



Commission Members

Presidential Appointees

L. Preston Bryant, Jr., Chairman
John M. Hart
Elizabeth A. White

Mayoral Appointees

Arrington Dixon
Robert E. Miller

Ex Officio Members

Secretary of Defense
The Honorable Leon Panetta

Secretary of the Interior
The Honorable Ken Salazar

Acting Administrator
General Services Administration
The Honorable Daniel Tangherlini

Chairman
Committee on Homeland Security
and Governmental Affairs
United States Senate
The Honorable Joseph I. Lieberman

Chairman
Committee on Oversight
and Government Reform
U.S. House of Representatives
The Honorable Darrell Issa

Mayor
District of Columbia
The Honorable Vincent C. Gray

Chairman
Council of the District of Columbia
The Honorable Phil Mendelson

Executive Director
Marcel C. Acosta

IN REPLY REFER TO:
NCPC File No. 6886

NOV - 1 2012

The Honorable Darrell Issa
Chairman
Committee on Oversight and Government Reform
United States House of Representatives
2157 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-6143

Dear Chairman Issa:

We are in receipt of your letter dated October 3, 2012 requesting a proposal and timetable for a study of building heights in the District of Columbia. The Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (Committee) has requested a study jointly conducted by the District of Columbia (District) and the National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC or Commission) that will explore the impact of strategic changes in "An Act to Regulate the Height of Buildings in the District of Columbia" (Height Act of 1910) through a height master plan. The Committee advises the study should take into account local economic development goals, impacts to the federal interest, compatibility with surrounding neighborhoods, national security concerns, local residents' input, and other related factors.

In response to the Committee's request, NCPC and the District have developed the enclosed proposal and timetable for the study. The study will be guided by the following principles:

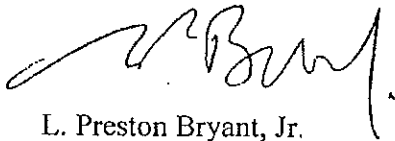
- ensuring the prominence of federal landmarks and monuments by preserving their views and setting;
- maintaining the horizontality of the monumental city skyline; and
- minimizing the negative impacts to nationally significant historic resources, including the L'Enfant Plan.

The Honorable Darrell Issa
Page 2

We anticipate the study beginning December 2012 and concluding with recommendations to the Committee by September 2013. The study and its recommendations will be vetted through a public process and presented to the Commission for action before submission to the Committee.

If you or a member of your staff has questions or comments, please do not hesitate to contact Marcel Acosta, Executive Director, at [REDACTED] or [REDACTED]@ncpc.gov.

Sincerely,



L. Preston Bryant, Jr.
Chairman

Enclosure

cc: The Honorable Vincent C. Gray, Mayor

Height of Buildings Master Plan Summary Proposal

Background:

On July 19, 2012, the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (Committee), Subcommittee on Health Care, District of Columbia, Census and the National Archives held a public hearing entitled *Changes to the Height Act: Shaping Washington, D.C., For the Future*.

During the hearing, Committee Chairman Issa and Congresswoman Norton identified the need for a strategic study of building heights, described as a "Height Master Plan," that would determine the extent to which An Act to Regulate the Height of Buildings in the District of Columbia (the Height Act) continues to serve the interest of both the Federal and District Governments.

In a letter dated October 3, 2012, Chairman Issa requested that National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC) work with the District to study strategic changes to the Height Act. The following summarizes the joint proposal prepared by NCPC and the District to accomplish the study.

Overview of Approach:

The District of Columbia Office of Planning (OP) and the NCPC (jointly the Agencies) have agreed to work together to study potential changes in height limits for various parts of the city. These areas include without limitation the center city, the higher elevations immediately surrounding the historic city (known as the topographic bowl), and locations around select Metrorail stations. The goal of the study is to reach a federal/local consensus on those areas of the city where height changes would be appropriate.

The study will be guided by the following principles:

- ensuring the prominence of federal landmarks and monuments by preserving their views and setting;
- maintaining the horizontality of the monumental city skyline; and
- minimizing the negative impacts to nationally significant historic resources, including the L'Enfant Plan.

In addition to these principles, careful consideration will be given to the pedestrian and human scale of the street-level experience. The Agencies will seek to avoid recommendations that create federal security concerns, and acknowledge federal security issues may preclude changes to the Height Act in specific locations. Further, this study and any potential congressional modifications to the Height Act may necessitate subsequent changes to the District of Columbia Zoning Regulations.

The Agencies have prepared the following work program:

- Model existing building heights and alternative levels of height throughout the city. These new levels of height will be analyzed and reflected in high quality visual renderings, photo simulations and selected digital models. These renderings, simulations and models will demonstrate the impact of these changes on the city's form, including its skyline, its most significant public spaces and streetscapes, and views to and from the city's most iconic structures, including the U.S. Capitol and the Washington Monument.

- Assess the construction, land economics, public benefit and cost implications of alternative increases in heights.
- Assess the impacts of alternative heights to the federal interest and solicit public input through public forums and on-line tools.

Coordination:

Throughout the study, NCPC will work closely with other federal agencies to include, without limitation, the Commission of Fine Arts, the General Services Administration, the Department of Defense, the Department of Homeland Security, the National Park Service, and the Architect of the Capitol.

Public Outreach:

The study will include on-going consultation and engagement with stakeholders and the general public. Public events will include a speakers' forum in the winter of 2012 in which eminent experts will discuss issues of height and urban design. We will also hold meetings in spring and summer 2013 to provide members of the public an opportunity to review and comment on the study's findings and recommendations. These efforts are in addition to a formal hearing or hearings held before the National Capital Planning Commission where the public will have the opportunity to provide testimony.

Expected Outcome:

A master plan prepared jointly by both the District of Columbia and the NCPC that identifies areas of the city where increasing heights above the current limits established by the Height Act may be appropriate.

Study Timeframe:

Given the lead time to procure consultant services, the study will commence in December 2012. It is estimated that the study will take seven to nine months to complete. This should result in submission of recommendations to the Committee by September 2013.

- **November/December 2012:** Drafting of scope, review of existing studies, consultant selection
- **December 2012:** Initiation of study
- **January – July 2013:** Study is conducted with consultation and outreach to the public, federal agencies and Commission members.
- **July/August 2013:** Draft plan released to public. NCPC holds formal hearings on draft plan to solicit public feedback.
- **September 2013:** After consideration of comments, NCPC adopts final plan and transmits recommendations and record of public comments to Congress for consideration.