



# U.S. COMMISSION OF FINE ARTS

Strategic Plan  
2022 – 2027

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## Message from the Chair

We are pleased to present a Strategic Plan for the Commission of Fine Arts, an independent federal design review commission of the U.S. government.

Our plan covers fiscal years 2022 through 2027.

It describes our mission, vision, values, general goals, and objectives; it reflects our commitment to the public, our customers, and to the equitable treatment of all; and it presents a real plan for accomplishing our goals and objectives by the end of fiscal year 2027.

Our strategic plan has been integrated into our existing program and annual budget processes, and together they serve to align the Commission's programs, organization, and budget with our mission and function. This plan will be used as a tool in setting priorities and allocating resources.

Our strategic plan highlights activities that are both within and outside of the control of the Commission.

At the end of each year, we will evaluate our performance and measure what is achieved with performance indicators that directly relate to our core mission and statutory mandate.

We will review the strategic plan each year, invite our stakeholders to review and comment on our plan, and revise it when necessary to reflect our changing environment.

**Billie Tsien, AIA, Chair**



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## Introduction

This is the Strategic Plan for the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts. It is action-oriented and provides a strategic direction to the Commission over the next five years. It begins with a statement of Commission of Fine Arts' mission, vision, and values, followed by general goals and objectives that will be accomplished by the end of 2027. Each year, a specific and detailed annual performance plan will be developed and submitted to the Office of Management and Budget and to Congress as a part of the annual budget process.

In the past five years, the Commission of Fine Arts staff is pleased to report that we have achieved a number of key objectives in the previous strategic plan for 2016–2021. In addition to completing the timely review of approximately 3,600 submitted cases in that period, these accomplishments include the publication of the architectural monograph *Palace of State: The Eisenhower Executive Office Building*, in 2018; the migration of most agency operations to digital format for all case filings and records; and upgrading all telecommunications, data, and website platforms and services. The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic has also been a significant challenge for the agency in adapting to primarily off-site operations and virtual public and consultation meetings.

As we move forward into the next five-year period, the achievement of our goals is based on the assumptions that there will be adequate levels of fiscal and human resources, that staffing levels are appropriate for the projected workload, and that there are minimal changes in our external environment. Given the recent uncertainties with federal budgets and increasing fiscal constraints, the Commission of Fine Arts will continue to optimize resources and align its budget with mandated priorities. However, like any good plan, this one will remain flexible, changing in response to the Commission's external environment.

As required by the Government Performance and Results Act (PL 103-62), this plan provides general direction to the Commission in the coming years and is focused on results.

## **Our Mission**

The Commission of Fine Arts, established in 1910 by Act of Congress, is charged with giving expert advice to the President, Congress, and heads of departments and agencies of the federal and District of Columbia governments on matters of design and aesthetics—particularly regarding proposals for public buildings, parks, infrastructure, and art—as they affect the federal interest and preserve the dignity of the nation’s capital. The Commission consists of seven “well-qualified judges of the fine arts” who are appointed by the President and serve for a term of four years; they may be reappointed.

Within the District of Columbia, the Commission advises on the design of private development in areas of federal interest; these include the Historic District of Georgetown, under the Old Georgetown Act, as well as areas of federal interest as defined under the Shipstead-Luce Act.

In its role to advise the federal government on the design of national symbols, the Commission provides guidance to the United States Mint on the design of coins and medals, and approves the site and design of national memorials, both in the United States and on foreign soil, in accordance with the Commemorative Works Act and the American Battle Monuments Act.

The Commission administers the National Capital Arts and Cultural Affairs program, a program created by Congress to benefit non-profit local cultural entities whose primary purpose is the presentation, exhibition, or performance of the arts in Washington, D.C.

## **Our Vision**

The Commission of Fine Arts endeavors to promote design excellence and to protect and preserve the historical and cultural significance of the built environment for America’s capital city. Our vision is to enhance the majestic beauty of the Nation’s Capital by providing the highest-quality advice on public art, architecture, landscape architecture, urban design, and historic preservation.

We are dedicated to promoting the best design of coins, medals, and insignia produced in the United States.

## **Our Values**

### **Mission Fulfillment**

*We are dedicated to the fulfillment of our mission to promote excellence in the arts for the nation and its capital and to enhance, protect, and preserve the built environment of the capital city.*

### **Professionalism**

*Our professionalism is maintained through the appointment by the President of well-qualified judges of art and design supported by a dedicated multidisciplinary professional staff.*

### **Partnership and Collaboration**

*We recognize partnership and collaboration as an important means through which the Commission will accomplish its annual and strategic goals.*

### **Education and Information Sharing**

*We strive to educate and inform the public on topics of history and design related to our mission. Public outreach is crucial to our developing and presenting information to be shared with larger audiences.*

### **Respect**

*We are committed to respect, honesty, open communication, mutual support, and equitable treatment among our members, staff, the community of stakeholders, and the general public.*

## **Our Customers**

President of the United States  
United States Senate  
United States House of Representatives  
Federal Government agencies  
Government of the District of Columbia  
The American public  
Residents of Washington, D.C.  
National and international visitors  
Arts and cultural institutions  
Associated professional and advocacy organizations  
Academic community

## **Our Products and Services**

The services that we provide are advice and comment on proposals for public art, commemorative works, architecture, landscape architecture, urban design, and historic preservation through the design review process.

Our products are information and records about our mission, role, and history through our publications, internet website, and other outreach activities. We also provide a forum for education and research on relevant topics of art, architecture, landscape architecture, and urban design in the District of Columbia.



## Goals, Objectives, and Strategies for 2022-2027

**Goal 1.0** To promote the highest-quality standards of aesthetic, environmental, and urban design for new construction in the Nation’s capital.

*Objective 1.1: Provide the highest-quality reviews of all submissions.*

Strategies:

- Maintain broad expertise in all design disciplines—including public art, architecture, landscape architecture, urban design, and historic preservation—related to projects submitted to the CFA.
- Provide the District of Columbia Government with design advice on matters pertaining to private construction within the area of the Old Georgetown Act and adjacent to Federal enclaves and properties under the Shipstead-Luce Act.
- Review 100% of government proposals submitted for review in a timely manner according to statutory obligation.
- Coordinate with the District of Columbia Government to resolve questions of jurisdiction and to update related documentation.
- Support senior case review staff with a new full-time staff position responsible for all case intake, case administration, and coordination with the District of Columbia Government.
- Provide advisory guidance to CFA staff and commission members for proposal and guideline reviews that require specific technical expertise.

*Objective 1.2: Provide the highest-quality information to customers, applicants, and potential applicants engaging in the CFA design review process.*

Strategies:

- Consult with applicants and potential applicants before and during submission review to promote highest-quality design for specific projects.
- Develop and make available to the public submission guidelines and references for specific types of projects, such as window and door replacements, signs, cellular antennas, roof decks, roof shading structures, and fences.

*Objective 1.3: Safeguard landscapes, sites, and structures of significant historic and cultural value.*

Strategies:

- Consider current national and international best practices and policies, such as the Secretary of Interior’s *Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties* and others, in the review of proposals.

- Participate in multi-agency historic preservation consultations under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act on applicable submissions.
- Consult and coordinate with the District of Columbia Historic Preservation Office on cases involving historic properties in Washington, D.C., including all cases reviewed within the Old Georgetown historic district.

**Goal 2.0 To enhance the physical and aesthetic character of the national commemorative landscape, including memorials and military cemeteries, by providing highest-quality review of all site selections and designs submitted for review.**

*Objective 2.1: Provide highest-quality reviews of all site selections and designs submitted by the National Park Service, the American Battle Monuments Commission, and Arlington National Cemetery for review.*

Strategies:

- Consult with applicants and potential applicants before and during the review process to promote the highest-quality design for specific projects.
- Participate in the National Capital Memorial Advisory Commission to represent the case-specific or general guidance of the CFA regarding the authorization, siting, and design of national memorials.

**Goal 3.0 To advise on comprehensive long-range plans that will ensure appropriate development in the Nation's Capital.**

*Objective 3.1: Partner with federal and local government agencies to develop studies or reports on planning for and analysis of the metropolitan region.*

Strategies:

- Engage in ongoing discussions with the National Park Service, the Smithsonian Institution, the General Services Administration, the District of Columbia, and other key partners to produce plans to enhance the National Mall and areas surrounding it.
- Collaborate with the National Capital Planning Commission to produce the *Pennsylvania Avenue Vision Plan*, the *Independence Avenue Vision Plan*, the *Beyond Granite* temporary commemoration project, and other studies or reports on planning for and analysis of the capital city or region.
- Participate in and guide the planning process to address the redevelopment of federal lands in such areas as the Northwest Rectangle, the St. Elizabeths campus, the Southwest Federal Center, Banneker Overlook, the Robert F. Kennedy stadium site, South Capitol Street, the Southeast Federal Center/Navy Yard complex; Anacostia River parks, East Potomac Park, the former Walter Reed Army Medical Center, and the United States

military facilities in the District of Columbia and Arlington, Virginia, including Arlington National Cemetery and the Pentagon, informed by current policies for resilience and the advancement of social equity.

- Coordinate with other federal and District of Columbia agencies, including the Army Corps of Engineers, to adapt the infrastructure and buildings of the Nation's Capital to changes resulting from climate change, including flooding in the monumental core and on federal property.

**Goal 4.0 To advise on the design of medals, insignia, and coins produced by the executive departments of the United States government.**

*Objective 4.1: Provide timely, high-quality advice on 100% of the proposed medals, insignia, and coins submitted for review.*

Strategies:

- Advise the U.S. Mint, the U.S. Army Institute of Heraldry, and other applicant agencies to produce high-quality designs for coins, medals, logos, and insignia through staff consultation and review by the Commission.
- Participate in artist selection panels and the advisory acquisitions management team for the U.S. Mint's Artistic Infusion Program.

**Goal 5.0 To provide support for artistic and cultural institutions of national stature in the capital city.**

*Objective 5.1: Administer the National Capital Arts and Cultural Affairs (NCACA) program.*

Strategies:

- Provide grants for general operating support to non-profit organizations whose primary mission is performing, exhibiting, or presenting the arts in the District of Columbia as funding is appropriated.
- Support artistic and cultural programs in the District of Columbia through advice on participation in the NCACA grant program.

*Objective 5.2: Comply with the codicil of the will of Charles L. Freer for the acquisition of objects to the Freer Gallery's permanent collection.*

Strategies:

- Review 100% of all acquisitions proposed for addition to the permanent collection of the Freer Gallery of Art.

- Conduct site visits, if possible, with the Commission and its chair to inspect objects proposed for acquisition.

**Objective 5.3:** *Represent the Commission at appointed and delegated committees related to the arts, design, and historic preservation.*

Strategies:

- Participate in or provide support for the Commission Chair in meetings of the Indemnity Committee of the National Council of the Arts and Humanities, the board of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, the Committee for the Preservation of the White House, and others as applicable.

**Goal 6.0** **To create, provide access to, and safeguard the record of the Commission’s actions and activities.**

**Objective 6.1:** *Create and make accessible the record of the Commission’s actions in the form of official letters, minutes, and archives.*

Strategies:

- Convey the advice of the Commission on cases reviewed in official letters of action that clearly summarize and present the consensus of opinion of the Commission members emerging from the design review as stated in its public meetings.
- Produce a permanent written record of minutes for the public meetings of the Commission as a resource for applicants, historians, or other interested groups that succinctly present the details of discourse and commentary of the Commission’s review.
- Maintain permanent records of the Commission’s actions in cooperation with the National Archives and Records Administration, whether in paper or digital form, and facilitate access to these records.
- Maintain and improve the Commission’s website to provide and expand immediate access to official agency records.

**Objective 6.2:** *Increase and improve digital and remote access to Commission services and information*

Strategies:

- Update the Commission’s website, expanding and improving its accessibility and usability to deliver Commission resources to applicants, government customers, researchers, and the public.
- Provide public access to real-time streamed public meetings of the Commission and Old Georgetown Board and an online archive of past meetings.

- Expand the availability of past submission records and Commission and Old Georgetown Board actions on agency’s electronic databases and website; digitize historic card file of submission records.
- Update website to fully integrate transition to digital submission procedures made during the Covid-19 pandemic.
- Modernize systems for digital web-based submissions and electronic file and records management and update records management policies and practices to align with the goals of the Presidential Directives in accordance with NARA Memorandum M-19-21, “Transition to Electronic Records.”

**Goal 7.0 To support education, awareness, and information-sharing related to the work of the Commission of Fine Arts.**

*Objective 7.1: Produce books, articles, and other printed and electronic media and participate in public forums to advance the knowledge of the history of the Commission of Fine Arts and its role in the development and shaping of the capital city, and promoting high-quality design for civic and public architecture, landscapes, and urban environments with local, national, and international audiences.*

**Strategies:**

- Complete the publication of two books in development by the Commission staff: an architectural history of Georgetown and a design history of American presidential commemoration.
- Participate in public forums, write articles, and provide information to the press and other printed and electronic media that expand the understanding of the work of the Commission of Fine Arts and related topics.
- Provide information to academic, professional, and affiliated organizations regarding the actions, history, and role of the Commission of Fine Arts through web-based content, responses to information requests, and public presentations.
- Respond in a timely manner to requests for agency records and other information under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).
- Use social media and other media platforms to enhance the Commission’s public outreach and advocacy for good design, its history and records, and discourse on topics related to its mission.
- Explore opportunities to expand our services to and collaboration with the Administration, members of Congress, their staffs, and the federal government as a whole.

**Goal 8.0 To improve and modernize the Commission’s management systems.**

*Objective 8.1: In the spirit of better management inspired by the President’s Management Agenda, work to improve or implement the Strategic Management of Human Capital; Competitive Sourcing; Improved Financial Management; Expanded Electronic Government (e-gov); and Budget and Performance Integration.*

**Strategies:**

- Expand the capability and capacity of the Commission’s electronic hardware and software systems. Increase opportunities to use Cloud Computing and web-based and wireless technologies to enhance the Commission’s electronic data management, day-to-day operations, and customer services.
- Leverage resources to support functions such as information technology, digital and wireless communications, cybersecurity, web security and reporting, electronic records archiving, digital web-based submissions, and other information-technology mandated priorities.
- Support information security operations in accordance with E.O. 14028, “Executive Order on Improving the Nation’s Cybersecurity,” with an additional FTE position with subject-matter expertise in telecommunications technology, cybersecurity, and cloud services, and with Contracting Officer’s Representative (COR) credentials.
- Implement the provisions of the Commission’s 2022–27 Workforce Plan.

**Goal 9.0 To promote safe, equitable, and ethical action and practices.**

*Objective 9.1: Establish policies developed in response to the Covid-19 public health emergency for the Commission’s operations.*

**Strategies:**

- Implement the related Executive Orders regarding mask-wearing, vaccinations, return-to-work policies, etc. for all Commission members, staff, and visitors.
- Establish appropriate office policies for public meetings, telework, and performance goals reflecting changes in transit, public meeting protocols, and access to public facilities due to the impacts of Covid-19.

*Objective 9.2: Develop plans and policies addressing the advancement of equity.*

**Strategies:**

- Formulate assessments and reports on agency equity policies in accordance with recent administration orders, including E.O. 13985, “Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities through the Federal Government”; E.O. 14035, “Diversity,

Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility in the Federal Workforce”; and the agency’s Survey on the Use of DEIA Promising Practices Across the Federal Government.

- Respond in a timely manner to related requirements addressing social justice, such as under E.O. 13176, “Tribal Consultation Plans of Actions” and E.O. 14019, “Promoting Access to Voting.”
- Draft a new Agency Equity Action Plan following guidance from the Employment and Equal Opportunity Commission (EEOC). Review diversity, equity, and inclusion policies and statements for relevant built environment professional organizations and peer agencies for better understanding of equity field knowledge and best practices.

***Objective 9.3:*** Administer the agency’s ethics program with guidance from the Office of Government Ethics (OGE).

Strategies:

- Complete annual ethics reporting requirements for appointees and senior staff.
- Conduct annual ethics training for staff and appointees per OGE guidance



## **Accomplishing Our Goals**

### **Operating Assumptions**

Foundational elements in the success of this strategy are budget and staffing levels that remain stable or grow as needed. In supporting the Commission in its efforts to provide timely, concise, and easily understood recommendations and actions, we rely on the continued facilitation of the submission process, the continued investment in professional development of our small staff, and its expansion to address critical lack of capacity and redundancy.

### **External Factors That Could Affect Achievement of Our Goals**

There are numerous challenges that we will face as we set out to achieve our goals over the next five years. The Commission, in its advisory and approval capacities, is not the origin of design projects; it is the recipient of project proposals. As the recipient, our objectives are subject to the needs of other agencies, federal and local, as well as those of private entities. Government construction projects materialize in response to the individual sponsor's needs and their schedules cannot be anticipated by the Commission within the framework of a five-year plan. The initiation of private construction projects is even less predictable.

The Commission, as a design review agency, is flexible by necessity. Its effectiveness and efficiency remain constant despite having no control over the number of proposals brought before it, or the relative size and importance of each item submitted.

Given recent federal fiscal constraints and the possibility of variable funding levels, which are most likely to lead to fiscally conservative budgets, the Commission of Fine Arts will work to maximize resources and align priorities within constrained budget realities. In addition, we are facing potential changes to the regulatory and legislative framework regarding federal oversight of District of Columbia proposals, whether public or private, and any change to this framework would have an unknown effect on our caseload and mission.

Adequate workforce resources are needed to address: increasing caseloads and increasing complexity of submission reviews; expanding intergovernmental reporting; updating and improving the agency's website to increase public participation and outreach; improving web-based digital submissions, and providing administrative and IT support; and updating electronic security for electronic, intranet, and internet based systems. The Commission of Fine Arts will continue to prioritize equitably increasing and maintaining a full complement of staff, particularly in the core submission review functions and in the development and improvement of the agency's technological support systems. The Commission of Fine Arts endeavors to attract and retain the best and most efficient workforce.

## **The Relationship**

### *General Goals and Objectives and Annual Performance Goals*

Annual performance plans will be prepared for each of the one-year performance periods covered by the Commission's Strategic Plan. These plans will be based on the general goals and objectives that have been approved by OMB and the Congress. The plans will contain milestone-type goals indicating the start and completion dates for individual tasks.

Our performance will be measured and reported annually on the basis of input, output, and/or outcomes and will be fully integrated with the Commission's annual budget. Performance information will be used to improve performance management and to develop greater organizational accountability for program results.



## Key Statutory Authorities

- I. **Commission of Fine Arts Act**, as amended. An Act establishing the Commission of Fine Arts. Public Law No. 61-181, 40 U.S.C. 104, 36 Stat. 371 and Public Law No. 86-461, 40 U.S.C. 106, 74 Stat. 128.  
*The Act established a permanent Commission of Fine Arts to advise upon the location of statues, fountains, and monuments in the public squares, streets, and parks in the District of Columbia. The Commission shall also advise generally upon questions of art when required to do so by the President or by any committee of either House of Congress.*
- II. **Executive Order 1259** (October 25, 1910)  
The executive order requires that all public buildings erected in the District of Columbia for the General Government be submitted to the Commission of fine Arts for comment and advice prior to approval by the authorizing officer.
- III. **Executive Order 1862** (November 28, 1913)  
The executive order requires that whenever new structures are to be erected in the District of Columbia under the direction of the federal government that affect in any important way the appearance of the City, or whenever questions involving matters of art and with which the federal government is concerned are to be determined, final action shall not be taken until such plans have been submitted to the Commissioners of Fine Arts for comment and advice.
- IV. **Executive Order 3524** (July 28, 1921)  
The executive order requires that essential matters relating to the design of medals, insignia, and coins, produced by the executive departments, also the design of statues, fountains, and monuments, and important plans for parks and all public buildings constructed by executive departments or the District of Columbia be submitted to the Commission of Fine Arts for advice as to the merits of such designs prior to approval by the executive officer.
- V. **Shipstead-Luce Act** (Public Law 71-231)  
The Act gave the Commission of Fine Arts authority to regulate the height, exterior design, and construction of private and semipublic building projects within certain areas of the National Capital. Specifically, the Shipstead-Luce Act applies to construction which fronts or abuts: the grounds of the Capitol; the grounds of the White House; the portion of Pennsylvania Avenue extending from the Capitol to the White House; Rock Creek Park; the National Zoo; Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway; the Mall Park System; the Southwest Waterfront and Fort McNair.
- VI. **Public Law 76-248**  
An Act to include Lafayette Park within the provisions of the Act entitled “An Act to regulate the height, exterior design, and construction of private and semipublic buildings in certain areas of the National Capital,” approved May 16, 1930.
- VII. **The Old Georgetown Act** (Public Law 81-808).  
The Act defined the boundaries of Georgetown and officially designated the area a historic district. The Old Georgetown Act also gave the Commission of Fine Arts the authority to appoint an advisory committee, the Old Georgetown Board, to regulate the height, exterior

design, and construction of private and semipublic buildings within the Old Georgetown Historic District boundaries.

VIII. **American Battle Monuments Act** (Public Laws 67-534 and 79-456)

The Act requires approval by the Commission of Fine Arts of designs or material for memorials submitted to the American Battle Monuments Commission (ABMC) prior to approval by the ABMC.

IX. **National Capital Planning Act** (Public Law 82-592)

The Act requires that the National Capital Planning Commission seek advice of the Commission of Fine Arts in the selection of lands suitable for the development of the National Capital park, parkway, and playground system in the District of Columbia, and the States of Maryland and Virginia.

X. **Commemorative Works Act** (Public Law 99-652)

The Act requires site and design approval of all commemorative works on Federal lands in the District of Columbia by the Commission of Fine Arts, National Capital Planning Commission, and (as appropriate) the Secretary of the Interior or the Administrator of General Services.

XI. **Foreign Missions Act** (Public Law 97-241, Section 206)

The Act gives the Commission of Fine Arts the authority to advise the Department of State on designs proposed for foreign chanceries in all areas under the jurisdiction of the Commission, including the International Center.

XII. **Public Law 85-263**

The Act gives the Commission of Fine Arts the authority, upon request, to advise the Heraldic Branch, Quartermaster Corps, Department of the Army, upon the merits of proposed designs for medals, insignia, seals, etc.

XIII. **Honoring America's Veterans and Caring for Camp Lejeune Families Act** of August 8, 2012 (Public Law 112-154)

The law gives the Commission of Fine Arts an advisory role on the design of monuments in Arlington National Cemetery.

XIV. **Public Law 100-102**

The law transfers administrative responsibility for the National Capital Arts and Cultural Affairs program from the National Endowment for the Humanities to the Commission of Fine Arts. This program was established by Public Law 99-190, as amended (20 USC 956a), to provide grants to support the general operating expenses of artistic and cultural organizations in the District of Columbia.