

# D.C. Robert F. Kennedy Memorial Stadium Campus Revitalization Act

December 9, 2024

The D.C. Robert F. Kennedy Memorial Stadium Campus Revitalization Act (H.R. 4984), if enacted, would transfer administrative jurisdiction of most of the federally owned [Robert F. Kennedy Memorial Stadium \(RFK Stadium\) campus](#) to the District of Columbia, expand the eligible uses of land on the site, and establish certain requirements associated with the administration of the campus.

## RFK Stadium Campus

RFK Stadium is situated on an approximately 190-acre campus of federal land along the Anacostia River in the District of Columbia. Currently, the District owns and operates the stadium, while the underlying federal land is administered by the National Park Service (NPS) as [part of Anacostia Park](#). See **Figure 1** for an NPS map of the land included in the proposed transfer of administrative jurisdiction.

The District of Columbia Stadium Act of 1957 ([P.L. 85-300](#)) directed the Secretary of the Interior to acquire what became the RFK campus site, and authorized the District of Columbia Armory Board to build a stadium that the District government would subsequently operate and maintain. D.C. Stadium [opened in 1961](#) and was the home of Washington’s Major League Baseball and National Football League teams at the time. The stadium was [renamed in 1969](#), following Senator Kennedy’s assassination. The baseball team [departed following the 1971 season](#) and the football team [departed following the 1996 season](#). RFK Stadium later hosted the Washington Nationals baseball team and the D.C. United soccer team; both subsequently moved to dedicated facilities ([Nationals Park](#) and [Audi Field](#), respectively). The stadium building is now [in the process of being demolished](#), while the broader campus is used for a range of [recreational purposes](#).

In 1986, P.L. 99-581 amended the District of Columbia Stadium Act to direct the Secretary of the Interior to convey the “right, title, and interest” of the stadium to the District of Columbia government, and to provide for the District to enter a 50-year lease, without consideration (i.e., at no direct financial cost), on the RFK campus site. In 1988, NPS [conveyed](#) the stadium to the District and the local government entered into a ground lease for the campus, which is set to expire in 2038. P.L. 99-581 provided that the

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District of Columbia could use the leased land for “stadium purposes” and other specified public purposes, primarily recreational facilities, open space, and outdoor recreation opportunities.

In 2006, anticipating the departure of sports teams from the stadium, the [National Capital Planning Commission](#) (NCPC) prepared a [redevelopment study](#) for the stadium site. The NCPC recommended that the site be redeveloped as a “large waterfront park,” including recreational fields, open space, commemorative and cultural works, and residential and retail development. Some of these uses, such as residential and commercial development, are prohibited under P.L. 99-581 and the current lease. In 2017, D.C. Mayor Muriel Bowser [requested](#) that the federal government transfer the site outright to the District or remove restrictions so as to allow housing, retail, sports, and entertainment on the campus.

## Campus Revitalization Act

On February 28, 2024, the House passed the D.C. Robert F. Kennedy Memorial Stadium Campus Revitalization Act (H.R. 4984). On November 21, 2024, the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources reported the bill. H.R. 4984 would modify the administrative structure and eligible uses of the RFK Stadium campus. Specifically, the bill would direct the Secretary of the Interior to transfer administrative jurisdiction of 174 acres of the RFK Stadium campus to the District for a renewable term of at least 99 years. Under this structure, the federal government would retain ownership of the land.

H.R. 4984 would also expand eligible uses on the site. The bill would authorize the District to develop and operate the campus for

- stadium and related facility use,
- commercial and residential buildings,
- public facilities and open space (including cultural, educational, and recreational activities), and
- other specified public uses.

Additionally, the bill would allow for demolition of structures on the campus site in order to facilitate future development of eligible uses.

H.R. 4984 would further establish a range of requirements regarding preservation, restoration, and access to onsite and adjacent natural lands. At least 30% of the campus would need to be reserved as public open space, and special protections would be required for a riparian area [identified](#) by NPS as “critical” for runoff prevention. The District would also need to ensure adequate parking facilities, as well as public safety and security measures. Additionally, the bill would require that the District government mitigate effects of traffic and noise from campus activities on the surrounding residential areas.

The District government would be responsible for any costs associated with the transfer of administrative jurisdiction. H.R. 4984 would also [prohibit the use of federal funds](#) to develop a stadium on the campus. The bill also includes restrictions on financial benefits for public officials.

## Discussion

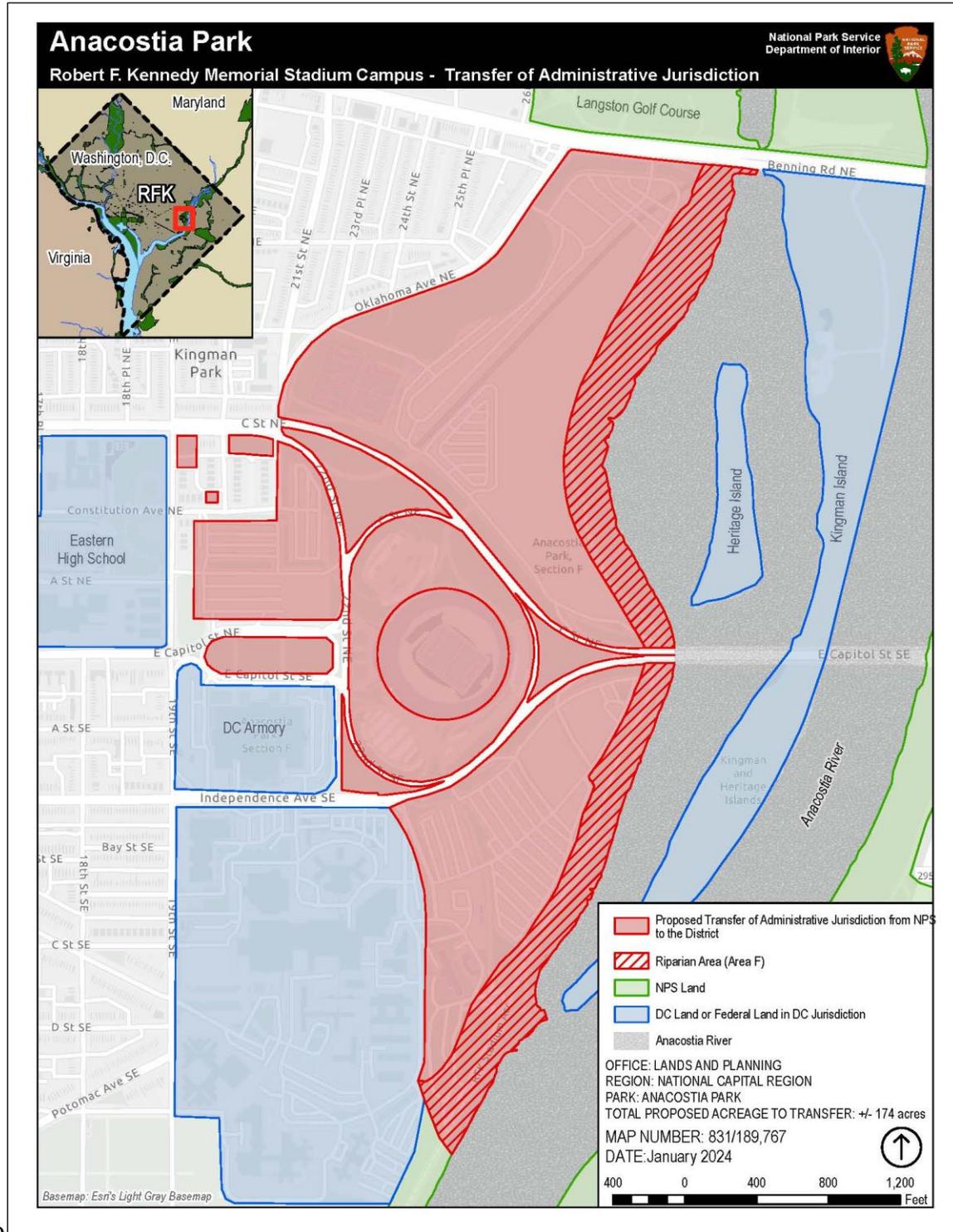
If Congress were to enact H.R. 4984, the District government could plan, approve, and allocate funding for eligible uses on the site through the local legislative process. Local funding and land use decisions would continue to be subject to congressional review, as is the case with most [District legislation](#).

Some proponents of the bill have noted that the proposed expansion of eligible campus uses would enable the District government to address [housing and economic development](#) needs, and improve [access to the Anacostia River](#). Some also have [contended](#) that the jurisdictional transfer would allow NPS to focus

more resources on its [deferred maintenance backlog](#). Some opponents of H.R. 4984 have stated that the bill could [provide an advantage](#) to the District government in its competition with other jurisdictions for the potential site of a new stadium for the Washington Commanders football team, potentially [at a cost to federal taxpayers](#).

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**Figure I. NPS Map: RFK Campus Transfer of Administrative Jurisdiction**  
Map Number 831/189,767



Source: National Park Service.

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