



MEDIA RELEASE

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NCPC Authorizes Release of Draft Federal Workplace Element for a 60-Day Public Comment Period *Master Clock Building and Planet Word Exterior Lighting and Revised Entry Gate Approved*

Washington, DC—At its [July 11 meeting](#), the National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC) authorized release of an update to the Comprehensive Plan's [Federal Workplace Element](#) for a 60-day public comment period. The element's policies provide guidance on how to improve the efficiency and productivity of the planning, location, design, and operation of federal workplaces. NCPC uses these policies to guide agency actions, including review of projects and long-range plans.

The element was updated to address new trends and major drivers shaping the workplace and to make it more efficient, effective and useful for NCPC staff, federal agencies, and the public. The element is framed around four guiding principles:

1. Adapt to the changing needs of the federal workplace.
2. Locate federal facilities strategically.
3. Design sustainable and healthy work environments.
4. Integrate federal facilities to collaborate with their surrounding communities.

The public can submit comments and feedback on the draft document through Monday, September 16, 2019. Two open houses are scheduled to provide opportunities to learn more, ask questions, and provide written comments. They will be held in NCPC's offices, 401 9th Street, NW, Suite 500N, on Tuesday, August 6 (6:00-7:30 pm) and Wednesday, August 7 (10:30 am-noon). The document and comment portal are available online at <https://www.ncpc.gov/initiatives/workplace/>. Following the public comment period, staff will update the element and bring it back to the Commission for adoption.

Commissioners noted the impact of federal workers and the importance of the federal workforce in Washington. They observed that the nature of the workplace is constantly changing and that it is good that the element reflects these changes. Vice Chairman Thomas Gallas said that "this is an important document that will help attract committed and talented people into the federal workforce." He also noted that "there is a strong balance between the quality of the federal workforce and advancing social and community objectives."

The Commission also approved two projects. The first was final site and building plans for a new facility (Building 51) to house the [Master Clock](#), and the renovation of several historic buildings, on the 72-acre U.S. Naval Observatory campus located at 3450 Massachusetts Avenue, NW. Plans submitted by the Department of the Navy call for a new one story, approximately 15,000 square foot Master Clock building with a minimalist design. The building was located so that it would not detract from the historic Clock House, which will be renovated along with several other historic buildings, including Building 78, which houses the Astrographic Laboratory (1932) and a two-story addition (1961).

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Commissioners expressed support for the selected site and thanked the Navy for removing a fence that was proposed in a prior submission. “I thank and compliment the design team, because a lot of work was put in to find the right building location. Building 51 will not compete with the historic buildings in design, which is a good thing,” stated Vice Chairman Gallas. Commissioner Mina Wright added that “the building settles nicely into the landscape, and the design for the historic buildings is very sensitive.”

NCPC also approved revised final site and building plans for exterior lighting and a revised entry gate at [Planet Word](#). Plans submitted by the DC Office of the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development call for the transformation of downtown’s Franklin School into Planet Word, a museum focusing on language.

Constructed in 1869 and designed by Adolf Cluss, architect for several buildings in Washington including Eastern Market and the Arts & Industries Building, the Franklin School sits across 15th Street, NW from Franklin Park. Based upon previous Commission comments, the applicant changed the entry gate design. The new gate has three sliding panels and one fixed panel, and the design complements the Speaking Willow Sculpture to be located in the courtyard behind the entryway and gates.

“This is a more sensitive and welcoming entryway for a tremendous new destination. It’s exciting to see the building come back to life,” said Vice Chairman Gallas.

Before adjourning, representatives from the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) briefed the Commission on a study examining the potential widening of both I-495 (the Beltway) in Maryland and a portion of I-270 to [add managed lanes](#) (similar to high occupancy toll lanes in Virginia). Under the Capper Cramton Act, NCPC has approval authority over any Capper Cramton park development, which may be required to accommodate new managed lanes. Widening of the Beltway could require up to 20 total acres of land from Rock Creek Park, Sligo Creek Park, and the Northwest Branch.

Maryland currently has the second longest commute times in the country and the project is an attempt to alleviate this. Six build options are under study to identify how the managed lanes would affect traffic congestion. While the Commission does not take any actions on information presentations, Commissioners did provide several observations including encouraging MDOT to examine ways to improve transportation beyond highway expansion and to look at the possibility of diverting traffic to the Intercounty Connector and I-270 as a way to avoid widening the northern portion of the Beltway.

Video of the Commission meeting, Commission actions, and related materials are available [online](#) within five days after the meeting.

This month’s agenda included four consent calendar items (no presentations were given):

1. Final site and building plans for a tennis pavilion on the White House Grounds, 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW. (8077)
2. Concept plans for building envelope repairs at the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, 700 Independence Avenue, SW. (7889)
3. Preliminary site development plans, with comments, for lighting replacement at the United States Air Force Memorial, 1 Air Force Memorial Drive, Arlington, Virginia. (8085)
4. Preliminary site development plans for signage in Rock Creek National Park. 98084)

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The Executive Director approved four items under authority delegated by the Commission.

1. Final site development plans for the preservation of Meridian Hill Park - Phase V and VI, 2400 15th Street, NW. (7642)
2. Approval of a report to the Zoning Commission of the District of Columbia regarding a Text Amendment to establish a community renewable energy facility - CREF, 441 4th Street, NW. (ZC 19-04).
3. Murals at the 23rd Street and Virginia Avenue, NW Overpass, 23rd Street and Virginia Avenue, NW. (8094)
4. Approval of a report to the Zoning Commission of the District of Columbia regarding a Text Amendment to Subtitle X to Clarify Voluntary Design Review FAR Aggregation. (ZC 19-06)

The National Capital Planning Commission is the federal government's central planning agency in Washington, DC and surrounding counties of Maryland and Virginia. The Commission provides overall guidance for federal land and buildings in the region. It also reviews the design of federal projects and memorials, oversees long-range planning for future development, and monitors capital investment by federal agencies.

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