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### **NCPC Comments on DHS Headquarters Master Plan Amendment**

#### *Commission Provides Feedback on Urban Design Streetscape Framework and Lighting Policy*

**Washington, DC**—At its November 7 meeting the National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC) provided feedback to the General Services Administration on the proposed [Master Plan Amendment for the Department of Homeland Security \(DHS\) Headquarters Consolidation](#) at the 176-acre St. Elizabeths West Campus in Southeast Washington, DC. The amendment would adjust the master plan previously approved in 2009 to address new DHS programming requirements and budget constraints.

The previous plan provided for 4.5 million gross square feet of office/support space between existing buildings and new development and attempted to balance the rehabilitation of historic buildings with new construction, resulting in the rehabilitation of 51 of 62 historic buildings. The amendment is focused on new construction, as opposed to the combination of historic rehabilitation and new construction previously envisioned and proposes two new approximately 650,000 square foot buildings and one new 175,000 square foot building. It recommends that 45 of the 62 historic buildings be retained, rehabilitated, and re-purposed in future project phases.

Commissioners commented favorably on the amendment's preferred approach, noting that it would best balance DHS's needs to consolidate its headquarters on the campus with historic preservation concerns. NCPC liked the priority placed on retaining three architecturally significant Administration Row buildings and maintaining panoramic views to and from the campus. The Commission asked GSA to consider finding uses for historic buildings 15 and 69 instead of tearing them down. All the historic buildings would be mothballed until the three new buildings are constructed, at which time they would examine how to renovate and reuse them.

The Commission provided feedback to staff on concept plans for the [Urban Design Streetscape Framework and Lighting Policy](#). These tasks are the first part of the Monumental Core Streetscape Project, a multi-phased effort to update the National Mall Streetscape Manual (1992). The Urban Design Streetscape Framework provides federal and local guidance for use during planning, design, and construction of streets of national significance. The Lighting Policy defines a lighting hierarchy for structures, landscapes, and streetscapes, and provides general guidance on light characteristics in the National Mall and vicinity.

Commissioners commented favorably on the Urban Design Streetscape Framework and Lighting Policy and supported the idea of expanding the 1992 manual's boundary to include the Kennedy Center and Banneker Park. They directed staff to use the Framework and Lighting Policy as the basis to develop new streetscape design guidelines, and also directed staff to use the Lighting Policy to inform the LED Streetlight Specification Amendment to the Streetscape Manual (2013) and coordination with the District Department of Transportation and Office of Public Private Partnerships Smart Street Lighting Project.

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NCPC commented favorably on a draft installation development plan that the Department of the Navy submitted for the [Naval Support Facility Suitland](#). Located within the Suitland Federal Center in Maryland, the site houses the National Maritime Intelligence Center. The plan would provide development guidance for the next 20 years related to several renovation projects and construction of a new 40,000 square foot building addition and visitor screening center. NCPC deferred action on the plan at its September 2019 meeting to allow the Navy time to reconsider its initial plan to build new parking to replace a parking garage that will be torn down.

Commissioners thought that the Navy had made substantial progress from its initial submission and appreciated the clear and direct response to prior Commission comments. The updated plan has a new transportation management proposal, proposes the net removal of 270 parking spaces, and has an updated parking ratio more in line with that recommended in the *Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital*. The Navy worked with the General Services Administration to extend an existing lease of 805 spaces and lease an additional 150 spaces in a Census Bureau lot; plans to create a new transit service between the facility, other military installations, and the nearby Suitland Metro Station; will coordinate with the Maryland Transit Administration to improve commuter bus service to the Suitland Federal Center; encourage contractor use of the Suitland Metro station parking deck; and will consider building a more direct pedestrian path from the Suitland Metro station to the facility.

"I want to acknowledge the substantial progress and thank all parties for addressing the Commission's concerns to get to this point," said NCPC Vice Chairman Thomas Gallas. "Thank you for listening and providing additional information so that we can better understand your needs."

Before adjourning, NCPC heard an information presentation by representatives from the Maryland Department of Transportation's State Highway Administration (MDOT) on their 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). Maryland currently has the second longest commute times in the country and the project is an attempt to alleviate this. Widening of the Beltway could require land from Capper Crampton Parks (Rock Creek Park, Sligo Creek Park, and the Northwest Branch). Under the Capper Crampton Act NCPC has approval authority over any Capper Crampton park development.

At the previous presentation Commissioners asked about the possibility of directing traffic to the Intercounty Connector. MDOT staff examined this possibility and determined that doing so would result in an increased travel time compared to the other proposed alternatives, create new bottlenecks, and result in more traffic and pollution. It was unclear whether the proposed alternative would improve traffic congestion compared to the no-build alternative. MDOT described design changes that would lessen the potential impact of highway widening on the three affected Capper Crampton Parks, and noted the removal of one possible design alternative, leaving a no build option and five design options for further study.

While Commissioners appreciated MDOT examining the possible use of the Intercounty Connector, they did not believe that enough time was spent studying the issue and that the option should remain a part of the future Environmental Impact Statement. They also believed that there is not a sufficient enough analysis at this time to understand impacts to Capper Crampton land among all of the alternatives (both retained and dismissed), which is the Commission's directed focus for this project.

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NCPC also moved two projects from the Action Agenda, where they were to have full staff presentations, to the Consent Calendar. Both projects, submitted by the National Park Service, proposed to modify two existing memorials. The concept plans for the [National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial](#), located at Judiciary Square, considers an additional cap to provide additional room for future names. The concept plans for the [Second Division Memorial](#), located on the Ellipse, considered new plinths, and improved pedestrian and all abilities access.

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

*This month's agenda included five consent calendar items (no presentations were given):*

1. Final site development plans for the National Native American Veterans Memorial, Independence Avenue and Fourth Street, SW. (8018)
2. Preliminary and final site development plans for the relocation of AT&T antennas at the Liberty Loan Building, 401 14th Street, SW. (8114)
3. Concept plans for a new Banneker Academic High School, 925 Rhode Island Avenue, NW. (8122)
4. Concept plans for modification of the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial, 444 E Street, NW. (6321)
5. Concept plans for modification of the Second Division Memorial, Constitution Avenue, NW & 17th Street, NW. (8120)

*The Executive Director approved one item under authority delegated by the Commission.*

1. Preliminary and final site development plans for the Winter Pavilion - Winter Arc, 912 17th Street, NW. (8119)

*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.*