

**L. PRESTON BRYANT, JR.**  
**CHAIRMAN**  
**NATIONAL CAPITAL PLANNING COMMISSION**

**TESTIMONY ON “THE FUTURE OF THE NATIONAL MALL”**

**JUNE 1, 2012**

Good morning, Chairman Bishop and Members of the Subcommittee. My name is Preston Bryant and I am the Chairman of the National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC). NCPC is the federal government’s central planning agency for the National Capital Region, and we focus on key planning issues that affect federal lands and buildings. Our activities include: jointly authoring a Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital with the District of Columbia, reviewing all federal development projects in the region, and addressing the unique planning issues of the capital city.

I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak with you about NCPC's role in the national memorial process and our efforts to protect the historic open space and unique urban design qualities that make Washington one of the most admired capital cities in the world. For each memorial project, NCPC strives to ensure that we implement a process that is responsive and transparent. More broadly, our goal is three-fold: to ensure that Washington’s commemorative landscape explores the diverse, rich stories of American history; to meet the expectations of millions of Americans who visit our nation’s capital; and to plan for future generations to have excellent locations for their memorial projects.

Under the Commemorative Works Act (CWA), NCPC approves the site and design for each new commemorative work that Congress authorizes. NCPC works with memorial sponsors; the National Capital Memorial Advisory Commission (NCMAC); the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts (CFA); and, depending on the site location, either the National Park Service (NPS) or the General Services Administration (GSA), to ensure that memorials are located and designed in a manner that supports their commemorative purpose and enhances their surroundings. Because memorials are often integrated within some of Washington’s most prominent public settings, staff works closely with sponsors and either the NPS or the GSA to ensure that each new project is designed to the highest standards.

In addition to our project specific work, NCPC and its agency partners develop studies designed to support the memorial process and plan for the next generation of memorials throughout Washington. In recent years, one of the central themes of our work has been to protect the National Mall from overbuilding, which may diminish the distinctive openness of this symbolic place. In response to concerns to protect the Mall’s unique urban design character and its existing memorial landscape, NCPC and its agency partners developed the *Memorials and Museums Master Plan* and the *Monumental Core Framework Plan*.

The *Memorials and Museums Master Plan* achieved two important goals. First, it identified a Reserve area where no new memorials may be built. Congress codified the Reserve, which includes the great cross-axis of the Mall, in the 2003 Commemorative Works Clarification and Revision Act. NCPC strongly supports the Reserve policy, which maintains the Mall's open spaces and existing memorial landscapes that are admired and enjoyed by Americans today.

The Master Plan also identifies 100 potential sites for future memorials and museums throughout Washington, DC. This strategy protects the Mall, helps sponsors visualize opportunities for their projects, and introduces cultural destinations to neighborhoods in all four quadrants of the city. The Master Plan has successfully guided six projects to superb locations off the Mall, including memorials honoring President Eisenhower, the U.S. Air Force, Czechoslovakian President Thomas Masaryk, the Victims of Communism, the Victims of the Manmade Ukrainian Famine, and American Veterans Disabled for Life.

In 2009, NCPC and CFA published the *Monumental Core Framework Plan*. This plan identifies strategies to extend the civic qualities of the National Mall and the vitality of the city into the federally-dominated precincts throughout the monumental core. In doing so, the Framework Plan identifies several strategies to make potential locations for new cultural destinations located off of the National Mall more attractive to museum and memorial sponsors. Examples include the precinct south of Independence Avenue, including 10th Street, SW and its terminus at Banneker Overlook. New cultural projects in these areas can serve as anchors that spark investment; add high-quality public spaces and buildings; and provide destinations that introduce visitors to new parts of the city. NCPC coordinated closely with the National Park Service (NPS) to ensure that the Framework Plan's goals and recommendations were consistent with the NPS' *National Mall Plan*. These plans provide the long-range vision memorial sponsors need to consider areas beyond the National Mall.

Our most recent study – *Washington as Commemoration* – provides an opportunity to look closely at trends related to memorial content and location over time. This NCPC study was conducted in partnership with NPS and includes the development of a publicly-accessible catalog of existing memorials on federal land in Washington, classified by subject matter, theme, and location. It is available as an interactive, online map at [www.ncpc.gov](http://www.ncpc.gov). The study also includes analyses of how other capital cities in the United States and abroad plan for memorials. This information will better equip the agencies and the public to consider the critical policy and planning decisions associated with memorial development today.

Thank you for inviting me to share NCPC's work on commemoration and to brief you on our role in the process. I look forward to answering any questions you may have.