

Visitors

Element

.....ComprehensivePlan
for the National Capital



Federal Elements

Visitors

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.....ComprehensivePlan
for the National Capital

Introduction

Visitors

It is the goal of the federal government to:

Accommodate visitors in a way that ensures an enjoyable and educational experience, showcases the institutions of American culture and democracy, and supports federal and regional planning goals.

Visitors often come to the National Capital Region to enjoy the many national symbols and memorials honoring America's greatest leaders and historical events and to educate themselves about American culture. They come to commemorate important public events, to petition their elected government officials, to conduct business, to do research, and to view and participate in special celebratory events. The nation's capital averages almost 20 million domestic and international visitors each year, and consistently rates as one of the most popular national tourist destinations.

Visitors to the region are particularly interested in the major federal visitor attractions located along the National Mall that tell the story of American history, hold invaluable artifacts, and display the artistic, technological, and scientific achievements of our society. In 2002, Smithsonian Institution attractions

recorded approximately 24 million visits, which included visitors who live in the area as well as those from outside the region.¹ Three museums alone attracted over 70 percent of total visits to Smithsonian facilities in the region: the National Air and Space Museum, with over 8 million visitors; the National Museum of Natural History, with over 6 million visitors; and the National Museum of American History, with over 4 million visitors.²

Many of the domestic visitors to the nation's capital originated from New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania, with these market areas accounting for approximately 16 percent of visitor volume.

Washington, D.C. Convention and Tourism Corporation



1. Washington DC Marketing Center, 2003. Includes repeat trips to the same museum.
2. Washington DC Marketing Center, 2003.

The number of visitors has increased over the years as new attractions have been added and as the nation's population and disposable income for travel and leisure have increased. The hospitality industry is one of the three core components of the District of Columbia economy. Travel and tourism contribute approximately \$10 billion annually to the local economy.³

In 2002, more than 8 percent of the workforce in Washington was employed in the leisure and hospitality industry.

Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments

and on the National Mall, has also increased. In the past 20 years, 25 new memorials were authorized,⁴ and eight have been built near the Mall. Two of the most recent openings include the National World War II Memorial and the National Museum of the American Indian, which were completed in 2004. If past trends continue, there could be more than 50 additional memorials in the heart of the nation's capital by 2050.⁵

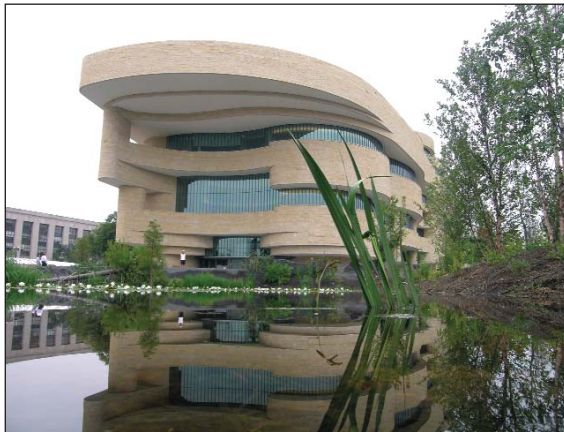
In addition to the growing number of visitors to the region, the demand for memorials, museums, and other federal visitor attractions, particularly within the monumental core

While the addition of new memorials and museums is exciting and offers new sightseeing opportunities for visitors and residents alike, accommodating these attractions—particularly on the Mall—places a burden on the symbolic heart of the nation's capital. Left unchecked, the demand could threaten the historic and open space character of the monumental core and spoil the quality of the visitor experience.

Security concerns have also added a unique challenge to many federal visitor attractions in the National Capital Region. Makeshift security measures, the temporary closure of some attractions, and restricted street access have affected visitors' experiences in the National Capital Region. While appropriate long-term security measures are being developed and implemented, it will be important to continue balancing the need for security with accessibility to federal visitor attractions.

Since Washington, D.C. is an international capital city with a vibrant local arts and cultural scene, and a popular visitor destination, improvements should be made to accommodate the growing number of domestic and international visitors. Policies in the Visitors Element provide a response to this growth in tourism and the demand for new federal visitor attractions.

National Museum of the American Indian



National World War II Memorial



3. *Washington, DC Local Comparables Report: A Report for the Washington, DC Visitor Transportation Study for the National Mall and Surrounding Parks*, prepared by Alexa C. Viets for the National Park Service, July 2003.
4. Twenty-three memorials are authorized under the Commemorative Works Act of 1986 for NPS and GSA property. Other memorials are authorized for sites under the jurisdiction of other agencies not subject to the Commemorative Works Act.
5. *Memorials and Museums Master Plan*, National Capital Planning Commission, December 2001.

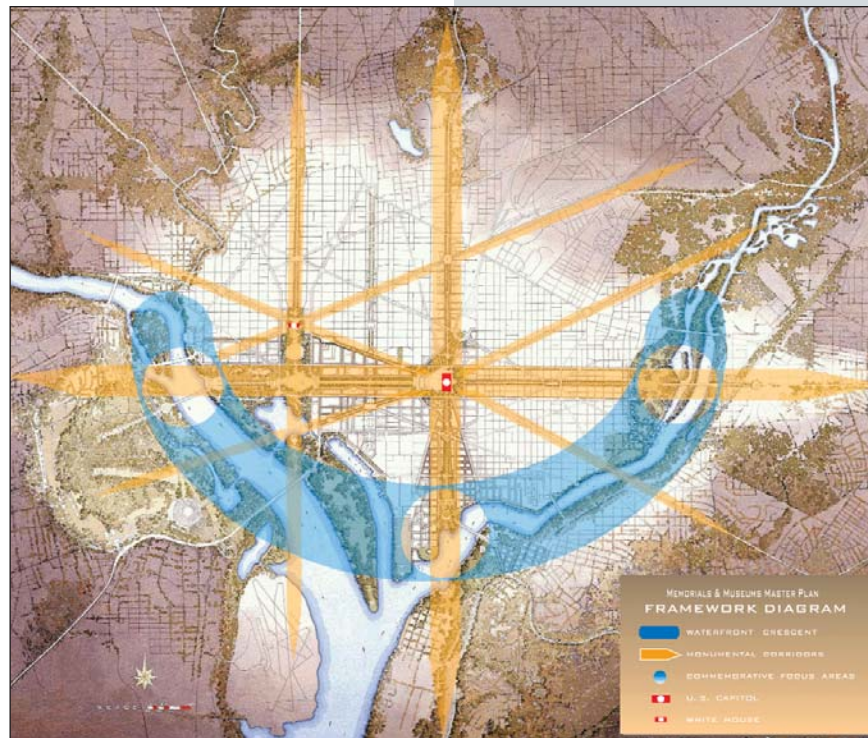
Although the Visitors Element continues to celebrate and promote the central area of the nation's capital as the focal point for federal visitor attractions, national events, and cultural and entertainment venues, it builds upon policies in the Commission's *Memorials and Museums Master Plan* that promote dispersing new attractions and activities away from the Mall. By looking to other areas of the city and region, the federal government can protect and enhance the unique historic resources of the monumental core, while aiding local and regional efforts to stimulate economic activity in areas not traditionally associated with federal visitor attractions.

The element also recognizes key local visitor attractions in the District of Columbia; acknowledges the need to maintain accessibility and openness; suggests improvements for managing visitor information services, visitor programs, and special events; and emphasizes the need to better educate the public about the activities of government agencies and federal facilities that contain unique attractions that could draw visitors. The element also emphasizes the importance of public transportation in facilitating the mobility of visitors to the various attractions.

Memorials and Museums Master Plan

The 2001 *Memorials and Museums Master Plan* extends the ideas expressed in *Extending the Legacy: Planning America's Capital for the 21st Century* that call for the distribution of new memorials and museums beyond the monumental core. The Master Plan preserves Washington's historic open space, ensures that future generations of Americans will have an abundant supply of sites for their own museums and memorials, and reflects public consensus on where those sites should be.

The Master Plan identifies and evaluates 100 potential sites, of which 20 are considered prime sites, appropriate for a major memorial or museum in all quadrants of the city and in Arlington and Alexandria, Virginia. These evaluations identify the size, location, transit connections, cultural and historic resources, and possible economic benefits of each site. With this information in hand, sponsors and review agencies will be able to discern quickly whether or not a project is suitable for a particular location.



Policies

Federal Visitor Attractions

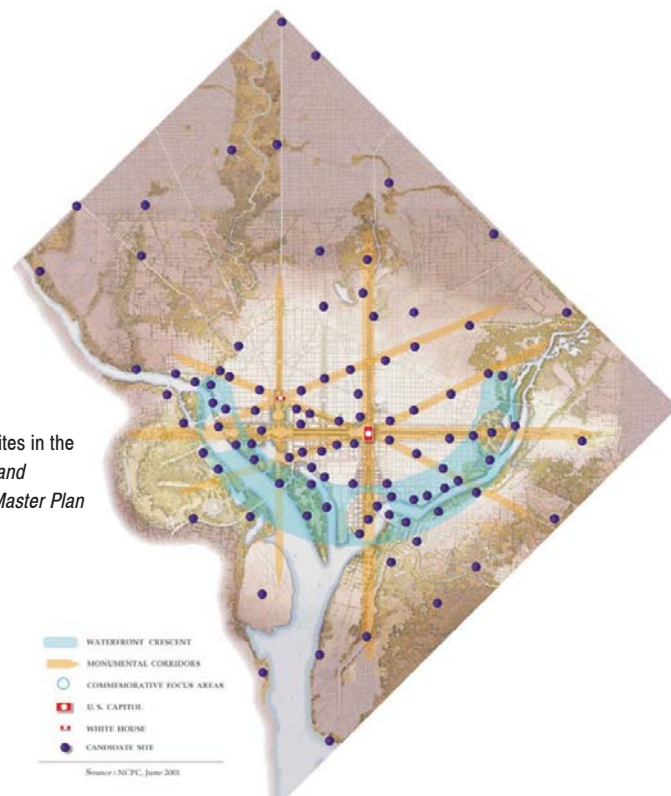
Federal visitor attractions in the National Capital Region take many forms, with memorials, museums, and parks among the most prominent. These attractions play a significant role in shaping the experience of visitors to the region. They also have important implications for the provision of visitor services, and the economic impacts of tourism. The most prominent federal visitor attractions are located in the heart of the monumental core, along the Mall and in West Potomac Park. The popularity of the core and the Mall as locations for federal visitor attractions threatens to overwhelm the very qualities that make these areas special.

Commensurate with rising attendance at these attractions is the need to provide visitor amenities, such as food service and restroom facilities. In order to increase awareness of federal visitor attractions, convenient, accessible visitor information centers and kiosks should be located where visitors can obtain assistance in planning an enjoyable itinerary. Finally, as the security of federal facilities in Washington, D.C. is increased, it is important to maintain a balance between safety and accessibility.

Protect the Monumental Core

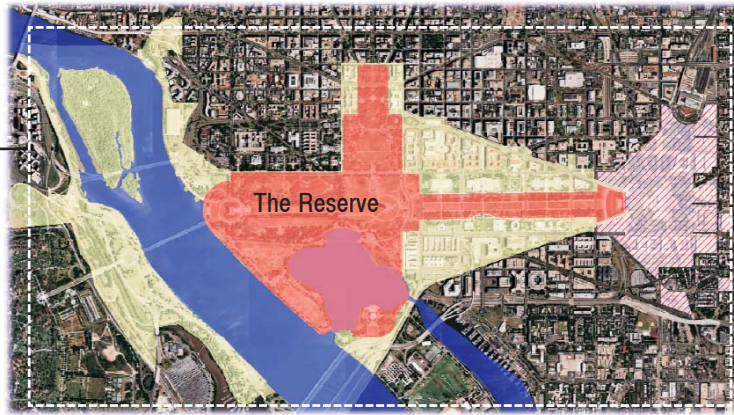
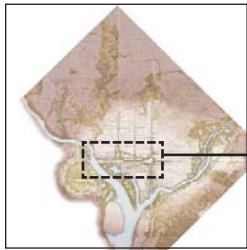
The federal government recognizes the importance of the monumental core and the National Mall as the center of national government and a symbol of national pride whose historic open space and urban design qualities should be protected for future generations. One way of protecting the core is by accommodating future federal visitor attractions throughout the city, as called for in *Extending the Legacy: Planning America's Capital for the 21st Century* and the *Memorials and Museums Master Plan*.

Proposed sites in the
*Memorials and
Museums Master Plan*






The *Legacy Plan* recommends locating memorials, museums, and other federal facilities outside of the monumental core, in neighborhoods where their location can achieve local and federal planning and economic development goals. The *Legacy Plan* identifies a number of specific areas where new federal visitor attractions could be woven into the city tapestry, including North and South Capitol Streets, and areas along the Anacostia and Potomac waterfronts. The *Legacy Plan's* recommendation of dispersing attractions into other areas of the city and stimulating economic growth is exemplified by revitalization that has occurred north of the monumental core, between 7th and 9th Streets, NW, from the National Archives to Mt. Vernon Square. The mix of public and private attractions (e.g., the U.S. Navy Memorial, the City Museum of Washington, D.C., and the International Spy Museum) has sparked a growing downtown district with new arts, entertainment, shopping, and dining venues.

The *Memorials and Museums Master Plan* sets forth principles and guidelines for locating future commemorative and cultural attractions throughout the nation's capital and identifies 100 sites to locate future commemorative works. It also provides guidance for new commemorative works in areas under the jurisdiction of the Architect of the Capitol.



Commemorative Zones

-  Area I
-  Jurisdiction of the Architect of the Capitol
-  Area II

In 2003, Congress strengthened the principles of the Master Plan when it amended the Commemorative Works Act and designated a Reserve area within the core of the great cross-axis of the Mall where the siting of new commemorative works is prohibited. The Reserve generally extends from the United States Capitol to the Lincoln Memorial, and from the White House to the Jefferson Memorial. The Commemorative Works Act also identifies the close-in portion of the capital appropriate for commemorative works of preeminent historical and national significance (Area I)⁶ and identifies areas outside this zone where works of lasting historical significance can be placed (Area II)⁷.

Provide Visitor Services Within the Monumental Core

Indoor and outdoor food service facilities are located throughout the Mall complex and close-in areas of the monumental core to handle anticipated demand. However, there are areas that lack adequate food service facilities. Vendors selling food and other tourist-related items can help to fill the gap and do provide an important visitor service, but they can also impede pedestrian and vehicular traffic and may adversely impact the visual and physical qualities of the monumental core. If carefully located and designed, food service facilities and vendors could serve visitors in remote areas of the monumental core while avoiding any adverse visual or environmental impact to these locations.

Provide Visitor Orientation Centers

Meeting many of the needs of visitors begins with the development of visitor orientation centers placed at different locations—both in the monumental core and in other areas of the District of Columbia and the region—to orient, inform, and educate visitors about special features, activities, and events at federal visitor attractions. Both large, comprehensive visitor orientation centers and small kiosks can be developed to provide essential information to visitors that can contribute to a more informative, interesting, educational, comfortable, and convenient visit. Outside the monumental core, these facilities can further educate the visitor about a wider variety of visitor activities that can be found throughout the District of Columbia and the region.

Balance the Needs of Security and Accessibility

Security has become an inevitable aspect of modern urban life, not only affecting those who live and work in the nation’s capital but also those who visit. In recent years the proliferation of security measures has had a significant effect not only on the historic integrity of the nation’s capital, but also on the ability to accommodate and serve visitors. Despite these heightened security concerns, the federal government has a responsibility to ensure that the nation’s capital, and the many federal and local visitor attractions that are such a vital part of the region’s heritage, remain publicly accessible and aesthetically pleasing. *The National Capital Urban Design and Security Plan* adopted by the Commission in 2002 helps to address some of these issues.

6. Area I is generally bounded by Constitution and Pennsylvania Avenues to the north, Maryland Avenue and the 14th Street Bridge to the south, and Boundary Channel Drive and Arlington National Cemetery to the west. The area surrounding the U.S. Capitol is under the jurisdiction of the Architect of the Capitol to the east.

7. Area II encompasses the rest of the city and other areas depicted on the map entitled “Commemorative Areas Washington, DC and Environs,” identified in the Commemorative Works Act.

Federal Visitor Attractions

Policies

Federal agencies should:

1. Locate and design new memorials and museums in accordance with the Commission's *Memorials and Museums Master Plan*.
2. Locate federal visitor attractions within the District of Columbia, focusing on areas not traditionally associated with federal visitor attractions; districts and neighborhoods of special historic and cultural significance (e.g., Shaw, Downtown Historic Anacostia, Columbia Heights); and areas characterized by unique architecture and historic homes and parks.
3. Support publicly accessible federal visitor attractions on federal property throughout the region.
4. Encourage exhibits and other educational activities and events in lobbies and public areas of government buildings to inspire and educate visitors about the role of government.
5. Support the location of information kiosks and visitor centers at federal facilities and at appropriate locations throughout the monumental core (in accordance with the Commemorative Works Act) and beyond (e.g., at major transportation centers, in historic districts, and in neighborhoods).
6. Continue to support food and retail vendor services at designated locations, while addressing any adverse visual impact to nearby attractions, and any impacts to pedestrian and vehicular accessibility.
7. Balance the needs of security with visitor accessibility by ensuring that federal visitor attractions in the National Capital Region provide for the safety of visitors while remaining accessible and aesthetically pleasing, following the recommendations in *The National Capital Urban Design and Security Plan*.

National Gallery of Art, East Wing



Visitor Transportation

As the volume of visitors to the region rises, special attention must be devoted to the transportation alternatives available to access federal visitor attractions, particularly as these attractions become more geographically dispersed beyond the monumental core. Automobiles, Metrorail, tour buses, and the Tourmobile are the primary transportation modes used to access many attractions. These modes alone, however, are not adequate to alleviate the increasingly heavy demand placed on the area’s road network and limited parking. Transportation alternatives, such as specialized bus and shuttle service, water transportation, walking, and cycling, must be developed and promoted.

Curbing the use of private automobiles as a primary means of travel for visitors to the nation’s capital continues to be a challenge. In a recent NPS survey, 40 percent of respondents indicated that their primary form of transportation to Washington, D.C. was the automobile.⁸ To minimize traffic in the monumental core, visitors are encouraged to use public transportation.

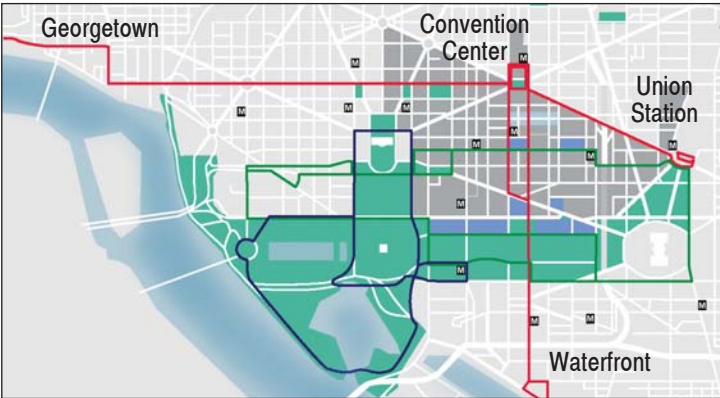
Federal visitor attractions are also increasingly accessed by tour bus, with as many as 1,000 tour buses in the District of Columbia every day during the peak April through June tourist season. Over time, the number of tour buses parked along busy city streets, frequently in large numbers, and often where parking is already limited, has increased significantly. Although tour buses are a desirable alternative to the private automobile, effective and coordinated temporary satellite parking for large numbers of buses should be developed close to the monumental core. While the Tourmobile—a concessionaire to the National Park Service—provides visitors with a narrated riding tour to major attractions (primarily the Mall, West Potomac Park, Arlington National

Cemetery, Mount Vernon, and the Frederick Douglass Home), these services offer limited travel routes. Greater access to attractions throughout the monumental core can be improved by implementing a system to connect visitors to hotels and the commercial and retail opportunities provided in areas of the city adjacent to the attractions.

Visitors to Washington, D.C. have a favorable opinion of the public transportation system and support it as a means to travel to the various attractions and maneuver around the city and region.⁹ The Downtown Circulator, currently in development, is supplementing the existing transportation system by connecting visitors and residents to the many activity nodes and attractions that run from Union Station toward Georgetown and along 7th Street from the new D.C. Convention Center toward the Southwest waterfront. Although current proposals envision routes within downtown D.C. and the monumental core, the *Legacy Plan* proposes a more extensive circulator route that could eventually serve areas extending from Anacostia Park and Robert F. Kennedy Stadium to the east, Arlington Cemetery to the west, North and South Capitol Streets, and beyond the Anacostia River into historic downtown Anacostia.

Nearly 60 percent of the hotel rooms in Washington, D.C. would be in close proximity to the proposed circulator.

Downtown Circulator Partner Group



Downtown Circulator Routes

8. *National Capital Parks Central, Washington, DC Visitors Transportation Survey*, November 2003.
9. *National Capital Parks Central, Washington, DC Visitors Transportation Survey*.

Circulators or similar transit alternatives, such as light rail, expand travel options and complement existing Metrorail and Metrobus service, providing better access for visitors to other vibrant and active areas of the District of Columbia and region currently less well served by public transportation. In addition, the federal government encourages the development of other modes of transportation, such as shuttle service between Metrorail stations and federal visitor attractions, and water transportation, such as water taxis. Walking and bicycling should also be encouraged, and trails and sidewalks should be improved to facilitate an enjoyable transportation alternative for visitors.

Visitor Transportation

Policies

Federal agencies should:

1. Encourage federal visitor attractions within walking distance of public transportation stations and routes.
2. Support increased visitor access to federal and local visitor attractions in the monumental core through a Downtown Circulator system or other transit alternatives (e.g., light rail) coordinated with key Metrorail station locations.
3. Support supplemental forms of transportation, such as shuttle service to and from Metrorail stations, to encourage visitor access to federal visitor attractions located outside of the monumental core.
4. Encourage development of tour bus parking and management strategies to reduce traffic congestion in and around the monumental core and near visitor attractions in other areas of the city and region.
5. Improve information dissemination to visitors to the nation's capital that promotes and educates visitors about transportation alternatives in the National Capital Region.
6. Increase visitor awareness about long-term parking facilities adjacent to public transportation.
7. Encourage increased use of bicycles to access attractions in the region, and provide bicycle racks, information about rental locations, and maps identifying designated bike path locations.
8. Encourage local governments to promote water transportation, such as water taxis, as a way of accessing attractions from the water.
9. Promote a pedestrian friendly monumental core and improved pedestrian access to neighborhoods and federal visitor attractions within the nation's capital through the development of sidewalks, streetscape enhancements, and ground level retail or other amenities.

Reagan Washington
National Airport



Visitor Services and Information

The nation's capital is a major destination for domestic and international visitors, and a center of visitor attractions, artifacts of history, art, and culture, and special events and activities that create memorable and educational experiences for all visitors.

As visitor numbers increase and new federal visitor attractions are located throughout the city and region, encouraging tourism and providing coordinated information to these attractions will become even more important. A coordinated and comprehensive visitor information service, providing information about events, activities, shopping,

transportation, and parking, would help visitors with their travel plans and enhance their travel experience. Current information could include a wide variety of dining and lodging options, arts and entertainment, sports schedules, and special events. Offering a program that tells the story of our nation's capital could heighten the experience of visiting school children.

Finally, a continuing increase in the number of international visitors to the region requires that the information needs of non-English speaking persons are met by providing maps, signage, and other information guides in a variety of languages.

Visitor Services and Information

Policies

Federal agencies should:

1. Support the dissemination of information at regional locations frequented by visitors (e.g., hotels, restaurants, Metrorail stations, and major transportation centers). Information should include federal and local visitor attractions, events, tours, and commercial, retail, and restaurant opportunities.
2. Encourage visitor interest in federal visitor attractions, including less frequently visited attractions in the region, by employing the use of brochures and multimedia materials.
3. Encourage specialized information, learning aids, and tours at federal visitor attractions for groups such as school children or international visitors.
4. Encourage multilingual information services and the establishment of foreign currency exchange facilities for international visitors in the vicinity of federal visitor centers and at key transportation centers.



Visitor Programs and Special Events

The federal government, in coordination with the government of the District of Columbia, has a vital role in sponsoring and providing special programs, festivals, parades, concerts, fine arts presentations, and entertainment events that educate visitors and contribute to a memorable and enjoyable visitor experience. Special events at central downtown locations, such as Freedom

Each year the National Park Service manages some 3,000 activities on the Mall and its environs.

Plaza, the U.S. Navy Memorial, and nearby activity nodes (e.g., D.C. Convention Center, MCI Arena), are ideally located to allow visitors to participate in special programs and events.

Adequately and safely accommodating visitors at these events and programs can also create challenges. Events such as inaugural parades or demonstrations that take place on Pennsylvania or Constitution Avenues often attract more people than the street system and public transportation

system can reasonably handle. This places stress on public facilities, such as dining establishments and restrooms, and on the federal visitor attractions themselves. These pressures can be alleviated through creative scheduling, planning events on days and at times without competing activities, and capitalizing on holidays. Timed ticketing for visits to major attractions is a successful response to scheduling issues, and extended hours should be tested periodically to address visitor needs.

The federal government should continue to be an active participant, with the District of Columbia, in supporting events and activities at traditional gathering places and on federal property, such as parkland and urban plazas. The federal government should continue to develop and implement creative solutions for special events programming. In the future, the development of other civic spaces, such as those proposed on South Capitol Street, will expand the opportunities for these events.

Visitor Programs and Special Events

Policies

Federal agencies should:

1. Continue to sponsor displays, special events, and arts, cultural, and recreational activities in, on, and around federal facilities in the monumental core, in other areas of the District, and throughout the region.
2. Utilize innovative management practices and methods, such as adjusting hours of operation, promoting daily and monthly off-peak times of operation, and utilizing centralized and time-dated ticketing practices to reduce visitor congestion, increase access to tour groups, and minimize visitor inconvenience.
3. Coordinate special events that draw large crowds in a manner that minimizes disruptions to surrounding land uses and federal activities in the region.