### ABSTRACT

Title of Thesis: BRIDGING ANACOSTIA

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Countless cities face issues of disconnection. Washington, DC's Anacostia neighborhood remains physically, socially, and economically separated from the city atlarge, while failing to take advantage of its proximity to an under utilized waterfront. This thesis explores ideas about "bridging", not only physically but also metaphorically and socially.

Interstate 295, as a physical and perceptual barrier, has had the most negative impact on this area. This thesis proposes to create connections between Anacostia, the waterfront, and greater Washington, DC by engaging land use into and beneath the highway thereby creating thresholds between Anacostia, the waterfront, and greater Washington, DC. Furthermore, this thesis sites the Frederick Douglass neighborhood and heritage center which not only bridges the highway, but also creates a physical link between historic Anacostia and the waterfront.

# BRIDGING ANACOSTIA by

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Thesis submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the University of Maryland, College Park in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Architecture

2007

## **Advisory Committee:**

Assistant Professor Brooke D. Wortham, Chair Professor of the Practice Gary Bowden, FAIA Professor Steven W. Hurtt, AIA

### **DEDICATION**

To my Parents (Jimmie & Vikki Powell) who have always supported all of my efforts, especially this past year. To my beautiful fiancé, Marquisha Emory, who helped me press forward over the duration of the thesis, stressing herself out me than me at times. To all my friends and family who have supported me (especially those no longer here). And finally to my (unborn) son, Caden James Powell, who inspired me more than he will ever know!

### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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#### INTRODUCTION

Even though Washington, DC's economic redevelopment has enjoyed a recent upturn, there are areas of the city that have not benefited from this. Anacostia, a neighborhood located in southeast Washington, DC, is one such place. While Anacostia is part of Ward 8, the city's most economically distressed, it nonetheless has a rich history, access to multiple means of transportation and a prominent location as it lies adjacent to Anacostia Park on the Anacostia River. It has yet to take full advantage of these circumstances. The river physically separates Anacostia from the city's monumental core, but it is possible to bridge this gap physically as well as socially. Connections are possible.

The barriers separating Anacostia from the city at-large are not only physical but also social. Of the nearly 71,000 residents of Anacostia, 92% of them are African-American versus only 56% across the city at-large<sup>1</sup>; this is coupled with the fact that Anacostia has the highest concentration of low-income housing of any area in the city; families in this neighborhood, on average, earn less than 65% of the city's median family income and the poverty rate is 38%<sup>2</sup>. Aside from a ¼ mile of river, Anacostia remains physically separated from the area north of the river by Anacostia Park, which pedestrians can only access by walking under I-295 at one location; as well as the main physical barrier, I-295 itself, which was constructed during the 1950s. It can be seen as one of the most offensive of negative edges any part of the city faces.

One particular question many people ask about Anacostia, which is indicative of the problem, is whether or not Anacostia or other areas east of the [Anacostia] river are

http://planning.dc.gov/planning/cwp/view,a,1285,q,617802.asp

http://planning.dc.gov/planning/cwp/view,a,1285,q,617802.asp http://planning.dc.gov/planning/cwp/view,a,1285,q,617802.asp

even part of Washington, DC proper. One of the reasons such questions may even be presented starts with the fact that Anacostia and all areas east of the river were not part of L'Enfant's plan for Washington; therefore, the street grid does not carry over. In fact, Anacostia remained a suburb of Washington, DC until 1869<sup>3</sup>.

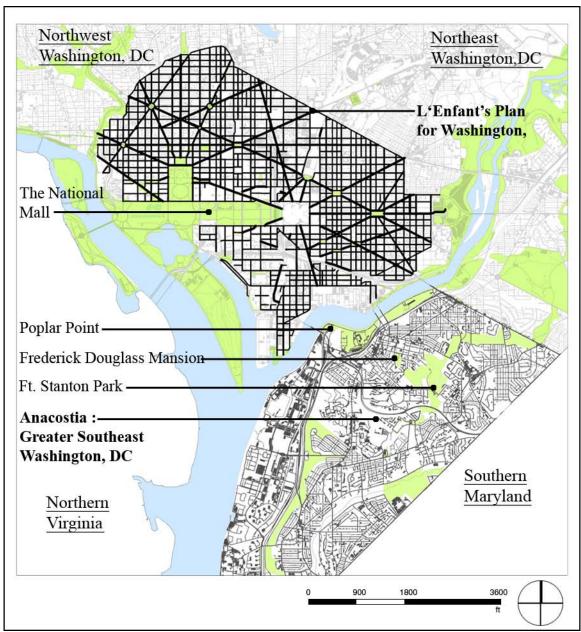


Figure 1: L'Enfant's Plan and Anacostia, Washington, DC.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Metropolitan Washington Planning & Housing Association. *Old Anacostia Washington* 

Even though Anacostia has been, for the most part, neglected since the 1960's, the city is now recognizing the waterfront's potential as not only a major destination within Washington, DC, but also as an economic catalyst for the immediate area; thus several plans are in the works to develop this area. This thesis proposes development that could potentially be that catalyst while maintaining sensitivity to the adverse results of gentrification which have plagued many areas of redevelopment in other parts of the city.

This thesis explores ideas about "bridging", not only physically but also metaphorically and socially. As Robert Putnam states in his book *Bowling Alone*, bridging can refer to social capital where networks are "outward looking and encompass people across diverse social cleavages." The members of these networks may have loose ties, but are formed out of a connection to something widely based (i.e. the Civil Rights Movement). Along with issues of bridging, this thesis also sets out to explore the manner in which new development can begin to enhance an area facing economic distress. Such redevelopment often times sponsors negative effects of gentrification, most notably displacement of residents. In his article *The Oversimplification of Gentrification*, Donovan Rypkema points out that gentrification is often times a "loaded term" which should not inherently imply the negative.

Lastly, this thesis aims to propose urban design solutions for which cities, facing similar issues related to connectivity, can effectively reverse their similar problems. The intention is to suggest the importance of using redevelopment as a tool to connect and enhance the character of a place, not to eliminate its history and displace or disenfranchise existing residents.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Putnam, Robert; *Bowling Alone* 

Chapter one of this document outlines the boundaries of the site for this thesis exploration. The chapter then documents the existing conditions of the site at multiple scales and concludes by stating how the existing conditions of the site and its surroundings will affect/influence the final design. The expression of the influence of the existing conditions begins to suggest initial design solutions.

Chapter two of this document encompasses ideas about the impact of community/stakeholders in this thesis process. It begins with a discussion of the role of community members and stakeholders in the design process and a description of the different groups involved. The chapter then discusses the various desires and concerns expressed by these different groups and outlines their suggestions in terms of potential development of the waterfront and the future of the neighborhood of Anacostia. The synthesis of these suggestions and their critique begin to inform program at the urban design and the building scale.

Chapter three outlines and discusses the program relative to the urban design proposal as well as the building proposal. The chapter begins with a description of the different elements composing the development proposal for the area which anticipates the inclusion of housing units, commercial, and civic uses. The chapter concludes with a description of the programmatic elements of the Frederick Douglass Community Center. The building is described in terms of its programmatic square footage requirements and is accompanied by images which begin to describe the potential character of the spaces.

In the fourth chapter an outline of initial design strategies at the urban design scale as well as the building scale are presented. It begins with three initial urban design ideas based upon the analysis conducted, and points out the implications of each scheme.

The chapter concludes with partis for each of the four building sites and discusses the positive and negative aspects of these approaches. The design strategies are accompanied by the urban design and architectural precedents that informed these strategies.

The document concludes with the final design proposal. This chapter documents the final conclusions of the thesis which validates or invalidates the initial conclusions of this thesis.

Chapter 1: Anacostia – Neighborhood, Park, Freeway and River

This thesis was initially conceived of as the development of Anacostia Park and the waterfront east of the river. Further exploration led to the observation that Anacostia is completely severed from not only the waterfront, but also from most of Washington, DC proper. While the conclusion of revitalizing the waterfront is valid, it was too narrowly focused and frankly could not be solved without first addressing the disconnect between the neighborhood, the waterfront, and the city. If the waterfront were to be developed independent of Anacostia it would render the area much like Baltimore's Inner Harbor where the re-development of the waterfront was not much of a catalyst outside of the Inner Harbor/Downtown. Rather, it was determined that any solution must first think to re-connect the residents of the neighborhood to the waterfront and then begin to make connections across the water to the city west of the river.

At a macro scale, creating connection between the city and the neighborhood is an important issue. It was important to be cognizant of the concerns of not only the residents of this community but also the concerns of other stakeholders early in the design process. Speaking with residents revealed that one of their main concerns was one of the effects of such a revitalization bringing about the negative aspects of gentrification, such as displacement and increased rents and taxes<sup>1</sup>. One resident expressed that the city wants all of the low income residents to move to Southern Prince George's County, MD, stating that "they're [the city government] is going to move us all to P.G. County and then put up a big fence so we can't come back."<sup>2</sup>

This thesis is predicated on creating positive change in the neighborhood of Anacostia, not only connecting it to the riverfront but also retaining those citizens who

<sup>1</sup> Rypkema, Donovan; *The Oversimplification of Gentrification*; Forum Journal, 2004

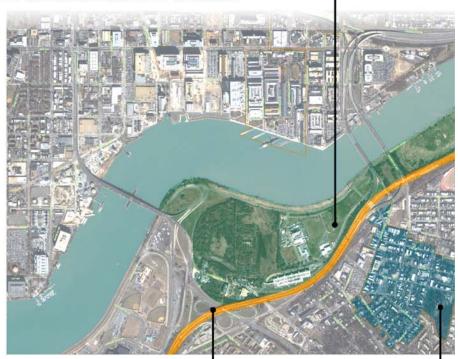
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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Personal Interview

are the heart and soul of the area. The current physical conditions of the site and the surrounding areas will inform urban and building form. At the urban design scale there are multiple variables that are addressed (refer to figure 2).

Anacostia Park/Anacostia River: The name is the only thing that bears connection to Anacostia as the two are separated by I-295 and has poor pedestrian connectivity. Because it is largely inaccessible, the park forms a barrier between the neighborhood and the greater city. Historically waterfronts have been generators of urban form. As seen in Lower Manhattan, the street grid responds to the geometry of the waterfront. In this case, it is also a determinant of block dimension in the effort to design more blocks toward the amenity and allow for view corridors to the waterfront.



I-295: Currently the highway acts as a barrier separating residents from the waterfront. This thesis attempts reverese the nature of the barrier as a uniter and as threshold in order to bridge old (the neighborhood of Anacostia) and new (development on and around Anacostia Park).

The historic district has a unique—architectural character. Housing tends to be attached residences no taller than 3-stories. The street grid of the neighborhood responds to the geometry of Good Hope Rd and Martin Luther King, Jr. Ave, which form the northern and western boundaries respectively.



Figure 2: I-295, Anacostia, Washington, DC: Park, Freeway, and Historic District.

This thesis focuses on creating a synthesis between these three disparate features of Anacostia.



Figure 3: Space Positive Diagram of Anacostia, Washington, DC and context.

The diagram illustrates the lack of continuity in the fabric between Historic Anacostia and the southeast

area of Washington, DC just north of the Anacostia River. It also illustrates the discontinuity in the urban fabric created by Interstate Highway 295 between Anacostia Park and the neighborhood. At the urban design scale, this begins to suggest that connections could be made by allowing the urban fabric to connect across the highway into Anacostia Park.



Figure 4: Space Negative Diagram of Anacostia, Washington, DC and context.

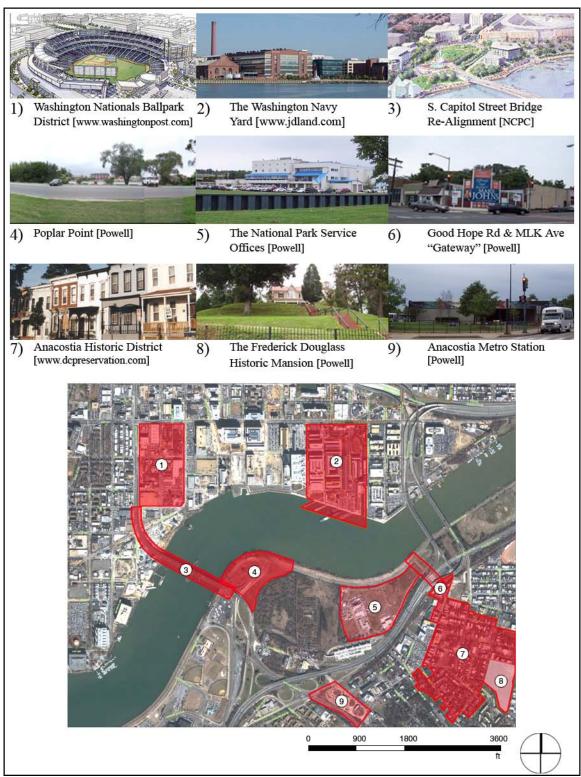


Figure 5: Major Areas of influence in and around Poplar Point and Historic Anacostia.

These various factors are one of the major reasons that many developers and politicians have begun to take

These various factors are one of the major reasons that many developers and politicians have begun to take notice of Anacostia. The unique condition of the park on the waterfront with adjacencies to neighborhood fabric, which is also in proximity to major development and sitting atop a metro station will support major development in this area.

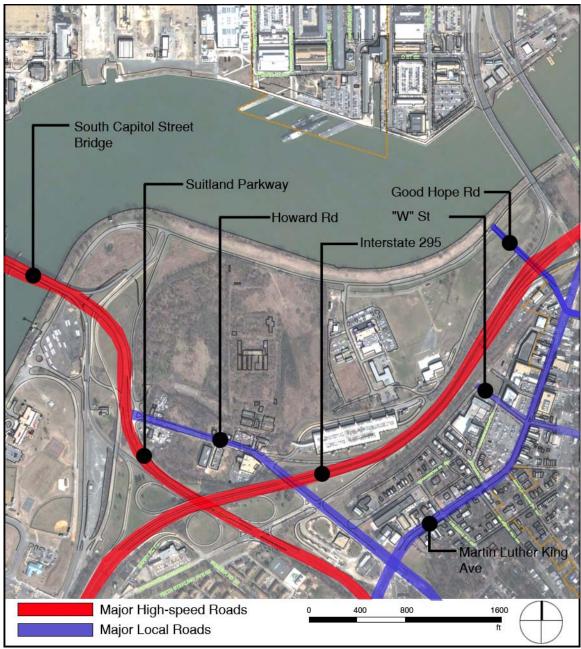


Figure 6: Anacostia, Washington, DC: Major roads and vehicular travel paths

Aside from being metro accessible, the site is also accessible through a multitude of street types. The Suitland Parkway and I-295 provide accessibility to travelers who many not be in close proximity to the site. Good Hope Rd, Martin Luther King, Jr Ave and Howard Rd are the primary streets on the site with the highest density of traffic among local roads. Good Hope Rd and Martin Luther King, Jr Ave are the main

commercial arteries on the site, while Howard Rd is more of a transportation hub as the Metro Station is located there as seen in Figure 7.

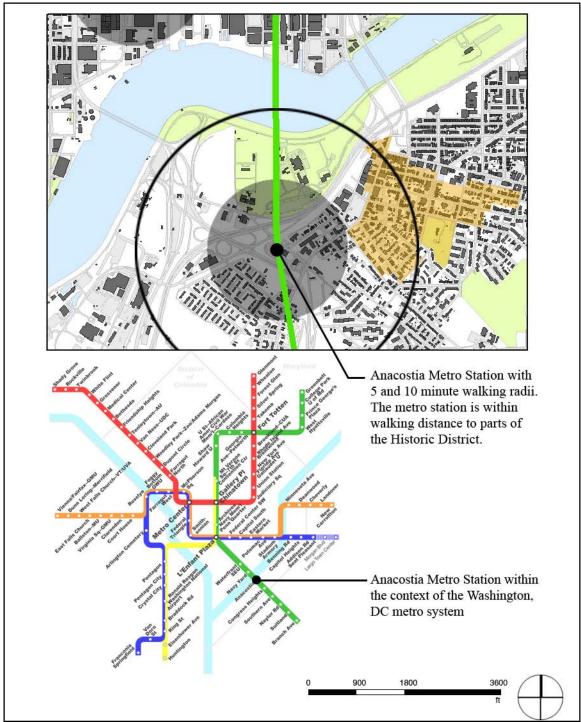


Figure 7: Anacostia Metro Station & WMATA metro transit map.

The figure reflects that the site is not only accessible by outsiders in terms of highways and roads, but also in terms of mass transit. This might begin to suggest more transit oriented-development at this node.

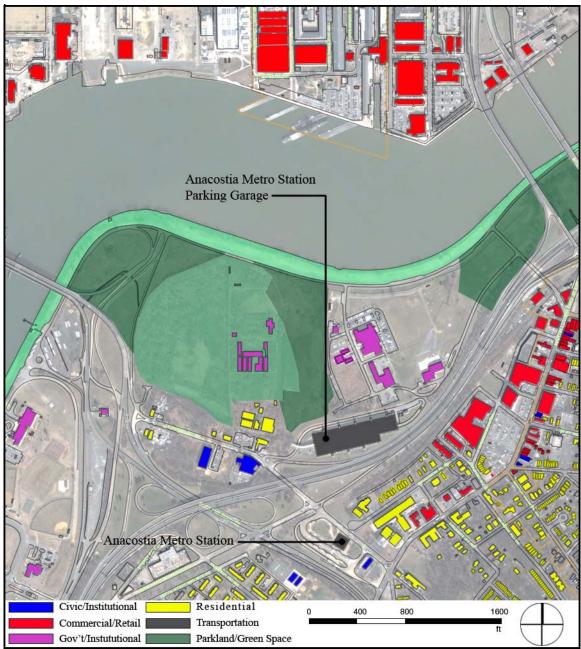


Figure 8: Anacostia, Washington, DC: Land Uses

The image depicts a commercial corridor which supports the residential areas in proximity to the metro station. What is not reflected is the fact that most of the commercial/retail are small businesses with only one "national chain" restaurant:

Subway. Much of the residential near the metro station is lower density and includes many vacant lots. This provides the opportunity to create development higher density

development near the metro station, following Peter Calthorpe's Transit Oriented

Development model seen in figure 9. This increase in density may also include retail

which could supplement the smaller businesses/retail in the neighborhood of Anacostia.

Another issue this diagram reveals is the lack of institutions which support the schools in
the area. There is currently no public library within a 15 minute walking radius of

Anacostia's Historic District. The cultural institutions in the area are too small to
function at the community scale as they are generally located in residential buildings

which have been converted into retail.

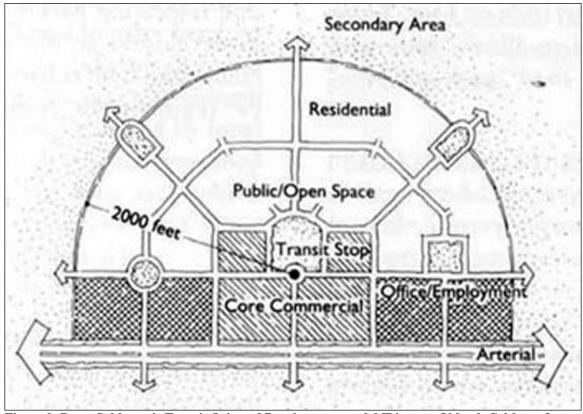


Figure 9: Peter Calthorpe's Transit Oriented Development model [Dittmar, Ohland, Calthorpe]



Figure 10: Anacostia, Washington, DC: Anacostia Metro Station and Parking Garage [Powell]



Figure 11: Anacostia, Washington, DC: Martin Luther King Jr. Ave



Figure 12: Anacostia, Washington, DC: the Anacostia Professional Office Buildings [Powell]



Figure 13: Anacostia, Washington, DC: Supermarket Warehouse on Good Hope Rd [Powell]



Figure 14: Anacostia, Washington, DC: United House of Prayer [Powell]



Figure 15: Anacostia, Washington, DC: Thurgood Marshall Academy [Powell]



Figure 16: Anacostia, Washington, DC: Anacostia Firestation [Powell]



### Typology 1: Attached

Attached housing is the most common typology in the Historic District. It generates an average housing density of 20 dwelling units per acre. Assuming an 2.5 people per household this typology yields an average population density 50 people per acre.



# Typology 2: Garden Apartments

Garden apartments are less common in the Historic District. It generates an average density in the range of 30-45 dwelling units per acre. Assuming 2.5 people per household this typology yields an average population density of 75-90 people per acre.

Figure 17: Housing Typologies in Anacostia, Washington, DC [Powell]

As it relates to housing, the two most common typologies are attached and garden apartments. Single family homes are seen sparingly throughout the neighborhood.

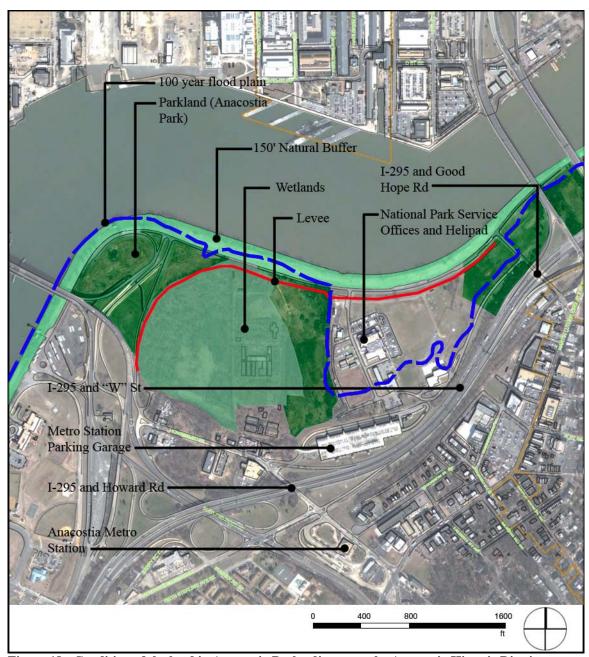


Figure 18: Condition of the land in Anacostia Park adjacent to the Anacostia Historic District. The graphic illustrates that much of the land in Anacostia Park is not suitable for building. The large area of wetlands and the 100 year flood plain comprise a significant portion of the park. While this is a barrier in terms of building capacity, it significantly limits the amount of land which can be privatized and provides the opportunity to become more of a public amenity. It begins to suggest building placement on the point itself as well as near Howard Rd and I-295.

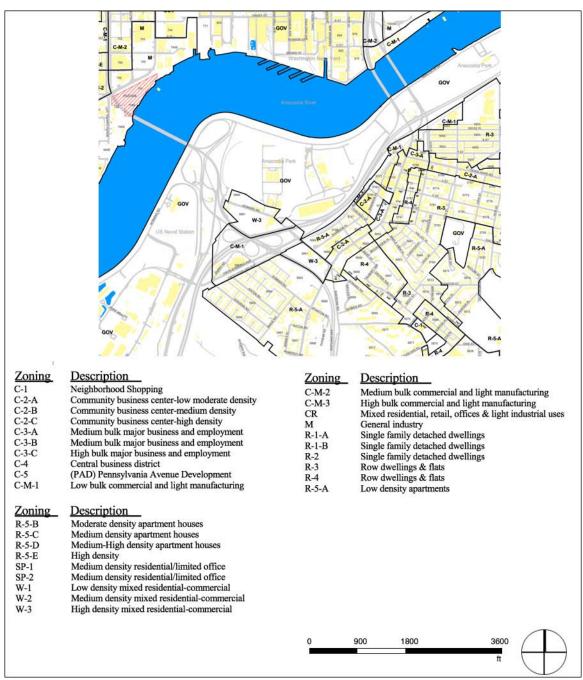
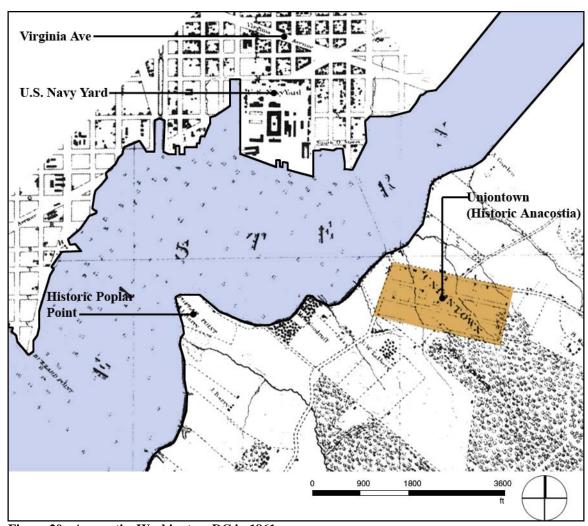


Figure 19: Anacostia, Washington, DC: Zoning Map [http://dcoz.dc.gov/info/map.shtm]

Zoning currently allows for low density retail along MLK Jr, Ave and Good Hope Rd. Housing in the area is zoned for low density apartments and row dwellings & flats. Figure 19 does not reflect the Federal Land Transfer passed in November of 2006 allowing mixed-use, residential and retail, development on Anacostia Park northwest of I-295.

### SITE HISTORY

Anacostia was once a settlement village of Native American fishermen and farmers known as the Nacotchtanke. In 1608 they were encountered by Captain John Smith who made his way up the Potomac River while traveling along the Chesapeake Bay. Upon this discovery, English explores convinced other Europeans to come to the area. Most of those who populated the area were farmers specializing in growing tobacco and had help from African slaves and indentured servants.



**Figure 20:** Anacostia, Washington, DC in 1861.

Map shows area prior to I-295. The graphic illustrate the nature of the shoreline when the town was developed. The generator of the Cartesian grid of Uniontown appears to be a railroad line which currently exists today but is unused.

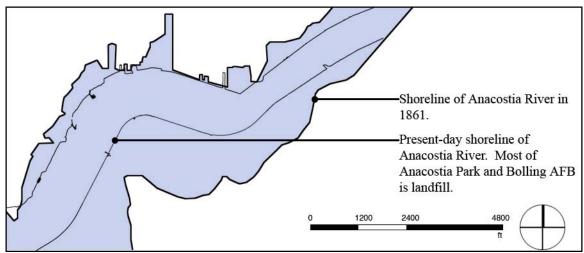
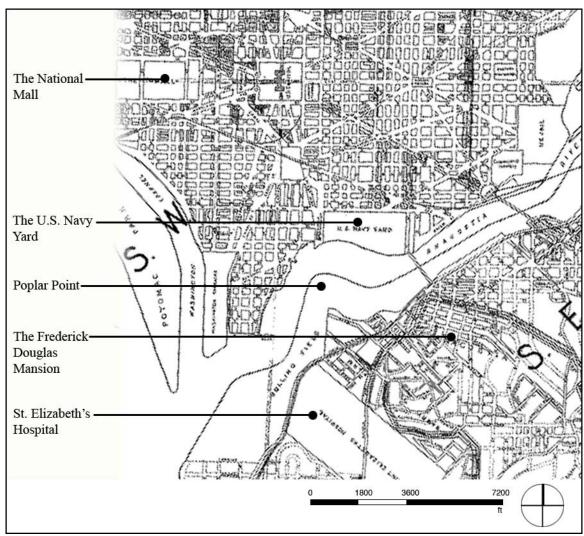


Figure 21: Anacostia, Washington, DC: Shorelines, 1861 and present-day

Anacostia was initially conceived as one of the first suburbs of Washington, D.C. Developers named the area Uniontown, which today is Historic Anacostia. Uniontown was to be an area for working class people to settle, many of whom worked across the river at the Navy Yard. At the time that it was established land ownership was restricted to the white population. Incorporated in 1854, the area remained segregated until 1877 when Frederick Douglass purchased the home of Uniontown's developer, John W. VanHook. The home, "Cedar Hill", still stands today and is one of the area's most important historic landmarks.

Anacostia remained a predominantly white area up until the 1950s when construction of I-295, the Southeast Freeway, began. It was also around this time that the government began to look for places to build public housing for the city's lower income residents. As a suburb, Anacostia was one of the few places in the city that had a great deal of undeveloped land. The construction of many new public housing projects and the new freeway, which isolated Anacostia from the water, brought about major changes to the area.



**Figure 22:** Map of Anacostia in 1928. Map shows the area prior to I-295. As the neighborhood and other areas South of the Anacostia River began to develop it is unclear what is sponsoring the new street systems which begin to develop. While the street grid is unclear, the neighborhood maintains good connection / accessibility to the waterfront.

The demographics of the area began to shift. What was once a predominantly white area slowly became what is today an African-American community (92%). The 1950s also brought the departure of a large number of middle class residents from the area; this led to a decline in the amount of services in the area including shopping & dining choices. The Washington Post reported that there is only one full-service seated restaurant within all of greater Anacostia, which has a population of nearly 150,000. For

the most residents part must travel to the suburbs or downtown Washington, D.C. for shopping, dining, & other entertainment services.

Several plans are being proposed to revitalize the neighborhood, including a soccer stadium for D.C. United (figure 23). These plans would elevate the nature of the waterfront in Anacostia, bring more jobs in to the area, develop an entertainment district, as well as to develop mixed-income neighborhoods.

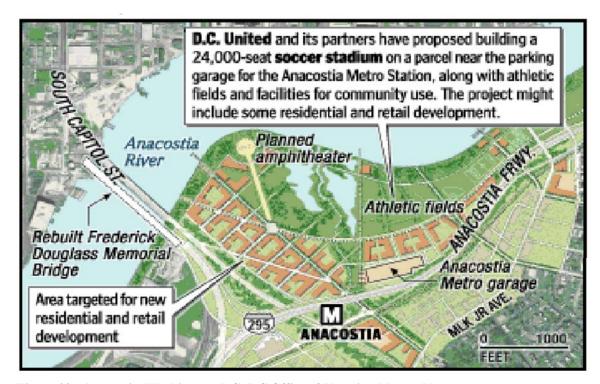


Figure 23: Anacostia, Washington, DC: DC Office of Planning Master Plan [www.washingtonpost.com]

The plan proposes high to medium density development along Howard Rd to the waterfront, restored wetlands, and a parcel of land that could accommodate a 24,000 seat stadium of D.C. United. While the plan has some feasible aspects to work from, it is unsuccessful in making any gesture toward Anacostia or across the river toward the city's monumental core. The scale of the housing represented in the graphic does not represent a scale that seems to be compatible with that of the historic district.

In November of 2006, the New York office of the firm Skidmore Owings & Merrill working in conjunction with the Anacostia Waterfront Corporation, unveiled initial plans for the waterfront. The most successful aspect of the plan is the different uses proposed along Anacostia Park which include an art park, the Frederick Douglass

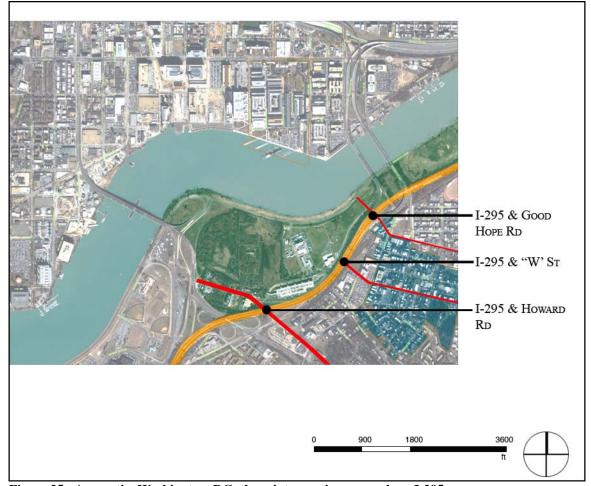
Memorial gardens, ball fields for recreation and an amphitheater, creating a park experience which caters to residents of Anacostia and non-residents alike. These uses are taken forward into the design portion of this thesis.



Figure 24: Anacostia, Washington, DC: SOM Master Plan [Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, New York Office]

The plan is unsuccessful in the sense that it makes little to no gestures toward the Historic District, with the exception of the extension of W St across I-295. The sweeping nature of the proposed street grid has little to no relationship to the city at-large or to Anacostia. This plan, much like the plan seen in figure 21 reflects a high density housing scale across the entire site that does not appear to be compatible with the scale of the housing in the surrounding area.

### ANACOSTIA FREEWAY: Interstate 295



**Figure 25: Anacostia, Washington, DC: three intervention areas along I-295.**There are three key intersections along the highway that this thesis explores: Howard Rd, W St, and Good Hope Rd. These three intersections represent three distinct conditions along the highway site.

Currently the main physical barrier separating the residents of the Anacostia Historic District from the waterfront is Interstate highway 295. The highway serves as a connection between Washington, DC and Virginia. As seen in figures 25 and 33 the highway is high enough at some points as to allow passage beneath it; it also drops low enough to meet the grade of the site between Howard Rd and U St. The result is that access across the highway to the park is limited to the edges of the neighborhood with no access from the center.

## SITE 1: HOWARD RD AT I-295

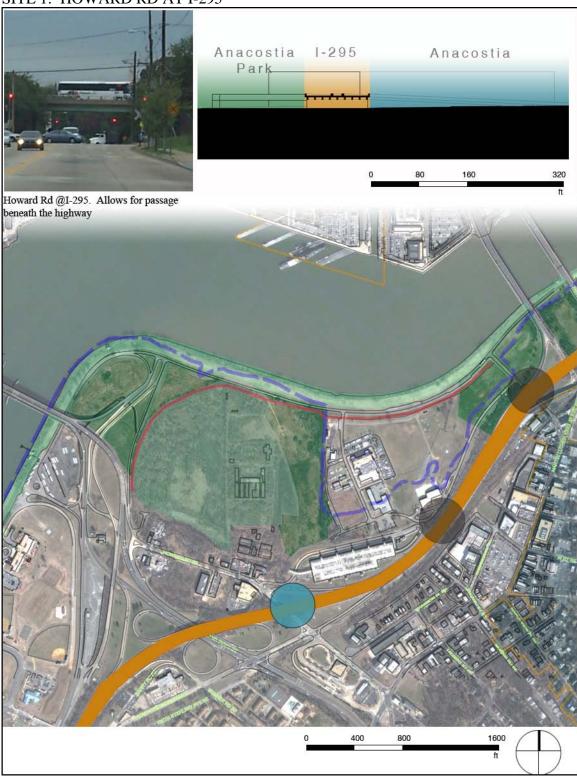


Figure 26: Anacostia, Washington, DC: I-295 condition at Howard Rd

The figure reflects the nature of the barrier which stands between the park and the neighborhood. At this location the highway is 23 feet above the grade and 98 feet wide. The picture of the highway reflects this being a very unpleasant place to walk.

The Howard Rd site currently serves as a secondary gateway from the neighborhood to the park and the mainland of the city. Located one block from the Anacostia Metro Station, it is currently underdeveloped in terms of density and has poor urban edges. The line of sight to the waterfront and the city beyond is severed by I-295. The site presents the problem of finding appropriate densities as well as creating connections not only between the metro site and the parking garage, but also the neighborhood to the city as a second gateway.

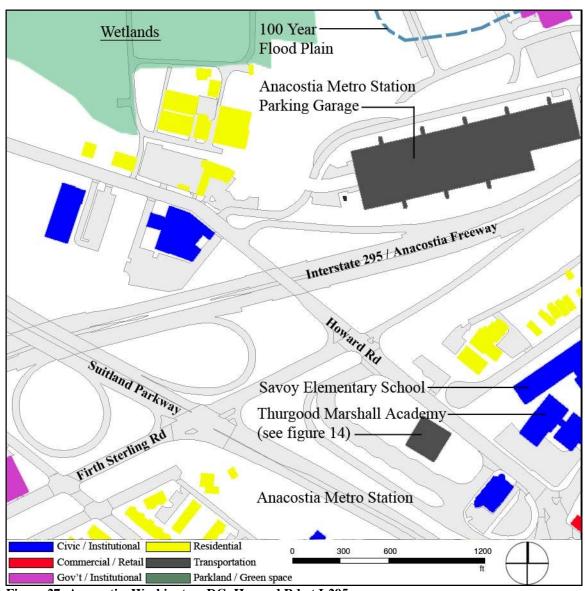


Figure 27: Anacostia, Washington, DC: Howard Rd at I-295



Figure 28: Anacostia, Washington, DC: I-295 (north) at Howard Rd exit [http://www.aaroadtrips.com/district\_of\_columbia]



Figure 29: Anacostia, Washington, DC: Howard Rd northbound toward I-295 [Powell]



Figure 30: Anacostia, Washington, DC: I-295 condition at W St

The figure reflects the separation created by I-295 between the park and the neighborhood. The section reflects the fact that I-295 levels out to the elevation of the neighborhood and the park at this point.

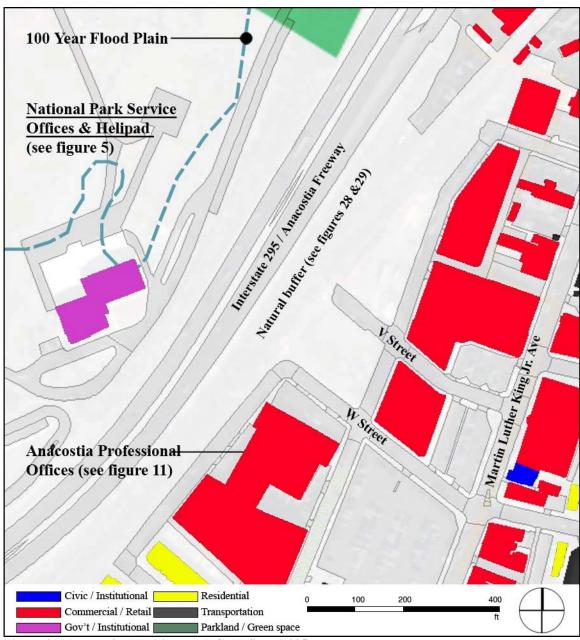


Figure 31: Anacostia, Washington, DC: W St at I-295

Unlike the Howard Rd site, there are no gestures made across the highway in this area of the neighborhood. "W" street can be seen as one of the more important streets in the neighborhood because it extends from the edge of the Frederick Douglas Memorial Mansion Site in Historic Anacostia. With this being the case, "W" St can be seen as a line of cultural and historic extension through the site. Its intersection with the new

highway development will call for programmatic elements which reinforce the idea of bridging as well as the historic/cultural component of the historic district. Because the highway is at grade with the neighborhood at this point (figure 28) there is an opportunity to bridge above I-295 or to slightly raise the topography in order to cross the highway at grade.



Figure 32: Anacostia, Washington, DC: W St at I-295 looking north [Powell]



Figure 33: Anacostia, Washington, DC: W St at I-295 looking northeast [Powell]

## SITE #3: I-295 AT GOOD HOPE RD



Figure 34: Anacostia, Washington, DC: I-295 condition at Good Hope Rd

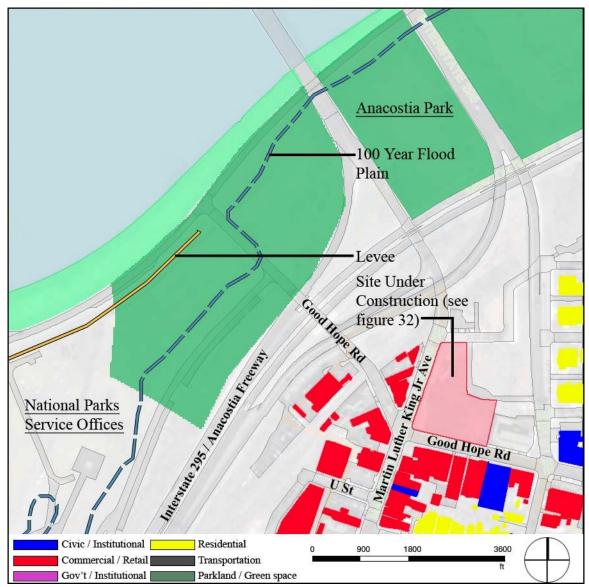


Figure 35: I-295 at Good Hope Rd.

Good Hope Rd currently provides the only pedestrian access to Anacostia Park for neighborhood residents, and thus serves as a gateway. This suggests that the intersection remain a gateway to the park for residents of the neighborhood.

Programmatically it could incorporate more landscape elements or create better views to the park and waterfront as a means to not only increase its perception as a gateway but to also begin go to create better connection between the neighborhood and the park and vice versa.



Figure 36: Anacostia, Washington, DC: Construction site at Good Hope Rd and MLK Jr. Ave near I-295 [Powell]



Figure 37: Anacostia, Washington, DC: Good Hope Rd (southbound) at I-295 [Powell]

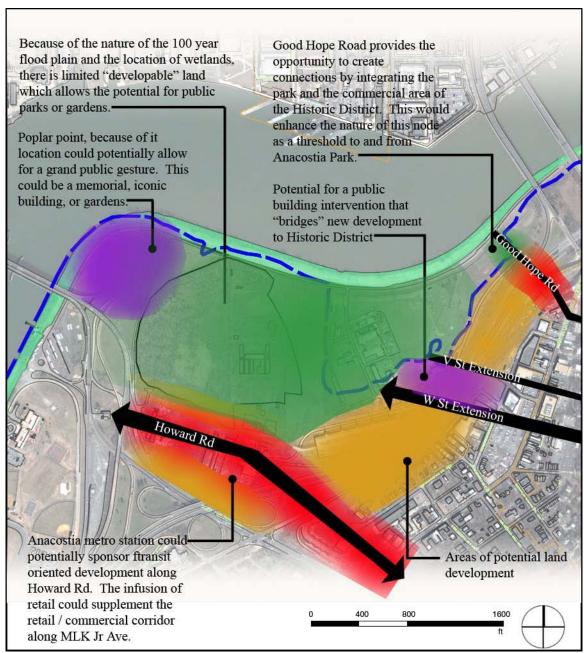


Figure 38: Anacostia, Wasington, DC: Design potential diagram

**Chapter 2: The Community and Stakeholders** 

#### ROLE OF COMMUNITY/STAKEHOLDERS

Design professionals are usually considered experts as related to issues of architecture and urban design. But design expertise can be enriched by an understanding of the intimate knowledge and unique personal experiences of the individuals who live, work, and play in a particular place. Thus, to help enrich this thesis, input was sought from not only residents of the community but also other stakeholders as well including: business owners, land owners, developers, planners, and local leaders.

This thesis was initially conceived as an exercise in waterfront development; the neighborhood was an afterthought. Further research and observation led to the conclusion that connection of the waterfront development as a way to enhance the neighborhood would be crucial. As the neighborhood grew in importance to the thesis, it became vital to seek community input to gain further understanding of the needs, concerns, and desires of this community.

Feedback from the community came in the form of personal interviews with residents and stakeholders including business owners; professionals including Aubrey Thagard, Ward 8 Planner from the DC office of planning, and Diane Sullivan, project director from the Anacostia Waterfront Corporations; local leaders including pastors and Advisory Neighborhood Committee (ANC) members; feedback was also generated through attendance to community meetings and observation of community listservs. The conclusions based upon the community feedback can be summarized in the following chart (figure 39):

#### Summary of Points from Community Feedback:

- -1) The desire to see Anacostia Park remain as open as possible with recreational facilities and ball fields for the neighborhood's youth. As well as public spaces that might foster public gatherings such as an amphitheater or "small stadium" for public use. Other residents expressed the desire to see other uses along the river including bicycle lanes, riverwalks, and water sports (rowing, canoeing, etc.).
- -2) The desire for the park to maintain and increase its connection to the neighborhood, but not just physically. One resident acutely expressed concern about the fact that the park is generally referred to as "Poplar Point" which is only a portion of what is legally named Anacostia Park.
- -3) Many of the business owners expressed the concern that new retail development would do little to enhance the existing retail corridors along Martin Luther King, Jr.. Ave and Good Hope Rd. It was stated that "big box retail" would merely reinforce the disconnect that already exists. But if there were to be new commercial development many several residents expressed the desire to see more small business opportunities and restaurants.
- -4) Residents (homeowners and renters) expressed concern about the need for affordable housing for residents of all income brackets. One resident pointed out the perception of members of the community that housing vouchers are being given to low income residents with the hopes that they will move to southern Prince George's County and Charles County, MD stating "they're going to move them all over there, then build a huge fence so they can't come back."
- -5) Finally, residents and stakeholders alike pointed out the communities need for more social, cultural, and civic institutions. Recreation and community centers would work in conjunction with potentially new educational facilities by providing after school activities. Cultural institutions would help satisfy the communities desire for the neighborhood to maintain connection to its rich cultural history in the midst of new development, especially its two key historical African-American figures Frederick Douglass and Benjamin Banneker, and could also work in conjunction with new educational facilities to educate youth and adults alike about these areas of the community's history. One resident pointed to the need to develop a plan that would allow the new park development to enhance the rich heritage and history of Anacostia.

#### Figure 39: Community Feedback Summary

The feedback reflects the community's main concerns and desires for their neighborhood. Their concerns — better connection to the park, affordable housing, compatible retail, and institutions to promote history and for communal gatherings — are duly noted and must be addressed in the urban design and building program / design of this thesis.



Figure 40: November 28, 2006 Community Meeting at Matthews Memorial Baptist Church [Powell] There were more than 150 Anacostia residents and stakeholders present at the meeting. This reflects the residents' desire to see their community improve.



Figure 41: Ward 8 resident Kalem Umrami [Powell]

Mr. Umrami points out the need to protect the rich heritage of Anacostia and questions how that can be achieved in conjunction with new development along the waterfront.

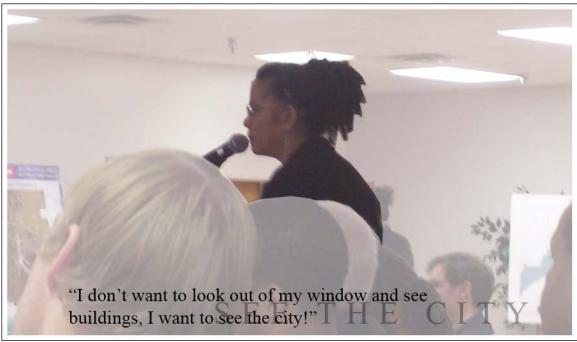


Figure 42: Anacostia resident Arnell Greer [Powell]

Ms. Greer expresses concern that new, tall buildings will eliminate the views that residents currently enjoy, and thus lose one of the most charming aspects of the area.



Figure 43: Ward 8 resident Diane Daniels [Powell]

Ms. Daniels expresses her concern that the proposed Skidmore Owings and Merrill master plan for Poplar Point does not place enough emphasis on the memorial gardens for one of Anacostia's most important historical figures, Frederick Douglass.

It was also important to gain perspective about Anacostia from design professionals. Personal interviews conducted with Diane Sullivan – Poplar Point project director from the Anacostia Waterfront Corporation – and Aubrey Thagard – Ward 8 planner with the Washington, DC office of planning – are summarized in figures 44 and 45 respectively.

#### Summary of Points from Diane Sullivan's Feedback:

- -1) She made the observation that development on Anacostia Park near the river had the potential to be an economic catalyst for this area which is the most troubled, economically, in the city. This supports the notion that in order to fully capitalize on this opportunity the park must have better connection to Anacostia. Overcoming the highway and the socio-economic differences between new and old will be key.
- -2) She explained that the Anacostia Waterfront Corporation sees an opportunity for the park to have a character similar to Millenium Park in Chicago. Such a character, on a smaller scale would allow cultural and civic institutions related to Anacostia and / or its history to create connection between Anacostia and Anacostia Park.
- -3) She pointed out that the Federal Land Transfer Legislation, which will ultimately allow for development calls for the following:
  - -(2) Federal Memorial Sites
  - -70 acres of parkland
  - -Relocation of the National Park Service Offices

#### Figure 44: Diane Sullivan Feedback Summary.

While Ms. Sullivan's focus is development of Anacostia Park & Poplar Point, she points out the need for an economic catalyst for Anacostia, which Anacostia Park development has the potential to be. The big ideas that she points to are the possibility and need for connection between the park and the neighborhood and the potential for cultural institutions –museums, memorials, etc—to play a role in creating such connection. As a design professional, she supports the contention of residents and stakeholders that connection to the waterfront will be key to the economic future of Anacostia.

### Summary of Points from Aubrey Thagard's Feedback:

- -1) He made the observation that in order to boost the economic status of the area that there needed to be more residents in the area, preferably middle-class residents in order to break up the high concentration of poverty in the area. This supports the notion that there needs to be more affordable housing to allow for an increase in the number of middle-class residents.
- -2) He pointed out that residents are generally proud of the community and value the history, views, and character of the homes in the Historic district. This supports the notion that Anacostia has a rich heritage that could be enhanced with the introduction of civic institutions which promote the neighborhood's history.
- -3) He recognized that many residents will be skeptical about new development in the area as they may be potentially displaced. He pointed out that new development needed to include a mixture in the housing types in terms of pricing as well as mixed-use development which would bring more jobs to the area. This supports the notion that there should be housing for residents of all income brackets, as well as a need for more commercial as to provide jobs to support the influx of new residents. Finally this point begins to suggest the need for a place that brings different members of the community together and promotes social interaction between a cross-section of residents.

#### Figure 45: Aubrey Thagard Feedback Summary.

Mr. Thagard's main focus was the economic growth of Anacostia. The high concentration of low-income residents, which began during the 1950s has been a major concern for five decades. Mr. Thagard recognizes that change is coming and points out the need for housing to support residents of various economic backgrounds, jobs to support new residents, as well as the need for cultural and social institutions which promote the history of Anacostia and provide places for interaction between a more diverse cross-section of residents.

While there were a wide variety of views expressed by the multiple community members, several key ideas came out of their feedback which is important to explore during the design phase of this thesis. First of all, the area has a rich cultural history which is tied to the Anacostia Historic District. At the urban design scale, this begins to suggest that new development should be respectful of the scale and materiality of the Historic District. At the architectural scale, it might begin to suggest a building program that is somehow related to the history of the place, which would allow for a heightened understanding of the history of Anacostia. It also begins to suggest a location which

takes advantage of proximity to both Anacostia Park and the Anacostia Historic District thus physically bridging and metaphorically bridging the historic district to new development. A building program which, as Putman puts it "bridges", would allow social interaction between residents of Anacostia and its new development, thus bringing residents of diverse age and socio-economic background together, thereby strengthening the new community. Chapter 3 explores a building program for the Frederick Douglass community center which satisfis all of these conditions.

Gentrification was a term that many shareholders brought up; not just residents, but business owners as well. This might begin to suggest housing which accommodates existing and potential residents of various income levels. The scale of which should be sensitive to the scale of the Historic District. Commercial development should not only include professional offices but should also incorporate white collar industry as well as service industry in order to create a variety of job types for residents and services provided for this community. Therefore, chapter 3 explores urban design program which satisfies these conditions.

**Chapter 3: Program** 

#### URBAN DESIGN PROGAMMING:

The urban design focus area of this thesis consists of 195 acres of land extending from Martin Luther King, Jr Ave to the south, Suitland Parkway and the new South Capitol St Bridge to the west, Good Hope Rd to the east and the Anacostia River to the north. This thesis accepts the re-alignment of the South Capitol St Bridge as slated by the National Capitol Planning Commission (refer to figure 5) as a starting point for urban design. The intention of the urban design intervention is to increase housing and retail density in order to take advantage of the location of the Anacostia Metro Station while being respectful of the scale of the Anacostia Historic District.

Of the 195 acres available, 95 acres are either part of Anacostia Park, wetlands, or the 100 year flood plain and thus will remain open space. Of the remaining 100 acres 30% or 30 acres will be dedicated to streets and other infrastructure. Assuming an average building coverage of 35% over the remaining 70 acres, there is approximately 24.5 acres of land dedicated to building footprints. The Urban design program consists of 70% single- and mulit-family housing, 20% retail and office space, and 10% civic institutions. These ranges are proposed to increase the number of residents in the area to support the proposed retail / commercial development as well as the existing retail / commercial corridors along Martin Luther King, Jr Ave and Good Hope Rd.

Housing: 3,500,000 sqft

Because of the high cost of housing in Washington, DC, and the fact that many residents of Anacostia earn well below the area median income, it is important to ensure that housing is able to accommodate residents of all income brackets. This is also

important in breaking up the high concentration of poverty which exists in Anacostia today. Housing units will be distributed over different income brackets as follows:

**Market rate housing:** 

**(25% of units)** 

These are units for households earning greater than 110% of the area median income.

**Moderate income housing:** 

(50% of units)

These are units for households earning 50-110% of the area median income.

Low income housing:

**(25% of units)** 

These are units for households earning less than 50% of the area median income.

**COMMERCIAL:** 

1,000,000 sqft

Commercial development is located across the site, but it is occurs at its highest density in proximity of the Anacostia Metro Station.

**Retail:** 

525,000 sf

Retail occurs at different scales and in conjuction with housing and office uses in order to supplement the small scale retail south on Martin Luther King Jr Ave.

**Offices:** 

475,000 sf

The office space provided will accommodate professional as well as service industry offices. The reconfiguration of the Anacostia professional offices (see figures 11 and 27) and the relocation of the National Park Service Headquarters (see figures 5 & 27). This may also include some light industrial uses.

**PARKS / OPEN SPACE:** 

95 acres (min.)

50

Park spaces include potential memorial site on Poplar Point, gardens, open green space, as well as ball fields for recreation.

**CIVIC INSTITUTIONS:** 

500,000 sf

Savoy Elementary School:

90,000 sf

Thurgood Marshall Charter High School

52,000 sf

Frederick Douglas Community Center

[WHAT ABOUT THE PARKING GARAGE? HOW MANY SPACES DOES IT CURRENTLY HOLD? WILL IT BE REPLACED, WHY OR WHY NOT? AND WHERE IN THE URBAN DESIGN WILL IT GO?]

#### **URBAN DESIGN TYPOLOGIES**

#### **HOUSING**

Newly developed housing must be respectful of the scale of Anacostia Historic District. Housing will include attached single-family units, attached multi-family units, and multi-family apartments/condos. An example of such development is the Townhomes on Capitol Hill by Wienstein & associates located in Washington, DC. Once the site of a notorious housing project, the new mixed-income development was able to remain respectful of the character and scale of Historic Capitol Hill while achieving a density of 75 people per acre; 153 units over 5 acres (refer to figures 46 and 47).

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Figure 46: Capitol Hill, Washington, DC: The Ellen Wilson Dwellings Site Plan [http://www.cdesignc.org/downloads/GMI\_washington\_study.pdf]



Figure 47: Capitol Hill, Washington, DC: The Ellen Wilson Dwellings [Powell]

#### RETAIL / COMMERCIAL

It is important for retail / commercial development to also be respectful of the scale Historic District. Retail and offices will be designed in conjunction with housing as to create mixed-use development. Mixed use may include retail-office-residential, retail-office, or retail-office. An example of this is Pentagon Row located in Arlington, VA. The development creates an urban mixed-use development near the pentagon city metro station. The development reflects a scale that would be appropriate for this thesis.



Figure 48: Arlington, VA: View of Pentagon Row along Lynn St. [http://www.4wallsindc.com/virginia/post-pentagon-row/post-pentagon-row.htm]

SITE #1: MIXED-USE RETAIL AND PROFESSIONAL OFFICES

The Howard Rd site presents opportunity for high to medium density retail and

office space because of its proximity to the Anacostia Metro station. The following list

of square footages is a range meant to provide a starting point for the design phase of this

thesis. Because of the varriability of the different site strategies seen in the proceeding

chapter, actual square footages for the building are determined during the design

conclusion of this thesis

RETAIL 25% of gsf

Ground floor retail is provided in order to serve the proposed housing on and near the

Howard Rd site.

OFFICES 25-50% of gsf

Office space is provided to provide greater opportunities for current and new residents to

work where they live. Offices may accommodate the relocated National Park Services

offices.

RESIDENTIAL 25-50% of gsf

Residential units further the idea of creating density near the metro station. Units for

market-rate, moderate income and low-income follow the distribution outlined in the

urban design program (25%, 50% and 25% respectively).

CIRCULATION 20% of gsf

MECHANICAL 15% of gsf

54

#### SITE #2: THE FREDERICK DOUGLASS COMMUNITY CENTER

The Frederick Douglass Community Center is designed to be an iconic presence in Anacostia. This is not necessarily physical; rather, it is a contextual building which is iconic in terms of its programmatic function and its invocation of the memory of Frederick Douglass.

It is intended to be a building that bridges Historic Anacostia with the new development on Anacostia Park. Bridging occurs physically, as it creates a physical link which overcomes the physical barrier I-295 by engaging it. The community center is also intended to be the phenomenal bridge between Historic Anacostia and the new development as well. Robert Putnam describes this idea as creating social interactions and relationships between otherwise disassociated groups<sup>1</sup>. The community center is designed to be a place where all members of the community can gather and actively engage in the history of place.

<sup>1</sup> Putnam, Robert; *Bowling Alone* 

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#### **BUILDING PROGRAM:**

#### LOBBY/RECEPTION AREA

800 sf

The lobby is a space meant to provide access to the public programmatic elements and provides a gathering point for social functions.

#### PERMANENT EXHIBITION SPACE/GALLERIES:

1500 sf

The exhibition space will allow for the display of historical information as related to Anacostia and its place within the historical context of Washington, DC. It is meant to be a draw to both residents and non-residents of Anacostia.

TEMPORARY EXHIBITION SPACE / GALLERIES:

1000 sf

#### **COMMUNITY GATHERING SPACES:**

1200 sf

#### 3 @ 400 sf each

These will be a series of large gathering spaces as well as smaller spaces that can accommodate large community meetings, as well as smaller meetings.

#### MULTI-PURPOSE / EXHIBITION HALL

4,000 sf

This is a multi-purpose space capable of accommodating large community gatherings and meetings. The space could also function as an auditorium or community performance, possibly hold programs from nearby schools. There is a need for such spaces for the community to gather because, currently, community meetings occur in scattered locations throughout the community and generally at churches.

#### MULTI-PURPOSE ROOM STORAGE

500 sf

#### ORAL HISTORY & AFRICAN-AMERICA STUDIES LIBRARY 4,150 sf

This space is meant to provide a place for "seasoned citizens" of not only Anacostia, but also greater Washington, DC to orally recount stories of significance in African-American History. This will supplement the African-American studies library which will provide a place for individuals to educate themselves about African-American history in Washington, DC. It may also serve as a place where an individual's genealogical history may also be explored.

Library Stacks	2,000 sf
Oral History Rooms (2 @500 sf each)	1,000 sf
Reading Room	500 sf
Computer Room	350 sf
Library Storage	300 sf

#### **COMMUNITY SERVICES**

2,400 sf

These are spaces that allow for services that contribute to Anacostia. Such services may include job placement, tutoring services for youth, or a literacy center for adults. These may also be leasable spaces for the private offices of small local businesses such as the Far Southeast Family Collaborative, Inc.

#### **OFFICES / ADMINISTRATION**

700 sf

These are spaces that will accommodate the staff of the community center.

RESTROOMS 825 sf

Men: 375 sf

Women: 450 sf

STORAGE/ MAINTENANCE 1500 sf

MECHANICAL 15% of GSF

CIRCULATION 20% of GSF

<u>NSF</u> 18,575sf

<u>GSF</u> 25,076 sf

#### **EXTERIOR SPACES**

Exterior spaces to contain Frederick Douglass memorial gardens, entry plaza, and outdoor performance pavilion for 300 @ approx. 2,900 sf.

**PARKING (Not to exceed 75 Spaces )** 

# SITE #3: SMALL BUSINESS ASSISTANCE AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP CENTER

The third site anchors the small-scale commercial development along Good Hope Rd to the north. The small business assistance and entrepreneurship center will provide incubator space for entrepreneurs in the area as well as provide resources such as marketing assistance and counseling for the existing neighborhood retail along Good Hope Rd. Because of the variability of the site strategies actual square footages for the

building will be determined during the design phase of this thesis. Square footage ranges are provided as a starting point for the design phase.

#### ENTREPRENEURSHIP INCUBATOR SPACE

45% of nsf

These spaces are to serve as inexpensive spaces to provide entrepreneurs an opportunity to grow their business under a limited amount of time. Location of theses spaces varies between ground level and upper levels depending upon the focus of the business (ex. a retail focused business would occupy a ground level space).

#### **BUSINESS ASSISTANCE OFFICES**

30% of nsf

The business assistance offices will provide the necessary support for entrepreneurs in the building as well as other entrepreneurs in the immediate area. Assistance includes but is not limited to business plan, marketing, and inventory assistance.

#### PERMANENT RETAIL / OFFICE SPACES

25% of nsf

These spaces are provided to accommodate businesses that move from the short-term incubator spaces or for other local businesses.

CIRCULATION 20% of gsf

MECHANICAL 15% of gsf

**Chapter 4: Design Strategies & Examples** 

## **Urban Design**

The urban design strategies propose different ways to integrate a new street grid from the existing neighborhood to the waterfront. The strategies suggest picking up on existing geometries in order to achieve this end. These geometries are drawn from the Anacostia Historic District, the area of Washington, DC just north of the Anacostia River, as well as the highway itself.

While waterfront development is a component of this thesis, it is not the focus. Thus, land use and park character will be suggested and the poplar point site will not be designed in full architectural detail. Suggested land uses proposed by the Anacostia Waterfront Development in conjunction with Skidmore Owings and Merrill of New York as well as the Washington, DC office of planning provide a starting point for uses along the waterfront and are finalized during the design portion of this thesis.

The design goals are to redevelop the area north of Martin Luther King Jr Ave in order to create better connectivity between the historic district the waterfront and the city. The issue of what geometries allow for the greatest sense of connection between these three is explored in the initial urban design strategies and is taken a step further during the design portion of this thesis.

## **Urban Design Strategies**

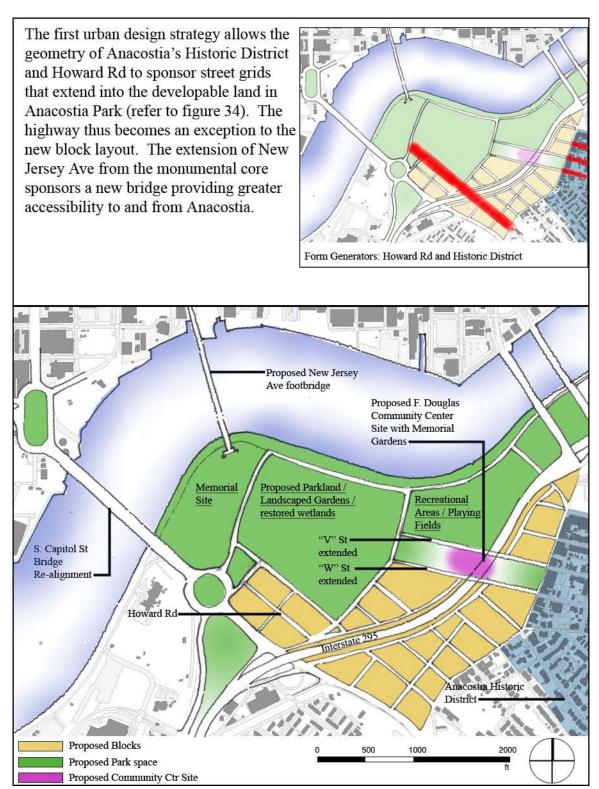


Figure 48: Anacostia, Washington, DC: Urban Design Strategy 1

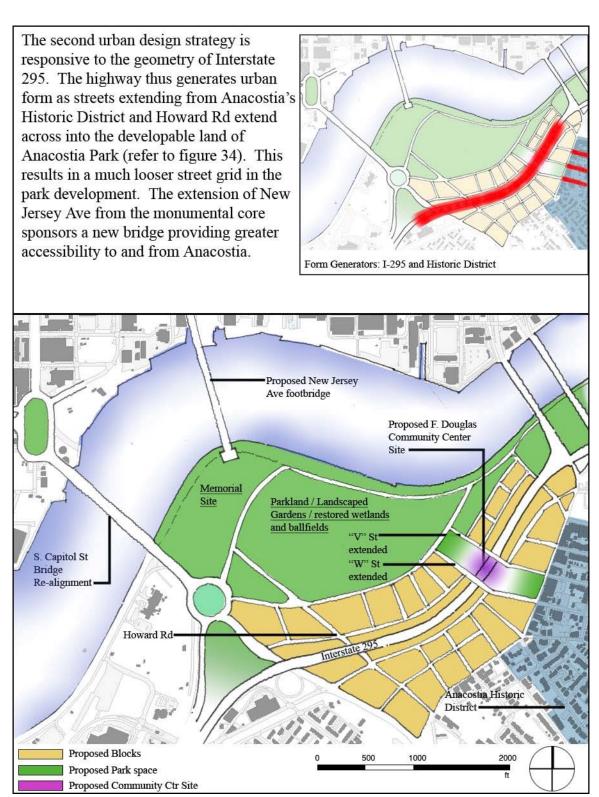


Figure 49: Anacostia, Washington, DC: Urban Design Strategy 2

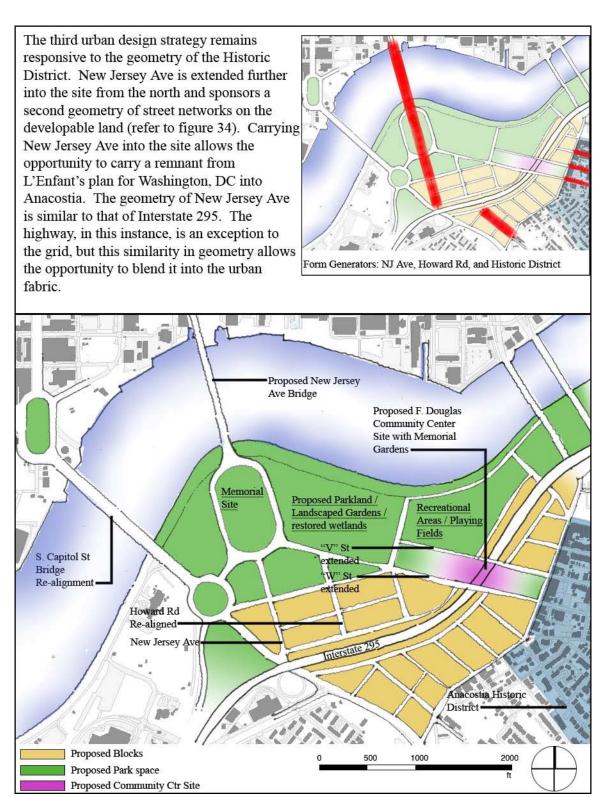
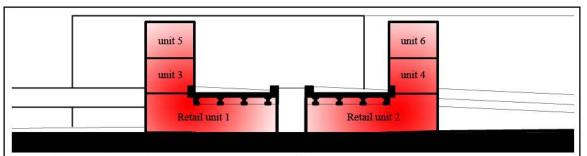


Figure 50: Anacostia, Washington, DC: Urban Design Strategy 3

## Sites #1 & 3: Design Strategies

Sites #1 and #3 share a similar sectional relationship to the highway allowing the opportunity engage the highway by building beneath and against it. These strategies propose simply building below the highway, building outboard of the highway as to submerge it, or a building outboard and beneath the building which appears to be emerging. The initial design strategies put forth in figures 47 and 48 suggest ways and site examples of just how to take advantage of this sectional relationship. The difficulty with these two sites that is made evident by the initial site strategies is dealing with the 98 foot width of the highway in order to allow light and air into the respective buildings. The strategies suggest ways to deal with this issue including modifying the highway's median to act as a skylight or light well into the respective buildings.



Howard Rd and Good Hope Rd at I-295: Option 2

Option 2 provides the opportunity to hide the highway to a degree. Commercial and possibly residential uses could occupy these spaces while presenting a much more pleasant front to the neighborhood and the park than that which exists today.



[http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/2/29/McCormick\_Tribune\_060304.jpg]

The McCormick Tribune Student Center on the campus of IIT in Chicago, IL by Rem Koolhas illustrates the manner in which a building might begin to address a physical barrier outbourne of the structure.



Figure 51: Anacostia, Washington, DC: Howard Rd & Good Hope Rd Design Strategy 1

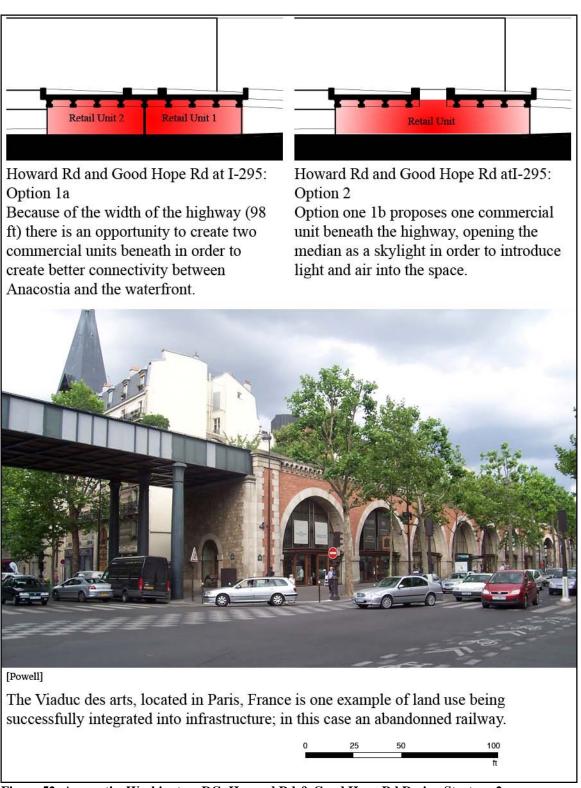


Figure 52: Anacostia, Washington, DC: Howard Rd & Good Hope Rd Design Strategy 2

## Site #2: Design Strategies

Initial design exploration of site 2 provide strategies for dealing with the two-sided nature of the Frederick Douglass Community Center by placing appropriate frontage on the neighborhood side and park side of the highway. The strategies explore a two building approach linked by a bridge, a singular building with uses on the ground and second levels which bridge the highway and the placement of all programmatic uses above the highway raising the building off of the ground plane.

The initial design strategies reveal some of the major issues that must be dealt with during the design portion of this thesis. The first major issue is dealing with the elevation needed to cross the highway. All three of the parties suggest different approaches to this issue. The second major design issue that the initial strategies reveal is finding the appropriate placement for program on either side of the highway. All three of the initial strategies deal with this issue in a similar fashion by placing the galleries on the park side of the highway, while trying to place community functions on the existing neighborhood side of the park. The merits of these strategies are also explored further during the design portion of this thesis.

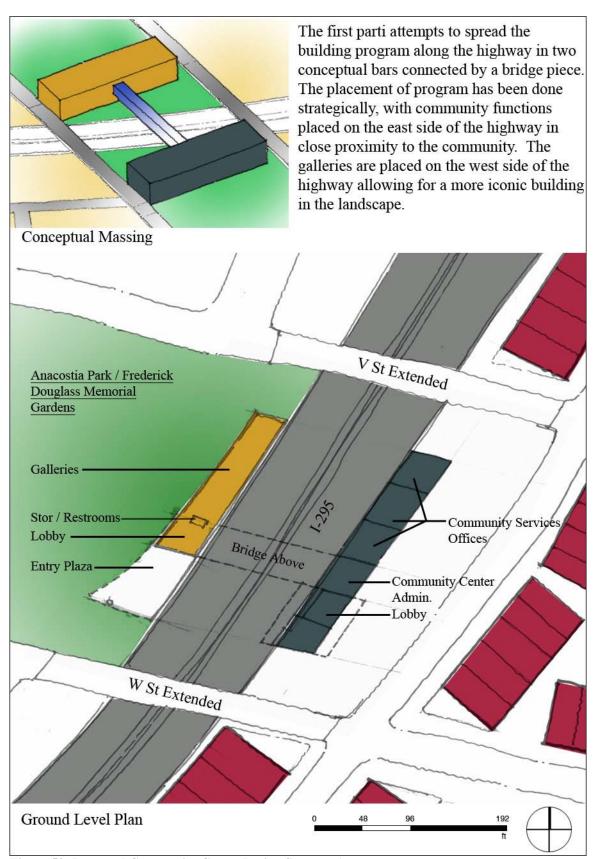


Figure 53: Proposed Community Center Design Strategy 1

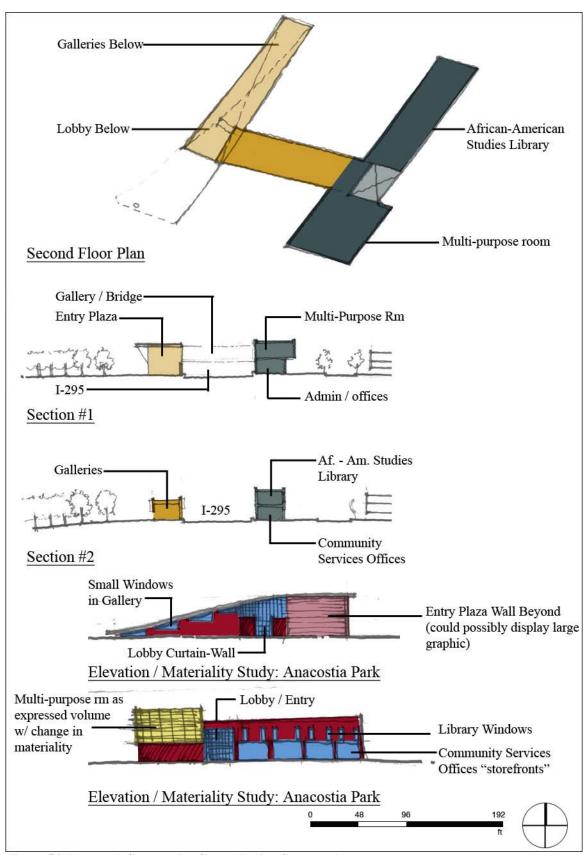


Figure 54: Proposed Community Center Design Strategy 1

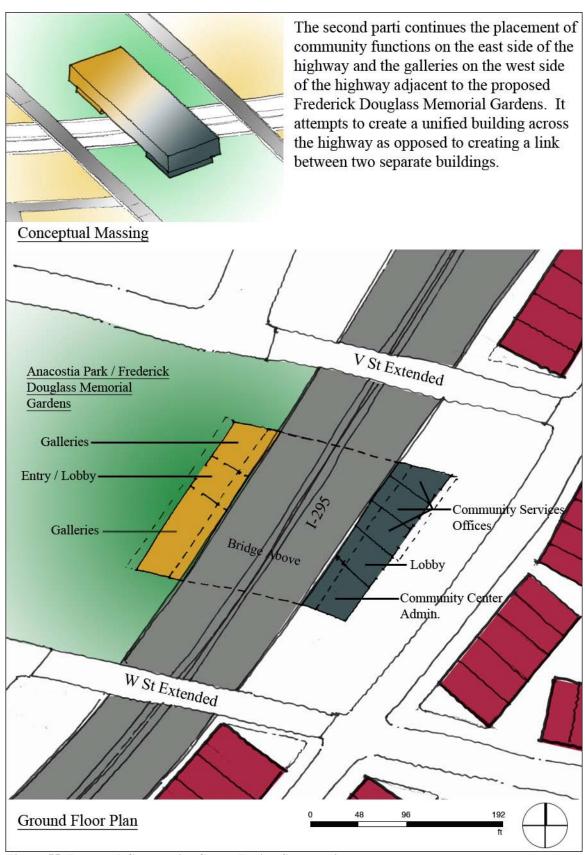


Figure 55: Proposed Community Center Design Strategy 2

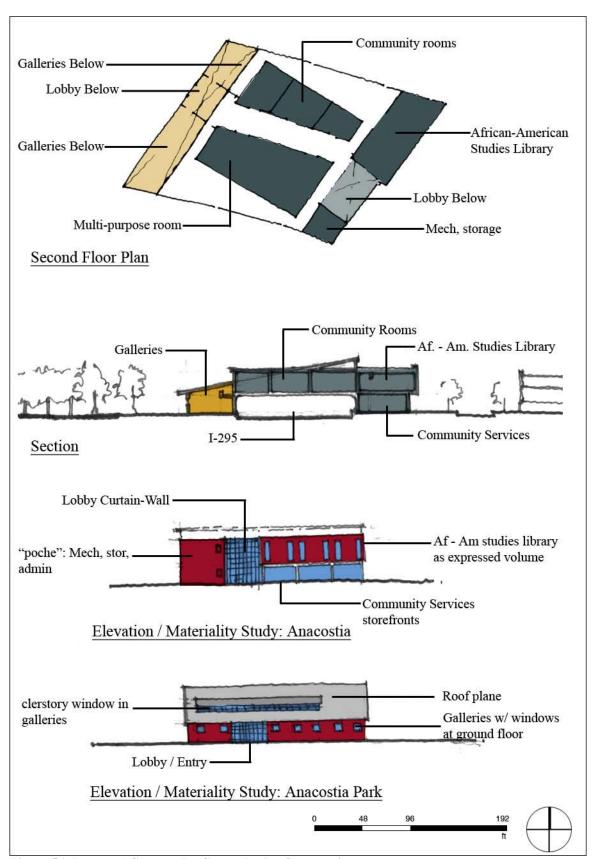


Figure 56: Proposed Community Center Design Strategy 2

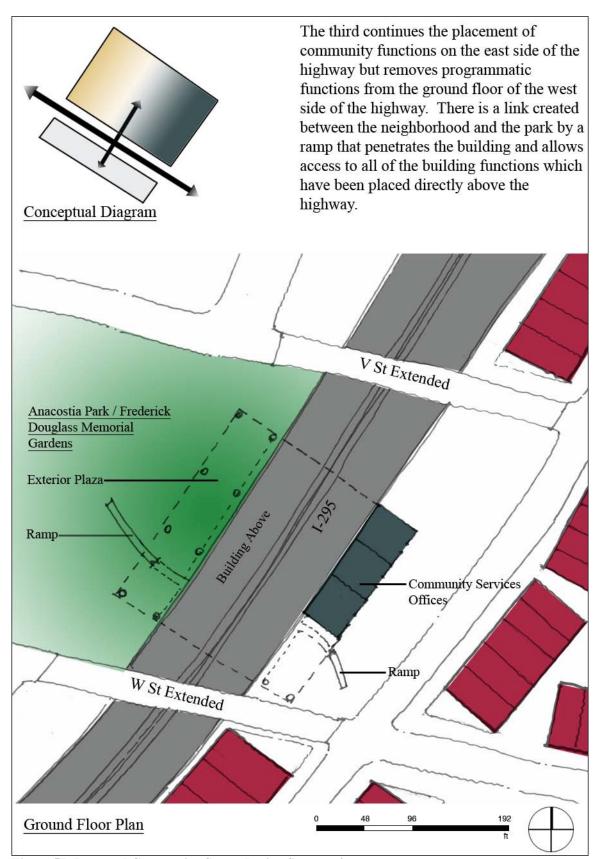


Figure 57: Proposed Community Center Design Strategy 3

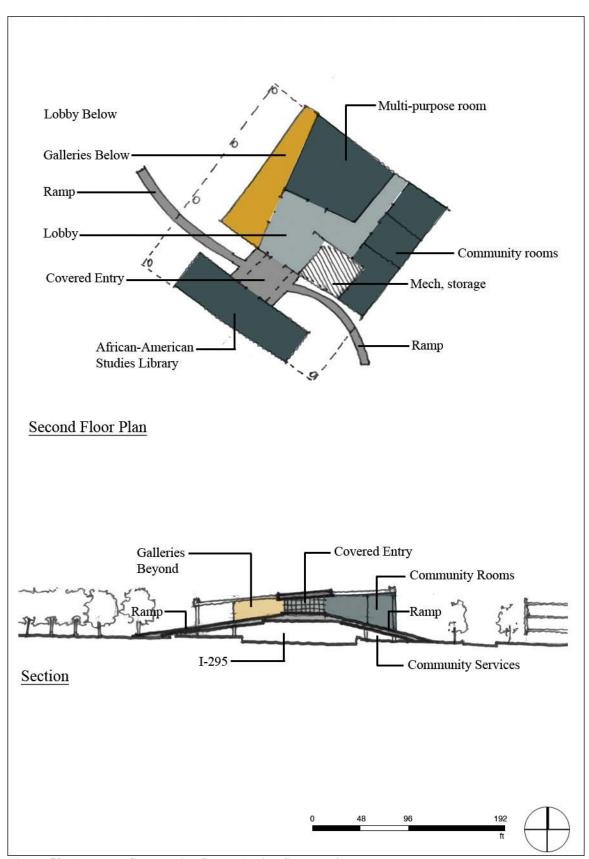


Figure 58: Proposed Community Center Design Strategy 3

**Chapter 5: Anacostia – Barriers & Conclusions** 

The design semester of the thesis became a way to address the three-fold barriers that separate Anacostia from Washington, DC proper. It is concluded that these barriers are physical, perceptual, and socio-economic. The thesis proposes interventions at the urban design and architectural scale as the means to address these three issues.

The urban design scale was used to address the physical barriers. The main objectives were to create better access to and from Anacostia, create connection between the core of Anacostia and the area of the city across the water, create a critical mass of development which would allow for a greater housing stock which would take advantage of the Metro station and allow for a mix of housing for residents of various income levels.

To achieve this end, a new bridge extending from New Jersey Ave at the capitol is brought into the site terminating at a memorial site. Stemming from the memorial site W St is extended from the historic district out to the waterfront also terminating at the memorial site. Density is focused near the metro station on Howard Rd and this area is redeveloped in order to create more connection between the existing street pattern and that of the new development. In regards to Howard Rd, scale was a major issue. One of the concerns expressed by the community was the relationship of the scale of any new development and the existing fabric. The decision was made to create taller buildings but to step them back after roughly 55' which was the height of the tallest building in this redeveloped area.

The last major portion of the Urban design was to address the second major barrier in the area: I-295. There was some debate as to the best way to address this issue. The idea of burying the highway, much like that in Boston, was rejected. One issue was

the potential issue of burying the highway because of the underground metro tunnel. Secondly, on the site there is only a half mile stretch opposed to two miles. Thus you would still be losing the land where it was necessary for the highway to re-emerge. Allowing more cross streets, opposed to the current condition of only two provided a greater opportunity to get at the heart of the thesis – CREATING CONNECTIONS.

These observations led to the decision to rebuild the stretch of the highway between two of the major streets in the area, Good Hope Rd and Suitland Parkway. Along with creating greater connectivity it provided opportunity to reverse the nature of this barrier and use it to create identity and threshold from park to "Anacostia". The highway was raised to a consistent height allowing for a flexible system of buildings to be built beneath it in the area closest to the existing second metro entry. The system of buildings would allow for retail / office space for small business entrepreneurs at all levels in a prominent location within the design. Further northwest, this system would become two park pavilions housing tools and supplies for the grounds of the park and gardens as well as recreational rentals for the larger parkscape such as bikes, sports equipment and rollerblades.

The roof structures of the buildings are separated from the underside of the deck of the highway and anti-vibration bearings are placed at the building's supports in order to address issues of vibration. A concrete structure was used for the highway in order to create mass to absorb sound and sound attenuation panels were introduce around the highway to assist in noise control as well. A baffling system along the sides of the highway has a three-fold purpose - to distort the view of the highway, assist with sound control, and create a sense of threshold to a driver along this portion of the highway.

Between these two is the focus building for this thesis, the Frederick Douglass neighborhood and heritage center. It is located along W St in order to create a "civic network in concert with the Douglass Mansion and the new memorial site. The building became a problematic portion of the thesis as its exact program and exact site configuration remained undetermined for half of the semester. A word of advice for anyone in thesis: NAIL DOWN YOUR SITE PRIOR TO FOURTH MEETING! The Douglass Center was also a way to address one of the major theoretical underpinnings of the thesis – the idea of social bridging, which is to creating networks or interaction between individuals who might otherwise have no interaction.

The buildings program includes an African-American studies library with oral history rooms, genealogical research center and reading rooms. Galleries for traveling and temporary exhibition space as well as permanent collections / archives spaces which would be open to the public. The center also includes gathering space for residents and public assembly, and services for community residents – including job training and health and human services. These building components are linked by a central spine, centered on the highway which houses permanent exhibition space relating the story of Anacostia and one of its most important historic figures, Frederick Douglass.

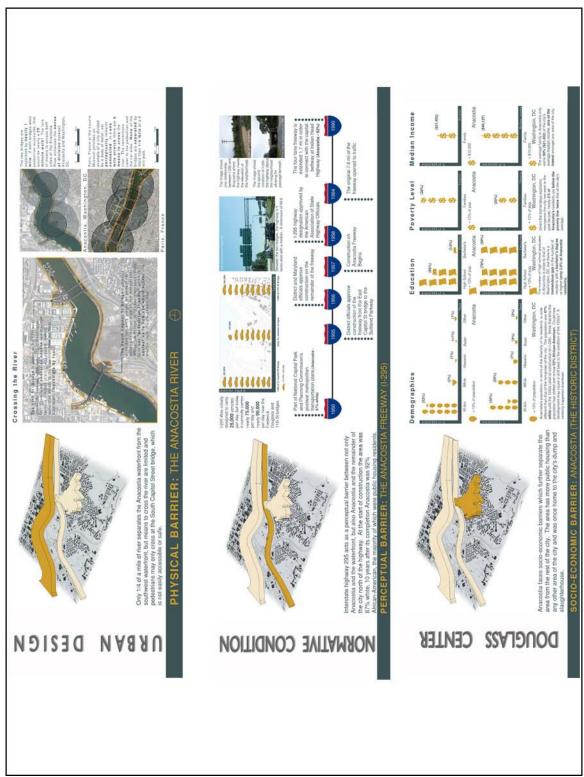


Figure 52: Three-fold barriers facing Anacostia



Figure 53: Urban Design Proposal



Figure 54: Density and Walkability diagrams

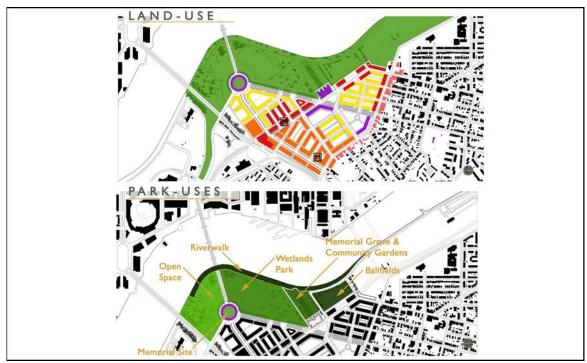


Figure 55: Building and Park Land-use diagrams

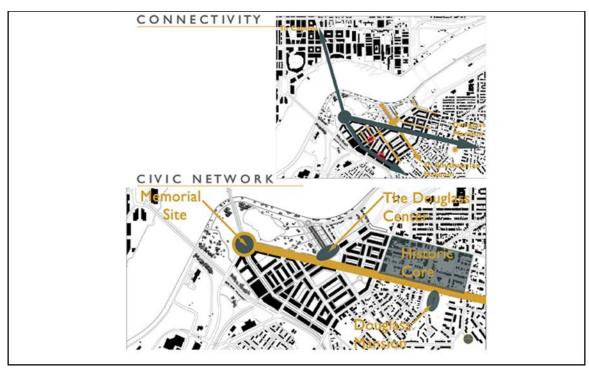


Figure 56: Connectivity & Civic Network Diagram



Figure 57: New Jersey Ave Bridge Section and Perspective



Figure 58: W St Section and Perspective

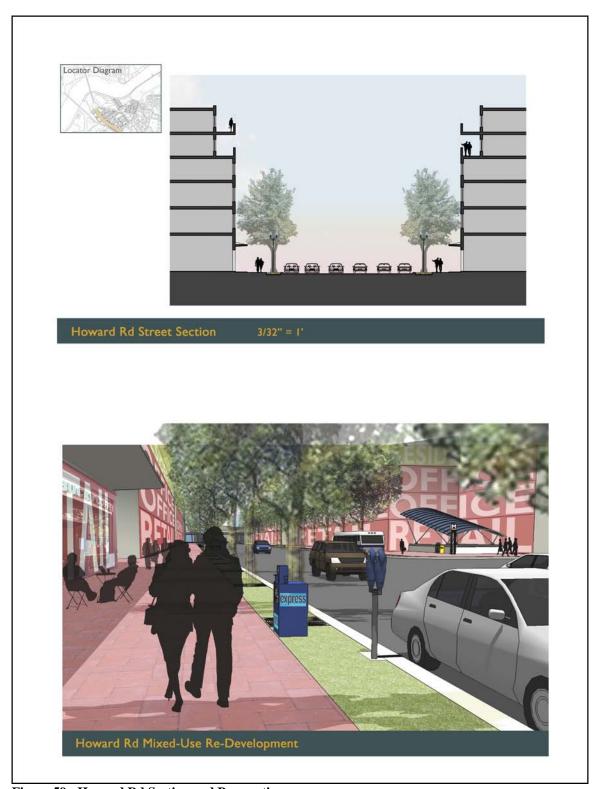


Figure 59: Howard Rd Section and Perspective

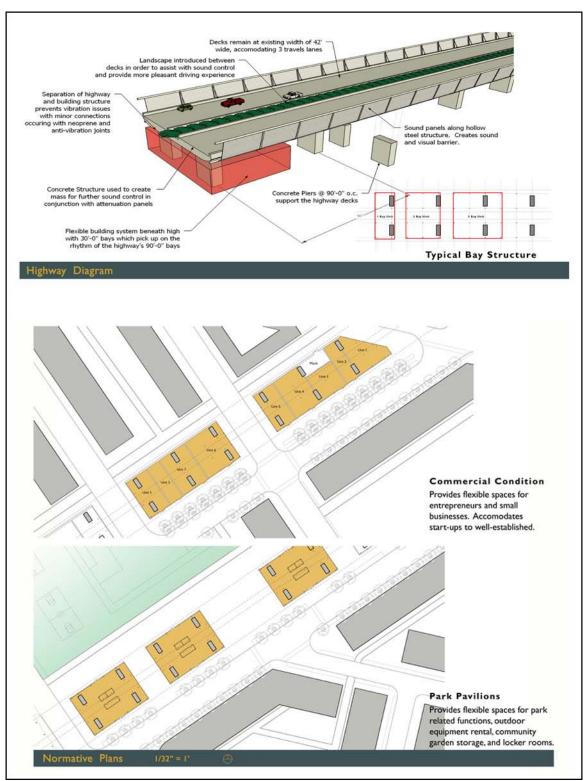


Figure 60: Highway Design Diagram and Normative Condition Plans

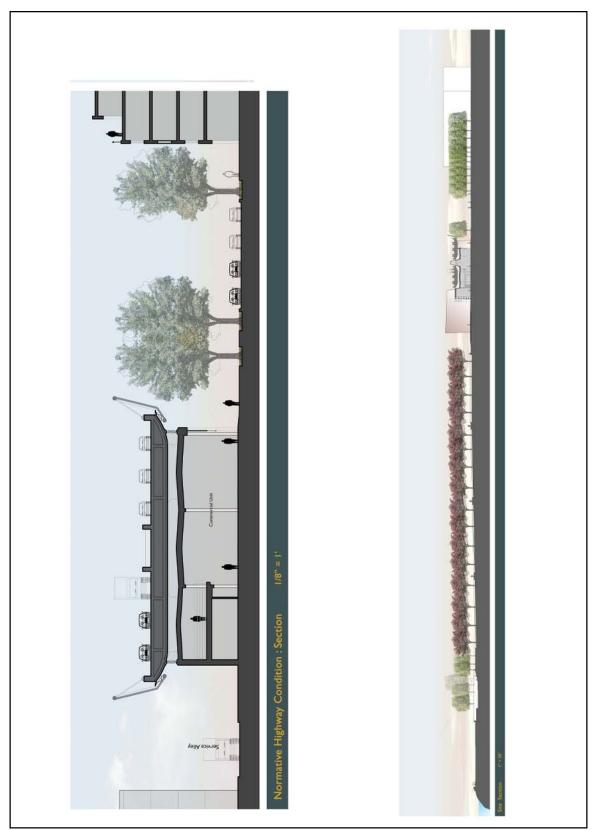


Figure 61: Normative Highway Condition Section and Site Section

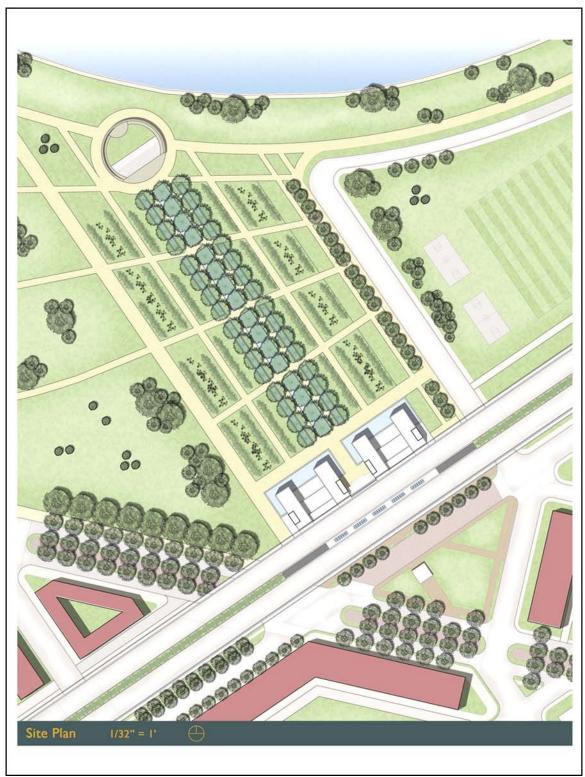


Figure 62: Douglass Center Site Plan

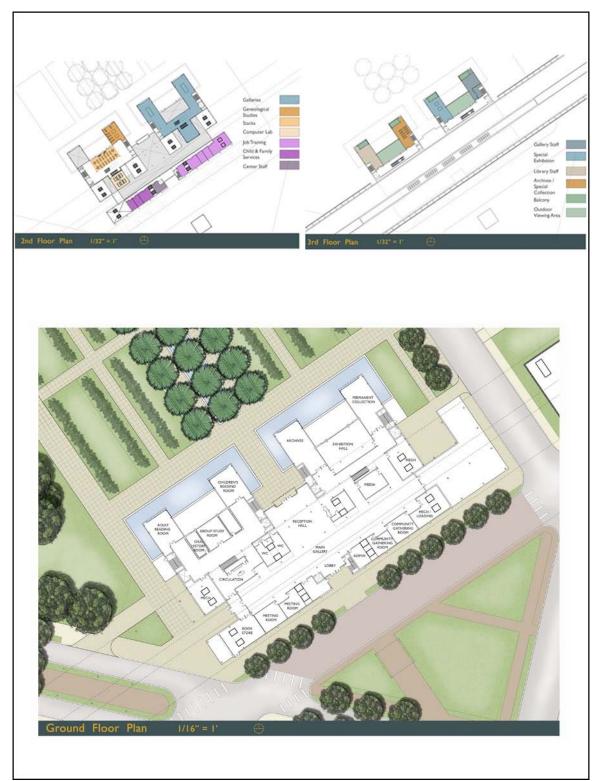


Figure 63: Douglass Center Floor Plans



**Figure 64: Douglass Center Building Sections** 



Figure 65: "Bridge" Gallery Perspective and Anacostia approach Perspective



Figure 66: Douglass Grove View from Balcony and Douglass Grove Building Approach

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