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NCPC Adopts Comprehensive Plan's Transportation Element
*Commission Releases Federal Environment Element and
Antenna Submission Guidelines for Public Review and Comment*

Washington, DC— At its [July 9 meeting](#), the National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC) commented favorably on the proposed second Master Plan Amendment for the [Department of Homeland Security \(DHS\) Headquarters Consolidation](#) submitted by the General Services Administration for 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. It addresses prior Commission comments provided in November 2019 related to historic preservation issues and provides more information on stormwater management, tree removal, and tree replacement.

The 2009 master plan proposed to balance the rehabilitation of historic buildings with new construction, with DHS rehabilitating 51 of the site's 62 historic buildings for future use. The new master plan amendment proposes to retain and rehabilitate only 45 of the 62 buildings due to unanticipated building conditions and the need to accommodate two 600,000 square foot buildings and a 175,000 square foot building.

The Commission commended GSA for fully engaging federal partner agencies and the Section 106 Consulting Parties through a process that examined the proposed changes to historic buildings and properties. They noted that while the updated plan has a greater impact on historic buildings it is a good balance between meeting DHS's needs and historic preservation. Due to its important location and relationship to the historic Hitchcock Building, NCPC requested that GSA look at siting and design options for the new building that will replace Building 69.

The Commission provided comments on a temporary [Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementias facility](#) that the National Institutes of Health plans for its Bethesda campus. The 24,000 gross square foot one-story modular building would provide temporary research space for 130 staff until a permanent building is constructed. At that time, the building would be removed. Commissioners observed that while the project is consistent with many planning principles from NIH's 2013 master plan, not enough information was provided on building materials, landscaping, and visual impacts and requested that NIH provide this information at the next phase of NCPC review.

The Commission adopted the [Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital's Transportation Element](#), an addendum, and corresponding updates to the agency's Submission Guidelines. Last updated in 2016, the element contains policies that the Commission uses when evaluating transportation components of projects and plans that affect federal buildings, installations, parks, and campuses.

Differences from 2016 include a revised parking space to employee ratio in the L'Enfant City (Washington's central core) from 1:5 to 1:6; standardizing the process to allow deviations from parking ratios for proposed projects at federal facilities; and encouraging agencies to charge for parking (where permissible). As part of the update, NCPC developed a new internal monitoring process to assess Transportation Demand Management performance at federal worksites. This monitoring process will allow agencies to adjust their strategies as needed to improve performance over time and will share this information with NCPC.

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The addendum describes NCPC requirements for Transportation Demand Management and Transportation Management Plans and explains key concepts. The agency's submission guidelines assist applicants in better understanding NCPC's project and plan review process. The updated policies will go into effect 60 days after the publication of the Federal Register notice about the Commission's adoption of the element. Individual projects already under NCPC review would be assessed using criteria from the 2016 element.

The Commission authorized release of two NCPC documents for 60-day public comment periods that will run through September 14, 2020. People will be able to view the draft documents and submit comments on NCPC's website: www.ncpc.gov.

The first is amendments to the [Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital's Federal Environment Element](#). The proposed changes are in Section G: Policies Related to Tree Canopy and Vegetation at federal development sites, as well as corresponding changes to the agency's Submission Guidelines. These policies are related to the preservation of existing trees (especially large stands of trees); procedures to replace trees when they are removed; and the goal to prevent a net loss of trees. NCPC staff will host an online public outreach session on the proposed changes on Wednesday, July 29 at 4:30 pm. Further details will be available on the agency's website.

Also released for public comment are updates to the agency's [Antenna Submission Guidelines](#). Last updated in 2001, the updated guidance addresses the impacts of new telecommunication infrastructure on federal buildings and land. The guidelines do not pertain to small cell infrastructure in the public right-of-way as this is regulated by the District of Columbia. NCPC staff will host an online public outreach session on the proposed changes on Tuesday, August 4 at 4:30 pm. Further details will be available on the agency's website.

Before adjourning, the Commission heard an information presentation by NCPC staff on the [Washington Union Station Expansion Project](#). The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) plans to expand the station to meet an increase in rail traffic in the Northeast Corridor anticipated by 2040. Project components include reconfiguration of the station tracks; a new train hall, bus facilities, and parking facilities; new concourses and rail support spaces; pedestrian and bicycle access improvements; and improved pick-up/drop-off areas for vehicles.

FRA released a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) that evaluates alternatives and impacts for public comment through September 28, 2020. While the Commission does not take official action on information presentations, feedback provided at the meeting will help inform NCPC's response letter to FRA on the draft DEIS.

The Commission's discussion focused on parking. FRA's preferred alternative proposes approximately 1,600 parking spaces, which is a reduction from the 2,200 spaces that exist today. However, District of Columbia agencies have recommended approximately 300 parking spaces, based on the limited needs identified by Amtrak, and reduced needs for retail and car rental uses at this multi-modal, urban hub. NCPC reviewed concept plans for the project at its January 2020 meeting, and strongly encouraged FRA to reduce parking. At yesterday's meeting, Commissioners expressed their concerns that there had been no change to the amount of proposed parking with little justification provided, and frustration at the lack of responsiveness to the concerns of federal, District, and local stakeholders.

"FRA will have to prove the need for parking and the overwhelming evidence so far is that they have not done so," said NCPC Vice-Chairman Thomas Gallas. "We need to see an excellent urban design intervention for this very important location and institution but have not seen a process that shows us that we will get there."

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After the conclusion of the DEIS comment period NCPC, FRA, and District of Columbia agencies will be able to review the public and organizational feedback provided. It is anticipated that NCPC will review concept plans developed after this sometime in late fall/early winter.

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

1. Preliminary and final building plans for the Lincoln Memorial Rehabilitation, 2 Lincoln Memorial Circle, NW. (7866)
2. Comments on concept plans for Freer Gallery of Art Courtyard Accessibility Improvements, 1050 Independence Avenue, SW (8182)
3. Preliminary and final building plans for the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden Revised Museum Entrance Sign, 700 Independence Avenue, SW. (7940)
4. Preliminary building plans for the George P. Shultz National Foreign Affairs Training Center Building B, 4000 Arlington Boulevard, Arlington, Virginia. (8192)
5. Preliminary and final site development plans for a Ground Circuit Initiative Tower, 9800 Belvoir Road, Fort Belvoir, Virginia. (8181)
6. Preliminary and final site development plans for Fletchers Field Park Stream Restoration and Floodplain Enhancement, 5200 Kenilworth Avenue, Riverdale, Maryland. (8177)

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

1. Preliminary and final site development plans for landscape reconstruction and installation of a flagpole at St. Elizabeths' Center Building, 2701 Martin Luther King Jr. Avenue, SE. (8186)
2. Final building plans for renovation and annex demolition at Fort McNair's Building 48, 4th A Street, SW. (8167)
3. Preliminary and final site development plans for the Howard T. Markey National Courts Building's ABA Ramp Project, 717 Madison Place, NW. (8183)
4. Preliminary and final site development plans for temporary stabilization of the C&O Canal's wall in Georgetown, 3207 Grace Street, NW. (8188)
5. Final site development plans for the relocation of a pedestrian crosswalk at Arlington National Cemetery's Memorial Avenue, 1 Memorial Avenue, Arlington, VA. (8174)
6. Preliminary site and building plans for building envelope repairs phase 1 at the Martin V.B. Bostetter, Jr. United States Courthouse Building Envelope Repairs Phase 1, 200 S. Washington Street, Alexandria, VA. (8190)
7. Preliminary building plans for a new wildlife staff office at the Beltsville Agricultural Research Center, Beaver Dam Road & Soil Conservation Road, Beltsville, MD. (8184)
8. Preliminary site development plans for Beltsville Agricultural Research Center Building 434 Renovation and Additions, 6900 Powder Mill Road. (8185)
9. Preliminary and final site development plans for the replacement of Garrett Park Road Bridge, No. M-0352, Garrett Park Road and Rock Creek Park, North Bethesda, MD. (8040)
10. Final site development plans for the Joint Base Andrews Taxiway Whiskey, Camp Spring, Maryland. (7711)
11. Preliminary and final site development plans for the Wolf Trap National Park for the Performing Arts Tents Replacement Project, 1551 Trap Road, Vienna, VA. (8187)

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

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.