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Established in 2018, the Dupont Circle Business Improvement District (BID) works to elevate the iconic Dupont Circle neighborhood through cleanliness and safety services, managing and activating public spaces, bolstering the neighborhood’s identity and sense of place, and supporting the local business community.

The Dupont Circle BID activates the Dupont Circle neighborhood with numerous events held throughout all seasons, improves the pedestrian experience through its Clean & Safe Team and Safety Ambassadors, and adds to the vibrancy and sense of place through both placemaking and public art projects and initiatives. The Dupont Circle BID covers approximately eleven blocks of the commercial district, spanning Dupont Circle, P Street NW, Massachusetts Avenue NW, and Connecticut Avenue from Dupont Circle to California Street NW. The BID’s southern geographic coverage is anchored by the landmark public space of Dupont Circle. The circle remains vital to the neighborhood’s identity and currently hosts a wide range of BID-organized events. Ground-floor retail storefronts line Connecticut Avenue NW and P Street NW, embodying the pedestrian-scaled built environment of Dupont Circle. Hotels scattered across the Dupont Circle BID area bring new visitors to the neighborhood, while surrounding office buildings, apartments, and townhouses provide a consistent base of daytime and evening foot traffic.

About This Strategic Plan

As the BID’s second Strategic Plan, this document outlines the Dupont Circle BID’s key priorities between FY2023 and FY2028. This Strategic Plan builds upon the first Strategic Plan completed in 2020 and recent BID accomplishments, outlining how the BID can best position the neighborhood in the current commercial landscape. The strategic planning process engaged a wide range of stakeholders to comprehensively identify key challenges and opportunities facing Dupont Circle over the next five years. The 2023 Dupont Circle BID Strategic Plan includes a redefined vision and mission statement for the organization, along with a strategic framework to help achieve its organizational vision over the next five years.
The Dupont Circle BID has created a strong foundation in its first five years and is ready to build upon this success to help Dupont Circle leverage its unique assets in an evolving post-COVID economy.

**Neighborhood Change Preceding the BID’s Formation**

Dupont Circle has been one of the most historic, recognizable neighborhoods in DC for generations, anchored by its iconic circle and fountain. Over the past two decades, new concentrations of shopping, dining, entertainment, and employment activity have emerged in other neighborhoods in the DC region, which has created increased competition for investment and visitation. Exciting plans were developed for new public infrastructure investment in the Dupont Circle neighborhood, including plans to construct a new public plaza over the Connecticut Avenue underpass and add a significant amount of streetscape improvements along Connecticut Avenue NW between Dupont Circle and Q Street NW. These conditions created a growing need for creation of a neighborhood-serving business improvement district to help strengthen the brand identity of the neighborhood, enhance its economic vitality, and oversee and coordinate the large-scale infrastructure projects on behalf of local stakeholders.

**Launch of the Dupont Circle BID in 2018**

The Dupont Circle Business Improvement District launched in 2018, covering the commercial district north and west of Dupont Circle. The founding goals of the organization were centered around placemaking, place management, and place branding—each of which care focuses of the BID.

**A Strong Foundation: Evolving Success and Gaining Momentum**

The Dupont Circle BID has firmly established itself in the community as a driver of economic development and neighborhood vibrancy over its first five years of operations. It guided the neighborhood through the COVID-19 pandemic, helping business and property owners navigate a tumultuous period for small businesses and commercial real estate. The BID also played a key role in the planning and design of the DDOT’s Dupont Plaza and Streetscaping Project, helping to ensure the project is positioned to be a thriving public space for decades to come. In addition, the BID has organized numerous public events, including volunteer cleanups, a summer jazz concert series, and “Fitness in the Circle” exercise classes in Dupont Circle. The organization has also successfully completed placemaking and public art initiatives throughout the neighborhood, beautifying the public realm and strengthening the brand of Dupont Circle as an aesthetically vibrant place to be.

**Expanding Its Impact**

After having successfully established a strong foundation, the BID is ready to elevate its impact. It is making strategic pushes to capitalize on local assets, help the local business and real estate community navigate the current tumultuous economic climate and capitalize on local and federal resources, and help Dupont Circle become an even more dynamic, active neighborhood.

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**Dupont Circle Today**

Dupont Circle has the assets that are poised to thrive in a post-pandemic economy.

The COVID-19 pandemic dramatically altered citywide real estate conditions, as remote work dramatically dampened demand for office space in the District. However, unlike the city’s areas with the highest concentrations of offices, Dupont Circle’s mix of uses created a more resilient economic environment in 2020 and onward toward post-pandemic. As a neighborhood that bridges the heavily commercial and office uses of downtown to a more mixed-use, residential fabric, Dupont Circle’s blend of commercial and residential uses helped sustain local businesses during challenging economic times. The on-the-ground leadership of the BID and its partnership network championed strategic efforts to support its business community as owners faced significant challenges in day-to-day operations.

**An Office Market in Recovery**

The office market within the Dupont Circle BID area was hit hard by the COVID-19 pandemic, accelerating a decline in office occupancy rates that began in 2017. From Q1 2017 to Q2 2021, the area’s office occupancy fell from 95% to 77%. Since Q2 2021, the area’s occupancy rate has experienced a slow but consistent recovery—in contrast with the citywide occupancy rate, which has continued to trend downward since the onset of the pandemic. Workers are also increasingly returning to the office, with the citywide in-person office work rate up to 46% as of February 2023, adding renewed pedestrian activity to Dupont Circle.

**A Retail Market Poised for Growth**

Dupont Circle’s mix of land uses helped local businesses avoid the steep decline in customer traffic experienced by Downtown DC and other office-centric commercial clusters. However, retail vacancy in the BID area remains above pre-COVID levels as of Q1 2023, creating continued need for Dupont Circle to enhance its visitor experience, strengthen its brand, and attract more high-quality tenants to its storefronts. The BID area has already begun to see consistent growth in retail demand since Q1 2022, experiencing positive net retail absorption each quarter since Q1 2022.1

**Spotlight: Office to Residential Conversion**

The rise of remote work and strong local demand for housing is leading to an increasing number of office-to-residential conversions throughout DC. The Dupont Circle BID area currently has one major planned office-to-residential conversion, the Universal Building at 1825-1875 Connecticut Avenue, which is converting nearly 700,000 square feet of office space to around 500 residential units. More conversions are expected over the next five years. These conversions will help Dupont Circle’s building supply to better meet contemporary market needs and grow the local residential base. However, these conversions will also lead to lower assessed values and decreased BID assessments from such buildings.

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Reimagining Connecticut Avenue: Creating a New Public Plaza

With over $25 million of public investment, the DC Department of Transportation’s Dupont Plaza and Streetscaping Project will be a transformative that will add a brand-new public plaza and significantly enhance the pedestrian experience in the Dupont Circle BID area. The project will construct a deck over the underpass along the 1500 and 1600 blocks of Connecticut Avenue—providing a flexible public space for everyday activities and special events such as markets, movies, and performances. The project also includes a beautification of the Connecticut Avenue streetscape between the north side of Dupont Circle to California Avenue NW, adding new tree boxes, benches, and light poles.

Construction is scheduled to start in Fall 2023, lasting an estimated 27 months. This long construction timeline will create a major need for the BID to lead efforts to mitigate the impact of construction on nearby businesses and the overall visitor experience along Connecticut Avenue. The BID plans to play a central role in these mitigation efforts, ensuring that businesses and properties affected by construction receive appropriate support. The BID will work with DDOT and the ANC to keep stakeholders informed about community meetings and public input forums, while providing additional technical assistance and support for affected businesses.

Enhancing Dupont Underground

The Dupont Underground, the 15,000 square feet of subterranean arts and cultural space, lies below Dupont Circle as a space re-envisioned from an abandoned streetcar station to a cultural platform and landmark of the District’s artists and cultural character. While the tunneling passageways extend to 75,000 total square feet, Dupont Underground operates 20% of the hidden space below the bustling sidewalks and busy streets of the Dupont Circle neighborhood. Since 2016, new energy and momentum transformed this once forgotten space into an event and cultural exhibition space with rotating programs and evolving activities.

This momentum continues with current plans for a series of renovations poised for the next several years that are expected to significantly bolster the maximum capacity and overall attendance levels in the space. These renovations include the installation of a new HVAC system, sprinklers, Wi-Fi, bathrooms, and enhanced ADA accessibility. With these upcoming investments, Dupont Underground can grow its presence and join Dupont Circle and the future Dupont Plaza to create a unique trifecta of cultural spaces in the heart of the Dupont Circle neighborhood, anchoring the southern boundary of the BID.
Stakeholder Feedback

This strategic planning process engaged a wide range of Dupont Circle stakeholders to inform its strategic direction over the next five years. This feedback was gathered through various formats, including a community survey, a business/commercial property-owner survey, one-on-one interviews with community stakeholders and BID board members, and three strategic planning workshops with BID board members.

**Top BID Priorities from Community Survey**

- Promoting and enhancing Dupont Circle’s character and brand identity
- Expanding the BID’s homeless outreach program
- Supporting and attracting more restaurants and retailers
- Maintaining and activating public spaces
- Landscaping and beautification efforts
- Increasing the overall safety of the neighborhood

**Cleanliness and Safety**

86% of respondents agree that the BID’s Clean Team is highly valuable to the neighborhood. Relatively, 77% characterized neighborhood safety in Dupont Circle as “good” or “great.”

**Events and Public Space Programming**

The Dupont Plaza & Streetscape Project, breaking ground in 2023, will bring a new public space to the neighborhood. Many community members and BID stakeholders want to see live music, holiday events, and an expanded farmers market in the future.

**Over 7 out of 10 people rated Dupont Circle as good or great** when it comes to walking, biking, and transit accessibility; overall safety; retail and restaurant offerings; and events and other activities.

**Events and Public Space Programming**

89% of surveyed community members went to the Dupont Circle Farmer’s Market in the past year, making it the neighborhood’s most popular event.

**Dupont Circle Community**

A community survey was issued digitally and in person at community events from Fall 2022 through Winter 2023. The survey collected a total of 203 responses.

**BID Members**

A survey of twenty-two Dupont Circle business owners and commercial property owners in the BID area was conducted digitally from Fall 2022 through Winter 2023.

**Dupont Circle Stakeholders**

One-on-one interviews with key community stakeholders were conducted in Fall and Winter 2022 to help identify key challenges and opportunities. Interviewees included local elected officials, nonprofit leadership, small business owners, and property owners.

**BID Board**

Dupont Circle BID board members participated in three board workshops in late 2022 and early 2023. These workshops, conducted virtually and in-person, identified major goals, opportunities, and programmatic priorities of the BID through 2028.
Vision Statement

Dupont Circle is one of the most active and vibrant neighborhoods in DC and a premier location for residents, workers, and visitors.

Mission Statement

The mission of the Dupont Circle BID is to elevate the iconic Dupont Circle neighborhood through cleanliness and safety services, managing and activating public spaces, bolstering the neighborhood’s identity and sense of place, and supporting the local business community.

Brand Promise

Promise of an exceptional and distinct experience that reflects the neighborhood’s cultural amenities, historic character, diverse customer base, world class public spaces, and 24/7 mix of uses.

Key Assets of Dupont Circle

- Historic built environment at an inviting human scale
- An iconic public space in Dupont Circle
- Dynamic mix of amenities, activities, and cultural assets, including old buildings, embassies, and museums
- Central and accessible mixing ground for residents, workers, shoppers, and visitors alike
Key Opportunities

Five key strategic pillars emerged from the Dupont Circle BID’s 2023 strategic planning process. These five pillars (see p. 15) represent the core programmatic and operational priorities for the BID through 2028 and reflect the current needs, opportunities, and challenges expressed by a wide range of community stakeholders. Notably, these strategic pillars align closely with the priorities established during the BID’s 2020 Strategic Plan.

Through 2028, the Dupont Circle BID plans to prioritize growing programmatic efforts and capacity for two of these pillars: “Clean, Safe, and Friendly” and “Economic Development.” Without a clean, aesthetic environment where people feel safe, Dupont Circle cannot fully take advantage of its central location, historic charm, and iconic brand. Likewise, Dupont Circle cannot reach its full potential without a thriving business-friendly climate that attracts retail tenants, office tenants, and visitors.

As such, strengthening the capacity of its Clean and Safe services will be one of the top priorities of the BID moving forward. The BID also plans to bolster ongoing efforts to beautify Connecticut Avenue and P Street NW through public art, lighting, greenery, and other placemaking strategies.

The BID is also planning for the upcoming Dupont Plaza and Streetscaping project. During construction, the BID plans to play a leading role in mitigating the impact of construction on nearby businesses. Once construction is complete, the BID plans to ensure the plaza is safe, clean, and one of the most active public spaces in the District. With quality maintenance and programming of Dupont Plaza, an opportunity exists for Dupont Circle and Dupont Plaza to form a truly unique duo of adjacent public spaces.

![Diagram showing Key Opportunities:
- **Clean, Safe, and Friendly**
  - Enhance Clean and Safe services.
- **Economic Development**
  - Support Dupont Circle’s business community and mitigate the impacts of upcoming construction.
- **Place Branding & Placemaking**
  - Improve the visitor experience in Dupont Circle.
- **Vibrancy and Place Management**
  - Ensure Dupont Circle and Dupont Plaza are premier public spaces.
- **BID Operations**
  - Strengthen organizational capacity and grow stakeholder awareness of BID programming and accomplishments.]

BID Operations are independent of the programmatic direction of the BID.
Enhance Clean and Safe services.

Key Action Strategies

- Enhance Clean & Safe Team capacity through additional hiring and/or purchasing of additional cleaning equipment that increases team efficiency.

- Work with DC government and other relevant partners to ensure outreach services for people experiencing homelessness in Dupont Circle are being efficiently delivered.

- Work with the newly formed Dupont Foundation to leverage additional resources to support human services and safety in Dupont Circle.

- Direct MPD and Clean & Safe Team members to prioritize ensuring entrances to Dupont Underground are clean and inviting.

Place Branding and Placemaking

Improve the visitor experience in Dupont Circle.

Key Action Strategies

- Implement beautification efforts throughout the BID area, with an emphasis on festival lights, landscaping, and neighborhood-branded banners.

- Develop robust communication channels to target Dupont Circle’s primary audience demographics.

- Explore opportunities to shift programing from Dupont Circle to Dupont Plaza in order to incorporate commercial uses not allowable within the Circle.

- Update Dupont Circle newsletter to be more engaging and better communicate business news, events, and BID accomplishments.

- Work with Dupont Circle Main Street to align neighborhood branding and marketing efforts into a cohesive Dupont Circle brand.
Support Dupont Circle’s business community and mitigate the negative impacts of upcoming construction.

**Key Action Strategies**

- Help attract new retail tenants to fill ground floor retail vacancies.
- Support efforts to expand public transportation access to Dupont Circle, including the proposed Circulator route expansion that would connect Dupont Circle with U Street and Georgetown.
- Advocate for efforts to provide tax relief and/or other forms of financial assistance to businesses negatively impacted by the upcoming Dupont Plaza construction project.
- Support housing and enhanced commercial vitality along Connecticut Avenue.

Ensure Dupont Circle and Dupont Plaza are premier public spaces.

**Key Action Strategies**

- Establish Dupont Plaza as a premier public space, through quality programming and consistent maintenance.
- Support the maintenance and protection of “streateries” in Dupont Circle to enhance business resiliency and street-level vibrancy.
- Develop a strong synergy between Dupont Circle and Dupont Plaza to become a cohesive public space destination.
- Work with elected officials, MPO, and DPR to ensure Dupont Plaza receives consistent maintenance and maintains a safe, inviting space upon project completion.
Strengthen organizational capacity and grow stakeholder awareness of BID programming and accomplishments.

Key Action Strategies

- Strengthen relationships with business and commercial property owners through additional member roundtables, happy hours, and other events.

- Utilize new District 360 CRM system to efficiently engage with BID members.

- Leverage Placer AI to analyze customer base and track visitation trends over time.

- Explore opportunities for fee-for-service partnerships with the DC government and other partners to grow BID operating revenue.