



Commission Action

June 2, 2016

PROJECT Draft Square Guidelines Squares 378 and 379 935 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW Washington, DC	NCPC FILE NUMBER P7713
SUBMITTED BY National Capital Planning Commission	NCPC MAP FILE NUMBER 1.25(38.00)44352
	APPLICANT'S REQUEST Approval of comments for transmittal to GSA
	ACTION TAKEN Approved comments, with amendments, for transmittal
	REVIEW AUTHORITY Memorandum of Agreement, § V, 61 Fed. Reg.41789, 41791 (August 12, 1996)

The Commission:

Approves the following comments on the Draft Square Guidelines for Squares 378 and 379 in accordance with the Memorandum of Agreement, § V, 61 FED. REG.41789 (August 12, 1996), and transmits the comments to the GSA under Section V of the 1996 Memorandum of Agreement:

A. Topics to be Included in the Square Guidelines

Comments favorably on the proposed set of topics to be included in the Square Guidelines:

Land Use

- General overall uses
- Ground floor use

Building Envelope

- Allowable building height
- Upper-story setbacks
- Build-to-lines

Circulation

- L'Enfant Plan
- Site Layout
- Access/Permeability

Sustainability

Special Design Guidance

- Building Composition
- Façade Design
- Signage/Awnings
- Rooftop Structures
- Parking and Loading

Public Realm Guidance

- Overall Character
- Ground Floor Design
- Outdoor Use
- Landscape

B. Building Envelope Guidelines

Notes that NCPC staff has worked diligently with agency stakeholders to produce draft building envelope guidelines for GSA and prospective development teams in advance of June 22, 2016 when proposals are due. This guidance provides greater certainty regarding the value of the site.

Supports building envelope guidelines that allow for high-density development.

Supports achieving a maximum height of 160 feet on both squares to expand development potential. These building heights are unique to Pennsylvania Avenue and are greater than anywhere else in the District.

Notes that a development project of this scale will require circulation throughout the site in the form of streets and alleys and that the proposed Square Guidelines add certainty with regard to the location of primary circulation without being overly prescriptive.

Therefore comments favorably on the following guidelines related to building envelope:

1. **D Street, NW:** The spatial configuration of the D Street Right-of-way as designed in the L'Enfant Plan at 70 feet wide will be re-established if Squares 378 and 379 are redeveloped. The Square Guidelines may provide additional guidance regarding the function of this space later in future drafts.
2. **Allowable Height/Upper-Story Setbacks:** Under certain conditions, the 1910 Height Act allows buildings on Square 378 (north of the D Street Right-of-Way) to achieve 160 feet. The Square Guidelines will support this allowable height (as measured from Pennsylvania Avenue) but will include additional guidance regarding penthouses (if any) and upper-story setbacks for D, 9th, 10th and E Streets, NW that are compatible with surrounding development. Staff will work with stakeholders to develop additional guidance this summer/fall.
3. **Build-to-lines for 9th, 10th, D and E Streets, NW** are as follows:
The build-to-line is the property line on 9th, 10th, E, and D Streets, NW. These property lines are consistent with the L'Enfant Plan rights-of-way.

C. Build-to-line for Pennsylvania Avenue (Square 379):

Notes that the build-to line set forth in the 1974 Plan is 50 feet from the property line (75 feet between the curb and building face¹) for new development. This is approximately what exists today on Square 379. The area between the building face

¹ Existing curb to building face in front of the FBI building is approximately 79 feet based on GSA's survey, DDOT's Transportation Online permitting system and DC Octo.

and the property line, in addition to the area between the property line and the curb, is under the administrative jurisdiction of the NPS.

Notes that the DC State Historic Preservation Office (DCSHPO) has stated that if the build-to-line on Pennsylvania Avenue is not restored to the L'Enfant Plan right-of-way, it will constitute an adverse effect for the project. Restoring the L'Enfant Plan right-of-way requires moving the build-to-line to the property line. This results in 26 feet between the curb and the building face.

Notes that NCPC, GSA, and the NPS have a Congressionally-mandated responsibility to administer, implement, and enforce the 1974 Plan.

Notes that the proposed build-to-line in the 1974 Plan is inconsistent with the L'Enfant Plan.

Notes that the Avenue will not be fully restored to the L'Enfant Plan right-of-way in terms of its overall dimension of 160 feet unless the Federal Triangle is redeveloped (the build-to-line on the south side of the Avenue is 24 feet from the property line/L'Enfant right-of-way). Furthermore, to restore L'Enfant's vision of an 80 foot cartway and two 40 foot walkways, the existing cartway of 100 feet will need to be reduced.

Notes that the NPS determined the Pennsylvania Avenue, NW – White House to the Capitol Cultural Landscape is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.

Finds that a return to the L'Enfant Plan under the Avenue's current condition will significantly alter the landscape and streetscape, and may have urban design implications that alter the ceremonial character of the Avenue.

Finds that the initial work underway in the Pennsylvania Avenue Initiative has indicated that the build-to-line in the 1974 Plan of 50 feet from the property line contributes to the lack of activity on the Avenue.

Therefore, supports a balanced approach for the build-to-line that best meets the intent of the L'Enfant Plan and the 1974 Plan under existing conditions.

Recommends that NCPC staff work with the public and other local and federal stakeholders to prepare visual and technical studies to analyze the impacts and benefits of moving the build to line from the L'Enfant Plan configuration to 30 feet from the property line (56 feet between the curb and building face) and provide detailed analysis and recommendations in the fall. The analysis should look at impacts and benefits to the building wall on the north side of the Avenue, the symmetry of building walls on the Avenue, the public realm, landscape, and developable area, the surrounding context, and assess potential impacts to historic properties and applicable plans.

