

Memorandum on the Allowable Height for Specific Parcels in the Maryland Avenue Corridor

Disclaimer:

The attached Memorandum “Allowable Height for Specific Parcels in the Maryland Avenue Corridor” (Memorandum) was written to informally advise the District Office of Planning (DCOP)’s Maryland Avenue Small Area Plan process. DCOP asked NCPC staff to evaluate the potential allowable height of specific parcels along Maryland Avenue per the 1910 Height of Buildings Act. While the Memorandum only addresses the potential allowable height (per the Height Act) of four specific sites along Maryland Avenue, the information in the Memorandum may have relevance for the larger area defined by the Federal Triangle South boundary.

The information in the Memorandum has not been reviewed, approved or endorsed by the National Capital Planning Commission. The data used was the best available information at the time. The advice with regard to the elevated portions of 10th Street is unique to this particular area and may not apply to other areas of the City. The memorandum does not evaluate existing or any proposed zoning regulations that may apply to the area.

Parties who rely upon the information in the Memorandum do so at their own risk.

MEMORANDUM

Date: October 3, 2011
To: Joyce Tsepas, Ward 2 Neighborhood Planner, District of Columbia Office of Planning
From: Bill Dowd, Physical Planning Division Director, National Capital Planning Commission
Subject: Allowable height for specific parcels in the Maryland Avenue Corridor

The DC Office of Planning has asked NCPC staff to evaluate the allowable heights for the parcels in Figure 1 per the 1910 Height of Buildings Act, as amended (“The Height Act”). The Height Act prescribes that allowable building heights are determined by the width of the street right-of-way on which they front plus twenty feet (on a business street). When a site abuts more than one street, the height shall be determined from the wider of the streets. The law caps the building height at 130’ on business streets, with the exception of a portion of Pennsylvania Avenue. The allowable height is measured from the grade of the sidewalk opposite the middle of the front of the building to the highest point on the roofline. No occupiable space can exist above the roofline, and other parameters control the height and setback of rooftop elements.

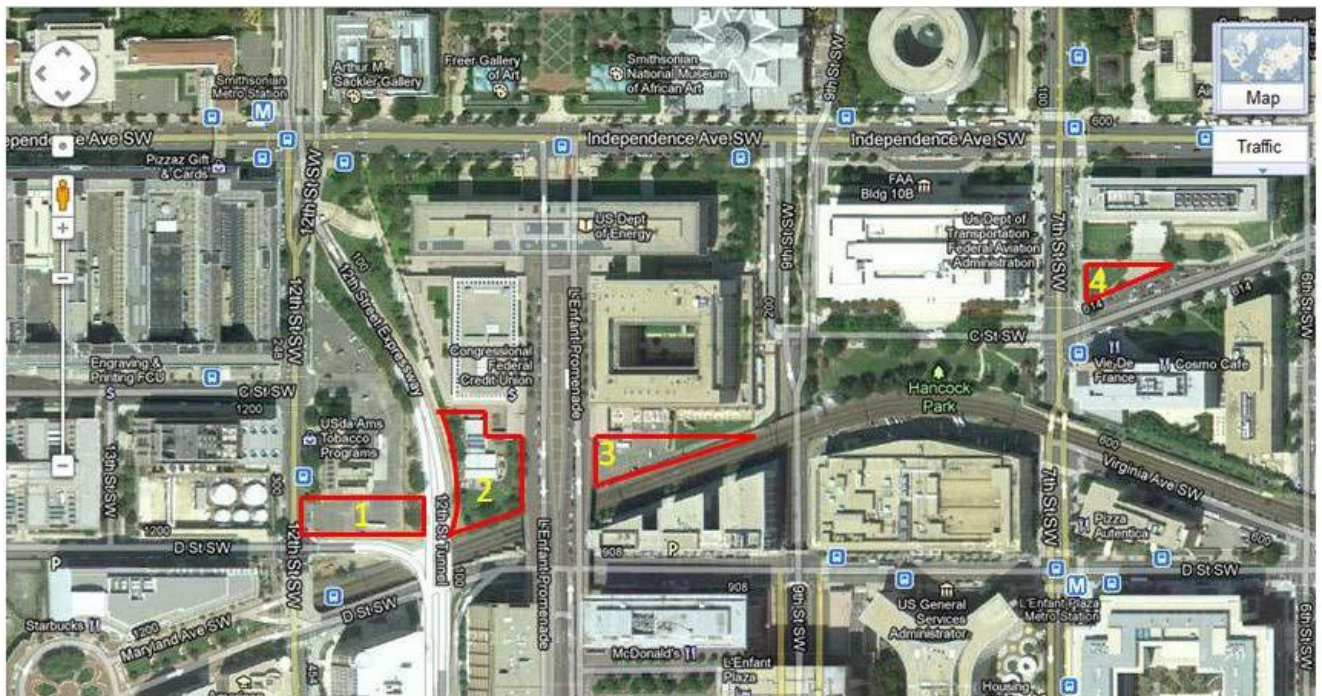


Figure 1

NCPC staff analysis finds that the allowable height for the four parcels outlined and numbered in Figure 1 would be 130 feet. The measuring point, justification, and additional considerations for each parcel are explained below. Articulation of the building mass (i.e., setbacks and massing) will need to be determined in conjunction with the development of future zoning regulations.

	Abutting Street Width(s)/ Allowable Height	Measuring Point, Justification and Additional Considerations
Parcel 1	<p>12th St = 110' wide D St = 50' wide</p> <p>Allowable Height = 110+20 =130'</p>	<p>Parcel 1 fronts 12th Street and D Street. 12th Street, the wider of the two streets, is 110' which allows a height of 130' measured from 12th Street.</p> <p><i>Additional Considerations:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Proposed development should be designed to complement and minimize impact on the Cotton Annex building. 2) If redevelopment were to occur in a way that resulted in the site fronting a new Maryland Avenue instead of D Street, the height could also be derived from Maryland Avenue (in addition to 12th Street). Maryland Avenue's right of way width is 160' allowing for a 130' building. The point of measurement would be placed at the grade of the newly built Maryland Avenue.
Parcel 2	<p>10th St = 160' wide</p> <p>Allowable Height = 130'</p>	<p>Parcel 2 is located between the 12th Street Expressway, the CSX rail line, and 10th Street. Since 10th Street is the only street that this parcel fronts, the allowable height is determined from 10th Street. The current width of 10th Street (approximately 160') allows for the maximum height of 130'.</p> <p>Determining the grade of the measuring point for this site (and Parcel 3 below) is not as straightforward. The effects of urban renewal and massive infrastructure projects (such as elevating 10th Street all the way to the Overlook) have created a neighborhood that is elevated overall. Because the elevated height of the grade is the norm for the entire neighborhood, which is largely built out, it would be illogical to measure from the original grade below 10th Street, and therefore the height should be measured from the grade of 10th Street.</p> <p>While 10th Street at this point is technically elevated, staff believes it should be considered the "natural grade" to preserve continuity with the adjacent sites that front both Independence Ave and 10th Street. This is where the</p>

	Abutting Street Width(s)/ Allowable Height	Measuring Point, Justification and Additional Considerations
		<p>Forrestal Complex is located. These sites also have an allowable height of 130' and can take their height from 10th Street and Independence Ave (both of which are at grade in this location).</p> <p><i>Additional Considerations:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) While 130' from 10th Street is the allowable height, the actual height and design of new buildings needs to be compatible with the surroundings. 2) If 10th is redeveloped, its new right-of-way will likely not be less than 110' which still allows a building height of 130'. 3) If Maryland Avenue is constructed over the rail line, parcel 2 and parcel 3 would abut Maryland Ave in addition to 10th Street. Both streets would allow a 130' building measured from either street.
Parcel 3	10 th St = 160' wide Allowable Height = 130'	<p>Parcel 3 abuts the CSX rail line and 10th Street. Similar to Parcel 2, 10th Street is the only street this parcel abuts. Therefore, the allowable height is 130'.</p> <p><i>Additional Considerations:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) See additional considerations for parcel 2
Parcel 4	Maryland Ave =160' wide 7 th Street = 100' wide Allowable Height = 130'	<p>Parcel 4 abuts Maryland Avenue and 7th Street. Maryland Avenue, the wider of the two streets, is 160' wide allowing for a 130' building measured from the grade of Maryland Avenue.</p> <p><i>Additional Considerations:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) While 130' is the allowable height, NCPC staff has concerns about the potential impact of a 130' building on the adjacent Wilbur Wright Building. Any building on this site should relate to the Wilbur Wright Building in a positive way.

cc: David Levy
Elizabeth Miller