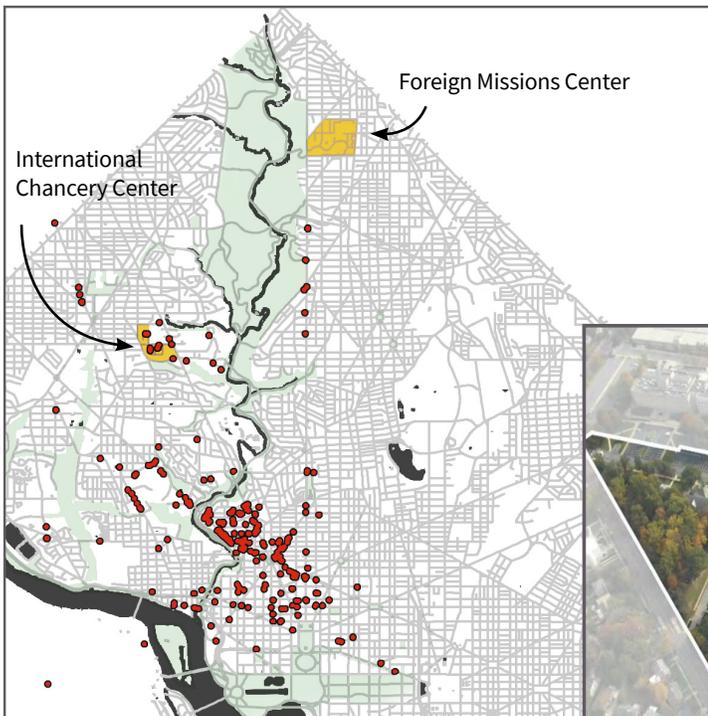


Review of Foreign Missions in Washington



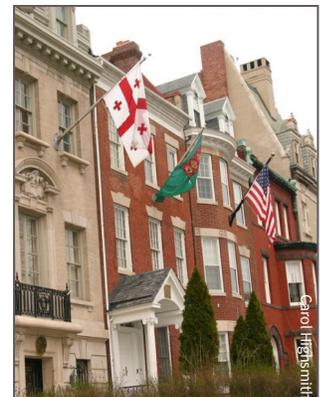
Foreign Missions represented by red dots on the map are concentrated in northwest Washington, DC



Embassy of the People's Republic of China, International Chancery Center



Foreign Missions Center on the former Walter Reed campus.



Embassy Row, Massachusetts Avenue, NW

Overview

The United States maintains diplomatic relations with 191 of the 195 independent states in the world, and as the diplomatic center of the United States, Washington, DC has approximately 185 countries operating foreign missions within its boundary.^{1,2} 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. Foreign mission development can exist in several forms. The facilities that house diplomatic functions—office space where the mission is conducted (the chancery), and the residence of the ambassador—are commonly referred to collectively as embassies.

The Foreign Missions & International Organizations Element of the *Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital* 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 foreign missions in Washington, DC. 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 the unique characteristics of Washington's neighborhoods. This resource guide is for general information purposes, and is not a regulatory document.

1 U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Independent States in the World, March 2013.
2 U.S. Department of State, Office of Foreign Missions, data received November 2013.

Foreign mission development in Washington, DC occurs on both federal and private land. The different laws and memorandum of agreements that guide foreign mission development are described below.

Review of Foreign Missions on Private Land

The Foreign Missions Act (FMA) of 1982 reaffirms the federal government’s jurisdiction over the operation of foreign missions and international organizations in the United States. It affirms a policy of support and facilitation of secure and efficient operation of U.S. missions abroad and foreign missions and international organizations in the United States. It also establishes the review process for foreign mission development on private land in Washington, DC. Pursuant to the FMA, the District of Columbia Foreign Mission Board of Zoning Adjustment (FMBZA) reviews foreign missions projects on private land such as chanceries and annexes. NCPC’s Executive Director sits on the FMBZA, along with the three District of Columbia Board of Zoning Adjustment members and the National Park Service representative from the District of Columbia Zoning Commission.

The FMA requires the FMBZA to review the location, replacement, or expansion of chanceries and apply six decision-making criteria that include: facilitating foreign missions in the U.S., historic preservation, the municipal and federal interests, adequacy of security, and parking. The FMBZA uses these criteria to either “disapprove” or “not disapprove” the project.

Review of Foreign Missions on Federal Land

There are two chancery enclaves located on large tracts of federal land in Washington, DC: the International Chancery Center (ICC), located at Van Ness Street and Connecticut Avenue, NW, and the Foreign Missions Center (FMC), located at 16th Street and Alaska Avenue, NW. The International Center Act, enacted in October 1968, guides NCPC review of foreign missions at the ICC, while a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA), signed in February 2017 between the Department of State/ Office of Foreign Missions (DOS) and NCPC, guides Commission review of foreign missions at the FMC.

International Chancery Center

The International Center Act authorized the creation of the International Chancery Center. The Act authorized NCPC to review and approve the development of individual foreign missions at the ICC based on a project’s conformance with development controls devised by NCPC in conjunction with the DOS. The development controls regulate the location, height, bulk, and number of stories of proposed chanceries. NCPC has amended these development controls many times since their initial adoption to reflect the evolving needs of foreign mission development.

Because NCPC has an approval authority for projects at the ICC, NCPC must comply with the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA). The DOS developed an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the development of the ICC in 1976 and a supplement in 1981, and uses these documents to meet its NEPA responsibility. NCPC has used these documents or its own categorical exclusions to meet its NEPA responsibility for projects located at the ICC.

The Department of State did not conduct Section 106 analysis when it developed the 1976 EIS. The EIS noted that the ICC site has the potential to yield unidentified archaeological resources, which requires an archaeological assessment with a GIS analysis, and an evaluation of the above-ground built resources. These components which the Department of State is looking to fund would inform a Determination of Eligibility for the entire ICC campus. In lieu of a campus Determination of Eligibility, NCPC initiates Section 106 directly with the DC State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) for individual projects.



Foreign Missions Center

The acquisition by DOS of a 32-acre portion of the former Walter Reed Army Medical Center campus allowed for the creation of a second chancery enclave in Washington, DC known as the Foreign Missions Center (FMC). Because the International Center Act and ICC Development Controls apply only to the ICC, DOS and NCPC developed an MOA to establish a review process for chancery development on individual lots at the FMC. The MOA requires NCPC to analyze individual chancery projects using the same six FMA decision-making criteria used by the FMBZA. Also, like the FMBZA, NCPC must either “disapprove” or “not disapprove” the project. Land at the FMC that is developed with infrastructure projects and the Memorial Chapel (i.e., roadways, pathways, sidewalks, landscaped areas) not governed by are the MOA. Instead, these projects must be reviewed and approved by NCPC in accordance with authority derived from the National Capital Planning Act.



Memorial Chapel

Following acquisition of the FMC site, DOS developed and approved a master plan governing development at the FMC. Going forward with chancery development, DOS will use this master plan to govern leasing and development of individual sites (the EIS process included the development of formal development controls which foreign missions must follow to preclude or minimize adverse environmental impacts.). NCPC will use the DOS EIS, for which it was a consulting party, or its own categorical exclusions as applicable to meet its NEPA obligation resulting from approval of FMC infrastructure projects. NCPC does not have NEPA (or NHPA) responsibility for individual chancery projects at the FMC because it does not approve these projects.

Both DOS and NCPC have a NHPA obligation although NCPC’s obligation is limited to infrastructure projects. A programming agreement was developed between NCPC, Department of State, DC SHPO, and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation and sets forth a process for compliance with NHPA at the FMC.

Applicant Resources

U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Independent States in the World, March 2019
<http://www.state.gov/s/inr/rls/4250.htm>

Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital: Foreign Missions & International Organizations Element
https://www.ncpc.gov/docs/05_CP_2016_Foreign_Missions_&_International_Organizations_Element_2.29.16.pdf

Embassies and Foreign Missions Topic Page: <https://www.ncpc.gov/topics/embassies/>

Foreign Mission Memorandum of Agreement
https://www.ncpc.gov/docs/MOU_NCPC_and_DOS_Foreign_Missions.pdf

NCPC Review Authorities (See Foreign Missions) Foreign Missions Board of Zoning Adjustment (DC):
<https://www.ncpc.gov/review/authorities/fma/>

DC Office of Zoning, Foreign Missions: <https://dcoz.dc.gov/node/1357496>

Purchase or Lease of Foreign Mission Property: <https://www.state.gov/purchase-or-lease-of-foreign-mission-property/>