



**National Capital Framework Plan
Summary of Public Meeting
July 25, 2006**

The National Capital Framework Plan, launched in May 2006, is a multi-agency federal effort led by the National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC) along with the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts to prepare a plan for the areas surrounding the National Mall. The Framework Plan seeks to move symbolic Washington beyond the National Mall and reduce an increasing demand for recreation, tourism, commemoration, and public events on the Mall to sustain the beauty of the setting that is home to many of our most treasured memorials and museums. These goals will be accomplished by enhancing the Mall's neighboring areas through improved streetscapes; enhanced visitor, worker, and resident services; and better connections among national attractions. A key goal of the plan is to identify the specific actions necessary to establish desirable new destination sites in areas surrounding the National Mall.

On the evening of July 25, 2006, NCPC hosted a public meeting that attracted more than 60 interested individuals. During the session, NCPC invited participants to break into seven small groups to consider a series of questions, offer suggestions, and identify concerns to help inform development of the Framework Plan. Following is a summary of participants' comments, suggestions, and concerns organized by topic and precinct.

Planning and Design

The public offered the following general suggestions regarding destinations and connections.

Destinations and Connections

- New destinations should be clustered together (rather than dispersed), integrated with food and retail options (e.g., a super-destination with multiple attractions), and organized around transit nodes.
- Destinations outside the Mall should create an identifiable and distinct sense of place within their city context by making the areas around the mall less "city like" at key points.
- Destination clusters should attempt to lessen the sense of urban enclaves through human scale structures and open spaces.
- Don't try to mimic the Mall. Precincts in the Framework Plan should have different identities with shops, commercial, mixed use, a "funky" feel, e.g., the MCI center and Penn Quarter.
- Mixed uses will be very important to increasing people presence. Bring in housing and mixed uses adjacent to memorials and museums.
- Need more restaurants/cafes.
- Small, green, open spaces among urban blocks are powerful community focal points and will draw people to congregate.

- Take advantage of the green spaces within the study area, especially in the Northwest Rectangle.
- Create small, next generation multi-purpose spaces around the city that function similar to the way multi-purpose rooms function in elementary schools (versatile, community-oriented spaces).
- Locate farmers' markets in unused building courtyards, e.g., white building near Department of Agriculture.
- Program public spaces between federal buildings with timed activities:
 - Farmers' Markets (also near Metro stations; ok to close streets during market)
 - Cultural Activities
 - Entertainment/Concerts
 - Play areas – not just for kids
 - Install outdoor public art that changes
 - Create outdoor space for performance (amphitheaters)
- To make government agencies, buildings, and precincts more friendly:
 - Extend hours of operation.
 - Provide safe havens.
 - Bury security deeper within building rather than at entrances.
 - Illuminate continuous pathways between buildings.
 - Implement public programs to teach people about agencies and American history, within the buildings (public lobbies) and in the spaces between them.
 - Use markers, trails, and pavement to draw people through spaces around buildings
 - Add color (banners) and humor; both would symbolize democracy.
- Be careful not to create a disconnected “jumble” of different museums/attractions.
- Capitalize on the history of neighborhoods by programming neighborhood tours.
- Locate small individual memorials in neighborhoods where individuals lived.
- Serious consideration should be given to redeveloping sites where poor decisions have stifled or prevented revitalization of important sites or streets. Some of these include: the FBI site on Pennsylvania Avenue, the Forrestal Building (particularly the elevated skyway span across 10th Street.
- The Framework Plan should find ways to diversify the experience depending on which area of the city you are in. Each destination does not have to be a major site for commemoration. There could be very different types of memorials.
- People are hesitant to go past the point where crowds “drop off,” i.e., along 7th Street, north of I Street.
- A benefit to spreading destinations throughout the city is that the visitor can't see it all at once. Coming back to Washington, D.C., will be necessary. Economic development will occur in all parts of the city, and people can experience the entire city.

- Redevelop buildings with new uses or to make them more attractive
- Consider a museum's focus in planning for future museums: what kind of a draw will a museum have? This should dictate where a museum might locate.
- Set aside space for District and/or private use in federal projects to generate tax revenue.
- This Framework Plan should focus on developing criteria or planning principles for how we prioritize selecting the *types* of events, memorials, museums – in addition to *where* these uses should be located. (See first concern below.)
- Create anchor destinations which minor spin-off destinations can relate to.
- Consider the neighborhood context when locating a memorial.
- Simply locating a destination is not the final answer. A good example of this is the City Museum. It's also the collection inside the museum and the way it is programmed that make it successful.
- How many museums and memorials are being sponsored? How does that happen? Memorials are the idea of private individuals; there isn't a group, a 'board of scholars' to identify what should be memorialized. This process doesn't seem to fit with the concept of identifying "niche" museums/memorials that are likely to be a good fit in a neighborhood, or successful.
- Need to create a critical mass to draw people, such as the MCI Center. Projects should have anchors and meet demonstrated needs.
- There is a need for a city visitor's center. The current one is in the Reagan Building and is inaccessible and not used.
- A first-class visitors' center is desperately needed (7 days a week w/ long hours).
- It is important to find ways to activate the street and give people a reason to move down the street. Get them over the barriers.
- Put emphasis on ground floor retail to prevent another Southwest, a "government ghetto."
- Need to reinforce connections along areas that suffer low visitation. Encourage active street life and provide for pedestrian safety.
- When promoting new destination areas, they should be referenced in terms of walking time. Example: 10-minute walking distance.
- All access must be considered (ADA, pedestrian, strollers, vehicular, transit, visual).
- Newly developed areas should include an appropriate combination of open space and attractions, including green space.
- Create more enclosed, peaceful spaces off of the Mall – to rest/relax (pocket parks).

- We need to leave (green) open areas. Open space should be used to define areas. It's very important to preserve space for future generations, so they can shape their national capital. Do not use up all the space right now.
- Create more places for visitors to gather.

Information

The public offered the following general suggestions about education, signage, and way-finding.

- Implement public programs to teach people about agencies and American history, located both within the buildings (public lobbies) and in the space between buildings
- Plans for new attractions should include ways to make maps, information, and educational/interpretive tours available to help one enjoy the attractions.
- Outdoor kiosks should perform a variety of functions: provide information, make change (money). Food kiosks should post menus.
- Better signage and lighting would help people better find their way
 - Color code signs.
 - Define continuous pathways between buildings with light.
- People who are not familiar with the area need frequent, continual reinforcement if wandering somewhere unfamiliar/away from the Mall. Way-finding signs are needed.
- Current transit options around and near the mall are not apparent to visitors.
- Develop a comprehensive signage/way-finding system which makes inter-modal transit transitions easier. In Area 1, the city transit systems should integrate with NPS systems on and around the Mall. Signage/way-finding should help make the transition.
- Signage and way-finding for important destinations in the NW is better than it used to be; much needs to be done in the other quadrants of the city.
- Highway signage is awful, engineers need to call upon other professionals for advice on how to improve.
- Ensuring easier access and finding ways around the city are important.
- There needs to be better marketing and a positive approach to locating somewhere other than the Mall. "These are other significant sites." "It's a good as the Mall."
- Using technology and interactive museums are good ideas, e.g., using iPods or dialups to conduct self tours. They allow people to do things rather than just see things. However, technology should supplement the face-to-face experience not replace it. There is no substitute for the experience of seeing the city in person. The Newseum is a good example of a successful interactive experience.

- Start using wireless way-finding methods or improve signage. For example, San Francisco uses “talking” signs to assist the hard of hearing/vision-impaired. Need to address ADA accessibility; it’s not that good at existing sites or museums.
- Plasma screens could help provide location orientation.

Urban Design

The public offered the following general suggestions about urban design.

- Do not necessarily try to extend the qualities associated with the Mall into the city fabric. Rather, maintain/protect/preserve “urban” qualities adjacent to the Mall.
- A “higher” level of design is needed off the Mall, rather than replicating the design qualities that distinguish the Mall.
- Ensure that the area is livable for both visitors and residents. Improve the quality of life for residents and visitors—reduce congestion, increase the number of amenities for residents (e.g., more grocery stores).
- Existing building designs must be part of the city. Bad design results in areas like Southwest where there is no street animation and no relation to the street.
- Ensure a uniform design character within each precinct.
- The Framework Plan must focus on the eyesores.
- There are not enough services for the public adjacent to the mall, i.e., sit- down dining, outdoor dining, restrooms. You have to already know where to look to find what is there.
- It is important to have a vision. A clear idea that everyone buys into.
- In order to make this happen there must be the political will and openness to change what is currently being done.
- Economic studies must be conducted to ensure that the demand is truly there for the kinds of uses that will be proposed.
- Consider the costs/benefits of projects to justify expenditures.

Infrastructure

The public offered the following general suggestions about facilities, infrastructure, parking, and transit.

- The existing public infrastructure (sidewalks, tree boxes, streets, etc) is deplorable. We need a high-quality public realm to attract people to these areas.
- Enhance pedestrian crossing with warning signals.

- Necessities must be provided for, e.g., restroom, quieter/calmer places to rest/relax.
- The following improvements are needed:
 - Signs Announcing Services
 - Bathrooms with diaper-changing stations
 - Water fountains
 - Places to eat – indoor
 - Places to buy food – outdoor kiosks
 - Farmers' Markets
 - Information Kiosks
- Maintain public facilities and fountains better.
- Sidewalks should be wide enough for groups of people to pass and there should be uniformity in the width of sidewalks.
- New transit options must be inexpensive and able to be identified and used spontaneously by families.
- Tour options and transit for families are too costly.
- More Metro stops are needed, along the existing tracks and through extensions of the system. The areas around Metro stops should be better utilized.
- Develop predictable bus routes along monumental corridors that convey two anchor points. (e.g., Georgetown to the Capitol)
- Better web information is important, more than a brief summary, but full details to justly present and promote each place or event. (Participant offers to provide more detail on this item).
- Ensure that all places are accessible by more than just a car.
- Link different parts of the city through means other than cars and traditional mass transit, e.g., walking, bicycling, small boats, Zip cars, water taxi, and provide better information on these options to encourage people to use them.
- Need to deal with tour buses.
- Add new Metro station at north end of East Potomac Park.
- Create new canal along Buckeye Drive.
- Water Taxis are needed to supplement the transit system and provide public attraction.
- Better parking information is needed, including understandable fee payments.
- Developing parking to provide access will still be important, particularly for visitors that simply aren't accustomed to Metro.
- Ample public parking with no permits

Security

The public offered the following general suggestions about restricted access, perimeter security and the perception of security.

- Address security concerns but not at the expense of a vibrant, active, public realm.
- Security screening is not a deterrent at established destinations (like the Smithsonian) but could be a barrier to the success of new destinations
- Most federal agencies need to stop taking themselves so seriously in implementing their own security measures and reduce all of the security around federal buildings.
- Security at federal buildings is a big problem. This must be addressed thorough building design and operations vs. creating excessive set-backs, blast zones, etc. (e.g., ATF building).
- Balance security so that physical barriers are less obtrusive and a human (police) presence is noticeable. Create a secure feeling; not a threatening presence.
 - Security kiosks and guards should seem approachable.
 - Barriers should serve dual functions, such as seating and water features.

Northwest Rectangle

The public offered the following general suggestions about the Northwest Rectangle.

- Efforts to re-energize the Kennedy Center improvements (plaza, building and Theodore Roosevelt Bridge) are crucial to connect the west end to city center. Multiple benefits would be derived: accessibility, symbolic linkage to more and a diverse range of patrons, space for the performing arts, reconnect this living memorial to the National Mall.
- Capitalize upon the proximity to George Washington University campus; it is charming and dynamic.
- It is essential to connect the city with the Kennedy Center.
- Maintain green space around the Kennedy Center.
- The streets and sidewalks along Virginia Avenue and E Street need to be enhanced to improve the pedestrian experience.
- Enhance E-Street Mini Mall.
- Maintain residential quality in Northwest Rectangle area.

Federal Triangle

The public offered the following general suggestions about the Federal Triangle.

- Find ways to break up the monumentality of Federal Triangle (physical and psychological). Currently it feels like Paris but without residential. It needs pass-through points, etc., in order to enliven the space.
- Retrofit south side of mall.
- Retrofit or redevelop FBI Building so building relates to the street with ground-floor uses.

Southwest Federal Center

The public offered the following general suggestions about the Southwest Federal Center.

- Restoration of Arts and Industries Building needs to happen soon. It might be a great place for a visitors' center.
- Relocate the Washington Marina.
- Infill the 12th Street corridor.
- Establish Southwest Waterfront and Independence Avenue as nodes, and the private sector will connect them.
- Improve 10th Street corridor & 12th Street as connectors.
- Provide stairs or other connections from Banneker Overlook to Maine Ave. Pedestrian connections are needed that will promote inviting/active uses.
- Need to strengthen the visual and physical connections along streets leading away from the National Mall, e.g., need to strengthen streetscape connection along 8th Street, despite visual connection that extends away from Pennsylvania Avenue. People are not always able to see nearby attractions. Visual access is blocked by certain buildings spanning streets, e.g., 10th St.
- Buildings along Independence Avenue make the street lifeless.
- Remove the SE/SW Freeway.
- Remove the DOE building across 10th Street.
- Ensure the Children's' Museum locates in Southwest.
- Consider changing the name of this area.

East Potomac Park

The public offered the following general suggestions about East Potomac Park.

- Strengthen East Potomac Park as recreation, environmental and exposition area, e.g., San Francisco Biomedical Center.
- Establish a park around the entire perimeter of East Potomac Park in which all 50 states (and the District of Columbia) would have a space and could contribute something representative of that state.
- Include Ohio Drive as key loop for cherry blossoms.
- Reconcile new projects with flood plain.
- Rebuild the East Potomac Park seawall.

RFK Stadium Site

The public offered the following general suggestions about the RFK Stadium Site.

- The RFK stadium site is going to be a giveaway because nobody is talking about it. Need to do something to protect areas of public land. RFK has the chance to be a totally new destination. A mix of uses would be nice (housing, parks, cultural).
- At RFK or other locations in the monumental core, we could have a performing arts center similar to Wolf Trap, or even like the Sydney Opera House or the Kimmel Center in Philadelphia.
- RFK needs more active recreation fields; maybe these could be “memorial fields.”
- Create a festival marketplace/ “Rouse-style” development at RFK.

The National Mall

The public offered the following general suggestions about the National Mall.

- Sports and recreation on the Mall attract people and should be considered in the study.
- Restroom facilities on the Mall have varying hours which causes confusion and frustration