

Testimony by
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Transportation and Infrastructure Committee
Subcommittee on Economic Development, Public Buildings,
and Emergency Management

**“TOO MUCH FOR TOO LITTLE: FINDING THE COST-RISK BALANCE FOR
PROTECTING FEDERAL EMPLOYEES IN LEASED FACILITIES”**

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Chairwoman Eleanor Holmes Norton (D-DC), Vice Chair Thomas S. P. Perriello (D-VA) , Ranking Member Mario Diaz-Balar (R-FL) and members of the Subcommittee, I want to thank you for inviting me to testify today regarding security requirements for federal buildings.

I am Maureen McAvey, Executive Vice President of the Urban Land Institute.

ULI is a global nonprofit education and research institute with a mission which is dedicated to providing leadership in the responsible use of land and in creating and sustaining thriving communities. Established in 1936, ULI now has offices in over 50 metropolitan communities across the country and around the world and counts over 30,000 professionals as members, who represent all aspects of land use and urban development disciplines, ranging from real estate investors, lenders, developers, architects and public officials.

I have organized my testimony today in three parts in order to underscore three areas of significance which I believe should be of interest to you and the subcommittee. These are:

- A renewed emphasis on the significance of urban livability;
- The nexus of federal security guidelines, federally leased space and sustainable communities;
- The need to reflect on the “long view” of urban development.

I. A Renewed Emphasis on the Significance of Urban Livability

ULI's entire program of work is based on a underlying belief that the livability of metropolitan areas is the single most important component of long-term community sustainability. A high quality of life in urban communities is essential to economic, social and environmental sustainability.

After decades of anecdotal observations, we now have data showing that residential building starts are migrating toward urban centers in many cities; centering on mixed-use and transit-friendly commercial centers which are the economic engines driving the service economy both in regional and national economies.

Recent research with respect to land use patterns and transportation trends show that our country's collective efforts reduce our dependence of foreign sources of oil and reduce greenhouse gas emissions indicate the absolute importance to engage in land use practices which produce “compact development” outcomes and reduce emissions in the transportation sector. Mixed-use compact development reduces vehicle trips, reduces overall miles driven and produces fewer greenhouse gas emissions in a “compounding effect” over time.

The rejuvenation of walkable civic spaces in our cities has played an important role in the overall urban revival that has been occurring over the past two decades. One needs not look farther than the renaissance of urban waterfronts in cities across the country. Whether the pioneers of Baltimore, Boston and San Francisco or the late bloomers of Providence, Chattanooga and even Washington, D.C.! The creation of meaningful and functional public open space is a demonstrated core-value of community self-determination and local economic development.

II. The nexus of federal security guidelines, federally leased space and sustainable communities.

First, let me unequivocally state the need to protect federal buildings and functions of the federal government -- and the federal employees and citizens who use those buildings-- from external threats to their security.

The challenge we face here is the need to balance legitimate needs for physical security with the associated undesirable impacts to public spaces, building design, and broader neighborhood vitality and community sustainability. In addition to mitigating undesirable impacts of federal facilities in communities, we must move further to understand the desirable impacts that federal facilities and federal uses can have in fostering sound local economic development.

Security proposals for individual buildings are often developed specifically to satisfy existing security standards, and do not balance improved building security outcomes in the context of broader neighborhood security measures, or other public, economic development or environmental impacts.

Furthermore, the opportunity to encourage federal leasing within existing commercial centers and within existing commercial buildings is highly desirable from both the perspective of the existing commercial real estate markets and the beneficial sustainable development outcomes associated with “infill development” strategies.

By approaching federal facility security in a manner which accommodates the land use patterns of existing commercial centers, federal leasing activity can serve to achieve multiple beneficial outcomes:

- Be located in highly accessible locations which have broad and efficient connections to a cross section of affordable and work-force housing alternatives. By encouraging all opportunities of “co-location”, existing investments in local infrastructure are leveraged and future investments in local infrastructure are minimized.

- Can be structured as a "development catalyst" which enables and encourages complementary private-sector mixed-use investment in adjacent sites, especially in Brownfield locations, where infrastructure and remediation costs can be structured for broader community benefit at no additional expense to the federal government.
- Can seek to target buildings and sites which are considered by local planning officials to be underutilized in terms of land use densities, such as abandoned/underutilized shopping malls, commercial office buildings or industrial areas. These existing buildings may not be historic, but may be functionally obsolete.
- Be oriented towards public transportation and thereby reduce or eliminate the need for conventional parking ratios. Federal leasing can not only encourage the use of public transit, but also facilitate and intensify the level of pedestrian travel in a given location.
- Include land use and building program elements which advance community and neighborhood economic development, such as the inclusion of storefronts and temporary markets and farmers markets.
- Employ strategies which creatively leverage federal "support" functions (food & beverage, conference facilities, customer services, childcare uses) in a manner which conforms with active ground-floor use objectives set forth by local land use planners, such as mandatory retail requirements and other active ground floor uses which not only promote the connection of building users to the neighborhood context, but which also make these service spaces available for use by surrounding non-employee residents.
- Where necessary, provide an investment in shared parking facilities in a manner where those facilities can become a community asset and shared during non-business hours, especially during the evening and on weekends, including in a manner which allows local planning officials to reduce the parking requirements in surrounding land uses.

III. The Need to Reflect on the "Long View" of Urban Development

The significance and impact of federal policies such as those we are discussing today should not be underestimated with respect to their long-term impact on communities. While we speculate as to whether people will leave our cities because of threats of terrorism, we do know for sure that they will leave if they are fed up with inadequate transit systems, inefficient land use planning and a low quality of community life.

In the summer of 2001, -- before the 9-11 terrorist attacks -- ULI's J.C. Nichols Prize – ULI's most significant award honoring lifetime achievement -- was presented to Senator Patrick Moynihan to honor his lifelong dedication to excellence in urban design, public building architecture and community revitalization issues. In his acceptance address to ULI members, in October 2001, only weeks after the 9-11 terrorist attacks, Senator Moynihan stated:

Buildings – particularly public buildings -- should serve a greater purpose than to simply provide shelter; they should be built to instill pride among citizens who use them, serving as a way to “say who you are.” This is a moment not to be intimidated. The only way they (terrorists) can win is if we change the way we live, and a lot of us live in cities. These acts won't change our civilization.

The annual ULI J.C. Nichols Prize for Visionary Urban Development recognizes a person or person representing an institution whose career demonstrates a commitment to the highest standards of responsible development. It honors the legacy of legendary Kansas City, Missouri, developer J.C. Nichols, a founding ULI member who is widely regarded as one of America's most influential entrepreneurs in land use during the first half of the 1900s.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before this committee. I stand ready to answer any questions you may have.

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