

MEDIA RELEASE



401 9th Street, NW
North Lobby, Suite 500
Washington, DC 20004
Tel: 202 482-7200
Fax: 202 482-7272
www.ncpc.gov

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Lisa MacSpadden
202-482-7263 or lisa@ncpc.gov

Advisory Panel Calls for Immediate Development of South Capitol Street *Panel Determines Street is Ripe to be a Grand Gateway to the Nation's Capital*

Washington, DC – An advisory panel commissioned by the National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC) and the District Office of Planning (DCOP) is urging that no time be wasted in redeveloping South Capitol Street as a vibrant new gateway to the nation's capital.

NCPC and DCOP invited the Urban Land Institute to assemble an Advisory Panel of leading experts from across the nation to study the area and offer specific land use, transportation, and urban design recommendations to create the new gateway that national and local leaders have been endorsing. The ULI Panel toured the area, interviewed more than 80 local stakeholders, and reviewed current federal and city plans for the street, including NCPC's South Capitol Street Urban Design Study, the Legacy Plan, and the Memorials and Museums Master Plan, as well as the District Department of Transportation Study, and the Anacostia Waterfront Initiative Study.

ULI panel members highlighted their own findings during an information presentation today during the National Capital Planning Commission's monthly public meeting. The presentation served as a preview of a detailed report the panel plans to release later this month, which will focus on market potential, planning and design, and development and organizational strategies.

The panel endorsed the concept of a welcoming and memorable gateway for visitors and commuters into the heart of the city. Noting the extensive planning work for the area that NCPC and DCOP have already completed, along with the extremely hot real estate market in this rapidly emerging part of the city, the ULI panel emphatically recommended immediate implementation steps. Pointing to the dwindling land supply north of the U.S. Capitol and the brisk movement of the private market into the area south of the Capitol, panel members urged federal and local planners to act quickly to achieve their development goals.

"NCPC has long considered South Capitol Street ripe for renewal, and we are pleased the ULI panel has reached the same conclusion," said NCPC Chairman John Cogbill, III. "The corridor is an important feature of the original L'Enfant Plan, yet it has been woefully neglected over the years. With the federal and city government working as partners we can create Washington's next great waterfront and an urban boulevard that will be an exciting new business, cultural, and residential address for the nation's capital."

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In order for South Capitol Street to be transformed in a manner that will allow for the development of a dignified and people-friendly avenue leading to the Capitol, panel members believe the process needs to start immediately.

“With ongoing market development forces underway, now is the time for federal and city agencies to collaborate to insure that the dual goals of re-establishing South Capitol Street as a major gateway to the nation’s capital and connecting the entire area south of the Capitol into a vibrant mixed-use community are accomplished under a cohesive set of design guidelines with the resources to do it right,” said Richards Reynolds, chairman of the ULI Advisory Panel.

In providing a preview of the soon to be released report, the panel today stated that the area of study should reflect the potential of adjacent communities beyond the immediate South Capitol Street Corridor. The M Street Corridor is an important cross street, and the South Capitol and M Street intersection should be the focal point of new growth opportunities. The Anacostia waterfront is another vital component. Due to their proximity, both the Capitol Hill and Historic Anacostia neighborhoods should also be included in overall plans.

The key findings of the panel include:

- Transforming South Capitol Street into a great avenue and grand entry to the monumental core of the city.
- Unifying the southeast and southwest quadrants of the city and connecting communities on both sides of the river.
- Improving accessibility to, from, and within the area.
- Allowing new development to serve emerging residential, office, institutional, retail, and entertainment needs, while adding to existing green space, opening up more pedestrian access to the waterfront, and providing space for new monuments and memorials.
- Rebranding the area with a new name and image reflecting its potential as an exciting urban destination.
- Increasing the supply of high quality, mixed-use, mixed-income neighborhoods.
- Cleaning up the Anacostia River and improving public accessibility to the waterfront.
- Replacing the existing Frederick Douglass Bridge with a stately new bridge over the Anacostia River that better connects Historic Anacostia with the rest of the city.

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- Creating a surface roadway retaining the street's current 130' width and providing additional space for parks, memorials, and pedestrian amenities along its length.
- Employing design guidelines and setback requirements to guide development of adjacent properties.
- Avoiding displacement, protecting the sense of neighborhood, and enhancing the quality of life for existing residents in the Anacostia neighborhood.

In summary, the panel concluded that specific development controls, selective land acquisition, and infrastructure improvements would need to be undertaken immediately. Otherwise, many of the ambitious goals of NCPC and the District will be lost due to the pressure of current development.

“Development of this corridor will bring better connectivity to South Capitol Street, the Anacostia River, and the Historic Anacostia neighborhood,” said Andrew Altman, Director of the District Office of Planning. “This would greatly benefit the residents already living there, as well as provide great opportunities for new housing, office, and retail options for additional residents and tenants.”

Noting that the present roadway does not effectively function as a local street or as a commercial corridor, Dan Tangherlini, Director of the District Department of Transportation, said, “South Capitol Street's crumbling infrastructure—including the Frederick Douglass Memorial Bridge—is in serious need of repair or replacement. A sensitively designed corridor will connect communities and bring renewed vitality to our neighborhoods on both sides of the river.”

Patricia Gallagher, Executive Director of NCPC, is enthusiastic about the potential for this important area. “We have a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to reclaim the corridor and transform it into an area that is truly worthy of the nation's capital. I look forward to reviewing the panel's full report and working with key stakeholders to address its recommendations.”

The Urban Land Institute Advisory Panel expects to make public the full report in late January. Copies will be available at that time from the National Capital Planning Commission and the District Office of Planning.

The National Capital Planning Commission is the federal government's central 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 projects and memorials, oversees long-range planning for future development, and monitors capital investment by federal agencies.

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