

## PHASE 1 PUBLIC MEETING WORKBOOK

May 13 | May 18 | June 4 | June 6, 2013

The National Capital Planning Commission and the District of Columbia Office of Planning are jointly conducting a Height Master Plan at the request of Congress. The study will address the impact of strategic changes to the federal Height of Buildings Act of 1910, and the extent to which the Height Act continues to serve the interests of both federal and District governments. The study won't include DC zoning issues or proposed changes to zoning; or the District's Comprehensive Plan; or detailed environmental/infrastructure analysis.

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### The Study has three phases:

#### Phase 1: Overview

Discussion of study principles and  
issues shaping federal and local interests  
Case studies  
*Public meetings in May-June 2013*

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#### Phase 2: Modeling studies and planning analysis

Identification of opportunity areas for strategic  
changes to the Height Act  
*Public meetings in July- August 2013*

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#### Phase 3: Draft recommendations.

*Public meetings and hearing in fall 2013*

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Recommendations transmitted to Congress in Fall 2013.

## OVERVIEW/APPROACH

The Height Master Plan and related studies are guided by three core principles:

### Principle 1

Ensure the prominence of federal landmarks and monuments by preserving their views and setting.

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### Principle 2

Maintain the horizontality of the monumental city skyline.

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### Principle 3

Minimize negative impacts to nationally significant historic resources, including the L'Enfant Plan.

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Additionally, the Height Master Plan will consider impacts to:

- Capital city image;
- Federal properties and operations; and
- Issues important to the future growth of the national capital and local city.

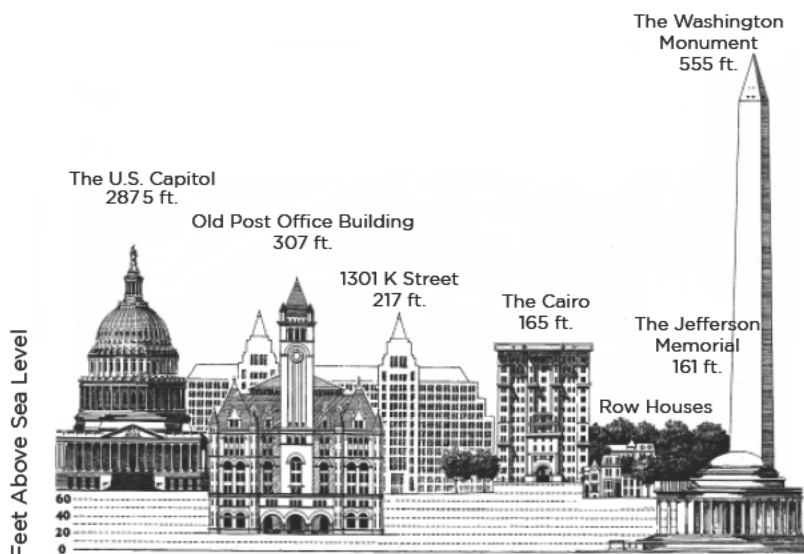
## WHAT IS THE HEIGHT ACT?

- 1894** 165-foot Cairo Building constructed (1615 Q Street, NW).
- 1899** Congress passed the first law regulating the District's building height.
- 1910** Law amended into the present day federal Height Act.
- 1912-61** Congress has modified the Height Act seven times, four of which allowed more height for individual buildings.

## HEIGHT ACT DETAILS

Building height is linked to street width. The Height Act limits buildings to 90 feet in residential areas. Buildings in mixed use or commercial areas can be as high as the width of the street plus 20 feet, but cannot exceed 130 feet.

*The Exception:* Buildings can rise to 160 feet on Pennsylvania Avenue only between the White House and the U.S. Capitol.



Source:

# GUIDE TO BOARDS AND STATIONS

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**Please feel free to visit stations in any order.**

## **STATION 1**

What is the Height Act? | Overview of Study

Height Master Plan (study phases) | Phase 2 Modeling Study

## **STATION 2**

Image and Identity of the City (case studies)

## **STATION 3**

How will we evaluate changes to the Height Act? | (three core principles)

How does building height play in these issues?

# STATION QUESTIONS

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## Station 1: Informational

## Station 2: Image and Identity of the City (Case Studies)

- What approaches from other cities might we like to follow?
- What is Washington's postcard image today and in the future?

## Station 3:

### Principle 1

- What landmarks and monuments should be prominent?
- What views are important to you?
- Is it important for civic structures to define Washington's future skyline?
- Should private buildings become prominent landmarks in Washington's skyline?

### Principle 2

- Can new taller buildings coexist with our skyline? Why or why not?
- What does a "horizontal skyline" mean to you?

### Principle 3

- How should building heights relate to:
  - Major parks and natural features?
  - Historic buildings and neighborhoods?
  - L'Enfant streets and public spaces?

## Other Considerations

- How does building height play in these issues?

Economic Vitality

Infrastructure

Security

Federal Presence

Walkability

Housing Options

Livability

Sustainability

Visitor Experience

Affordability

Transportation

Symbolism

## CASE STUDIES



London protects historic viewsheds and wants clusters of tall buildings along the Thames River to signify relevance as a world financial power.



Paris has maintained its historic lower-scale by directing growth out of the core to high-rise clusters.



Barcelona wants to shape a mid-rise skyline to frame the spires of the Sagrada Familia Cathedral (under construction).



San Francisco wants clusters of beautifully designed tall buildings that step down in scale toward the city's natural features, waterways, and open spaces.



Vancouver wants to add visual interest to its skyline of tall buildings while maximizing views of, and to, the backdrop of surrounding mountains and water.



How would you describe Washington's skyline today and in the future?

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October 3, 2012

The Honorable Vincent C. Gray  
Mayor  
District of Columbia  
John A. Wilson Building  
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20004

Mr. Preston Bryant, Jr.  
Chairman  
National Capital Planning Commission  
401 9th Street, NW  
North Lobby, Suite 500  
Washington, D.C. 20004

Dear Mayor Gray and Chairman Bryant:

Since its establishment as our nation's capital, it has been necessary to balance the dual role of Washington D.C. as both the federal city and a home to local residents. One of the roles of my Committee is to help ensure that the proper balance is struck.

At a July 19, 2012, hearing entitled "Changes to the Height Act: Shaping Washington, D.C., for the future," I suggested that the National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC) could work jointly with the District of Columbia government to examine the extent to which the Height of Buildings Act of 1910 continues to serve federal and local interests, and how changes to the law could affect the future of the city.

The character of Washington's historic L'Enfant City – particularly the monumental core – establishes the city's iconic image as our capital. Any changes to the Height of Buildings Act that affect the historic L'Enfant City should be carefully studied to ensure that the iconic, horizontal skyline and the visual preeminence of the U.S. Capitol and related national monuments are retained. The Committee encourages the exploration of strategic changes to the law in those areas outside the L'Enfant City that support local economic development goals while taking into account the impact on federal interests, compatibility to the surrounding neighborhoods, national security concerns, input from local residents, and other related factors that were discussed at the July 19 hearing.

I understand that NCPC and the District are prepared to work jointly to examine this issue and make recommendations. I therefore request that NCPC work with the District to formulate and submit to the Committee a joint proposal and timetable for such work by November 1, 2012. If feasible, the timetable should indicate a summer 2013 completion date.

The Honorable Vincent C. Gray  
Mr. Preston Bryant, Jr.  
October 3, 2012  
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Thank you for your attention to this matter. If you have question, please contact James Robertson at (202) 225 5074.

Sincerely,

  
Darrell Issa  
Chairman

## How To Participate

Check out the Height Master Plan website.

Review study related resources & read what others are saying:

**[www.ncpc.gov/heightstudy](http://www.ncpc.gov/heightstudy)**

Phase 1 Public meetings schedule

Each follows the same format and agenda:

**May 13, May 18, June 4, and June 6, 2013**

Post your comments online or send them to:

**[info@ncpc.gov](mailto:info@ncpc.gov).**

**Follow us: #HeightDC**

## Next Steps

Economic Feasibility Study (June 2013)

Draft Phase I Report (June 2013)

Height Modeling Study (July 2013)

Draft Phase II Report (August 2013)

Draft Height Master Plan and  
Recommendations prepared (August 2013)

Draft Height Master Plan and  
Recommendations released (September 2013)

Public Meetings and Hearing (September-October 2013)

NCPC Commission Action on the Height Master Plan (Fall 2013)

Final recommendations transmitted to Congress (Fall 2013)

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NAME \_\_\_\_\_

CITY/NEIGHBORHOOD \_\_\_\_\_

EMAIL (Optional) \_\_\_\_\_

Using your workbook, provide answers to questions listed  
on Page 5: (More room on back)

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**Washington, DC**

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What else should we be concerned about?

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