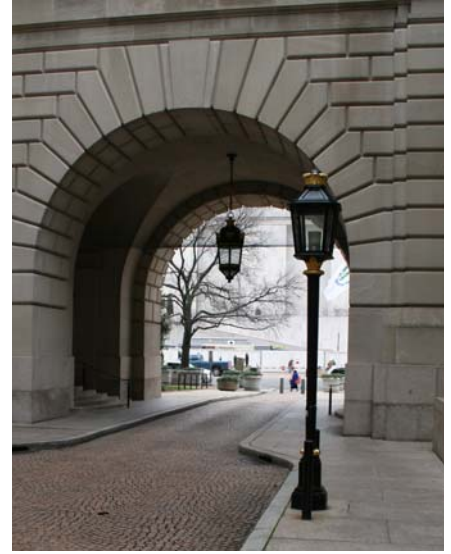


Activating

Federal Places





Important activities occur within these government buildings, but the exteriors do little to integrate the city's urban fabric with the monumental presence of the federal government.



Activating Federal Places

Enlivening Federal Precincts

Few American cities rival Washington, DC's grand public spaces and iconic architecture. Each day, thousands of people are drawn to its National Mall, inspiring landmarks, and world-class museums that are located in an area of the city known as the monumental core.

While the architecture is indeed impressive, and the flow of workers and tourists is steady throughout the day, most federal buildings in this area fail to include the type of mixed-use activities that strengthen a vital, vibrant city center.

The concentration of federal buildings in prime locations adjacent to the National Mall offers little in the way of publicly accessible ground-level restaurants, cafes, retail, professional services, or cultural opportunities. Clusters of single-use, large-scale office buildings are void of life past the traditional nine-to-five work day, and the lack of public-space programming hinders an active street life. Important activities occur within these buildings, but the exteriors do little to integrate the fabric of city life with the monumental presence of the federal government.

In 1997, the National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC) began addressing how to make federal buildings and spaces more publicly accessible and integrated with local economies, when the agency published *Extending the Legacy: Planning America's Capital for the 21st Century*. The 2009 *Monumental Core Framework Plan: Connecting New Destinations with the National Mall*, built on *Extending the Legacy's* vision for the capital city by advancing its ideas for connecting and animating areas adjacent to the Mall.

The *Framework Plan* recognizes that Washington's monumental and historic federal buildings must play a role in providing a mix of uses to enliven the civic spaces around them. The plan identifies target areas for future redevelopment, such as 10th Street, SW, and explores infusing existing areas, such as the Federal Triangle, with more active uses. The plan offers solutions for animating public buildings and spaces, such as requiring new federal buildings to include retail, dining or cultural uses on their ground floors that are designed to support and attract activity beyond the traditional work day.



U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

Addressing Current Challenges

Activating federal buildings and their adjacent public space presents many challenges. First, many federal buildings, particularly those in the District of Columbia, are considered historic; therefore providing new amenities and active uses in these buildings requires thoughtful and careful design and planning.

In addition, many federal agencies do not realize that leasing space for retail or cultural purposes is a policy supported by the U.S. Congress and the General Services Administration through its Urban Development/Good Neighbor Program (for more on this program, please see page 6).

Another challenge is that many federal agencies have security concerns about allowing open, public access to spaces within their facilities. However, there are innovative solutions that allow for street-level uses and animated public space without comprising security.

Whatever the reason, it is important for federal agencies to know that there are available resources to help implement the important goal of having buildings and public spaces that include needed amenities that serve a growing base of workers and residents, as well as the entire National Capital Region and its millions of annual visitors.

Leasing space for retail or cultural purposes is a policy supported by the U.S. Congress and the General Services Administration's Urban Development/Good Neighbor Program.



Supporting the Use of Historic Buildings

Existing federal policies support the reuse of historic buildings for tourism, economic development and community programs.

Over the past decades, laws and policies have been established to protect and preserve historic buildings, while allowing them to be adapted for re-use to keep them viable and active. In 1966, Congress passed the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), which established national policies and the federal program for the protection of historic properties including federal facilities. For example, Section 111 of NHPA regulations permits long-term leases and adaptive reuse for all or portions of assets listed in the National Register of Historic Places. This regulation allowed the General Services Administration to work with the private sector to restore the historic, federal Tariff Building on 7th Street, NW for use as a hotel and restaurant. Furthermore, Executive Orders such as EO 13006 and laws such as the Public Buildings Cooperative Use Act support the whole or partial reuse of historic buildings for active uses as a means to protect them and to support economic development and urban revitalization. Federal agencies are encouraged to utilize these policies when assessing a historic property for new or continued use.



Tariff Building located on 7th Street, NW.



Old Post Office Pavilion

Supporting Active Federal Spaces

The GSA Urban Development/Good Neighbor Program

Buildings owned or leased by the federal government in Washington's monumental core are typically managed by the General Services Administration (GSA), which represents agencies in locating, procuring, developing, and managing space for their operations. GSA administers space requirements according to the needs specifically identified by the client agency; be it security, design, or location.

While this approach addresses specific needs of individual agencies, it often precludes more global considerations, such as including amenities and active public spaces around federal buildings. Often times, tenant agencies may not understand the importance of including these elements within their building program. As such, it is critical that all tenant agencies in the federal government better understand the benefits of incorporating active uses and developing exciting public space destinations in and around their buildings.

Providing amenities such as ground-floor retail, public art, and programming events, such as farmers' markets, can increase employee satisfaction, public interest in an agency's mission, and the value of federal property.



The U.S. DOT Headquarters includes a walkable outdoor museum alongside retail.





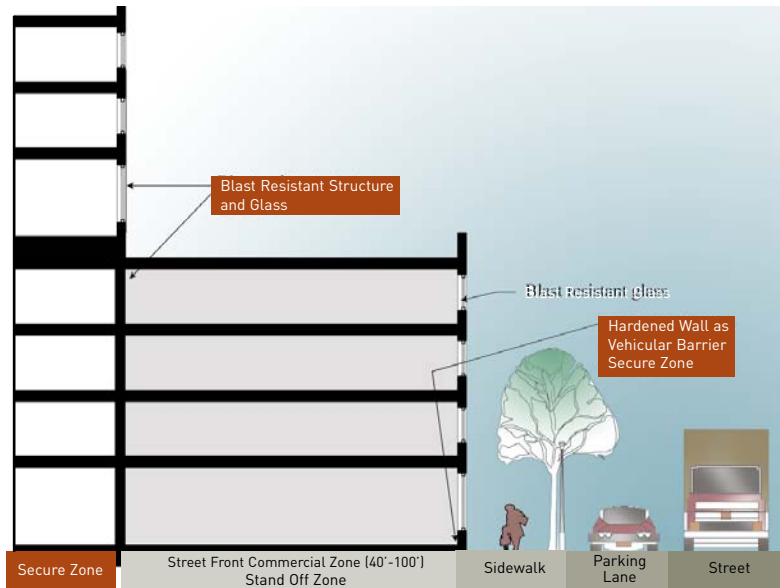
View of National Archives from
the National Portrait Gallery

To encourage and support active, public federal buildings, Congress passed the Public Buildings Cooperative Use Act. To advance the goals of the act, the GSA created the Urban Development/Good Neighbor Program to help federal buildings better integrate with their surrounding communities; support neighborhood urban design goals; and manage federal properties to encourage public use and openness.

While there are legal mechanisms and policies that promote active public spaces in federal buildings, it is up to the tenant agencies to realize the value these additions can create for their building, work environment, and community. Tenant agencies should include publicly accessible retail and well-designed public spaces as part of their program early in the planning process.

Specifically, the Public Cooperative Use Act established the following objectives:

1. Acquire and utilize space in suitable buildings of historic, architectural, or cultural significance, unless use of such space would not prove feasible and prudent compared with available alternatives;
2. Encourage the location of commercial, cultural, educational, and recreational uses within public buildings;
3. Provide and maintain space, facilities, and activities, to the extent practicable, which encourage public access to and stimulate public pedestrian traffic around, into, and through public buildings, permitting cooperative improvements to and uses of the area between the building and the street, so that such activities complement and supplement commercial, cultural, educational, and recreational resources in the neighborhood of public buildings.



Providing publicly accessible space as a building wrap

Innovative Solutions that Balance Security and Public Access

Providing physical security at federal buildings or at facilities with federal tenants is both important and necessary. However, it doesn't have to be at the expense of providing publicly accessible spaces in and around federal buildings.

There are solutions that allow for publicly accessible street-level commercial and cultural spaces without affecting necessary security measures. One method is to construct a "building wrap," which is a separate building that wraps around the secured space without resulting in the appearance of two distinct buildings.

Other approaches include providing structurally reinforced retail space within the building's envelope (as opposed to being a wrap outside of it), and allowing free-standing vending kiosks to operate within the public space around the building.

One security solution is the "building wrap," a publicly accessible building that wraps around the secured space without resulting in the appearance of two distinctly separate structures.





Integrating Federal Buildings within the City

The federal government has a significant presence in Washington, DC's commercial districts, especially in newly developing areas such as North of Massachusetts Avenue (NoMa) and the Capitol Riverfront. In most commercial areas in the District of Columbia, city zoning requires private buildings to include street-fronting publicly accessible retail or cultural uses and the city encourages public art and open spaces within commercial areas.

Since federal buildings are located in areas with significant private development that is regulated by District of Columbia zoning, it is important that their use complement the city's efforts to include publically accessible retail, cultural, or arts-related uses at street level. The federal government should strive to meet similar goals so that its properties may better integrate with the city and foster a seamless and active public realm.



Successful Precedents

Across the country, the federal government is demonstrating that buildings can contribute to the making of great streets and urban vitality. The following examples illustrate the progress that has been made in ensuring that federal buildings provide active spaces for public use.



Environmental Protection Agency Region 8 Headquarters

Denver, CO

Opened in March 2007, the Environmental Protection Agency's Region 8 Headquarters is located in a section of lower downtown Denver known as "LoDo." The building received LEED Gold certification and includes approximately 18,000 square feet of publicly accessible ground-floor retail.



International Monetary Fund

Washington, DC

The International Monetary Fund has security concerns similar to any federal installation; nonetheless, this building includes approximately 6,700 square feet of retail along its Pennsylvania Avenue frontage. It also incorporates public art that adds to the life and vitality of the surrounding streets.



Ronald Reagan Building & International Trade Center

Washington, DC

The Ronald Reagan Building and International Trade Center is located in the heart of Washington's Federal Triangle. The 3.7-million-square-foot complex was completed in 1998, and features approximately 83,000 square feet of retail and exhibit space, which animates the interior of the building and provides a publicly accessible plaza for events. The complex welcomes an estimated one million visitors a year for conferences and trade shows, all of which take place in the same building that houses federal employees for EPA, USAID, and U.S. Customs and Border Patrol.

The US Department of Transportation Headquarters

Washington, DC

The new headquarters for the United States Department of Transportation (DOT), located in southeast Washington, incorporates into its design retail uses and public art. Built in 2006, the 1.5-million-square-foot building has 1,800 square feet of street-fronting retail and includes a transportation-related art walk around its perimeter. The plaza on the south side of the building is used for a weekly farmers' market and neighborhood events. These amenities provide a great service for both U.S. DOT employees and neighborhood residents.



Seattle Federal Courthouse

Seattle, WA

Built in 2004 in downtown Seattle, Washington, this federal courthouse consolidates a number of federal agencies. It includes the offices of the U.S. Attorney, U.S. Marshal, federal grand jury, and other judicial services. Despite housing security-sensitive agencies, the project includes a 1,500-square-foot, publicly accessible retail space along the Seventh Avenue frontage of the 615,000-square-foot building. The project allocated more than \$2 million for public artwork, including the incorporation of a well-designed one-acre public plaza.



US Federal Building

San Francisco, CA

The new 18-story, 605,000-square-foot federal building located in San Francisco's Mission District is a model of how a secure federal building can utilize modern architecture to create an iconic and welcoming public space. Like the Ronald Reagan Building in Washington, DC, the facility provides retail space within its public plaza. It also incorporates service amenities, such as a childcare center and conference facility that are available for public use.



Imagine... ***Integrating Residential and Office Space***



The Newseum Residences

Mixing residential housing with office and retail is the most effective method for creating an authentic livable, walkable, city center. In Washington, DC residences are regularly mixed with office or retail development. Examples include Market Square, the Newseum on Pennsylvania Avenue, NW and the International Spy Museum on 9th Street, NW.

Given that the federal government is the city's largest employer, imagine the possibilities if federal developments included on-site housing. Such is the case on military installations like the Marine Barracks in southeast Washington on 8th and I Streets. The inclusion of housing and community amenities better integrates federal developments into the city environment and meets the growing demand by employees to live near their work. The result is urban living at its best and animation of the surrounding community. While there are security and ownership issues to be addressed, providing housing within federal projects is a worthy objective to pursue.



10th Street, SW Corridor, proposed
and existing conditions

Opportunities in DC

As the federal government continues to realize the value of creating public and street-level spaces, it can take advantage of development opportunities to once again produce public buildings that contribute to the cityscape. The *Monumental Core Framework Plan* identifies priority redevelopment opportunities including:

- **10th Street, SW Corridor - Linking the National Mall to the Waterfront**
The Banneker Overlook and the headquarters for the U.S. Department of Energy and U.S. Postal Service are located within this corridor, which is often desolate and uninviting. The *Framework Plan* highlights the opportunity to create a crucial connection between the National Mall and future developments planned for the Banneker Overlook and the southwest waterfront. Allowing retail and cultural uses in the ground floors of federal facilities in this corridor would foster street life, attract visitors from the National Mall to new destinations, and provide needed amenities for area employees.
- **Pennsylvania Avenue - America's Main Street**
Modifying current regulations to introduce vending and public art is a critical next step in furthering the evolution of this great street. Redeveloped in the 1970s by the Pennsylvania Avenue Development Corporation, this avenue defines the area where the federal district intersects with the District of Columbia's downtown. While developments with retail, residential, and office use are thriving on parts of the street, much of Pennsylvania Avenue lacks the continuity of street-level amenities that encourage greater use. Continuing the progression of Pennsylvania Avenue as an active main street lined with street-level shops, cafes, and exciting public space destinations would be a powerful model for other federally controlled precincts in the nation's capital and elsewhere in the country.



Partnerships and Action

Advancing strategies for enlivening federal precincts requires collaboration among many partners. The federal government should reach out to private and non-profit groups to establish creative leasing arrangements, understand the market demands, and further encourage incorporation of cultural and community uses within facilities. To begin a dialogue on these issues, the National Capital Planning Commission, in partnership with GSA, held a roundtable discussion in May 2009. "Reimagining the Federal Superblock: Bringing Mixed-Uses to Government Sites" brought together critical stakeholders from the public, private, and non-profit sectors to discuss incorporating active uses within the ground floors of federal buildings.

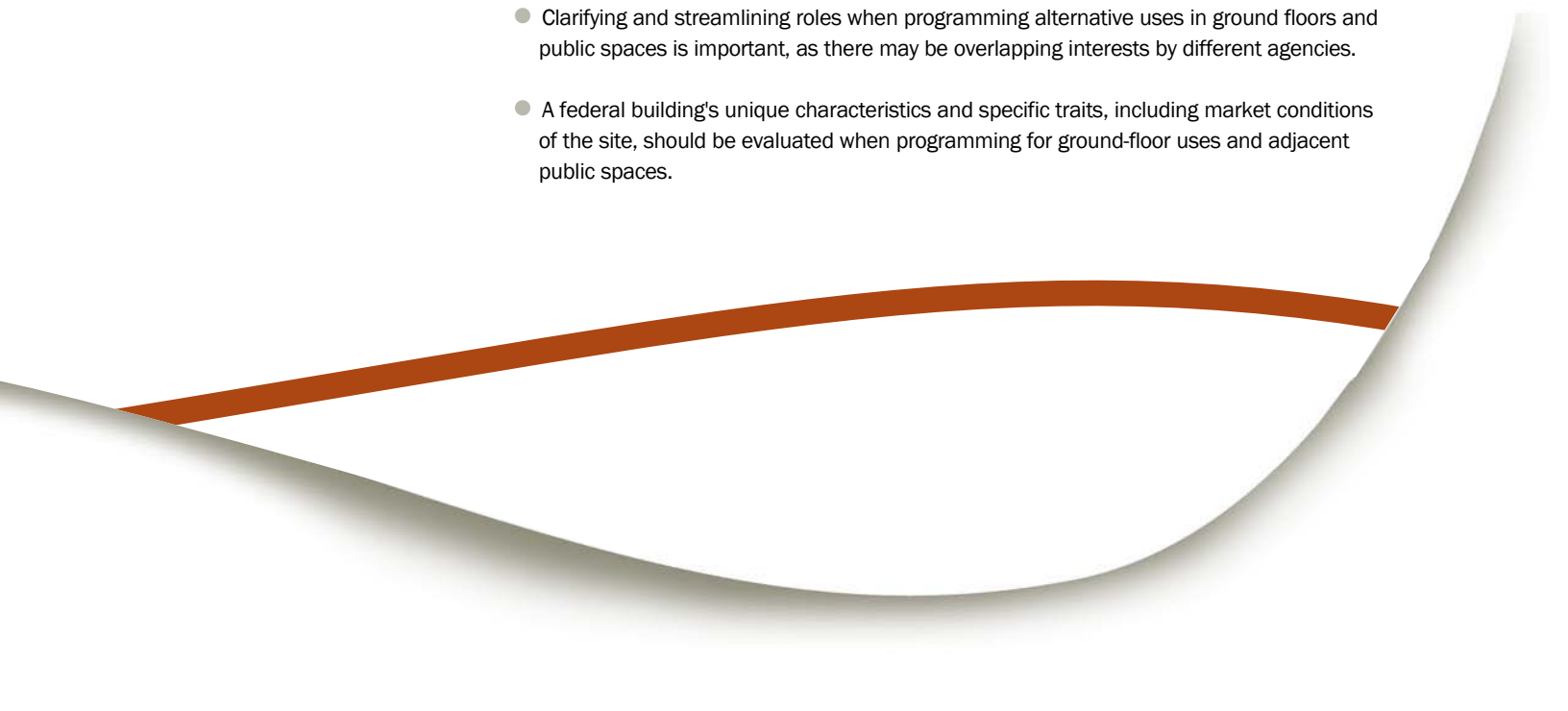


What's Next?

The National Capital Planning Commission, the General Services Administration, and other partner agencies continue working together to remake the spaces around federal buildings into vibrant destinations. In advancing the ideas suggested in this brochure, NCPC will work with tenant federal agencies to develop creative solutions and provide urban design assistance for enlivening their facilities. These solutions could focus on areas such as:

- **Security Concerns:** Federal agencies and the GSA should work closely together to find creative security solutions that provide the necessary protection to federal sites while allowing ground-floor retail uses and access for public events.
- **Public Space Programming:** Agencies should develop cultural activities and attractions that draw people throughout the day and evening hours. This will not only activate the space, but also make the area more appealing for entertainment or retail use.
- **Housing:** While it is important to introduce retail and cultural uses into public spaces, integration of housing should also be explored as a worthy component to activate federal buildings and precincts.
- **Balanced Amenities:** Agencies should learn what combination of amenities, such as retail or attractions, will provide the best value for their employees, residents, other community stakeholders, and visitors.

Roles and Responsibilities:

- Clarifying and streamlining roles when programming alternative uses in ground floors and public spaces is important, as there may be overlapping interests by different agencies.
 - A federal building's unique characteristics and specific traits, including market conditions of the site, should be evaluated when programming for ground-floor uses and adjacent public spaces.
- 



The Federal Planning Agency for America's Capital

401 9th Street, NW Suite 500 Washington, DC 20004 Telephone 202.482.7200 Fax 202.482.7272 www.ncpc.gov info@ncpc.gov

The National Capital Planning Commission is the federal government's planning agency in the District of Columbia and surrounding counties in Maryland and Virginia. The Commission provides overall planning guidance for federal land and buildings in the region. It also reviews the design of federal construction projects, oversees long-range planning for future development, and monitors capital investment by federal agencies.

