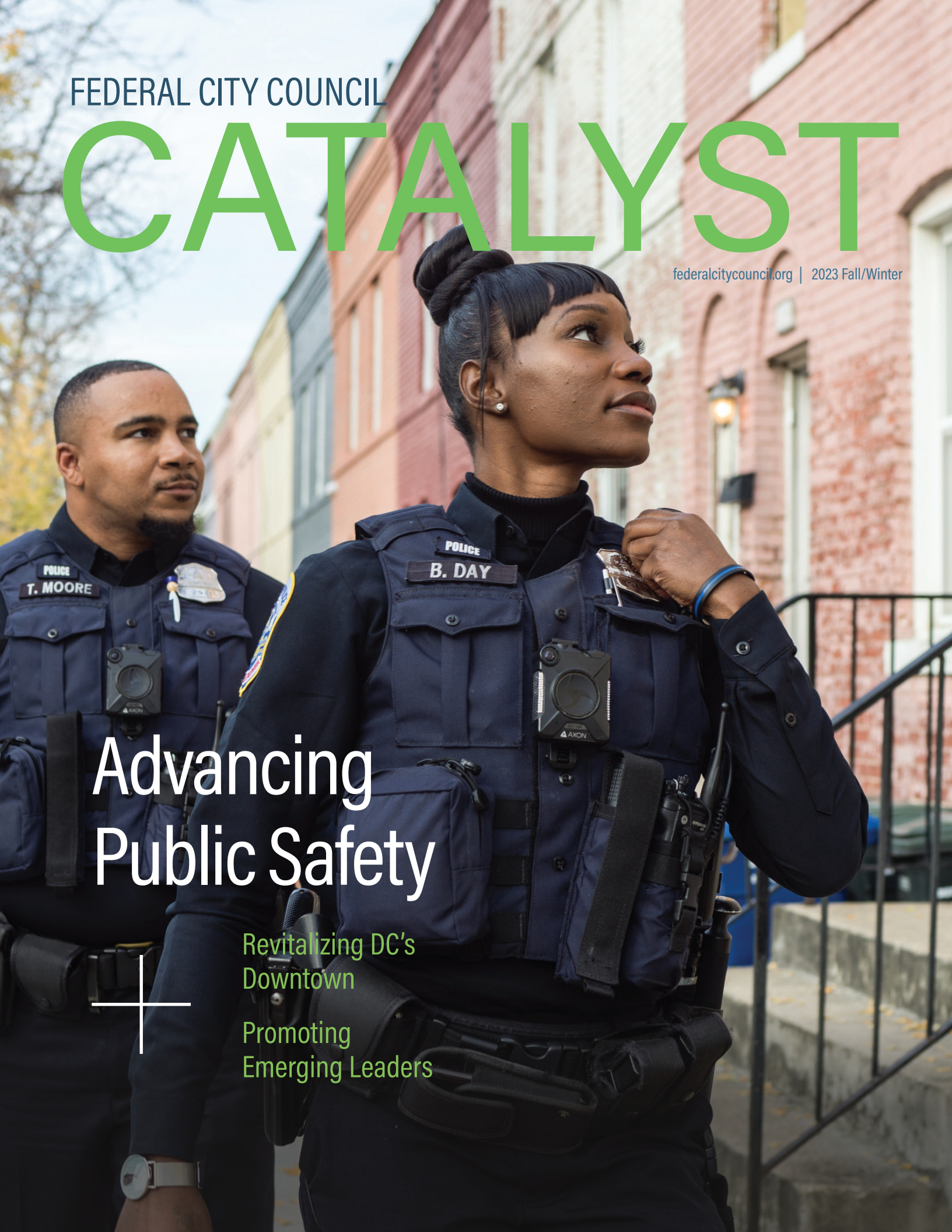


FEDERAL CITY COUNCIL

CATALYST

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Advancing Public Safety

Revitalizing DC's
Downtown

Promoting
Emerging Leaders



Table of Contents



“Everybody we’ve met with agrees that public safety is paramount.”

Advancing Public Safety p. 2

“Our goal is to incentivize the business community and workers to return to DC’s downtown.”

DC’s Downtown p. 5

“We hope to build a core of leaders with a deep knowledge of the District and its issues.”

**Emerging Leaders
Program** p. 8

“It is time to bring our members back together for these highly interactional in-person meetings.”

District Strong p. 8

Letter from the CEO and Executive Director

Dear Trustees,

The challenges facing the District, its economy and its businesses are to be expected after a once-in-a century event like the pandemic. The history of cities is one of catastrophe and re-emergence, decline and revival. Cities are enduring. We know the District will bounce back, and our actions will revitalize the downtown more swiftly and more decisively.

Our current problems speak volumes about the importance of initiating, supporting and sustaining a vital, flexible and responsive economy. It also illustrates our steadfast belief that it takes many partners and allies to respond to problems, with each assuming their individual roles while also collaborating with other stakeholders.

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In our feature story in this edition of *Catalyst* magazine, you will read about how we are confronting public safety issues that are defining our time. Many of DC's economic and financial goals rely heavily on people feeling safe to come here to work, live, visit, dine or shop. FC2 and our allies are working together, collaborating on near- and far-term solutions to this thorny problem. Read about our efforts on page 2.

Recognizing our vital role in helping the District meet challenges today and in decades to come, FC2 plays a leadership role in advancing community initiatives to build a resilient, robust downtown. Our longstanding emphasis on transparency and accountability in DC tax policy, as well as our authority to convene visionary thinkers to develop creative municipal solutions, have placed us at the forefront of efforts to rethink the downtown environment. It is an exciting and necessary responsibility. Read more about our downtown DC efforts on page 5.

Reflecting FC2's firm belief in the importance of community-based leadership, we launched our Emerging Leaders Program earlier this year. These new and diverse voices are essential in local policy debates, and the program will set the standard for years to come for how best to identify and inform networks of local leaders. We invite you to read more about this program on page 8.

Moving forward, FC2 will continue to engage with the critical issues affecting residents and businesses in DC. In every instance, we will rely on our Trustees to inspire and lead these efforts as we seek to fuel a vibrant, equitable and safe District of Columbia.

Sincerely,



Tony Williams



ADVANCING PUBLIC SAFETY

Public safety has become a prominent, if not *the* prominent, issue for District residents and businesses in the last few years. The Federal City Council (FC2) is working cooperatively with stakeholders across the District to advance targeted and comprehensive public safety solutions.

“We continue to believe the city must have a robust, viable public realm, and to do that, we must go back to first principles,” said **Anthony Williams**, FC2 CEO and Executive Director. “To have a vibrant public realm, it must be founded on a base of public safety. You have got to feel safe with your family, in your business and in your community to have a prosperous and vital city.”

Toward that goal, the FC2 has launched its Public Safety Initiative by creating an open line of communication with policymakers, voicing concerns about rules and systems that may contribute to crime, identifying policy sticking points, providing

educational resources, and encouraging public officials to work collaboratively to respond to the District’s troubling crime rates.

Along with convening stakeholders, the FC2 is supporting targeted initiatives: the reaccreditation and reopening of the DC crime lab; recruiting new Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) officers; the prosecution of more criminal cases in DC; and strengthening the ability of landlords to evict dangerous tenants.

The stakes are high in tackling public safety concerns, said Williams. Unless people feel safe commuting to or living in the District, DC’s economy cannot fully recover. “We need to take abusive, dangerous people off the street,” said Williams. “We as a community need to address crime as part of our efforts to recover from the pandemic, bring people back downtown and ensure the District has a steady economic footing for the future.”

A Multi-Government Challenge

The structure of the District's criminal justice system is a patchwork of local and federal agencies, making it near impossible to find a single jurisdictional solution to resolve ongoing issues with the criminal justice system and to advance public safety.

Washington, DC, represents a master class in complexity: multiple police forces safeguard the city; responsibility for prosecuting youth and adult offenders is handled by both local and federal prosecutors; K-12 educational challenges have accelerated after the pandemic; and a backdrop of volatility has resulted in widespread economic and workforce trends.

This complexity is a particular feature of the DC criminal justice system. If the MPD makes an arrest, most adults are prosecuted by the U.S. Attorney for the District (USAO), which is an office within the U.S. Department of Justice. Youth offenders are prosecuted by the DC Attorney General. DC's Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services oversees arrested youth, but many of those youth offenders and most adult offenders are, ultimately, supervised by federal agencies. The DC Jail is under local control, but a majority of residents who are in prison are in federal prison facilities. To close the loop on this piecemeal system, DC judges are appointed by the president and confirmed by the U.S. Senate.

A Problematic System in Need of Change

The journey toward the reaccreditation of the DC Department of Forensic Science is still in process, but it remains a critical factor in not only supporting public safety in the District but also guaranteeing the operation of an efficient justice system.

Having lost its accreditation in 2021, the DC crime lab has been relying on federal labs to process tests, but there is a concern about the quality of the work being done. The concern is so widespread that both federal and local prosecutors often decline to prosecute cases because evidence quality is poor or slow to process.

Efforts by the city to have the crime lab reaccredited in 2024 are underway, in hopes that the fortified lab can complete DNA analysis, process fingerprints and analyze other evidence that would be submitted in court. The ANSI National Accreditation Board

"To achieve public safety, we all have the responsibility to make that happen," said **Becky Strauss**, FC2 Director of Economic Initiatives. "This is not one sector or one agency or one person. We are all responsible for being part of the solution and for working together. We all have to own our part of the solution in this complex system and work toward collaborative solutions."

Yet multifaceted systems are difficult to fully address because they are evolving in response to other factors and alterations in the system. Because the constituent components influence each other, the FC2 is looking for ways to work across sectors, agencies and governments. The FC2 is playing a critical role in bringing groups together to find solutions across jurisdictions, and reaching out to key figures who can make a difference in their fields, whether local or federal decision makers.

"There is work being done to tackle key issues in the system," said **Kevin Clinton**, FC2 Chief Program Officer. "For example, we have a backlog of pending prosecutions, in part, because we have a shortfall of local judges. The Federal City Council is supporting **Congresswoman Eleanor Norton** who is trying to get our local judges confirmed by the Senate so we can move those prosecutions forward."

(ANAB) pulled the DC crime lab's accreditation after reports of inaccuracy in evidence handling.

"The city's working hard to bring back the crime lab," said Clinton. "It's just taking time to go through the list of problems and solve them. A continued focus on improving the crime lab, even after accreditation, needs to be front and center. Accuracy in processing evidence is essential, and we need to look for the best way to process evidence to advance cases to conclusion."

We encourage our members to volunteer to serve on the Public Safety Initiative. Contact Becky Strauss, FC2 Director of Economic Initiatives, bstrauss@federalcitycouncil.org, to learn more about these opportunities.

Safety in Our Neighborhoods

Today, some DC residents don't feel comfortable walking in their own neighborhoods and, occasionally, don't even feel safe in their apartment buildings as fellow residents threaten the security of their neighbors with handguns, break-ins and creating other dangers in their buildings.

DC landlords currently struggle to remove tenants who were able to move in with fraudulent tenant applications and who are a danger to other tenants. DC's robust landlord-tenant laws often favor tenants, but in these recent cases involving drug dealers, scam artists and some mentally ill individuals, other tenants and landlords have been unable to respond to protect their buildings.

"Landlords are often the canary in a coal mine and are indicators of bad behavior. Landlords have staff in the building and they can see when there is unusual traffic going in and out of an apartment," said **Joshua B. Bernstein**, FC2 Vice President of the Board of Directors and CEO of the Bernstein Management Corporation.

"Our hands are often tied, so we may know something bad is going on, but there are hurdles for us to deal with these problems," Bernstein added. "There are provisions in DC laws that allow landlords to press cases if they believe there's illegal activity, but the standard of proof is so high. Unless we have a conviction, or someone is caught discharging a gun, it's essentially a toothless provision."

A Shared Responsibility Approach

At the heart of a shared responsibility approach is the notion that what causes safety problems and what best addresses them are not within the realm of the police alone. Rather, the community at-large must respond to endemic or widespread problems.

But what happens when DC is facing a shortage of more than 400 officers? During FC2's Fall Board meeting, **MPD Chief Pamela Smith** said there are currently 3,443 sworn MPD officers, approximately 450 fewer police officers than three years ago. With crime up, MPD is stretched painfully thin.

"We don't want to get to the point where fear is impacting decisions," said Clinton. "People tend to get paralyzed when they feel that kind of fear in



Photograph courtesy of DC Metropolitan Police Department

Strengthening DC landlords' ability to evict dangerous tenants is one ongoing problem that could be resolved through targeted changes in DC laws, particularly removing some of the red tape that has kept dangerous tenants in buildings. This initiative is a priority for the FC2.

Bernstein has been hosting a series of discussions with DC stakeholders to find solutions to these legal issues, and the FC2 is committed to working with the DC Council to strengthen the "Drug Haven" statute so that drug dealers can be more easily evicted.

"Everybody we have met agrees that public safety is paramount," said Bernstein. "All of them seem open to more coordination and seeing the benefits of that, so nobody's resistant to greater collaboration. But there remains, I think, a lot of barriers to that coordination because there are so many divisions within the District."

their homes and neighborhoods. If crime becomes a self-reinforcing spiral or doom loop, it can cause residents, restaurants and retailers to pull out of troubled neighborhoods. Nobody wants that."

Responsibility for addressing public safety should be distributed across the community, with the police performing their prescribed duties but also with citizens, businesses and nonprofits committing to being accountable for advancing solutions, whether they are lobbying for the addition of new police officers, pressing for expansive public safety legislation pending now in the DC Council, or encouraging the deployment of apprenticeship programs to give the city's youth viable career paths and the hope of a better future. ■



FRANKLIN PARK

THE PROMISE OF DC'S DOWNTOWN

To fully bounce back from the pandemic and its aftereffects, the business, government and cultural sectors that power DC's economy must return to full capacity. The path forward faces hurdles, including ongoing concerns about crime in the city's core and the slow return of employees to in-person work.

The Federal City Council (FC2) remains a fervent advocate of the District-wide effort to bring workers back downtown in order to revitalize and strengthen the city's central neighborhoods. Welcoming workers, residents and visitors back to DC's downtown will also secure the District's long-term economy.

"Our goal is to incentivize the business community and workers to return to DC's downtown," said Anthony Williams, FC2 CEO and Executive Director. "I think we can start sending the message now that downtown DC is not only fully open for business but that it's a welcoming place for business. New

businesses to the region should consider becoming pioneers and come in early and help shape the future of the downtown."

Along with other community leaders, FC2 is championing a variety of initiatives and projects to draw in those sector-leading businesses and entrepreneurs. These projects are designed to improve business conditions, rethink workplaces and open up new ways of viewing the downtown built environment that has long been the engine driving DC's economic fortunes.

"The appeal of DC is enduring, and we're seeing that proven with the number of businesses locating in popular neighborhoods like The Wharf and Navy Yard," said Kevin Clinton, FC2 Chief Program Officer. "We need to bring the downtown in line with those other neighborhoods and offer the kind of amenities and environment that draw residents and visitors alike."

A Vision for the District's Future

Workers in the Golden Triangle and the DowntownDC Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) may not return in the same robust numbers as before the pandemic, requiring FC2 and other downtown stakeholders to look for more innovative approaches to repopulate those BIDs. With numerous museums and monuments, parks and

outdoor spaces, those two neighborhoods offer people more than just office space.

"We recognize downtown will remain a commercial hub and office center, but there are few companies that are looking to move there right now. We need to take other steps in the interim that complement our next-generation recovery," said Clinton. "We are



thinking about ways to make it more compelling to come downtown, not by browbeating people but through new types of spaces, an improved transportation network and a greater sense of safety.”

Working in cooperation with the two BIDs, **DC Mayor Muriel Bowser** and the DC Office of the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development (DMPED), FC2 has hosted a series of public webinars, as well as a half-day Futuring Workshop this past summer, to add meat to the bones of a what is being called the Joint Action Plan, a road map to re-envisioning DC’s core BIDs.

The Futuring Workshop brought together local and national leaders and decision-makers to work through scenario-planning exercises to spark creative thinking that could be transformed into Action Plan recommendations. Bowser participated in the workshop along with Councilmembers Kenyan McDuffie and Brooke Pinto.

“We know why this work is urgent and important: Downtown is the economic engine that supports the investments we make in people and programs across all eight wards,” said Bowser, in a June 2023 written statement. “Reimagining our downtown is something that must happen and now, as we build the ... Action Plan, is the time for all of us to unleash our creativity.”

Workshop participants rethought the potential of DC’s downtown including pedestrian-friendly greenways and piazzas; a K-12 and university innovation hub; a home to an entertainment, arts and culture district; and innovative spaces hosting lifelong learning and incubators. Participants gravitated toward education as a primary use as well as

developing spaces that appeal to both families and those without children.

The Futuring Workshop was entirely funded by event sponsors. Champion-level sponsors were Amazon, Capital One, Monumental Sports and Entertainment and Post Brothers. Changemaker-level sponsors were Bank of America, Destination DC and Events DC. Collaborator-level sponsors were the Apartment and Office Building Association, the DC Building Industry Association, the Greater Washington Board of Trade and the Greater Washington Partnership.



Any exercises like these must acknowledge the reality of the downtown environment and the needs of the business community. The future of DC’s downtown will not be built on a blank canvas. A number of factors – renovation costs, the business climate and political feasibility – are equally potent in reworking these historic neighborhoods. When the Joint Action Plan is finalized, the goal will be to recommend and coordinate implementable actions across a variety of sectors to achieve a robust revival of DC’s economy.



Improving the Business Climate

The success of the Joint Action Plan won't be possible unless DC's business climate is a welcoming space for the business community and entrepreneurs. To ensure that climate is hospitable, the FC2 is leading the decennial effort to rethink DC taxes.

Every decade, the DC Mayor appoints a DC Tax Revision Commission to examine the District's tax system, analyze it in relation to other major cities inside and outside the region, and determine if the city needs to change its tax code to respond to current trends. With FC2's Williams serving as chair of the 11-member Commission, the FC2 is providing critical leadership and encouraging its members to offer their insights to the Commission through written statements or speaking at public hearings.

"I think the Tax Revision Commission is going to send a message that we have a stable fiscal platform in DC, and that we're attentive to the signals sent through our tax system to the business community," said Williams. "We welcome investment, and our taxes are set to create an environment where they support social initiatives and government programs."

Williams said the Commission faces a different economy today than it did 10 years ago, when it last reviewed DC taxes. "We were in an environment of growing revenues and a growing District economy then," said Williams. "All the metrics were going up. Now, we're in a much more challenging fiscal environment."

The Commission's recommendations will ensure that the tax system can raise enough revenue to finance DC services, distribute taxpaying responsibility fairly and equitably across the city's residents and businesses, adapt to economic and tax trends, and be administered efficiently and transparently.

"The business climate, the tax environment, the regulatory environment, all these things are very important for a city," Clinton said. "It used to be that people would withstand DC's challenges in some of those areas because businesses wanted to be in downtown DC. Today, people have other places in DC to go or they can be outside DC where they can find governments friendlier to businesses."

Commission members will develop a package of recommendations for the Mayor and DC Council in late 2023, responding to emerging trends, long-term drivers of spending growth in DC, the growth of remote work, the rise of digital currency use, and the lingering effects from the pandemic. ■



FC2 encourages members to offer their insights to the DC Tax Revision Commission through written statements or speaking at public hearings. Contact Becky Strauss, FC2 Director of Economic Initiatives, bstrauss@federalcitycouncil.org, to learn more about these opportunities.

Emerging Leaders Program Showcases DC's Top Leadership Talent

The Federal City Council (FC2) is showcasing DC's pipeline of community-oriented professionals through its Emerging Leaders Program, unlocking the District's talent potential and advancing DC as a national leader in innovative policy solutions.

By recognizing leadership talents from throughout the District, FC2 seeks to nurture a network of emerging city leaders from diverse professional backgrounds while educating them about DC's challenges and areas of opportunity. The goal is to provide them with a strong network and the tools to advance their professional lives for careers of service and leadership in Washington, DC. There are 19 Emerging Leaders in the 2023-24 cohort.

"These leaders represent the rich diversity of the District's talent pool," said **Anthony Williams**, FC2 CEO and Executive Director. "We hope to build a core of leaders with a deep knowledge of the District and its issues."

A one-year program with 10 monthly sessions, the Emerging Leaders Program hosts content-focused workshops led by local policy experts and exclusive panel discussions between city thought leaders. There are also opportunities to network with FC2 members. After completing the program, Emerging Leaders remain within the Emerging Leader Alumni Network.

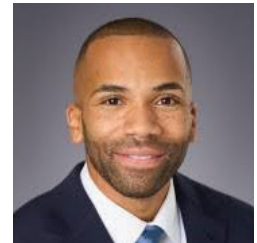
"Participating in the Federal City Council's inaugural Emerging Leaders Program has been a fantastic professional step in the first phase of my DC career," said **Rachel Shank**, Executive Director at the Georgetown Main Street. "I find both the networking

opportunities and educational sessions to be valuable to my goal of being knowledgeable of DC policy and well connected to other leaders. The session on The Economics of Cities was particularly valuable to my work."



To be eligible for the program, individuals must be professionals in the government, non-profit or private sectors, and show a dedication to the economic, civic and social advancement of the District.

"The Federal City Council's Emerging Leader's program has been incredibly enriching," said **Michael Odum**, Development Manager, AKRIDGE. "Each session has provided unfiltered access to influential DC leaders, both past and present, allowing an expansion of knowledge beyond my industry and a better understanding of the interconnectivity required for the District to succeed. The program has fostered meaningful relationships with cross-disciplinary peers that I will undoubtedly continue to grow." ■



We will be recruiting for the 2024 Emerging Leaders cohort soon, and we encourage members to submit the names of qualified potential candidates to Ally Schultz, FC2 Communications Associate, at aschultz@federalcitycouncil.org.

District Strong Goes Back to the Office: In-person Meetings

After more than three years of virtual gatherings, the Federal City Council (FC2) is transitioning District Strong to more face-to-face meetings. The change gives FC2 members an opportunity to gather, socialize and share knowledge face to face. "It is time to bring our members back together for these highly interactional in-person meetings," said **Melissa Crawford**, FC2 COO.

To learn more about the upcoming in-person District Strong sessions, scan the QR Code. You can register for future virtual and in-person District Strong conversations and explore past webinars.



In April, FC2 kicked off its Emerging Leaders Program that includes content-focused workshops led by local policy experts and city thought leaders.



FC2 hosted an in-person District Strong session in November with Ward 2 Councilmember Brooke Pinto.



The FC2 Fall Board Meeting welcomed MPD Police Chief Pamela A. Smith and Attorney General Brian Schwalb who spoke to the Trustees about public safety concerns and solutions.



FC2 celebrated its 200th District Strong with Nina Albert, Acting Deputy Mayor of Planning and Economic Development (DMPED).





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