REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

DELEGATED ACTIONS

1. Preliminary site and building plans for the Student Center at the University of the District of Columbia, Northwest, Washington, DC. (7228)

2. Preliminary and final site development plans for the 5th Avenue stormwater system replacement and roadway modifications at Fort McNair, Southwest Washington, DC. (7240)

3. Found that the proposed closing of a portion of a public alley in Square 2905 at Randolph Street and Georgia Avenue, Northwest, Washington, DC, would not be inconsistent with the Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital, nor would it adversely affect any other federal interests. (7249)

4. Found that the proposed closing of a portion of a public alley in Square 1245 at 33rd Street between O and P Streets, Northwest, Washington, DC, would not be inconsistent with the Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital, nor would it adversely affect any other federal interests. (7251).

5. Found that the Second Stage Planned Unit Development at Square 5055, Lots 25 and 801 and portions of Lots 24 and 802 for the Parkside development, Northeast, Washington, DC, would not be inconsistent with the Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital, nor would it adversely affect any other identified federal interests. (Z.C. 05-28B)

6. Found that the modifications to the First Stage Planned Unit Development, at Square 5055, Lots 14-25 and 801-813 for the Parkside development, Northeast, Washington, DC, to allow a maximum building height of 130 feet and to allow additional uses including a community college and health care center in addition to the approved office and residential uses would not be inconsistent with the Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital, nor would it adversely affect any other identified federal interests. (Z.C. 05-28E)
PLANNING UPDATES

President’s Park South

On May 9, NCPC staff along with representatives from the National Park Service and the U.S. Secret Service provided a briefing to the design firms that were selected to compete in the President’s Park South design competition. The five firms include: (1) Hood Design Studio, San Francisco, California; (2) Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates, New York, New York; (3) Reed Hilderbrand Landscape Architects, Watertown, Massachusetts; (4) Rogers Marvel Architects, New York, New York; and (5) SASAKI, Watertown, Massachusetts. These firms will submit their design concepts to NCPC on June 20. The concepts will then be made available to the public. The design teams will present their concepts to NCPC’s Interagency Security Task Force and members of the public on June 28. The Task Force will meet the next day to rank the concepts, and the winning concept will be presented to the Commission at the July 7 Commission meeting.

The public will have opportunities to provide opinions on the design concepts between June 21 and June 28. This will include written comments where the boards will be on display at the White House Visitor Center, or on NCPC’s website, and an opportunity to share their thoughts with the Task Force following the design firms’ presentations on June 28. The June 28 event will be streamed at www.ncpc.gov/live.

Comprehensive Plan Update

Draft updates to the policies for the transportation and workplace elements will be submitted to the Commission for approval at its July 7 meeting to release for a public and agency comment period. The Contemporary Design, Historic City speaker series public event on the evening of June 7 will kick off the Urban Design element for staff work on a new Comprehensive Plan.

Department of Defense Briefing

On May 24, NCPC staff held a briefing with Department of Defense (DOD) installation commanders, senior civilian leadership, and supporting staff to discuss NCPC’s authorities under the Planning Act as well as strategies for improving coordination and collaboration on DOD projects in the region. Following a presentation by staff, participants discussed some of these strategies, including using early staff consultation more effectively, balancing DOD and NCPC planning objectives, improving regional coordination, and increasing the effectiveness of installation master planning. Staff appreciates the efforts of Commissioner Provancha in helping pull together this important, timely meeting. We look forward to continued discussions on how best to pursue some of these strategies.
Southwest Ecodistrict

This past month, the SW Ecodistrict consultant team began to identify alternative revitalization scenarios for consideration by the Task Force. As part of this process, the project team held a work session on May 6 to incorporate input from the Task Force and Working Group.

On May 17, the District of Columbia Office of Planning (DCOP) held an Advisory Committee meeting to share the results of the May 6 work session and obtain input from private property owners. NCPC and DCOP also held a joint public scoping workshop on May 19 at DCOP’s office. More than 40 members of the public provided input on the types of alternatives to be studied, including range of ideas about the future character of the area and what type of activities, amenities, and changes would improve connections, destinations, and the sustainability of the area.

Key meeting materials were posted on NCPC’s website and comments will be accepted through Friday, June 3, 2011. The public is encouraged to post their comments, ideas, sketches, photos, and even videos to our new interactive Public Comment Forum webpage. Project news, meeting materials, and links to our informational videos and Public Comment webpage can be found at www.ncpc.gov/swecodistrict.

Staff is preparing for the next Task Force meeting planned for July 6. This meeting will review and evaluate the range of development scenarios proposed by the consultant team and staff.

Commemoration

The National Capital Memorial Advisory Commission (NCMAC) will meet on June 23. The agenda has not been finalized but is expected to include updates on works in progress and pending legislation.

As a follow-up to the Beyond Granite symposium held last December, staff is developing plans for a pilot project to explore the design potential of temporary commemorative installations and to engage the public in a dialogue regarding the design process for commemorative works. This effort was discussed at the Commission retreat in March. In partnership with GSA, who would co-sponsor this effort, staff is currently developing a vision statement and preliminary scope of work. We look forward to presenting the result of our efforts at an upcoming Commission meeting.

Streetcars

The Policy and Research Division staff attended a meeting of the DC Surface Transit, Inc. Streetcar Task Force on May 19. DCOP Director Harriet Tregoning provided an update on the results of Phase 1 of the Office of Planning’s Streetcar Master Land Use study, and the next steps for the study's Phase 2. Staff met with DDOT staff on May 25 to discuss issues of shared interest regarding installation of the streetcar system.
CapitalSpace Project

On April 30 NCPC staff led the work party at Coolidge High School to complete the meadow planting and prepare the other gardens in the schoolyard for spring season. More than 60 community volunteers, including members of the American Society of Landscape Architects, and Coolidge High School students and faculty, spent the whole day planting the meadow, mulching, and preparing the schoolyard gardens. Councilwoman Muriel Bowser visited to show her support to the community volunteers. This CapitalSpace/ASLA project has since fostered other initiatives in the community, including the formation of a “Friends of the Garden” group that will work with the school to provide long-term maintenance; a partnership with a local elementary school that will incorporate the schoolyard gardens in its educational curriculum; and the creation of the Garden Guide, which will serve as an educational and maintenance guide for the gardens.

The CapitalSpace partners work team (PWT) had an initial meeting with Landon Van Dyke, Greening and Sustainable Diplomacy Coordinator for the U.S. Department of State on May 18, to explore ways that the diplomatic community can reach out to the local communities by developing sustainable gardens. Mr. Van Dyke represents the Embassy Greening Forum, whose members include 75 embassies in Washington, DC. The Forum meets quarterly to share best practices in sustainability. Stella Tarnay, at the District Department of the Environment (DDOE) also briefed the PWT on DDOE’s ongoing activities with the diplomatic community related to technical training and promoting sustainable practices in the District of Columbia. The PWT agreed to work closely with Mr. Van Dyke to identify projects of mutual interest, and will present these garden project ideas to the Embassy Greening Forum at their next quarterly meeting.

The Committee of 100 on the Federal City awarded the Civil War Defenses of Washington (CWDW) Trail a 2010 Vision Award. This multi-year project is spearheaded by the National Park Service in partnership with the City of Alexandria, Arlington County, Fairfax County and the Washington Area Bicyclists Association. CWDW Trail, a priority project in the CapitalSpace Plan, is an urban greenway that will connect the network of Civil War earthwork forts and adjacent parkland, linking communities in and around DC to recreational opportunities and local historic sites. NCPC Urban Planner Amy Tarce represented the CapitalSpace partnership at the Awards Ceremony on June 1 at the Belmont Mansion.

INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

Regional Business Plan

Staff from NCPC and the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) met with Brookings Institution staff to discuss the opportunity to develop a regional business plan for the National Capital Region. Brookings views regional business planning as a new approach to economic growth. This method analyzes a region’s market position, unique strengths, and key investments and interventions that support job creation and lead to sustainable economic growth. Over the next few months, NCPC and COG will explore regional interest and capacity to support this type of planning, potentially through a regional forum with Brookings.
PUBLIC OUTREACH AND PLANNING ASSISTANCE

Twitter
NCPC recently launched its own Twitter feed in order to provide the public with frequent, regular updates about the agency’s work, along with related news, links, and events. We already have over 100 followers, exceeding our milestone target. NCPC’s new Twitter feed is part of the agency’s continued adoption of social media as outlined in its Open Government Plan. You can follow NCPC on Twitter@NCPCgov.

NCPC Cinema
Two new videos are posted on our website. The first provides an overview of NCPC, and is a great tool for introducing our activities to a general audience. NCPC’s review process — highlighting how staff works with applicants to prepare for Commission meetings — is the subject of the second. Enhanced podcasts of the Agents of Change speaker series event are also now available.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Live Chat
On Monday, June 6, David Levy and Christine Saum will participate in a live chat hosted by DCMud, a local real estate blog. This live chat is will explore how contemporary architecture and existing city fabric are balanced through NCPC’s review process and in our Comprehensive Plan policies. This topic will also be the subject of our speaker series event the following day.

Speaker Series
NCPC’s next Speaker Series event, Contemporary Design, Historic City: The Balancing Act between Innovation & Preservation, will be held on Tuesday, June 7 at 6:30 p.m. This public panel discussion will explore how Washington can preserve its architectural heritage and welcome new innovative design into its urban fabric. The event will take place at the Catholic University School of Architecture and Planning, and is being held in partnership with AIA DC. Details about the event are available at www.ncpc.gov.

Region Forward
The Region Forward initiative will hold a kick-off meeting on Friday, June 10. The Executive Director and Director of Intergovernmental Affairs Julia Koster are participating on the steering committee. Anticipated work for this group includes establishing measurable regional benchmarks and defining and identifying areas for desired regional growth, called “complete communities.”
RECENT EVENTS

Annual Loeb Lecture: A Tale of Two Cities
The 2011 Annual Loeb Fellowship Lecture on May 6 featured a conversation with the Executive Director and DC Office of Planning Director Harriet Tregoning (via video.) The conversation covered the shared and distinct interests created through Washington’s dual identity as a major U.S. city and as the nation’s capital, and how NCPC and the District work together on major planning initiatives. Moderated by Loeb curator Jim Stockard, the session took place at the Harvard University Graduate School of Design.

Southwest Ecodistrict Initiative
NCPC staff presented the project at the USGBC Government Summit Conference at the Ronald Reagan Building on May 10.
As part of the AIA National Convention held in New Orleans, Bill Dowd, the Director of the Physical Planning Division, along with Tom Luebke, the Secretary of the Commission of Fine Arts made a presentation about our work on the SW Ecodistrict project. This session drew an attendance of over 175 people. We look forward to sharing the recommendations that the Task Force will produce at next year’s convention to be held in Washington, DC.

Region Forward
On May 24, Julia Koster and David Robertson, COG Executive Director presented Region Forward: A Comprehensive Guide to Regional Planning at the Tuesdays with APA speaker series, a monthly forum presented by APA National.

Young Planner Showcase
On May 25, NCPC co-hosted the Young Planner Showcase with the Coalition for Smarter Growth. This lively, well-attended event provided an opportunity for planners from across the region to showcase their jurisdictions’ most innovative ideas.

AGENCY ACCOLADES

Leading by Example
According to data released by the White House Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ), NCPC is among the top five federal agencies with the lowest Green House Gas (GHG) emissions per employee commute trip.
Top Honors

The National Association of Government Communicators recognized NCPC’s efforts in two categories at its 2011 Blue Pencil & Gold Screen Awards. The first place Blue Pencil Award honored graphic design work associated with the Daniel Burnham documentary film screening held on the National Mall last June. The agency’s monthly e-newsletter ranked second nationally and received a Gold Screen Award. There were more than 430 nominations.

PERSONNEL

Andrea Lytle, urban planner in the Office of Intergovernmental Affairs, left NCPC to join the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI USA), a member association of 600 local governments committed to advancing climate protection and sustainability. She will develop the STAR Community Index, a performance-based framework for sustainability for cities and counties. We wish Andrea every success in her new career.

This past month three college students began their summer internships with NCPC. Kelly Wagner is a rising junior at the University of Virginia participating in their Science and Technology Policy Internship Program. Kimberly Sparling is a rising senior at MIT. She is pursuing a degree in Civil & Environmental Engineering and Urban Studies & Planning and is part of the MIT Washington Intern program this year. Finally, David Foster is a rising senior pursuing a degree in Landscape Architecture from West Virginia University.

These three interns will work in the Physical Planning Division where they will be actively involved in several of our current planning projects. They will also participate in other projects and initiatives throughout the agency.