



MEDIA RELEASE

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NCPC Provides Favorable Comments for New National Aquarium Entrance Pavilion and General Services Administration Headquarters Modernization Plan

Commission Hears Information Presentation on Proposed National Museum of the American Latino

Washington, DC – At its monthly meeting today the National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC) heard an informational presentation from the National Museum of the American Latino Commission which is exploring plans for a museum in the nation's capital. The museum commission discussed several possible site locations for the museum. NCPC does not take action on informational presentations.

Under action items, NCPC provided favorable comments on concept plans submitted by the General Services Administration (GSA) to move the entrance of the National Aquarium from 14th Street to Constitution Avenue, NW to coincide with the Aquarium's relocation within the Department of Commerce building. Moving the aquarium to a more prominent location will help activate the Federal Triangle and increase traffic from the National Mall. Since 1932 the National Aquarium has occupied its current location on the basement level inside the Department of Commerce Headquarters Herbert Hoover Building.

In its comments the Commission commended GSA for balancing various design considerations and required GSA to resolve several design issues—including design and grading of the green roof, flood protection, and pavilion lighting—before bringing the project back for preliminary and/or final review. The Commission noted that perimeter security was not in the concept submission, but understands from GSA that the new entrance's outer wall would be designed to include perimeter security.

GSA proposes moving the Aquarium from its current 18,000 square foot location with the basement on the building's north side to an approximately 30,000 square foot basement-level site on the building's south side (Constitution Avenue). Plans for the new entrance pavilion include two 42-inch high and 216-foot long granite clad walls spaced ten feet apart. A staircase and an accessible ramp located between the walls would lead down to the Aquarium's entrance. New signs will be located at both ends of the pavilion and engraved on the rear pavilion wall.

In a separate action, the Commission approved preliminary and final building plans for the modernization of the General Services Administration headquarters located at 1800 F Street, NW. The nine-story, E-shaped building—constructed in 1917 with additions made in 1934—currently has 520,000 square feet of office space.

GSA proposes a complete restoration of the building's interior and exterior including its windows and exterior stone facades, and will seek a LEED Gold rating. The physical plant and other mechanical systems will be replaced, and changes made to the entrances and exits. In addition, 120,000 square feet of infill construction will replace a portion of the building's current open space courtyards. This seven-story addition will be located on the south side of the existing courtyards. The modernization will take place in two phases, with the first phase paid for with funds from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

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GSA is currently evaluating what form of perimeter security, if any, the building will have, and submitted two options for comment. They anticipate making a decision on which option to move forward with in several months. NCPC commented favorably on the first concept with two exceptions. This concept features a new formal building entrance on E Street complete with central staircase and access ramps. Perimeter security includes hardened garden walls and three different types of bollards. NCPC's favorable comments exclude the proposed curblin bollards in front of E Street and 18th Street building entrances.

NCPC provided favorable comments and expressed strong support of GSA's second concept, which does not include perimeter security. The new E Street entrance would be on the street level. Four new locations for ground-level retail would flank this new entrance, two on either side. This concept would necessitate lowering part of the building's first floor slab.

"This is a very exciting project. It has the potential to have a positive impact on the E Street Corridor extending from the White House to the Kennedy Center, and also to serve as a model for ground floor retail in federal buildings, a move that is strongly advocated by the agency in its planning initiatives," said David Levy, NCPC Director of Urban Design and Plan Review.

The Commission was very supportive of the concept, and commended GSA for its efforts to include ground level retail, instead of perimeter security, at its headquarters. This second alternative complements goals promoted by NCPC in two recent planning initiatives: *The Monumental Core Framework Plan* and *Activating Federal Places*, both of which encourage adding retail and other mixed-uses to the ground floors of federal facilities to better integrate them into the fabric of the city and provide needed amenities.

This month's agenda also included 13 consent calendar items (no presentations were given):

- Final site and building plans for the American Veterans Disabled for Life Memorial, to be located at the intersection of Washington Avenue and Second Street, SW
- Preliminary and final site and building plans for exterior security upgrades and a guard booth at the United States Tax Court located at 400 2nd Street, NW
- Preliminary and final site and building plans for a consulate/security annex structure at the United Arab Emirates Chancery located in the International Chancery Center, 3522 International Court, NW
- Concept designs for expansion of the United States Post Office located at 11110 Sunset Hills Road, Reston, Virginia
- Concept designs for the National Museum of the United States Army to be located on Fort Belvoir's North Post in Fairfax County, Virginia
- Preliminary and final site and building plans for an Arts and Crafts Center on Fort Belvoir's South Post in Fairfax County, Virginia
- Concept designs for a Post Exchange Shopping Center on Fort Belvoir's North Post in Fairfax County, Virginia
- Preliminary and final site and building plans for a Dental Clinic at Joint Base Andrews in Camp Springs, Maryland
- Preliminary site and building plans for a multi-use garage at the National Naval Medical Center located at 8901 Rockville Pike in Bethesda, Maryland
- Final site and building plans for a new Kenilworth-Parkside Recreation Center to replace the existing one located at 4300 Anacostia Avenue, NE

- Authorization to circulate the *Federal Capital Improvements Program for the National Capital Region, Fiscal Years 2011-2016* for a 45-day review and comment period
- Comments on the *District of Columbia's Fiscal Year 2011-2016 Capital Improvements Plan: Highway Trust Fund* provided to the Mayor and Council of the District of Columbia
- Preliminary and final site plans for a new 80-space parking lot at the Naval Support Facility Carderock in Bethesda, Maryland.

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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