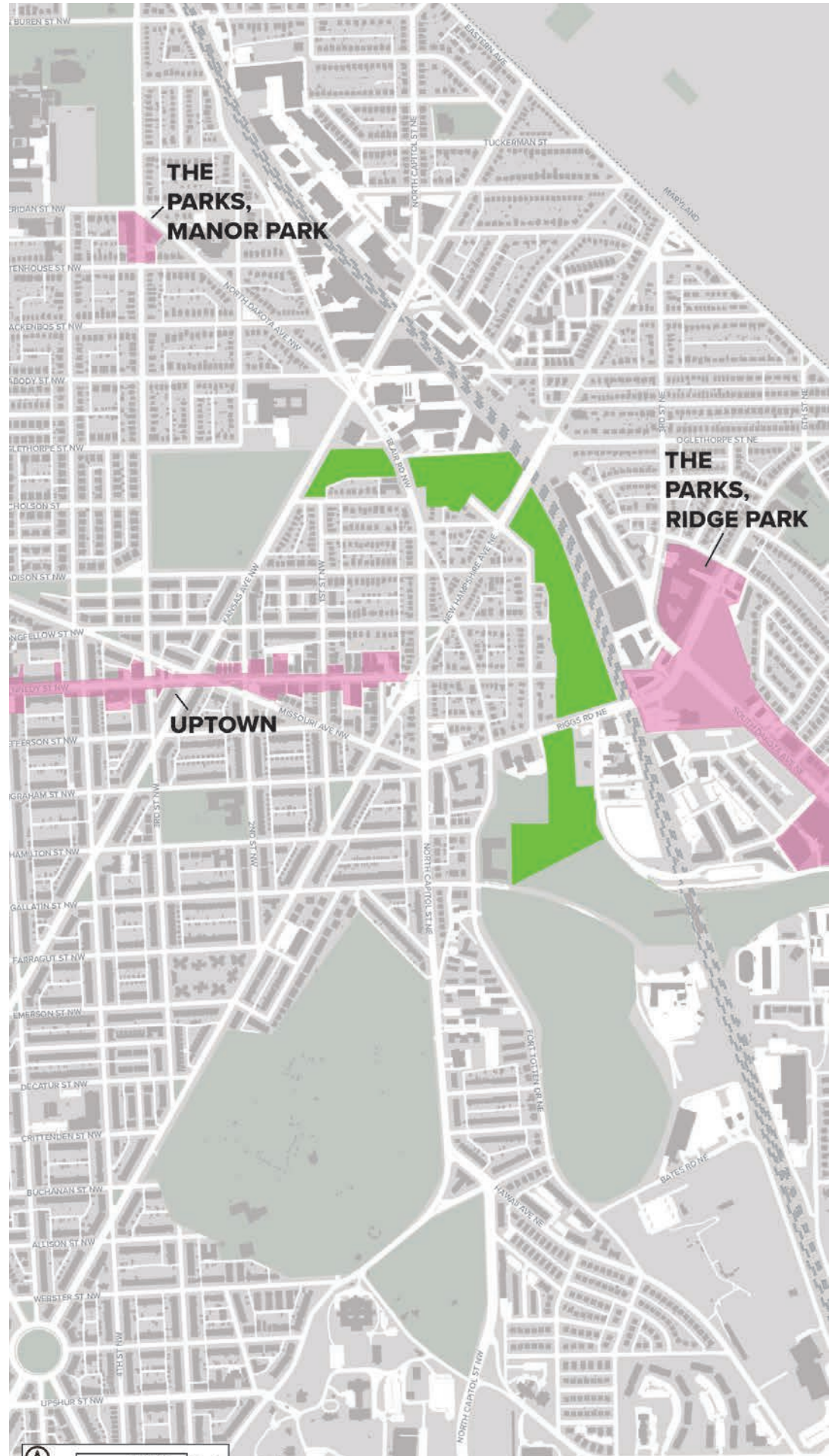
This map's zoning overlay was developed by the DC Office of Planning.



Data Source: DC Office of Planning

## Nearby DC Main Streets Programs

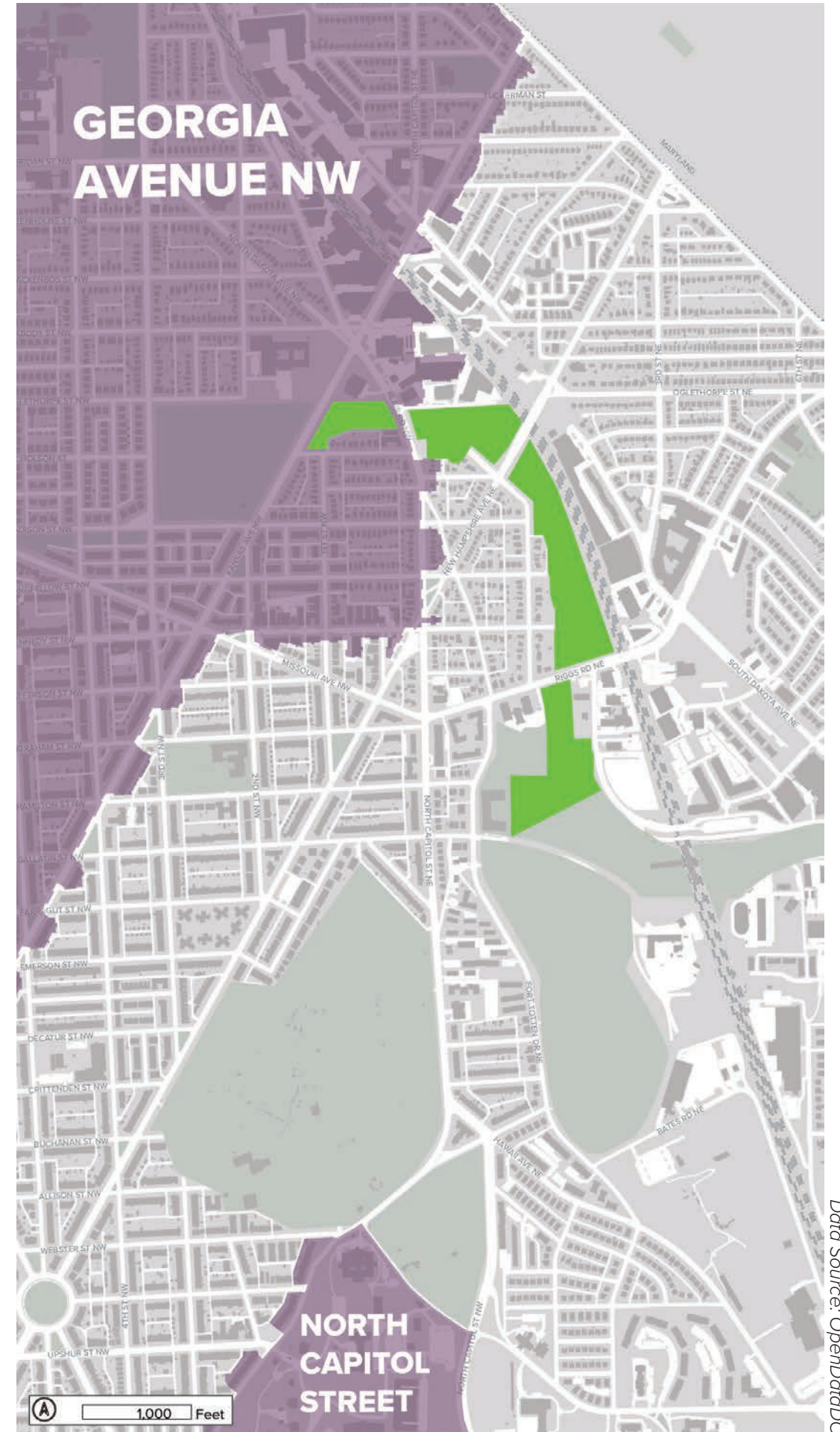
DC Main Streets is a District-wide economic development program that promotes the revitalization of business corridors. There are 24 independent, nonprofit neighborhood Main Streets programs in the District of Columbia, of which two are located near the cultural landscape. Uptown Main Street supports the commercial corridor of Upper 14th Street NW and Kennedy Street NW. It supports economic development, historic preservation, and technical assistance for local businesses, and provides event planning to promote community engagement. Uptown Main Street also provides two cleaning teams to conduct street cleaning within its boundaries. The Parks Main Street works to strengthen the economic vitality of the Riggs Park and Manor Park neighborhoods. In both neighborhoods, The Parks Main Street supports façade renewal, economic development initiatives, and promotional campaigns for businesses, and hosts community events.



Data Source: OpenDataDC

## Nearby DC Great Streets Programs

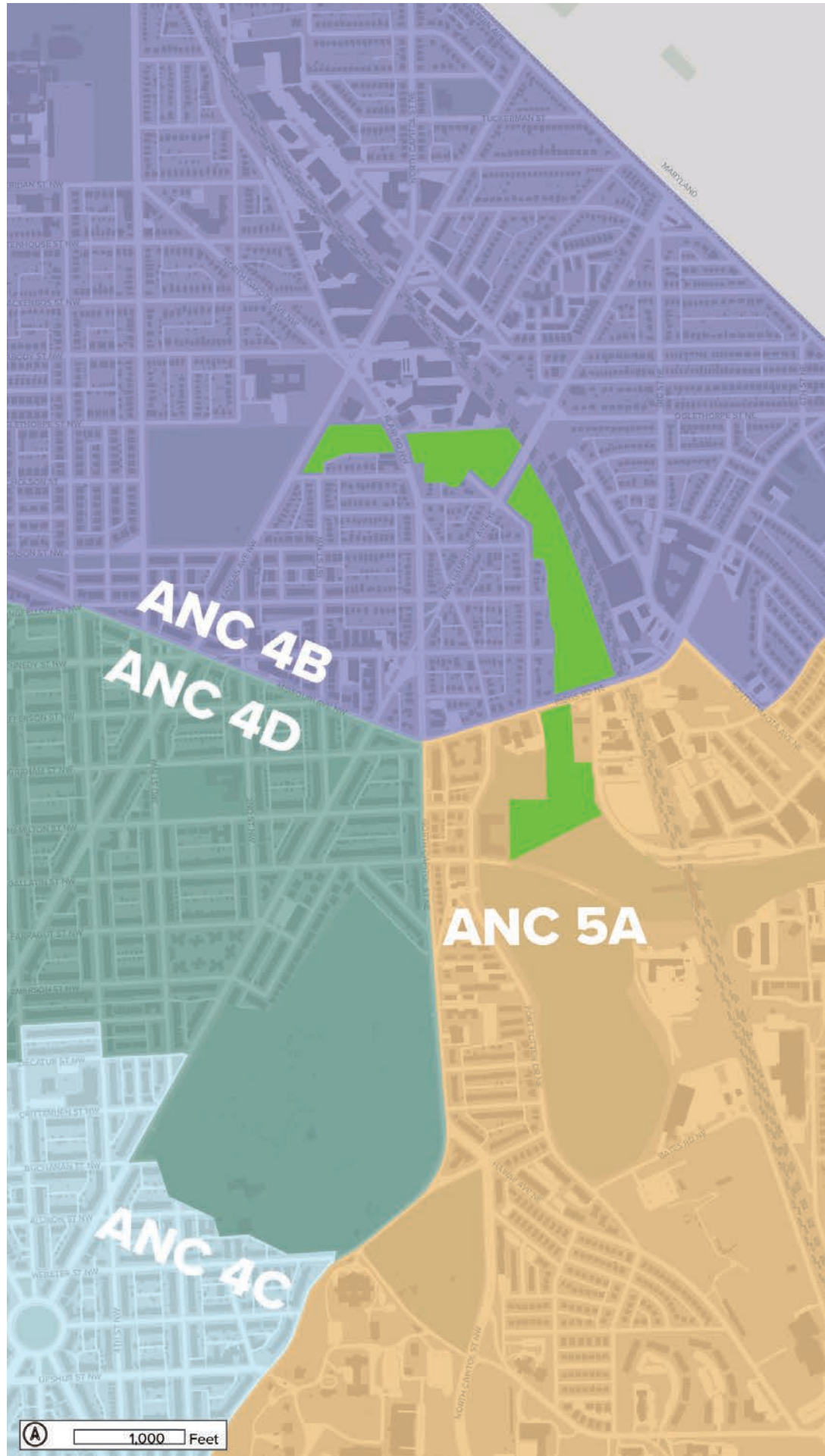
Similar to the Main Streets Program, the Great Streets program is a commercial revitalization initiative designed to support existing small businesses, attract new ones, create job opportunities for residents, and promote commercial corridors as vibrant neighborhood centers through financial incentives and other initiatives. The Georgia Avenue Great Streets corridor, located west of the cultural landscape, runs the length of the District's Ward 4. The North Capitol Great Streets Initiative operates southwest of the cultural landscape.



Data Source: OpenDataDC

## Advisory Neighborhood Commissions

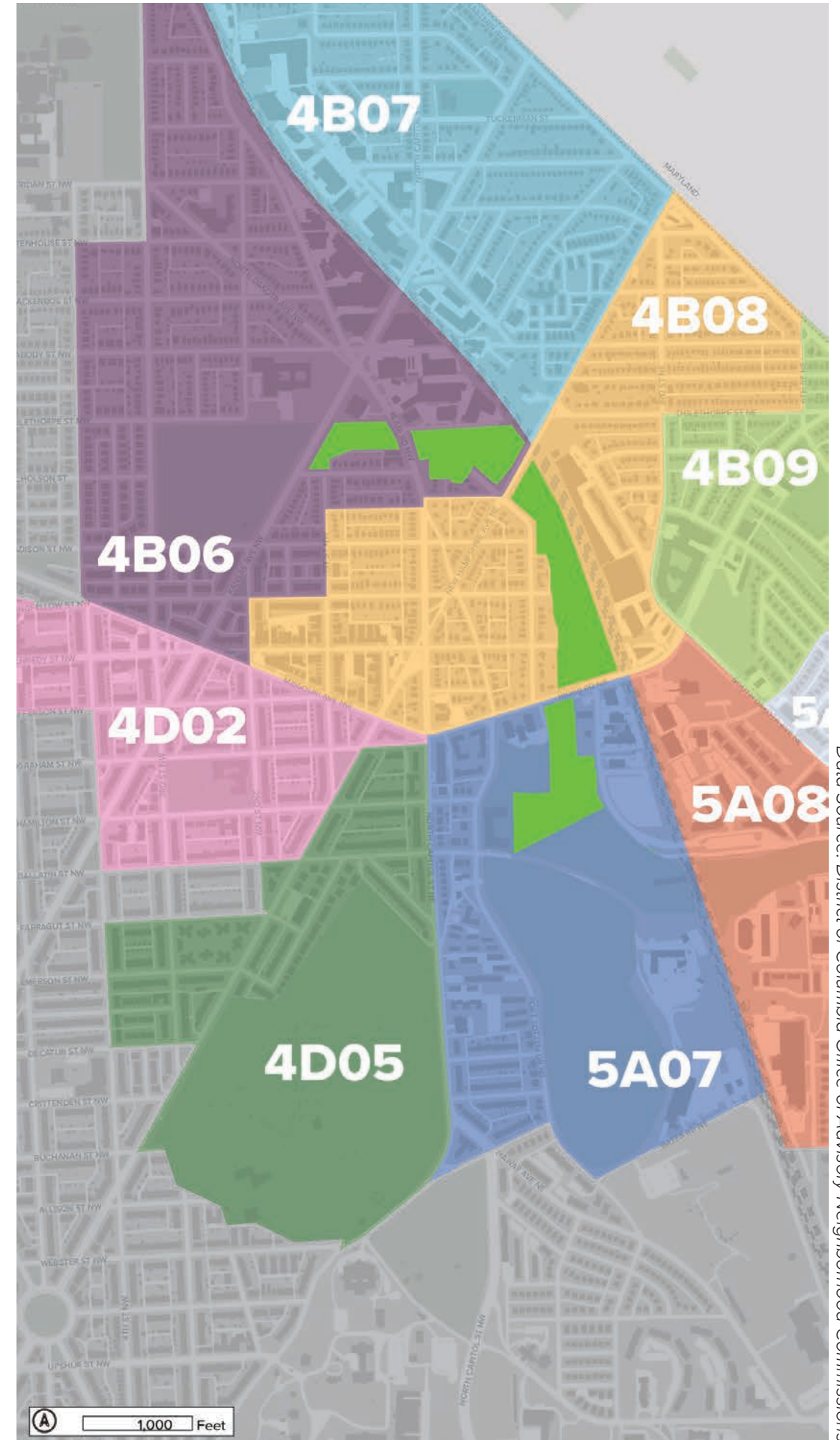
The cultural landscape is split between the jurisdictions of two Advisory Neighborhood Commissions: 4B and 5A.



Data Source: District of Columbia Office of Advisory Neighborhood Commissions

## Single Member Districts

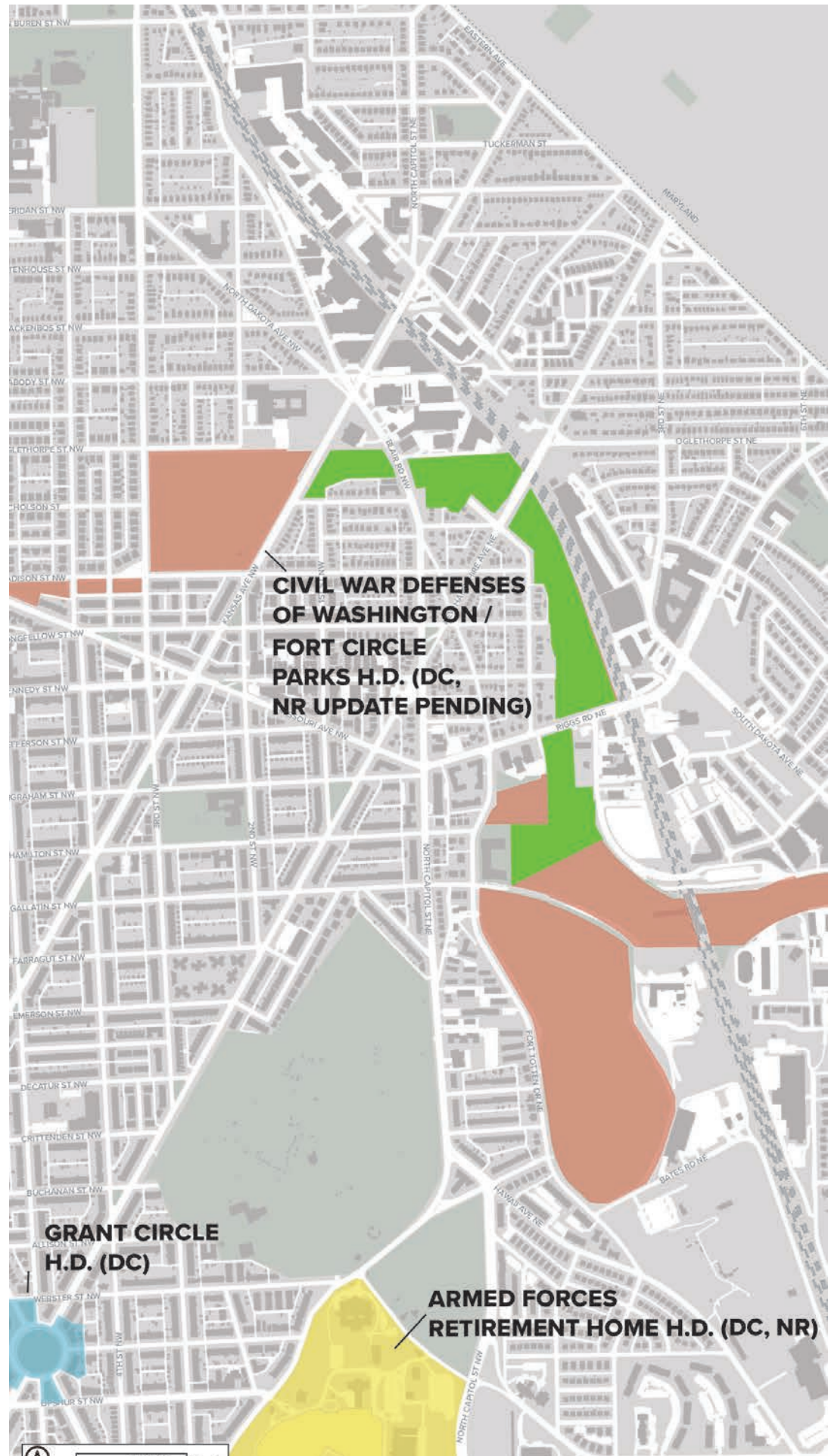
The cultural landscape spans three Single Member Districts: 4B06, 4B08, and 5A07.



Data Source: District of Columbia Office of Advisory Neighborhood Commissions

## Nearby Historic Districts

There are three historic districts in the vicinity of the cultural landscape. The Civil War Defenses of Washington/Fort Circle Parks Historic District, which is inclusive of the cultural landscape, is listed on the D.C. Historic Register; an update to the National Register nomination is pending. The Grant Circle Historic District is also listed on the D.C. Historic Register, and the Armed Forces Retirement Home Historic District is listed on the National Register and the D.C. Historic Register.





# 5 Stakeholder Interviews

In order to gain first-hand perspective on the use and perception of the park, we interviewed several stakeholders. (For a list of the interviewees, see the appendix.)

Across all of our stakeholder interviews, several themes emerged. We have organized these takeaways into the following categories, to compare with the stakeholder survey findings (see page 63): Identity + Association; Access; Activity + Use; and Stewardship.

## Identity + Association

Stakeholders expressed a general feeling of appreciation for the natural beauty of this parkland, including the gardens themselves as well as their settings.

According to the stakeholders interviewed for this REAP, the gardeners at Blair Road and Mamie D. Lee Community Gardens are a diverse group of people: racially, socio-economically, etc.

Stakeholders were generally unaware of the history of this parkland outside the garden boundaries.

## Access

According to interviewees, most gardeners are not local. (Note: in our stakeholder survey, most respondents said that they were local residents; however, we received only 23 responses. Stakeholders may be aware of other patterns among the broader membership of the gardens.)

Because many gardeners are not local to the neighborhoods around the gardens, they generally drive to reach the site. This conflicted with the observations of the ANC members interviewed for this REAP, who believe most garden members to be local to the area (and therefore, their constituencies).

The ANC representatives expressed concern about the lack of street lighting for public safety. However, some gardeners interviewed for this REAP worried that additional street lighting could affect their plantings.

## Activity + Use

Historically, this parkland was more multi-use, but as of 2020, the cultural landscape is used almost exclusively for gardening at Blair Road and Mamie D.

Lee Community Gardens. The parkland around these gardens sees little to no community use, and has few features to encourage additional use.

There is a trash dumping problem near the gardens, which can have a spillover effect in the gardens themselves.

## Stewardship

The ANC commissioners interviewed for this REAP assumed that most people would not know that this land is owned by the National Park Service. However, the gardeners are all aware of this association—for better and for worse.

According to the gardeners, the association with the National Park Service is linked with power dynamics. One gardener reflected on the document that each person must sign, which in his perspective establishes the NPS as the landlord, the garden as the supervisor, and the gardeners as the lessees.

Several interviewees observed that the relationship between the National Park Service and the gardens could be strengthened and improved. They see the National Park Service as negligent in maintaining the parkland around South Dakota Avenue NE in particular.

Based on their observations of maintenance practices (and perceived neglect), several gardeners consider NPS to be very hands-off. However, they expressed interest in partnering with NPS more: one reflected that “It would be better if they [NPS] could help support the garden with their knowledge of plants and wild agriculture.”

All of the gardeners spoke to the internal politics of the community garden—particularly, conflicts around single-crop gardeners who grow for commercial use.

In terms of community dynamics, the ANC commissioners are generally unclear of the boundaries of NPS-owned and -managed parkland in their jurisdiction. However, they observed that their constituents typically avoid engaging with the National Park Service for the use of NPS-governed land because of the time and money required to secure a permit.

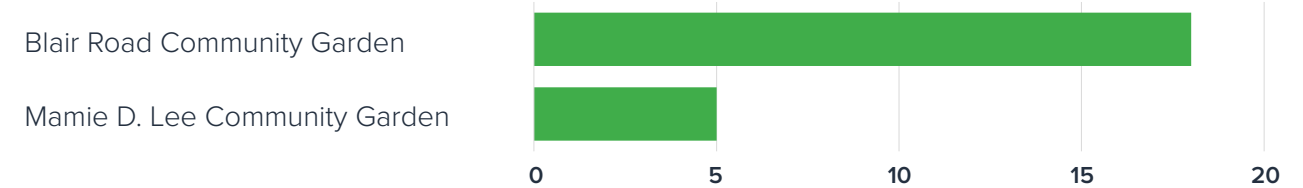
# 6 Stakeholder Survey

We distributed this survey to community members at Blair Road Community Garden and Mamie D. Lee Community Garden through the gardens' own communication channels. We received 23 responses overall, with 18 responses submitted by gardeners from Blair Road, and 5 responses from Mamie D. Lee gardeners. Those responses are combined in the findings pages that follow. We recognize that this survey did not reach park users and neighbors who do not follow these particular communication channels.

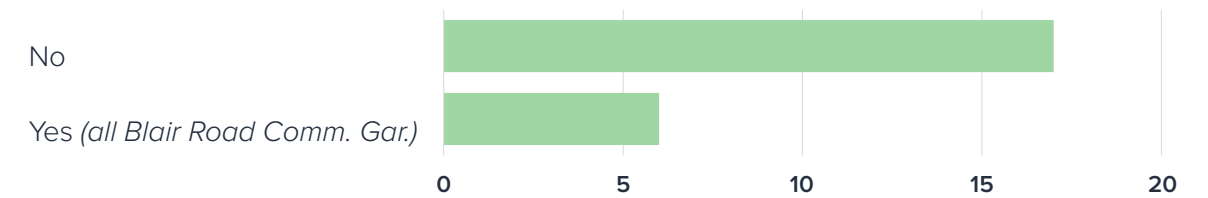
The survey is organized into the following areas of inquiry: Identity + Association; Access; Activity + Use; and Stewardship.



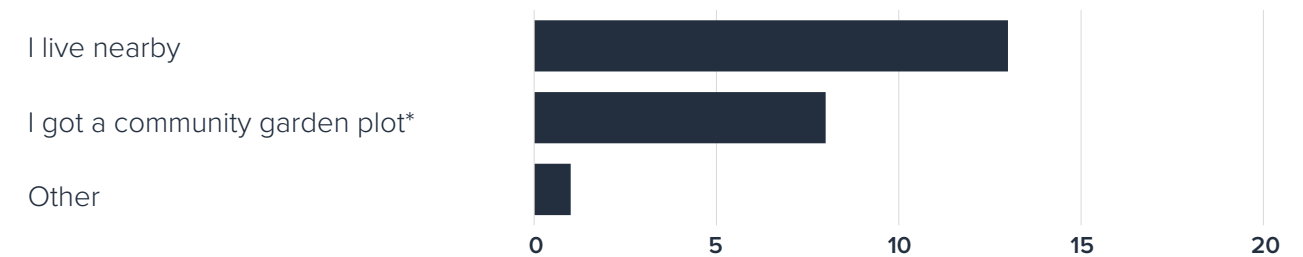
### Which community garden are you affiliated with?



### Do you have an official role with the community garden?



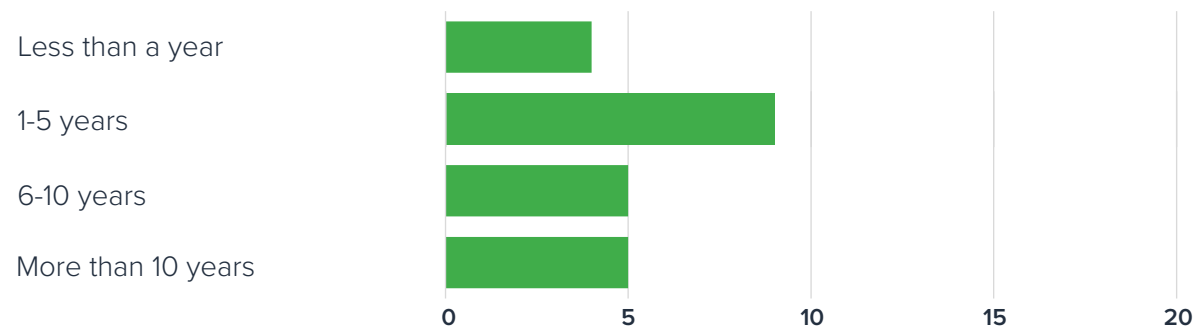
### Why did you first start visiting the Blair Road Community Garden? (select all that apply)



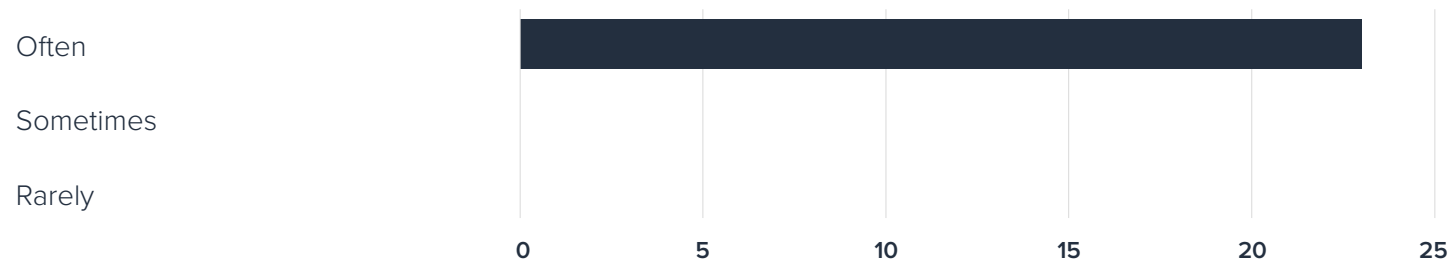
\* Respondent did not self-describe as a local resident

## Identity + Association (continued)

### How long have you been visiting the garden?



### How often do you visit the park?



“

Property values in DC continue to go up. It has caused a significant amount of gentrification in the neighborhood. The commercial space directly adjacent to the garden is changing, too.

”

*Blair Road gardener who has been visiting for 1-5 years*

“

A lot of construction on the bike path outside the garden. New lights, etc.

”

*Mamie D. Lee gardener who has been visiting for less than a year*

### What changes have you noticed during that time?

“

The garden seems more organized and better maintained.

”

*Blair Road gardener who has been visiting for more than 10 years*

“

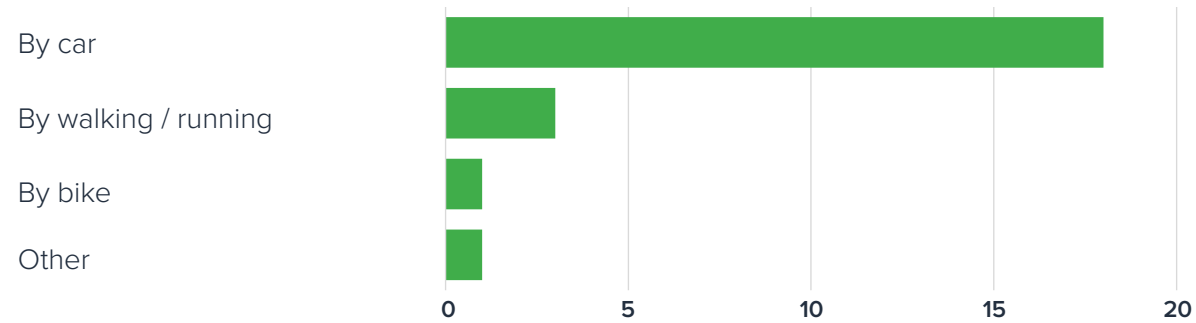
It's frustrating coming early and not having a parking space. That means you have to stay longer into the night. Also, we now have construction workers to compete with.

”

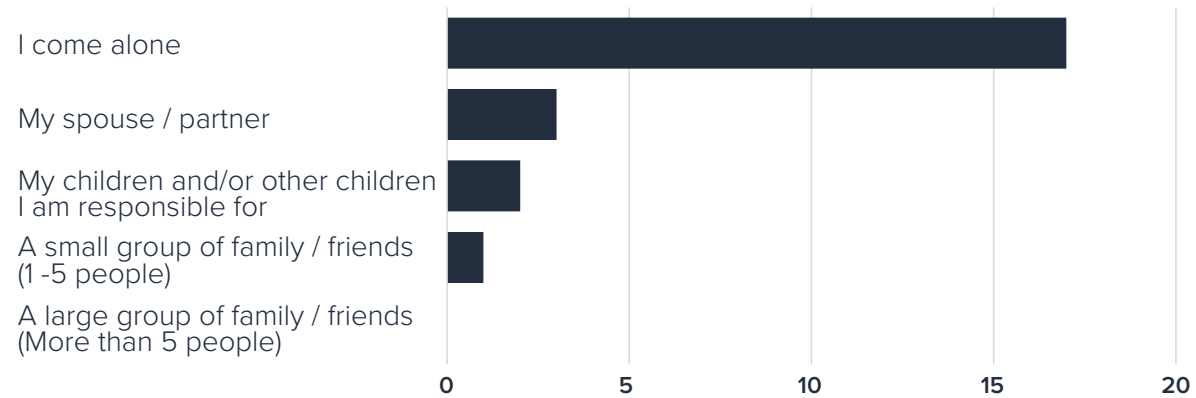
*Blair Road gardener who has been visiting for more than 10 years*



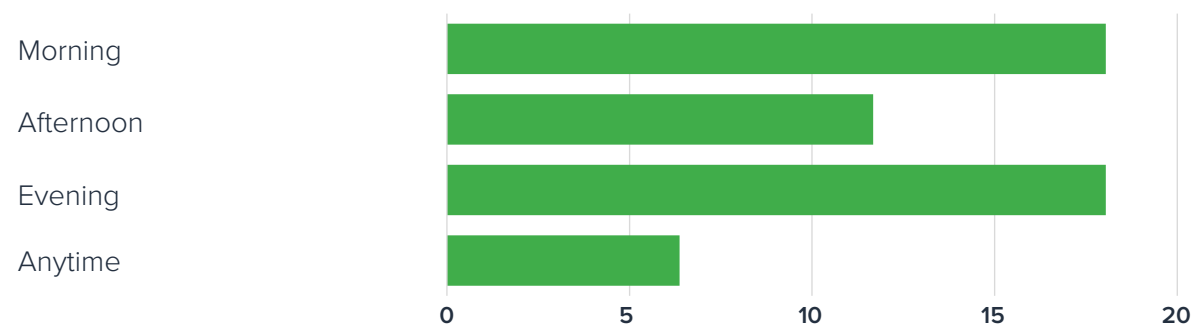
**When visiting the garden, how do you usually get there?**



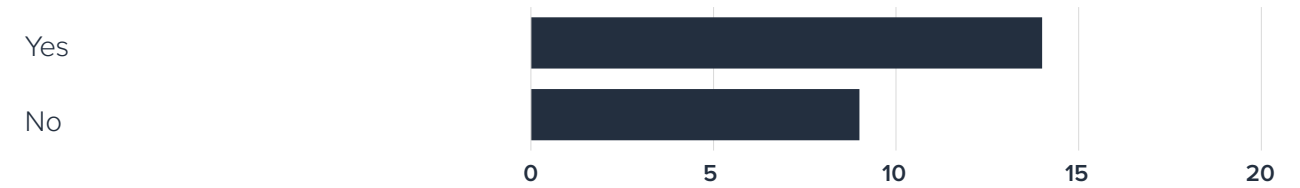
**When you visit the garden, who are you typically with?**



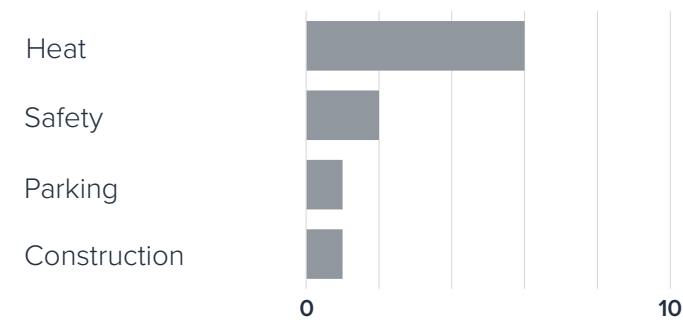
**What time(s) of day do you typically visit? (select all that apply)**



**Are there any times you avoid visiting?**



**For those who said they avoid the park at certain times of day, their concerns are related to:**



“ After dark, and currently avoiding work hours because of construction.

*Blair Road gardener who has been visiting for 1-5 years* ”

“ I usually avoid mornings because there are no parking spaces.

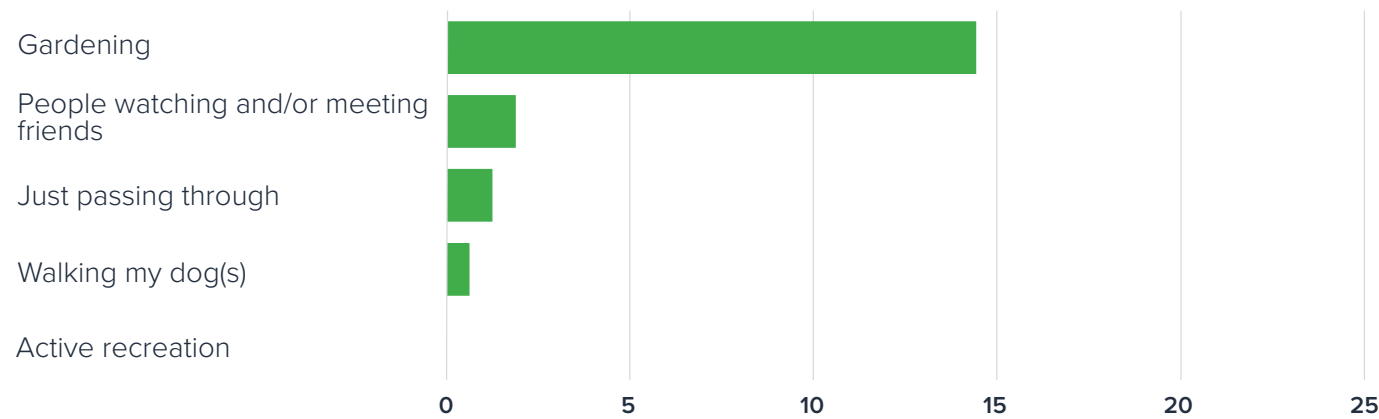
*Blair Road gardener who has been visiting for more than 10 years* ”

“ During summer I avoid mid day when my plot is in full sun. Too hot. Unsafe.

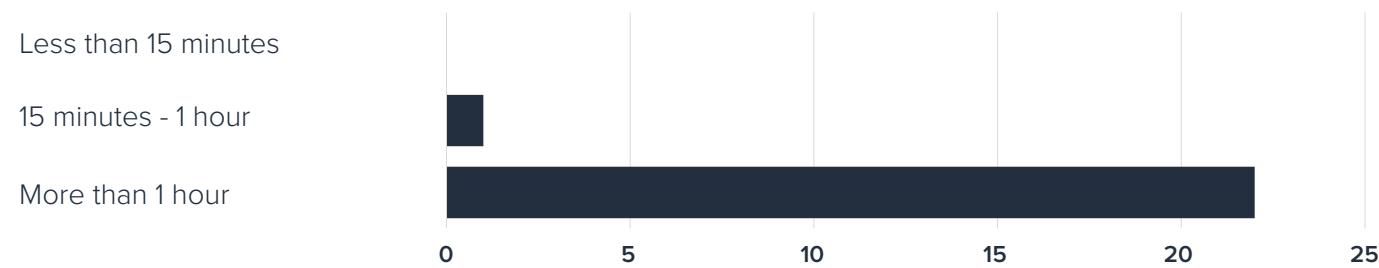
*Blair Road gardener who has been visiting for 6-10 years* ”



**How do you spend your time in the park?** (select all that apply)



**How much time do you usually spend in the park?**



**“I am there very often in spring and fall when the weather is nicest and the garden is in the need of the most work.”**

*Mamie D. Lee gardener who has been visiting for less than a year*

**“I garden during winter. It is allowed, I just have to bring water.”**

*Blair Road community gardener who has been visiting for 6 - 10 years*

**How does your use of the garden change based on the season?**

**“With changes in weather patterns, I’ve been working on permaculture, matching crops to expected temperatures.”**

*Blair Road community gardener who has been visiting for 6 - 10 years*

**“I grow veggies in all seasons, but I do visit less in the winter. Maybe one every couple of weeks when the weather is colder.”**

*Mamie D. Lee community gardener who has been visiting for 1 - 5 years*

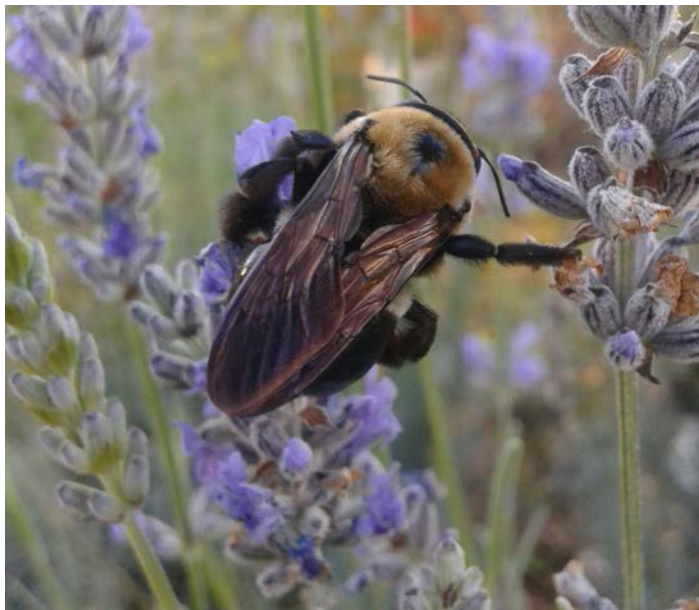
**“Spring: prepare soil, plant. Summer: cultivate, weed, harvest. Fall: harvest, maintain, prepare soil. Winter: maintain.”**

*Blair Road community gardener who has been visiting for 1 - 5 years*



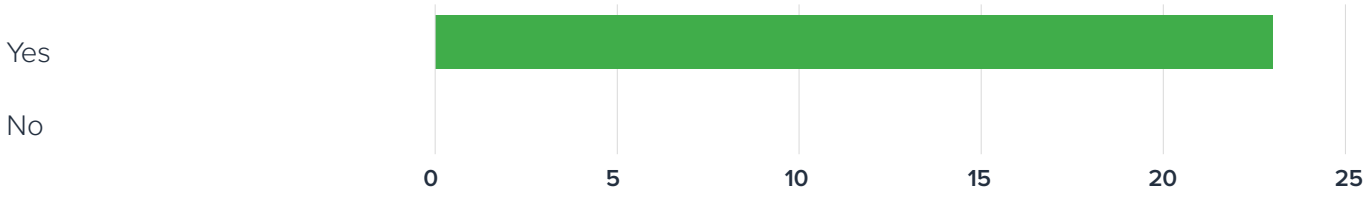
**Do you have any favorite photos of the garden/parkland that you'd like to share?**

*7 photos submitted*

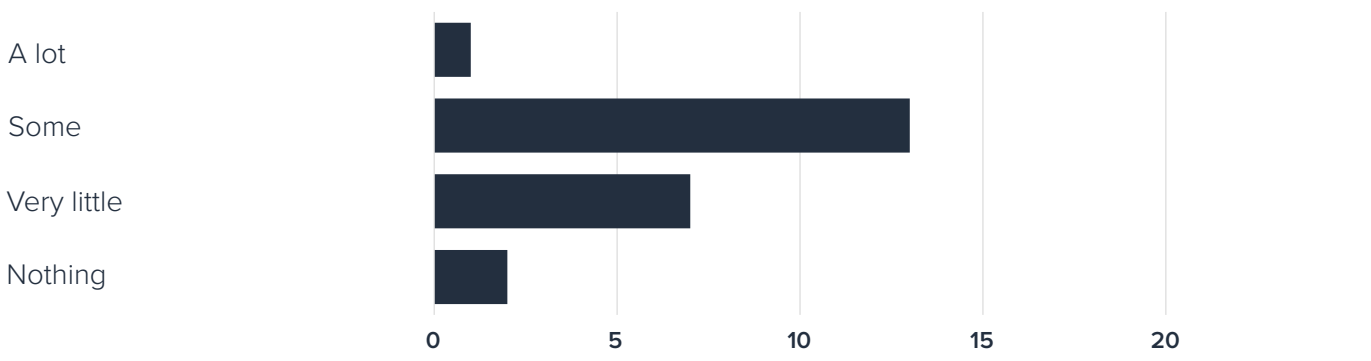




Were you aware that this public space is owned by the National Park Service?



How much do you know about the park's history?



## What should we know about the park / garden, based on your experience?

**“There are people who have been gardening for 15+ years. They have a lot to offer.”**

*Blair Road community gardener who has been visiting for 1 - 5 years*

**“It’s the best thing about living in this area. When I arrive at the garden each morning, I immediately feel calmer, more peaceful, and optimistic.”**

*Mamie D. Lee community gardener who has been visiting for 1 - 5 years*

**“Except for the yearly inspections, NPS has abandoned this garden and all the gardens under their control in DC. As a result, the garden management is dominated by people who do not run things democratically.”**

*Blair Road community gardener who has been visiting for 6 - 10 years*

**“When we looked for neighborhood to move to, we saw this garden and decided to move nearby.”**

*Mamie D. Lee community gardener who has been visiting for 1 - 5 years*

“ It would be nice to have more of a shady spot for picnics or hanging out, and access to public restrooms and water fountains. ”

*Mamie D. Lee gardener who has been visiting for more than 10 years*

“ A structure of some sort to promote community, sharing of best practices, and most importantly: shelter. It would be a place to relax and enjoy. ”

*Blair Road gardener who has been visiting for 6 - 10 years*

### If you could change one thing about the park / garden, what would it be?

“ The control the club’s leadership tries to have over your garden. ”

*Blair Road gardener who has been visiting for more than 10 years*

“ Capitol Bikeshare station. ”

*Mamie D. Lee gardener who has been visiting for less than a year*

“ The garden needs to be better cared for and managed by NPS. The garden association needs lots of assistance financially, and help to fill the ever-present flooding problems. ”

*Blair Road gardener who has been visiting for 6 - 10 years*

“ I like that the garden is a collaborative effort and that each individual plot can be different. ”

*Mamie D. Lee gardener who has been visiting for 1 - 5 years*

“ I like the cultural, racial, and economic diversity of the membership. ”

*Blair Road gardener who has been visiting for 6 - 10 years*

“ I definitely love that the garden is big! And would not want it to be smaller. ”

*Mamie D. Less gardener who has been visiting for 1 - 5 years*

### What aspects of the park / garden would you NOT want to change?

“ The garden should always remain. There are very few places to grow fresh food in the city. ”

*Mamie D. Lee gardener who has been visiting for less than a year*

“ Accessibility. Water availability. ”

*Blair Road gardener who has been visiting for 1 - 5 years*



# 7 Conclusions + Recommendations

Based on this REAP analysis, we can draw the following conclusions about the ethnographic aspects of the Fort Drive parkland between Fort Slocum and Fort Totten:

**It is underutilized.** This parkland does not include many features to encourage recreational use, and as a result, it sees little use.

**The parkland currently operates as a series of forested islands, rather than a cohesive green belt.** The segments of Reservations 497 and 451 would have more value if they were treated as a cohesive system of parks rather than individual sections. With new thinking about their maintenance practices, wayfinding, interpretation, social trails, and community garden connections, they could be experienced as a connective thread in the urban fabric, rather than isolated pockets of No Man's Land.

**With the exception of the community gardens, the Fort Drive parkland serves few functions.** Most sections of this parkland do not offer any experiences to visitors. Without seating, open space, or social trail, most of this parkland is not conducive to passive or active recreational use and does not function as a recreational green belt, as it was intended to do. It also does not offer any interpretation to visitors to enrich the understanding of the landscape's or deepen the sense of connection to this public space.

**The community gardens are anchors.** People seek out the Blair Road and Mamie D. Lee Community Gardens and spend more time there than in the parkland around the gardens, thanks to the opportunity to cultivate crops and community.

**The community garden groups are small but mighty.** The Blair Road and Mamie D. Lee gardeners are deeply invested in their respective gardens. They are dedicated stakeholder groups for these pockets within the larger parkland.

**The gardens' ownership is clear, but the parkland's management is not.** The community gardens are very aware of the National Park Service's management of the garden properties (for better or worse), but stakeholders such as the gardeners and local ANC commissioners do not understand the stewardship arrangements of the park around the gardens. They are unclear on the appropriate points of contact at the National Park Service, unsure how to present concerns, and uncertain with whom to collaborate.

Going forward, we recommend that the National Park Service consider new ways to bolster this parkland as a community-facing asset. Since the conception and implementation of a Fort Drive, this parkland has been set aside as a series of public reservations for recreational use and open space. It should remain intact as such, but there is an opportunity to reimagine how it fulfills these public functions:

...Could its maintenance practices be adapted to introduce more open space and/or invite more park visitors into its forested areas?

...Could it accommodate more pedestrian and recreational amenities, to invite people across the "threshold" into No Man's Land?

...Could it encourage more play space to serve all ages?

...Could it host more bikeshare docks, to encourage more use and recreational activity?

...Could it incorporate new botanical experiments, in relation to or beyond the confines of the community gardens, to reinvigorate Fort Drive's function as green infrastructure?

...Could the community gardeners be invited into more active participation and deeper engagement with the parkland around their gardens? For instance, could the National Park Service pilot a collaboration with the gardeners to explore new vegetation practices that serve both groups' priorities of natural resource management?

...Could the National Park Service use the parkland around the gardens to address community gardeners' concerns regarding parking concerns, long-term management, etc.?

...Could it feature more artwork that serves a public good?

...Could it experiment with new modes of interpretation that re-establishes the links to the broader network of 19th-century forts and 20th-century Fort Drive segments?

...Is there an opportunity to interpret the history of this land more publicly, including valorizing the gardeners as the most recent layer of this long history?

These opportunities have implications for the management of parkland's distinct segments, beginning with the opportunity to treat them like they are part of the larger Fort Drive—as they are—rather than as a series of forgotten pockets of parkland.

# 8

## Appendices

### 8a. REAP Bibliography

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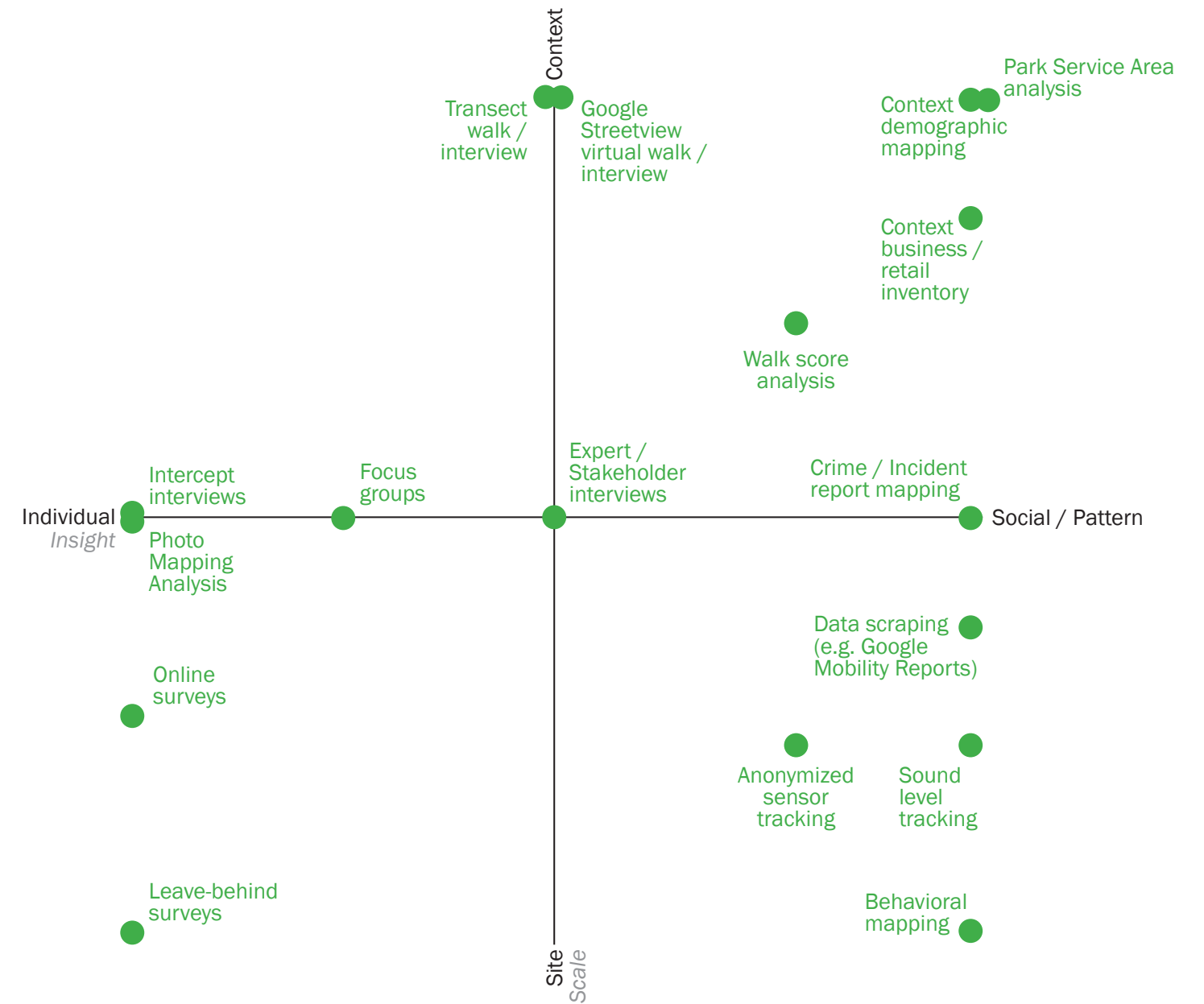
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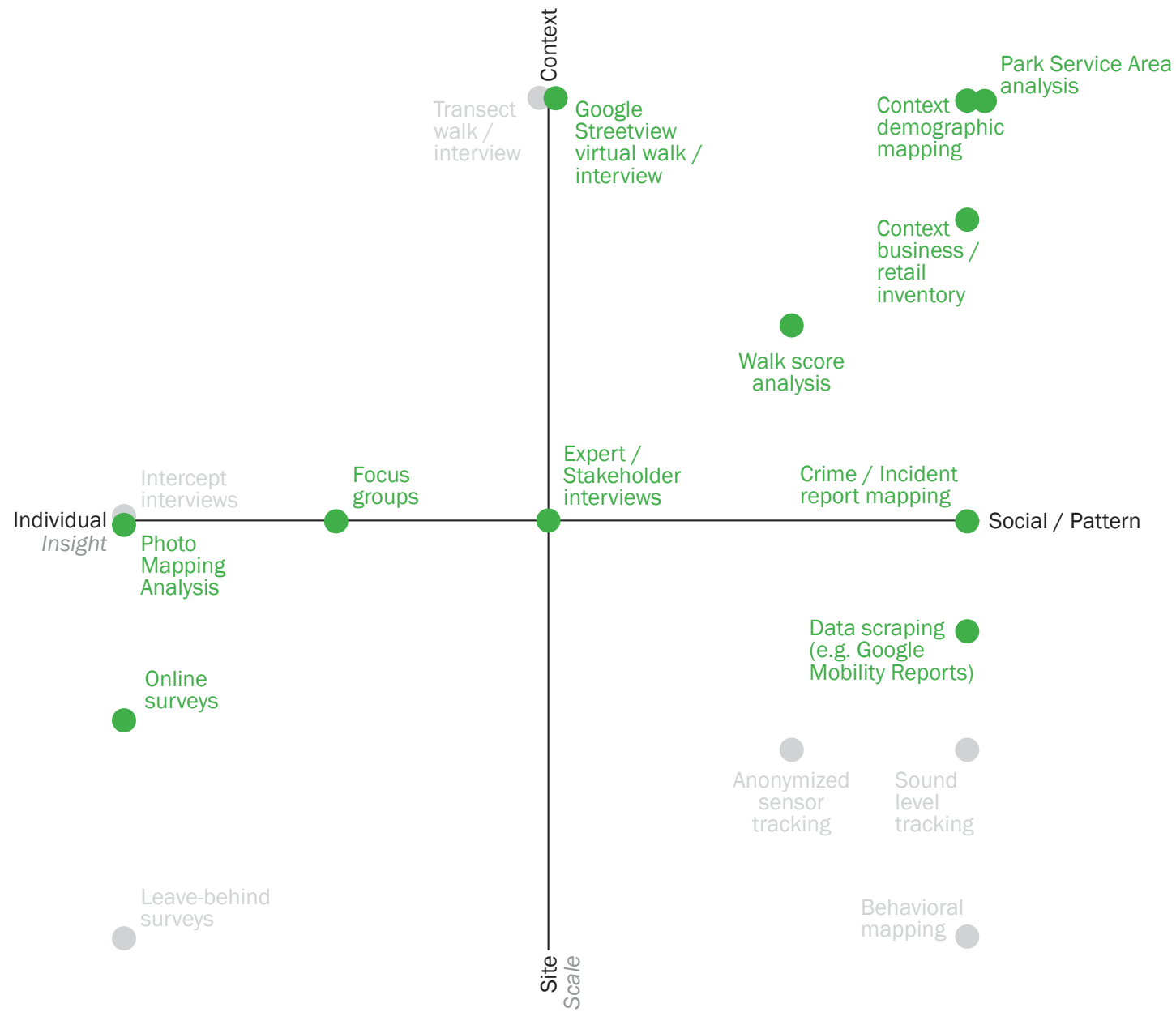


# 8b. REAP Methodology Matrix

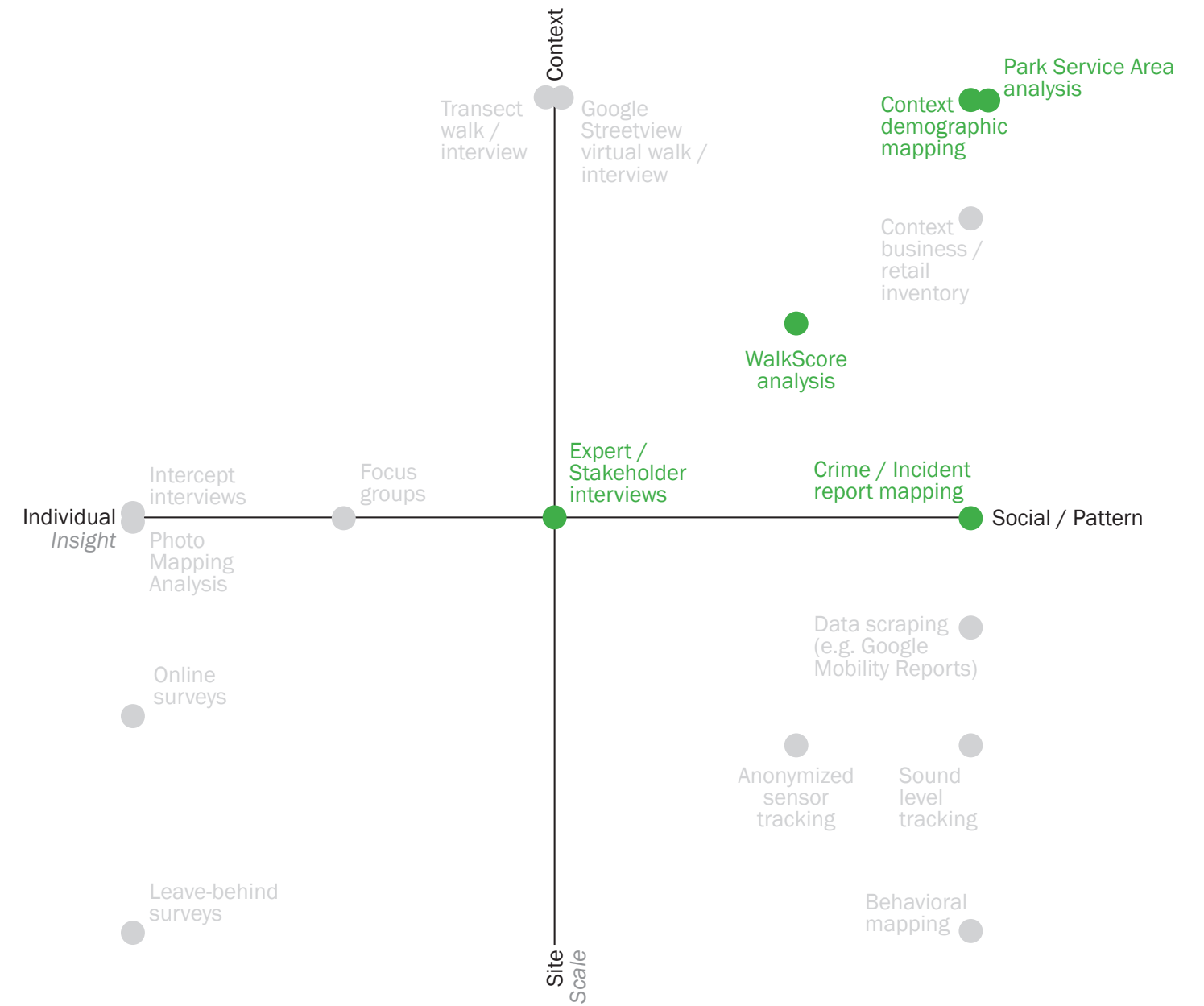
## REAP Analysis: Methods + Objectives DC Small Parks Project



REAP Analysis:  
Methods + Objectives  
Virtual/Remote Opportunities



REAP Analysis:  
Methods + Objectives  
Confirmed Approaches for  
Fort Drive (Fort Slocum - Totten) REAP





## 8c. List of Stakeholder Interviews

**Allison Brooks**  
Commissioner, ANC 4B08  
District of Columbia

**Tiffani Nichole Johnson**  
Commissioner, ANC 4B06  
District of Columbia

**Maxwell Kalmann**  
Board Member  
Mamie D. Lee Garden Association

**Greg King**  
Board Member  
Blair Road Community Garden

**Howard Williams**  
Former Manager  
Blair Road Community Garden



## 8d. Stakeholder Survey Questions

1. How often do you visit the Mamie D. Lee Community Garden/Blair Road Community Garden? *(select one)*
  - a. Rarely
  - b. Sometimes
  - c. Often
2. Why did you first visit the park? *(select all that apply)*
  - a. I live nearby
  - b. I work nearby
  - c. Other: \_\_\_\_\_
3. How long have you been visiting the Mamie D. Lee Community Garden/Blair Road Community Garden? *(select one)*
  - a. Less than a year
  - b. 1-5 years
  - c. 6-10 years
  - d. More than 10 years
4. How have you seen the park/neighborhood around the garden change in that time? *(open answer)*
5. Do you have an official role with the Mamie D. Lee Community Garden/Blair Road Community Garden, or have you had an official role in the past? *(select all that apply):*
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
6. When visiting the park/garden, how do you usually get there? *(select one)*
  - a. By walking/running
  - b. By mobility device (e.g. wheelchair)
  - c. By bike
  - d. By public transportation
  - e. By car
  - f. By rideshare (Uber, Lyft, etc.)
  - g. Other: \_\_\_\_\_
7. If you use a mobility device (e.g. wheelchair), how accessible is your journey? Please share any observations on access to and/or within the park. *(open answer)*
8. When you visit the park, who are you typically with? *(select one)*
  - a. I come alone
  - b. My spouse or partner
  - c. My children (and/or other children that I am responsible for)
  - d. A small group of family or friends (1-5 people)
  - e. A large group of family or friends (more than 5 people)
  - f. Coworkers and/or colleagues
9. What time(s) of day do you typically visit? *(select all that apply)*
  - a. Morning
  - b. Afternoon
  - c. Evening
10. Are there any times you avoid visiting? *(select one)*
  - a. No
  - b. Yes
11. If there is a time of day you avoid visiting, what time of day do you avoid and why? *(open answer)*
12. How do you spend your time in the park? *(select all that apply)*
  - a. Active recreation (e.g. running, walking, biking, playing sports, and/or other forms of exercise/play)
  - b. People watching and/or meeting friends
  - c. Walking my dog(s)
  - d. Resting (e.g. reading, sitting on a bench)
  - e. Eating a meal
  - f. Fishing
  - g. Just passing through
  - h. Gardening
  - i. Other: \_\_\_\_\_
13. Upload any favorite photos of the park. They will not be shared on any public platforms; we are interested in what parts of the park are popular for public use and memory. *(upload file)*
14. How much time do you usually spend in the park/garden? *(select one)*
  - a. Less than 15 minutes (I am just passing through)
  - b. 15 mins - 1 hr
  - c. More than an hour
15. How does your use of the park/garden change based on the season? *(open answer)*

*(continued on next page)*

16. If you were to meet someone at the park/garden, where would you tell them to meet you? *(open answer)*
17. Were you aware that this public space is owned by the National Park Service? *(select one)*
- a. Yes
  - b. No
18. What areas of the park/garden do you spend the most time in? *(open answer)*
19. If you could change one thing about the park, what would it be and why? *(open answer)*
20. What aspects of the park would you NOT want to change? *(open answer)*
21. How much do you know about the park's/garden's history? *(select one)*
- a. Nothing
  - b. Very little
  - c. Some
  - d. A lot
22. If you would like to share a story about the park, its history, or your own history at the park, please do so below. *(open answer)*
23. What else should we know about the park, based on your experience? *(open answer)*



