



Canada

NATIONAL CAPITAL COMMISSION

DESIGN GUIDELINES

JANUARY 2016

6

DIPLOMATIC MISSIONS

6.1. DESIGN GUIDELINES FOR DIPLOMATIC MISSIONS

Principle: The National Capital Commission (the NCC) is committed to promoting design excellence as a distinctive signature of the Capital, and fostering thoughtful, sensitive and creative design for Capital building.

When the Government of Canada sells federal land in the National Capital Region, it does so with a requirement that the NCC approve the design of any new facility built on that land.

Typically, diplomatic missions must own the lands they reside on to ensure their privileges under international law and the practices of diplomacy.

The purpose of this policy document is to outline the design guidelines for the construction of new buildings, or substantial additions or alterations to an existing building, for the purpose of diplomatic missions on lands transferred from the Government of Canada. When a diplomatic mission develops a new facility on other lands, even though an NCC land use and design approval would not be required, it is nevertheless encouraged to refer to these guidelines.

These guidelines are meant to encourage sensible creativity in Capital building. They express a series of design intentions to create a cohesive relationship with federal lands and compatibility with adjacent neighbourhoods, as well as to foster a high standard of exemplary design.

The guidelines are an invitation for dialogue between the NCC and the proponent. They are a tool to assist proponents in the federal land use and design approval process, as they identify the design principles that are consistent with the plans for the Capital and that reflect the NCC's steadfast commitment to design excellence.

The guidelines will be used as a basis for the NCC's review of design and site development proposals. The NCC promotes context-sensitive and innovative design in diplomatic missions, in tandem with the expression of the cultural uniqueness of the mission's national arts and architecture.

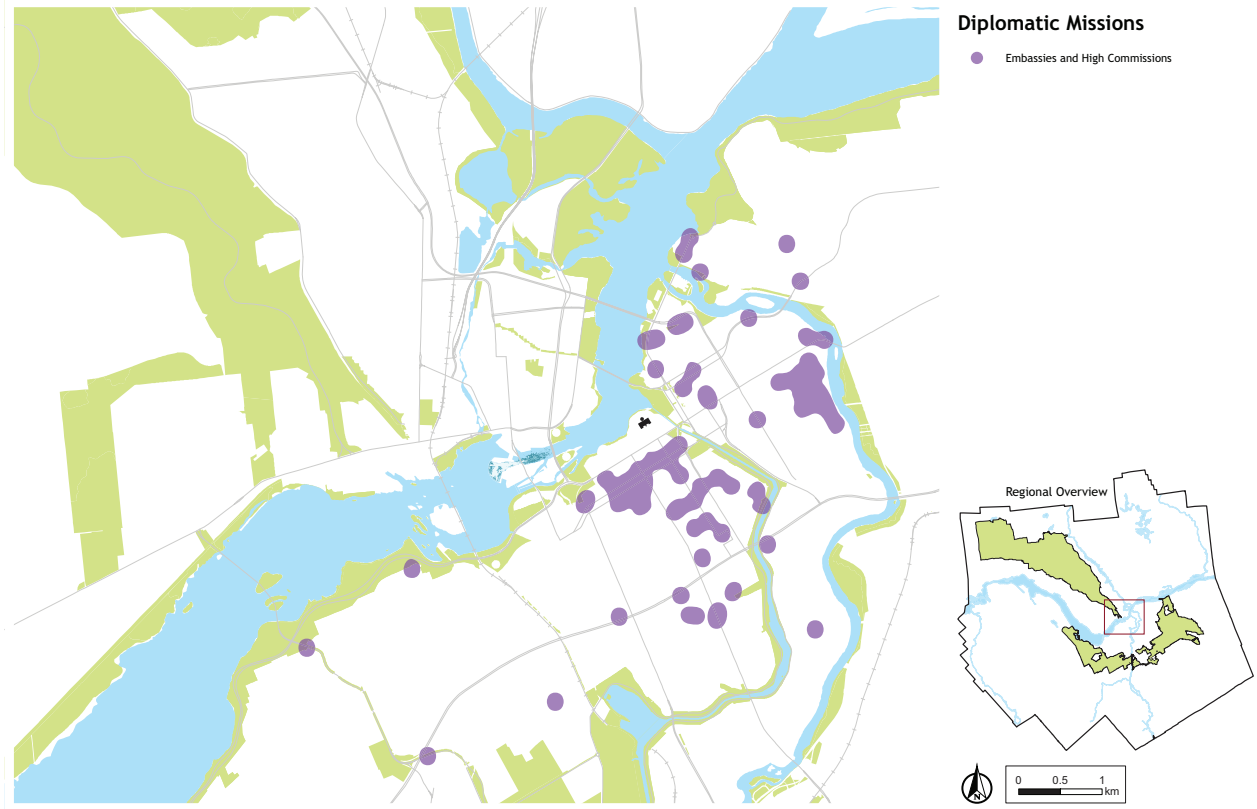
The guidelines are meant to be interpreted by design professionals who may have their own approaches to achieving the design intent, which ensures inherent flexibility in their application.

1. Location

The NCC may, from time to time, designate some of its land holdings in key locations for the purpose of future diplomatic missions. As diplomatic missions represent an important function of a national capital, the NCC will continually review its inventory of lands to retain a supply of available sites through its land use plan review. Currently, there is potential along Confederation Boulevard-Sussex Drive, and along the Sir John A. Macdonald Parkway corridor in the NCC plans.

In general:

- Diplomatic missions are encouraged to locate in these areas as part of the Capital experience.
- Diplomatic missions are also encouraged to locate in places that are easily accessible through different means of active transportation and public transit.



2. Design Excellence

Mission sites located on Confederation Boulevard, parkways and driveways are situated on ceremonial routes. They are thus highly visible, as well as being in the neighbourhood of prominent Capital features and landmarks, other diplomatic missions, or official residences. This level of significance calls for developments of the highest quality.

As a contribution to the Capital's expression and culture, foreign missions should be of the highest design quality, sensitive to the characteristics of their location and offer a positive image of Canada's Capital, befitting a first-class facility.

To achieve this, international missions are encouraged

- to retain qualified architects and landscape architects to prepare plans for the new facility;
- to undertake design competitions, where feasible (the NCC can provide advice on this process, if requested);
- to be context-sensitive in their design, with respect to the surrounding neighbourhoods, landscapes and uses;
- to be architecturally distinctive and dignified, in accordance with the function, and to incorporate stylistic elements that are indicative of the country they represent, through the building design and/or public art;
- for new developments, to express a commitment to sustainable design and construction, and energy-efficiency; and
- to reflect the country's values and ingenuity and exemplify the best of their architecture, and innovation.

3. Site, Context and Cultural Landscapes

Nature and cultural landscapes as places of meaning, belonging and ritual are important to the experience of the Capital. They are as sensitive to the effect of one dominant intervention, as they are vulnerable to the cumulative effect of several interventions. For these reasons, projects must be sensitive to the context, and respect the history and values of the cultural landscape in which the work is proposed, as well as how the proposed work will enhance those values.

3.1 SITING

All site plan designs must contribute to the character of the Capital, be responsive to the conditions of the existing site and its surroundings, protect heritage values, conform to NCC plans, and locate elements so as not to encroach on protected views of national symbols.

Site-specific guidelines will be developed to assist the development of a proposal.

In general:

- All projects must consider the building's setting.
- Designs (architecture, landscape and engineering) must be unique to the location and responsive to the context (site, surrounding, local culture, climate).
- The design should be thoughtfully conceived cohesive, coherent and well balanced with the surrounding.
- Setbacks established by the city or by the NCC in a particular location must be respected.
- Front yards should not be used for parking, servicing, loading or storage.
- Setbacks should be sufficient to provide for the installation of any ancillary security buildings and checkpoints within the setback areas, since those elements are not permitted outside of the fence perimeter of the site in the public right-of-way.
- New embassies or additions to existing embassies must contribute to the civic and urban fabric of the Capital.

- Special attention must be paid to the general ensemble of surrounding buildings, streets, and public spaces.

3.2 STREETSAPES AND PUBLIC SPACES

All projects in the Capital realm should contribute to the value and public enjoyment of places such as streets, courtyards, squares and parks that are significant to the quality of the Capital. Besides providing access, urban streets and squares act as a primary source of open public space. They provide a home for the urban forest, public art and commemorations, and a place for people to gather, communicate and enjoy themselves.

The missions are encouraged to develop a public face, where feasible, to showcase their respective country's culture and history.

In general:

- The projects should respect the design integrity of existing public places, or improve these spaces.
- Adjacent development should protect existing values and provide further public benefit by enhancing the sense of place and address; improving the microclimate; and providing spatial containment, aesthetic interest and animation.

3.3 ACCESS AND TRAFFIC FLOW

A mission should have its ceremonial entrance distinct from its service entrances. If the site is located on Confederation Boulevard, the ceremonial entrance should face the street. Entrances from other streets will be based on municipal standards.

In general:

- The configuration of vehicular access should consider the urban design qualities, the characteristics of the neighbourhood and the traffic capacity.
- Vehicle access from the parkways will not be permitted to service missions.
- Where feasible, parking should be located underground.
- The site should be designed in such a way that public sidewalks are maintained on all public rights-of-way. No temporary or permanent fencing or

security apparatus may be installed in the public rights-of-way, except in times of extraordinary security threats.

- Sidewalks should be a minimum width of 5.0 metres, if the site fronts onto Confederation Boulevard.

On other sites, the widths should be in accordance with municipal standards or specific NCC requirements.

- Efforts should be made to provide pedestrian access and amenable interaction with the facility.



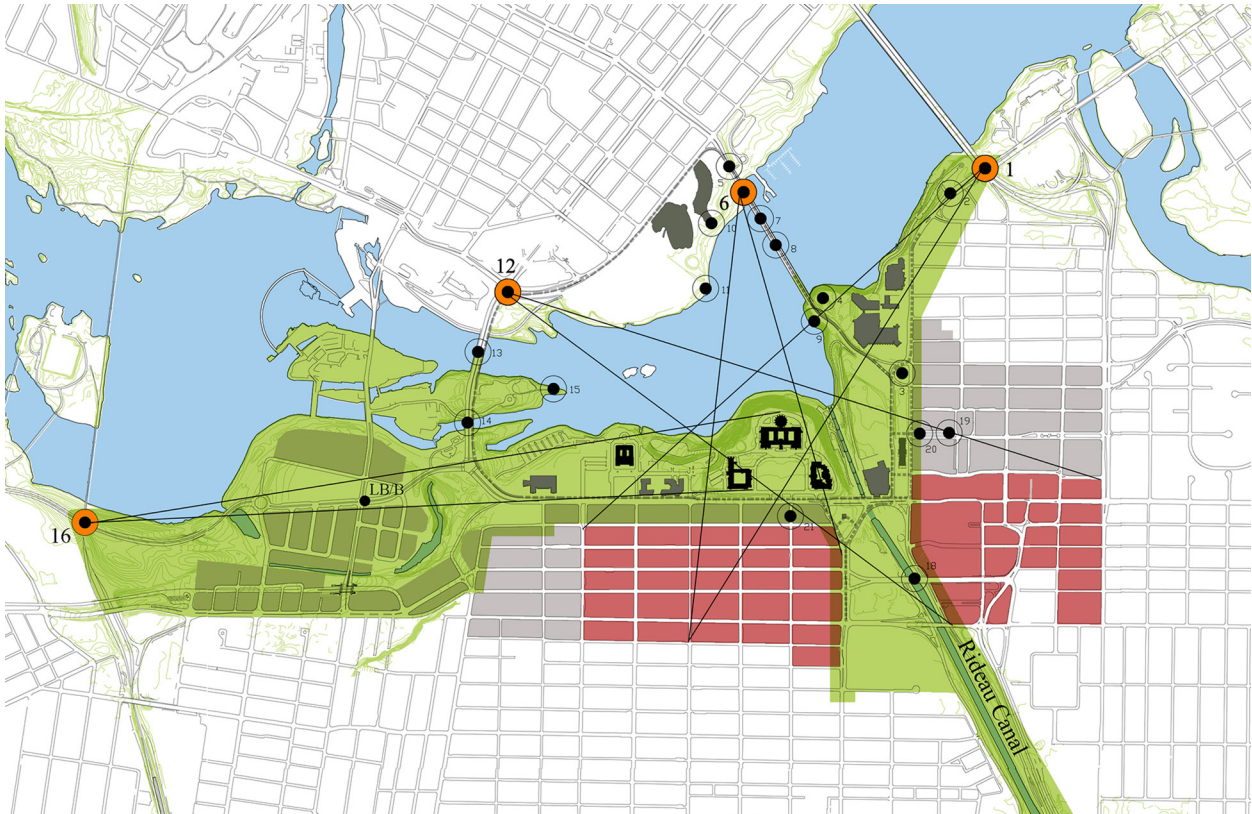
Presence on the street. Canada Embassy in Washington, DC. Architect, Arthur Erickson. Source : Wikimapia

3.4 VIEWS AND VISTAS

View protection height limits for the downtown core were developed through a partnership between the City of Ottawa, Public Services and Procurement Canada (PSPC), and the NCC. The height limits have been established to protect the views and silhouette of the national symbols, notably the buildings on Parliament Hill and those of the Judicial Precinct, to ensure the visual integrity and primacy of the national symbols.

- All projects must comply with the approved Canada's Capital Views Protection Policy (November 2007), and respect background and foreground views protection.
- The height of a proposed new building must be sensitive to adjacent existing conditions, and careful consideration should also be made in terms of the contribution that the overall form and roofscape to make a distinctive skyline.

- The siting of a building should take into account other views that could be enhanced or created according to their potential of offering new vistas on valued landscapes and Capital features.
- The project has the potential to develop itself into an iconic building, and proper attention to the perspective on the building should be given.
- Site-specific guidelines will identify views and vistas to be protected and enhanced.
- New projects should not intrude into or obstruct protected viewsheds, and they should reinforce the perceptual experience along an important view corridor.
- Designers should provide the NCC with a 3-D digital model of the massing of the proposed diplomatic mission, including output renderings showing the impact on protected viewsheds or other valued panoramas as identified by the NCC.



Map of the areas subject to background and foreground height controls, from Canada's Capital Views Protection, figure 84 p.82, November 2007, DTAH – Centre for Landscape Research, University of Toronto. Source : NCC

4. Architecture and Landscaping

4.1 ARCHITECTURAL EXPRESSION

New buildings, modifications and additions to existing buildings are to contribute to the identity of Canada's Capital. They must demonstrate good integration with their surroundings, through their purpose, scale, materiality, accessibility and interaction with the public realm. They must not encroach on, or diminish views of, the national symbols. New buildings should express a commitment to a high quality of sustainable design and construction.

New interventions on heritage buildings and sites must respect their character and their setting in the Capital. Any proposal to alter a heritage building must protect and conserve the elements that define its character and embody its heritage value.

Missions located along Confederation Boulevard or along parkways and driveways fulfill a particular role in

the Capital. The design of all new projects must reflect this Capital role in all aspects.

In general:

- New buildings, renovations and additions to existing structures are to demonstrate excellence with respect to their public face, the public spaces that they create and the contribution that they make to the public realm.
- Contemporary architectural vocabulary is encouraged, and must be sensitive to the heritage surroundings if expressive of the country's culture and finest architectural craftsmanship.
- Designs must be contemporary and spatially flexible to meet changing needs and be enduring over time.
- Bland office embassy style or international style must be avoided and bunker-style architecture and high perimeter fences and walls should be avoided or kept at a minimum.
- Missions are encouraged to use high quality materials. The choice of the materials should be in

context to the character of surrounding buildings and the location of the mission. High quality materials are more aesthetically pleasing, and they



Contemporary architectural expression, Canada Embassy in Seoul. Architects, Zeidler Partnership. Source : <http://www.zeidler.com/>

frequently are more durable in the climate of the Capital.

- At the street level, street animation is preferred in lieu of blank facades, especially in urban settings.

4.2. BUILDING MASSING AND FORM

In general:

- Building massing and site configuration should take into account adjacent natural settings, open space networks, streets and the public realm, urban patterns of built form and density, public outlooks, visual accents, fields of view, and the relationship to any adjacent public art, such as commemorative monuments, fountains, or gardens of important edifices.
- Mechanical, communications and other roof elements are to be located in such a way that they are not visible from public streets and the spaces surrounding sites. Whenever possible, these elements should be incorporated into the roof forms of the building.
- The massing of the building must reflect and contribute to the overall composition of the street, and should take cues from the adjacent sites.
- Buildings must comply with the height restrictions of views protection and, where no protected views is within sight, must respect the local municipal by-laws or regulations.
 - Typically, stand-alone diplomatic missions should not exceed three storeys or 14 metres in height.
 - Building massing should be articulated



Showcase of the country's culture and openness; House of Sweden, Washington DC. Architects, Gert Wingardh and Thomas Hansen Source : <http://www.houseofsweden.com/>

whenever any facade has a frontage wider than 20 metres.

- Designers should share a site study and massing options with the NCC during the review process. This site study should include the following:
 - o wind and sun studies;
 - o analysis of the roofscapes and typical geometry.

4.3. LANDSCAPING

Landscapes surrounding buildings must achieve design excellence, and be commensurate with the location, architecture and cultural heritage of the area. The cultural landscapes in which or adjacent to which the mission is planned to be located must be protected and enhanced.

In general:

- Landscaping and architecture must be conceived and integrated as a whole.
- Existing landscape features such as mature trees should be retained, except where they are an impediment to security, or if their removal is unavoidable for site remediation activities.
- Front yards should have landscaped areas typically a minimum of 1.8 metres in width. Landscaping could be used to screen site elements that detract from the architectural composition of the principal building on the site.
- Planting in rear and side yards should enhance the visual appeal of the site and reinforce the definition of parcel boundaries. It should also screen parking from the street view.
- Where site hardening within the site perimeter is required, it should be integrated into the topography of the site, wherever possible. If it is not, security barriers should be integrated into the urban landscape in a manner that minimizes their visual impact and any infringement on public space.
- The planting of native and non-invasive species is strongly favoured.
- Where maple trees in particular are proposed, favour the planting of native maple species.
- Non-native trees or other plantings may be planted on a limited basis under circumstances such as the following:

- o for ornamental and/or formal landscape applications where native species are not feasible or appropriate to the context;
- o where non-native alternatives offer a significantly better likelihood of survival, given conditions specific to the planting location (e.g. impacted street trees); and
- o other similar exceptional circumstances.

- The removal of trees must comply with the tree policy in effect at the NCC, and provide compensation measures commensurate with the value of any loss of vegetation or ecosystem function resulting from works on federal properties.
- The replacement ratios and/or tree value compensation will be determined on a context-specific basis, by considering the following factors:
 - o the number, health, size and age of the specimen affected;
 - o the significance to the Capital of the affected area's location;
 - o the affected area's relative landscape contribution to the quality of the Capital's setting; and
 - o the relative impact of the anticipated loss of ecosystem function.
- When trees are removed from the site, they should be replaced on the site with trees of a minimum size of 90 to 110 mm caliper. When the replacement of trees on-site is not possible, the mission may donate the replacement trees to the NCC for planting on a nearby federal site.
- All trees designated to be saved must be protected during the building construction and excluded from the construction area.

4.4. SECURITY

Security installations must achieve their objectives without compromising the integrity or environmental qualities of the Capital's "green" image, and they must engender a sense of secure, but open access. Equipment should be incorporated unobtrusively into normal urban elements.

In general:

- The missions should integrate risk-reduction measures with the maintenance or creation of a great public environment.
- Security elements should be unobtrusive, usually doubling as normal urban design elements, such as decorative walls, planters, seating, landscape features or public art in an urban setting, or bioswales and ha-has in an open setting.
- The NCC expects a design palette, or family of elements integrated with the design character of the building, which will establish a desirable unity across the site.
- Kiosks, bollards, fences and lighting will be compatible with the design language of the main building and of its surroundings, and will not appear as alien elements. Special care must be given in cases of missions located along Confederation Boulevard with respect to the use of similar elements.
- Fencing of the site for security or other purposes should be minimized. A combination of low wall (below 0.5 metres) and fence is preferred.
- The NCC encourages the use of high quality metalwork and/or stonework in fencing. Chain link fencing is not permitted.
- Fencing may not be solid or opaque (other than stone columns if they are part of the design).
- The colour scheme of the fencing should be in relation to fencing on adjacent sites. The preferred colours of fencing are black or silver-coated metallic colours. The fencing should be designed to be visually subordinate to the architectural impact of the principal building.
- Security fencing should be below 2.0 metres in height unless exceptional security measures are a requirement of the mission.
- Fencing and ironwork should reflect the wrought iron vocabulary in use in comparable locations for significant buildings.

4.5. ANCILLARY STRUCTURES AND UTILITIES

In general:

- No utility boxes are permitted in front yards, or along Confederation Boulevard or parkways, unless demonstrated that no other location is feasible.
- If, by exception, such a utility box is permitted, it should be integrated with another ancillary structure or be properly screened from the public road and walkway.
- Ancillary buildings such as security guard houses, garages and so on, should generally be limited to one storey in height, and they should be faced with



Integration of security with the landscaping and the siting: a reimagined moat, USA Embassy in Beijing. Architects : SOM; landscape architecture : PWPLA, Source : <http://www.pwpla.com/>

a material that is of a comparable quality to the principal building on the site.

- Security devices, signage and other elements must be designed to fully integrate with the building design, must not create a discordant appearance to the street, nor be highly visible from the public edges of the site.
- Areas or structures for the storage of garbage or recycling should be integrated within an ancillary structure that is not in the front yard, or they should be properly screened.

4.6. LIGHTING

The design of exterior lighting must provide good visibility and functional safety, while enhancing nighttime enjoyment and contributing to an attractive nightscape. Lighting must contribute to a special sense of place, a space that functions well, where users and pedestrians feel welcome and comfortable.

In general:

- Light sources must be selected for long life, energy-efficiency and excellent colour rendering.
- Exterior lighting fixtures should be architecturally integrated with the character of the associated structures, site design and landscape.
- Lighting should provide good visibility, minimum glare and minimum spillage onto other properties or into the sky.
- Lighting of and around the site must be compatible with adjacent uses, and not be directed toward, or create trespass on, adjacent properties.
- In instances where the site faces Confederation Boulevard or an NCC parkway or driveway, lighting should be in accordance with established NCC standards for type, quality and colour of lighting (Confederation Boulevard Guidelines - Management and Stewardship of our Capital Legacy, March 2011).
- Pole-mounted and wall-mounted lighting fixtures used for parking lots, area lighting and security lighting should be full cut-off luminaires shielded or installed in such a way as to enhance architectural or landscape features.

- If the site is located within the core area, the lighting plan must be in accordance with the Capital Illumination Plan developed by the NCC.

5. Requirements for Approvals

To build Canada's Capital Region, the NCC seeks projects of quality and excellence. The federal land use, transaction and design approval process ensures that projects on federal lands and by federal organizations (including the NCC) contribute to a capital that Canadians can be proud of.

- Applications for the development of a site should follow the process described at <http://www.ncc-ccn.gc.ca/property-management/how-to-use-federal-lands/federal-land-use-design-transaction-approval-process>
- The architectural design drawings must be stamped by an architect registered in the province of Ontario or Quebec; the landscape plans, by a landscape architect registered in the province of Ontario or Quebec and engineering drawings, by an engineer registered in the province of Ontario or Québec, depending on the province where the project is located.

6. Modifications

Any subsequent modifications to the design, the exterior of the building, or the site landscaping or functional requirements will be subject to approval by the NCC, if and as established in the transaction agreement. The changes must be in the spirit of the original design. Missions are encouraged to consult the original designers for input during the formulation of plans for modifications.