

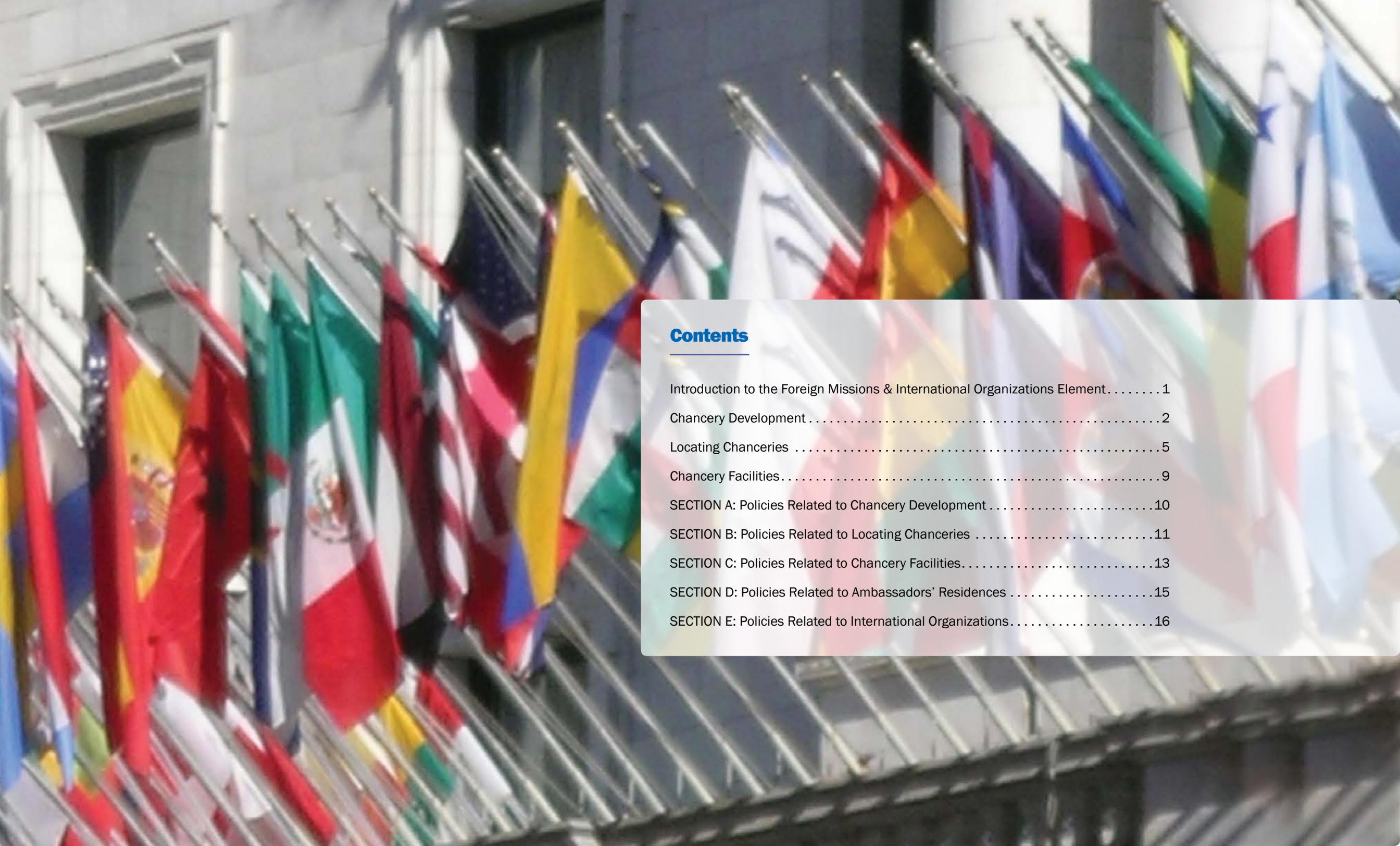


Foreign Missions & International Organizations Element



2016





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There are 195 independent states in the world. The United States maintains diplomatic relations with 191 of them.

The federal government’s goal is to plan a secure and welcoming environment for the location of diplomatic and international activities in Washington, DC. This should be done in a manner that is appropriate to the status and dignity of these activities; enhances Washington’s role as one of the world’s great capitals; and is sensitive to the character and use patterns of the city’s neighborhoods.

Washington, DC is one of the world’s most important diplomatic centers. There are a total of 195 independent states in the world, and the United States maintains diplomatic relations with 191 of them.¹ The United States also has diplomatic relations with many international organizations. There are approximately 185 countries that have foreign missions in Washington, DC.² These missions are vital to the United States government in assisting diplomatic relations with international institutions, organizations, and states. Foreign missions help promote peace and stability and bring nations together to address global challenges.

The Foreign Missions & International Organizations Element of the *Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital: Federal Elements* (Comprehensive Plan) provides a policy framework for the United States to fulfill its international obligation to assist foreign governments and international organizations in obtaining suitable locations for their diplomatic missions. This in turn supports efficient functioning of diplomatic and international activities. The element also includes policies to ensure that foreign missions promote the prestigious nature of the diplomatic mission, contribute to the city, and acknowledge and maintain the unique characteristics of Washington’s neighborhoods.

Honoring the United States’ treaty obligations is an important component in accommodating foreign missions in the nation’s capital. The Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations obligates the U.S. government to assist foreign governments in obtaining suitable facilities for diplomatic missions. The Convention states that “the receiving State shall either facilitate the acquisition on its territory, in accordance with its laws, by the sending State of premises necessary for its mission or assist the latter in obtaining accommodation in some other way.”³

The [Foreign Missions Act](#)⁴ of 1982 reaffirms the federal government’s jurisdiction over the operation of foreign missions and international organizations in the United States. It enunciates the policy to support and facilitate the secure and efficient operation of U.S. missions abroad, and of foreign missions and international organizations in the United States.

To ensure reciprocal accommodations in foreign countries, the Act established the Office of Foreign Missions within the U.S. Department of State (State Department) to review and control the operations of foreign missions in the United States. It empowers the Secretary of State to set forth the mechanism and criteria relating to the location of foreign missions in Washington, DC.



Former residential row house



Commercial office building

Chancery Development

Foreign missions occupy buildings of all sizes, shapes, and ages. Some are housed in former residential row houses or mansions, while many are in custom-designed buildings. Others lease space in commercial office buildings.

The facilities that house diplomatic functions—office space where the mission is conducted, and the residence of the ambassador—are commonly referred to collectively as embassies. Individually, these facilities are referred to differently depending upon their use. These uses include:

- **Ambassador's residence:** The official home of the ambassador or the chief of mission.
- **Chancery:** The principal offices of a foreign mission used for diplomatic or related purposes.
- **Chancery annex:** Used for diplomatic purposes in support of the mission, such as cultural or military attachés, or consular operations. Chanceries and chancery annexes are the same in this element when considering the accommodation of foreign missions in Washington, DC.

Many foreign missions in Washington occupy chanceries, chancery annexes, and ambassadors' residences in more than one location. Collectively and individually, these buildings contribute to the vibrancy and diversity of Washington's neighborhoods and add significantly to the city's visual interest and character.

Some countries maintain limited diplomatic establishments in Washington, with only the minimal staff needed to maintain diplomatic relations. Others have quite extensive activities and employ hundreds of people to work in specialized offices with particular functions. For example, several foreign missions maintain trade offices to encourage the import and export of goods to and from their countries. Many missions have offices for military liaisons to the U.S. Department of Defense. The diplomatic and international community continues to be a source of economic growth in Washington, DC as it provides employment and attracts international culture and commerce.

The Economic and Fiscal Impact of Foreign Missions on the Nation's Capital

The foreign missions in the National Capital Region represent the world's major countries, and with few exceptions are those countries' largest missions. Even though foreign missions by themselves are not major generators of economic activity, they have an economic force far exceeding their measurable benefits.

International Business Industry in Washington, DC

In addition to direct and indirect spending, foreign missions represent a critical component of the international business industry in Washington, DC. The continued growth and vitality of the city's international business industry is closely tied to Washington maintaining its position as a power center among world capitals, generating country-to-country business opportunities, and attracting visitors seeking individual or multiple-country meetings.

Foreign missions support and facilitate a significant and growing sector within the District of Columbia economy in the following ways:

- Foreign missions employ workers in Washington, DC.
- Consumer spending by foreign mission employees.
- Non-payroll spending by foreign missions.
- Foreign missions attract a large volume of day visitors and business visitors staying overnight, who spend money on lodging, food, and shopping.
- The District of Columbia collects taxes generated by the office space and homes leased in the city by foreign missions and their employees, respectively.

International Investments in Virginia

Between 2009 and 2013, French companies invested more than \$570 million in Virginia, making France the second-largest foreign direct investor in the state.⁵ In 2014, the Ambassador of France to the United States and the Commonwealth of Virginia signed a partnership agreement to develop new solutions to face climate change, develop quality of life, create jobs, and generate new economic opportunities. This partnership symbolizes two countries working together to address climate change and sustainable economic development in Virginia.



Embassy of Cuba

Washington, DC (2013):
 322 Chanceries
 78 Ambassador Residences
 46 Missions to the Organization
 of American States

Some countries maintain limited diplomatic establishments in Washington, with only the minimal staff needed to maintain diplomatic relations. Others have quite extensive activities and employ hundreds of people to work in specialized offices with particular functions. For example, several foreign missions maintain trade offices to encourage the import and export of goods to and from their countries. Many missions have offices for military liaisons to the U.S. Department of Defense. The diplomatic and international community continues to be a source of economic growth in Washington, DC as it provides employment and attracts international culture and commerce.

In recent decades, the nature of international diplomacy has shifted. In addition to political relationships, economic and cultural relationships have taken on added significance. This expansion of diplomatic functions has resulted in a commensurate shift in foreign mission facilities. Buildings are increasingly used to signify the importance a country places on its relations with its host country and to project a positive image.

In addition to their traditional function as places of negotiation, chanceries also act as communication vehicles for their countries. Increasingly, foreign missions use their chancery facilities as event spaces to foster intergovernmental relations at the political, economic, and cultural level. Using the power of architecture to convey a message in a way that spoken and written words cannot, many foreign missions now host public and private cultural events such as art exhibits, concerts, and films, or sponsor special events to increase awareness of their country and promote trade and tourism. These new programs often result in the need for larger buildings and specialized space. As a result, increased security requirements have become a consideration in chancery development.

Foreign Missions Since 2004: Key Developments and Trends

In 2004, when the Comprehensive Plan’s Foreign Missions & International Organizations Element was last updated, there were 169 countries with foreign missions spread across 507 facilities (residential and non-residential) in the region: 451 facilities in the Washington, DC, 41 facilities in Maryland, and 15 facilities in Virginia. In Washington, DC, there were 195 chanceries—18 located on federal land and 177 located on non-federal land.

The collapse in the 1990s of both the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia resulted in the creation of 21 new countries, which established diplomatic missions in Washington, many located in small, historic townhouses in Northwest. Two decades later, many of these countries have outgrown their smaller facilities.

Since 2004, the growth and diplomatic presence of foreign missions such as Brazil, China, India, and Vietnam, have increased, resulting in larger facilities in the United States, as well as on the State Department’s reciprocal presence and operations in those countries.

The construction of the new U.S. chancery in Beijing and the Chinese chancery in Washington provides an example of how reciprocity functions. Without the ability to accommodate China’s construction at the International Chancery Center, the State Department’s efforts to construct a new chancery in Beijing would likely not have been successful.⁶

Another example relates to a proposal from the Republic of Georgia to relocate to another property in Washington. The State Department determined that the case was a federal interest and acknowledged the Republic of Georgia’s generous assistance in establishing a new U.S. Embassy in Tbilisi in 2005. Such cooperation was essential to successfully achieve the federal government’s mission to provide safe, secure and functional facilities for the conduct of U.S. diplomacy and the promotion of U.S. interests worldwide.

In addition, the increasing “footprints” of U.S. diplomatic facilities abroad—largely due to security requirements—have resulted in additional pressure for similarly sized sites for foreign missions in the United States. Within Washington, DC, this task is challenging due to the lack of larger, undeveloped sites.

As foreign governments continue to face greater difficulty identifying properties within Washington that are either available for chancery use, or viewed by foreign governments as suitable for modern embassy operations, the State Department faces a number of challenges in its attempts to reciprocally acquire properties in other countries.

As of 2013, there were 322 chanceries (chancery and chancery annexes), 78 ambassador residences, and 46 missions to the Organization of American States in Washington, DC.⁷ Since 2004, the Embassy of the Republic of Congo, Embassy of South Africa, and the Embassy of Brazil are just a few of the completed multiple renovation and expansion projects. Under development are the Chinese Embassy Annex on Connecticut Avenue, estimated to be completed in the summer of 2016, and the Moroccan Embassy at the International Chancery Center. With the restoration of diplomatic relations between the United States and Cuba, both countries have reestablished embassies in each other's countries. While most chancery facilities are owned by the countries that occupy them, several missions lease space in office buildings, small commercial buildings, or freestanding structures.

Where Foreign Missions Are Located

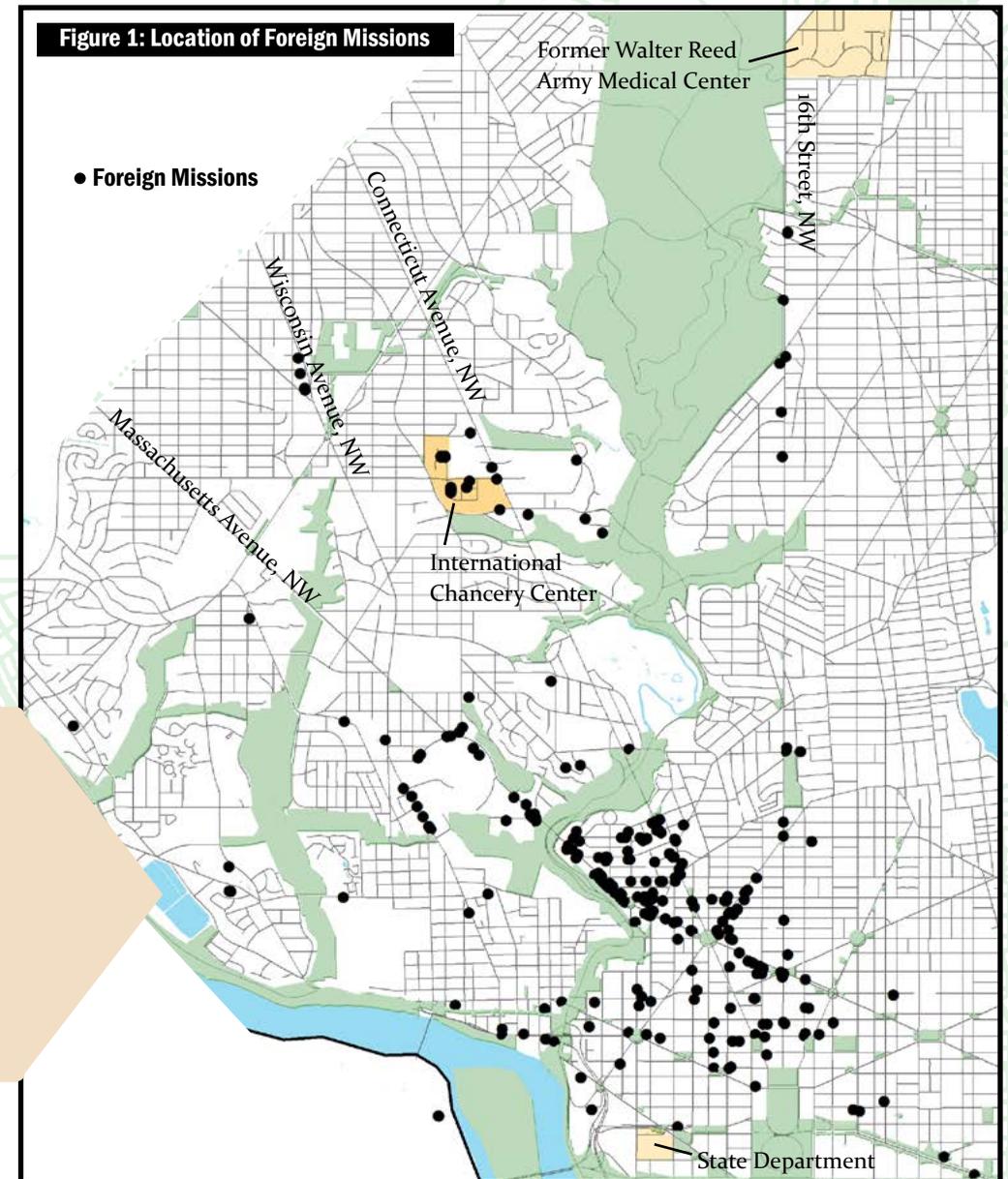
Currently, all chanceries in Washington, DC are located in the city's Northwest quadrant, with the majority located between 16th Street, NW (to the east) and Wisconsin Avenue, NW (to the west.) The Sheridan Kalorama neighborhood contains the largest number of chanceries, with the adjacent Dupont Circle neighborhood having the second most.

In 1968, the International Center Act established a 47-acre enclave in the Van Ness neighborhood known as the International Chancery Center, where foreign missions leased land from the U.S. government. The International Chancery Center became a purpose-built community designed to balance the federal government's need to accommodate foreign mission facilities while addressing the concerns of citizens about the location and operation of foreign missions in Washington.

The International Chancery Center houses 17 chanceries and is essentially built out, as all 47 acres have been developed with the exception of two lots for Morocco. The final plans for the new Moroccan chancery have been approved.



Embassies are located predominately in the northwest quadrant of Washington, with a high concentration along a stretch of Massachusetts Avenue, NW (known as "Embassy Row") and along New Hampshire Avenue, NW and 16th Street, NW. Many embassies are located in neighborhoods including Dupont Circle, downtown, Foggy Bottom, Georgetown, Kalorama, and Van Ness. Where foreign missions locate can influence neighborhood character. For example, the many embassies in Dupont Circle bring a constant flow of employment and distinctive international feel to the historically designated neighborhood.⁸ These embassies generate demand for restaurants and the arts, helping establish the neighborhoods' distinct character.



Chanceries are located as a matter-of-right in areas zoned commercial, industrial, waterfront, or mixed-use.



Commercial



Waterfront



Mixed-use

Future Demand

The greatest demand for new chancery facilities will likely come from existing foreign missions that expand as they increase their presence and the services performed. A few small countries that house their primary diplomatic missions to the U.S. in New York City may also choose to open chanceries in the capital. As new countries are created over time, it is likely that they too may establish diplomatic relations with the U.S. and will require new chanceries in Washington, DC.

New foreign missions, and the relocation of existing ones, could require the identification of chancery sites each year. It is unlikely that all foreign missions would require new sites—some may purchase or lease existing foreign mission facilities, while others may purchase or lease other existing buildings. However, the past trend has been toward new construction of larger facilities on large lots, both on privately owned land and in the International Chancery Center. Because of the full build-out of the International Chancery Center, another large tract of federally owned land to accommodate a new foreign missions center is planned. A discussion of the proposed foreign missions center at the former Walter Reed Army Medical Center campus is located in Section B: Policies Related to Locating Chanceries.

Locating Chanceries

Where Foreign Missions May Locate

The Foreign Missions Act establish procedures and criteria governing the location, replacement, or expansion of chanceries in the District of Columbia and identified areas where foreign missions may locate without regulatory review, and areas where foreign missions may locate subject to disapproval by the District of Columbia Board of Zoning Adjustment.

The areas where foreign missions may locate without regulatory review are referred to as matter-of-right. A foreign mission may locate a chancery in a matter-of-right area without it being subject to review by the BZA. The Foreign Missions Act establishes matter-of-right areas as those areas in the District of Columbia zoned commercial, industrial, waterfront, or mixed-use. According to the current District of Columbia zoning map, these areas are located in all quadrants of the city, with the single largest contiguous area within the Central Employment Area (see the Federal Workplace Element for more details). From this core, several matter-of-right areas extend outward along major avenues of the city. In addition, large matter-of-right areas are located south of the National Mall and east of the Anacostia River.

Foreign missions are also permitted to locate chanceries in areas outside of the matter-of-right areas subject to review and disapproval by the BZA as defined in Section 4306(b)(2) of the Act. These include areas zoned medium-high or high density residential, as well as “any other area” deemed suitable for a chancery use on a case-by-case basis. For these latter areas, prior to making a decision concerning the location of a chancery, the BZA must first determine whether the area within which the chancery is to be located is suitable based upon an evaluation of existing office or institutional uses in that area. As required by the Foreign Missions Act, any determination concerning the location of a chancery outside of the matter-of-right areas must be based solely on a set of six criteria found in Section 4306(d). While the areas considered outside of the matter-of-right can be found in all quadrants of Washington, these areas are primarily located in Northwest and Northeast Washington.

The District of Columbia Board of Zoning Adjustment (BZA)

The **BZA**, a five-member quasi-judicial board created by the [Zoning Enabling Act of 1938](#),⁹ is charged with hearing cases related to variances, special exceptions, and appeals of administrative decisions related to zoning. The BZA also undertakes special reviews of proposed chancery development for facilities proposed to be located in certain mixed-use areas of the city. When the BZA is performing functions regarding foreign missions and chancery applications, the BZA consists of three Mayoral appointees, the Director of the U.S. National Park Service (NPS) or designee, and the National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC) Executive Director.



Six Criteria for Locating Chanceries Outside of Matter-of-Right-Areas

Section 4306 (d) of the Foreign Missions Act

(d) Criteria for determination

Any determination concerning the location of a chancery under subsection (b)(2) of this section, or concerning an appeal of an administrative decision with respect to a chancery based in whole or in part upon any zoning regulation or map, shall be based solely on the following criteria:

- (1) The international obligation of the United States to facilitate the provision of adequate and secure facilities for foreign missions in the nation’s capital.
- (2) Historic preservation, as determined by the Board of Zoning Adjustment, in carrying out this section; and in order to ensure compatibility with historic landmarks and districts, substantial compliance with District of Columbia and federal regulations governing historic preservation shall be required with respect to new construction and to demolition of or alteration to historic landmarks.
- (3) The adequacy of off-street or other parking and the extent to which the area will be served by public transportation to reduce parking requirements, subject to such special security requirements as may be determined by the Secretary [of State Department], after consultation with federal agencies authorized to perform protective services.
- (4) The extent to which the area is capable of being adequately protected, as determined by the Secretary of State, after consultation with federal agencies authorized to perform protective services.
- (5) The municipal interest, as determined by the Mayor of the District of Columbia.
- (6) The federal interest, as determined by the Secretary of State.

Location Decisions

All foreign missions in Washington are currently located in the city's Northwest quadrant. This is due to historic development patterns, availability of buildings and land, proximity to government offices and other chanceries, and former Comprehensive Plan policies that encouraged this practice.

Historic Patterns. The historic pattern came early in Washington's diplomatic history. The first foreign missions in the city were near the White House, and as outlying areas of the city became fashionable—and increasingly urbanized—foreign missions followed. The first concentration of foreign missions occurred along 16th Street, NW in the vicinity of Meridian Hill Park. By the 1920's 16th Street, NW was referred to as Embassy Row.

However, during the Depression, many of the grand homes in the area northwest of Dupont Circle became vacant and were bought by foreign missions that wanted to establish their presence in a stylish neighborhood. By the end of the 1930's Massachusetts Avenue, NW from Scott Circle to Wisconsin Avenue had become the new Embassy Row. As the United States became an international power and Washington became an increasingly important diplomatic center, more and more foreign missions clustered around this area. Its desirability continues to this day.

Available Buildings. As large private homes became available, many foreign missions purchased and occupied them. When these foreign missions later moved into larger facilities, new missions establishing or increasing their diplomatic presence often moved into these former residences.

Available Land. Although chancery construction has dispersed to areas including the Pennsylvania Avenue, NW corridor and Georgetown, for many years the availability of large lots along the Massachusetts Avenue corridor allowed for the construction of new chancery facilities that accommodated a variety of functions and uses.

Proximity to Government Offices and Other Chanceries. As increasing numbers of foreign missions clustered in the city's Northwest quadrant, the desirability of locating chanceries near or in the cluster increased. The neighborhood character and the prestige of the nearby foreign missions added to the desire to locate there. In addition, foreign missions in Northwest often prefer to be located in proximity to the State Department headquarters, with easy access to other government functions located around the monumental core.

Former Comprehensive Plan Policies. Based on prior development patterns over the course of 20 years, the Comprehensive Plan adopted in 2004 recognized a potential for future expansion of existing foreign missions and demand for new chancery sites. Planning challenges with chancery development in Washington, DC included the over-concentration of chanceries in specific neighborhoods and the impact on traffic, parking, noise, and land use patterns. To address those challenges, several potential development areas were identified in the 2004 Comprehensive Plan that could accommodate future chanceries including the 16th Street, NW Corridor and the South Capitol Street Corridor. Other policies encouraged the development of a new foreign missions center at the Armed Forces Retirement Home. However, due to changing conditions, future foreign missions centers at the Armed Forces Retirement Home and along the South Capitol Street Corridor are no longer viable.



Former Embassy Row, 16th Street, NW



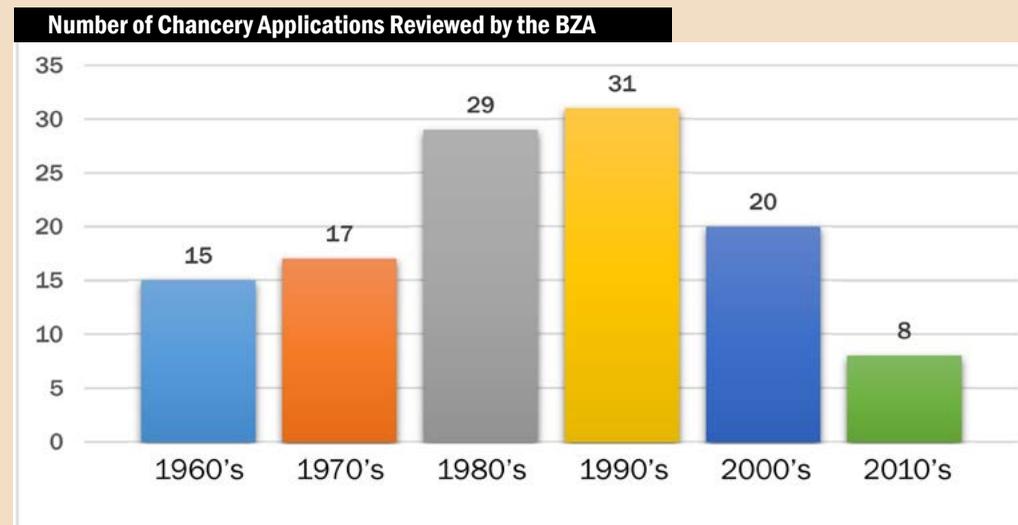
Embassy Row, Massachusetts Avenue

Carol M. Highsmith

Key Policy Issues and Challenges. The Foreign Missions Act continues to serve as the federal regulatory framework that guides the location of chanceries in the District of Columbia. Section 4306 of the Foreign Missions Act establishes specific areas where chanceries are permitted as a matter-of-right, and areas where chanceries are permitted subject to the disapproval of the BZA (implemented at a local level through the District of Columbia Zoning Regulations). In general, the BZA process and the matter-of-right zoning restrictions are intended to balance a number of key planning challenges associated with locating chanceries within the context of both federal and local interests. For example, concentrating chanceries in neighborhoods may impact traffic, parking, noise, and land use patterns. There may be other issues related to protecting neighborhood character or site-specific historic preservation issues. These must be balanced with fundamental federal interests to respect the nation's diplomatic obligations and locate chanceries within the capital.

One issue for locating chanceries is how to define the “in any other area” section of the Foreign Missions Act in Section 4306(b)(2)(B) and described on page 6. In December 1983, NCPC amended the Foreign Missions & International Organizations Element to provide planning and policy guidance to the Zoning Commission and the BZA with a method developed to delineate the “in any other area.” It included a methodology that identified areas with 1/3 office and institutional and 2/3 residential land uses. Thus, it was commonly referred to as the “1/3–2/3 method.” This mixed-use ratio was then applied to city squares zoned low- to medium-density residential, and squares that met the ratio were identified as being appropriate for chanceries under Section 4306(b)(2)(B).

The 1/3-2/3 methodology was intended to clarify guidance in the Foreign Missions Act and help delineate areas where chanceries were appropriate in non-matter-of-right areas. However, from a process perspective, it was noted that the methodology has been applied somewhat inconsistently and in some cases caused an unanticipated increase in the concentration of chanceries in certain residential neighborhoods. Thus, NCPC is not including this methodology in this update. NCPC supports prioritizing matter-of-right areas and the proposed foreign missions center at the former Walter Reed Army Medical Center for location of chanceries. The location of chanceries outside of the matter-of-right areas are subject to the review of the District of Columbia BZA. The BZA makes their determination based on the six criteria defined in the Foreign Missions Act, which considers both local and federal interests.



The BZA has reviewed approximately 120 chancery applications since the 1960's. Of these, approximately 67 percent were chancery applications reviewed after the 1982 Foreign Missions Act was established. The number of chancery applications have declined in the past two decades.



Davis Brody Bond

South African Embassy



Embassy of Finland

Finnish Embassy

Sustainable Design

Many countries are incorporating sustainable design in their architecture and green facility renovations. The Finnish Embassy's architecture includes materials that are age-old and contemporary, with simplicity and transparency which captures the essence of Finnish culture. The building was the first embassy in the United States to receive the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's ENERGY STAR for superior energy efficiency, as well as the U.S. Green Building Council's Leadership in Energy and U.S. Environmental Design certificate for green buildings. More than 75 diplomatic missions and international organizations in Washington have signed a pledge with the city and mayor through the D.C. Greening Embassies Forum to commit to maintain their operations sustainably and to pursue environmental and efficiency goals consistent with those of the District of Columbia. The U.S. Department of State and Earth Day established the forum.



Wingårdh Arkitektkontor AB

House of Sweden

Chancery Facilities

Future Building Requirements

In the past, foreign countries built new, large, distinctive chancery facilities on prominent, busy streets. Most of these chanceries were stand-alone, multi-use buildings with underground garage parking and increasingly sophisticated security. Although there is high demand for new construction, a lack of larger sites available for foreign mission development or redevelopment in Washington, DC have led to the emergence of three other patterns of chancery development:

1. Rehabilitating prestigious historic structures.
2. Relocating into vacated chancery buildings.
3. Leasing space in commercial office buildings.

Many foreign countries use the power of architecture in the design of their chancery facilities to convey a message. Buildings are often used as statements about their countries and relationships to the international community. For example, the design of the South African Embassy renovation and expansion project represents the "new" South Africa with a symbolic message that South Africa, while respecting the past, is moving towards a bright future free of the political strife that characterized the country's recent history. The contemporary Scandinavian architecture of the House of Sweden, located in Georgetown, exemplifies Swedish values such as openness, transparency, and democracy with a building that is light and airy with large glass segments.

SECTION A: Policies Related to Chancery Development

Future Chancery Development

As the seat of our nation's government and an important diplomatic center, future development opportunities should be provided within Washington, DC for new chanceries so that foreign missions will not have to relocate outside the boundaries of the nation's capital. The continuing demand for new chancery sites within Washington, the build-out of the International Chancery Center, and increasing private-sector land and development costs demonstrate the need to plan and establish additional foreign missions centers to assist in the accommodation of new and expanding foreign missions. NCPC anticipates an increased demand for larger foreign missions sites in the future. Foreign countries make their chancery siting decisions for a variety of reasons, including proximity to other foreign missions and government offices, neighborhood character, access, cost, and security requirements. The availability of sites that meet the needs within traditional diplomatic areas in the city is increasingly limited. Therefore, identification of additional areas is needed to accommodate future demand of foreign missions.

Future chancery development areas need to consider matter-of-right areas, compatible land uses with chancery development, adequate land for a variety of chancery sizes, and potential redevelopment and reuse opportunities. These areas should offer prominent sites that can accommodate the prestigious nature of the diplomatic mission, meet the planning objectives of the local and federal governments, are easily accessible by multiple modes of transportation, promote historic preservation and adaptive reuse, and strengthen the capital's image and character. Future chancery development areas should consider building mass and scale, and provide adequate and secure siting for foreign missions.

New chancery development should be encouraged at designated foreign missions centers and areas of the city that have not traditionally been considered, where chanceries and their functions are sensitive to the character and use patterns of the neighborhood. Chancery development can help strengthen neighborhood redevelopment, revitalization, and economic development goals, and promote diverse and lively communities. Many embassies already host events such as tours, exhibits, lectures, and performances that promote the country's culture. There are also organizations dedicated to cultural programs that work with embassies to help celebrate Washington's diplomatic community and add a rich and diverse culture in neighborhoods across the city by planning and promoting larger festivals and events. The NCPC, in collaboration with State Department and the District of Columbia government, should continue to study future potential chancery development areas in the city.

Potential Foreign Missions Center Development Area

In the foreseeable future, the prime development opportunity for a large-scale foreign missions center is at the former Walter Reed Army Medical Center, located on 16th Street, NW. As part of 2005 Defense Base Realignment and Closure, the U.S. Department of Defense closed the Walter Reed Army Medical Center campus in 2011, relocating its functions to facilities in Virginia and Maryland. After several years of considering the suitability of other locations throughout the District, the State Department concluded that the former Walter Reed Army Medical Center site presented a viable option for the development of a foreign missions center of a similar size and scale to the existing International Chancery Center. 16th Street is one of most important streets in Washington, with visual and symbolic connections to the White House and the historic embassy district centered on Meridian Hill, making it an appropriate location for the development of a new international center.

The State Department is preparing a master plan for a new foreign missions center on a 43.5-acre portion of the former Walter Reed Army Medical Center site. Similar to the International Chancery Center, it is envisioned that the master plan will divide the property into several development parcels that would be assigned to foreign governments, under long-term leases, for the construction of foreign missions facilities. The master plan estimates a planned 20-year buildout of this foreign missions center and may accommodate approximately 15 chanceries. The master plan is being developed with consideration given to the District of Columbia government's plan to redevelop the remainder of the campus with a mix of uses including office, institutional, residential, and retail.

The federal government should:

- FM.A.1** Encourage all foreign missions to locate chanceries, combined chancery/ambassadors' residences, and chancery annexes in owned or leased facilities in Washington due to its stature as the established seat of the federal government.
- FM.A.2** Identify areas appropriate for the future location of foreign missions in the nation's capital.

Foreign missions are encouraged to:

- FM.A.3** Site chanceries so that they satisfy their operational requirements to further the efficient conduct of diplomatic relations between the United States and other nations.
- FM.A.4** Site chanceries so that they add visual interest and character, contribute to cultural life, and promote diverse and lively communities.



Foreign Missions Center site at the former Walter Reed Army Medical Center.

SECTION B: Policies Related to Locating Chanceries

As the number of foreign missions in Washington increased throughout the twentieth century, different regulatory mechanisms were enacted to guide chancery location decisions. Over time, technology driven methodologies were created to guide future chancery locations, which resulted in land-use controversies in some of the residential neighborhoods in which chanceries are located.

A key challenge with locating chanceries is balancing the need to plan secure locations for diplomatic activities while being sensitive to residential neighborhoods. The 1/3-2/3 method developed in the 1983 Comprehensive Plan resulted in an increase in the concentration of chanceries in certain residential neighborhoods not suitable for chancery uses. As a result of indirect impacts to residential neighborhoods, the Comprehensive Plan moves away from the previous 1/3-2/3 method. Instead, it prioritizes location of chanceries in matter-of-right areas and at designated foreign missions centers—areas compatible for chancery uses. The location of chanceries outside of the matter-of-right areas are subject to the review of the BZA. The BZA makes their determination based on the set of six criteria as defined in the Foreign Missions Act, which considers both local and federal interests. This public decision-making process includes the input and participation of stakeholders, and attempts to balance the need for diplomatic activities with the concerns of residential neighborhoods.

The District of Columbia is updating the District Elements of the Comprehensive Plan. Throughout the District's Element update process, NCPC, the State Department, and the District of Columbia government should work collaboratively to ensure that any proposed plans and policies identified as suitable locations for foreign missions are consistent with the Foreign Missions Act.

Foreign Missions Center

Foreign missions can be expected to relocate their chanceries to a new foreign missions center for several reasons: a range of office space alternatives; office space that is appropriate for chancery use; increased security requirements; proximity to other chanceries; and amenities that serve the diplomatic community.

Incentives. At the existing International Chancery Center, foreign missions leased land at a favorable rate. The lease price for the land was determined by the size of the property and the commensurate cost of building the infrastructure necessary to support the facility. Although it is unlikely that the same low-cost lease rates could be offered in a new foreign missions center, it is anticipated that land acquisition costs would be more favorable than in the open market.

Office Space Alternatives. Several foreign missions currently occupy small buildings or office space in commercial buildings. Several foreign missions moved from small facilities to larger facilities as their missions expanded and the range of services they provided increased. The demand for varying space requirements over time would be met in a foreign missions center that contains a wide range of buildings available to foreign missions for shorter lease periods than is currently available.

Appropriate Office Space. Chancery office space in a foreign missions center can fulfill the unique requirements of the diplomatic community without the need for expensive renovation, and without negatively affecting the neighborhood's character. This might mean the construction of facilities with increased security and privacy requirements or parking requirements appropriate to the vehicular traffic a foreign mission may be expected to generate.

Security. It may be easier to control access and provide increased security to chanceries located in a foreign missions center. In addition, facilities built exclusively for chancery use can be built to accommodate specific security standards.

Proximity. As demonstrated by the success of the International Chancery Center, proximity to other foreign missions may create greater demand to relocate, and add to the prestige of a foreign missions center address.

Amenities. A large concentration of chanceries is likely to require amenities necessary to support the diplomatic community, such as restaurants, housing, retail, and back-office functions. As a foreign missions center is developed these amenities are likely to locate in the vicinity.

The federal government is encouraged to:

FM.B.1 Give priority consideration for the location of chancery facilities at the proposed foreign missions center.

FM.B.2 Give priority consideration for the location of chancery facilities in matter-of-right areas.

Foreign missions are encouraged to:

FM.B.3 Locate chanceries where they would support neighborhood revitalization and economic development.

FM.B.4 Locate chancery facilities in areas where adjacent existing and proposed land use and zoning are compatible (e.g., office, commercial, and mixed use), giving special care to protecting the integrity of residential areas.

FM.B.5 Renovate, expand, or reuse an existing chancery to the extent consistent with the Foreign Missions Act.

FM.B.6 Evaluate the availability of chancery sites in matter-of-right areas prior to considering sites within areas that are primarily residential in nature.



Canadian Embassy

SECTION C: Policies Related to Chancery Facilities

Federal and local planners in Washington have the unique responsibility of balancing the needs of foreign missions with the responsibility of creating orderly growth and fostering community development.

Consistency with federal and District of Columbia planning initiatives and compliance with federal and local plans and regulations are primary criteria for guiding planners' decisions. Some of these criteria include historic preservation and revitalization goals that must be balanced with the needs of the foreign missions. Other criteria include transportation goals, sustainability guidelines, and the desire to protect the city's unique character established by the [L'Enfant Plan](#)¹⁰ (refer to the Federal Urban Design Element). Together, these criteria form a complementary set of guiding principles where the most desirable locations can be recommended for future chancery facilities. Foreign missions may locate without regulatory review in matter-of-right areas, including all areas zoned commercial, industrial, waterfront, or mixed-use.

The following policies provide general guidance in response to the identified needs of foreign missions and ensure that foreign missions maintain chanceries in a way that enhances the unique qualities of the nation's capital. When new chanceries are built, or foreign missions relocate to other facilities, these policies should be applied to ensure that chancery development is compatible with the neighborhood and that the integrity of residential neighborhoods is maintained. As foreign missions relocate their chanceries, the policies should be applied to ensure that older existing chanceries are maintained so they do not negatively impact a neighborhood's character.

Urban Design

Foreign missions are encouraged to:

- FM.C.1** Protect the L'Enfant Plan's historic open space system and develop structures and landscaping that enhance and preserve its historic qualities.
- FM.C.2** Preserve and enhance the urban spaces, circles, squares, and plazas generated by the L'Enfant Plan and the national capital's unique views and vistas.
- FM.C.3** Protect Washington's historic legacy by ensuring that buildings and landscapes are consistent with the grandeur of a great world capital.
- FM.C.4** Design chanceries to complement—and be consistent with—the height, size, and spatial orientation of existing buildings and the surrounding neighborhood character.
- FM.C.5** Construct buildings and landscapes in a manner that demonstrates an appreciation for the architecture and landscape of the surroundings, while also expressing characteristics of the corresponding nation's native architectural styles.
- FM.C.6** Maintain existing chancery facilities so they do not negatively impact neighborhood character.
- FM.C.7** Where possible, include sustainable site and building design, green space, tree canopies, and pursue environmental and efficiency goals that are consistent with the District of Columbia's.



Historic Memorial Chapel at the former Walter Reed Army Medical Center

Samantha L. Quigley



The Dutch Embassy

Historic Preservation

Foreign missions are encouraged to:

- FM.C.8** Protect, preserve, and rehabilitate historic buildings when locating chanceries in them.
- FM.C.9** Ensure that chanceries located in historic districts are respectful of the architectural character established by the district.
- FM.C.10** Protect and enhance historic landscapes by ensuring that development adjacent to such landscapes promotes their preservation and rehabilitation.
- FM.C.11** Promote awareness of significant historic properties.

Open Space and Parkland

Foreign missions are encouraged to:

- FM.C.12** Preserve and protect existing parks and open space.
- FM.C.13** Enhance and make accessible adjacent open space or parkland, including waterfront locations.
- FM.C.14** Construct landscapes that promote a beautiful and healthy environment by preserving the tree canopy and avoiding the destruction of mature trees.
- FM.C.15** Maintain and enhance the public space adjacent to chancery facilities so they do not negatively impact the neighborhood's character.

Access

Foreign missions are encouraged to:

- FM.C.16** Locate chanceries such that access is possible from multiple transportation modes (e.g. walking, bicycling, public transportation, and automobile).
- FM.C.17** Consider urban design qualities, neighborhood characteristics, and traffic capacity in the configuration of vehicular access for diplomats, staff, and service, events, and delivery vehicles.
- FM.C.18** Provide pedestrian access and offer safe, clean, and pleasant environments for pedestrians that include sidewalks and other amenities.
- FM.C.19** Provide adequate off-street parking on private property that accommodates employees, visitors, and special event participants.
- FM.C.20** Minimize obstructions to public connections for local and regional trails, bikeways, pedestrian ways, or open space networks where possible.
- FM.C.21** Minimize public space obstructions such as vehicular curb cuts and orient service areas away from major streets or locate them in an area that will be the least disruptive on the site.
- FM.C.22** Locate perimeter security elements within the building yard and not in public space. Where necessary, perimeter security elements located in public space should be minimized, unobtrusive, and designed to relate to the surrounding context.



SECTION D: Policies Related to Ambassadors' Residences

As the number of foreign missions in Washington has increased, so has the number of ambassadors' residences. Like most chancery facilities, most ambassadors' residences are under the ownership of the country that occupies them. Ambassadors' residences are located in Washington, DC, as well as in the Maryland and Northern Virginia suburbs immediately outside the city. As of 2013, there are 78 ambassadors' residences in Washington.

The number of new residences established in the National Capital Region is expected to be the same as the number of foreign countries that establish new foreign missions. While the majority of residences are expected to locate in Washington, some are expected to locate in the Maryland and Virginia suburbs. Ambassadors' residences are considered residential uses under the DC Zoning Regulations. As such, these residences are permitted to locate in all areas of the District of Columbia except areas zoned industrial. Many of the preceding policies related to urban design, historic preservation, open space and parkland, and access are applicable to ambassador's residences.

Foreign missions are encouraged to:

- FM.D.1** Locate ambassadors' residences, as the official home of the ambassadors or heads of foreign missions, in Washington befitting their status as the established seat of the federal government.
- FM.D.2** Locate ambassadors' residences in all of Washington's quadrants in areas which are compatible with residential uses.

SECTION E: Policies Related to International Organizations

International organizations perform a wide range of functions and activities in the National Capital Region. A public international organization is designated or created pursuant to the [International Organizations Immunities Act](#)¹¹ (22 U.S.C. 288-288f-2), treaty, or other international agreement where two or more foreign governments engage in some aspect of their conduct of international affairs. International organizations are official missions that are supported by real property and personnel. In 1983, there were 23 international organizations located in the region; in 2002, there were 28. As of 2013, there are 31 international organizations and 46 missions to the Organization of American States. Most international organizations are located in the downtown business district, particularly in the area west of the White House. Proximity to the State Department, the U.S. Department of Treasury, and other international activities is a key factor in the site selection of international organizations.

Most international organizations prefer high-density office and mixed-use areas that are convenient to the federal offices, organizations, and foreign missions with which they interact. The majority of the organizations occupy leased office space. While national symbolism is typically not a factor for international organizations, the location and design of international organizations' facilities can increase the organization's public awareness. Additionally, international organizations can contribute to the visual appearance of the nation's capital by maintaining and restoring historic structures and locating on the L'Enfant Plan's historic street network.

Under the Foreign Missions Act, the Secretary of State may extend the relevant provisions of the Act to an international organization. In that event, the references to chanceries in the preceding policies would also apply to the offices of that international organization. When subject to the Foreign Missions Act, international organizations are permitted to locate as a matter-of-right in areas zoned waterfront, mixed-use, and commercial. The location of international organizations outside of the matter-of-right areas are subject to the review of the BZA.

International organizations in the National Capital Region are encouraged to:

- FM.E.1** Locate their principal offices in Washington, befitting its status as the established seat of the federal government.
- FM.E.2** Locate so that access to them is possible from multiple transportation modes and in a manner that their activities can function efficiently and be compatible with the surrounding land uses.



Organization of American States

Juan Manuel Herrera

Endnotes

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3. Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations, Vienna, April 18, 1961. http://legal.un.org/ilc/texts/instruments/english/conventions/9_1_1961.pdf
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9. **Zoning Enabling Act of 1938:** <http://dcoz.dc.gov/about/history.shtm>
10. **L’Enfant Plan:** [http://www.ncpc.gov/ncpc/Main\(T2\)/About_Us\(tr2\)/About_Us\(tr3\)/History.html](http://www.ncpc.gov/ncpc/Main(T2)/About_Us(tr2)/About_Us(tr3)/History.html)
11. **International Organizations Immunities Act:** <http://www.ipu.org/finance-e/PL79-291.pdf>