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401 9th Street, NW
North Lobby, Suite 500
Washington, DC 20004
Tel: 202 482-7200
Fax: 202 482-7272
www.ncpc.gov

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Lisa MacSpadden
202-482-7263 or lisa@ncpc.gov

NCPC Plans Win National Awards

Washington, DC – San Francisco – For the second time in one week, the American Planning Association (APA) has honored the National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC) during its annual national planning conference. The APA today named NCPC's National Capital Urban Design and Security Plan as the winner of the 2005 Current Topic Award for Safe Growth. On Friday, the APA Federal Planning Division presented NCPC's Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital: Federal Elements with its Outstanding Sustainable Planning award.

The Current Topic Award for Safe Growth is the second national APA award for NCPC's urban design and security plan. The planning organization previously honored the security plan with its Outstanding Federal Planning Project in 2002. Today's award, presented in San Francisco, recognizes NCPC's efforts to promote safe growth by balancing good planning and urban design against an increasing need for perimeter security in the nation's capital.

NCPC's plan offers a variety of streetscape elements and design solutions that are geared toward enhancing the public realm while also providing necessary perimeter security. Although written with federal facilities in mind, the plan's principles are applicable throughout the country. To date, more than 60 security projects have been guided by the plan, including the redesign of Pennsylvania Avenue in front of the White House and a Mall-wide perimeter security plan proposed by the Smithsonian Institution for 10 of its museums.

"We are honored to receive this level of recognition for our security plan," said NCPC Chairman John V. Cogbill, III. "We reached consensus with more than 75 agencies prior to adopting the document and we are proud to have it serve as a model for planning agencies across the country as cities work to develop their own security plans."

"This plan takes the planning of physically secure environments to a whole other level," said Carol Rhea, AICP, co-chair of the APA Awards Committee. "It offers a variety of tools and techniques to federal agencies interested in protecting their building or complexes from terrorist attack," she said.

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The National Capital Urban Design and Security Plan, adopted by NCPC in October 2002, identifies perimeter design solutions aimed at protecting buildings from bomb-laden vehicles. It proposes a variety of hardened street furniture to seamlessly integrate security measures into Washington's historic urban fabric. The plan is already having an impact in Washington.

Pennsylvania Avenue in front of the White House, which had been cluttered with unsightly security barriers, is now a beautiful civic space featuring pedestrian-friendly amenities and street furnishings that welcome residents and visitors to the historic setting. Construction is also nearing completion on a landscape solution for the grounds of the Washington Monument. In addition to new paths, the monument will feature 800 new trees, upgraded lighting, and new granite paving. The elements will provide necessary security while preserving the character of the grounds and allowing recreational and civic uses to continue.

The second award conferred by APA this week recognizes NCPC's Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital: Federal Elements as an example of Outstanding Sustainable Planning. The plan serves as a blueprint for planning in the national capital region for the next 20 years and addresses significant changes that have evolved in the nation's capital since the plan's last publication in the 1980s. It recognizes four major themes including the importance of the appearance and image of the nation's capital; the operational efficiency of the federal government; transportation mobility and accessibility; and stewardship of the region's natural and cultural resources.

The Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital: Federal Elements contains seven elements representing the most significant planning topics in the region. While each of the plan's elements can stand alone, the full collection creates a framework connected by the principles of accommodating federal and national activities, reinforcing smart growth, and supporting coordination with local and regional governments.

"The nation's capital has distinct planning and development needs that set it apart from other major cities," said NCPC Chairman Cogbill. "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."

The Commission released the Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital: Federal Elements in August 2004 following a 90-day public comment period. To achieve a cohesive document that would be widely embraced, NCPC consulted with federal and local government agencies, professional organizations, and the general public. Through the process and the development of its plan, NCPC helped to convey and enforce the principles of smart growth and sustainable 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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