

11th Street Bridge Park

Identifying Community and Economic Development Opportunities



Virginia Tech
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2. Small Businesses in Anacostia

This section examines the role of small businesses in Anacostia and how they might play a role in the Bridge Park to ensure and incentivize local hiring practices and capture value within the surrounding area. While Section 1 generally considers both sides of the river, Anacostia was chosen as the unit of analysis in Section 2 for two reasons. First, the neighborhood has the closest commercial district to the Bridge Park's eastern end. This area is well positioned to benefit from Bridge Park visitors who might extend their visit beyond the Bridge Park itself. Second (and as previous sections have discussed), the Anacostia neighborhood sits among others with lower household incomes; partially as a result, the area has fewer retail destinations than other parts of DC. With this in mind, Anacostia has the greatest room for retail growth that could result from Bridge Park visitors.

This section is broken into three subsections. Sub-Section 2.1 offers an overview of the small business community and summarizes our research and interviews. Sub-Section 2.2 examines short and long-term strategies that may help Anacostia leverage the opportunities of the Bridge Park. Sub-Section 2.3 concludes with recommendations based on research, interviews and discussions.

2.1 Analysis of Current Conditions and Opportunities of Anacostia

This assessment of the current state of small businesses in Anacostia includes information from a variety of sources: a review of articles in the local press focused on small business and Anacostia was conducted; the business database ReferenceUSA was utilized to understand the composition of existing businesses; and interviews with key stakeholders in Washington, DC and Anacostia were conducted. The following is a summary of the major findings and themes.

2.1.1 Press Coverage

Press coverage of the businesses community in Anacostia has largely focused on the lack of sit-down restaurants and has framed the attraction and success of restaurants as the bellwether of the neighborhood's turnaround (Schwartzman 2012). The openings of Big Chair Coffee and Grill and Uniontown Bar and Grill were heralded as signs of the neighborhood's changing market; when they closed, they became signs of the neighborhood's failure (Muller 2011). Now that both have reopened under new owners, they are once again portrayed as signs of hope for Anacostia's future.

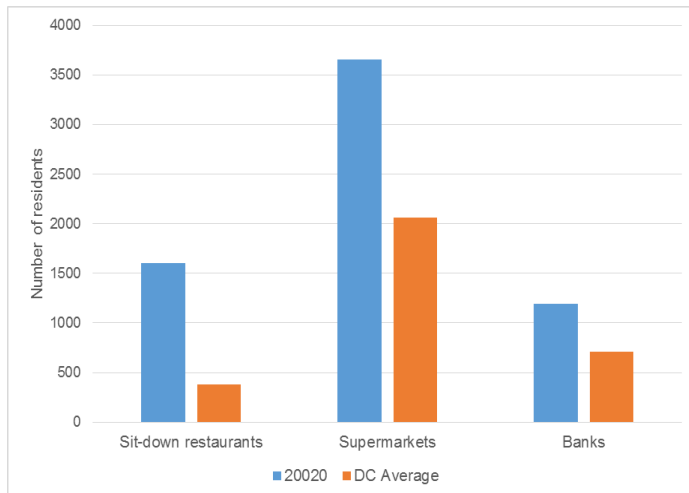
Press coverage also details some skepticism about the market for sit-down restaurants in Anacostia. In an article in The Washington Post, some prominent Washington, DC restaurateurs expressed doubts about this market opportunity. Paul Cohn, owner of the twenty year old, successful downtown DC restaurant Georgia Browns, told The Washington Post that he decided against opening a restaurant in Anacostia because of the lack of nighttime foot traffic on MLK Avenue. Similarly, early H street restaurateur, Joe Englert, suggested that the neighborhood was not ready for investment (Schwartzman 2012). The recent failure of an organic market also raises questions of the market potential in Anacostia. YES! Organic Market, which opened in Anacostia in 2010 with the help of a \$900,000 grant from the DC government, closed shop in 2012 after reportedly never having a profitable month (O'Connell 2012).

The tone and the focus of the press coverage send an overall message that Anacostia is still an undesirable business location. For example, a January 2013 Greater Greater Washington article does little to entice shoppers to visit:

With these circumstances in mind, can Anacostia attract the types of businesses (independent or not) that might draw visitors from the Bridge Park? To help answer this, it was necessary to deploy the criteria provided in the Vibrant Streets Toolkit. In short, the Toolkit consolidates key criteria that retailers seek when determining the neighborhoods in which to locate. (Please see Section 2.2.1 for an explanation of this resource).

For this analysis, the area within a half-mile and a full mile from the neighborhood center was examined. This radius was used to capitalize on available statistics about the neighborhood from the Washington, DC Economic Partnership. Table 2.1 includes some criteria from the Toolkit as well as Anacostia characteristics within the two radii.²

Figure 2.2. Residents per business type in Washington, DC and zip code 20020



Source: Reference USA. 2014.

Table 2.1. Minimum conditions for urban retail submarkets.

Criteria	Minimum Conditions for Urban Retail Submarkets		Anacostia	
	Food and Beverage	General merchandise, apparel, furnishings, & other	0 – ½ mile	0-1 mile
Population	At least 7,500 within ½ mile	At least 30,000 within 1 mile	10,474	29,621
Educational Attainment – Bachelor’s Degree or higher	At least 25% of residents	At least 30% of residents	13%	13%
Median Household Income	At least \$45,000/year for households within ½ mile	At least \$50,000/year for households within 1 mile	\$34,808	\$31,976
Metro Accessibility	A Metro stop w/in 3 blocks	Metro accessibility often irrelevant	Anacostia station	Anacostia station
Vehicular Traffic Counts	At least 7,500 vehicles per day	At least 15,000 vehicles per day	10,200-15,300 15,400 63,000-87,600	Good Hope Rd SE MLK Jr. Ave SE I-295

Source: Streetsense 2012.

In some respects, the area closest to the Bridge Park (within ½ mile of Anacostia’s center) fares well. It has over 10,000 people within ½ mile, a Metro station three blocks away, and over 15,000 vehicles per day along Martin Luther King Jr. Avenue and over 10,000 vehicles per day along Good Hope Road (WDCEP 2014a). This suggests that the area has the minimum criteria to support sit-down restaurants

² The Vibrant Streets Toolkit includes the following criteria that retailers use to assess a potential location: population, median household income, daytime population, educational attainment, pedestrian counts, Metro accessibility, vehicular traffic counts, level of retail competition, and cannibalization (i.e. when a new store opens and threatens to reduce the sales of an existing store).

(part of the “food and beverage category”). However, the median household income of roughly \$35,000 significantly lags behind the income threshold, as does the education attainment rate of 15% with Bachelor’s degree or higher. And, when considering the minimum requirements for general merchandise, apparel, furnishings, and other items, the area does not meet those of education attainment nor median household income.

This quick analysis shows that Anacostia has some pieces in place to support the business types previously shown as lacking: sit-down restaurants and general merchandise (grocery stores included). Additional economic analysis is needed to show whether potential Bridge Park visitors can “make up for” the difference between the neighborhood’s current socio-economic characteristics and what retailers are seeking; that is, these visitors might have sufficient spending power to support restaurants and even merchandise retailers. Additionally, art assets (discussed below) and the Bridge Park itself could serve as important draws to capture additional spending power.

2.1.3 Interviews with Key Stakeholders

Key information sources for our analysis were interviews with stakeholders in Washington, DC and the Anacostia neighborhood specifically (see references for individual sources). Across the interviews, certain themes emerged as necessary to create an environment for small businesses and entrepreneurs to thrive. These themes included:

- The need for a clean, attractive business environment
- The opportunity that the arts-focused businesses present in Anacostia to attract visitors and customers
- The need for a centralized organizing body to galvanize local stakeholders.

2.2 Best Practices and Recommendations

2.2.1 Metrics-Based to Needs Assessment

The findings suggest that the business adage “you can’t manage what you can’t measure” may also apply when developing a small business community. To chart a path to growth, you first need to understand current conditions and – just as importantly – the extent to which those conditions do or do not meet small business needs. It is important to ask: does a neighborhood have the population, income levels, and traffic that retailers need in order to open businesses? Fortunately, a resource exists that helps all community stakeholders answer those questions: the Vibrant Streets Toolkit.

In 2009, DC Office of Planning (DCOP) acted on a long-running concern about losing retail spending to surrounding jurisdictions. DCOP sought to create a metrics-based tool through which its current retail clusters could be measured; this tool could be provided to community leaders, neighborhood residents, and business owners to benchmark whether a street could attract particular types of businesses. Streetsense, a Bethesda-based retail design and consulting firm, consolidated a host of metrics for vibrant retail streets throughout the world. Metrics included surrounding household incomes, average daily traffic, the presence or absence of supporting community organizations, and the presence or absence of overhead power lines. What resulted from this research was an accessible document that distills the key details of business attraction and retention and charts a course for making a street more vibrant.

The Toolkit focuses on the following: components of a vibrant street; best practices in creating and maintaining a vibrant street; the criteria retailers have for locating in an area; a self-diagnostic assessment; and implementation steps. Simple metrics are listed (e.g. daytime population, retail competition, and pedestrian counts) and examples are given to help the user understand how businesses approach site selection.

The Toolkit's applicability to DC is consistently reinforced by specifying which retail streets are models for various DC streets. For example, North Market Street in Frederick, MD is a model small-scale shopping street for Georgia Avenue NW in Petworth, while Newbury Street in Boston, MA is a model destination retail street for the Dupont Circle area.

To date, the Toolkit has been used by representatives of 11 DC neighborhoods (including Anacostia) via technical assistance training sessions. Streetsense led these sessions and helped attendees assess their particular neighborhood, brainstorm opportunities for growth, and outline steps to achieve those opportunities. The technical assistance sessions in each neighborhood produced certain products; in Anacostia, these included a safe streets audit; a non-retail spatial uses assessment; a neighborhood marketing brochure; and training for neighborhood stakeholders to become volunteer retail brokers (Khan, 2014). An attendee at the pilot initiative using the Toolkit remarked, "Instead of just talking in generalizations you were actually able to have focused direct conversation...I found it to be beneficial because it was specific" (Marlowe 2013).

As mentioned, the Toolkit has already been used by some Anacostia community members. Therefore, **it is recommended that the Toolkit be continuously used to assess the current retail environment and determine what businesses the neighborhood can and cannot realistically expect to attract.** The Toolkit itself empowers all neighborhood stakeholders to measure, assess, and act on the conditions they see. Its objective measurements of successful retail areas remove the subjectivity that is sometimes brought to discussions about retail attractiveness (i.e. that an area "should" have a certain business type, like a coffee shop or a small grocery store). Stakeholders with different points of view and motivations can jointly witness the metrics Anacostia does and does not meet. Commonly defining a problem is the first step to commonly defining a solution.

2.2.2 Art District Strategies

Arts as a tool to create jobs and revitalize neighborhoods became part of the urban planning/economic development lexicon after the art-based transformation of vacant warehouses in New York's South of Houston Industrial Area, known today as SoHo (Johnson 2011). While there are many different types of art-based economic development programs (ranging from world-class art institutions, to street art, to ethnic cultural celebrations), most approaches typically share common goals to:

- Maintain or grow the economic base
- Transform place
- Attract and retain knowledge workers and residents
- Stimulate neighborhood arts and activities
- Support sustainable development (Johnson 2011)

Policies that go hand-in-hand with artists/artisan districts are artist-friendly zoning, incentives for affordable artists housing and live/work space, marketing campaigns aimed at attracting tourists,

incentives for creative incubators, and rehabilitation of vacant buildings and warehouses for art production or showcase space (Johnson 2011).

Stakeholder interviews pointed to Anacostia's budding art and culture scene as an opportunity for the neighborhood and one that could be leveraged to support the Bridge Park. Anacostia has a number of art assets within close proximity of the Bridge Park. They include:

- ARCH Development Corporation (ADC): ARCH is a community-based development organization dedicated to improving Anacostia through arts and culture. Its vision (ADC 2012) is "Creating a home for small businesses, artists, arts and cultural organizations to fulfill our commitment to the revitalization and sustainable economic development of Historic Anacostia." In addition to offering five arts studios in 2014 at a discounted rate (Anacostia Arts Center 2014), it has helped the following initiatives:
 - Anacostia Arts Center: Opened in 2013, Anacostia Arts Center has a 1,000 square foot black box theater, pop-up gallery space, five gallery or boutique spaces, a bar/restaurant, and an 800 square foot lounge ("Neighborhood Profiles: 2014 Edition" 2014).
 - Honfleur Gallery: A 1,700 square foot gallery focused on cutting edge contemporary art ("Mission" 2014).
 - LUMEN8 ANACOSTIA: A multi-week festival of art installations, pop-up galleries, and programming. It has highlighted the potential of Anacostia as a revitalized art district (DeBonis 2012). ARCH and the DCOP supported and funded Lumen8 through a \$75,000 grant (Fischer 2013). The festival attracted over 100,000 people and was seen as a major success. A second Lumen8 festival occurred in June and July 2013, while a third is planned for September 2014 and will showcase the new Anacostia Arts Center.
- Anacostia Playhouse: This is the former H Street Playhouse, which helped revitalize the H Street corridor during the 2000s. The owners decided to move to Anacostia after being priced out of H Street (DePillis 2012). The new location opened in 2013 and features a theater with 120 flexible, reconfigurable seats and serves as both a rental facility and a production organization (Anacostia Playhouse 2014).

It is recommended that these current art assets be leveraged to enhance Anacostia's small business community. To understand how art can be leveraged, this report offers an exploration of the art-focused programs in the River North District of Denver, Colorado and new artist housing and studio space in the Brookland neighborhood of Washington, DC.

2.2.2.1 River North Art District, Denver, CO

One recent example of a community where art has helped lead revitalization and attract new small businesses is Denver's River North Art District (RiNo). A local real estate and development blog (Infill 2014) described the area as follows: "for decades the River North district has been isolated from the rest of the city by a tangle of rail yards and viaducts, keeping it out of the public spotlight and off the radar screen of the development community." However, in recent years this area has been revitalizing, so much so that a 2013 *New York Magazine* travel article (Schechter 2013) advised readers to ride bicycles on the "Platte River Trail up to RiNo, a vibrant art district made up of abandoned warehouses, raw industrial spaces, and mixed-use studios."

RiNo began in 2005 as the brainchild of two gallery owners. The appeal of RiNo was that it offered affordable space for art production. This was a significant difference for Denver artists, as they were priced out of established arts-based areas of the city that became high-priced gallery and entertainment districts (Kaplan, pers. comm.). Nine years later, RiNo includes 100 small businesses and has become a major stakeholder in the city's discussions about development and infrastructure improvements in the area (Weil, pers. comm.).



Mural in RiNo.
Source: River North Art District.

From the beginning, creating a unified brand was a core focus for RiNo. It was viewed as a necessity to get foot traffic to the pedestrian unfriendly area as well as overcome public safety concerns. Interviews of RiNo's leadership indicated that the RiNo logo (a rhinoceros) was instrumental in originally getting the area recognized by the Denver community. Additionally, sculptures and murals helped activate empty streets and the sides of vacant buildings and further promote the brand. District-wide events have also helped make new consumers familiar with the area. To date, its branding efforts have been quite successful. Members of the RiNo district display a now ubiquitous orange rhino in storefront windows; its email newsletter has around 10,000 subscribers; and RiNo is the accepted name by the public, media, and development community (Kaplan, pers. comm.).

The initial artists in the neighborhood have helped shepherd in a wave of small businesses including restaurants, bars, coffee shops, and breweries. Interviews suggest a symbiotic relationship between the area's artists and new retail and service businesses. The original artists (and public art) helped revitalize the neighborhood and establish a "hip" brand, while the other retail businesses help attract new customers and dollars into the neighborhood. Additionally, the real estate community is now extremely interested in the area. Zeppelin Development was the first developer in the area and – in the early 2000s – had trouble getting traditional financiers to see the area as a good investment. Now, with five completed buildings 100 percent leased, Zeppelin has little trouble convincing financiers of the potential of the area (Woldum 2013).

The RiNo District offers a number of lessons for small business planning and arts-based development around the Bridge Park. First, vacant real estate could be marketed for artist use. Artists were initially drawn to the RiNo because it was a more affordable part of the city to locate and create art (verses just display art in galleries). Similarly, Anacostia offers affordable space to artists who may be priced out of trendy neighborhoods in DC. Economic development stakeholders in Anacostia could assess existing, vacant spaces and identify those that would be well suited for art studios. These potential spaces could be actively marketed towards artists in the region.

Second, art can be a branding tool. RiNo's focus on branding offers another important lesson for Anacostia. Like Anacostia, RiNo suffered from a lack of foot traffic and perception challenges (in this

case, the perception that it was an industrial wasteland). To this end, the artists actively engaged in creating an organization to brand itself, create buzz, and organize events. The symbol they created is promoted everywhere, from storefronts, to murals and sculptures, and events (see following section). By uniting behind a single brand, the community was able to change its narrative and promote a new image. Similarly, incorporating art into Anacostia's brand may help turn the conversation away from a focus on the lack of retail to a focus on the concentration of creative artists. As the Bridge Park is developed, it can also associate itself with art-based branding to develop a link between the Bridge Park and the neighborhood (and local businesses).

While art can be helpful in changing the narrative, it can be also be ineffective or even divisive if it is considered inauthentic. Anacostia, unlike RiNo which was largely industrial, has existing residents that need to be considered when using art as a branding tool. Additionally, art that comes across as corporate verses grassroots and artist-driven may also be problematic.

2.2.2.2 *Brookland, Washington, DC*

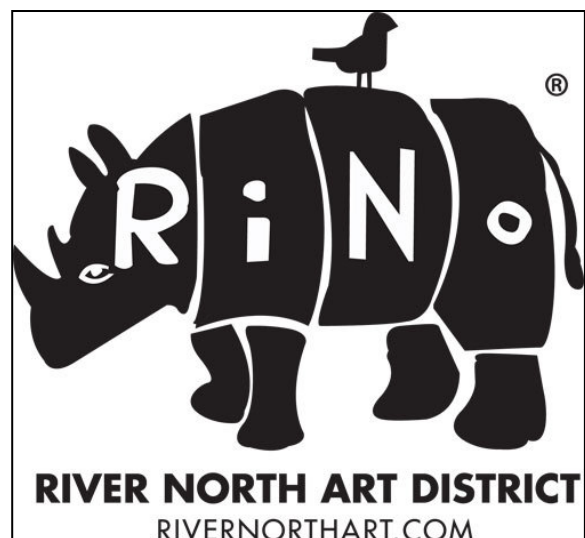
As Anacostia cultivates art entrepreneurs, the Brookland neighborhood in Washington, DC also presents a number of lessons. Since 1986 the neighborhood has been home to Dance Place, a respected dance studio and company. Building off of that success, Brookland has two recent projects devoted to attracting artists to the neighborhood.

Monroe Street Market is a privately financed mixed-use development adjacent to the Brookland/Catholic University Metro station. Opened in 2013, the development features 27 studios that line the ground floor of two adjacent buildings. The studios face a pedestrian-friendly promenade and are flanked by restaurant spaces on either end. Studios are between 300 and 625 square feet and feature concrete floor and glass windowed garage doors. Rents range from \$390-\$850 a month (CulturalDC 2014).

The creation of new studio space would provide Anacostia with a tool to attract artists who may have been inclined to consider other DC neighborhoods. Similar to Brookland's Monroe Street Market, new development slated to occur in Anacostia (see Section 1) could be leveraged to attract new art entrepreneurs and further solidify Anacostia's art brand by including art-focused features like studio space.



Brookland Arts Walk
Source: Monroe Street Market 2014



RiNo Logo
Source: River North Art District

As of Summer 2013, all of Monroe Street Market’s studios have been rented and the building has had to implement a waiting list, suggesting that there is a broader market for studio spaces in Washington (CulturalDC 2014). Just as they have done in Brookland, community leaders or developers could pursue artist-focused development in Anacostia.

Another strategy to attract new art entrepreneurs to Anacostia is to explore the creation of dedicated artist housing, similar to that of Brookland neighborhood’s Artspace. This effort is a collaboration between Dance Place, Artspace (a Minneapolis-based developer of art facilities), and the DC Department of Housing and Community Development. The development has 39 live and work artist spaces available for those whose income is up to 60 percent of the area median income. According to Artspace’s website, the building is fully occupied and the wait list for spaces is around two years, suggesting that there is demand in the District for additional units like these (Artspace 2014).



Brookland Artspace Lofts
Source: Artspace 2014

2.2.3 Use Elements on or near the Bridge Park to Draw Visitors into Anacostia

Once the nascent arts community is strengthened, **it is recommended that physical and programmatic elements be included on or near the Bridge Park itself to inspire visitors to continue into the Anacostia neighborhood.** Doing so accomplishes two objectives: first, small businesses – specifically those devoted to arts – can be featured on the Bridge Park and second, Bridge Park visitors can become Anacostia customers.

2.2.3.1 Self-Guided or Guided Tours from the Bridge Park into Anacostia

The first way to link the small business community to the Bridge Park is to install physical markers that create a path from the Park to Anacostia. Helpful examples abound. Perhaps the simplest is Boston’s Freedom Trail, in which a red line is literally painted onto the pavement, leading trail followers from one historic location to the next in the North End of the city. The distinctive line marking the trail (figure 2.3) was completed in 1958. The trail itself attracts an estimated 3.2 million people per year and is even estimated to generate over \$1 billion in annual spending (Freedom Trail Foundation n.d.).

A second example of drawing people into a neighborhood comes from the aforementioned

Freedom trail in Boston, MA.



Source: Emiliano 2014.

RiNo arts district. In May 2013, neighborhood artists participated in a neighborhood-wide open house. Central to this event was a scavenger hunt, in which visitors could find 100 custom ceramic medallions hidden around the district. This approach could be replicated in Anacostia with its own neighborhood-wide open house, preferably that would start at the Bridge Park, and its own emblematic figurine or medallion that could be hidden throughout the neighborhood.

A third method takes advantage of an existing resource: expanding the District's existing African American Heritage Trail. Managed by the non-profit Cultural Tourism DC, this particular trail is a multi-



RiNo medallion
Source: Emiliano 2014

neighborhood feature in which notable sites are designated by a plaque that includes the history of that site. There are ten sites in and around Anacostia, creating a natural backdrop against which to add a stop on the Bridge Park itself. To be sure, adding a Heritage Trail stop on the Bridge Park will be challenging from the perspective of determining what historic information (if any) can be portrayed about the Bridge Park or its vistas. Regardless, a Heritage Trail stop on the Bridge Park that – importantly – indicates where other stops occur can motivate visitors to explore Anacostia.

A guided walking tour goes one step further to assuage any trepidation about exploring a new neighborhood, as the visitor will be led by a knowledgeable guide. Furthermore, guided walking tours can lead participants to specific businesses. Models abound, including a fashion walking tour of the New York City Garment District and food tours of different Chicago neighborhoods; Anacostia itself already has one guided walking tour, given by a local historian and author. Regardless of the type, arrangements can be made to visit Anacostia art studios, coffee shops, and restaurants along the way so participants are deliberately introduced to these establishments, perhaps even meeting the business owner. This familiarity could lead to additional, future visits to that business.

Last, self-guided and guided walking tours should work with organizations that create Heritage Trails and lead walking tours. Fortunately, a single organization (Cultural Tourism DC) both designs the Trails and leads semi-annual walking tours and could therefore be a partner for these activities. Perhaps the most explicit way to include Cultural Tourism DC into the walking tour idea is to devote a small space on the Bridge Park for a visitor center. Much like the U Street Visitor Center, this space can include information about the Anacostia River and the history of the communities that run along both banks. The benefits of utilizing Cultural Tourism DC lie in its existing capabilities to research community history and create programs and communication pieces that visitors can utilize as they explore the neighborhood.

2.2.3.2 *Anacostia Artists on the Bridge Park*

The second way to link the small business community to the Bridge Park and attract visitors to Anacostia is to feature work of Anacostia artists. Art installations would be included on the Bridge Park and – crucially –



Sculpture along the High Line
Source: High Line Art

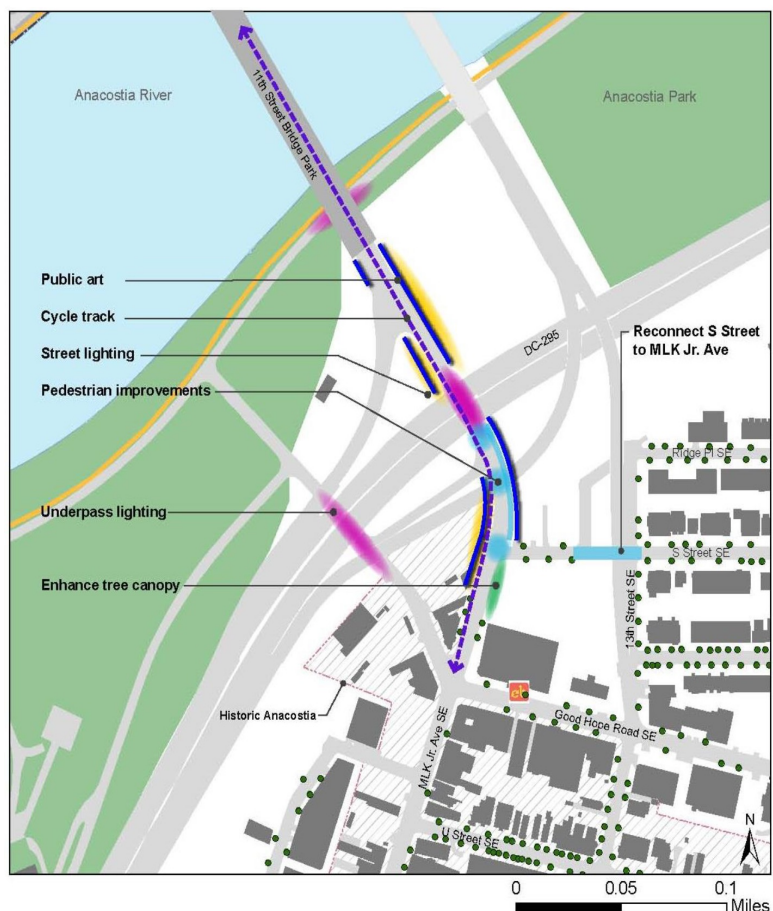
indicate that the work came from an artist whose studio is less than a ten-minute walk from the installation. Those impressed and intrigued by the art installation become potential studio visitors. The High Line in New York City is an increasingly popular example of how rotating art installations are featured along an elevated pedestrian park. Perhaps most interesting about the High Line art project is its proclaimed goal of “inviting artists to think of creative ways to engage with the uniqueness of the architecture, history, and design of the High Line and to foster a productive dialogue with the surrounding neighborhood and urban landscape” (High Line Art 2014). This initiative is supported by grants from public and private entities, including the Friends of the High Line, the New York City Department of Parks & Recreation, the Brown Foundation, and the New York State Council on the Arts.

In addition to visual art, live performing art can also be featured on the Bridge Park. The Anacostia Playhouse is emerging as the source for local, performing art, and their plays and musicals can be featured on the Bridge Park. To be specific, a troupe of actors can perform a five- to ten-minute excerpt from their show, thereby both entertaining and piquing the interest of Bridge Park visitors.

2.2.3.3 Inviting and Interesting Spaces

Lastly, points of visual interest can be installed between the Bridge Park and Historic Anacostia. These points will draw pedestrians to see and experience them, thereby bringing the pedestrians closer to the Anacostia business district and making any remaining walk much shorter and feasible. More specific recommendations can be found in the 2013 Virginia Tech report (Anderson et al. 2013), in which students analyzed and gave recommendations on how to improve the access, walkability, and wayfinding to and from the Bridge Park. As described in the report, “The gateways and entry points to the Bridge Park should be comfortable, safe, and interesting,” and “the approach from the Bridge Park should clearly define a sense of arrival” (p. 12). The report’s recommendations are presented in figure 2.3, in which a combination of public art, lighting, and general pedestrian improvements create an inviting and safe experience for getting onto the Bridge Park. Both the principles and the recommendations are equally applicable in terms of drawing visitors off of the Bridge Park and into Anacostia.

Figure 2.3. Virginia Tech Pedestrian Access Recommendations



Source: Anderson et al. 2013

In addition to pedestrian amenities, parklets can be installed in Anacostia, in areas surrounding the Bridge Park. Parklets are small, temporary installations in an on-street parking space. As the City of San Francisco describes them, parklets “(provide) a place for merchants, community organizations, business owners, and residents to take individual actions in the development and beautification of the City’s



Parklet in San Francisco, CA
Source: City of San Francisco n.d.

public realm” (City of San Francisco). Parklets can include vegetation, benches, child play areas, picnic tables, and art installations, all to improve the use of a public area.

As shown in figure 2.4, the walk between the future Bridge Park and Historic Anacostia currently has underused open spaces in which parklets could be installed (thereby deviating slightly from the San Francisco model of using on-street parking spaces). These spaces include empty lots around 1115 Good Hope Road (the building with the iconic Anacostia script sign) and directly adjacent to 1800 Martin Luther King Avenue. Both can be filled with inviting spaces, creating an intermediate destination for Bridge Park visitors before continuing into the commercial district.

Figure 2.4. Potential parklet locations (in red) near the Bridge Park

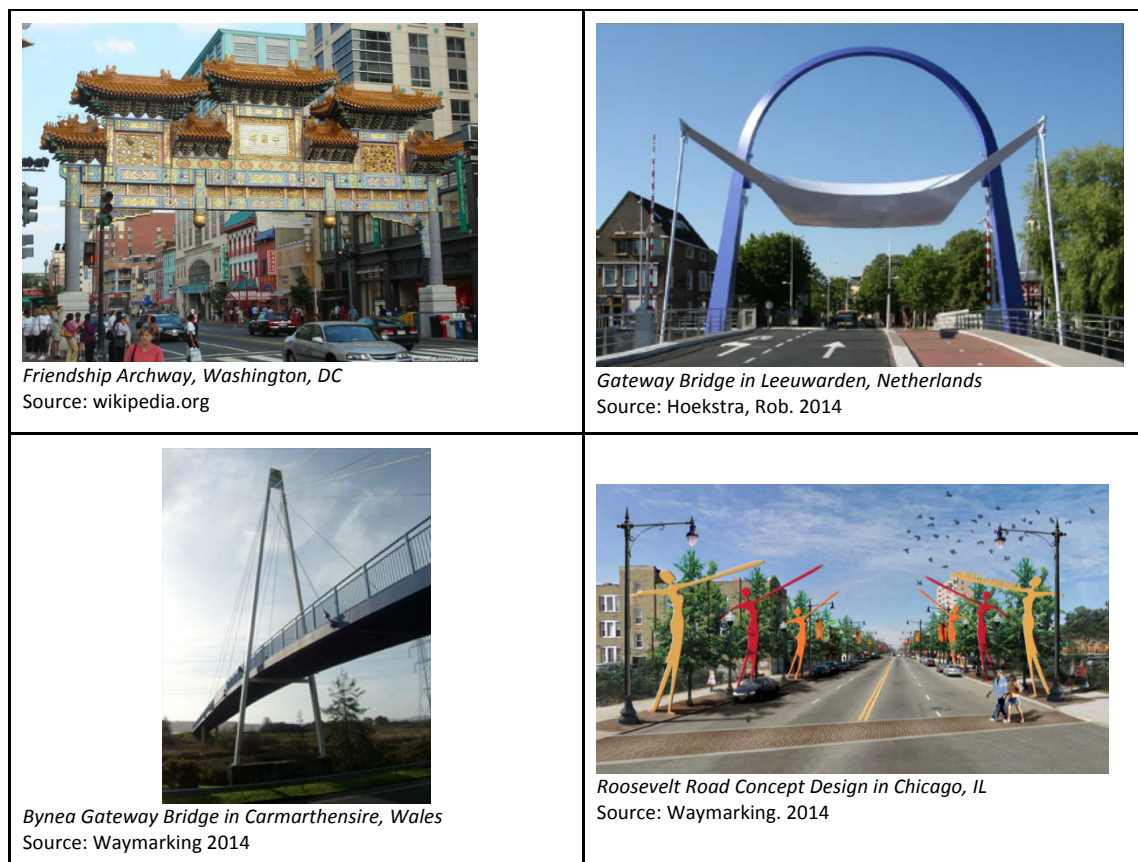


Source: Google Earth 2014

Last, a prominent gateway could be installed just beyond the Bridge Park as one enters Anacostia. Gateways have been used as physical entryways that signify an entrance to a community and are common features in special districts and parks. Gateways can be implemented in a variety of ways (see figure 2.5). They can be interpreted literally, like the Friendship Archway in DC’s Chinatown, or the Gateway Bridge in the Netherlands. They can also be interpretive, like the concept design for Chicago’s Roosevelt Road by placemaking firm Site Design Group, Ltd. The source of the gateway’s design can come from a number of places. The coordinating capacity of the Anacostia BID is well suited to organize a formal design competition, roughly modeled after the competition for the Bridge Park itself.

Alternatively (or in conjunction with the design competition), Anacostia residents could participate in community charrettes in which they brainstorm gateway ideas and/or review the competition options.

Figure 2.5: Types of gateways: non-structural, structural, and public art



2.2.4 Centralized Organizing Body

Considering the three recommendations above (measuring the business environment, leveraging the arts, and connecting the Bridge Park to Anacostia), the question remains: who could coordinate these steps?

Research on small business development strategies suggests that a unified vision, defined leadership, and strong communication are characteristics of successful programs (NJPPRI 2014; APA 2014; McConnell et al, 2012). According to the National League of Cities, strong local leadership can bring together service providers and business groups to help identify gaps, encourage collaboration, and can be a centralized information source.

A review of Washington, DC small business programs and interviews with community leaders suggest that – while there are many small business champions in DC and Anacostia specifically – an agreed upon vision has not yet taken hold in Anacostia. For example, the three major, local organizations each have a different vision for the area. These are:

1. ARCH Development Corporation (ADC) is a non-profit organization that supports creating and maintaining an arts district in Anacostia. It supports this vision by offering loans for arts and creative industries (ADC 2014).
2. Anacostia Economic Development Corporation (AEDC) focuses on development of single and multi-family housing, neighborhood retail and office projects, and a shopping center to serve residents who live east of the Anacostia River in Washington, DC (AEDC 2014a).
3. Four Points LLC is a real estate development company that specializes in mixed use and urban infill development and has its headquarters in Washington, DC. As described in Section 1, the company plans to develop nearly 500 new homes, 144,000 square feet of retail, and 900,000 square feet of office space in Anacostia (Muller 2013).

Interviewees suggested that, while these visions are important and complementary, they are not entirely coordinated. The new Anacostia BID has the potential to play the coordinating role. Therefore, **it is recommended that the Bridge Park work with the BID to accomplish the shared goals of a clean, inviting business environment and identifiable neighborhood brand.**

In Washington, DC, BIDs are defined commercial areas supported by property owners and tenants who pay mandatory, yearly assessments for enhanced services (e.g. ambassadors to BID visitors) and the maintenance of clean streets and storefronts (AEDC 2014b). Major local business organizations and property owners in the area govern the Anacostia BID, including:

- Stan Voudrie, Four Points LLC
- Jeff Epperson, Urban-city Ventures
- Dennis Garbis, Environmental Design and Construction
- Duane Gautier, ARCH Development Corporation
- Philip Hutinet, Honfleur Gallery
- Stanley Jackson, Executive Director of AEDC
- Dr. Michael Kim, Grubbs Care Pharmacy and Medical Equipment
- B. Doyle Mitchell, Industrial Bank
- Nikki Peele, The Hive + The Hive 2.0
- Alex Woldu, National Service Contractors

This group is uniquely positioned to bring together stakeholders to help create an environment to thrive.

BIDs can also support local businesses because of their ability to create clean, attractive business environments. For Anacostia small businesses to capture new clients who use the Bridge Park, a clean, attractive street experience is essential. Indeed, interviewees from the area mentioned the need for vacant and unattractive buildings to be better maintained and streets to be better cared for and cleaned (Wilson, pers. comm.; Peele, pers. comm.; Grandis, pers. comm.).



Safety and Maintenance workers, or SAMs, from the DowntownDC BID.
Source: DowntownDC 2014.

BIDs in other parts of Washington, DC have successfully created clean and safe streets and ultimately helped rebrand their area as friendly for visitors and businesses. For example, the DowntownDC BID employs a group of people responsible for maintenance and upkeep, known as Safety and Maintenance workers (SAMs). SAMs were established to promote the principles of a "clean, safe and friendly" area. Their duties include removing litter, trash, posters, and graffiti from downtown streets as well as planting flowers and hanging promotional banners. They also offer directions, notify police of issues, accompany workers to garages or public transportation, and report major defects in public spaces (DowntownDC 2014). Table 2.2 contains a sample of assistance that SAMs provided in 2012 (Sam Stats 2014):

Table 2.2. SAM Services Performed in 2012

Service	Amount
Homeless people assisted	8,984
Citizens assisted	316,402
Citizen escorts provided	131
Aggressive panhandling incidents	1,115
Bags of litter removed	180,955
Instances of graffiti removed	496
Vandal stickers removed	1,909
Blocks cleaned of gum	234

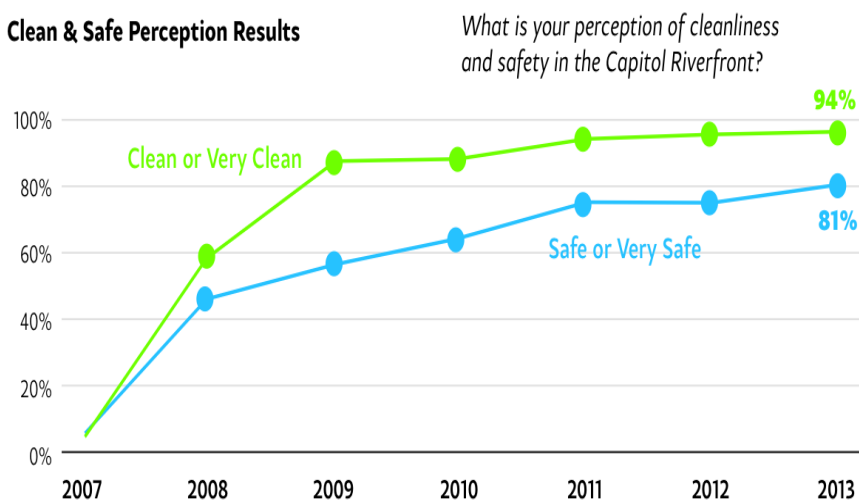
Source: DowntownDC 2014.

The Capitol Riverfront BID also has a Clean Team that "maintains day-to-day cleanliness and the appearance of the neighborhood" (Capitol Riverfront BID 2012). BID Hospitality Ambassadors are stationed near Metro stations in the area and are on hand to answer questions for visitors and monitor street activity.

Most notably, maintaining and cleaning the Capitol Riverfront neighborhood has had a measurable impact on its perception over time. The BID conducts surveys to determine how the area is perceived by individuals who frequent it. As figure 2.6 indicates, perceptions of the area as clean, very clean, safe or very safe increased dramatically over five years.

BIDs also have the capacity to help promote a new brand for their districts. For example, the Capitol Riverfront BID and the Golden Triangle BID (the latter being a 34-block business district located in Downtown DC) promote brands for their areas. The Capitol Riverfront identifies itself as a "vibrant mixed use community and riverfront destination" with a large and diverse retail area for visitors to explore (Capitol Riverfront 2014). The Golden Triangle describes its area as a "central business district and an amazing convergence of people, power and commerce" (Golden Triangle BID 2013).

Figure 2.6. Capitol Riverfront BID Clean and Safe Perception Results



Creating clean streets and storefronts is an important, small-scale goal on which key players can agree. It is an important step for making the area hospitable to new small businesses that could capture new customers from the Bridge Park. Additionally, achieving clean streets is “low-hanging fruit” that can help unite the BID members before tackling

larger, future issues like real estate development or attracting businesses to the area.

Since the BID represents major stakeholders and small business owners from the area, it is a natural platform for coordinating with and leveraging the Bridge Park. Currently the business community is fragmented. Moreover the area’s reputation decreases the likelihood of attracting new customers from the completed Bridge Park. The Anacostia BID can remedy both of these issues by cleaning the streets, establishing a brand, and acting as a unifying body for the business community. It can develop a strategy to attract future foot traffic from the Bridge Park and possibly help local businesses be present on the Bridge Park itself.

2.3 Recommendations and Implications

Figure 2.7. Recommended small and local business strategies for the Bridge Park



Our research exploring how Anacostia and the Bridge Park can enhance small businesses suggests that there are a number of strategies the community could pursue:

Use metrics to assess needs: An essential step in positioning the Anacostia neighborhood for small business success is assessing the current market environment. The Vibrant Streets Toolkit provides a

helpful framework to assess the Anacostia business environment. This common framework is crucial to develop a common understanding of what household and visitor measures the neighborhood does and does not have. The sooner neighborhood stakeholders align their understanding of the neighborhood's opportunities and weaknesses, the sooner they can align their work to capitalize on the former and address the latter. The Anacostia BID would greatly benefit by using the metrics in the Toolkit to understand its area's opportunities for retail growth. It seems likely that the organization will do so, as the BID executive director has expressed interest in utilizing the Toolkit.

Leverage the neighborhood's current art assets: As has been discussed, the neighborhood currently has arts assets such as the Anacostia Arts Center, the Honfleur Gallery, and the now-annual Lumen8 Anacostia festival. These features are an important base to attract visitors to the neighborhood and fill previously vacant buildings with active uses. Much like the RiNO district in Denver, CO, Anacostia can use art as a branding tool. Doing so can steer the conversation away from the lack of sit-down restaurants and retail, as well as public safety concerns. The Bridge Park should also prominently feature the branding to create a more seamless link with the neighborhood. Arguably the most important implication of branding the neighborhood via its arts assets is the potential for alienating the indigenous residents. Those that have lived and/or worked in the neighborhood before the arts community developed may feel that such attractions are not intended for them. Therefore, any effort to use art as a branding tool and – more basic than that – expand the arts assets must consider their desires and concerns to ensure that this growth strategy is as inclusive as possible.

Beyond capitalizing art for its branding potential, neighborhood leaders can leverage art activities to fill vacant real estate, both commercial and residential. Economic development stakeholders could assess existing vacant spaces, identify those that would be suited for art studios, and market them to artists that may be priced out of other more expensive neighborhoods. As discussed above, ARCH Development has one artist-focused space, which can be a template for future, art-focused real estate development. A long-run implication for this strategy affects neighborhood housing: if ARCH or another entity wants to provide live-work options for its artists, the real estate focus can extend beyond commercial space to include residential space. The neighborhood's vacant residential buildings could be rehabilitated for artist housing.

Include physical and programmatic links between the Bridge Park and Anacostia: By adding these links on and near the Bridge Park, visitors can be inspired to travel into Anacostia itself. These links could include historic walking trails, guided walking tours, artist installations, and performance art. Other points of visual interest could include parklets that fill small, unused spaces or an entire gateway at the end of the Bridge Park and just prior to Anacostia.

Arguably this set of recommendations requires the greatest level of coordination between Bridge Park administrators and Anacostia stakeholders. In short, the Bridge Park has the space on which these links will be included, but the Anacostia neighborhood has the artist community and the existing, African-American history trail that could be featured on the Bridge Park. Important issues to address when installing physical or programmatic links include specific content (which artist will design the installation?); maintenance (does the Bridge Park ensure the trail stop is maintained or another entity?); and financial support (who will fund the parklet between the Bridge Park and Anacostia, and who will support a gateway design competition?).

Leverage the new, centralized organizing body: The Anacostia BID is an opportunity for community members to organize around business goals. The short-term implications of the BID are likely seen in efforts to beautify the neighborhood; the BID itself has already specified a “clean, safe and vibrant community” as its first goal (Anacostia BID 2014). This goal could lead to the hiring of a BID street team that will not only keep the area clean but also monitor it for safety concerns or property damage, much like the Capitol Riverfront BID does. Beyond maintaining cleanliness and monitoring for safety, the BID could also be a funding source. Unlike other BIDs, the Anacostia BID is a 501c3 non-profit organization. According to the BID director, this IRS status allows for the BID to offer grants for area development efforts. Looking to the future, these efforts could fund Bridge Park art installations or neighborhood tours. So long as the Anacostia BID is funding activities that directly or indirectly involve the Bridge Park, coordination is required to ensure that the activities do not duplicate activities that might come from the Bridge Park’s own planning and funding processes.