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Julia Koster  
202-482-7211 or [julia@ncpc.gov](mailto:julia@ncpc.gov)  
Stephen Staudigl  
202-482-7279 or [stephen@ncpc.gov](mailto:stephen@ncpc.gov)

**NCPC Comments on White House Perimeter Fence Proposal**  
*Commission Approves Kennedy Center Bridge/Ramp and Comments on  
National Air and Space Museum Renovation Plans*

**Washington, DC** – At its July 7 meeting the National Capital Planning Commission provided comments on concept plans for a new perimeter fence and gates at the White House Complex to the project applicants, the U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, in coordination with the United States Secret Service. The proposed fence would follow the existing alignment that encompasses approximately 18 acres, and will retain the existing gate access points.

Three options are under consideration. They vary in the design of the fence top and base, including both ornamental and functional elements. All options feature a new 10-foot 7-inch fence on top of an 18-inch stone base, to replace the existing fence and base. NCPC commented favorably on the second option, noting that it provides a good balance between ornamental and security elements while limiting the visual weight of the fence top and most closely replicates the existing design. The Commission did not support the third option and noted that the first option appeared too ornate and could clash with the White House's more modest neo-classical design.

There are two options for the fence pickets. The first has 2-inch pickets with a 5.5-inch clear space between them. The second has 1.75 inch pickets with a 5-inch clear space between them. The Commission commented favorably on the 2-inch picket option, noting that its wider spacing would provide allow visitors close to the fence to see the White House better. The Commission requested that the fence base and foundation be designed to avoid negative impacts on nearby trees.

The project will return for preliminary review later this year. The Commission requested a full size mock-up of the fence design and additional renderings and perspectives of the fence from several locations as part of their next review. This is the first phase of a comprehensive security plan, with the next phase including the Eisenhower Executive Office Building and the U.S. Treasury Building. There has been some type of fence around the White House Complex since 1803.

"The importance of providing adequate security for the President and First Family cannot be overstated," said NCPC Chairman L. Preston Bryant, Jr. "However, as noted at today's meeting, the fence is a lens through which visitors view the White House and its grounds, and as such it is important to provide measures that are in keeping with such an important building and setting."

The Commission then approved two related Kennedy Center projects. The first was preliminary and final site and building plans for a pedestrian ramp and bridge over Rock Creek Parkway that would connect the Kennedy Center building and its expansion project to the south with the Rock Creek Paved Recreation Trail. In its approval NCPC noted that the Kennedy Center successfully addressed its previous comments regarding the bridge's character and circulation.

Currently there is no direct access between the Kennedy Center and the Potomac waterfront. The bridge will approximately 93 feet long and 9.5 feet wide and connect to a 201-foot ramp. This ramp would have a set of stairs at the other end, and a connection to another 91-foot ramp which switches back to the trail.

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NCPC then approved a transfer of jurisdiction from the National Park Service to the Kennedy Center for approximately 3,900 square feet of land and additional air rights. The land and air rights will be used by the Kennedy Center to build the ramp and bridge, which will increase accessibility for visitors to the performing arts center and users of two nearby trail systems.

The Commission also commented favorably on the overall concept design submitted by the Smithsonian Institution for the National Air and Space Museum's building exterior, vestibules, and site improvements. Plans call for the renovation and restoration of the 687,000 gross-square-foot building and its grounds. Project components include the addition of vestibules to the north and south entrances, and revitalization of the 112,000 square foot terrace to improve pedestrian circulation, perimeter security, landscaping, and public amenities.

In its comments NCPC recommended that the south vestibule not project into the Independence Avenue right of way; studying whether the north vestibule would impact viewsheds between the museum and other buildings on the National Mall; and noted its support of Scheme A (ground plane) for the terrace improvements, as opposed to Scheme B (a raised planter system which the Commission did not support), because Scheme A would better meet the project's design objectives and create a welcoming and inviting public space. The Commission also provided comments addressing topics including perimeter security, streetscape amenities, circulation, visitor experience, landscape, and the West Terrace.

Replacement of the building's exterior stone cladding is also part of the project; however, review of potential replacement materials was not part of today's discussion. This will be reviewed by NCPCs at a later date. In its comments the Commission recommended that the Smithsonian continue to work closely with NCPC staff, the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts, and the DC State Historic Preservation Office to identify an appropriate cladding material that meets the required criteria. Constructed in 1976 for the United States Bicentennial, the Air and Space Museum is one of the most visited museums in the world, with seven million annual visitors.

Tanya Stern, District of Columbia Office of Planning Deputy Director, Planning, Engagement and Design, provided an information presentation on the Second Amendment Cycle to the 2006 *Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital's* District Elements. Composed of Federal and District Elements, the Comprehensive Plan guides planning and development for Washington and the National Capital Region. The 12 District Elements provide a 20-year vision for the District of Columbia's future planning and development. Adopted in 2006 and first amended in 2011, the second amendment cycle began this spring and will feature a new Resilience Element, data updates, and a synthesis of recently completed District plans and initiatives. Following a three phase public process, approval from the DC City Council, NCPC, and Congress will be sought in early to mid-2018. No Commission action is taken on information presentations.

This month's agenda also included four consent calendar items (no presentations will be given):

- Concept plans for the renovation of the National Museum of Natural History's South Entrance, 1000 Constitution Avenue, NW. (7753)
- Preliminary and final site and building plans for the renovation of, and addition to, Building 501 at Fort Detrick's Forest Glen Annex, Silver Spring, Maryland. (7779)
- Preliminary and final site and building plans for the renovation of, and addition to, Building 511 at Fort Detrick's Forest Glen Annex, Silver Spring, Maryland. (7780)
- Preliminary and final approval of site development plans for the upgrade of five AT&T telecommunications sites on General Services Administration buildings in Washington, DC. (7801)

In addition, the Executive Director approved 11 items under authority delegated by the Commission. The final agenda, project materials, and staff recommendations are available on [NCPC's website](#).

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