



Height Master Plan

For Washington, DC



Congressionally Requested Height Master Plan for Washington, DC

PHASE 1 PUBLIC MEETING
MLK Central Library, Gallery A6
Saturday, May 18, 2013

#HeightDC

Congressional Request

“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...”

Why are we looking at the Height Act?

Current Height Act served
Washington, DC
for >100 years



Source: US Commission of Fine Art

What do we expect to see in next 100 years?

- More people; more demand for housing
- More jobs, more diversified economy
- Sustainable practices
- Changing technologies, changing space needs

#HeightDC



Phase 1

Overview, study principles, federal & local interests, case studies.
Public meetings in May-June 2013

Phase 2

Planning & modeling analysis results & opportunity areas for strategic changes to Height Act.
Public meetings in July-August 2013

Phase 3

Draft recommendations.
Public hearings in Fall 2013

Recommendations transmitted to Congress in Fall 2013

Studies for the Height Master Plan

1. Economic Feasibility Analysis

- Relationship between height-level alternatives & construction costs
- Economic projection of the effects of changes in building height.

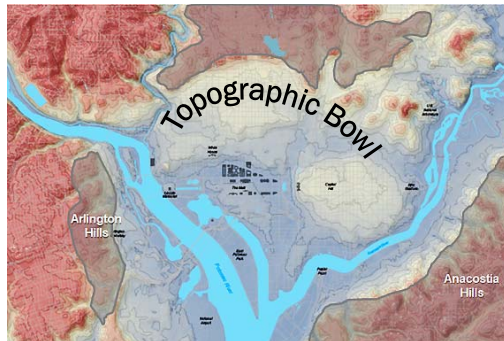
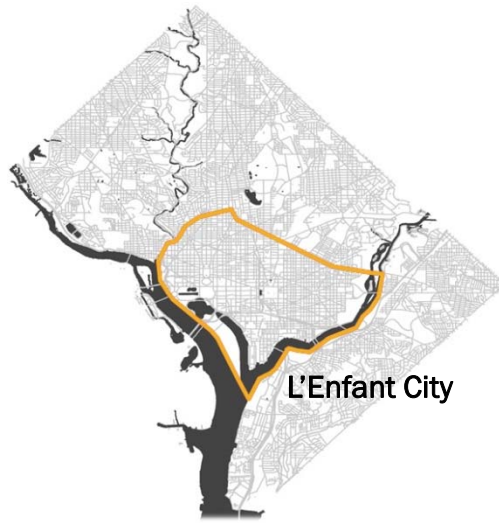
2. Modeling Analysis

- Design studies of varying building heights to understand the impacts they could have on the city's character.

3. Case Studies

- Experiences of other cities with managing height

Height Modeling Study



Panoramic View: The larger context

Skyline Studies: Impacts on skyline character

- L'Enfant City
- Topographic Bowl
Beyond Florida Avenue & along the edges of the escarpment which reflect steep grade change beyond the L'Enfant City.
- Illustrative sites across the District

Street-level Corridor Studies:
Impacts on pedestrian experience & quality of public spaces

How are we picking sites to study?

Panoramic Views

- Iconic vantage points with open public access
- Gateways & corridors with views into the L'Enfant City

Skyline Studies

- Iconic vantage points with open public access
- Illustrative sites:
e.g., designated as high density; transit-adjacent

Street-level Corridor Studies

- Selection of major streets/avenues in the L'Enfant City

The Height of Buildings Act of 1910

Federal law that applies citywide

Height of buildings related to the width of adjacent street

- Width of the street +20 feet (commercial streets)
- Width of the street (residential streets)

Establishes maximum heights

- 90 feet on residential streets (approx. 7-8 stories)
- 130 feet on commercial streets (approx. 10-11 stories)
- 160 feet on north side of Pennsylvania Avenue
(between the U.S. Capitol and the White House)
(approx. 12-13 stories)

Why Congress enacted the Height Act



- The Cairo Building
- Light, air, and fire safety
- Similar efforts by other cities to manage height

Height Act vs. Zoning



Height Act sets the maximum height, but DC's Zoning Code sets the actual height limits

Many areas have lower heights per Zoning Code than what is allowed by the Height Act

e.g., 16th Street, NW
(90 ft under zoning)

Core principles of the study

Principle 1

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

Principle 2

Maintain the horizontality of the monumental city skyline.

Principle 3

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

Principle 1: Ensure the prominence of federal landmarks and monuments by preserving views to them and their settings



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?

#HeightDC

Principle 2: Maintain the horizontality of the existing monumental city skyline



Source: Darrow Montgomery

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

Principle 3: Minimize the impacts to nationally significant historic resources, including the L'Enfant Plan



How should building heights relate to:

- Major parks and natural features?
- Historic buildings and neighborhoods?
- L'Enfant streets and public spaces?

Height Master Plan

For Washington, DC

www.ncpc.gov/heightstudy



Economic Vitality

Livability

Sustainability

Walkability

Affordability

Infrastructure

Symbolism

**How does
building height
play in
these issues?**

Security

Federal Presence

Housing Options

Visitor Experience

Transportation

#HeightDC

Case Studies

Paris, France

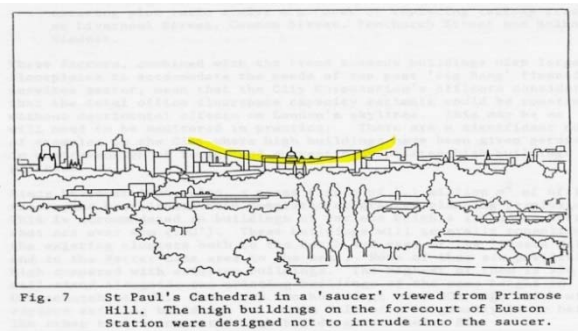


Vancouver, Canada

Barcelona, Spain



Case Study: London



Help Shape the Study!

Today's Program

- Q&A for clarification (10 minutes)
- Visit stations and explore issues
- Submit comment, ideas and thoughts in workbooks

Join the Conversation Online

- Website www.ncpc.gov/heightstudy
- Email info@ncpc.gov
- Twitter [#HeightDC](https://twitter.com/HeightDC)

#HeightDC

Height Master Plan

For Washington, DC

www.ncpc.gov/heightstudy

National
Capital
Planning
Commission



#HeightDC