



MEDIA ADVISORY

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Julia Koster
202-482-7211 or julia@ncpc.gov
Will Herbig
202-482-7270 or will@ncpc.gov

Chairman L. Preston Bryant, Jr. Announces Joint District-Federal Study of Washington, DC's Building Heights *Height Master Plan to Examine Impacts on Federal and Local Interests*

Washington, DC – NCPC Chairman L. Preston Bryant, Jr. today announced a joint Height Master Plan with the District of Columbia that will explore the impact of strategic changes to the federal Height of Buildings Act of 1910 (The Height Act). The study was requested by Congressman Darrell Issa, Chair of the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, Subcommittee on Health Care, District of Columbia, Census and the National Archives following its July 19, 2012 hearing on “*Changes to the Height Act: Shaping Washington, D.C., For the Future.*” The District of Columbia and NCPC were asked to determine the extent to which the Height Act continues to serve both the federal and District government interests. The Height Act is a federal law which provides uniform restrictions on the height of all buildings within the District of Columbia boundaries.

“We are fortunate to have the legacy of the Height Act that has so dramatically shaped the distinctive character of our capital city,” said L. Preston Bryant, Jr., NCPC Chairman. “This study is an important step in protecting this legacy, while also addressing future federal and local needs. It is essential for the study to be comprehensive and to identify and consider federal interests.”

In response to the Committee’s request, the District and NCPC developed a joint proposal that 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 taller buildings as perceived from the street-level. Additionally, the District and NCPC will seek to avoid recommendations that create federal security concerns and acknowledge that federal security issues may preclude changes to the Height Act in specific locations.

“I welcome this collaboration with our federal partners on this important and strategic look at height in this city for the first time in over one hundred years,” said Mayor Vincent C. Gray. “The Height Act laid the groundwork for a skyline that is iconic in the world. This study will evaluate whether reconsidered and possibly different limits to building heights might affect federal and other interests, preserve the City’s characteristic skyline, and continue to give prominence to the views of stately federal landmarks and monuments that grace the District of Columbia.”

The study is expected to launch in December 2012. The DC Office of Planning is leading the District’s efforts in partnership with NCPC on the study. NCPC and the District plan to submit the final recommendations from the study to the Committee by September 2013. NCPC, in partnership with the District, will consult with key federal agencies and provide extensive opportunities for public input throughout the process. The District will partner with NCPC to consult with key federal agencies and the public during the study process. Study recommendations will be presented to the National Capital Planning Commission (Commission) for action before submission to Congress. The Commission is comprised of Presidential appointees and representatives from the District of Columbia, federal agencies and Congress.

The Height Act is a federal law that can be modified only through Congressional action. Any changes to the law proposed by Congress will not pre-empt local decisions by the District Government about whether and when any changes to building heights would occur. The District would undertake amendments to its Comprehensive Plan, and then initiate any zoning changes deemed appropriate through its normal processes, including substantial public input, to respond to any Congressional modifications to the Height Act.

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