

QUARTERLY

NCPC Weighs in on Washington's Skyline

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"In a world of cookie cutter cities, it is important to keep the things that are special about DC, including its skyline."

Marcel Acosta,
National Capital Planning Commission

NCPC Weighs in on Washington's Skyline

NCPC's Executive Director Marcel Acosta appeared September 24 in, "How Tall to Build?" an expert panel discussion organized by the National Building Museum to explore the merits of the 1910 Height of Buildings Act. An estimated 175 people who turned out for the event took part in a lively and interesting dialogue, much of which centered on the broader question of how to guide future development in the nation's capital.

"This is a topic of national significance," Mr. Acosta stated in his opening remarks. "And in a world of cookie cutter cities, it is important to keep the things that are special about DC, including its skyline."

The Height Act establishes heights for buildings in the District—generally between 90 and 130 feet—based upon the width of the streets. Although fire safety was the primary reason for limiting heights at the turn of the last century, the Act has nonetheless shaped the urban form of the city and given it a distinct iconic identity.

"I think it's very important to recognize the real uniqueness of Washington's physical character, certainly compared to any other American city," said fellow panel member Thomas Luebke, secretary of the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts (CFA). The city's skyline is "a national symbol."

The evening event was part of the Museum's "D.C. Builds" lecture series, which celebrates Washington through discussions of design, planning, and development issues in the National Capital Region. Other panelists included Christopher Leinberger, visiting fellow at the Brookings Institution and Wayne Quin, an attorney for Holland & Knight, LLP. Mary Fitch, executive director of the Washington chapter of the American Institute of Architects moderated the discussion.

One notable observation of the evening was that the panel was in agreement on a number of issues, including the aesthetic value of the city's horizontal skyline, the need for denser

development, as well as the importance of having a regional perspective.

"The market wants walkable, urban places," Mr. Leinberger said, also pointing out the additional benefits of higher density for the environment: "Someone in a walkable, urban place emits 25 percent of the carbon dioxide that someone on the fringe does."

Panelists agreed that the Height Act is in part responsible for the continuous fabric of the downtown area and that it has helped sparked the resurgence of several neighborhoods, including NOMA and South Capitol Street.

"[In Washington], you don't see single towers surrounded by parking lots," Mr. Acosta said, referring to a pattern of development that is common in many American cities. "The Act has helped expand the central area to underutilized parts of the city," he said.

"Seventy-four percent of demand for walkable urban development is in the suburbs."

Christopher Leinberger,
Brookings Institution



Wayne Quin agreed, saying "For the first time in the city, we have active development in all four quadrants."

Mr. Leinberger, however, expressed the persistent worry that the city will run out of developable land sooner or later. "DC is the most remarkable downtown turnaround in the country," he acknowledged. "But at some point, once we've filled out these other areas...we will have to address this—this generation or next," he said.

The panel shifted its focus to height limits in areas farther from the center when it became evident during the discussion that there was little support for skyscrapers in and immediately around the monumental core.

All of the panelists were enthusiastic supporters of compact development around Metrorail stations. As one audience member pointed out, however, the Height Act has little bearing on this question. "Three or four miles away from the center, the Act seems like a red herring...the issue is more zoning," he said.

Mr. Luebke agreed. "Most areas around Metro wouldn't allow full build-out [to the Height Act limit]," he said. "We would have to start unzoning these areas."

All of the participants acknowledged a need for strong leadership and public education to overcome public resistance to denser development. "The only thing people like less than urban sprawl is densification," Mr. Quin quipped.

Mr. Acosta added that denser, transit-oriented development should not be limited to the District. "In the long-term, we need a regional solution," he said. "Metrorail extends beyond the District, and we need to maximize all the transit assets in Virginia and Maryland."

Fortunately, this type of development is sought after in the suburbs as well as the city. "Seventy-four percent of demand for walkable urban development is in the suburbs—places like Bethesda, Arlington, and Reston," Mr. Leinberger said. "Now we have twelve such centers in the metro area and ten more emerging. Maybe it should be forty or fifty."

Another audience member turned the discussion to whether the Height Act has had a detrimental effect on the city's architecture. "It is not especially dramatic," he said. "It looks boxy."

Mr. Luebke acknowledged that a squared-off aesthetic predominates, but saw no necessary connection between the Act and uninspired design. "The Washington Box is a form in itself, notoriously difficult to compose," he said, suggesting that good design is more a function of the willingness to pay for it. "We've turned the corner in the last fifteen years...now that we have higher rents, we can afford better skins."

Mr. Leinberger agreed with this general point. "There are good buildings because clients are demanding them, just like they are demanding LEED certification," he said. He added, however, that the Act places more subtle limitations on building design. "We squeeze the ceilings to eight-and-a-half feet rather than twelve or fifteen, which limits the ways the buildings can be reused," he said.



"I think it's very important to recognize the real uniqueness of Washington's physical character. The city's skyline is a national symbol."

Thomas Luebke,
U.S. Commissioner of Fine Arts



"I like the height limitation the way it is...it is conducive to good architecture."

Wayne Quin,
Holland and Knight, LLP

"I like the height limitation the way it is...it is conducive to good architecture," Mr. Quin said, returning to the effect it has had on the overall composition of the city. "Besides," he added, "It is just whistling in the wind to think we are going to amend the Height Act in any significant way." To be changed, the Height Act would have to be amended by Congress. Quin, rather, proposed changes in the interpretation of technical matters that would have the effect of easing height limits slightly.

Mr. Acosta echoed the need for clear and consistent interpretation of the Act. "We have been working with the city on zoning rewrites to close the gaps in interpretation," he said.

The Building Museum event ended with concurrence among the panelists that vertical development is only one way to increase density, and that our objective should be to maximize density within the framework of the 1910 Act.

"It is important to think through these decisions thoroughly," Mr. Acosta said. "What you build is permanent, and once you make the change, you can't undo it."

The evening following the Museum panel discussion, NCPC staff provided input at a public hearing of the D.C. Zoning Commission to consider updates to the District's zoning code. Under consideration was a set of proposed concepts for changing sections of the code related to the regulation of height. The concepts are not the actual language that may eventually appear in the new zoning code, but they instead lay out the parameters of the likely changes and the rationale behind them.

"It is important that any zoning changes are consistent with the federal Height of Buildings Act," said Julia Koster, who represented NCPC at the hearing. "We also want to create more certainty for developers and citizens by clarifying specific issues on which the Height Act is silent."

The District's major overhaul of its zoning code includes the review of more than twenty separate zoning issues. The process of updating it is likely to continue into 2010, but the sections pertaining to heights could be acted upon sooner. The proposed changes will ultimately go before the City Council for review and approval.

Capital Cities: Leaders in Sustainability

By assuming a leadership role within their own countries and striving to be the greenest on the world stage, capital cities are in a unique position to lead the world to a more sustainable future.

This assessment came from Larry Beasley, former director of planning for Vancouver, in a rousing appeal to the international delegates of *Capitals Alliance 2008: Greening the World's Capital Cities*. "If you don't do it," Mr. Beasley urged good-naturedly, "you're going to be embarrassed in front of your nation, and your country is going to be embarrassed before the world."



Larry Beasley

Beasley's effort to spark a friendly competition among nations culminated a week of panels, workshops, and presentations exploring how capital cities can take the lead in improving the environmental health of the planet.

NCPC hosted the five-day conference, which kicked off on September 14 at the House of Sweden. The event came to a close on September 18 at the National

Building Museum with participating cities signing a declaration to support green and sustainable practices.

With 50 percent of the world's population in urban areas, a figure approaching 80 percent in industrialized countries, cities are both the greatest contributors to global climate change and the key to solving it.

Herbert Girardet of the World Future Council, drove right to the heart of the problem in the keynote address by showing how today's cities have come to exist through the unsustainable exploitation of the earth's natural resources. "We are burning more than a million years of fossil fuels every year," he said. "[So] the critical issue is how cities in the 21st century can create a sustainable relationship with the global environment."

The Perfect Storm: Policy, Technology, and Profitability

Urgency and optimism infused the week's sessions, with many participants sensing that the time is ripe for change. Laurel Colless of the Energy Efficiency Partnership of Greater Washington predicted that technological innovations,

improved policymaking, and the increasing profitability of going green would converge very soon in a "perfect storm" of rapid progress.

Presentations throughout the week chronicled the changes that are already underway, particularly in making buildings more energy efficient. Buildings, "the silent offenders," are responsible for 43 percent of greenhouse gas emissions, and as several participants noted, significant reductions can be made relatively quickly through retrofitting.

Richard Moe, president of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, agreed. "Any new building makes an impact on the environment," he said, encouraging delegates to recognize the environmental and social value of recycling existing buildings. "If we don't deal with this issue, it's going to change life as we know it."

Improved energy efficiency alone is not enough to address global climate change, however. Many of the week's panelists and speakers noted that alternative energy sources must be part of the solution.

"The really good news is that the cost of renewable energy is going down," Mr. Girardet said, citing examples of the latest technologies—from solar farms in Germany and windmills in Denmark to tidal power stations in Ireland. With policies like feed-in tariffs that have been adopted in forty-six countries, homeowners can now install photovoltaic panels and "enjoy...a payback on [the] solar roof within twelve years," Girardet said.

Public/private partnerships like Energy Service Companies (ESCOs) have also yielded good results, a fact noted both by Ms. Colless and George Hawkins, the director of Washington D.C.'s Department of the Environment. "People know that conserving energy saves money in the long-run," Mr. Hawkins said. "The challenge is how you find the money upfront."

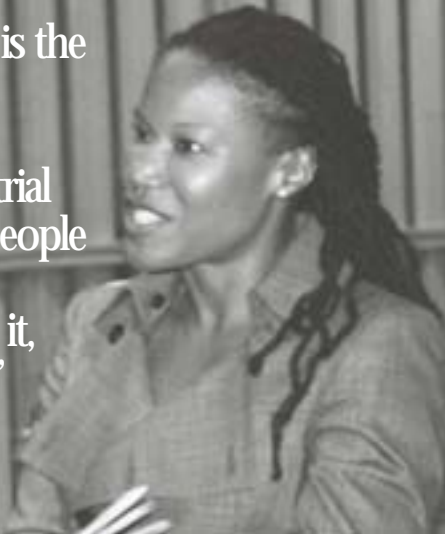
With ESCOs to help defray the initial investment, "A building owner who doesn't have upfront capital," Ms. Colless explained, "can get a fully green-retrofitted, upgraded asset with no upfront cost."

Going green pays off in other ways as well, Thomas Hicks of the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC), pointed out. The agency is the creator of the nationally accepted LEED building efficiency rating system.

"Green buildings are delivering scientifically documented productivity gains...and reducing symptoms for respiratory illnesses," he said. With higher occupancy rates, premium rents, and increased asset values, "green buildings are delivering real bottom line results."

“The climate crisis is the end result of concentrating dirty industry and industrial design on top of people who have had little power to influence it, let alone to stop it.”

Majora Carter
Sustainable South Bronx



The Need for Good Planning

The conference revealed broad consensus on what cities need to do to become sustainable—promote denser, transit-oriented, human-scale development, with energy-efficient heat, water, power and waste systems that mimic natural processes. Discussions over how to arrive at this common endpoint covered a wide range of tactics and strategies, many of which emphasized the importance of planning.

Mr. Beasley put it most bluntly: “The accidental city will never be a sustainable city,” he said.

Planning agencies play an important role in building broad coalitions to sustain a long-term push for change. “The built environment takes a lot of time to change,” said Harriet Tregoning, director of Washington, D.C.’s Office of Planning. “[The process] is longer than the term of any single elected leader. And longer than the term of an inexhaustible nonprofit leader.”

How to recruit and engage people in the planning process was a topic of a lively discussion. “I believe in the importance of storytelling,” said Daniel Slone, an attorney who has served as the national counsel for many prominent organizations promoting sustainable development. “If we do not embed the principles that we pursue in stories that can be shared in our communities...we will not achieve the momentum we desire.”

Robert Stacey, executive director of the smart growth advocacy group 1,000 Friends of Oregon, agreed. “The only way to sustain a plan over time is by regularly revisiting [it] and reengaging the public.” Recounting his own experience, Mr. Stacey explained how special interests nearly succeeded in gutting Oregon’s renowned planning laws because the public did not understand how the laws—30 years after their implementation—still contributed to their quality of life.

Majora Carter, executive director of Sustainable South Bronx, the first and most successful green-collar jobs program, stated that climate change is a business opportunity that can empower people and mobilize them to effect broader social and environmental change. “You know, little green fairies are not going to come out of the sky and do this work for us,” she said. “When you put people to work fixing the environmental problems in our shared world...you are solving two of the world’s greatest problems at the same time, poverty alleviation and environmental remediation.”

Capitals Take Action

The conference also afforded the international delegates several opportunities to discuss the sustainability initiatives underway in their capitals. Through formal presentations and informal exchanges, they showed how particular challenges and varying priorities shaped each city’s greening projects.

For several European capitals, the driving goal of sustainability programs was the need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to come into compliance with the Kyoto Protocol. Vienna’s transportation plan—Vienna on the Move—aims to increase use of mass transit in the Austrian city and make those vehicles cleaner and more energy efficient. The city has even introduced an electric freight tram that delivers cargo at night.

Copenhagen, Denmark, which has already defined itself as the environmental capital of Europe, aspires to be the world’s capital city with the best urban environment by 2015. The city’s four-point plan includes an initiative to increase bicycle usage to 50 percent of all home-to-work trips from the current level of 40 percent. In Finland, Helsinki is replacing its defunct cargo ports in the city center with a mixed-use sustainable development and working to contain urban sprawl by promoting cooperation among the region’s municipalities.



Vienna’s Cargo Tram “GüterBim”

Canberra, Ottawa, and Moscow emphasized the importance of preserving their cities' green spaces. To safeguard a nationally significant landscape that is increasingly under threat of drought, Canberra's planners are employing water-sensitive urban design features to conserve and reuse this valuable resource. In the Old Parliament House Gardens, which require irrigation to maintain their appearance, the installation of new water management technologies has reduced water usage by 52 percent since 2001.

Ottawa's planning has emphasized the preservation of the area's natural features for the last one hundred years. The city now aspires to be a model of environmental leadership in the preservation of its green spaces and blue waterways.

The central focus of Moscow's 2005 master plan is the conservation of green spaces, many of which have been threatened by private development since the collapse of communism. Thirty-five percent of the city's area is green space, and in the last several years, the city has undertaken a massive campaign to improve parks, refurbish monuments, and plant thousands of trees.

Many cities, including Bogotá, Islamabad, Abu Dhabi, and Brasilia are coping with rapid population growth, but Bogotá's ability to expand is constrained by the city's topography. Their master plan, Vision Bogotá 2038, focuses on livability and sustainability, with initiatives to increase the density of development, improve mass transit, and create green and vibrant public spaces.

Carved out of a lush, green landscape in 1961, Islamabad is in some ways already a "green city," but rapid development has undermined the city's environmental quality. The capital is now focusing its efforts on infusing the city with culture and energy while improving its environmental health and without undermining its natural beauty.

The capital city of Abu Dhabi is also experiencing rapid population growth and development. The city's newly established planning agency is developing its first master plan, which embeds green practices, particularly for

water and energy conservation, into the building codes for the city. They also have broken ground on the ambitious Masdar City project, the world's first zero-carbon, zero-waste, car-free city that will eventually house fifty thousand residents.

Brasilia is accommodating its expanding population with the

"If you are going to do transformational change, you have to love conflict... There are huge forces protecting the status quo, and they are very comfortable."

Tom Murphy
Urban Land Institute

development of Noroeste: The Green Neighborhood. Noroeste will occupy a previously undeveloped sector of the city's famed urban plan. Its layout and systems engineering are all designed around the "three R's"—reduce, reuse, and recycle."

The capital of Tshwane, South Africa is assuming all of the governmental functions that had previously been divided among the country's three capital cities. Although the city's planners are not designing with a "clean slate," they are at an exciting juncture. Not only are they working to give expression to a unified, post-Apartheid national identity in the city's built environment, but they are able to take this opportunity to embed the practices of sustainability into their new master plan.

For details on efforts to make Washington, DC more sustainable, please read the Quarterly article, "NCPC Launches Sustainability Initiative," on page 7.

Leadership and Courage

One theme to emerge throughout the conference was that creating sustainable cities requires not just vision, but leadership and the courage to confront resistance from multiple sources. Examples included engineering standards that may slow down sustainable development and officials who say funds aren't available.

"Somebody needs to stand up with passion and commitment and say we're going to change this behavior," Tom Murphy, former mayor of Pittsburgh, said. "Money is always the excuse, and it should never be an excuse. It's always about whether you have the community will to make the change."

Planning agencies and elected officials can play a critical role in generating that community will. Ms. Carter, who is taking her method of community organizing to other urban areas, concluded with a moving appeal to the assembled delegates: "People are aching for leaders just like you to inspire them and to believe that there is another way."

"We've gone from cities being the problem to cities being the solution."

George Hawkins
Department of the Environment,
District of Columbia

NCPC Launches Sustainability Initiative



At the July Commission meeting, NCPC staff member Diane Sullivan presented an overview of the agency's new sustainability initiative. When completed in late 2009, the project will define the sustainable development objectives that will be incorporated into the agency's Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital: Federal Elements. These new policies will guide the agency in its plan review and long-range planning processes.

"I am very glad that NCPC has embarked upon this timely and important project," said John V. Cogbill, III, NCPC's chairman. "The protection of the region's natural resources is integral to the agency's mission, and we welcome the opportunity to provide a regional perspective on sustainable development."

NCPC will coordinate with other federal agencies to develop policy objectives that are expected to focus on several areas including land use, transportation, green infrastructure, and stormwater management.

One of the National Capital Region's most significant challenges is the reduction of its carbon footprint—the level of greenhouse gases emitted into the atmosphere. "Our metropolitan area has the 12th largest carbon footprint in the nation," Ms. Sullivan reported. "The primary producers of emissions are buildings and cars."

As a major employer and building owner in the Washington area, the federal government has a great opportunity to address these challenges. The executive and legislative branches have already implemented several policies to reduce the future energy consumption of federal buildings. Existing federal facilities must reduce their overall energy consumption 30 percent by 2015, and new or renovated buildings are required to reduce fossil fuel-generated energy consumption 55 percent by 2010 and 100 percent by 2030.

"Sustainable development meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs..."

World Commission on Environment and Development
(The Brundtland Commission), 1987

"These measures will certainly have a positive impact," said Ms. Sullivan, "and NCPC can play a role in helping to develop a broad, comprehensive vision for the National Capital Region."

The debut of the sustainability initiative dovetailed with Capitals Alliance 2008 (see page 4), at which capital city delegates shared information and experiences on greening their communities. The delegates discussed a wide range of sustainable development initiatives in their own cities, and considered the unique leadership role national capitals can play in creating a more sustainable planet.

The expected completion date for NCPC's sustainability initiative is late 2009 or early 2010.



Washington's Challenges:

- Ranks among the top ten metropolitan areas for air pollution
- 12th worst carbon footprint out of the largest 100 metropolitan areas
- The health of the region's Chesapeake Bay is rated as a C-
- Regional population will increase 32% by 2030, resulting in:
 - A 37% increase in the daily vehicle miles traveled in the Washington region
 - Increased development, energy consumption, and runoff into rivers

Concept Designs for National Mall Levee Closure Unveiled

On August 19, an interagency levee task force got its first glimpse of proposed concept designs for National Mall levee improvements near 17th Street and Constitution Avenue. The Olin Partnership landscape architecture firm unveiled six alternatives designed to provide flood protection for portions of the monumental core and central Washington, D.C. while respecting the historical and cultural resources of the Mall.



must be completed by November 2009, will probably be made of poured concrete. When funding becomes available in the future, portions of the flood wall will be clad in decorative stone or covered with dirt to create a berm, depending on the design.

The Task Force—comprised of representatives from NCPC, the DC Office of Planning, the National Park Service, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and three consulting firms—must weigh many variables before settling on a single design.

“Some alternatives are more like structures, while others are more like landscape features,” said Nancy Witherell, one of the NCPC staff members who has been attending the weekly task force meetings since they began in April. “We have to think about how many trees will be lost under each scenario, how the solutions will affect views of the Washington Monument, and how people will experience the wall at street level.”

Public comment on the draft Environmental Assessment (EA) that evaluates the impact of all six designs opens October 23 and closes November 22. During that time, the public will be able to view the document and submit comments through the National Park Service’s website.

The Commission of Fine Arts is scheduled to review the concept designs at its November meeting, and NCPC review is expected in December.

“Some alternatives are more like structures, while others are more like landscape features.”

“It’s a tricky place to design for,” explained Christine Saum, who is spearheading NCPC’s contribution to the task force. “There’s already an existing landscape on the Mall and there are so many potential impacts to consider, including cost.”

Nancy Witherell
National Capital Planning Commission

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The Mall levee protects central Washington from overbank flooding of the Potomac River. Without upgrades to its system of temporary closures, much of Washington’s monumental core, including the Federal Triangle, will lie within the 100-year floodplain, according to proposed flood maps issued by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) in September 2007.

All six of the concept designs feature some type of flood wall on both sides of 17th Street that can be joined together with a post-and-panel closure system (see box) when flooding is imminent. The interim wall, which



What is a Post-and-Panel Closure System?

The temporary closure that will cross 17th Street near Constitution Avenue is comprised of below-ground footings. When flooding is imminent, responders will insert tall posts into the footings and slide panels in between them to complete the assembly, which takes approximately two to four hours. Because it is the most expensive element to construct, the length and height of the closure are significant factors in calculating the cost of each alternative.

Public Comment Period for Framework Plan Generates Significant Feedback

At its July Commission meeting, NCPC released the draft National Capital Framework Plan for a 90-day public comment period. Hailed by *The Washington Post* as “a bold new vision for Washington’s future,” the Framework Plan reimagines areas around the National Mall as distinctive destinations enlivened by a mixture of daytime and evening activities for residents, federal employees, and visitors alike.

In addition to receiving extensive media coverage, staff received significant feedback from the general public in the three months following the plan’s release.

“The Framework Plan has the potential to transform the way people experience Washington,” said Marcel Acosta, NCPC’s executive director. “We are extremely pleased that the initial response has been enthusiastic and we look forward to incorporating the public’s feedback into the final plan.”

The high volume of responses received during the public comment period may be in part a result of wide-ranging outreach efforts conducted by staff during the two years the plan was in development. Prior to the July release, NCPC hosted two public meetings and met with more than thirty organizations—from local and federal agencies to nonprofit organizations, community groups, and private enterprise associations.

“Public input is essential to city building; the best plans include input from a diverse range of individuals and groups during the planning process,” said Elizabeth Miller, the plan’s project manager. “The central benefit of public review is learning about issues that impact how citizens, workers and visitors experience their community. We must collectively identify the best ideas and learn from each other. Our job as planners is to bring it all together.”

After the July 10 release of the draft plan, NCPC hosted two additional public meetings in July and September. For the one hundred people who attended the two meetings, enthusiasm for specific proposals was relatively evenly distributed among the plan’s four study areas—Federal Triangle, Southwest Rectangle, Northwest Rectangle, and East Potomac Park.

Responses flowed in through email as well. Some expressed enthusiasm for the overall plan, such as James G. Hill, a member of the board of directors of Historic Dupont Circle Main Streets. He wrote, “The plan is an excellent start on solving problems that have plagued DC...I’m glad to help NCPC promote this plan.”

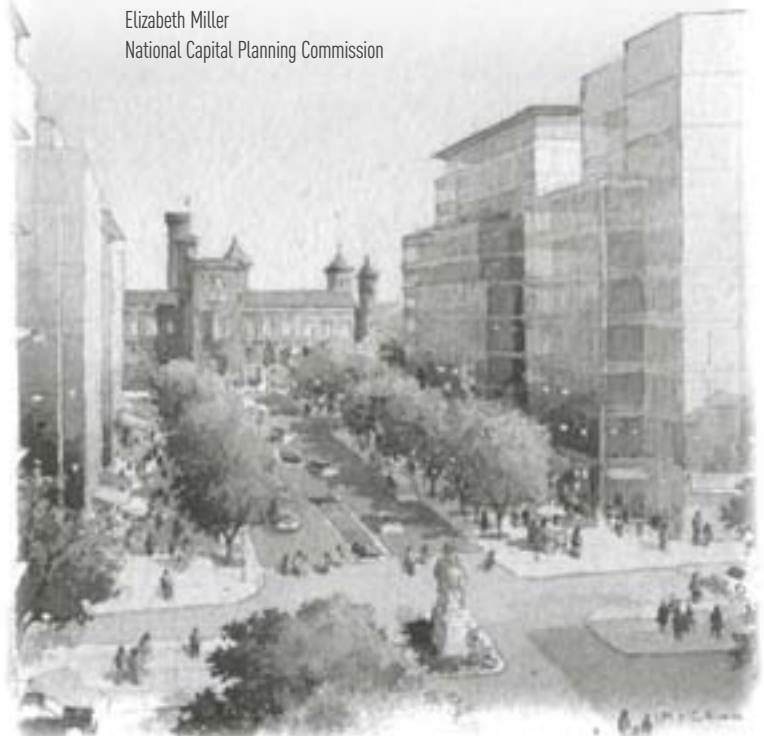
Others provided very detailed and sometimes technical advice about many of the concepts articulated in the plan, from the feasibility of putting a drawbridge over the Washington Channel to coping with throngs of tourists during the Cherry Blossom Festival. David Cranor, cycling enthusiast wrote, “There is no mention of bike lanes...or bicycle access to water taxis. This should be addressed.”

NCPC’s staff is in the process of reviewing feedback received during the public comment period, which ended October 10. “We appreciate the efforts that so many people extended in providing us with feedback about the plan,” said Ms. Miller. “The comments and suggestions will undoubtedly improve the overall quality of the document, which we hope to finalize in early 2009,” she said.

The Framework Plan is a joint effort with the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts. It was officially launched in May 2006.

“Public input is essential to city building; the best plans include input from a diverse range of individuals and groups during the planning process.”

Elizabeth Miller
National Capital Planning Commission



Plan rendering of 10th Street, SW

September

September 4, 2008

Lincoln Memorial Temporary Vehicle Security Barriers, East Side

(File Number 6265)

At its September meeting, the National Capital Planning Commission approved preliminary and final site development plans for a temporary vehicle barrier on the east side of the Lincoln Memorial for a period not to exceed two years. The National Park Service submitted the project, which involves placing a temporary barrier at the outer edge of the Circle on the east side of the memorial with forty-three custom-designed concrete elements. The barrier line is temporary and reversible, with each barrier being lifted into place and spaced four feet on center on the pavement surface. The barrier elements feature an exposed aggregate finish to complement the original granite of the approachway to the Memorial.

The temporary vehicle barrier is part of an overall plan for improvements to the Lincoln Memorial including roadway and sidewalk reconstruction, paving, vehicle barriers, a retaining wall, and the construction of two concession buildings.

The Park Service plans to complete the improvements to the plaza and the security barrier construction in time for the bicentennial celebration of President Lincoln's birthday in February 2009.



Staff Reports Now Online

NCPC's staff recommendations to the Commission, known as Executive Director's Reports (EDRs), are now available online prior to each Commission meeting. Staff will post the EDRs as Adobe Acrobat pdfs by noon on the Monday prior to the meeting.

If you are interested in a project, please visit www.ncpc.gov/meetings and click on the final agenda to view the full reports.

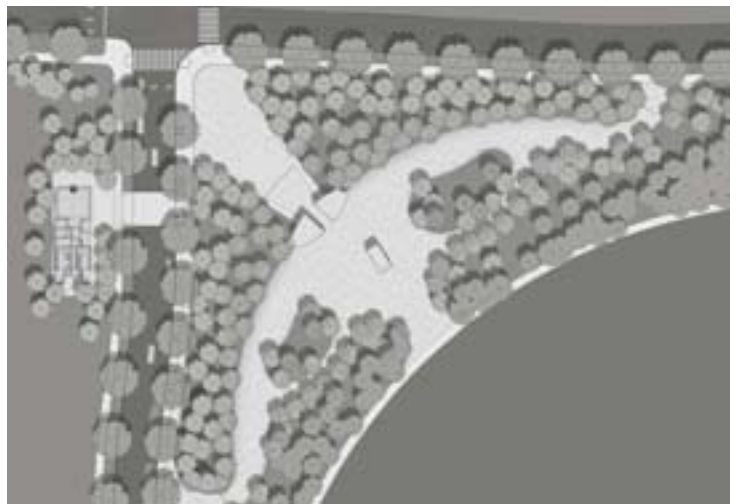
Martin Luther King, Jr. National Memorial

(File Number 5907)

NCPC reviewed preliminary and final site and building plans for the Martin Luther King, Jr. National Memorial. The Commission approved the project with the exception of security barriers proposed by the National Park Service.

The memorial will be located in West Potomac Park on the northwestern side of the Tidal Basin. The three main design elements of the memorial include the Mountain of Despair, a curved Inscription Wall, and the Stone of Hope featuring the likeness of Dr. King. The Commission's action on this project constitutes final approval.

The submission for the memorial included a visitor support building, public restrooms, a bookstore, and a ranger contact station. The Commission disapproved an interior donor wall within the building and required the applicant to remove the feature from the project to bring the project into compliance with requirements of the Commemorative Works Act and the Commission's policies on donor recognition. The Commission's decision to reject the security bollards was based on information received during a security briefing.



National Law Enforcement Museum

(File Number 6321)

The Commission approved the final site and building plans for the National Law Enforcement Museum, completing the final stage of the review process for this project. Submitted by the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund, the largely underground museum will be constructed on federal land within the District of Columbia Courts complex in Judiciary Square.

The museum's design includes two above-ground entrance pavilions clad in transparent low iron glass, each measuring 52 feet by 77 feet for a total of 7,695 square feet. The museum design also includes a surrounding plaza that will be used by both the museum and the District of Columbia Courts, retaining walls and bollards, glass skylights in the plaza, and landscaped planting beds.

The final plans reflect minor changes to the preliminary site and building plans approved by the Commission at its December 2007 meeting. Changes from the preliminary plans include the removal of two elements: flush translucent pavers from the ramps leading to the Courthouse and two of the three proposed crosswalks across E Street.

The majority of the museum will be housed under a former parking lot between Court Building C and the United States Court of Appeals for the Armed Forces, as well as below the right-of-way of the 400 block of E Street, NW.

Federal Capital Improvements Program for the National Capital Region

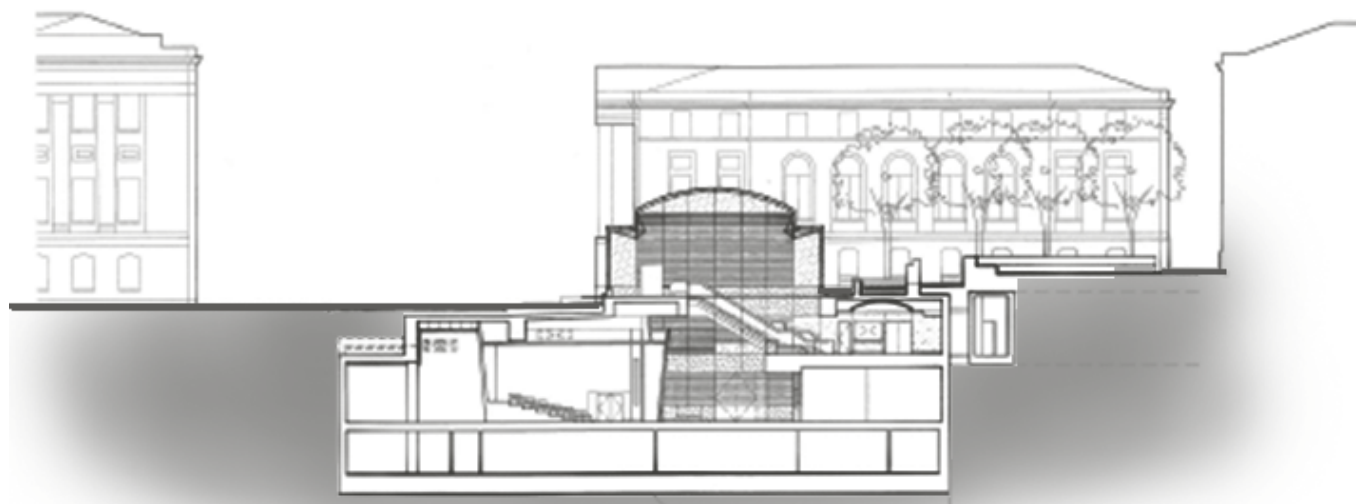
(File Number 1485)

The Commission reviewed and approved the Federal Capital Improvements Program (FCIP) for the National Capital Region for Fiscal Years 2009-2014. The estimated total cost of agency-submitted projects in this year's FCIP is \$11.6 billion. This year's FCIP contains 190 projects submitted by thirteen agencies.

Project and cost distribution for this year's FCIP has been shaped by BRAC requirements, building modernizations, new construction proposals for agency consolidation, and research and development. Over \$2.4 billion of requested funding is for BRAC-related construction projects, most notably at Fort Belvoir, Virginia, and the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center in Bethesda, Maryland.

The General Services Administration (GSA) submitted forty-two projects representing \$4.6 billion in total costs from FYs 2009-2014. While the majority of GSA's proposed projects involve modernization of existing federal buildings located in the monumental core, the new Department of Homeland Security headquarters at St. Elizabeths represents the biggest request at \$1.4 billion.

The greatest number of projects by jurisdiction, seventy-nine, was in the District of Columbia. This represents 46 percent, or \$5.3 billion, of the total project costs. Virginia has fifty-five projects representing 29 percent of the total proposed project costs, while Maryland has fifty-four projects representing 22 percent of total project costs. Following adoption by the Commission, the FCIP was forwarded to the Office of Management and Budget.



August

The Commission did not meet in August.

July

July 10, 2008

Draft National Capital Framework Plan: Destinations and Connections Beyond the National Mall

(File Number 6629)

At its July meeting, the National Capital Planning Commission authorized circulation of the Draft National Capital Framework Plan for a ninety-day public comment period. Launched in May 2006, the Framework Plan is a multi-agency initiative led by NCPC and the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts. The plan aims to enhance existing federal precincts, create new destinations beyond the National Mall, and improve connections between the Mall, downtown, and the waterfront.

The Framework Plan seeks to preserve the treasured open space of the National Mall by proposing strategies to improve the setting of the adjacent areas and make them desirable locations for the next generation of national museums, memorials, public gatherings, and federal offices. It seeks to reinvigorate Washington's existing federal office precincts by encouraging a mix of offices, shops, businesses, and cultural activities that support economic vitality and vibrant city life.

To achieve its goals, the Framework Plan re-imagines the precincts near the National Mall as new city destinations with distinctive identities. It focuses on federal land and buildings in four key precincts near the National Mall: the Northwest Rectangle, the Federal Triangle, the Southwest Rectangle, and East Potomac Park.

The connections between these precincts are particularly important and the plan proposes to eliminate barriers such as shattered street grids and intrusive road, rail, and bridge infrastructure. It recommends connecting these precincts to one another, to the waterfront, the National Mall, and to the rest of the city. Making these connections, enhancing the quality and beauty of public spaces, and improving transit options are essential to creating a city that is livable, walkable, and enjoyable.

During the ninety-day public comment period, which ended on October 10, NCPC and CFA conducted numerous public outreach efforts with interested parties. Informational public meetings were held in July and in September. In addition, presentations were made to more than ten civic groups. The plan also was posted on the NCPC website and made available by mail or for review at CFA's and NCPC's offices.

NCPC and CFA staff members are currently refining the plan for final review and approval. It will be presented to NCPC on January 8, 2009 and to CFA on January 22, 2009.

Armed Forces Retirement Home

(File Number MP060)

The Commission reviewed the final master plan and transportation management plan for the Armed Forces Retirement Home (AFRH), approving Zone A but returning Zones B and C to the AFRH campus. The Commission also modified both the parking supply and transit service proposed in the plan.

The Commission approved Zone A based on the Home's commitment to engage in a planning process with NCPC staff, the District of Columbia Office of Planning, the National Park Service, and the community to determine the feasibility of allowing Zone C to be used as a publicly accessible park while providing an income stream acceptable to the Home.

The final master plan calls for new development to serve the Home and also provides for private development on Zone A that will accommodate a mix of uses, including residential, office, research and development, institutional, medical, retail, and hotel through private leases for portions of the federally owned site. Zoning for the site will be applied in accordance with the approved master plan. The private development will also provide an income stream for the Trust Fund upon which the Home depends for its operating expenses.

Parking for Phase One Development in Zone A was approved at 2,741 spaces, with the total parking supply for Zone A approved at 5,155 spaces. The parking supply may increase or decrease in accordance with mutually-accepted triggers such as an increase in transit service to the site, opportunities for shared parking, and the results of a planned District of Columbia study on parking requirements for medical office uses. The parking supply may not exceed the limit studied in the Environmental Impact Statement.



The Commission approved the applicant’s proposal to enhance the shuttle service plan originally outlined in the master plan. Service characteristics are subject to negotiation between the AFRH and the District of Columbia and must fall within the overall service levels accounted for in the proposed funding plan.

In its review the Commission also approved the project’s Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) Alternative 3A as presented and analyzed in the adopted Final Environmental Impact Statement, dated November 2007, for the AFRH. The master plan development is anticipated to occur over a timeframe of fifteen to twenty years.

Martin Luther King, Jr. National Memorial

(File Number 5907)

NCPC reviewed a submission by the National Park Service on behalf of the Martin Luther King, Jr. National Memorial Project Foundation, Inc. for preliminary site and building plans for the Martin Luther King, Jr. National Memorial to be located in West Potomac Park at the Tidal Basin. The Commission approved the preliminary site and building plans for the memorial’s Visitor Contact Station/Bookstore/Restroom Building only, and deferred preliminary approval of the memorial design pending the National Park Service’s resolution of design changes to West Basin Drive being discussed in the Section 106 consultation process, and issues surrounding the Park Service’s intent to design and place security barriers in or around the memorial site. The Commission noted that it supports the overall memorial design and discouraged the Park Service from adding security barriers.

The three main elements of the preliminary design include the Mountain of Despair, the curved Inscription Wall forming the main plaza areas of the memorial interior, and the Stone of Hope that features the likeness of Dr. King centered within the plaza. The preliminary plans submitted for Commission review further the concept of the Stone of Hope breaking free from the Mountain of Despair and now fully depict the Visitor Contact Building in its new location and design.

Visitor support building



Final pergola design

Georgetown Waterfront Park

(File Number 6383)

The Commission reviewed and approved final site and building plans for the Wisconsin Avenue Terminus portion of the Georgetown Waterfront Park, an approximately 2.3 acre portion of the park serving as the park’s main entrance from the surrounding city.

The project, submitted by the National Park Service, features a riverfront promenade that passes along the park’s southern section and incorporates the Capital Crescent Bicycle Trail passing through its northern section. A pathway leading from Wisconsin Avenue to the waterfront includes a fountain area with granite seating on one side. Granite features are infused throughout the project to establish a consistent theme for the park’s design.

Green design and open spaces are signature elements applied throughout the design. The plans incorporate a large open lawn area between the pathway and 31st Street, NW. A pergola alongside the waterfront promenade is a major focal point of the lower plaza with seating shaded by a green roof and offering views of the waterfront. Steps leading down to the water’s edge will feature grass seating with a vegetated soil bioengineering system alongside.

The Commission noted that the Park Service is undertaking an Environmental Impact Statement for the Georgetown Boathouse project that includes an alternative for locating a boathouse in a portion of the Georgetown Waterfront Park.

Modification to a Planned Unit Development at 250 M Street, SE (File Number ZC 03-12F/03-13F)

The Commission commented on a proposed action of the District of Columbia Zoning Commission to approve a modification to a Planned Unit Development for an office building located at 250 M Street, SE. The Commission's role is to advise the Zoning Commission on whether the project will adversely affect any identified federal interests. The Commission found that the proposed action would not comply with the Height of Buildings Act of 1910, as amended, and would therefore be adverse to the federal interest.

The proposed site is part of the larger Capper/Carrollburg Redevelopment Project, a thirty-three acre project located in Southeast just north of M Street between 2nd Street, SE and 7th Street, SE. The proposal is to construct a 233,000 square foot, eleven-story commercial building that includes retail on the ground floor, offices above, and a conference center on the eleventh floor. The proposal represents a shift from the original design of the building by increasing the roof height of the building by twenty feet, increasing the gross floor area, increasing the number of floors from nine to eleven, and modifying the top floor and roof structure design.

The Height Act establishes the maximum height for this building at 110 feet, based on the width of the widest street surrounding Reservation 17D, which will form a portion of Canal Park. NCPC recommended that the Zoning Commission require the applicant to modify the design to reduce the building height by twenty feet to bring the project into compliance with the Height Act.

Union Place - 250 K Street (File Number ZC 05-36A)

The Commission reviewed a proposed action of the District of Columbia Zoning Commission to approve a Second Stage Planned Unit Development (PUD) located at 250 K Street in Northeast.

The Commission's role is to advise the Zoning Commission on whether the project has an adverse impact on an identified federal interest. The Commission considered this matter and did not take an action.

Draft Strategic Plan, Fiscal Years 2009-2014 (File Number 6400)

The Commission authorized circulation of the draft Strategic Plan for the National Capital Planning Commission, Fiscal Years 2009-2014 for a 45-day public review and comment period.

The Government Performance and Results Act of 1993 (GPRA) requires each agency to submit a strategic plan spanning a minimum six-year period—the fiscal year it is submitted and five years forward. The new version, which reflects the views and comments of the NCPC staff, is a comprehensive reworking of the current strategic plan covering FYs 2004-2009.

The new strategic plan provides a clearer articulation of the NCPC's function and operations, with revised vision and mission statements and five strategic goals to guide the agency's work over the next six years. It also sets out the specific means for fulfilling the strategic goals and identifies performance targets for measuring the agency's progress toward achieving its objectives.

The authorization to circulate will enable the NCPC staff to begin consultation with Congress and the Office of Management and Budget and to solicit the views of federal departments and agencies, state and local governments, and interested organizations and individuals. The 45-day period will begin upon posting of the draft plan to the agency's website.



CommissionNotes

Commissioners and Executive Staff Pay Respects at 9/11 Memorial Opening

On Thursday, September 11, several members of the Commission and executive staff attended the dedication of the Pentagon Memorial. The memorial honors those killed on American Airlines Flight 77 and in the Pentagon on September 11, 2001. The two-acre memorial, which NCPC reviewed and approved, features 184 "light benches," each one honoring a person killed on that tragic day. Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates, former Secretary of Defense Ronald H. Rumsfeld, and President George Bush were among those providing remarks during the dedication ceremony. The Pentagon Memorial is the first national memorial to be dedicated to the terrorist attacks that took place on September 11, 2001.

Staff Participates in GSA Fair

On July 22 staff participated in the U.S. General Services Administration's 2008 Public Building Service Customer Connections Event. More than three hundred people attended this year's "Excellence in Times of Change" event, held at the Ronald Reagan Building and International Trade Center. NCPC staff were on hand to promote the agency's initiatives including the joint National Capital Framework Plan and the joint CapitalSpace plan.

The Story Behind Carsharing's Success

NCPC hosted the Coalition for Smarter Growth Forum "From A to B, With a Stop at Z: The Story Behind Carsharing's Success" on September 23. Speakers included Ellice Perez, regional vice president for Zipcar; Anna McLaughlin, DDOT's TDM coordinator; and Chris Hamilton, Arlington County Commuter Services chief. The participants examined the policies that led to the dramatic increase in carsharing programs in the United States and the important role carsharing plays in the region's municipalities.

NCPC Email List

To join NCPC's monthly e-newsletter list, start receiving a monthly email listing of NCPC's Tentative Agenda Items, and/or to receive the Quarterly in the mail, please email info@ncpc.gov and let us know how to keep you better informed.

Staff Announcements

Following a nine-month stint as a Loeb Fellow at the Harvard University Graduate School of Design, **Christine Saum** recently accepted the position of Chief Urban Designer. In her new role, Ms. Saum will provide design guidance on agency projects and help coordinate agency policy regarding design issues. Ms. Saum also will work with submitting agencies on major projects during the design phase. Ms. Saum previously served as the director of the Urban Plan and Design Review Division.

After serving as acting director of Urban Plan and Design Review for a year, **David Levy** was officially named director of the office. Mr. Levy is a licensed architect and a certified planner with more than twenty years of experience in urban design and planning, transportation planning, architectural design, construction management, and design review. His division reviews some two hundred federal and District plans and projects annually and makes recommendations to the Commission for action at its monthly meeting.

Cheryl Kelly joins NCPC as a community planner in the Urban Design and Plan Review Division. She will receive her Masters in Urban and Regional Planning from Virginia Tech in December. She received her undergraduate degree from Virginia Tech. A native of Yorktown, Virginia, Ms. Kelly interned with NCPC from December 2007 - August 2008.

The Commission welcomes several interns to the staff. **Bessie Lee**, who is studying for a Masters in Urban Planning and Historic Preservation at the University of Maryland, is working in the Urban Design and Plan Review (UDPR) Division. Also interning in UDPR is **Allan Henderson**, a fourth-year undergraduate in Howard University's School of Architecture and Design. **Ruben Hoyos**, a senior at Brigham Young University is working with the Plan and Project Implementation Division on the Framework Plan.

The Commission says goodbye to **Terrine Flythe** who worked for four years as a human resources assistant in the Office of Administration. Ms. Flythe accepted a position with the Office of the Secretary at the Department of Commerce. The Office of Public Affairs says goodbye to two staff members who were on temporary assignment. Communications Specialist **Athena Hernandez** and Public Affairs Specialist **Ingrid Utech** completed their appointments with the agency in October. We wish both well in their new endeavors.

Congratulations to Community Planner **Diane Sullivan** and her husband Zac on the birth of their daughter Katherine Elizabeth Coile, who was born on September 17.

QUARTERLY

Coming Soon

October 24, 2008

A panel discussion on the new book, *The National Mall: Rethinking Washington's Monumental Core*, will be held in the Russell Senate Caucus Room at 1:00 p.m.

November 6, 2008

The National Capital Planning Commission holds its monthly public meeting. Informational presentations include a briefing on the Potomac Park levee and the Eisenhower Memorial.

December 1, 2008

NCPC Executive Director Marcel Acosta discusses the agency's contribution to the book, *The National Mall: Rethinking Washington's Monumental Core*. The event will be held from 6:30 - 8:00 p.m. at the National Building Museum.



National Capital Planning Commission

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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.

Commission Members

John V. Cogbill, III, Chairman, Presidential Appointee

Herbert F. Ames, Presidential Appointee

Jose L. Galvez, III, Presidential Appointee

Arrington Dixon, Mayoral Appointee

Stacie S. Turner, Mayoral Appointee

The Honorable Robert M. Gates
Secretary of Defense

The Honorable Dirk Kempthorne
Secretary of the Interior

The Honorable James A. Williams
Acting Administrator of General Services Administration

The Honorable Joseph I. Lieberman
Chairman, Senate Committee on Homeland
Security and Governmental Affairs

The Honorable Henry A. Waxman
Chairman, House Committee on Oversight
and Government Reform

The Honorable Adrian M. Fenty
Mayor of the District of Columbia

The Honorable Vincent C. Gray
Chairman, Council of the District of Columbia

Executive Director
Marcel C. Acosta

