

October 8, 2021

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NCPC Approves Goddard Space Flight Center Master Plan *New Beyond Granite Temporary Commemoration Pilot Project Announced*

Washington, DC—At its [October 7, 2021 meeting](#), Vice Chair Beth White [announced that the Trust for the National Mall was awarded a grant](#) from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation for its Beyond Granite proposal, which will be conducted in partnership with the National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC) and the National Park Service. This project will result in 8-10 temporary commemorative installations in and around the National Mall and Washington, DC.

Thanking the Mellon Foundation and the project partners, she said “Beyond Granite will be an incredibly important way for us to promote a more diverse and inclusive commemorative landscape in the nation’s capital, one that ensures that we are telling more stories reflecting our country’s history, aspirations, and different perspectives.”

NCPC approved the final master plan for the Goddard Space Flight Center Master Plan submitted by NASA, with one exception. They deferred approval of the number of special use parking spaces until NASA submits an assessment of its use as part of the Transportation Management Plan update in two years. The 1,270-acre facility is located on five parcels in Greenbelt, Maryland. It currently has 7,900 employees and more than 4.11 million gross square feet of building space. The plan, which is primarily focused on the main campus, would guide development through 2037 and replace a previous master plan that NCPC approved in 2003. Goddard was established in 1959 with the land for the main campus acquired in 1961-1962.

NASA seeks to concentrate development in a linear pedestrian zone marked by new and existing buildings in the center of the main campus. Other components include reducing the building square footage by one million square feet; reducing parking by 2,321 employee spaces; preserving the forested areas and adding trees; reorienting the main entrance on ICESat Road near a new visitor center to provide a welcoming entrance; and adding pedestrian/bicycle amenities to improve mobility on campus and alternative modes of commuting.

The Commission supported NASA’s vision to “create a sustainable, walkable and vibrant campus comprised of modern adaptable facilities within a natural setting” and commended the final master plan and its objectives, including meeting the Comprehensive Plan’s parking ratio goals for the campus of 1:2 (one parking space for every two employees). Commissioners also appreciated that NASA addressed prior Commission concerns expressed at its [June 2021 meeting](#) related to transportation/parking, natural resources/sustainability, and land use/historic preservation.

Staff presented information on the agency’s [Climate Action Plan](#) that was released earlier on October 7 as part of the Biden Administration’s whole of government approach to confronting the climate crisis. NCPC, as a federal agency, develops annual sustainability and climate reports. Adaptation planning allows NCPC to minimize the negative impacts of climate change that are already occurring in the National Capital Region and take advantage of opportunities to coordinate and respond effectively to future conditions. NCPC’s plan is [available online](#). Other agency plans are available at www.sustainability.gov/adaptation.

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NCPC heard an update on the I-495 and I-270 Managed Lanes Study being jointly conducted by the Maryland State Highway Administration and United States Federal Highway Administration. The study is examining the potential widening of I-495 (the Beltway) in Maryland and a portion of I-270 to add managed lanes (similar to high occupancy toll lanes in Virginia).

The Maryland State Highway Administration changed its preferred alternative so that it no longer includes adding managed lanes on the Beltway between I-270 and I-295 which would have impacted Rock Creek Park, Sligo Creek, and Northwest Branch Stream Valley Parks. The current project would add two managed lanes on the Beltway in each direction from the George Washington Memorial Parkway, across an expanded American Legion Bridge, and up I-270 to the Intercounty Connector (I-370) interchange. With the changes, five impacted parcels remain under NCPC's review jurisdiction: Cabin John Regional Park, Cabin John Stream Valley Park Unit 2, Clara Barton Parkway, the C&O Canal, and the George Washington Memorial Parkway.

A supplemental Environmental Impact Statement issued by the Maryland State Highway Administration, which is open for public comment from October 1-November 15, reflects these changes. It also addresses other areas that the Commission had commented on previously including tree replacement being done according to NCPC and National Park Service standards; the installation of new dynamic signage to increase usage of the Intercounty Connector as an alternative between I-95 and Northern Virginia; traffic monitoring for the remainder of the study; and increased transit funding (approximately \$300 million for transit services in Montgomery County and \$60 million for projects along the MD 355 Corridor).

NCPC plans to submit a letter with agency comments. While the Commission does not take official action on information presentations, staff asked for feedback on these proposed agency comments:

- Recommend that Maryland adopt a broader study purpose that focuses on accommodating future mobility in general, which would better reflect NCPC Transportation Element policies and focus on fostering efficient federal development in the region.
- Require a better understanding of specific benefits for the use of Capper-Cramton Act parkland so that NCPC can ensure that future project submissions would meet the act's intent.
- Request Visual Impact Assessment results and renderings so that NCPC staff can understand specific visual/user experience impacts, proposed mitigation measures, and help guide mitigation.
- Support current National Park Service and Maryland National Capital Park and Planning Commission positions with the expectation that SHA will work to resolve outstanding issues related to furthering park impact reductions, detailing impact/mitigation measures, and transit element commitments.

[Commission actions and related materials are available online.](#)

This month's agenda included five consent calendar items (no presentations were given). Unless otherwise noted, all projects are in Washington, DC.

1. Preliminary and final site and building plans for the Smithsonian Institution Quadrangle Guard Booth, 1050 Independence Avenue, SW. (8304)
2. Preliminary site and building plans for the St. Elizabeths East New Hospital, 2700 Martin Luther King Jr. Avenue, SE. (8310)
3. Preliminary and final site development plans for the Suitland Federal Center Tower AT&T Antenna Installation, 4400 Suitland Road, Suitland, Maryland. (8311)
4. Preliminary site and building plans for the Joint Base Andrews P203 Crash Rescue Station #2 Renovation and Addition, 1057 W. Perimeter Road, Camp Springs, Maryland. (8306)
5. Final site and building plans for the Marine Corps Base Quantico P734 Main Side Parking Garage, 3019 Embury Loop, Quantico, Virginia. (8273)

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The Executive Director approved three items under authority delegated by the Commission. Unless otherwise noted, all projects are in Washington, DC.

1. Comments to the Council of the District of Columbia for an Alley Closing in Square 274 - S.O. 21-06612, 1250 U Street, NW. (8303)
2. Preliminary and final site and building plans for the LEARN Charter School Temporary Facilities, 100 Duncan Street, SW. (8308)
3. Preliminary and final site development plans for a T-Mobile Antenna Installation Modification at the Beltsville Agricultural Research Center, 10300 Baltimore Avenue, Beltsville, MD. (8309)

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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