

# MEDIA RELEASE



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## NCPC Releases Federal Elements of the Comprehensive Plan

**Washington, DC** – The National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC) authorized release of the agency’s draft of the Federal Elements of the Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital (the Plan) during its monthly meeting today.

The Plan addresses federal interests in the National Capital Region (NCR) and serves as a blueprint for long-term planning. It establishes goals and policies for future federal development in the Washington area and takes a comprehensive look at how significant issues—such as preservation and transportation—impact the NCR. The Plan is comprised of two parts—the Federal Elements, which cover matters related to federal properties and federal interests, and District Elements, which address local issues such as land use, housing, and economic development.

The Commission determined an update of the Comprehensive Plan was needed to address new policy issues and planning concerns that have surfaced since the last adoption of the Plan in the mid-1980s, including changes in federal contracting and procurement, perimeter security at federal facilities, and transportation mobility. The revised elements respond to the changing needs of the federal government and the nation’s capital in the 21st century.

“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. “Not only is Washington home to numerous federal employees and facilities, it is also the symbolic heart of the nation. That is why it is very important that NCPC adopt a comprehensive and coordinated blueprint for the region that will build upon the standards that have made Washington a world-class capital city.”

The Plan 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

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The Federal Elements address the federal government's unique position in the region. It is the seat of government for the nation, owns and maintains vast land holdings in the region, is the largest employer in the region, and attracts some 20 million visitors annually. In addition to looking at the impact of federal and national capital activities, the updated draft Federal Elements account for emerging planning issues and challenges facing the region. They also focus on current planning practices; promote coordinated growth and sustainable development principles; and encourage partnerships with local and regional governments to coordinate planning and advance development objectives.

There are seven Federal Elements: Federal Environment; Federal Workplace; Foreign Missions and International Organizations; Parks and Open Space; Preservation and Historic Features; Transportation; and Visitors.

The Federal Environment Element promotes the federal government as an environmental steward and emphasizes and supplements existing environmental regulations. The element establishes the federal interest as it relates to the maintenance, protection, and enhancement of the quality of the environment and protects the health and welfare of the public in the NCR. It provides guidance to evaluate the environmental implications of federal development proposals and aids in managing the region's environmental resources.

The Federal Workplace Element encourages an efficient and orderly distribution of federal work activities in the region; encourages federal development in a manner that complements local and regional plans to direct land use and economic growth; analyzes the growing importance of federal contracting and procurement activities; and promotes partnerships with local and regional governments to support activities that satisfy mutual planning goals.

The Foreign Missions and International Organizations Element provides a policy framework for the United States to fulfill its obligation to foreign governments in obtaining suitable locations for their activities. The element is primarily concerned with accommodating the locations of foreign missions in the District of Columbia and encouraging activities in all quadrants of the city. The element also explores developing a new foreign missions center.

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 to ensure that an adequate supply of parkland and open spaces are available to meet the needs of an increasing population and fill gaps in the existing system. It encourages preservation and maintenance to protect existing open space from overuse, conversion to other uses, and encroachment by inappropriate new development.

The Preservation and Historic Features Element preserves and enhances the image and identity of the nation's capital and region and provides a framework for the federal government's treatment of historic properties. The element protects and promotes the qualities that have made

the capital a strong symbol of our nation for two centuries. The element calls for coordinated federal-local efforts to identify, designate, and protect landmarks, as well as ensure that adjacent development is appropriate. It also addresses the challenge of implementing security measures while maintaining an appropriate image for federal buildings that are worthy of our nation.

The Transportation Element is new. In the past, the Commission included its transportation policies in the Federal Facilities and Federal Employment Elements. However, given the importance of this regional issue, the Commission concluded transportation merited a separate discussion. The federal government has a significant impact on the transportation network in the NCR and can offer valuable guidance in developing solutions that promote greater choice, result in greater access and mobility, and improve air quality for the region's residents and visitors. The Transportation Element encourages the development of new transportation modes and commuting alternatives; relates federal parking ratios to the regional transit system; and supports other modes of transportation, such as bicycle commuting.

The Visitors Element responds to the growth in tourism and continuing interest in creating new federal visitor attractions. Policies are provided to ensure the conservation and protection of the unique federal visitor attractions so that they may be enjoyed by future generations. Policies promote sites away from the Mall in coordination with the Commission's Memorials and Museums Master Plan; accommodate transportation needs of visitors; promote improvements to disseminate information about visitor attractions in the region; and advocate innovation in programming, scheduling and purchasing tickets to federal visitor attractions.

Copies of the draft Plan will be made available to federal and local agencies and to the general public for a 60-day public comment period. The Plan also will be available on the NCPC website. During the comment period NCPC will hold two public meetings to discuss the Plan. They are scheduled for Wednesday, March 24 from 2:00-4:00 p.m. and Monday, April 19 from 5:30-7:30 p.m.

The District Elements, which are currently being developed under the Mayor's auspices, are targeted for release in the next couple of years and will be subject to NCPC review before being adopted by the District City Council.

*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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