

BACKGROUND

Washington, as the capital of the United States, must provide space for the activities of the more than 100 foreign governments accredited to our own. These activities range from embassies, which are the official residences of the ambassadors, and chanceries, which are the business offices of diplomatic missions and may employ as many as 500 persons, to offices concerned with such matters as purchasing, education, and finance, and which may employ only a few persons.

Because Washington is also a focal point of international activities as well, many international organizations have established offices here. The presence of these international activities is one of the unique features which make Washington a truly cosmopolitan city.

The important position of the United States in world affairs and the ever-increasing complexity of foreign relations has resulted in a continuing increase in the number of foreign representatives assigned to Washington, with a corresponding increase in office space needs.

Since 1947, 47 foreign nations have established new diplomatic missions in Washington. Now 120 foreign governments are represented, functioning in 265 separate office locations. Recently, the Department of State has identified 27 foreign governments requiring new chancery space. Many international organizations also maintain offices in Washington. These range from the headquarters of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund to the Washington Branch of the International Labor Office. Today, a number of these need additional office space. In addition, quasi-official agencies with international interests and business firms engaged in international trade find it essential to be located in Washington, where contact with foreign, international, and Federal representatives can be conveniently accomplished.

The location of chanceries has been one of the most perplexing problems relating to international activities in Washington. Because these office uses generate substantial traffic and parking requirements, their location in residential areas often leads to neighborhood friction. On the other hand, chanceries cannot be located in anonymous rental space in

commercial office buildings because of security requirements and considerations of national prestige.

Before 1957, chanceries were allowed anywhere within the District of Columbia. In that year new zoning regulations were adopted providing that chanceries may be located in residential zones only with the approval of the Board of Zoning Adjustment. Chancery location was further limited by legislation enacted in 1964 which barred new chanceries in all residential areas except high-density zones, where again they need approval of the Board of Zoning Adjustment. The result has been to restrict new chancery operations to areas where adequate sites are difficult and costly to acquire.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN PROPOSALS

In February 1967, the National Capital Planning Commission published the Proposed Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital. This plan presented major proposals on Foreign Missions and International Agencies in Washington.

Basic Plan Policies

■ Chanceries and international organizations should be encouraged to locate in an International Center in the District of Columbia.

The nature of diplomacy requires numerous meetings among personnel of foreign missions, international organizations, and certain Federal agencies and non-governmental organizations. The prompt designation of an International Center in a location functionally related to the existing concentration of international activities will encourage their further concentration. The International Center and the immediate surrounding area should include not only official activities, such as chanceries and organizational headquarters, but supporting services, such as restaurants, shops, and hotels. The center would become a focal point of international activities in Washington.

THE EMBASSY OF JAPAN



THE EMBASSY OF IRAN

