

The National Capital Urban Design and Security Plan



NCPC NATIONAL CAPITAL PLANNING COMMISSION

OCTOBER 2002
November 2004 Addendum

The National Capital Urban Design and Security Plan is the result of close collaboration among the federal and District of Columbia governments, the professional planning and design community, security agencies, and civic, business, and community groups. The Interagency Security Task Force invited key public and private stakeholders to participate as members of its Core Advisory Group. During early development of the plan, National Capital Planning Commission staff presented its security design work to dozens of audiences in Washington and around the country. The plan was released in draft for public comment in July 2002. The Commission received dozens of responses from groups and individuals and carefully considered those comments in the preparation of this final plan.

The National Capital Urban Design and Security Plan is available from the National Capital Planning Commission offices and is online at www.ncpc.gov.

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The National Capital Planning Commission is the federal government's 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 construction projects, oversees long-range planning for future development, and monitors capital investment by federal agencies.

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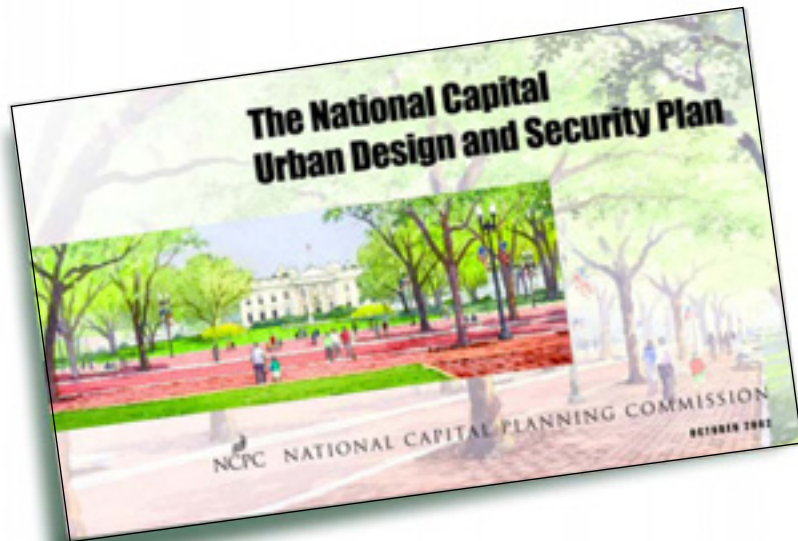
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NATIONAL CAPITAL URBAN DESIGN AND SECURITY PLAN ADDENDUM

When the National Capital Planning Commission



“Security must not be gained at the expense of the very qualities we seek to protect—accessibility, openness, and civic beauty.”

Richard L. Friedman
NCPA Interagency Security Task Force Chairman

released *The National Capital Urban Design and Security Plan* in October 2002—little more than a year after the September 11 terrorist attacks—security design was in its infancy. The NCPA plan has since led the nation in exploring innovative urban design solutions to meet heightened perimeter security requirements. In Washington’s monumental core, the design policies outlined in *The National Capital Urban Design and Security Plan* are transforming the way the federal government secures its land and buildings. The plan has dramatically altered the building-by-building approach traditionally employed by federal agencies. Today, federal security planners are working together in multi-agency efforts to develop coherent design plans that run the length of streets and across multi-block precincts. In designing their security installations, federal agencies are now collaborating with their neighbors to achieve aesthetic continuity.

NCPA’s groundbreaking plan also has served as a model for the nation’s planning and design community. NCPA commissioners and staff members have presented the plan across the country at the request of numerous groups in the professional community, including the American Society of Landscape Architects, the American Institute of Architects, and the American Planning Association. In addition, planners from cities big and small have sought NCPA’s advice as they work to develop their own security guidelines. Even planners in foreign capitals such as Ottawa, Canada and as far away as Canberra, Australia are using the NCPA plan as a model for similar initiatives in their own capital cities. Today, architects and planners in the United States and around the world are working together to integrate new security measures into the public realm in ways that demonstrate that security and great urban design can be compatible. For its part, NCPA is committed to advancing the use of security solutions that do not threaten the very qualities we seek to protect—accessibility, openness, and civic beauty.

Reinforced street furniture such as the pieces shown here can serve as vehicle barriers while maintaining an attractive and welcoming civic space.



Design and Testing of Security Elements

In the past year the National Capital Planning Commission has joined with the Department of State, the Federal Highway Administration, the General Services Administration, the National Park Service, the Secret Service, the Architect of the Capitol, the National Crash Analysis Center, and the Department of Homeland Security to work with private-sector vendors to develop the hardened street furniture called for in *The National Capital Urban Design and Security Plan*. Federal agencies are looking to security providers to design a wide array of reinforced street benches, trash cans, lampposts, and other streetscape elements to serve as curbside vehicle barriers. The ready availability of such new and tested security elements is essential to the successful implementation of *The National Capital Urban Design and Security Plan*. Otherwise, if faced with pressing security concerns and the absence of immediately available alternative and attractive designs, federal agencies will resort to the long, monotonous rows of bollards and planter pots that have already been greatly overused.

To allow agencies the time it takes to design and install more thoughtful, permanent security measures, NCPC developed policies to allow federal agencies to install temporary barriers while long-term solutions are crafted. The policies state that temporary security measures intended to be in place for more than 60 days are subject to NCPC's review and that temporary security measures may not be in place longer than two years.

Implementation of NCPC's security plan continues to move forward in the nation's capital, much of it as originally envisioned. Agencies are conducting risk assessments of their facilities and installing security measures as their needs dictate and their funding permits. In cases requiring design solutions along streetscapes or across multiple blocks, agencies have been consulting with one another, often with NCPC serving as a facilitator among the multiple partners.

In some cases security measures have increased beyond those conceptually outlined in the plan. To address these developments, NCPC has reconvened its Interagency Security Task Force and plans to update *The National Capital Urban Design and Security Plan*.

Transforming Public Spaces



Numerous projects outlined in NCPC's urban design and security plan are already completed or are under construction at some of the nation's most symbolic civic sites.

PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE AT THE WHITE HOUSE

A dignified new civic space featuring pedestrian-friendly amenities and site furnishings now graces the famous stretch of Pennsylvania Avenue in front of the White House. As one of the most symbolically significant destinations in the nation, Pennsylvania Avenue was one of the first sites in NCPC's security plan to be completed. It officially reopened to pedestrians on November 9, 2004 during a ceremony with First Lady Laura Bush and the federal and local partners who collaborated on the effort.

The completed design closely follows the concept plan presented in NCPC's 2002 security plan. Twin-headed streetlights originally designed for Washington by Henry Bacon in 1923 now line the precinct. A rustic paving helps unify the White House grounds with Lafayette Park, and large granite pavers at the ends of the street and along the sidewalk reinforce the connection of the avenue to the city's urban fabric. In place of bulky planter pots, specially designed fluted bollards as well as retractable and removable bollards ensure a visually open setting. New guard booths complement the classical architecture found along the avenue, and more than 85 new American elm trees—due to be planted in spring 2005—will provide a welcoming canopy for pedestrians. The project's design is reversible and does not preclude the reopening of the avenue in the future, if and when the security environment permits.





A ring of jersey barriers surrounded the Washington Monument prior to the security improvements.



WASHINGTON MONUMENT

In June 2003 the Commission approved the final security design for the grounds of the Washington Monument. The landscape project, which was in the planning stages at the time NCPC released *The National Capital Urban Design and Security Plan*, is now under construction and scheduled to be completed in 2005. The simple and minimally intrusive design features a series of oval walkways extending around the monument plaza at the base of the mound. These walkways are lined with curved and sunken seating walls that also serve as vehicle barriers. Granite will replace the asphalt surface of the monument's plaza, and curved white stone benches will form the outer edge of the plaza. Approximately 800 new shade and flowering trees will augment 400 existing trees, and new lighting and signage will grace the monument. The design retains the pastoral quality of this portion of the National Mall and allows visitors to enjoy the grounds and open space of one of Washington's most important iconic structures.

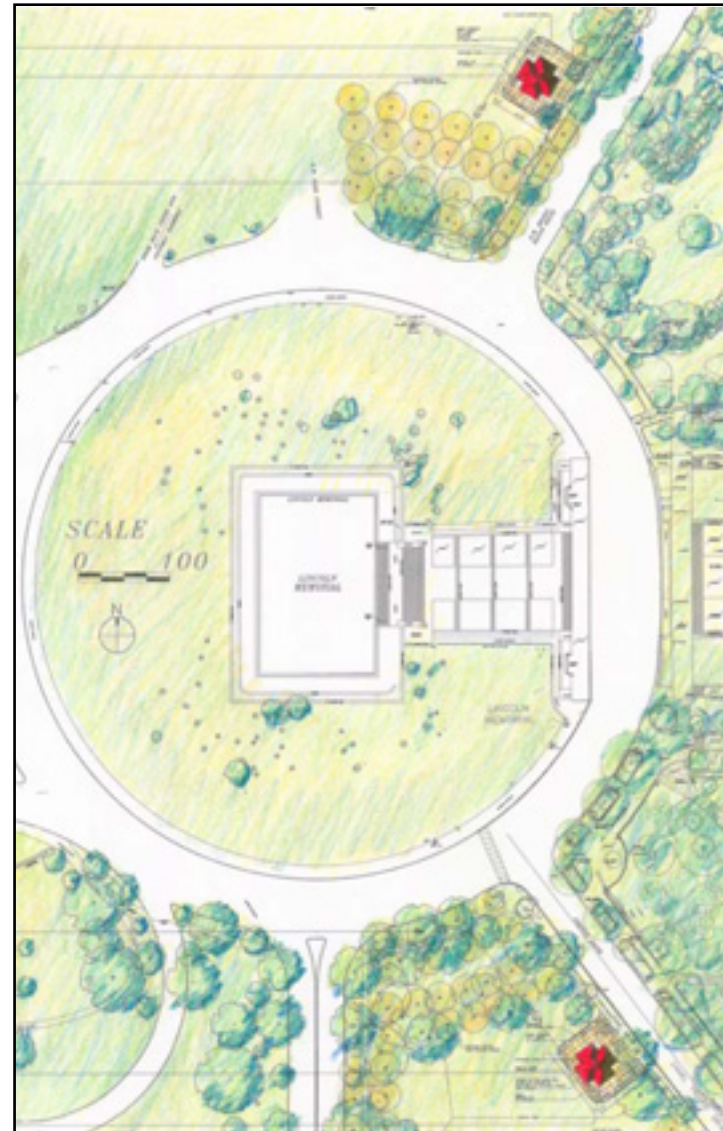
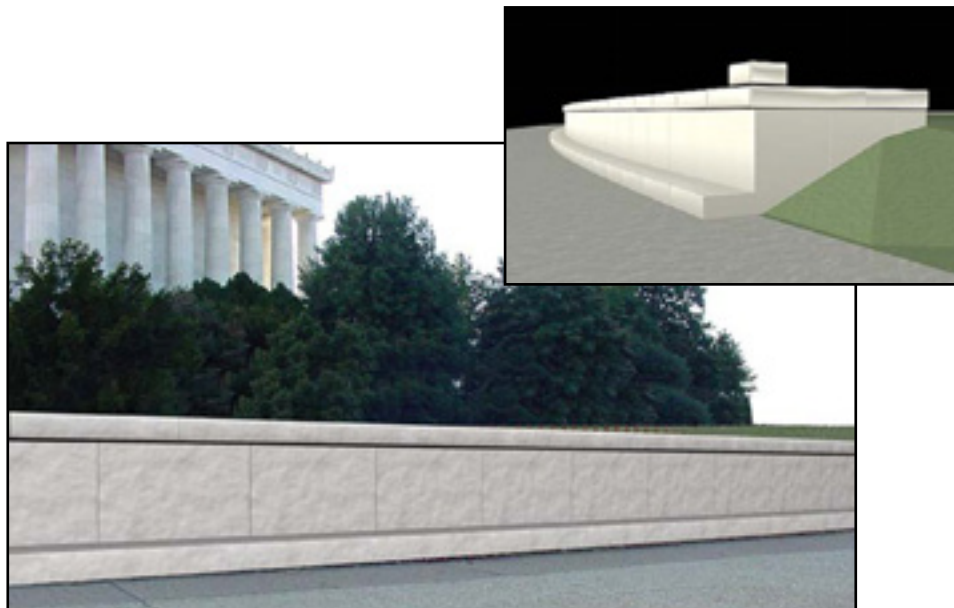


The new landscape plan for the Washington Monument features oval walkways, curved stone benches, 800 new trees, and new lighting.

LINCOLN MEMORIAL

The design of security improvements at the Lincoln Memorial, another project featured in the urban design and security plan, demonstrates the continuing challenge to find the right balance between appropriate security measures and site-sensitive design. Preliminary plans submitted by the National Park Service in December 2003 include a low wall to enclose the circular lawn on which the Lincoln Memorial sits. Other changes include traffic and pedestrian improvements, new street lights, and new concession buildings.

The plan generally employs materials, color, and massing that are compatible with the historic and architectural qualities of the memorial and grounds. However, on the critical east side of the memorial (Mall side), the Park Service proposed a long line of bollards above the stairs to the Reflecting Pool, at the outer edge of the Lincoln Memorial Circle. In the Commission's view a long row of bollards would form a visual and physical barrier between the memorial and the Reflecting Pool, two elements that are physically, historically, and symbolically linked. The Commission has asked the Park Service to refine its design with fewer bollards in order to minimize the visual impact that a continuous row of bollards would create.



An aerial view of the Lincoln Memorial. New security measures include a granite wall (shown left) that will encircle the memorial at the lawn's edge. Other planned changes include traffic and pedestrian improvements, new street lights, and new concession buildings, in red above.

SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION

In October 2004 the Commission approved preliminary plans for perimeter security measures for nine Smithsonian museums on the Mall. The Commission appreciated the Smithsonian's adherence to many of the tenets of the urban design and security plan such as establishing security lines within the building yard rather than in the public space; incorporating security into already existing site features when possible; respecting the monumentality of Independence and Constitution Avenues; custom designing solutions at entryways and plaza areas; and establishing a comprehensive tree planting program.

Due to differences in architecture, streetscape elements, and roadway conditions, the Smithsonian tailored its designs to each facility. Along Independence Avenue, for example, existing walls will be hardened and custom-designed bollards will be used to secure pedestrian and vehicular entrances. Along Constitution Avenue the design calls for new freestanding walls on the inside edge of the sidewalk. Custom-designed benches, light poles, and urns will complement the historic fabric of the Mall precinct.



A low fence along Constitution Avenue will help to secure the National Museum of Natural History.



Outside the Smithsonian Castle, a landscaped retaining wall will provide attractive security.

FEDERAL RESERVE

Recognizing the Federal Reserve's special security risk, NCPC allowed the Reserve to modify its security design for its Northwest Washington facilities. The Federal Reserve's two buildings have frontages on Constitution and Virginia Avenues, and C, 20th, and 21st Streets. The perimeter security proposal consists of landscape features including plinth walls and planters, bollards, and a fence wall. While NCPC did not envision the need for guard kiosks for this facility, the Federal Reserve has monitored pedestrian activity for more than a year and has concluded that 24-hour security guards and kiosks to shelter the guards are necessary. Similarly, while the NCPC plan proposed a wider sidewalk and plinth wall on the inside edge of the sidewalk on 21st Street, the Federal Reserve, in order to meet its recommended stand-off distance, intends to install a fence wall 18 inches from the curb line. The fence wall is depicted below in front of the buildings on 21st Street.



The Federal Reserve's Martin Building along Virginia Avenue, NW



The Federal Reserve's Eccles and Martin Buildings at the intersection of 21st and C Streets, NW



The Eccles Building along Constitution Avenue, NW

Responding to Heightened Security Measures

Security projects have become a significant focus of Commission activity and now account for nearly 30 percent of the projects that the Commission reviews.

Over the past two years the Commission has noted the evolution of federal security requirements and the heightened threat levels that federal security managers seek to protect against. While bomb-laden vehicles have been considered the prime threat and perimeter security measures to protect against those vehicles are the focus of *The National Capital Urban Design and Security Plan*, federal agencies are now also seeking protection against other threats such as chemical and suicide attacks. In response, agency security managers are considering an expanded array of security measures not envisioned in the urban design and security plan adopted by the Commission in October 2002. The Commission has grown concerned that these escalating threat assessments and potentially extreme security responses undermine its objectives for a vibrant capital city that showcases democratic ideals of openness and accessibility. In addition, the cost of ever more sophisticated security measures against an expanding array of threats is beginning to overwhelm individual agency budgets.

For these reasons the Commission has reconvened its Interagency Security Task Force to better understand the evolving threat environment; manage the risk assessment process; and develop reasonable, cost-effective security responses. The task force will update *The National Capital Urban Design and Security Plan* to reflect the changing security environment and the specific needs of federal installations and the communities that surround them.

While updating *The National Capital Urban Design and Security Plan*, NCPC will continue to work with federal agencies, the Office of Management and Budget, and Congress on funding strategies for comprehensive security design projects. Current funding patterns too often force agencies to adopt piecemeal approaches to their security installations. For example, agencies may receive funding for new well-designed guard booths but not for the adjacent entry area, or in some cases money is available to appropriately secure a garage entrance but jersey barriers continue to mar nearby curbs. The Commission recommends funding that enables agencies to develop complete security installations, and NCPC will continue to work with its partners to encourage the necessary funding for such coordinated projects.

The updated urban design and security plan also will provide guidance for the design of perimeter security solutions at federal facilities outside of the monumental core in the National Capital Region. Citizens and local officials are increasingly concerned about security measures at federal facilities that adversely intrude into their communities. Concerns include street closings, divisive perimeter fences, and limited public access to federal land. The updated plan will examine the security and design challenges these federal installations face, particularly where they abut non-federal property.

As the Commission advances its security design work, it will continue to work with its partners and stakeholders to find an acceptable balance between meeting legitimate security needs and creating lively, welcoming, and economically vibrant communities.