

# 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)

## **NCPC Adopted Federal Elements of the Comprehensive Plan Today**

**Washington, DC** – The National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC) adopted an updated Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital: Federal Elements (the Plan) during its monthly meeting today, laying out the first new blueprint for long-term planning in the region since the mid 1980s.

Today's vote followed a 90-day public comment period on the Plan's draft, during which NCPC staff reviewed comments from federal agencies, local government offices, professional organizations, and other interested parties and individuals.

"The updated Plan addresses key policy issues and planning concerns that have surfaced since the last adoption of the Plan," said Executive Director Patricia Gallagher. "It explores important issues such as changes in federal contracting and procurement, perimeter security at federal facilities, and transportation mobility. It also recognizes the ever changing needs of the federal government and the nation's capital in the 21st century."

The new Plan establishes goals and policies for future federal development in the National Capital Region (NCR) and covers matters related to federal properties and federal interests. It recognizes four major themes:

- The importance of the appearance and image of the nation's capital
- Operational efficiency of the federal government
- Transportation mobility and accessibility
- Stewardship of the region's natural and cultural resources

"The nation's capital has distinct planning and development needs that set it apart from other major cities," said John V. Cogbill, III, chairman of the Commission. "This new plan is a thoughtful, well-prepared document that will help to reinforce the standards that have made Washington a world-class capital city."

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The Federal Elements assess the impact of federal activities on the NCR and address emerging planning issues and challenges facing the region. There are seven Federal Elements: Federal Workplace; Foreign Missions and International Organizations; Transportation; Parks and Open Space; Federal Environment; Preservation and Historic Features; and Visitors.

The Federal Workplace Element encourages efficient distribution of federal work activities throughout the region and promotes federal development that is compatible with local and regional plans for land use and economic growth. The element also analyzes the growing importance of federal contracting and procurement and promotes partnerships with local and regional governments to further mutual planning goals. The element also explores the increasing installation of perimeter security measures at federal facilities and outlines the Commission's security guidelines contained in its National Capital Urban Design and Security Plan.

The Foreign Missions and International Organizations Element provides a framework for the United States to fulfill its obligation to foreign governments to obtain suitable locations for their activities. The element is concerned with accommodating the locations of foreign missions in the District of Columbia and encouraging diplomatic activities in all quadrants of the city.

The Comprehensive Plan adds a separate Transportation Element. Recognizing the federal government's significant impact on the region's transportation network, NCPC expanded its guidance on transportation into a stand-alone element. The section encourages development of new transportation modes; relates federal parking ratios to the regional transit system with the goal of encouraging public transportation; and supports transportation alternatives such as bicycle commuting. The element promotes solutions that offer more choices, provide greater access and mobility, and improve air quality for the region's residents and visitors.

The Parks and Open Space Element establishes policies for the use and protection of federal parks and open space in the region. The element encourages approaches that ensure an adequate supply of parkland and open space to meet the needs of a growing population and to fill gaps in the existing system. In addition, it encourages measures that protect open space from overuse, conversion to other uses, and encroachment by inappropriate new development.

The Federal Environment Element establishes the federal interest in maintaining, protecting, and enhancing the quality of the environment and in protecting the health and welfare of the public in the NCR. It provides guidance for evaluating the environmental implications of federal development proposals and for managing the region's environmental resources.

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The Preservation and Historic Features Element provides guidance for preserving and enhancing the image and identity of the nation's capital and the region and provides a framework for the federal government's treatment of historic properties. The element calls for coordinated federal-local efforts to identify, designate, and protect landmarks and ensure that adjacent development is appropriate. It also addresses the challenge of implementing perimeter security measures while maintaining an appropriate image for federal buildings.

The Visitors Element responds to the growth in tourism and the continuing interest in creating new federal visitor attractions. It promotes access to federal destinations while ensuring their conservation and protection; addresses visitors' transportation needs; and explores improvements in programming, scheduling, and ticket purchasing. It also encourages locating new tourist sites away from the Mall in keeping with NCPC's Memorials and Museums Master Plan.

In response to comments received during the 90-day public comment period, NCPC staff made numerous revisions and updates to the Plan's draft. For example, in response to comments on the Transportation Element, NCPC clarified the language regarding exceptions to the established parking ratios at federal facilities. Staff also added examples that might trigger exceptions, such as worker shifts or other operational issues.

Many of the comments forwarded to NCPC focused on environmental issues. Staff responded by making several modifications to the Environment Element including addressing the issue of recycling at federal facilities; and adding a measure to review how federal buildings deal with waste as part of overall resource consumption.

Additional changes to the Plan addressed the identification of areas where new visitor attractions are desirable, and the traffic impacts of infrastructure removal projects. Copies will be made available to federal and local agencies and to the general public. The Plan also will be available on the NCPC website.

The District Elements, which are currently being developed under the Mayor's auspices, are targeted for release in March 2006 and will be subject to NCPC review before being adopted by the District City Council. The District Elements will address issues such as local land use, housing, and economic development.

*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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