



RFK Stadium Site Redevelopment Study

December 2006







Redevelopment of the RFK site presents an opportunity for new cultural and commemorative uses as well as active recreational opportunities.

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An important site in the nation's capital could be transformed into a dramatic gateway to the city if plans envisioned by the National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC) are realized.

The Robert F. Kennedy (RFK) Memorial Stadium site, located on East Capitol Street along the banks of the Anacostia River, has long been considered a strategic location. The site serves as the eastern gateway to the city's monumental core and is a direct link between the Capitol Hill neighborhood and the Anacostia River's western banks. Redevelopment of the RFK site presents an opportunity for new cultural and commemorative uses to attract visitors, but the site also presents an opportunity to address the recreational needs of local residents. NCPC envisions a mixture of residential and neighborhood commercial development in this area of the city that is ripe for revitalization.

Recognizing that the stadium may be vacated by the sports teams now using it, NCPC staff recently completed an in-depth analysis of potential uses for the site. Through the recommendations offered in this report, NCPC seeks to balance local and federal interests by creating a lively destination for residents and visitors.

Background

The RFK Stadium is located in a critical position in the original L'Enfant city plan. Comprising approximately 190 acres of land at the eastern edge of the city, the area is a key site in monumental Washington. In addition to the stadium, the site includes surrounding federal lands and buildings including the D.C. Armory. It was primarily used as park and open space from the early 1900s until 1957 when Congress authorized construction of the stadium. The stadium is now owned by the city but sits on land leased to the District of Columbia by the federal government for stadium use only.

The site has long been recognized by NCPC as a vital stretch of land that could serve as a dramatic gateway to Washington. NCPC's 1997 plan, *Extending the Legacy: Planning America's Capital for the 21st Century*, envisioned the site with a major memorial surrounded by new housing and commercial development. NCPC's 2001 *Memorials and Museums Master Plan* included RFK as a prime location for future commemorative works. The site also is included in NCPC's recent National Capital Framework Plan, which will identify alternative sites for future memorials and museums beyond the National Mall. Further, the site is an important part of the District's Anacostia Waterfront Initiative (AWI), which is aimed at transforming the Anacostia River into a lively waterfront.

Building on these earlier visions, planners at NCPC conducted an extensive study of future uses for the site. They consulted numerous stakeholders and the general public during the study, and feedback helped shape NCPC's recommendations.



The RFK Stadium site is 190 acres of federally owned land located at the eastern gateway to the monumental core.

NCPC staff hosted public meetings in July and October 2006 to solicit input into NCPC's redevelopment ideas for the RFK Stadium site.



Poised for Change

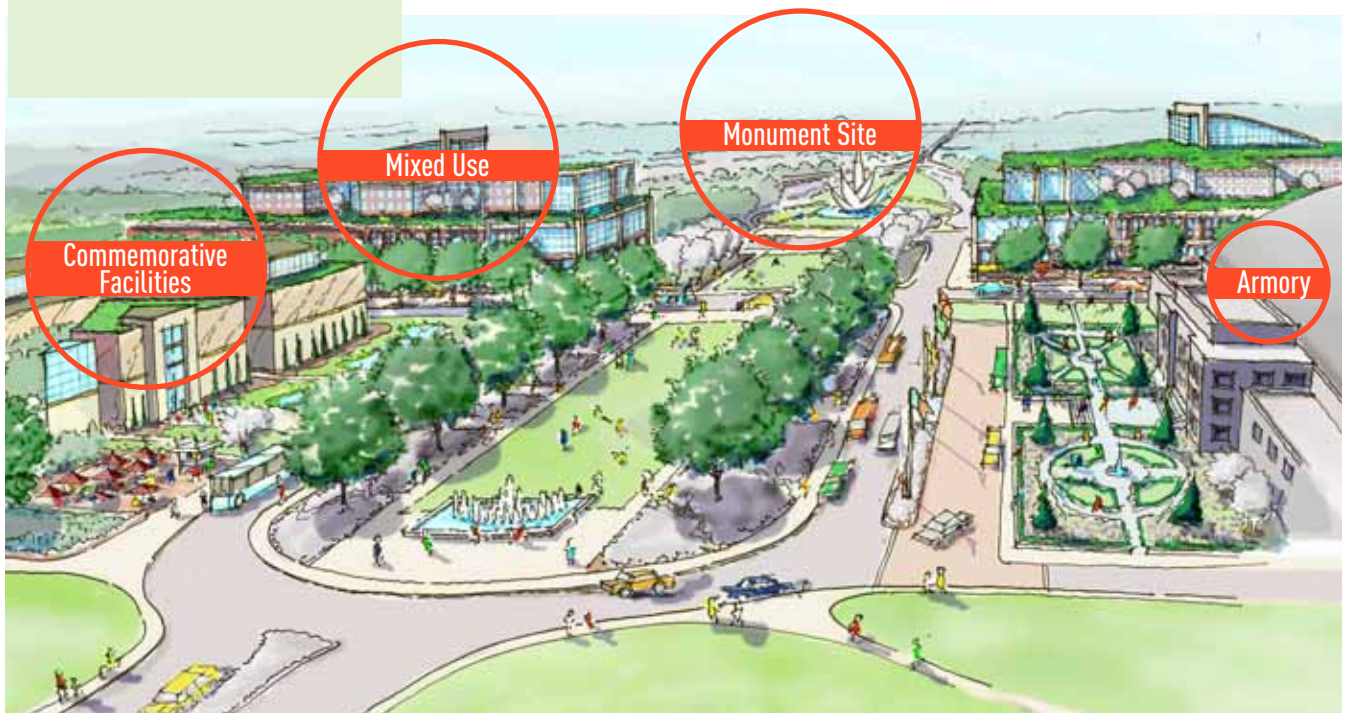
Reconnecting Constitution Avenue and Independence Avenue would highlight East Capitol Street as a grand boulevard that could be anchored by a major memorial.

NCPC planners believe the RFK site should be an environmentally friendly gateway into the monumental core. It should include a large waterfront park, with recreational fields and open space, augmented by commemorative works and connected to the surrounding neighborhoods by pedestrian and bicycle paths.

The interior of the site should include new residential and retail development. The retail element should include restaurants and cafés as well as service-oriented businesses such as dry cleaners and bookshops. A proposed new commemorative attraction, such as a museum, across from the D.C. Armory building, which is adjacent to the stadium, would attract a steady flow of visitors to the area.

A museum on the north side of East Capitol Street would mirror the scale of the Armory and encompass a 15-acre superblock surrounded by a well designed landscape. NCPC believes a federal building also might be appropriate for the area, provided that any perimeter security is designed in a manner that befits a gateway and allows public access to the site.

NCPC also sees an opportunity to upgrade transportation networks and environmental conditions. Reconnecting Constitution Avenue and Independence Avenue as the main axial streets adjacent to the East Capitol Street Bridge, extending the planned Water Street (part of a plan for nearby Reservation 13) to Constitution Avenue, and highlighting East Capitol Street as a grand boulevard with a major commemorative work are all key components to reflect the prominence of these streets and the gateway concept. Additionally, this new street network would create a new urban border between the mixed-used development and the waterfront park offering active recreation and cultural opportunities.



NCPC's vision of East Capitol Street running through a redeveloped RFK Stadium site



NCPC planners developed four concepts for the site and vetted them with stakeholder agencies and the community.

Site Opportunities and Constraints

In developing planning and design recommendations for the RFK Stadium site, NCPC first analyzed the site to identify key opportunities and constraints.

CONSTRAINTS

Floodplain - the site is situated on the western bank of the Anacostia River, and most of it is included in the 100- and 500-year flood plain.

Metrorail line - the northern portion of the site is bisected by an above-grade Metro line. The line is considered a constraint to redevelopment opportunities as it bisects the northern portion of the site and presents a barrier to new development because of visual impacts and noise.

Environmental Sensitivities - RFK is located next to the Anacostia River, one of the most polluted rivers in the United States. Run-off from the stadium parking lots drains into the river untreated.

OPPORTUNITIES

Location - the site's location presents a great opportunity to advance the long-term goals outlined in the following NCPC initiatives: the Legacy Plan, the *Memorials and Museums Master Plan*, and the National Capital Framework Plan.

Street Network - the site offers a clear opportunity to develop a street network that is less focused on regional traffic and more geared toward redistributing traffic into the city grid. Further, a redesign of the transportation system would provide an urban design opportunity to redefine Independence and Constitution as symmetrical avenues and augment the terminus of East Capitol Street as a major focal point at this gateway location.

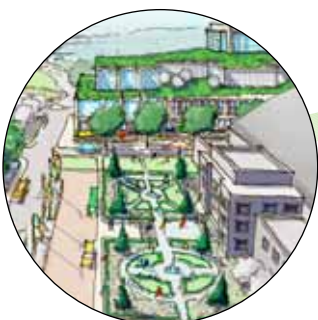
Viewshed - the site presents an excellent opportunity to create and enhance existing viewsheds to the monumental core and the Anacostia River for those entering the city.



Establishing Planning Principles

In analyzing the site, NCPC focused on:

- * **Creating a major recreational area with passive and active recreation to serve neighboring communities.** The CapitalSpace initiative—a comprehensive parks and open space plan being developed for Washington, D.C. by federal and District agencies—identified a lack of ball fields, recreational facilities, and open space in the Northeast quadrant of the city. NCPC recommends that the RFK Stadium site fill those pressing recreation needs and complement the Anacostia Waterfront Initiative.
- * **Reinforcing the site as the Eastern Gateway.** Situated on the eastern edge of the original L'Enfant city at the terminus of East Capitol Street, the site serves as a gateway into the historic L'Enfant city and provides an excellent opportunity for national commemoration and reinforcement of critical viewsheds. NCPC's Legacy Plan provided a general vision of land use for this site, but this report offers more detailed concepts of open space, recreation, cultural uses, and opportunities for housing and commercial development.
- * **Establishing Constitution and Independence Avenues and East Capitol Street as symmetrical key avenues.** The Legacy Plan identified as a priority the reconfiguration of the site's street network to make Constitution and Independence Avenues and East Capitol Street the main axial streets. Currently, Independence Avenue and C Street, NE, are the main roadways.
- * **Building on key AWI principles.** These include increased public access to the waterfront, a 200-foot environmental buffer along the water's edge, the construction of a river walk on both sides of the Anacostia River, and the development of the area as an ecological and recreational precinct.
- * **Complementing proposed mixed-use redevelopment in the adjacent area.** The RFK site is near Reservation 13, for which mixed-use development is planned, including housing and healthcare facilities. NCPC encourages complementary mixed-use development on the RFK site, including residential and neighborhood retail uses.



Design Precedents

NCPC planners surveyed other signature waterfront parks that illustrate how the site could be developed into an exciting destination. The maps below depict the RFK Stadium site superimposed upon some of the world's greatest waterfront parks to compare scale.

Jefferson National Expansion Memorial Park

St. Louis, Missouri (Gateway Arch Riverfront)
42 acres of passive recreation
27.5 acres of cultural/commemorative space



Maximiliansanlagen (Maximilian Park)

Munich, Germany
55 acres of passive recreation
25 acres of active recreation
15 acres of cultural/commemorative space



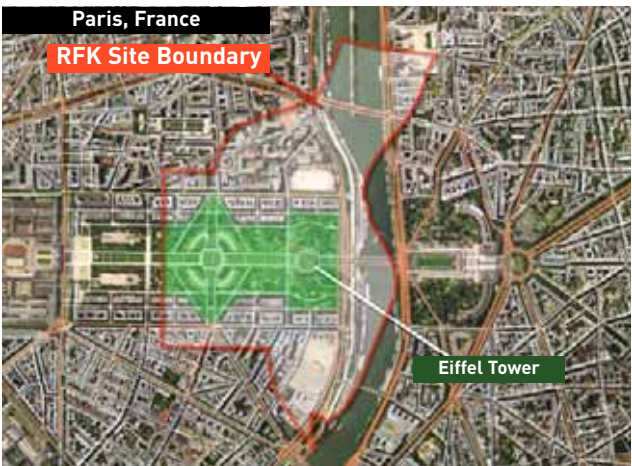
Birrarung Marr (Speakers Corner)

Melbourne, Australia
46 acres of passive recreation
63 acres of active recreation
5 acres of cultural/commemorative space



Le Champs de Mar

Paris, France
30 acres of passive recreation
16 acres of active recreation



Specific Recommendations

Street Network, Land Uses, and Building Height

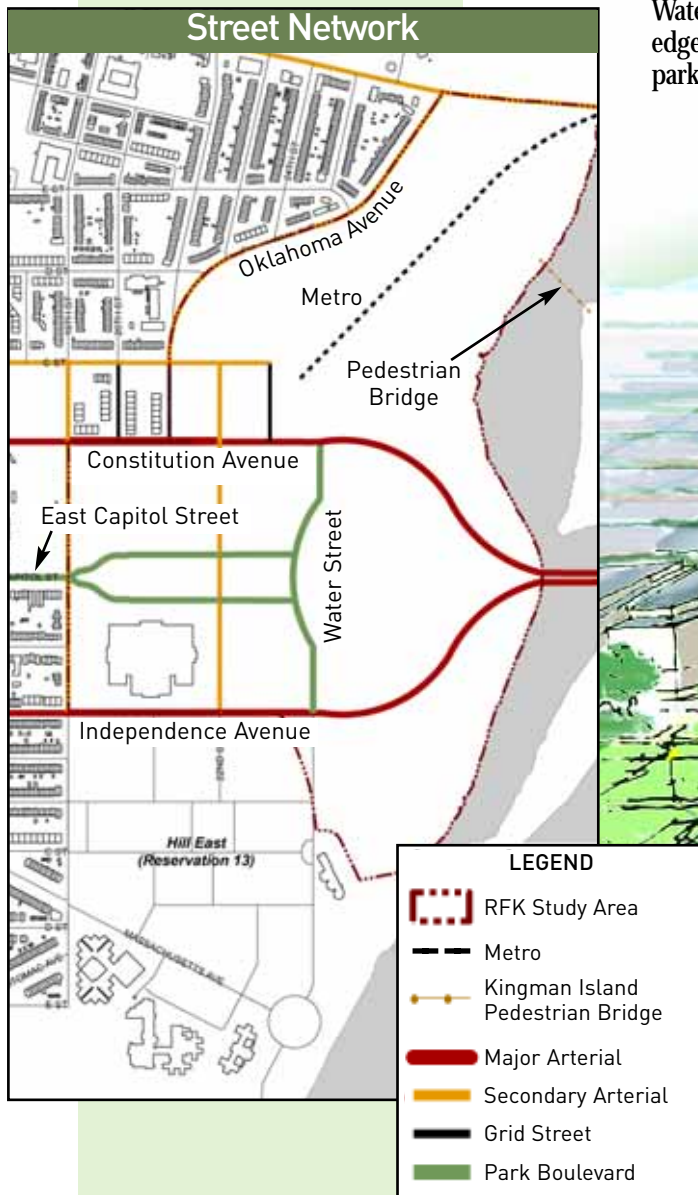
NCPC analyzed street-network, land-use, and building-height considerations in developing its recommendations for the RFK Stadium site. Input from stakeholder agencies and the general public was factored into NCPC's proposed vision.

Street Network

NCPC recommends the reconnection of Constitution and Independence Avenues as the main axial streets connecting to the East Capitol Street bridge.

North-south access through the site would be provided by extending Water Street to Constitution Avenue. This would create a new urban edge between the areas of mixed-use development and the waterfront park area with active recreation and cultural opportunities.

NCPC envisions extending the city's grid toward the waterfront.



Land Uses

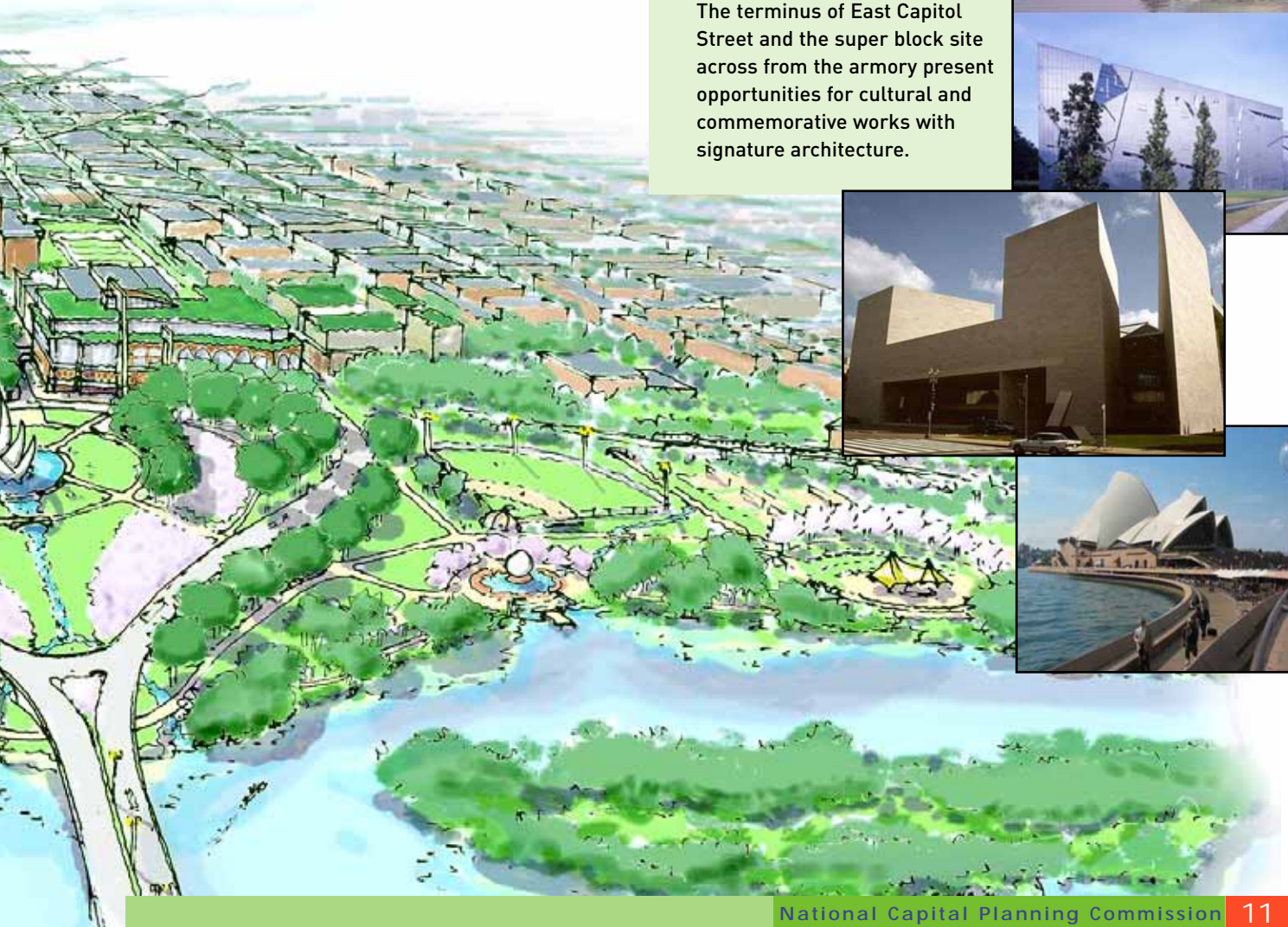
Commemorative/Cultural Uses

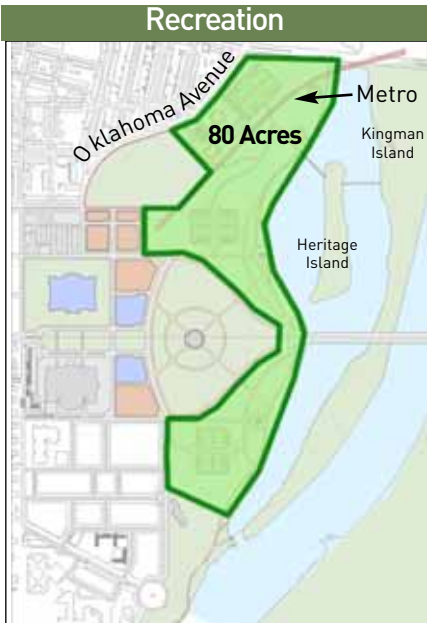
There are two key areas in which to locate new commemorative or cultural works. The first is located within a 30-acre site at the terminus of East Capitol Street in the waterfront area. The second area is a 15-acre site, located across from the armory. This second site could accommodate a building or combination of buildings consisting of 300,000 to 800,000 square feet of space so as to provide symmetry for the Armory building along East Capitol Street.

Development of these areas could include commemorative uses such as memorials or museums, or cultural uses such as a performance house, aquarium, or significant civic buildings. All developments should be of signature architecture, utilize green building methods, and reflect the site's eastern gateway role.



The terminus of East Capitol Street and the super block site across from the armory present opportunities for cultural and commemorative works with signature architecture.





Active Recreation

The 80 acres of the RFK site that border the waterfront and fall within the floodplain that extends to Oklahoma Avenue should be developed as a waterfront park that includes ball fields and other active recreational opportunities. Recreational uses such as tennis and basketball courts and community recreation centers should be located between Oklahoma Avenue and the Metro line. Permeable recreational surfaces such as soccerfields and ballfields should be concentrated along the water's edge. Additionally, any parking facilities should be located in this same area and should support recreational uses and nearby activities on Heritage and Kingman Islands. A pedestrian network should be developed to connect the recreation areas and the Anacostia Riverwalk Trail to adjacent development and existing neighborhoods. Also, vehicle roadways are appropriate in this area as long as they are meant to serve uses in the site and not traffic cutting through.

NPC's Legacy Plan, the Anacostia Waterfront Initiative, and the CapitalSpace initiative all highlight the urgent need for more active recreation in this part of the city.



Mixed-Use Development

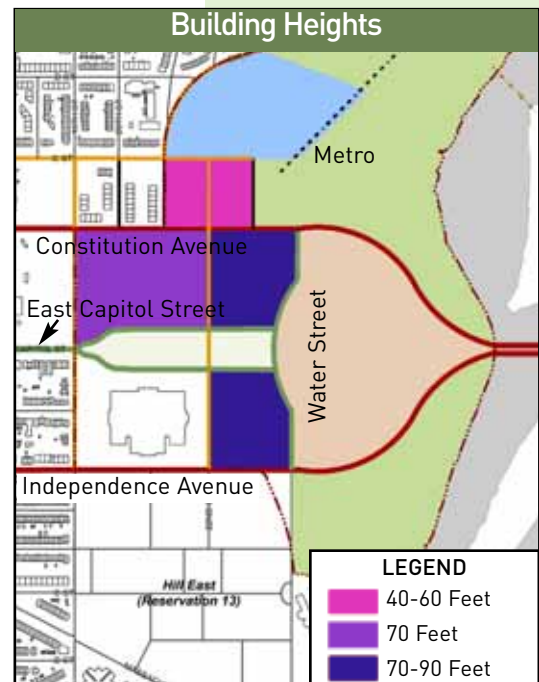
Approximately 20 acres of mixed-use development opportunities exist at the terminus of East Capitol Street along the 22nd Street axis and between C Street and Constitution Avenue, at the northern edge of the site. Building designs should consist of signature architecture and should reflect the important gateway function of the site, while also complementing any new cultural or commemorative works. Mixed-use developments also should be sensitive to the existing residential neighborhood that lies to the north. The two blocks around the terminus of East Capitol Street can accommodate approximately 500,000 to 700,000 square feet of new development each. The two smaller blocks to the north could each accommodate approximately 100,000 to 300,000 square feet of new development.



Building Heights

The RFK Stadium site is in a transitional building-height area between the AWI's proposed development called "Hilleast" on Reservation 13 and the adjacent neighborhoods to the north. It is important that the heights of buildings within the RFK site provide a transition from the taller buildings in Hilleast to the lower residential buildings to the north, while still providing adequate framing of East Capitol Street and the significant cultural/commemorative work at its terminus.

To accomplish this, NCPC recommends that the mixed-use buildings along 22nd Street at the East Capitol Street terminus be between 70 to 90 feet in height. A height of 70 feet is recommended in the superblock area. For the remaining mixed-use blocks on the northern part of the site, a height range of 40 to 60 feet is recommended.





Environmental Recommendations

Redeveloping the RFK Stadium site provides an opportunity to improve the site's environmental conditions and help clean up the Anacostia River. Currently, 52 percent of the RFK Stadium site is covered with concrete and asphalt, which results in untreated run-off flowing into the Anacostia River.

The soil located on the RFK site has shown traces of various contaminants, including lead, chromium, and Polynuclear Aromatic Hydrocarbons as well as materials such as ash, cinders, glass, and metal debris.

Rectifying these issues is critical to ensuring that the site is developed as an ecological site, as envisioned in NCPC's Legacy Plan. Furthermore, clean-up of this site is critical to restoring the health of the Anacostia River and its waterfronts. Several policies are recommended to achieve these ends.

- * All buildings should utilize green design and conform to the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Green Building Rating System™ standards. Specifically, buildings should include green roofs, such as roof gardens on new buildings to reduce heat gain, provide for storm water management, and add green space.
- * Underground cisterns should store rain water for re-use in cultural buildings and for irrigation needs.
- * Tiered wetlands and rock gardens should be created along the river bank to filter storm water and make the shore less susceptible to erosion and scouring.
- * The vegetated riparian river buffer should be maintained to a minimum of 200 feet in width, in order to better sustain wildlife.



Next Steps



To further its recommendations for the site, NCPC will coordinate:

- * Detailed planning of roadway and traffic flows with the District Department of Transportation.
- * Additional planning and design work related to the mixed-use areas with the Anacostia Waterfront Corporation and the District of Columbia Office of Planning.
- * Detailed design of the waterfront park with the National Park Service and District of Columbia agencies.

Enlivening the Metro

The existing Metrorail overpass must remain but could be enhanced with public art that would enliven the waterfront park.





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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.

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RFK Stadium Site Stakeholder Agencies:

National Park Service
U.S. Commission of Fine Arts
District Department of Transportation
District of Columbia Office of Planning
D.C. Sports and Entertainment Commission
Anacostia Waterfront Corporation
Washington Metropolitan Transit Authority
D.C. City Council
D.C. National Guard