The Underpass and Virginia Ave Corridor Vision Plan offers an exciting, cohesive, functional, and compelling guide for the transformation of underused or currently-unusable space to enhance the Capitol Riverfront neighborhood.
PROJECT OVERVIEW

The Capitol Riverfront BID, convened a group of stakeholders in Spring 2021 to discuss possible improvements to the New Jersey Ave and 2nd St underpasses as a first step towards improving the entire network of I-695 underpasses between New Jersey Ave SE and 8th St SE.

The conversation made clear that the best path forward was to first create a coherent vision for the entire network of underpasses and the adjacent connecting spaces before seeking to pursue design and implementation of any individual project.

Project Goals

- Transform the current edge condition of the 695 underpasses into revitalized gateways & welcoming entry points for pedestrian & vehicular access
- Connect the unique characteristics of individual sites with a cohesive creative theme
- Activate underutilized sites for placemaking opportunities
- Leverage neighborhood assets connecting them to disjointed areas with vibrant art, lighting, wayfinding, accessibility, landscape design, and creative community serving programs
- Partner with stakeholders and the local community in the vision planning process

Challenges:

- While there are some underlying challenges that are common to each site in this Vision Plan, there are other complexities unique to individual sites. Some of the most notable challenges include:
  - Improving pedestrian safety
  - Enhancing connectivity between Capitol Riverfront and Capitol Hill neighborhoods
  - Finding long-term housing solutions for unhoused persons
  - Working with sites involving various layers of jurisdictional control

Opportunities:

- The Underpass Vision Plan provides a number of key opportunities both for the individual sites and collectively for the entire corridor:
  - Enhance neighborhood assets
  - Beautify the neighborhood and make connection points more inviting
  - Improve pedestrian safety
  - Establish new partnerships
STUDY AREA
EXISTING ASSETS
STAKEHOLDERS

Throughout 2021, Capitol Riverfront BID convened a broad group of stakeholders to guide the visioning plan and will continue to collaborate with the community, local and federal agencies, and private partners for project design and implementation.

Community

ANC 6D
ANC 6B
Barracks Row Main Street
Friends of Garfield Park
Capitol Quarters HOA
Local Businesses and Residents

Local community members and groups are at the heart of the Vision Plan. The envisioned improvements are ultimately for them and as such should be driven by them. Some of these groups and individuals have been instrumental in crafting the vision and all will be critical to shaping design and implementation.

Government

FEDERAL PARTNERS
US Commission on Fine Arts
Architect of the Capitol
US Marine Corps
US Navy

LOCAL PARTNERS
Councilmember Charles Allen
DC Commission on Arts and Humanities
DC Dept. of Energy and the Environment
DC Dept. of Parks and Recreation
DC Dept. of Transportation
DC Office of Planning

Government agencies control all of the assets that are the subject of this Vision Plan. Additional federal and local entities are among the key stakeholders in both Capitol Hill and Capitol Riverfront. Combined, the public sector is a central part of the visioning, funding, and implementation of these projects.

Private Partners

WC Smith
Greystar Development
Martin-Diamond
Brookfield Properties
National Community Church

Our private-sector partners have provided time and expertise towards the visioning process and will play an important role in planning, advocacy, and funding as the vision moves toward formal plans and implementation.
CORRIDOR DESIGN

The following sections provide a guide to the key elements envisioned for each identified site.

The narrative descriptions and design elements callouts describe the design intent that would serve as the basis for a future arts commission or design competition, as well as ideas for future activations.

The corresponding renderings provide a visual sample of how design intent might be implemented but are not intended to propose final designs.
The Vision Plan identifies New Jersey Avenue as a key entry point to welcome pedestrian, bicycle, and vehicular access into the Capitol Riverfront neighborhood and which will revitalize the overall streetscape.

New Jersey Avenue is one of Capitol Riverfront’s three monumental corridors in the L’Enfant Plan, and the maintenance and enhancement of the viewshed to the US Capitol is critically important.

With that in mind, design elements include creating a continuous architectural feature such as a green wall sound barrier along the northern edge of the overpass, wayfinding art, decorative lighting, and efforts to enhance the view of the Washington Monument while crossing over Virginia Avenue are all suggested considerations.

- Intuitive wayfinding via fence treatments, lighting, and art
- Structural gateway elements on either side of the overpass to frame viewshed
- Artistic lighting
- Artistic treatment of safety fencing
- Painted bike lane
- Improved lighting enhances safety for all modes
- Possibility of “living wall” freeway sound barrier
- Improvements for non-automotive mobility uses
Entrance Design
The Bridge Spot located on the 2nd Street offers a unique place for community gathering. The current industrial pass-through space should be enhanced to create a gateway with signage, mural art, and vegetation. The pedestrian-only space should be activated with events, the arts, and recreation.

Connection Design
The Bridge Spot Connection should feature a vibrant well-lit, accessible entrance to Garfield Park. The space could feature decorative lighting, integrated public painted art wall, park seating, and open space to host community program events. The Connection will become a destination.
Stage Design
The Stage is a central programming space that can host a series of performances, school groups, shows, and recreational events. The current industrial passthrough space will be transformed into an urban cultural arts hub with pop-up events, food vendors, mural art walls, festivities, and much more.

Recreation Space Design
The current recreation uses in the underpass will be enhanced. The existing skateboard park will be expanded and equipped with new rails, ramps and painted concrete surface. The dedicated pickleball courts will be painted with nets and spectator seating. The existing basketball court has been offline due to construction and skateboarding use. The new court will be painted and reoriented to maximize its flexibility for community and school group uses.
The approach along this stretch reimagines the landscape berm along the 2nd Street Underpass by creating a sustainable and functional tiered planter. The new landscape feature will create visual interest, while serving as a sustainable resource for power and water with an educational component. Some key features would include: solar panels to power underpass lighting, storm water management treatment for overpass runoff, display of native plants in maintenance free planters, incorporating wifi benches and providing sustainable educational signage.

2ND STREET BERM LANDSCAPE

- **Sustainability**
  - Living sound wall
  - Solar panel and battery array to power artistic lighting in adjacent underpasses
  - Stormwater management/retention
  - Use of native vegetation

- **Visual Aesthetic**
  - Improved landscaping
  - Native perennial plantings
  - Structural elements to provide visual definition to the berm

- **Community Building**
  - Sustainability education
  - Seating areas

2ND STREET BERM - EXISTING

2ND STREET BERM - AFTER
The 3rd Street Underpass improvements would feature sustainability themed art with its adjacent location to the 2nd Street planted berm. The walls should be repaired and prepared for new mural art and lighting should be improved. The sidewalk on the west side of the underpass comes to a dead end, but is wide and could be transformed into a “gallery” space for mural viewing and could incorporate sustainability-themed kinetic sculptural elements (windmill-powered lighting sculptures for example).

Structural gateway elements could be added on either or both entrances to the underpass which sees significant car and pedestrian traffic.

Other suggestions from stakeholders have included more active uses including additional skate park space, or more passive uses such as artistically decorated storage spaces for BID and park assets.
The 4th Street Underpass is the access point into the lower-density residential community of Capitol Quarter, which is the redevelopment of the former Arthur Capper public housing. The art will be based on the Capitol Riverfront community history. Bright colors and a rich history will inspire many people to learn about the legacy of the neighborhood through the years.

As this gateway is used primarily by cars and bikes entering Capitol Riverfront on the southbound one-way, a structural gateway element may be appropriate on the northern entrance to the underpass.
4TH STREET TRIANGLE PARK

**Visual Aesthetic**
- Playable art
- Community scale

**Wayfinding**
- Neighborhood scale
- Colorful structures

**Accessibility**
- Lighting
- Bike repair station
- Add shade structures

**Community Building**
- Community amenity
- Gathering spot

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**Playable Art**
A community themed Playable Art activation would complement existing recreation in this family-oriented part of the neighborhood. The goal is to activate the underutilized pocket park by adding climbable sculptures, bench seating, pedestrian-scale lighting and shade elements.

**Community Amenity**
Another opportunity for the pocket park, at the intersection of two bike paths, is a bicycle repair station. This will be a community amenity that adds function to the green space and encourages more bicycle ridership.
Underpass Corridor Vision

**Underpass Restoration**

The 6th Street Underpass has iconic abstract murals painted on both walls. The murals have been restored by the community. Future improvements could incorporate lighting to the underpass to create visual interest, continuity and a safer bike/ped passage.

**Berm Reimagination**

The 6th Street Landscape Berm is currently overgrown and hard to maintain. The Landscape can be re-imagined with a low-maintenance stormwater garden with a mix of ground cover sedums or rocks. Sculptures can also be added for movement and creative interest.
**7TH STREET UNDERPASS**

**Visual Aesthetic**
- Mural and sculptural art
- Art wall/artistic lighting

**Wayfinding**
- Installations
- Green wall sound barrier

**Accessibility**
- Repair sidewalks
- Lighting

**Community Building**
- Neighborhood military history
- Informational signage

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**Mural/Light Art**

The 7th Street Underpass concrete wall can be transformed into a vibrant art wall showcasing lighting installations. The art can be temporary installations connecting Capitol Hill to the Capitol Riverfront.

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**Military History Theme**

The 7th Street Underpass will have Marine/Navy themed art. These art (both mural and sculptural) pieces would be commissioned by military artists. There are eight concrete posts that could be painted to symbolize both the military and location with the word Barracks on one side and Navy Yard on the other.
The 8th Street Underpass is a community gateway opportunity to connect the retail & entertainment activities from Barracks Row north to the Navy Yard campus and Capitol Riverfront. Lighting art and sculptural elements can be installed to create a vibrant iconic destination.

The existing parking lot could be a flexible use space, providing parking for the commercial corridor at peak times, but transformed into a neighborhood hub with art wrapping along the perimeter and temporary community uses on occasion for: farmer's markets, public events, outdoor dining, music, cultural art fairs and many more.
The 8th Street Berm could be re-imagined into a robust community garden that extends and connects with the programming of the over-subscribed Virginia Avenue Community Garden a block away. The “urban farm” would become an active and engaging front yard of the Lower Barracks Row neighborhood.

- Sustainability
  - Green wall
  - Urban farm
  - Stormwater management

- Community Building
  - Sustainability education
  - Beautification
  - Community activation
The plaza in front of the Emblem condominium is an important connective piece to the gateway at 8th Street. It sits at the intersection of 8th Street and Virginia Avenue and is the first visible space on Lower Barracks Row coming under the I-695 freeway from the north.

Given the prominent corner, adjacent retail, and large amount of open space, the community should work together with the property owners and city to create a high-quality, publicly accessible plaza. This could include shade trees and native plantings surrounding a plaza with seating and possibly an outdoor cafe to anchor this new community space.

**Sustainability**
- Removal of impervious surface
- Expanded tree canopy and inclusion of native plants

**Community Building**
- Cafe space and publicly accessible seating
IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE

**Immediate Action**
- Present plan to DDOT, DPR, US CFA, NCPC, and communities for feedback and further engagement
- Site management
- Short-term improvement

**Mid-late 2022**
- Design competition for one or more sites
- Funding identification and collection
- Constant partnership cultivation

**2023-2025**
- Design competition
- Funding collection and distribution
- Implementation of winning design

**2026-2030**
- Underpass activation
- Constant programming
- Maintainance
NEW JERSEY AVENUE
IMPLEMENTATION

Stakeholders

WC Smith
Greystar
Friends of Garfield Park
Architect of the Capitol
US CFA
DDOT
CSX
FHWA
ANC 6B
ANC 6D

Immediate Action

• Present Vision Plan to DC Agencies, National Capitol Planning Commission, and US Commission on Fine Arts, and local community for additional reaction and feedback

2022-2023

• Design Competition
• Pursue funding (grants and private partnerships) to implement winning designs
• Determine ongoing maintenance needs, schedule, and budget/funding

2024 - 2025

• Permitting and construction of underpass enhancements
• Ongoing maintenance
2ND STREET UNDERPASS
IMPLEMENTATION

Immediate Action

• Present Vision Plan to DC Agencies, National Capitol Planning Commission, and US Commission on Fine Arts, and local community for additional reaction and feedback
• Engage DDOT regarding short-term lighting improvements and other improvements that can be moved forward in implementation.
• Identify upgrades to design plans that could be spearheaded and maintained by the BID and seek funding to add those elements to DDOT scope. Could include special pavers, lighting, electrical conduit, etc)
• Engage with DDOT/DPR public planning process for design and activations of the space.

2022 - 2024

• Design Competition
• Work with DDOT and DPR and interim activation strategies
• Pursue funding (grants and private partnerships) to implement winning designs
• Determine ongoing maintenance needs, schedule, and budget/funding
• Work with DPR on ongoing programming/activation
• Permitting and construction of underpass enhancements

2024 - 2025

• Ongoing programming and maintenance

Stakeholders

Friends of Garfield Park
Skateboard and Mural Arts Communities
DPR
DDOT
FHWA
ANC 6D
ANC 6B
2ND STREET LANDSCAPE

IMPLEMENTATION

Immediate Action
- Present Vision Plan to DC Agencies, National Capitol Planning Commission, and US Commission on Fine Arts, and local community for additional reaction and feedback
- Begin due diligence on control of the site and what uses/alterations might be permitted

2022 - 2024
- Design Competition
- Pursue funding (grants and private partnerships) to implement winning designs
- Determine ongoing maintenance needs, schedule, and budget/funding
- Permitting and construction of enhancements

2025 - ongoing
- Ongoing programming, plantings, and maintenance
3RD STREEET UNDERPASS
IMPLEMENTATION

Stakeholders

DCCAH
WC SMITH
Capitol Quarters HOA
ANC 6D

Immediate Action

- Present Vision Plan to DC Agencies, National Capitol Planning Commission, and US Commission on Fine Arts, and local community for additional reaction and feedback
- Begin due diligence on control of the site and what uses/alterations might be permitted

2023 - 2026

- Design Competition
- Pursue funding (grants and private partnerships) to implement winning designs
- Determine ongoing maintenance needs, schedule, and budget/funding
- Permitting and construction of underpass enhancements
- Ongoing programming and maintenance
Underpass Corridor Vision Plan

IMPLEMENTATION

Stakeholders

DCCAH
Capitol Quarters HOA
ANC 6B
ANC 6D

Immediate Action

- Present Vision Plan to DC Agencies, National Capitol Planning Commission, and US Commission on Fine Arts, and local community for additional reaction and feedback
- Begin due diligence on control of the site and what uses/alterations might be permitted

2023 - 2026

- Community engagement and design process
- Selection of artist(s)
- Pursue funding (grants and private partnerships) to implement winning designs
- Determine ongoing maintenance needs, schedule, and budget/funding
- Permitting and installation of underpass enhancements
- Ongoing programming and maintenance
Underpass Corridor Vision Plan

IMPLEMENTATION

Immediate Action

• Present Vision Plan to DC Agencies, National Capitol Planning Commission, and US Commission on Fine Arts, and local community for additional reaction and feedback
• Begin due diligence on control of the site and what uses/alterations might be permitted

2023 - 2025

• Community engagement and design charrette with neighborhood residents
• Selection of artist(s)
• Pursue funding (grants and private partnerships) to implement winning designs
• Determine ongoing maintenance needs, schedule, and budget/funding
• Permitting and installation of underpass enhancements
• Ongoing programming and maintenance

Stakeholders

Capitol Quarters HOA
ANC 6D
Historic St Paul AUMP
Church
6TH STREET LANDSCAPE
IMPLEMENTATION

Stakeholders

Capitol Quarters HOA
ANC 6D
Marine Barracks Annex
AC Senior Housing

Immediate Action

- Present Vision Plan to DC Agencies, National Capitol Planning Commission, and US Commission on Fine Arts, and local community for additional reaction and feedback
- Begin due diligence on control of the site and what uses/alterations might be permitted

2024 - 2027

- Design Competition
- Pursue funding (grants and private partnerships) to implement winning designs
- Determine ongoing maintenance needs, schedule, and budget/funding
- Permitting and construction of enhancements
- Ongoing programming, plantings, and maintenance
Underpass Corridor Vision Plan

7TH STREET UNDERPASS

IMPLEMENTATION

**Stakeholders**

Barracks Row Main St
ANC 6B
US Marine Corps
US Navy

**Immediate Action**

- Present Vision Plan to DC Agencies, National Capitol Planning Commission, and US Commission on Fine Arts, and local community for additional reaction and feedback
- Begin due diligence on control of the site and what uses/alterations might be permitted

**2022 - 2026**

- Community engagement and design charrette with Marine Barracks, Washington Navy Yard, and residential groups
- Selection of artist(s)
- Pursue funding (grants and private partnerships) to implement winning designs
- Determine ongoing maintenance needs, schedule, and budget/funding
- Permitting and installation of underpass enhancements
- Ongoing programming and maintenance
8TH STREET UNDERPASS
IMPLEMENTATION

Stakeholders
Barracks Row Main St
ANC 6B
US Marine Corps
US Navy

Immediate Action
• Present Vision Plan to DC Agencies, National Capitol Planning Commission, and US Commission on Fine Arts, and local community for additional reaction and feedback
• Begin due diligence on control of the site and what uses/alterations might be permitted

2022 - 2025
• Design Competition
• Pursue funding (grants and private partnerships) to implement winning designs
• Determine ongoing maintenance needs, schedule, and budget/funding
• Permitting and construction of underpass enhancements
• Ongoing programming and maintenance
**Stakeholders**

ANC 6B
Area Property Owners
Barracks Row Main St

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**8TH STREET BERM**

**IMPLEMENTATION**

**Immediate Action**

- Present Vision Plan to DC Agencies, National Capitol Planning Commission, and US Commission on Fine Arts, and local community for additional reaction and feedback
- Begin due diligence on control of the site and what uses/alterations might be permitted

**Mid-2022 - 2023**

- Community engagement and design charrette with neighborhood residents
- RFP for design-build of community garden and establishment of memorandum of understanding with controlling agency for use of the space
- Design process with community engagement
- Permitting and construction of underpass enhancements
- Ongoing programming and maintenance
Stakeholders

ANC 6B
Emblem Condo Assoc.
Area Property Owners
Barracks Row Main St

8TH & L STREET PLAZA
IMPLEMENTATION

Immediate Action

- RFP for design-build of new plaza space
- Contractor selection
- Design process with key stakeholders
- Plaza construction and activation