118TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. ______

To establish the President’s Council on Improving Federal Civic Architecture, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Mr. BANKS introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on ________________

A BILL

To establish the President’s Council on Improving Federal Civic Architecture, and for other purposes.

1 Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

2 SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

3 This Act may be cited as the “Beautifying Federal Civic Architecture Act”.

4 SEC. 2. POLICY OF THE UNITED STATES.

5 It is the policy of the United States that—

6 (1) applicable Federal public buildings should—

7 (A) uplift and beautify public spaces;
(B) inspire the human spirit;
(C) ennoble the United States;
(D) command respect from the general public;
(E) be visually identifiable as civic buildings; and
(F) as appropriate, respect regional architectural heritage;

(2) architecture, with particular regard for traditional and classical architecture, that meets the criteria described in paragraph (1) is the preferred architecture for applicable Federal public buildings;

(3) in the District of Columbia, classical architecture is the preferred and default architecture for Federal public buildings absent exceptional factors necessitating another style of architecture;

(4) where the architecture of applicable Federal public buildings diverges from the preferred architecture, great care and consideration shall be taken to choose a design that—

(A) commands respect from the general public; and
(B) clearly conveys to the general public the dignity, enterprise, vigor, and stability of
the system of self-government of the United States;

(5) when renovating, reducing, or expanding applicable Federal public buildings that do not meet the criteria described in paragraph (1), the feasibility and potential expense of building redesign to meet those criteria should be examined;

(6) where feasible and economical, a redesign described in paragraph (5) should be given substantial consideration, especially with respect to the exterior of the applicable Federal building; and

(7) the Administration should seek input from future users of applicable Federal public buildings and the general public in the community where those buildings will be located before selecting an architectural firm or design style and give the general public’s input substantial consideration.

SEC. 3. DEFINITIONS.

In this Act:

(1) 2023 DOLLARS.—The term “2023 dollars” means dollars adjusted for inflation using, with 2023 as the base year, the Gross Domestic Product price deflator of the Bureau of Economic Analysis.

(2) ADMINISTRATION.—The term “Administration” means the General Services Administration.
(3) **ADMINISTRATOR.**—The term “Administrator” means the Administrator of General Services.

(4) **APPLICABLE FEDERAL PUBLIC BUILDING.**—

(A) *IN GENERAL.*—The term “applicable Federal public building” means—

(i) any Federal courthouse;

(ii) any Federal agency headquarters;

(iii) any public building in the District of Columbia; and

(iv) any other public building the cost or expected cost to design, build, and finish of which is more than $50,000,000 in 2023 dollars.

(B) *EXCLUSIONS.*—The term “applicable Federal public building” does not include an infrastructure project or land port of entry.

(5) **BRUTALIST.**—The term “Brutalist” means the style of architecture that grew out of the early 20th-century modernist movement that is characterized by a massive and block-like appearance with a rigid geometric style and large-scale use of exposed poured concrete.

(6) **CLASSICAL ARCHITECTURE.**—
(A) IN GENERAL.—The term “classical architecture” means the architectural tradition—

(i) derived from the forms, principles, and vocabulary of the architecture of Greek and Roman antiquity; and

(ii) later developed and expanded on by—

(I) Renaissance architects, including Alberti, Brunelleschi, Michelangelo, and Palladio;

(II) Enlightenment masters, including Robert Adam, John Soane, and Christopher Wren;

(III) 19th Century architects, including Benjamin Henry Latrobe, Robert Mills, Louise Blanchard Bethune, and Thomas U. Walter; and

(IV) 20th Century practitioners, including Julian Abele, Daniel Burnham, Charles F. McKim, Robert Robinson Taylor, John Russell Pope, Julia Morgan, and the firm of Delano and Aldrich.

(B) INCLUSIONS.—The term “Classical architecture” includes styles such as Neoclassical,
Georgian, Federal, Greek Revival, Beaux-Arts, and Art Deco.

(7) COUNCIL.—The term “Council” means the President’s Council on Improving Federal Civic Architecture established by section 4(a).

(8) DECONSTRUCTIVIST.—The term “Deconstructivist” means the style of architecture—

(A) generally known as “deconstructivism”; and

(B) that emerged during the late 1980s that subverts the traditional values of architecture through features such as fragmentation, disorder, discontinuity, distortion, skewed geometry, and the appearance of instability.

(9) GENERAL PUBLIC.—The term “general public” means members of the public who are not—

(A) artists, architects, engineers, art or architecture critics, instructors or professors of art or architecture, or members of the building industry; or

(B) affiliated with any interest group, trade association, or any other organization whose membership is financially affected by decisions involving the design, construction, or remodeling of applicable Federal public buildings.
(10) OFFICER.—The term “officer” has the meaning given such term in section 2104 of title 5, United States Code.

(11) PREFERRED ARCHITECTURE.—The term “preferred architecture” means the architecture described in section 2(2).

(12) PUBLIC BUILDING.—The term “public building” has the meaning given such term in section 3301(a) of title 40, United States Code.

(13) TRADITIONAL ARCHITECTURE.—The term “traditional architecture” includes—

(A) classical architecture; and

(B) the historic humanistic architecture, including Gothic, Romanesque, Pueblo Revival, Spanish Colonial, and other Mediterranean styles of architecture historically rooted in various regions of America.

SEC. 4. PRESIDENT’S COUNCIL ON IMPROVING FEDERAL CIVIC ARCHITECTURE.

(a) ESTABLISHMENT.—There is established the President’s Council on Improving Federal Civic Architecture.

(b) MEMBERSHIP.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Council shall be composed of—
(A) the chair of the Commission of Fine Arts;

(B) all prior living chairs of the Commission of Fine Arts who elect to serve;

(C) the Secretary of the Commission of Fine Arts;

(D) the Architect of the Capitol;

(E) the Commissioner of the Public Building Service of the Administration; and

(F) the Chief Architect of the Administration.

(2) CHAIR.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—The Council shall be chaired by an individual described in paragraph (1)(A), who shall be designated by the President.

(B) VICE CHAIR; SUBCOMMITTEES.—The Chair of the Council may—

(i) designate a Vice Chair; and

(ii) establish subcommittees.

(3) COMPENSATION.—

(A) NO COMPENSATION.—Except as provided in subparagraph (B), a member of the Council shall receive no compensation as a result of serving on the Council.
(B) Travel Expenses.—A member of the Council shall be allowed travel expenses, including per diem in lieu of subsistence, at rates authorized for employees of agencies under subchapter I of chapter 57 of title 5, United States Code, while away from their homes or regular places of business in the performance of services for the Council.

e) Duties of the Council.—The Council shall—

(1) not later than 1 year after the date of enactment of this Act, submit to the Administrator a report recommending updates to policies and procedures of the Administration that—

(A) incorporates the policy of the United States described in section 2, including how the recommended updates to policies and procedures will accomplish such policy; and

(B) advances the purposes of this Act, including how those recommendations accomplish those purposes; and

(2) recommend to the Administrator changes to Administration policies for situations in which the Administration participates in a design selection pursuant to chapter 89 of title 40, United States Code (commonly known as the “Commemorative
(d) **Administrative Support; Staff.**—

(1) **Administrative Support.**—On request of the Council, the Administrator shall provide funding and administrative and technical support to the Council.

(2) **Staff.**—The Administrator—

(A) shall direct employees of the Administration to provide any relevant information the Council requests; and

(B) may detail those employees to aid in the work of the Council, on request of the Council.

(e) **FACA Functions.**—Any functions of the President under chapter 10 of title 5, United States Code, except for the reporting to Congress under section 1005(b) of that title, shall be performed by the Administrator in accordance with guidelines and procedures established by the Administrator.

(f) **Termination.**—The Council shall terminate on the date that is 5 years after the date on which the Council first meets.
SEC. 5. GSA REQUIREMENTS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The Administrator shall adhere to the policy of the United States described in section 2.

(b) NOTIFICATION.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—If the Administrator proposes to approve a design for a new applicable Federal public building that diverges from the preferred architecture, including Brutalist or Deconstructivist architecture or any design derived from or related to those styles of architecture, the Administrator shall submit to the Assistant to the President for Domestic Policy, the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs of the Senate, and the Committee on Oversight and Accountability of the House of Representatives not later than 30 days before the date on which the Administrator could reject the design without incurring substantial expenditures a notification in accordance with paragraph (2).

(2) REQUIREMENTS.—A notification submitted under paragraph (1) shall describe the reasons the Administrator proposes to approve a design described in that paragraph, including—

(A) a detailed explanation of why the Administrator believes selecting the design is justified, with particular focus on whether the design is as beautiful and reflective of the dignity,
enterprise, vigor, and stability of the system of 
self-government in the United States as alter-
native designs of comparable cost using pre-
ferred architecture;

(B) the total expected cost of adopting the 
proposed design, including estimated mainte-
nance and replacement costs throughout the ex-
pected lifecycle of the design; and

(C)(i) a description of the designs using 
preferred architecture seriously considered for 
the project; and

(ii) the total expected cost of adopting 
those designs, including estimated mainte-
nance and replacement costs throughout 
the expected lifecycles of those designs.

SEC. 6. SAVINGS PROVISION.

Nothing in this Act—

(1) impairs or otherwise affects—

(A) the authority granted by law to an ex-
ceutive department or agency, or the head 
thereof; or

(B) the functions of the Director of the Of-
office of Management and Budget relating to 
budgetary, administrative, or legislative pro-
posals; or
(2) creates any right or benefit, substantive or procedural, enforceable at law or in equity by any party against—

(A) the United States, including—

   (i) any department, agency, or entity of the United States; or

   (ii) any officer, employee, or agent of the United States; or

(B) any other person.

SEC. 7. REPORT TO CONGRESS.

On an annual basis, the Administrator shall submit to the Committee on Oversight and Accountability of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs a report about the promulgation of this Act, detailing adherence to the policy of the United States described in section 2.