

# MEDIA RELEASE



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## **NCPC Approves Final Master Plan for DHS Headquarters at St. Elizabeths** *Commission comments favorably on plan to improve the Potomac Park levee and postpones action on Fort Dupont Park land transfer*

**Washington, DC** – At its January monthly meeting the National Capital Planning Commission approved a proposal by the General Services Administration (GSA) for a final master plan for the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) headquarters at St. Elizabeths, located in Southeast Washington, D.C. The Commission approved the West Campus portion of the final master plan and commented favorably on the Transportation Improvements and the East Campus portion of the plan.

The master plan will guide redevelopment of the 176-acre West Campus and a portion of the 280-acre East Campus and provide a secure federal site for executive leadership of the 22 agencies that make up the Department of Homeland Security and five of its component agencies.

The master plan seeks to maintain the historic character of the West Campus, preserve the natural context of the site to the extent possible, and promote sustainable development by achieving a Silver LEED rating. It includes the reuse of many of the existing buildings, and locates new development to respect the historic resources on the site.

“The development of this master plan involved many parties, including federal and District agencies. The General Services Administration, the Department of Homeland Security, and the District of Columbia should be commended for their collaborative efforts in working to produce a final master plan that will meet the needs of DHS while providing a new use that will extend the life of an important historic asset,” said NCPC Executive Director Marcel Acosta. “This project also exemplifies the positive impact federal facilities can have on District neighborhoods by serving as a catalyst for development, in this case in the surrounding Ward 8 neighborhood.”

NCPC’s approval is contingent upon several factors including the following actions: GSA must construct a west access road through the Shepherd Parkway, which is owned and managed by the National Park Service; GSA must submit to NCPC for its review and approval an Amendment to the Final Master Plan for the Interchange/Access Road Improvements; GSA is required to take several actions prior to beginning construction to implement Phase I of the Final Master Plan; and GSA is required to submit to NCPC for its review and approval an Amendment to the Final Master Plan for the East Campus portion, including an environmental document that complies with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the National Historic Preservation Act and that includes NCPC as a Cooperating Agency.

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When completed, the DHS headquarters will include approximately 4.5 million gross square feet of office space plus 1.5 million gross square feet of parking. Of this, approximately one million gross square feet will be leased space on the northern portion of the East Campus. Approximately 14,000 of 26,000 DHS employees will ultimately be housed at St. Elizabeths, beginning with the United States Coast Guard. The project is expected to be implemented in three phases over an eight year period. Other federal agencies to be housed on the site include the Transportation Security Administration (TSA), Customs and Border Protection (CBP), Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), and the Federal Emergency Management Administration (FEMA).

In voting to approve the master plan, NCPC Chairman John V. Cogbill, III commended the General Services Administration and expressed his appreciation to the historic preservation community. "I think GSA has done a remarkable job of significantly improving the plan they first brought to this Commission," said Chairman Cogbill. "This project holds great potential and while there are many steps remaining in this process, today's approval is a very important first step forward. I also commend the historic preservation community and the important role it played in providing valuable input throughout this process."

Also today, the Commission commented favorably on a design concept for improvements to the Potomac Park levee located on the National Mall near the intersection of Constitution Avenue and 17th Street, NW. The plan addresses new requirements by FEMA that a more reliable and effective means of flood protection be implemented on the site.

The concept design calls for construction of a new section of the existing levee system across 17th Street, NW that will utilize concrete and stone retaining walls combined with a post and panel flood wall. The first phase will include the post and panel system, concrete walls, and a vault for storage of the post and panel system when it is not in use. The second phase will construct permanent earthwork, surface treatments, and landscaping. This first phase of improvements is required by FEMA to be in place by November 2009.

The original levee system, completed in the late 1930s by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers consists of a permanent earthen berm that runs north of the Reflecting Pool. It incorporates temporary measures including sandbags and Jersey barriers, which the National Park Service installs during flood events. The U.S. Corps decertified the system in 2007 after determining that it did not meet stricter post-Hurricane Katrina policies.

In providing its comments to the applicant, the Commission recommended that the Park Service develop a landscape plan that minimizes encroachment on the World War II Memorial and respects the intent of the Skidmore, Owings & Merrill 1976 Constitution Gardens plan and the Olin Partnership's 2003 plan for the Washington Monument grounds.

In its final action today, the Commission voted to postpone until March a proposal by the National Park Service to transfer the jurisdiction of approximately 15 acres of Fort Dupont Park in Southeast Washington, DC to the District of Columbia. The District proposes to use the land to build a youth baseball academy and to expand the existing Fort Dupont Ice Arena. Following a presentation by staff and subsequent testimony from members of the public, National Park Service and District officials noted that it would be necessary to renegotiate some of the terms of the land transfer agreement. Therefore, the Commission voted to postpone action on the project in order to allow the National Park Service and the District of Columbia time to resolve all outstanding matters and resubmit a revised agreement.

This month's agenda also included two consent calendar items (no presentation given): preliminary and final site development plans for an antenna test platform at the U.S. Coast Guard Telecommunication and Information Systems Command in Fairfax County, Virginia; and preliminary and final site and building plans for a security screening addition at the Ft. Detrick Forest Glen Annex in Silver Spring, Maryland.

Information regarding actions taken at today's Commission meeting can be accessed at [www.ncpc.gov](http://www.ncpc.gov).

*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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