

# MEDIA RELEASE



401 9<sup>th</sup> Street, NW  
North Lobby, Suite 500  
Washington, DC 20004  
Tel: 202 482-7200  
Fax: 202 482-7272  
[www.ncpc.gov](http://www.ncpc.gov)

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Lisa MacSpadden  
202-482-7263 or [lisa@ncpc.gov](mailto:lisa@ncpc.gov)

## **Commission Task Force Unveils Exciting Vision for Transforming South Capitol Street into a Grand Urban Boulevard and Waterfront Gateway**

**Washington, DC** – A grand urban boulevard and waterfront gateway with spectacular views to and from the U.S. Capitol would serve as the centerpiece of the South Capitol Street corridor, as envisioned by the National Capital Planning Commission’s South Capitol Street Task Force. Open green space, mixed-use development, new commemorative works, and a beautiful new Frederick Douglass Memorial Bridge would help turn the area into a vibrant boulevard bustling with life and activity.

After months of study with federal and local partners, NCPC’s task force is presenting its recommendations to transform South Capitol Street into a signature address in the nation’s capital.

For more than a decade, NCPC has set its sights on a long-range vision for this neglected corridor—a vision that will transform the avenue into a grand boulevard with magnificent spaces for public plazas, parkland, national monuments, and commercial and residential uses. Today, after ten months of study, the task force is unveiling its framework for revitalizing this important area.

“South Capitol Street today stands on the brink of change,” said José L. Galvez III, chairman of NCPC’s South Capitol Street Task Force. “We believe the scenarios the task force is presenting all offer an exciting opportunity to turn the area into a spectacular and vibrant boulevard that will attract residents, workers, and tourists alike.”

The task force envisions the development of an oval traffic rotary, with a green common featuring a memorial site and civic art where the new bridge would intersect South Capitol Street and Potomac Avenue. A South Capitol Waterfront Park would be located between the rotary and the river with a possible new major memorial or signature cultural building on the banks of the Anacostia River. The resulting stunning view would run from the Capitol to the waterfront.

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The plans are the result of collaboration with numerous government and local entities, including the National Park Service, the General Services Administration, the Department of Defense, and the District of Columbia. Representatives from the U.S. House of Representatives, the Commission of Fine Arts, the office of the Architect of the Capitol, and the Smithsonian Institution also participated.

Task force members agree that South Capitol Street and the boulevard's Anacostia River gateway set the tone for the southern route to the Capitol and the monumental core. In its current condition, the street is a bleak stretch of thoroughfare that is strewn with empty lots and abandoned businesses. That should soon change. This past year saw a remarkable number of developments related to this important gateway, including plans for a ballpark for the Washington Nationals and the signing of an important agreement pledging the federal government's commitment to facilitate construction of a new bridge.

The task force calls for a mixed-use development zone surrounding the common that would feature cultural institutions, housing, and retail to build on the momentum of the baseball stadium and better connect the area with the rest of the city. The task force's recommendations for the corridor focus on five key points, which are worked into three alternate scenarios.

#### Key Recommendations

- Transform South Capitol Street into a grand urban boulevard
- Develop an oval traffic rotary and South Capitol Commons (major public open space and memorial site), where the new bridge intersects South Capitol Street and Potomac Avenue.
- Create a South Capitol Waterfront Park (major public open space and memorial site) between the traffic rotary and the terminus of the South Capitol Street viewshed on the Anacostia River.
- Establish a mixed-use cultural development zone adjacent to the common and waterfront gateway.
- Support federal facilities as part of a broader mixed-use development along the corridor predominantly north of M Street.

#### Potential Scenarios

- The central memorial alternative: a major memorial and smaller civic art in the common and an amphitheater or other active public space on the waterfront terminus.

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- The waterfront memorial alternative: a major memorial on the waterfront terminus and smaller civic art/memorials and major public gatherings and events in the common.
- The major cultural facility alternative: a significant cultural building such as a new museum at the waterfront terminus and a major memorial and civic art in the common.

"I welcome the recommendations of NCPC's South Capitol Street Task Force," said U.S. Congressman Steny Hoyer (D-MD). "In the coming days I look forward to working with NCPC, the District of Columbia, and the federal government to make the best possible use of this important report to keep this process moving forward so that we can ensure that the South Capitol Street Corridor becomes the magnificent gateway to our nation's capital that we have long envisioned."

"Your South Capitol Street vision is just what we have been waiting for as we continue our work on the Southeast Federal Center," said Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton (D-DC). "Your vision will make the work now underway along M Street and Anacostia truly transformational."

To create a great urban boulevard and maintain an open view of the U.S. Capitol, South Capitol Street would maintain its current width of 130 feet, accommodate six lanes of traffic, and provide parking lanes on each side of the street. New construction would be setback an additional 15 feet from the property line and open space would be preserved along the street's major intersections. To improve traffic flow, the task force—as suggested by the District Department of Transportation (DDOT)—recommends the creation of an oval traffic rotary at the intersection of the bridge with South Capitol Street and Potomac Avenue.

Implementation of the traffic rotary would also create the opportunity to develop South Capitol Commons, a new seven-acre green space created in the oval rotary's interior. This lively space would be a perfect location for public gatherings, commemorative works, civic art, and landscaping. It would also serve as the stadium's front door and an inter-modal transit site, with two levels of underground parking for up to 1,000 cars, with a future light rail station at-grade to the east of the rotary.

"The infrastructure of the roadway and bridge is in serious need of repair, and in its present condition, the street fails to live up to its potential as a great urban boulevard," said Dan Tangherlini, Director of the District Department of Transportation. "Not only would a rotary help ease traffic congestion, it would connect our neighborhoods on both sides of the river and help produce a vibrant, lively corridor."

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The design and development of a South Capitol Waterfront Park is critical to protect the South Capitol Street viewshed from the U.S. Capitol to the Anacostia waterfront. The park would provide a direct connection from the common to the waterfront and create opportunities for open recreational space, public events, a major memorial site, or key cultural facility such as a national aquarium.

The area immediately around the common and waterfront gateway should be developed as a mixed-use cultural development zone. New museums and cultural institutions should be integrated with shops and restaurants to create a vibrant and bustling environment day and night.

The task force expects that many federal agencies will look to lease space in privately developed buildings predominantly north of M Street during the next ten years. The addition of residential dwellings will further establish the makings of a great neighborhood.

In combination with any of the task force scenarios, the northwest corner of the South Capitol Street and Potomac Avenue oval traffic rotary is a key development site. To complement the proposed baseball stadium, this site should incorporate a mixed-use facility of architectural significance that would provide opportunity for major cultural uses.

In addition, preeminent commemorative works could be sited at the bridge landings on both sides of the river, at South Capitol Commons and the South Capitol Waterfront Park, or within the mixed-use cultural district.

The South Capitol Street corridor, waterfront park, and new Anacostia River crossing all represent important federal interests. The National Capital Planning Commission is committed to building on the momentum generated by these events to keep this project moving forward. We look forward to the day when South Capitol Street is transformed into a signature address in the nation's capital, as the agency first envisioned a decade ago.

*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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