



DC Small Parks Project
Marion Park
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 Marion Park.

In order to understand this REAP analysis in its fullest context, it should be interpreted alongside the Cultural Landscape Inventory for Marion Park, 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)
- Titanic Memorial Park: Cultural Landscape Inventory + REAP Analysis (2020)
- Fort Drive (Fort Slocum to Fort Totten): 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, DC.

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 Marion Park, 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:

Marion Park is a neighborhood-centric park. The park is integrated with the neighborhood, connected with the street grid and used by local residents.

The park is somewhat isolated within southeast DC. Although Marion Park is well-situated and -scaled within the street grid, it is located several blocks away from the closest Metro stop. Instead, it is closer to the highway, which has an isolating effect as people bypass this part of Capitol Hill.

Demographically, the neighborhood around Marion Park has experienced significant change over the last several decades. Since 2000, the Capitol Hill neighborhood has gotten whiter and wealthier, and households have more children now than they did 20 years ago. This echoes similar demographic changes in Washington, DC overall, but these shifts have been more acute in Capitol Hill.

Our REAP analysis suggests that this park functions as a gathering place for local residents, rather than a destination for more distanced DC residents/visitors. The park is appealing for local families with children, dog-walkers, people-watchers, etc. It does not have any distinguishing features (e.g. a statue) or popular amenities to draw visitors from longer distances.

The park has a clear, albeit isolated, identity. Marion Park is identifiable by name, with defined boundaries and a cohesive landscape design.

The park is fully accessible. Marion Park is ADA-friendly, with wide, maintained, flat walkways throughout the park.

The park's playground and lawns are the two most prominent and popular features of the park. There are no flower beds to mark seasonal changes, but the lawns suffer in winter months.

The landscape design serves different audiences and uses in a balanced way. Marion Park is popular with both young children (who use the playground) and dog-walkers (who use the lawn) These populations present potential for conflict, as dogs (on- or off-leash) could frighten young children. However, Marion Park accommodates both of these functions well: the physical distinctions between the playground and the lawns—including the wide walkways and the low fence around the playground—mediates between these functions so that they do not conflict.

The park is considered clean and well-managed, but there are no features to link this stewardship with the National Park Service. With little regulatory signage and no interpretive opportunities, park visitors may not associate Marion Park with the National Park Service. NPS therefore may not reap the associational benefits of visitors' positive experiences in this park.

The park is embedded in a neighborhood of local institutions. The park is flanked by a church and a police sub-station, and the neighborhood is well-served by (and a component of) civic infrastructure.

However, the park has few clear-cut stakeholders in the form of organized groups. There is no active friends group for Marion Park, and no identifiable organization with which the National Park Service could collaborate as a partner in managing and stewarding 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 Marion Park 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. Marion Park 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 Marion Park, based on the opportunity to reach targeted samples of stakeholder audiences and perspectives while building an understanding of the full spectrum of affiliations.

Marion Park has clear boundaries, a defined identity (in name and neighborhood), and an unobstructed landscape design: these aspects of its design lend themselves to a virtual walk-through and a photo mapping analysis via hashtagged / geotagged photographs on social media. It does not have an active friends' group, so it was not a candidate for a targeted online survey. (For examples of this survey methodology, see the Titanic Memorial Park REAP or the Fort Drive, Fort Slocum-Fort Totten 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. Virtual walk-through(s) to understand community values and neighborhood change, in site-specific terms and in context;
3. Photo mapping + analysis, to understand the park's visual identity and representation by park users
4. Stakeholder interviews, to gain first-hand perspectives about the park's community value, perception, and use;

Context mapping + Park Service Area/WalkScore Mapping

In order to understand Marion Park 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
- DCGIS

- District of Columbia Office of the Chief Technology Officer
- 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

Virtual walk-through

This method builds a community-centered understanding of the site, including its local meaning and the identification of significant places. Members of the project team conducted this walk in July 2020 with Robyn Hinson-Jones, a longtime resident of the Capitol Hill neighborhood and an occasional volunteer with the National Park Service.

During fieldwork for the park’s associated Cultural Landscape Inventory, our team recorded 11 brief videos at various points in the park. These recordings represent the only in-person, non-remote aspect of our methodology. We considered using Google Streetview from similar vantage points, but decided to find a way to record the videos on-site, to achieve higher-resolution footage and to offer better vantage points from the interior of the park.

The videos (each approximately 60 seconds in length) presented 360-degree views from the playground, lawns, walkways, and perimeter of the park. We mapped the video locations (#1 - 11), and shared the map and videos with Ms. Hinson-Jones in advance of a video conference call. On the video call, our team “walked” with Ms. Hinson-Jones through the park, using the videos, asking her to share any observations about the features, uses (and conflicts of use), users, spatial character, changes over time, and context of the park, as captured in each video.

The notes from this conversation were spatially translated to annotated maps, using Adobe Illustrator.

Photo Mapping + Analysis

This method seeks to gauge public perception of the park, beyond those stakeholders who were directly involved in interviews or the online survey. It gleans a better understanding of the park’s use and experience, using photographs made publicly available online on Google Maps and Instagram.

From these platforms, we culled any photographs there were geotagged with the park’s location and/or hashtagged with an identifying label (e.g. #MarionPark). We found a total of 175 photographs that satisfied these conditions, spanning March 2015 through July 2020 (the conclusion of our data collection period). Our team assessed each photograph to determine its location, viewshed, subject(s), and time of day, and created a mapping strategy to represent this data in relation to park geographies and features.

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 responsibility for park-related issues in a professional capacity; unlike other REAPs that we have conducted (including Titanic Memorial Park REAP), there is no current friends’ group for Marion Park, so there were no community members to interview based on their official volunteer affiliation to the park. 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.

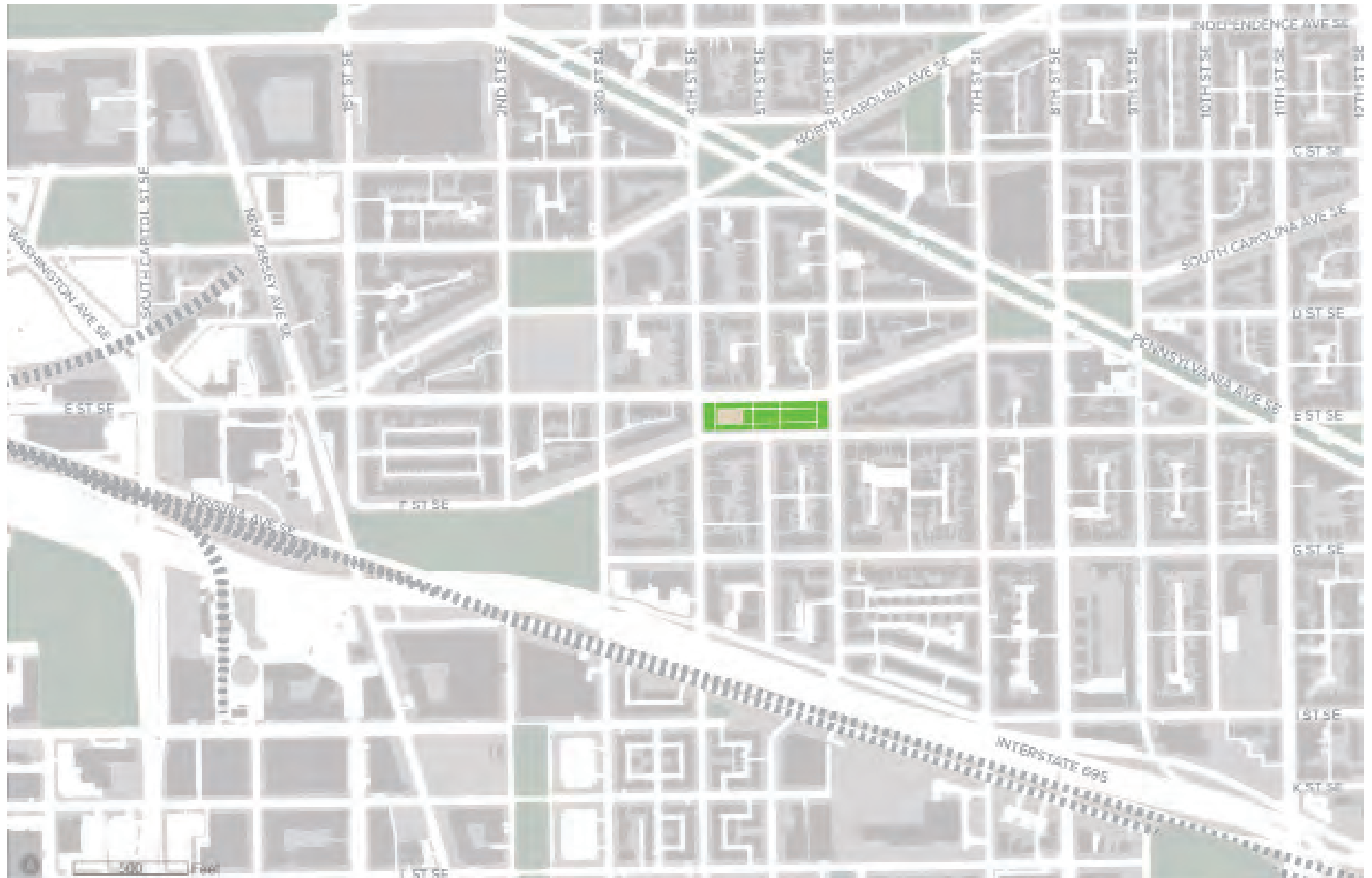
A list of interviewees is included in the appendices of this report.



4 Context Mapping

Marion Park Context

Marion Park is located along South Carolina Avenue SE between 4th Street SE and 6th Street SE. According to Decennial Census and American Community Survey data, between 2000 and 2018, the demographics of residents in the area around Marion Park have changed. Residents in 2018 were more likely to be white and wealthier, and were more likely to have children in the household than residents in 2000.



Site Photographs



Site periphery



Site design



Site design



Site vegetation



Site vegetation



Site playground



Site views and vistas



Site views and vistas



Site hardscaping



Site hardscaping



Site small-scale features

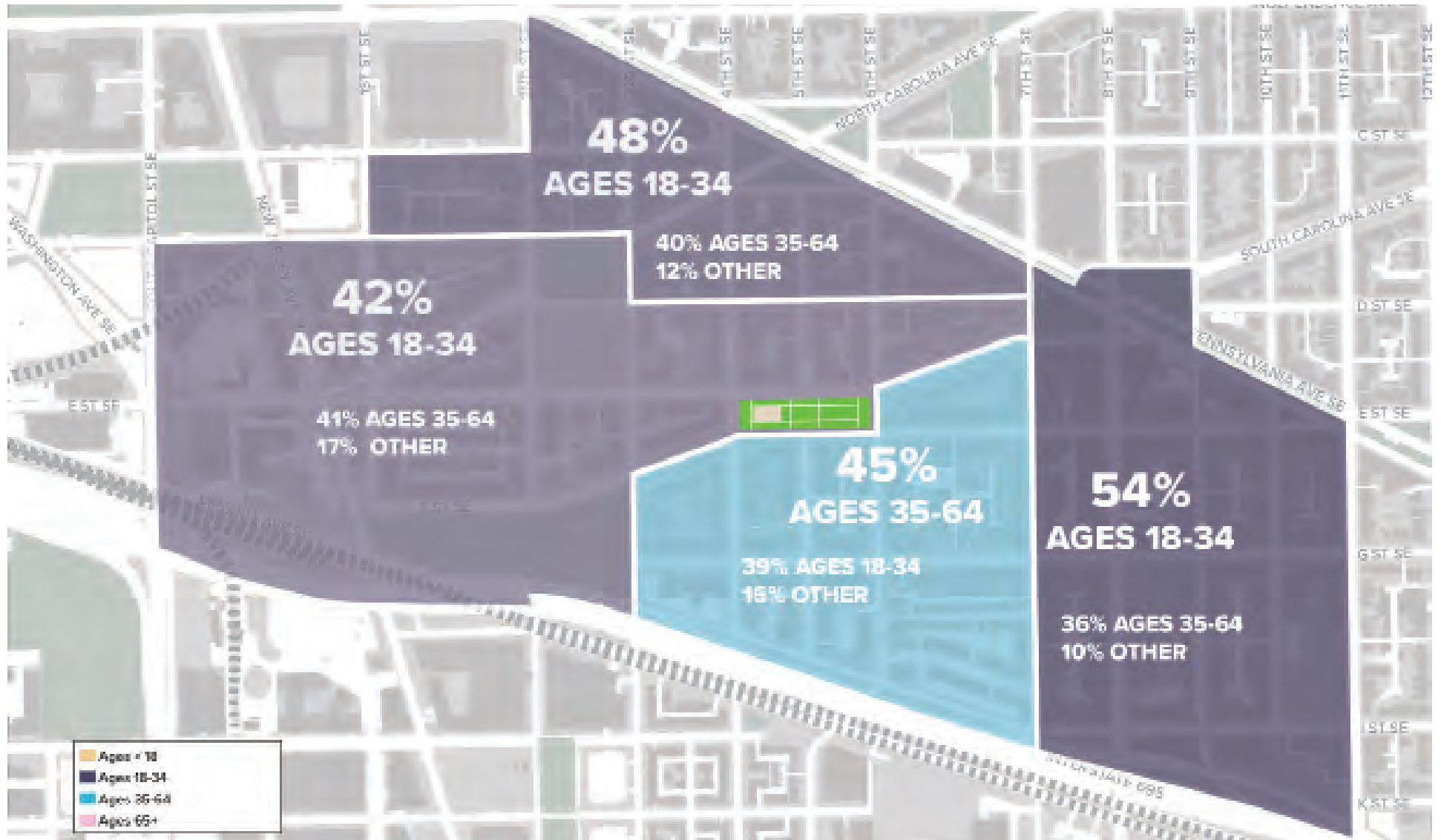


Site small-scale features

Age by Census Tract, 2000

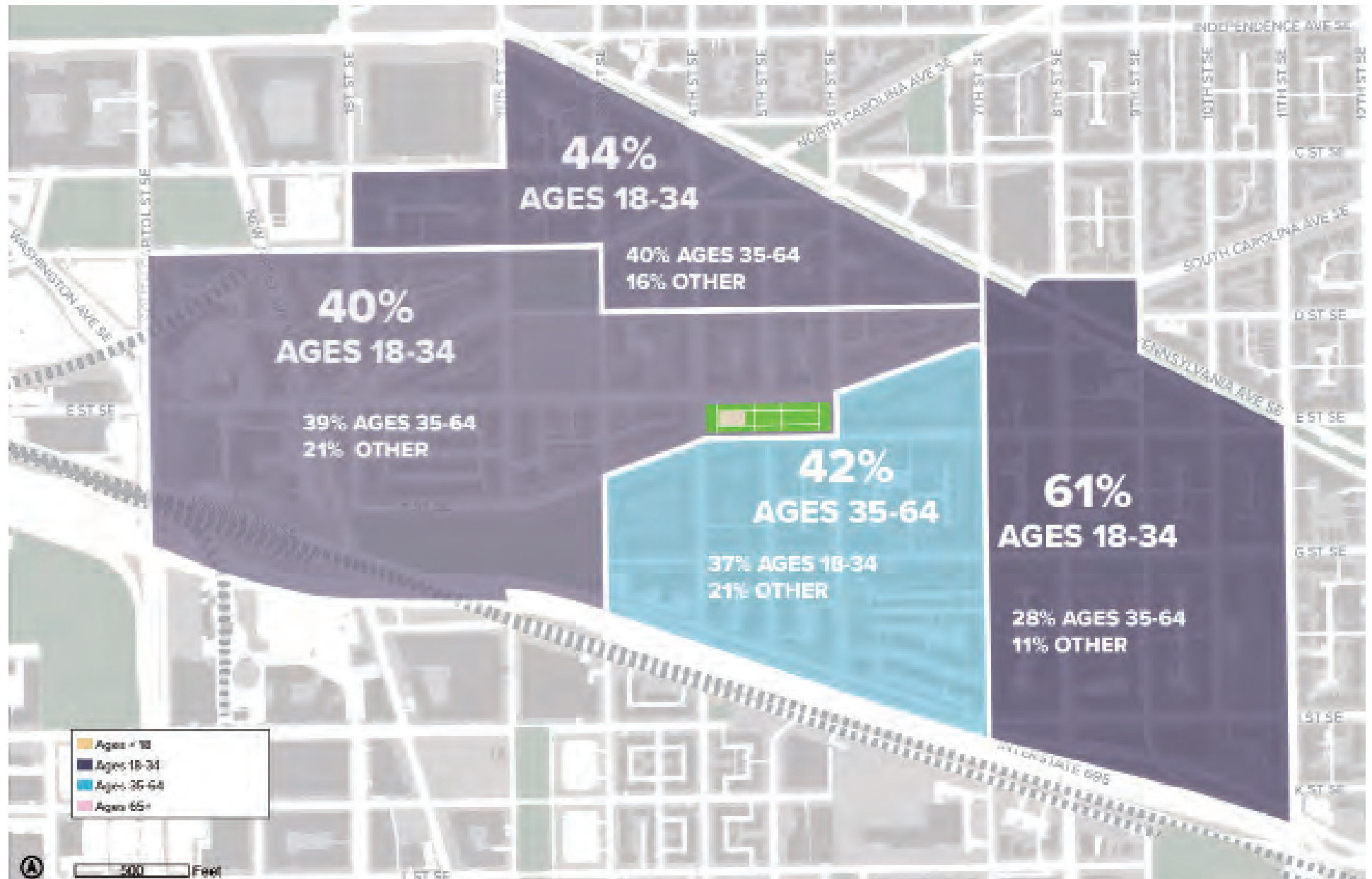
Represents dominant age group; color distinguishes between age groups. Transparency based on propensity of population.

The largest age group of residents around Marion Park is 18-34 years, with a sizable minority of residents ages 35-64. The one exception is Census Tract 70 Block Group 1 to the south of Marion Park, where the predominant age group is 35-64 years, with a substantial minority of residents ages 18-34. These trends have been consistent over time. Residents over 65 and under 18 are relatively small percentages of the population around Marion Park, indicating that most people in the area are of working age.



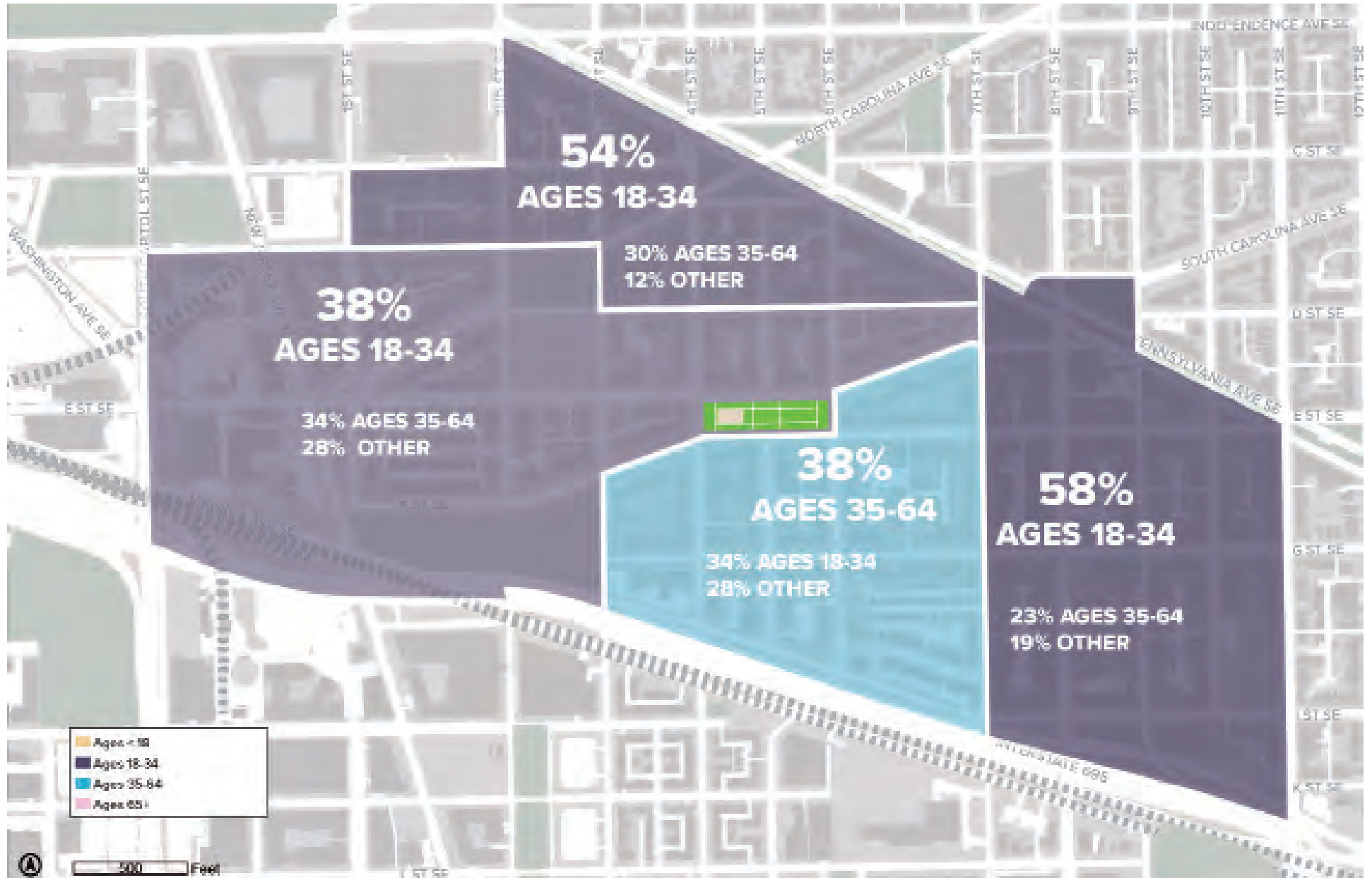
Age by Census Tract, 2010

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.

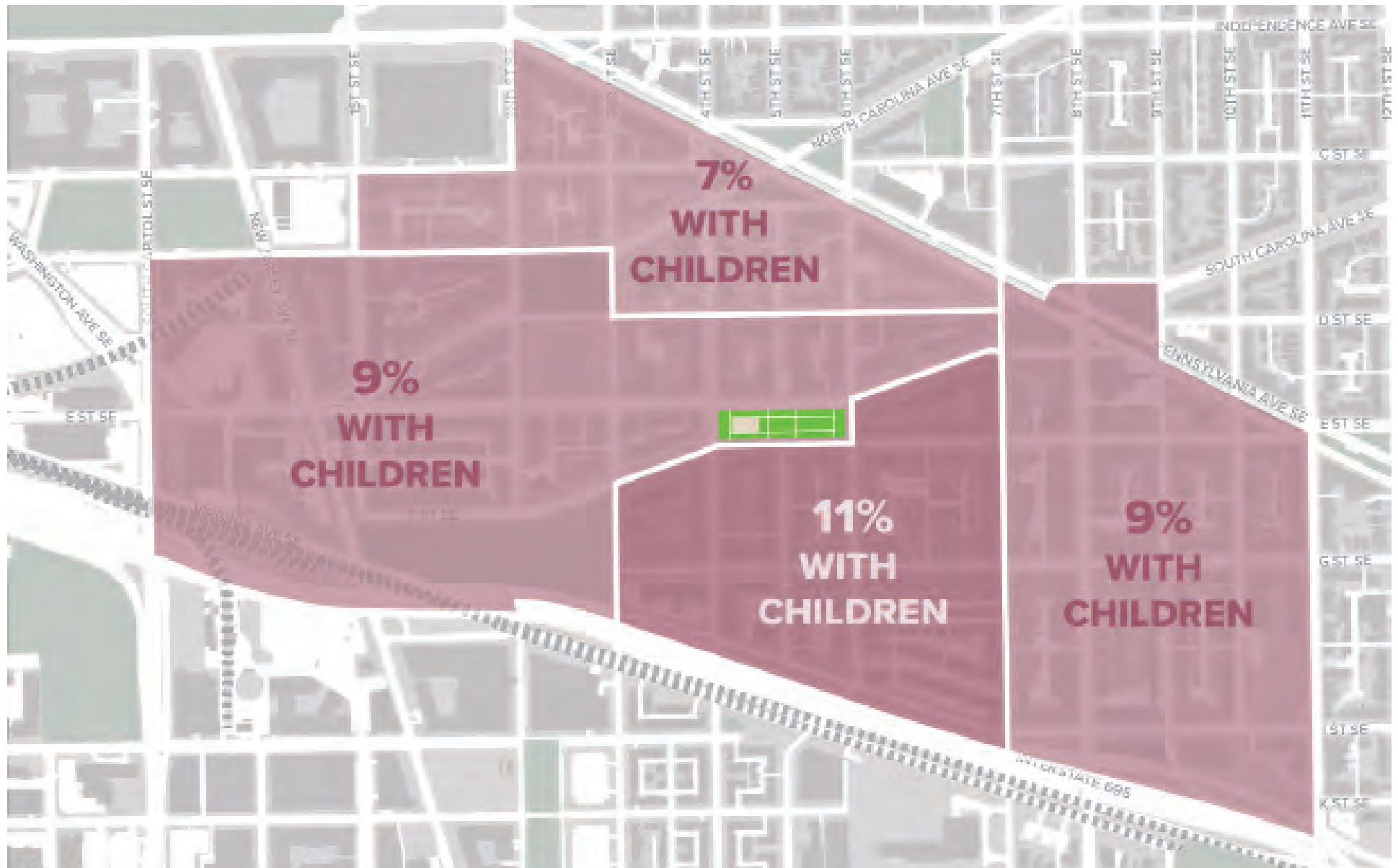




Households with Children by Census Tract, 2000

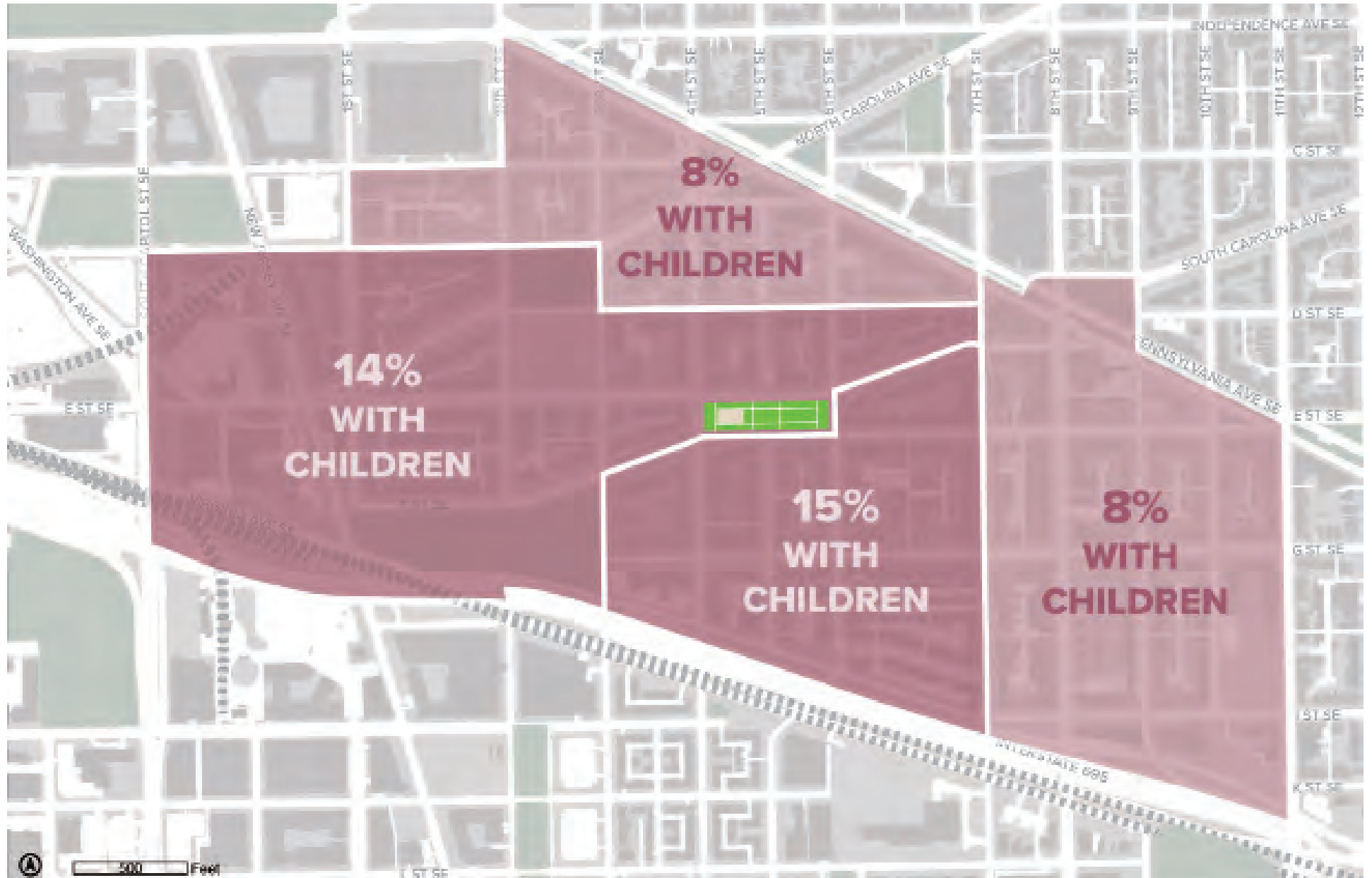
Transparency based on propensity of population.

According to Decennial Census and American Community Survey data, the number of households with people under 18 has increased steadily from 2000 to 2018, indicating that families are viewing the Capitol Hill neighborhood as a good place to raise children.



Households with Children by Census Tract, 2010

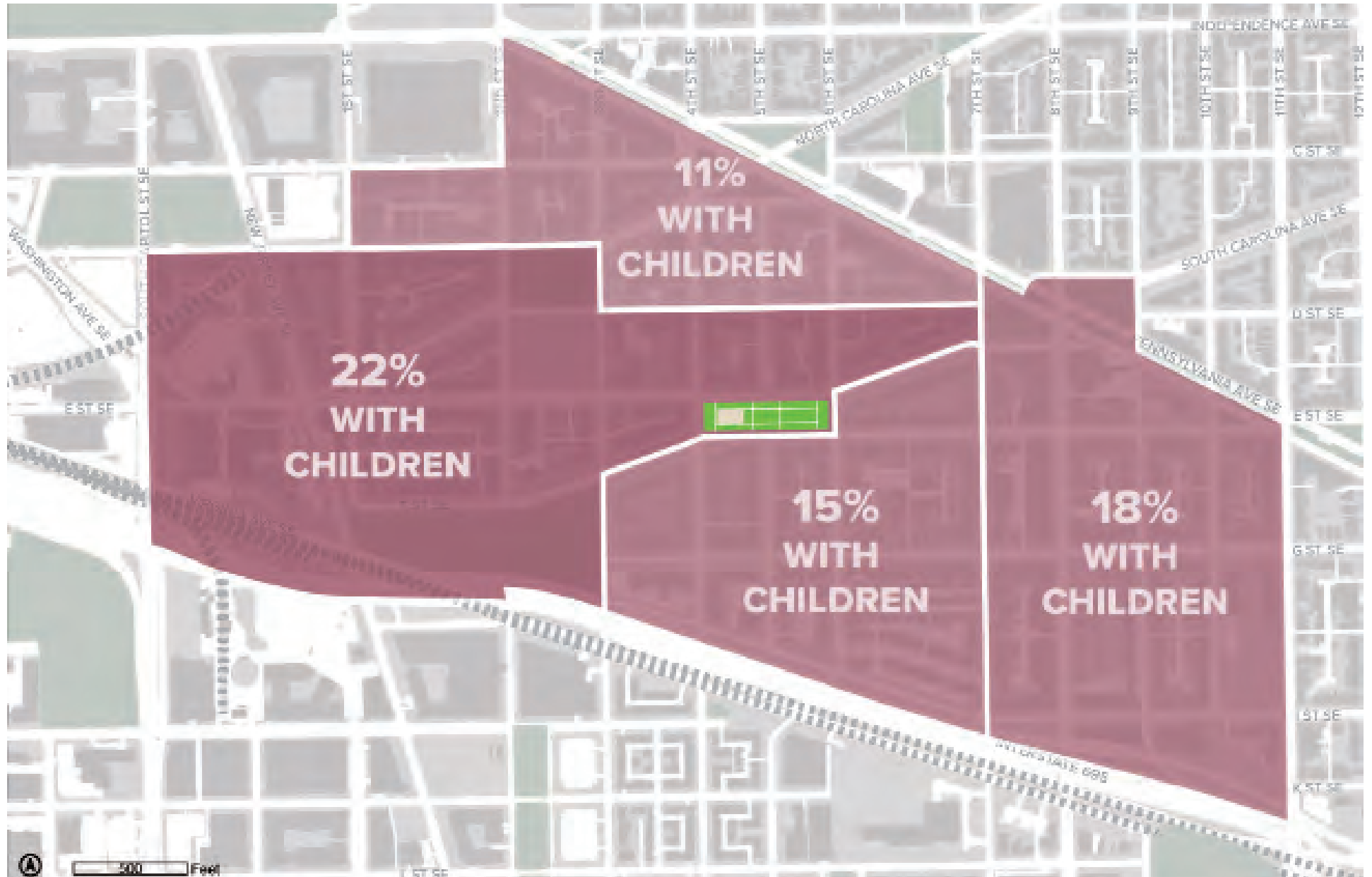
Transparency based on propensity of population.



Data Source: Social Explorer Tables (SE), Census 2010, U.S. Census Bureau and Social Explorer

Households with Children by Census Tract, 2018

Transparency based on propensity of population.

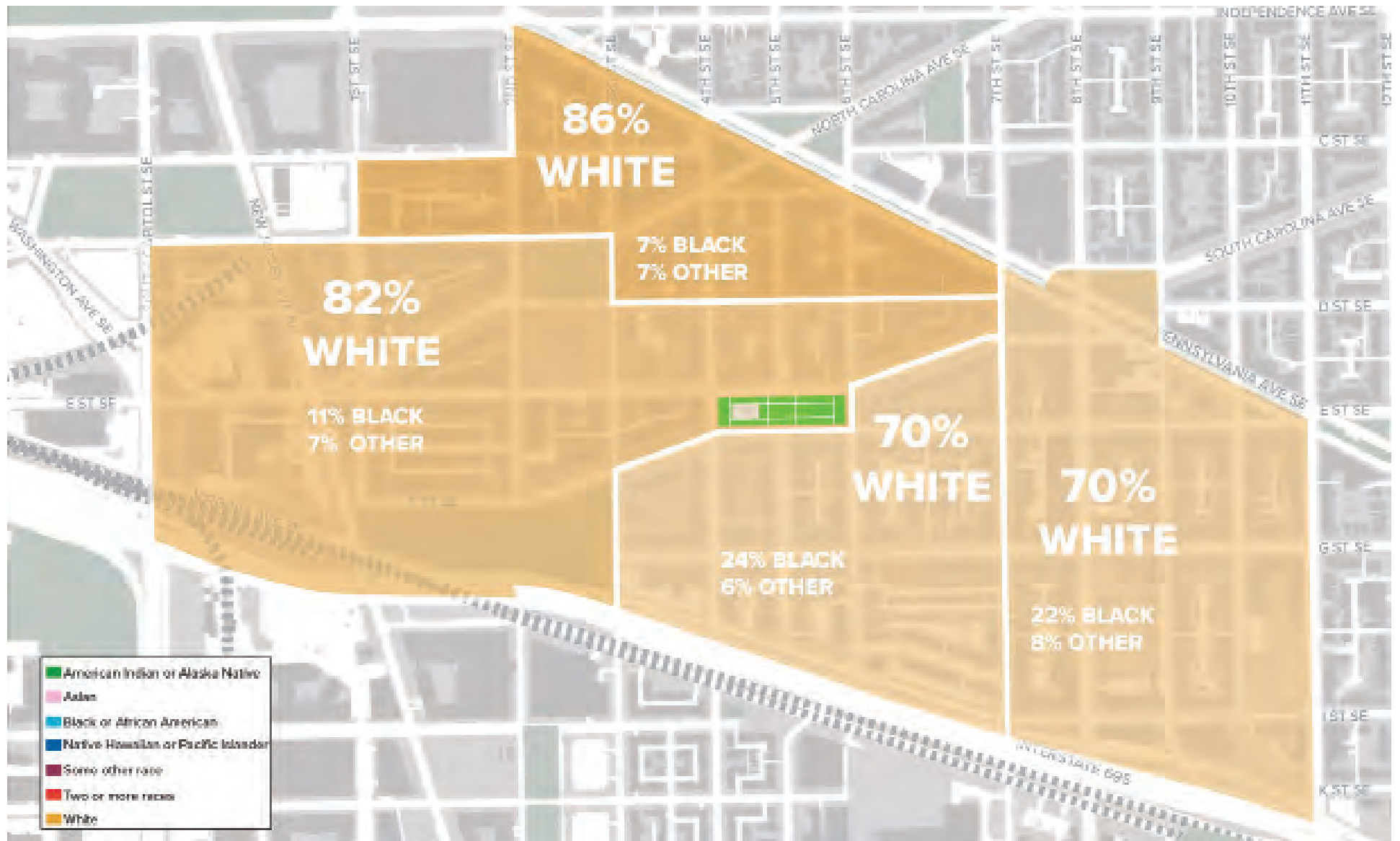




Race by Census Tract, 2000

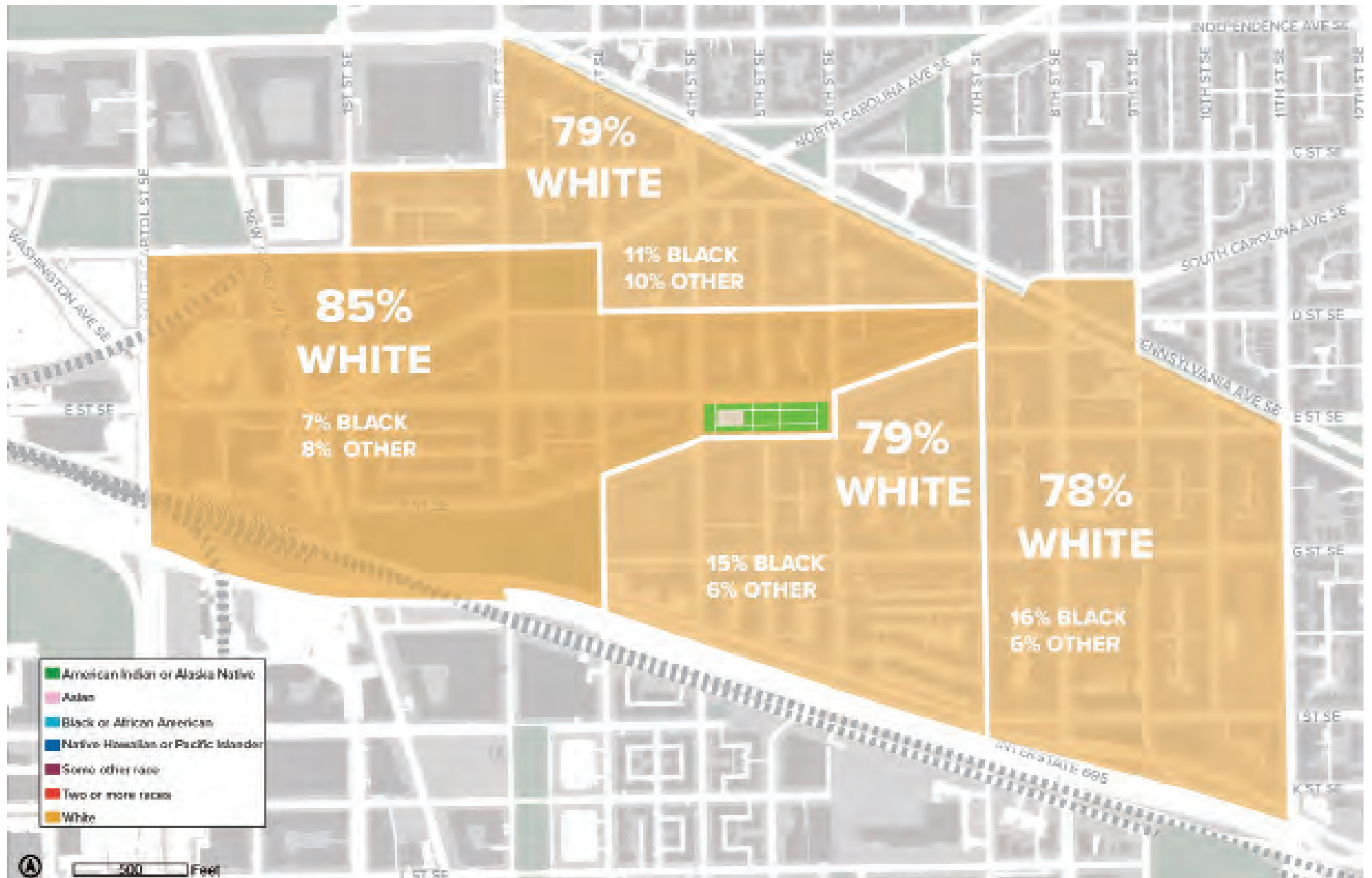
Transparency based on propensity of population.

The area around Marion Park has remained majority-white between 2000 and 2018. However, the share of white residents compared with residents of other races has increased over time. The second-largest racial group has been predominantly Black or African American, although residents of two or more races were the second largest racial group in half of the block groups in 2018.



Race by Census Tract, 2010

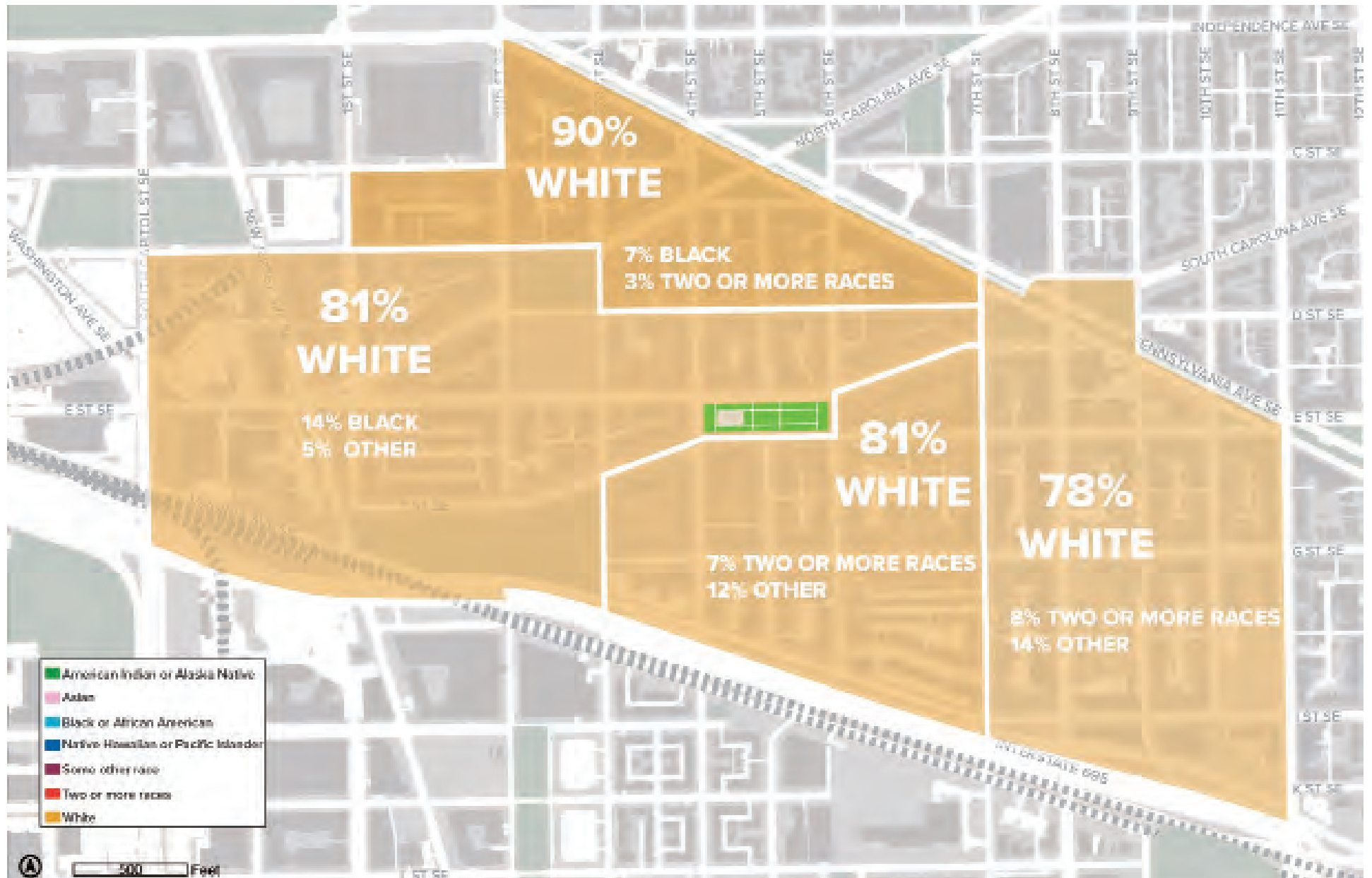
Transparency based on propensity of population.



Data Source: Social Explorer Tables (SE), Census 2010, U.S. Census Bureau and Social Explorer

Race by Census Tract, 2018

Transparency based on propensity of population.

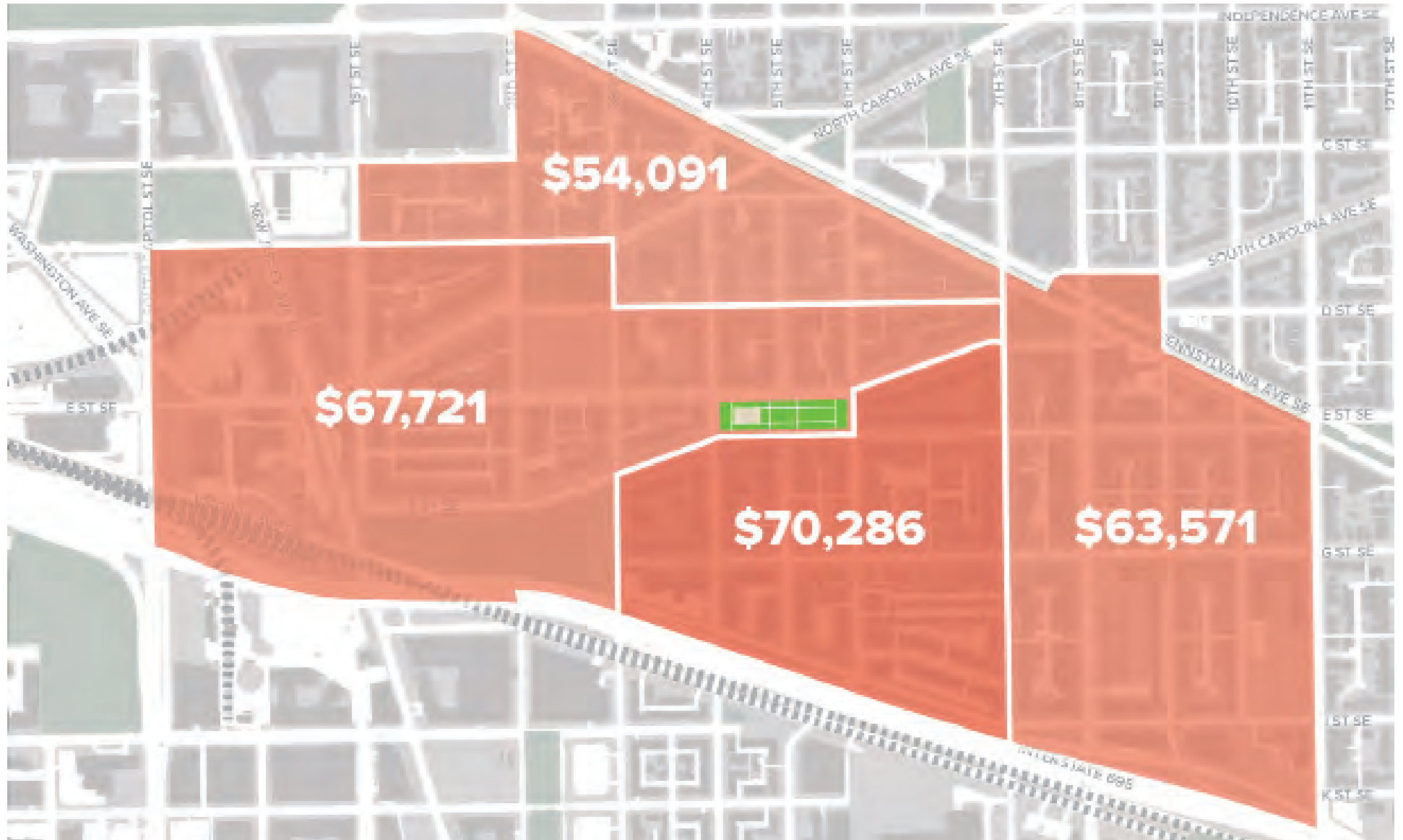




Income by Census Tract, 2000

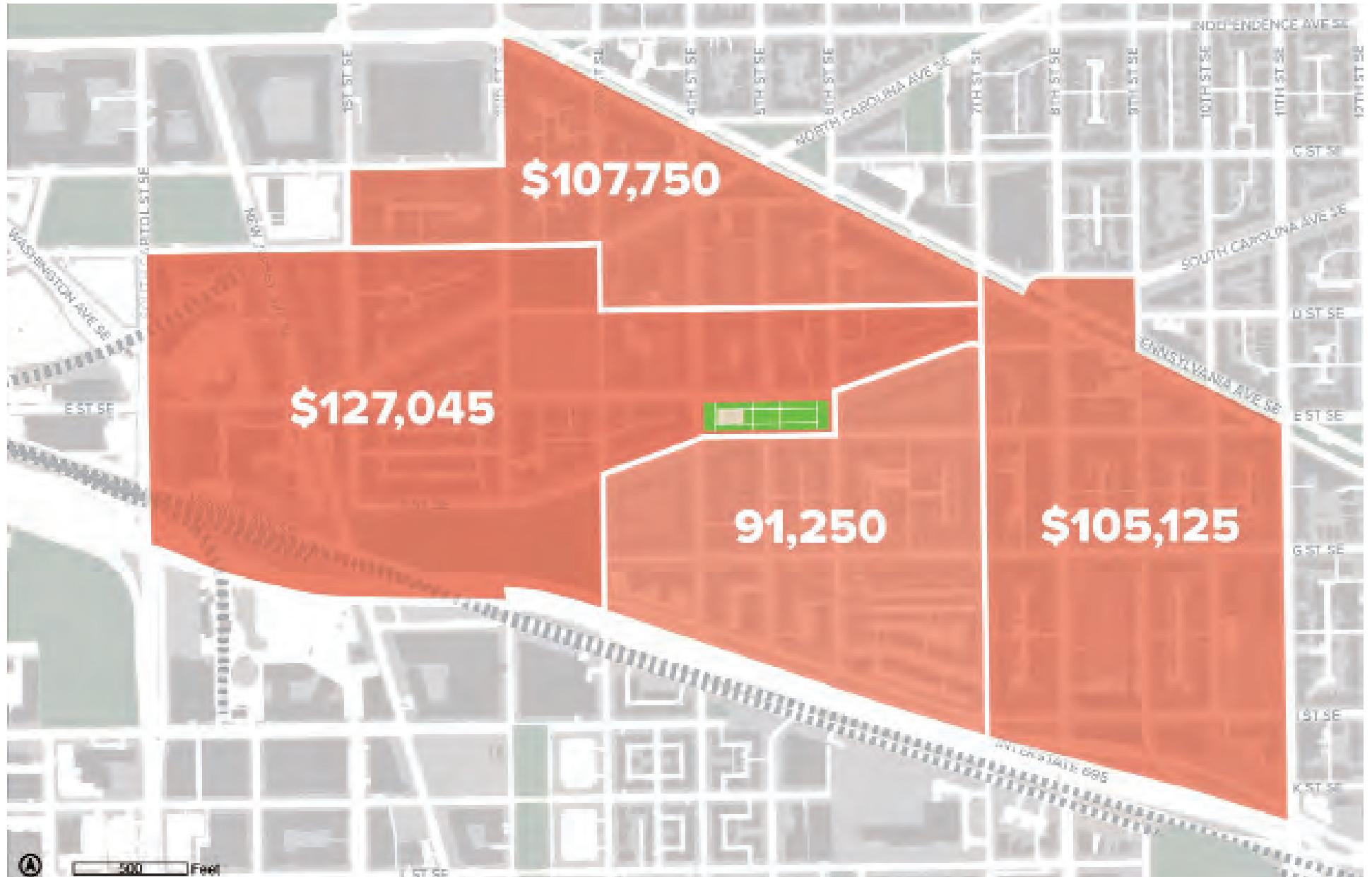
Transparency based on income level.

The median household income of residents around Marion Park increased significantly—by 114%—between 2000 and 2018. This rate of change is slightly than in Washington, D.C. overall during that same period (103%), although household incomes have been consistently higher in the Marion Park area than in the District overall.



Income by Census Tract, 2010

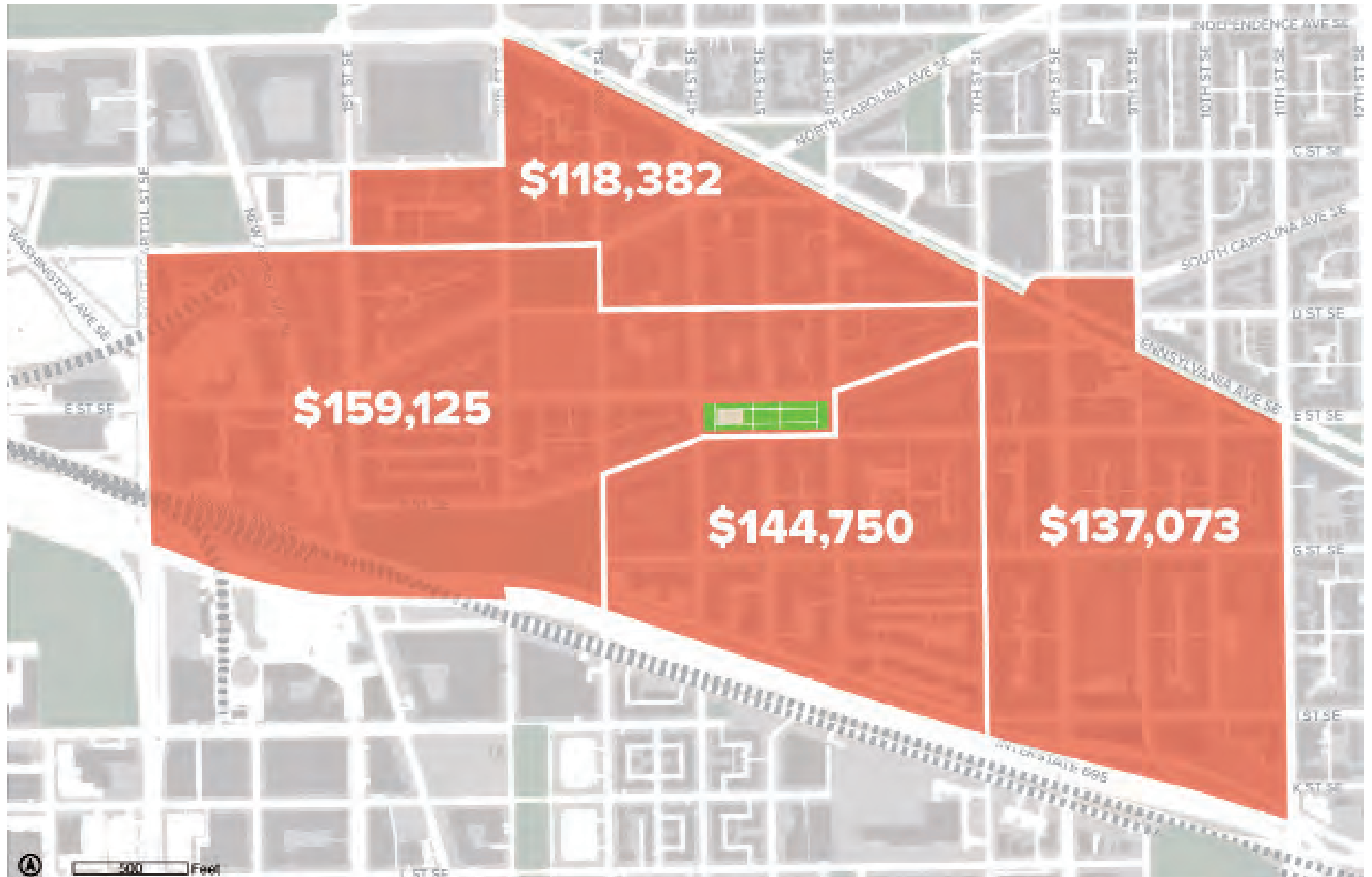
Transparency based on income level.



Data Source: Social Explorer Tables (SE), Census 2010, U.S. Census Bureau and Social Explorer

Income by Census Tract, 2018

Transparency based on income level.

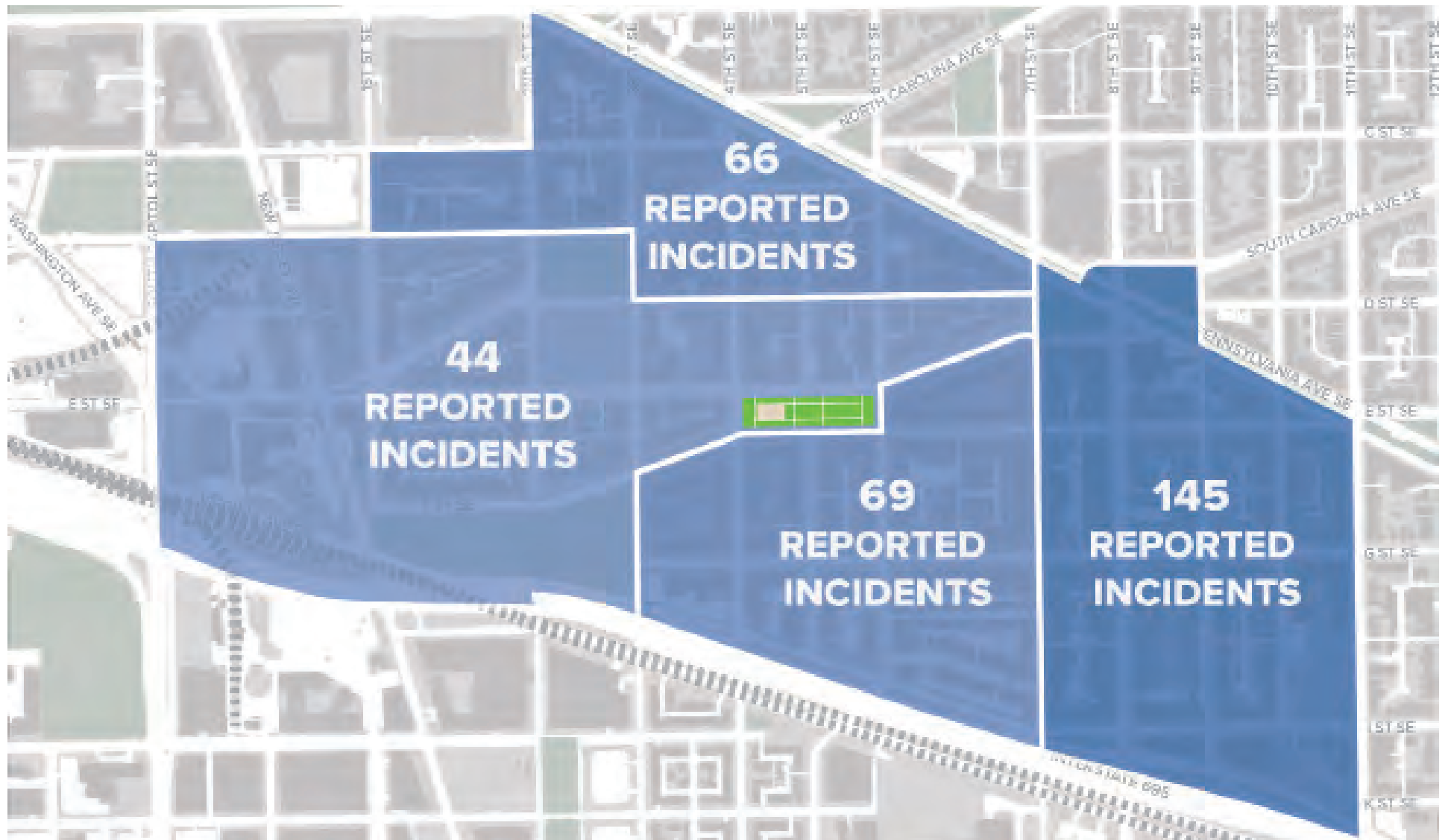




Reported Incidents by Census Tract, 2010

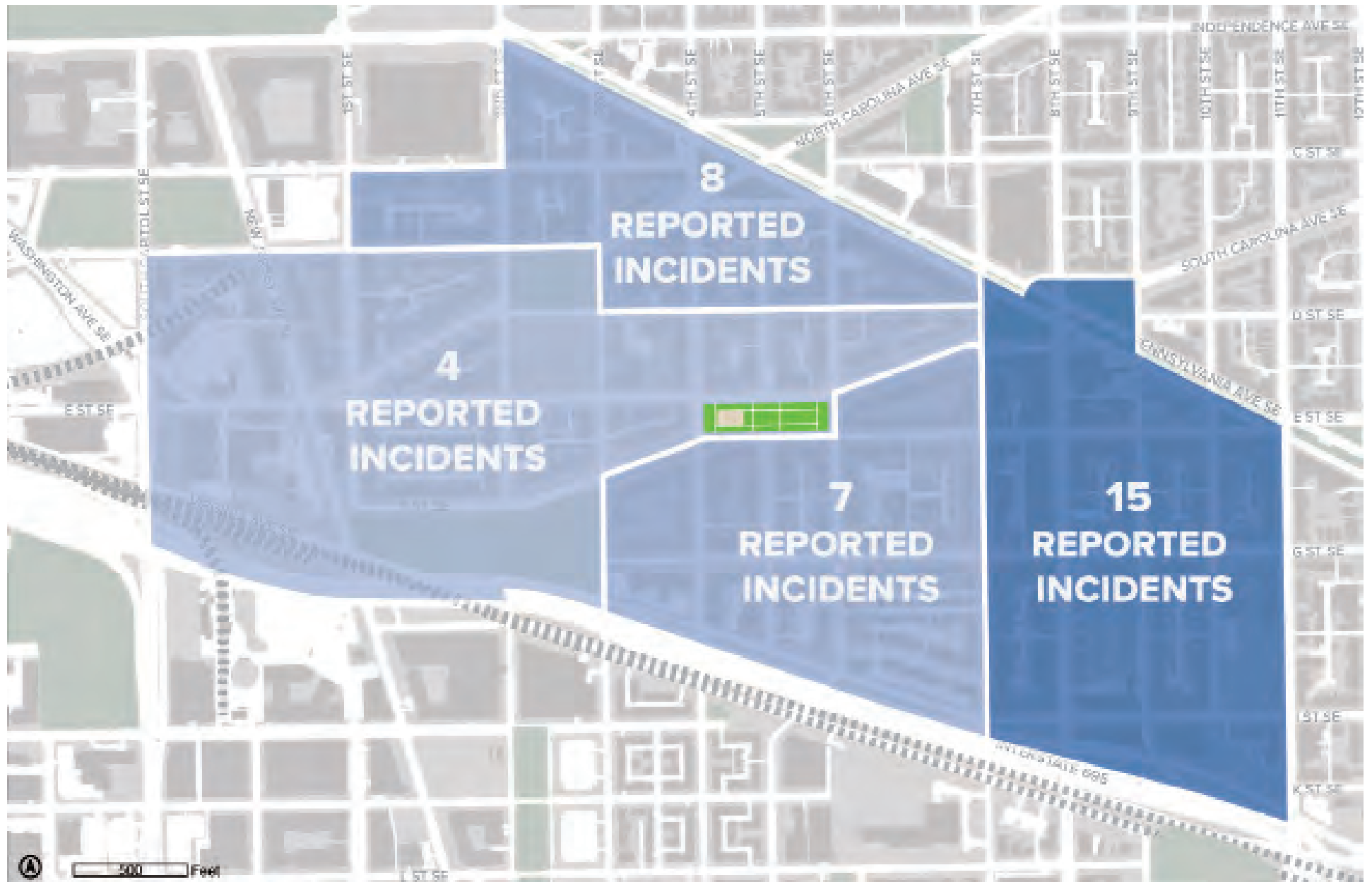
Transparency based on income level.

This data from the DC Metropolitan Police Department's crime database describes the number of reported crime incidents in each Census Block Group around Marion Park for 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 in all block groups. In both years, the area between 7th and 11th Streets SW and Pennsylvania Avenue and Interstate 695 had the highest number of reported incidents.



Reported Incidents by Census Tract, 2019

Transparency based on income level.

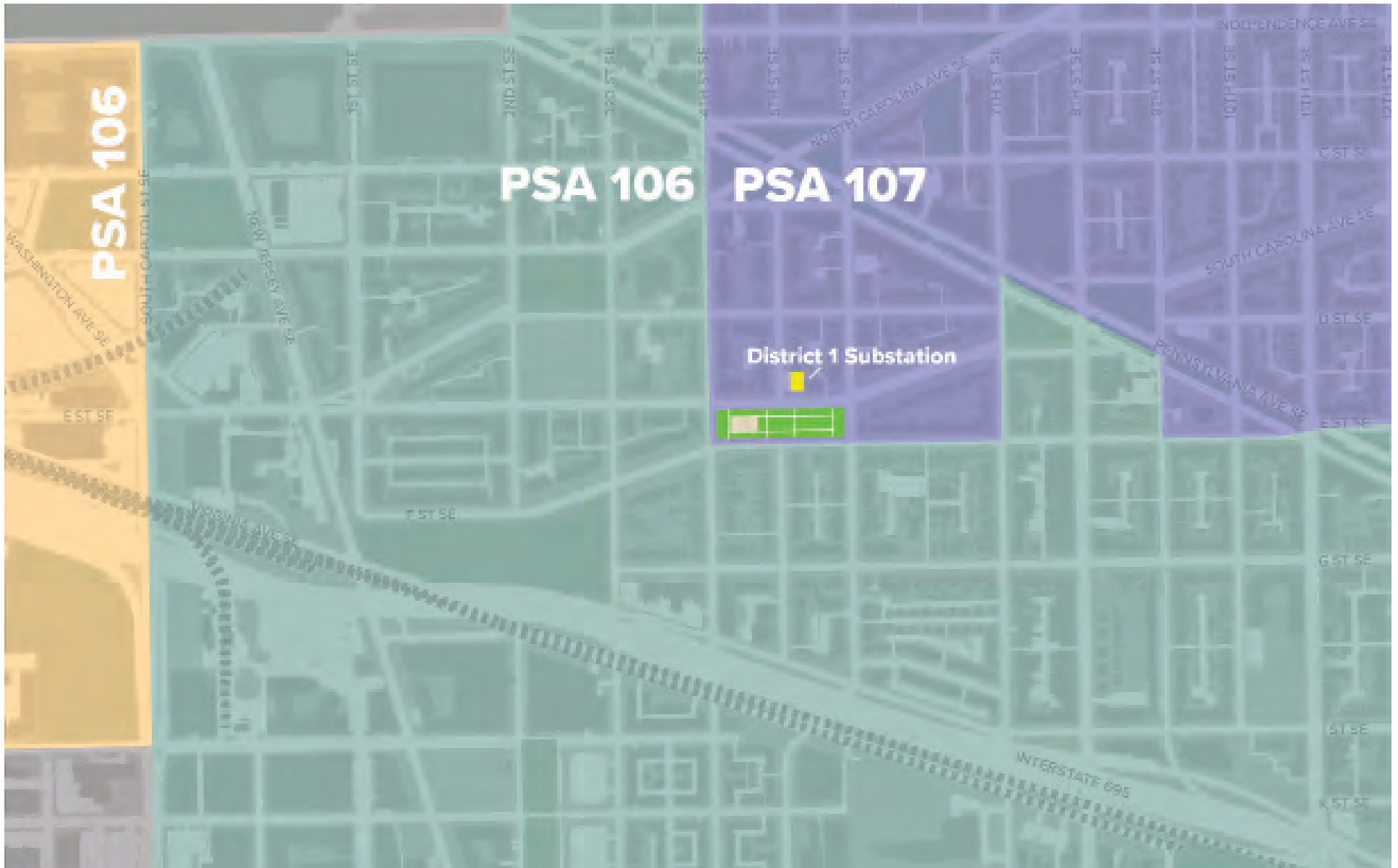


Data Source: DC Metropolitan Police

Police Service Areas

The park is in Police Service Area (PSA) 107 and adjacent to PSA 106. Directly across E Street SE from Marion Park is the Metropolitan Police Department's District 1 substation, one of two major stations within District 1.¹

1 <https://mpdc.dc.gov/page/welcome-first-district>





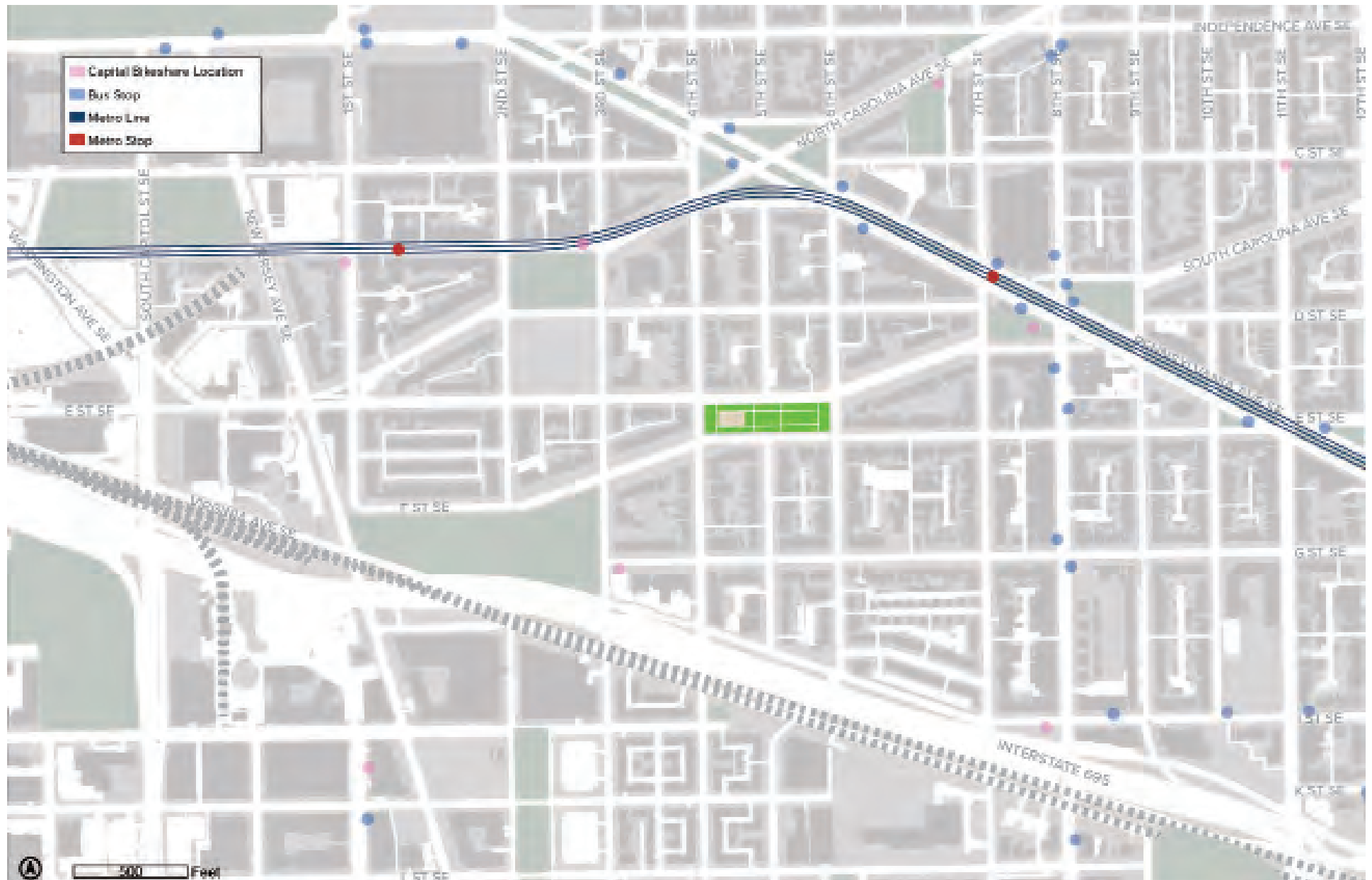
Parks, Libraries, and Green Space

The area around Marion Park is well-served by civic institutions, all of which are places that help to build community among residents. Places of worship are plentiful, especially in the immediate vicinity of the park. There is one library, one community garden, and several public and charter schools. The District of Columbia government's DC Net Program provides free public Wi-Fi in both indoor and outdoor community anchor locations, including public schools, libraries, recreation centers, senior centers, parks, social service sites, and on the National Mall. These amenities help residents engage with their community and enhance their experience in public spaces. Although there are no wireless hotspots in the immediate vicinity of Marion Park, there are several within walking distance at various institutions, including Brent Elementary School, the Eastern Market, and the William H. Rumsey Aquatic Center.



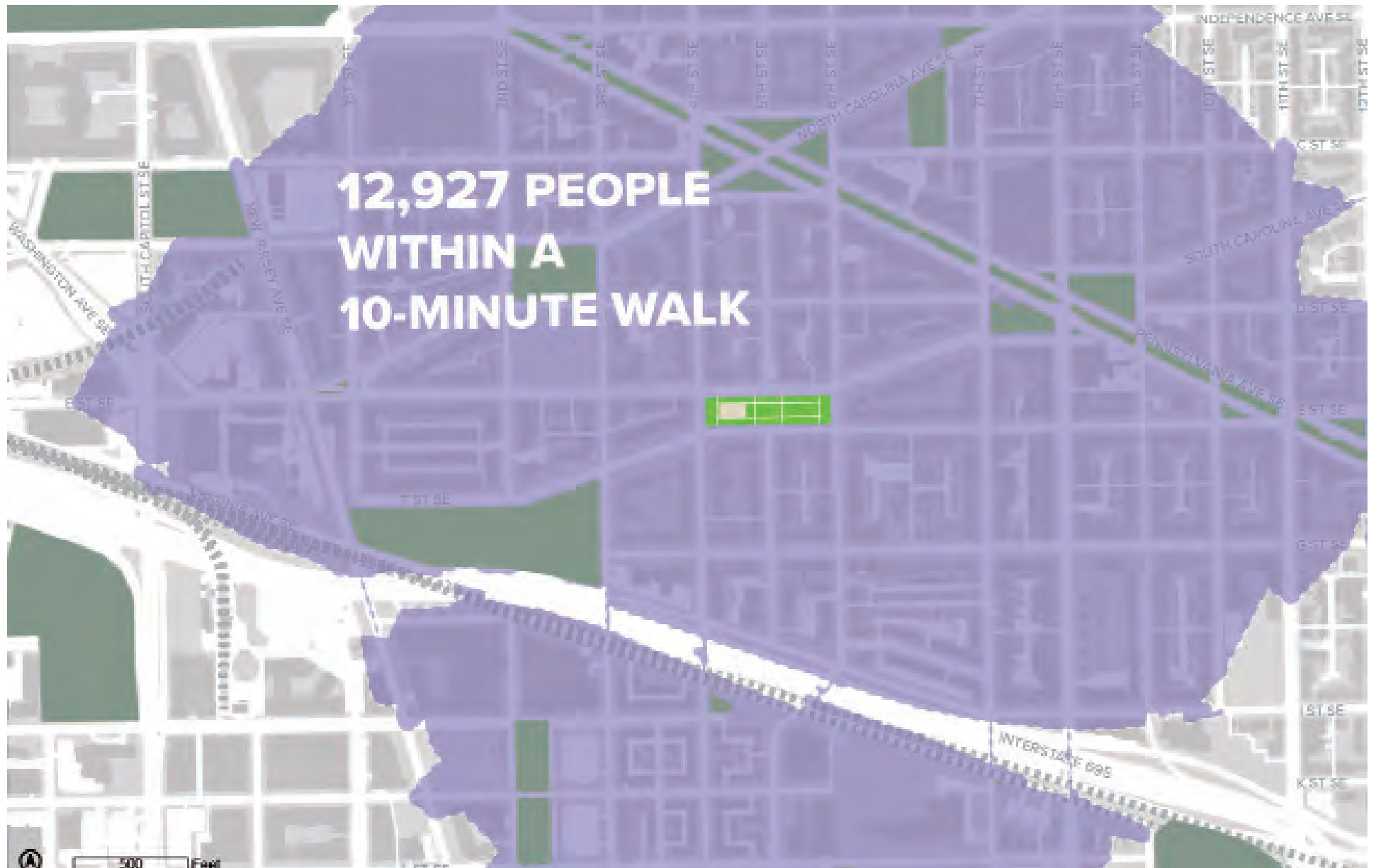
Public Transportation + Capital Bikeshare Docks

The area surrounding Marion Park is well-connected to public transit. There are two Metro stops nearby: Capitol South, west of the park; and Eastern Market, to the east. Bus stops are concentrated along Pennsylvania Avenue SE and 8th Street SE; there are no bus stops in the immediate vicinity of the park. There are also several Capital Bikeshare docking stations in the area, especially near Metro stops; none are adjacent to Marion Park itself.



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 Marion Park. The nearly 13,000 people in the Marion Park service area also benefit from several other parks within walking distance—each of which has its own service area—indicating that the residents of the Capitol Hill neighborhood are very well-served by green space.



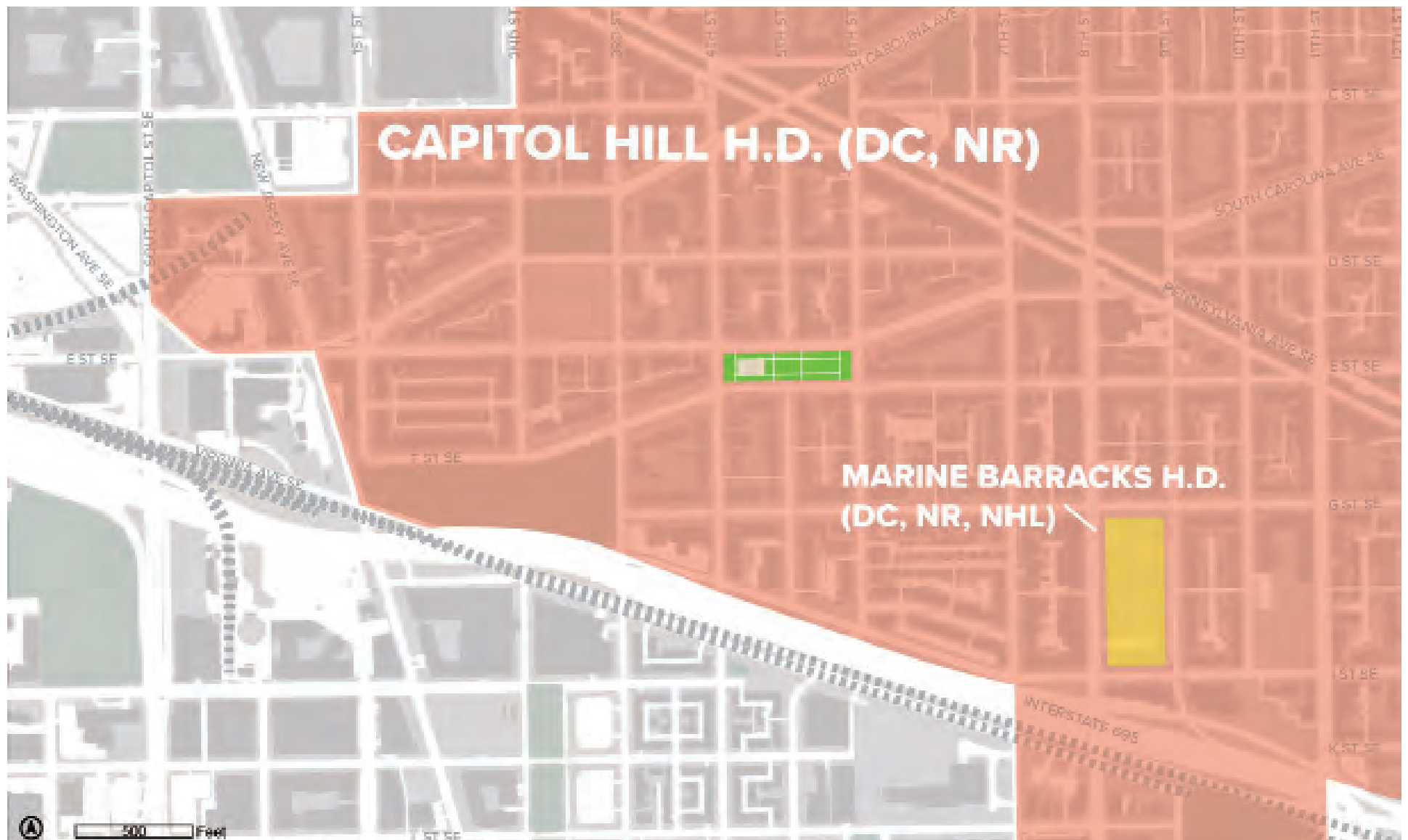
WalkScore

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, 1/4, and 1/2 walksheds around Marion Park, amenities are readily accessible. As one moves north and west away from the park, walk scores are generally higher than they are to the south and east. The immediate environment surrounding the park (1/8 mile), walk scores are uniformly high, as is largely the case in the 1/4-mile walkshed. In the ten-minute walkshed, the area north of the park has a higher walk score than across Interstate 695. This could be in part due to the proximity of the National Mall, several commercial corridors, and other points of interest, but the Interstate overpass may also serve as a visual barrier to walkability.



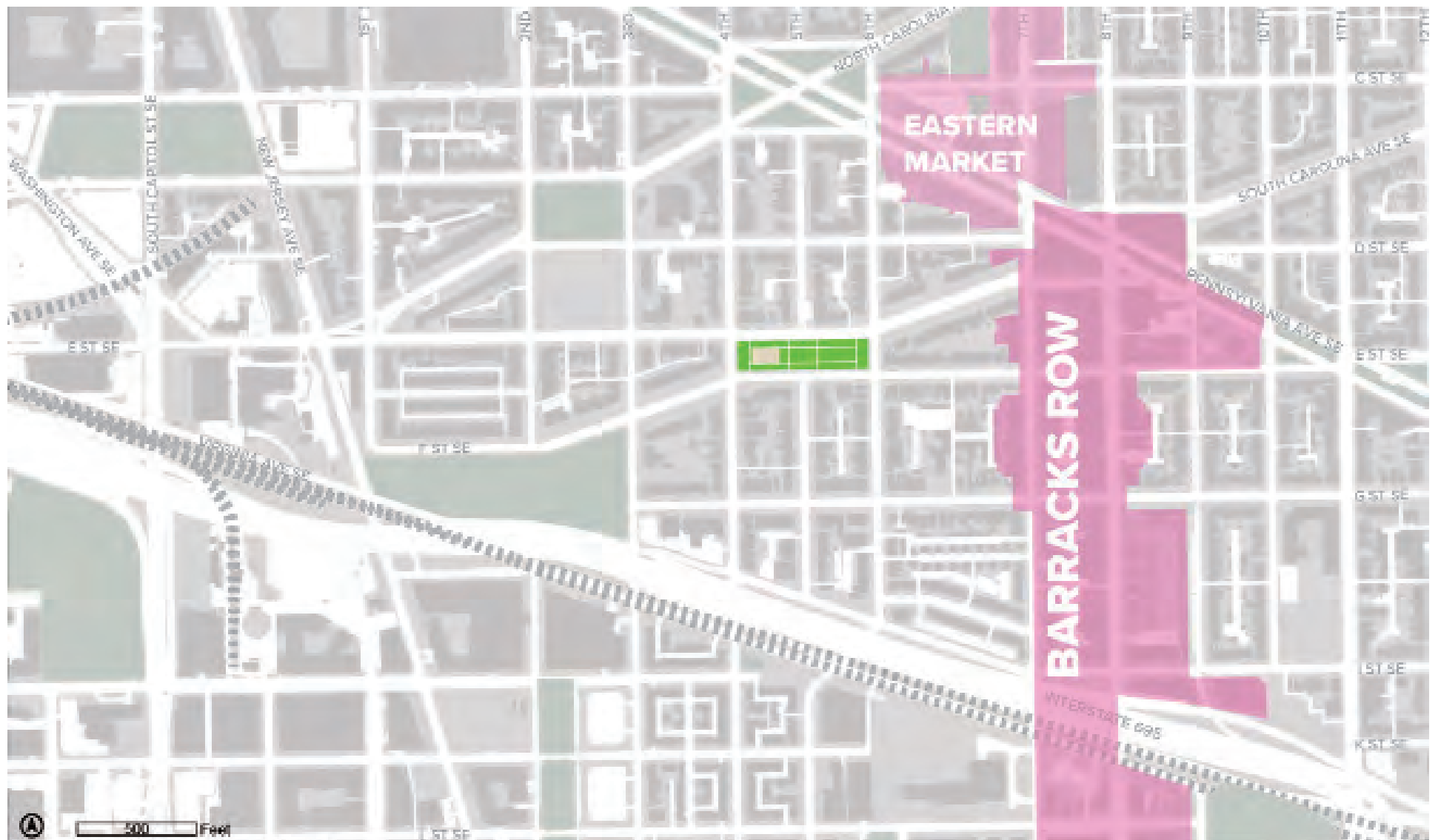
Nearby Historic Districts

There are two historic districts in the Marion Park area: the Capitol Hill Historic District includes Marion Park and is listed on both the National Register and the DC Historic Register; and the Marine Barracks Historic District, which falls inside the boundaries of the Capitol Hill Historic District. The Capitol Hill Historic District was designated locally in 1973 and listed on the National Register with a boundary increase in 1976; the district was further expanded in 2003 and 2015. The Marine Barracks Historic District is listed on both the National Register and the DC Historic Register and is also a National Historic Landmark.



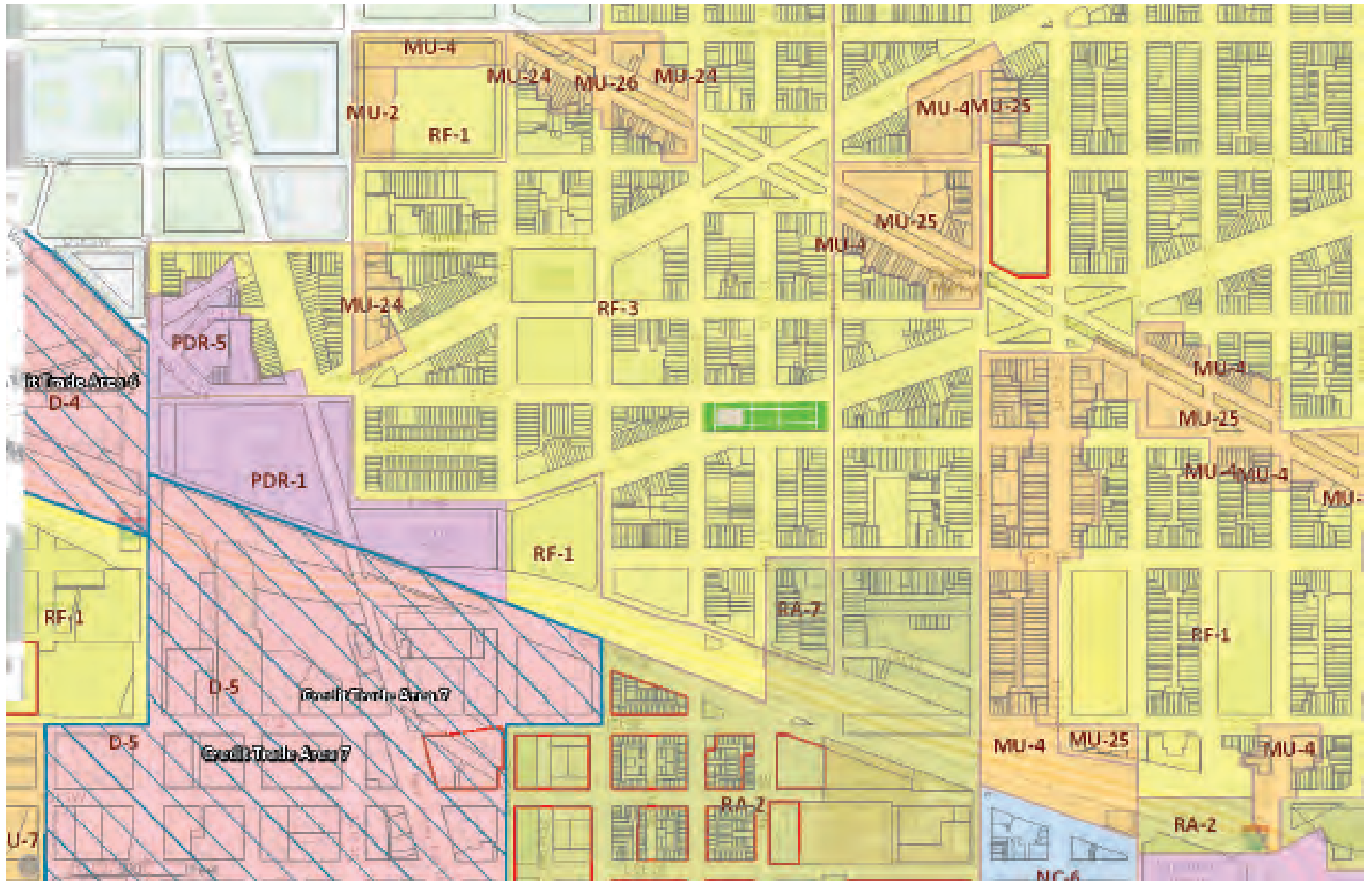
Nearby Business Improvement Districts

DC Main Streets is a District-wide economic development program that promotes the revitalization of business corridors. There are 24 independent, nonprofit Main Streets programs in the District of Columbia, of which two are located near Marion Park. Barracks Row Main Street has been operational for twenty years and was awarded the Great American Main Street Award in 2005 for its revitalization efforts. It maintains an active façade improvement program, organizes festivals and promotions for merchants and residents throughout the year. The Eastern Market Main Street program began in 2017 with the goal of retaining, attracting, and promoting diverse, small businesses. They host regular events and incentive programs to encourage engagement and provide services to area businesses including façade improvement grants and technical assistance sessions.



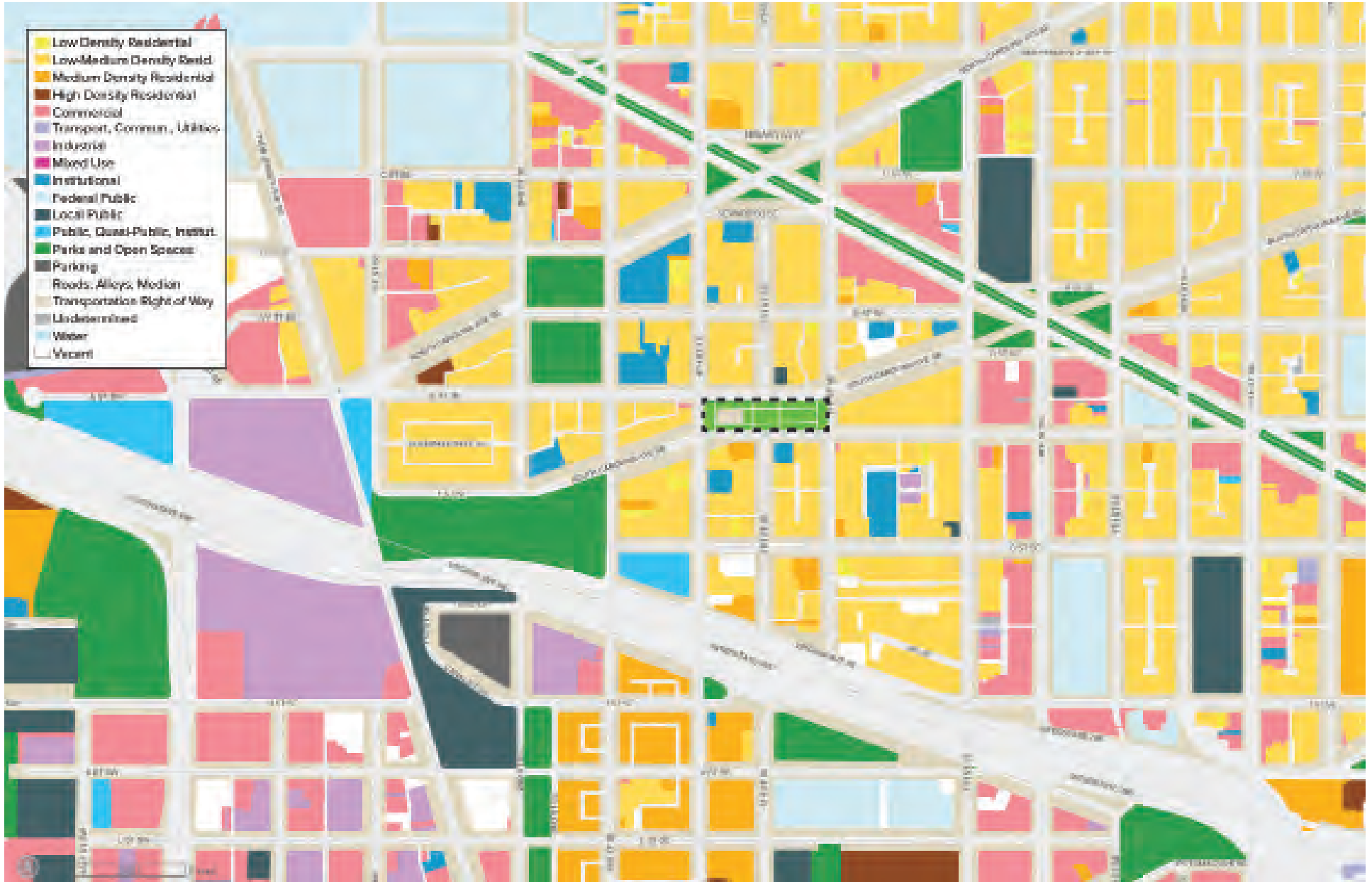
Zoning Context

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



Land Use Context

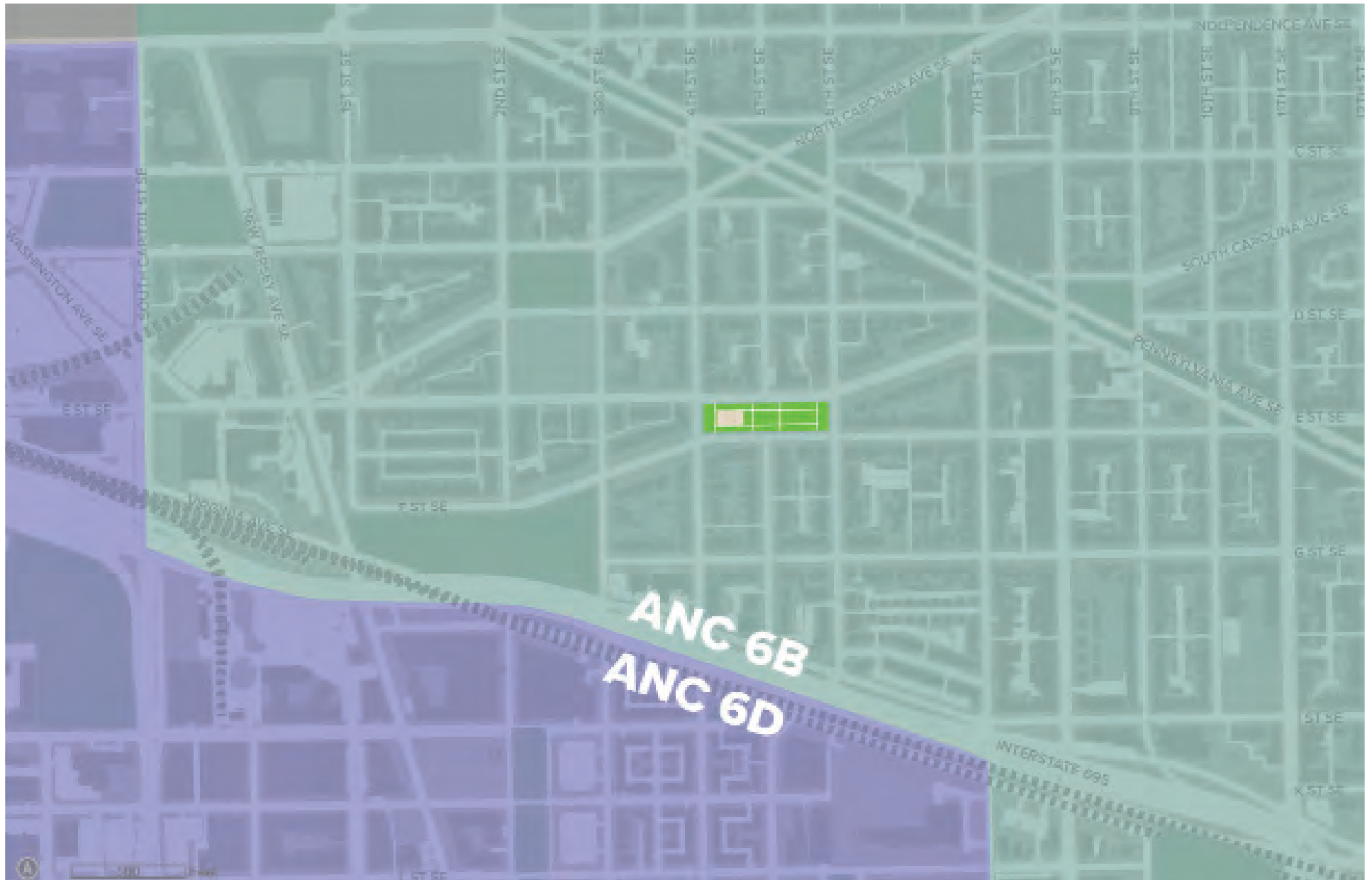
This map's zoning overlay was developed by the DC Office of Planning.



Data Source: District of Columbia Office of Planning

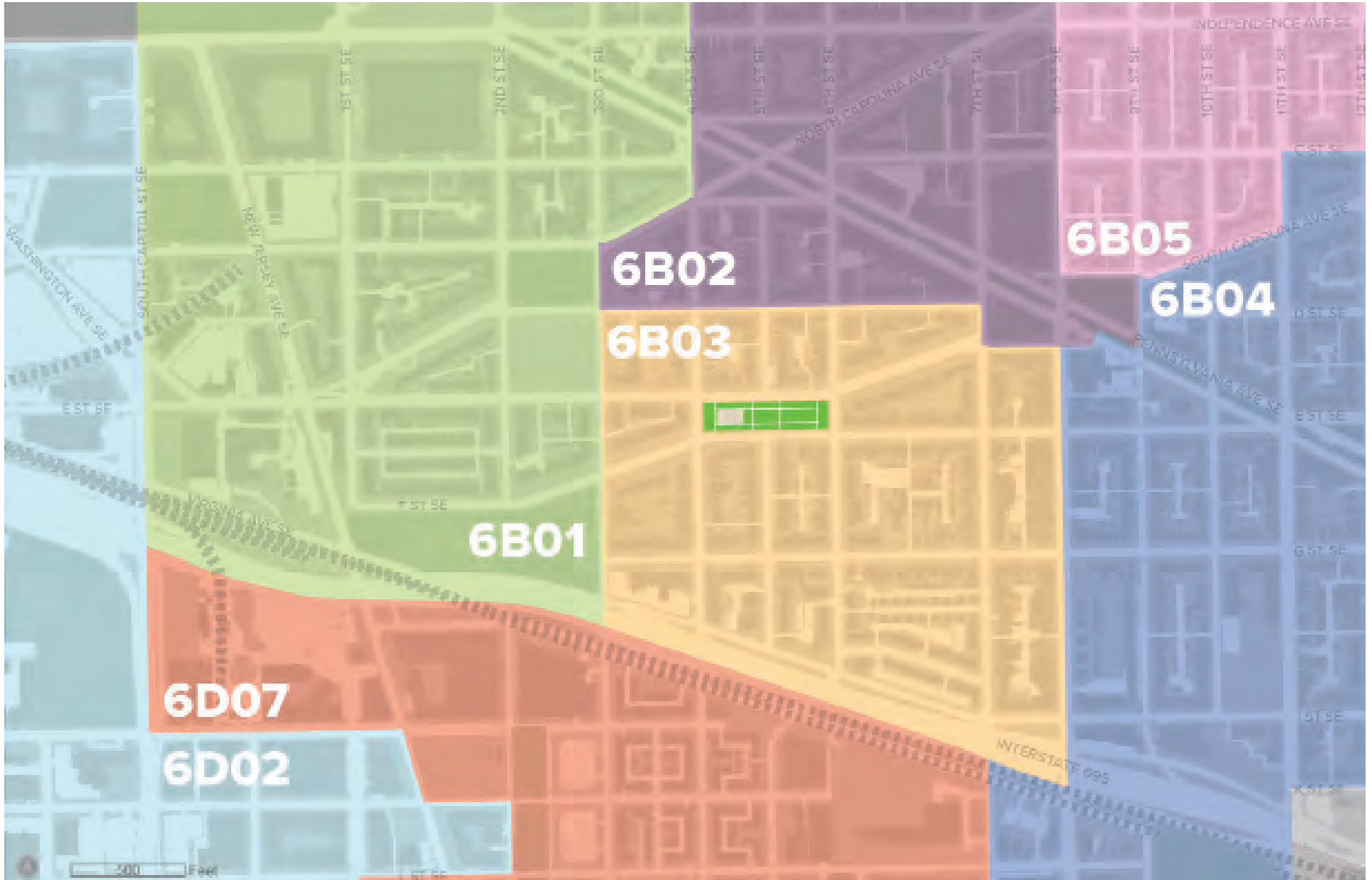
Advisory Neighborhood Commissions

Marion Park is within Advisory Neighborhood Commission 6B.



Single Member Districts

Marion Park is located within Single Member District 6B03.



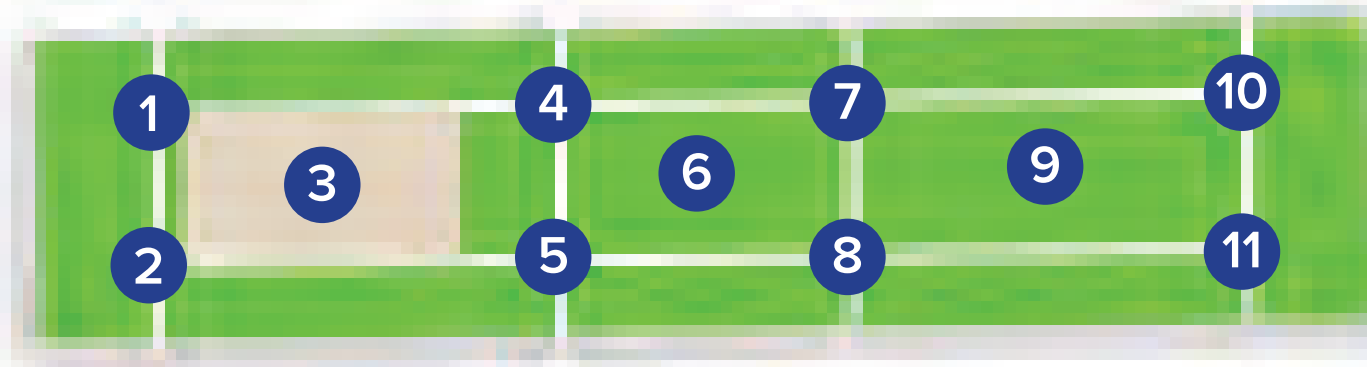
Data Source: District of Columbia Office of Advisory Neighborhood Commissions

5 Virtual Walk-Through

This virtual walk-through was designed as a remote alternative to a transect walk/site visit, due to the conditions of the COVID-19 pandemic. For this walk-through, we relied on 11 videos that were recorded in advance, at each of the locations noted on the map below. Each video was brief (approximately 60 seconds) and included a 360-degree view of the park from that vantage point. We then video-conferenced with Robyn Hinson-Jones, who lived in the neighborhood for several decades, until recently. On our video-conference, Ms. Hinson-Jones “walked” through the park, video by video. On the next page, see her observations on specific features, values, experiences, and uses within the park—all captured in response to these walk-through videos.

One key finding of this approach is that it worked! The virtual walk-through proved to be a reasonable substitute for an in-person transect walk of the park, delivering insights on specific features and experiences to help us learn more about stakeholder values for the park. Other key themes that emerged from our conversation (and are mapped on the following pages) include:

- The park is appreciated as a quiet pocket park, particularly in comparison with other, larger parks in the area;
- Yet, according to Ms. Hinson-Jones, the park is quiet in part because “there is not a lot there,” with few features (other than the playground) to encourage activity and use;
- Overall, Marion Park operates as a sort of incidental park in the Capitol Hill neighborhood: pleasant as a green space, but absent a clear identity that would engender a stronger constituency.



Marion Park is located directly across the street from a police sub-station. "I think most people would say that they like the police station there...In the 1970s, the city was going to move the sub-station, but the neighbors protested with signs that said SOS -- Save Our Station." When she first moved there it was the height of the crack epidemic -- but the police station was an asset.

She noted that in recent years, the interior of the police station has been designed with more barriers and protective measures. Where neighbors used to be able to walk in and meet an on-duty officer at a desk, the front desk is now protected behind a thick plexiglass wall "like a slum liquor store." This sets a different tone in terms of the sub-station's place in the community, although the police are still visible in the park, taking their breaks and taking walks.

The police are not always very helpful with issues related to safety. She recalls a time that there was an assault near the park that the officers did not take much of an interest in addressing. ("Maybe it happens to be who is in charge and when?") Despite this incident, Robyn expressed that there are not any times that she feels unsafe in the park; when she lived on an adjacent block, she would walk the dog pretty late at night.

She has noticed a lot more children, parents, and nannies using the park and playground in recent years. She notes that the demographics of the surrounding neighborhood have changed significantly; there were not as many kids when she lived nearby in the 1980s. Now, "you see a lot of nannies."

She thinks that "with the exception of Lincoln park, people focus [use] on the parks located closest to them. Whichever they pass on their way to the metro." She notes that, Marion Park is distinct enough for folks to say, "I live near Marion Park." "There is a very strong feeling of neighborhood, it is a nice space in the neighborhood." However, there is no friends group.

In her decades of visiting the park, the playground surface has been modified: "The ground was made nice and bouncy and safe for the kids." The gray climbing feature is also newer; she did not remember seeing that before.

She notes that there is much more shade in the play area than the rest of the park. She also appreciates that the playground is enclosed by a fence: "It's really good to have an area where a dog cannot go in."

"There is not a lot there," as one looks from west to east in the park. "More shade and more color might go a long way towards making it an attractive place to read, exercise, and meet up with a group. Those things happen in Stanton Park without any more amenities than Marion, so maybe it's the plant life that makes the difference."

She does not think the police have an attitude of harassing people experiencing homelessness and sleeping on benches (which does not happen often), so things in the park are just pretty calm and relaxed.

There is a broken water fountain at this corner, and Robyn noted that inoperable water fountains were an occasional issue over the years. But she thinks the park is well-maintained overall, and considers it a clean and safe park. She appreciates the lighting throughout the park, which makes her feel safe.

The park, as encountered by cars: “4th Street is one street you can carry on under the freeway to Southwest DC. 5th Street is not a through street. 6th Street, but it is along the edge of the park.”

For pedestrians, “walkers do use it to cut through east to west, but there aren’t too many.” Their destination is usually the metro stations to the northwest or northeast. “The freeway is such a barrier: mentally, you either go north or south of it.”

Robyn notes that the NPS changed the design of the benches to prevent people from sleeping on them: “They are not accommodating for anyone who would want to lay down.” She does not think there should be a restroom in the park, to deter the same use.

Commenting on the patch of missing grass: “This is probably from dogs that dig so hard.” She has observed dogs off-leash, and says “there must have been conflicts about that, but I’ve never seen any issues.” She noted that the playground is enclosed, and that this fence likely helps to avoid conflicts between children and dogs in the park.

“The park does not change much from season to season. There aren’t any flowering plants or beds that would change by season (unlike Stanton Park, for example.” In winter, she thinks it takes the National Park Service a little while to clear the snow and ice, but that they do take care of it.

It is her impression that “everyone knows that all the parks are National Park Service parks.” She does not think there are negative feelings toward the NPS ownership, unless there are maintenance problems (e.g. fixing issues with the lawns). If there is a problem, people know that the NPS has jurisdiction, although they don’t necessarily know who to talk to at NPS.

6 Photo Mapping Analysis

The COVID-19 pandemic precluded us from conducting a traditional on-site clipboard survey of park visitors. As a proxy for the type of personal insights and experiences that a clipboard survey would provide, we created a new REAP method that we refer to as photo mapping analysis.

As an indicator of broader public use of the park (beyond those stakeholders we interviewed and/or surveyed), we conducted an analysis of photographs posted online that were:

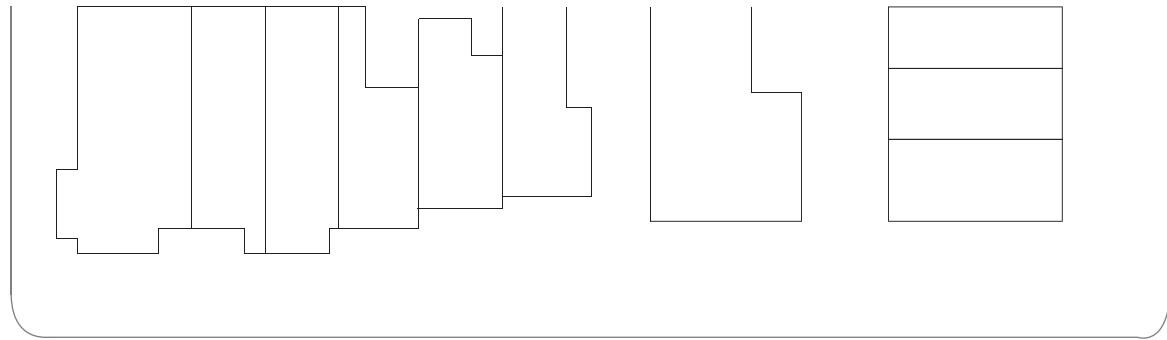
- 1) publicly available on Google Maps and Instagram,
- 2) geotagged with the park's location, and/or
- 3) hashtagged with an identifying label (e.g. #MarionPark)

We found a total of 175 photographs that met these conditions, with dates that spanned from March 2015 through July 2020 (the conclusion of our data collection period). Our team assessed each photograph to determine its location, viewshed, subject(s), and time of day.

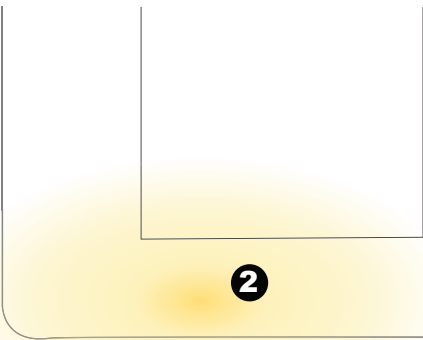
This analysis offers a better understanding (at a distance) of how this park is experienced by visitors, beyond any users we may see on any particular visit. Of course, this analysis skews toward those who use these platforms and choose to post in these ways. Despite these caveats, we can still begin to interpret answers to several questions about how visitors experience this space:

- **Where do they choose to spend their time?**
- **What parts of the park do they value and/or call attention to?**
- **How do they choose to spend their time in the park?**
- **How do they see the park, in relation to its context?**

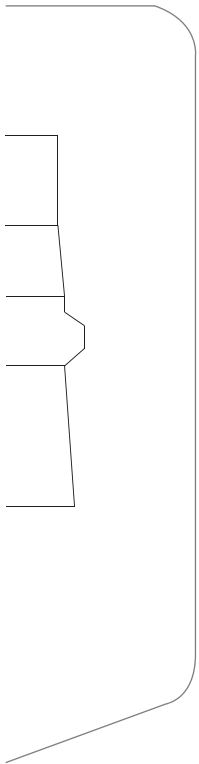
See the following pages for our analysis of these questions.



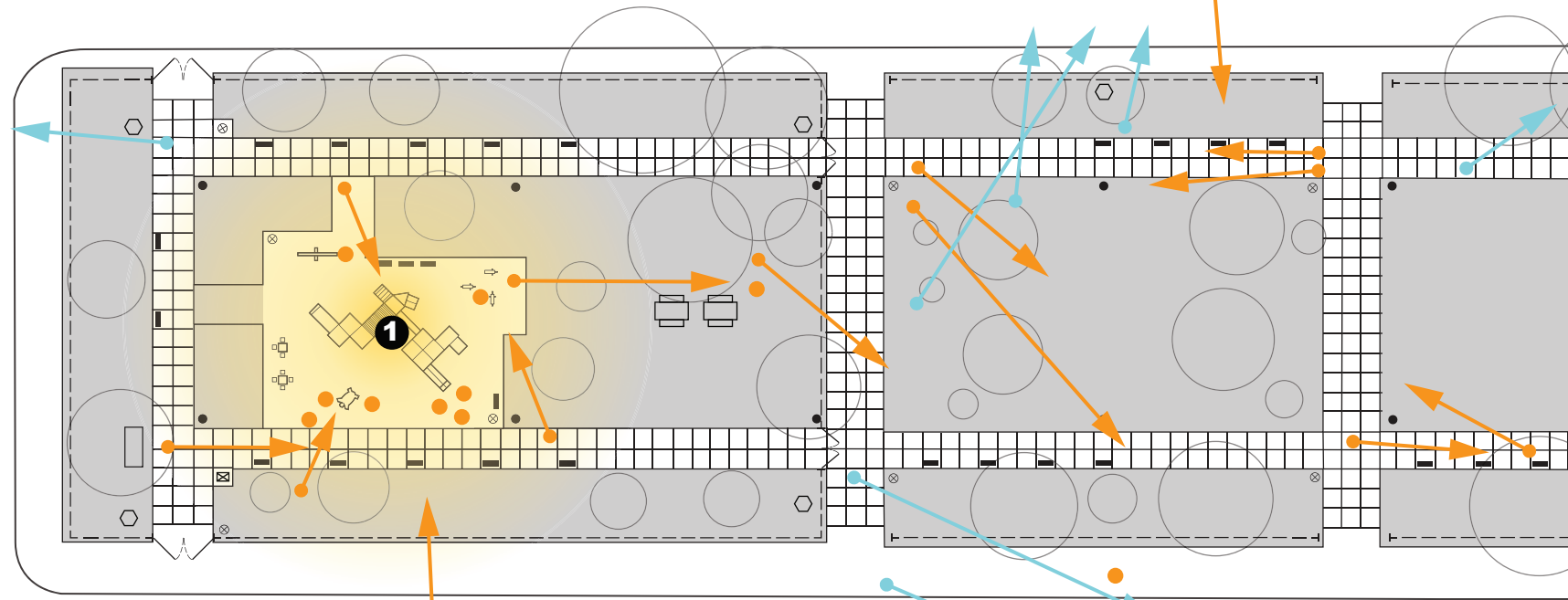
5th Street SE



2

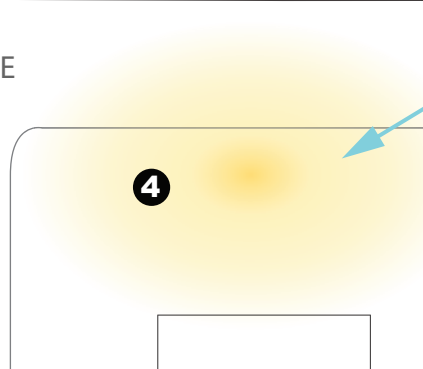


4th Street SE



E Street SE

E Street SE

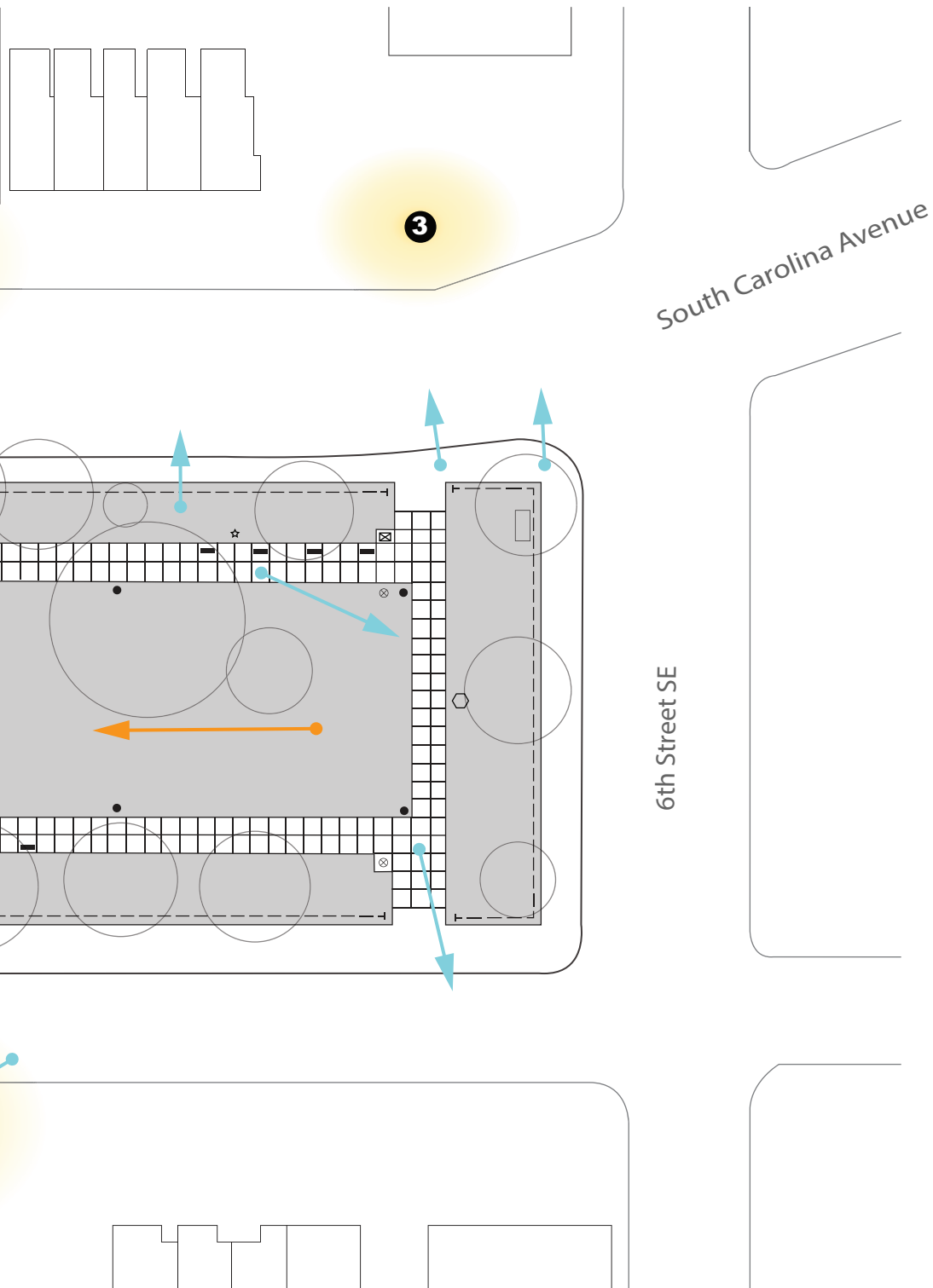


4

5th Street SE



100 FT



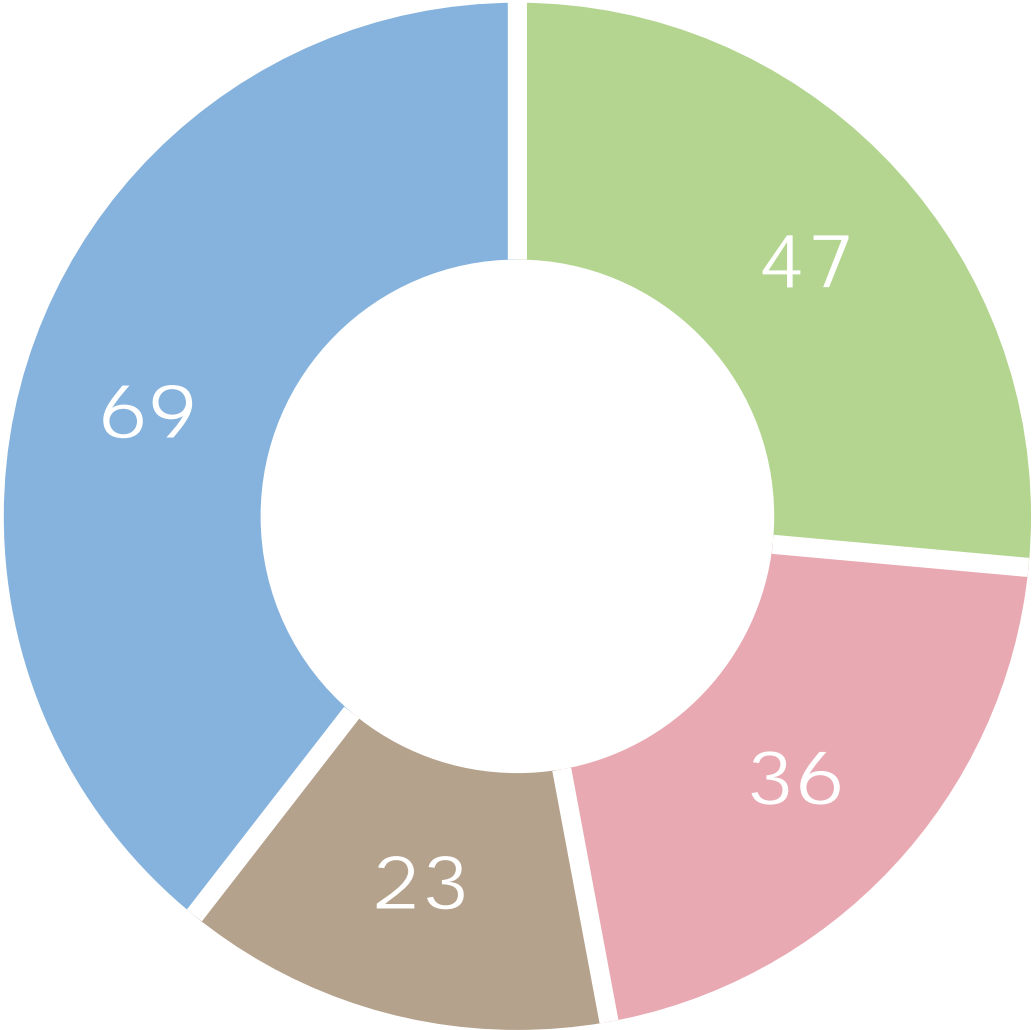
This map represents an analysis of 175 photographs that were publicly available via internet search on the Google Maps and Instagram platforms, and were geotagged with the park's location or hashtagged with the park's name. The dates of the photos span from March 2015 to July 2020; online data collection was carried out in July 2020.

Approximate locations and angles of each photograph were mapped. Analysis grouped them to indicate the views within the park (orange arrows) and views from the park to the surrounding neighborhood (teal arrows). Areas where many photographs were concentrated are represented by "heat mapping" shades (in yellow), indicating intensity of the number of views. For visual clarity, all 175 views are not individually represented on the map; dominant locations/angles are noted by arrows representing a number of photographs as well as the relative depth of field for each perspective.

Marion Park Ethnography Photo Mapping

- Photo views within the park
- Photo views looking out to the neighborhood
- Photo concentration nodes
- Playground at Marion Park
- DC Police - First District Substation
- Historic Carbery House
- Progress for Christ Baptist Church
- Light
- Bench
- Fence
- Trash can
- Spring motorcycle
- Dog bag receptacle
- Seesaw
- Kiddie Tables
- Concrete turtle
- Drinking fountain
- Regulatory signage
- Moveable picnic table
- Existing Vegetation

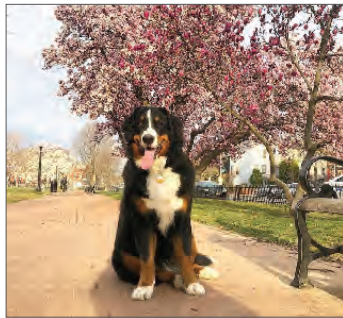
Photos by Subject



According to the photographs available for this photo analysis, Marion Park is popular among park visitors for its landscape design and its use for dog-walking. The park’s playground is also a significant feature in the captured memory of the landscape.

Some photos are taken from the park with views toward the neighborhood and surrounding context, with particular focus on the DC Metropolitan Police First District Substation, the Progress for Christ Baptist Church, and the Historic Carbery House at the intersection between 6th Street SE and South Carolina Avenue.

- Landscape
- Neighborhood / Context
- Playground
- Dog Park



7 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: Identity + Association; Access; Activity + Use; and Stewardship.

Identity + Association

The park is located across the street from DC Metropolitan Police's substation. According to the stakeholders we interviewed, the presence of this substation creates a general feeling of public safety for the park (although the DC Metropolitan do not have direct jurisdiction over the park, as it is federal parkland).

Amidst the recurring protests in 2020 around racial injustice and police brutality, stakeholders commented that Marion Park has seen little such activity—due perhaps to its smaller scale, and to the fact that it does not have a statue with negative associations. It is important to note that (as documented in the Cultural Landscape Inventory for Marion Park, published in 2020 by this same project team), Marion Park almost did receive a statue of a controversial figure: in 2009, the Palmetto Conservation Association successfully lobbied Congress to authorize a sculpture of Francis Marion in the park bearing his name. This effort was met with much resistance from the neighborhood based on the loss of open space the proposal would entail. Due to neighborhood advocacy, the statue installation was abandoned.¹

Access

The sidewalks were recently renovated, which keeps the park accessible for all users. Those visitors with mobility devices (e.g. wheelchairs) and strollers do not have to worry about navigating deteriorating pavers as they move through the park.

Activity + Use

The park gets less use than other NPS-managed parks in Capitol Hill. The neighborhood is well-served by public green space (see page 38), and Marion Park seems to be secondary to several of those parks in

terms of use. Marion Park is smaller than local parks such as Lincoln Park, which is both an asset and a drawback in terms of its activity and use.

The park is primarily used by families and caretakers with children. Several stakeholders commented on the use of the park by nannies with their charges; although this observation leans on some speculation (in making an assumption that the nannies are not related to the children in their care), it is consistent with the household income demographics of the Capitol Hill neighborhood.

Marion Park's playground is popular among these younger children. The park does not appear to be used by teenagers, however; stakeholders reported little activity among middle school or high school youth.

Although the park is used by local residents to walk their dogs, our interviewees do not feel that the park is over-run with dogs and they do not report strong conflicts over this use (e.g. on-leash versus off-leash activity). The enclosure of the playground does help to separate the young children from any dogs, which helps cut down on potential conflict.

Stewardship

Stakeholders consider Marion Park to be cleaner and better maintained than other NPS-managed parks in Capitol Hill (perhaps due in part to its smaller scale, and its less-intensive use): the grass is routinely cut, and the sidewalks are in good condition. NPS focused its maintenance on turf management, mowing, and trimming for the lawns, as well as debris removal and tree limb pick-up.

In terms of stewardship and management, interviewees reported that the National Park Service has a very visible maintenance presence at the park: they conduct rapid daily assessments, and more intensive annual assessments to evaluate condition of features such as the sidewalks.

¹ For more on the history of Marion Park, see the *Marion Park Cultural Landscape Inventory* written by Jacob Torkelson et al., 2020.

8 Conclusions + Recommendations

Based on this REAP analysis, we can draw the following conclusions about the ethnographic aspects of Marion Park:

Marion Park is a true neighborhood park. In design and use, it is clear and simple. Its scale, spatial arrangement, and users all align around this space as a neighborhood small park.

It serves a neighborhood undergoing massive change.

The neighborhood around Marion Park has changed significantly in the last generation, exhibiting demographic changes often associated with gentrification. These changes have implications for the use, perception, maintenance, and policing of this public space. The next generation of management for Marion Park should engage with these neighborhood transitions.

As served by the landscape design, park users are well balanced. Marion Park accommodates different audiences and uses well, in terms of families with young children using the playground and dog-walkers/community members using the lawns. These balanced uses are a function of a park that is well-designed and well-maintained.

The park's accessibility is an asset. Marion Park is integrated with the street grid and offers wide, flat, and well-maintained paths for visitors.

The park is well-maintained, but there are no features to attribute that stewardship to the National Park Service.

Marion Park is considered a clean neighborhood park, but there is little signage (or other features/activities) to help park users associate this stewardship with the National Park Service.

Marion Park has a distinct, if understated, identity...

The park has clear boundaries, an identifiable name, and a coherent landscape design.

...but the park lacks a similarly distinct group of stakeholders.

The park has no active friends group to rally stakeholders and/or collaborate with the National Park Service in stewarding this space.

Going forward, we recommend that the National Park Service consider new ways to bolster Marion Park as a community-facing assets. Since the publication of the L'Enfant Plan in 1791, Marion Park and other similar small parks have been set aside as public reservations for recreational use and open space. It should remain intact as such, but there is an opportunity to reimagine how it fulfills those public functions:

...Could it host a bikeshare dock, to better link the park with nearby Metro stops?

...Could it incorporate compatible new plantings or botanical experiments, to reinvigorate its function as year-round green infrastructure?

...Could it feature more artwork that serves a public good and contributes to the park's distinct identity?

...Could it experiment with new modes of interpretation that re-establishes the park's links to its surrounding community and other nearby parks?

...Could these modes of interpretation address the role of Marion Park (and similar small parks) in serving changing urban neighborhoods? Could they acknowledge the ways in which Marion Park and other small parks can catalyze change (including gentrification) and/or have a stabilizing effect in the midst of change?

...Could the National Park Service seek out new opportunities to cultivate and collaborate with an active friends group?

Lastly, we recognize that the scale and neighborhood context of this site presents interesting questions of ownership and management: is the National Park Service the ideal steward of this public space? Or would it serve NPS, DC, and Marion Park better if a different, more local arrangement were made? It is worth considering whether Marion Park might be a pilot for new management partnerships, engaging potential partners in a dialogue on the future of this small park.

9

Appendices

9a. REAP Bibliography

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9b. REAP Methodology Matrix

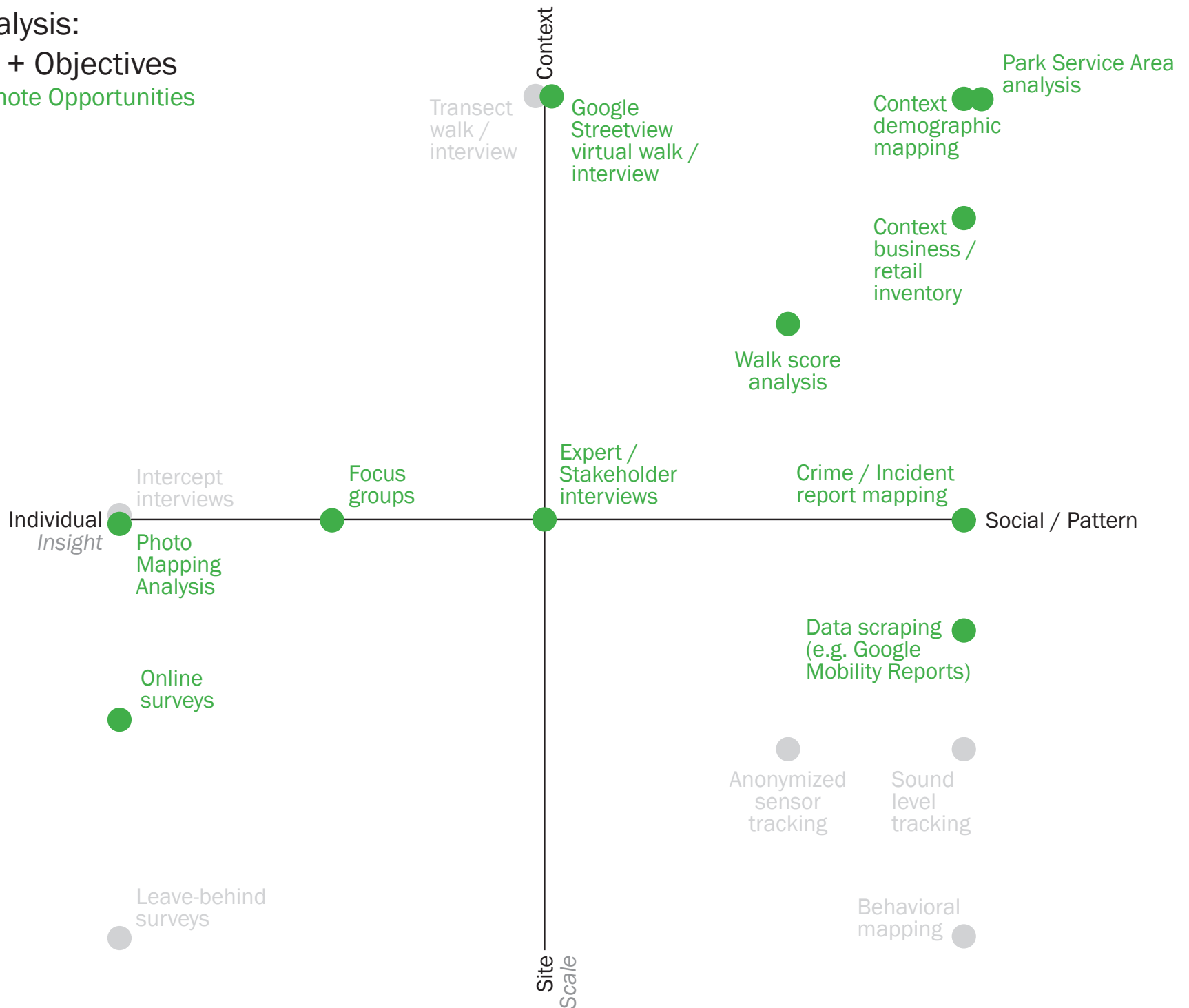
REAP Analysis: Methods + Objectives

DC Small Parks Project



REAP Analysis: Methods + Objectives

Virtual/Remote Opportunities



REAP Analysis: Methods + Objectives

Confirmed Approaches for
Marion Park REAP





9c. List of Stakeholder Interviews

Robyn Hinson-Jones

Long-time Capitol Hill resident

Brian Ready

Chair, ANC 6B

District of Columbia

James Sledge

Gardener Supervisors

Fort Dupont Maintenance

National Park Service

