Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture
Section 106 Consulting Parties Meeting #10

Date of Meeting: February 23, 2011
Project: Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture
Location of Meeting: 600 Maryland Avenue, NW – 5th Floor
Time of Meeting: 9:30 am – 12:00 noon

Attendees:
Sharon Park, SI OFEO
Patsy Fletcher, AAHGS
Thomas Luebke, U.S. Commission of Fine Arts
Dreck Wilson, ASAALH and NTHP
LaFleur Paysour, NMAAHC
Maureen Joseph, NPS-NAMA
Perry Wheelock, NPS-NCR
Amy Ballard, SI OFEO
Peter May, NPS-NCR
Judy Scott Feldman, National Coalition to Save Our Mall
Stephanie Dyer-Carroll, AECOM
Andrew Lewis, D.C. Historic Preservation Office
Louise Brodnitz, ACHP
Kelan Dyer, SI OFEO
Judy Robinson, Robinson & Associates
Daria Gasparini, Robinson & Associates
Brenda Sanchez, SI OFEO
Felicia Bell, U.S. Capitol Historical Society
Don Hawkins, Committee of 100 on the Federal City
Jud McIntire, SI OFEO
Ken Walton, NCPC
Rodrigo Abela, Gustafson, Guthrie, Nichol
Peter Cook, Davis Brody Bond Aedas

Meeting Summary
Sharon Park (SP), SI OFEO, brought the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m. and began by introducing Maureen Joseph from the National Mall and Memorial Parks, National Park Service (NPS). Next, SP reviewed the objectives of the meeting – to get an update on the museum design, including landscape modifications and the development of the corona skin, and to discuss the timeline and content of a Programmatic Agreement in compliance with Section 106 regulations concerning resolution of adverse effects. SP introduced LaFleur Paysour (LP) from the NMAAHC Department of Media Relations and External Affairs to speak about the museum’s outreach efforts relating to the design.

LP stated that the museum staff spends a great deal of time on the road meeting with people face-to-face and using every opportunity to talk about the design of the building. LP distributed a list of Design Presentations to African American Audiences (see attached). The list included museums, professional organizations, universities, and international sites, among others. LP explained that museum has also developed a special project, “Spotlight on the Design of NMAAHC – A National Tour,” to create excitement for the museum and stimulate monetary contributions and collections items. As part of this tour, members of the design team, working together or separately with key staff from the NMAAHC, will
be giving illustrated presentations on the museum design. LP noted that while traveling across the country, museum staff has listened to people’s responses about the design. For the most part, the response has been joy, enthusiasm, and the feeling that the design honors the Smithsonian’s name and honors the legacy of African American history and culture. Other responses have focused on the size of the auditorium and the character of the cafeteria. It has been suggested that the cafeteria be designed as a destination place.

SP thanked LP and asked if there were other ways to continue the discussion of the museum design at the national level and to generate feedback. LP noted that the museum is working on establishing relationships with African American fraternities and sororities as well as professional organizations.

SP added that it is very exciting that the museum received a Save America’s Treasures grant to restore the Pullman car.

Felicia Bell (FB), U.S. Capitol Historical Society, asked if the outreach meetings have been well attended. LP replied that audiences have ranged from small groups of 12 to groups of 200, depending on the program, the day of the event, etc.

Dreck Wilson (DW), ASAAHL and NTHP, noted that it may have been his comment at the last consulting parties meeting that was a catalyst for this discussion. He added that his comment was more about outreach to technical associations such as the American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA), the American Institute of Architects (AIA). DW noted that these professional associations are not on the list of design presentations. LP responded that this audience will be targeted when the design is closer to being finished.

SP thanked LP and introduced Rodrigo Abela (RA), Gustafson, Guthrie, Nichol, and Peter Cook (PC), Davis Brody Bond Aedas.

**Landscape Design Presentation**

RA began his discussion of the landscape design update by focusing on the northern section of the landscape plan. He noted that in response to comments received following the staking exercise, the design team reduced the height of the mounds in the north landscape. This served to open up views from points along Constitution Avenue. RA showed perspective studies comparing the original design of the mounds with the current modified lower mounds. (SP added that there is another site stake out planned for March 16, 2011, at 2:00 p.m., and invited the consulting parties to attend.) RA clarified that while previously the north landscape featured artificial high points, the height of the mounds is now defined by the height of the below-grade structure. RA added that the overall goal for the north landscape was to create a level ground for the building. RA showed illustrations of the topography to demonstrate how the mounds have been moved and lowered and how the landscape is now softer and shallower.

RA noted that another key element in the north landscape is the oculus, which the design team did not want to be simply another element placed in leftover space between the two primary paths. The oculus will be a skylight, although its design has not been fully developed. The design team is not yet certain if a guard rail will be required around the oculus.

RA explained that another element in the north landscape is the cooling tower. The Smithsonian is studying ways to avoid having a cooling tower, but right now it is located along Fourteenth Street. The
cooling tower will be placed within a vault covered by a large open grate. The cooling tower will not protrude above ground and may be screened by shrubs.

RA explained that the sweeping curvilinear paths are crucial elements in the landscape design. Secondary paths will be introduced into the landscape but will be deemphasized and will be designed using different materials than the primary paths. Seating areas will be used to define spaces for small groups to congregate. Secondary pathways will tie the seating areas together.

RA discussed two elements of the landscape design that had not been previously presented – the courtyard and the skylight. RA explained that the courtyard will be located on the east between the loading dock and the main building. The courtyard was introduced into the design to address issues of egress and to bring light into the lower level. Thomas Luebke (TL), U.S. Commission of Fine Arts, asked about the configuration of the stairs to the courtyard and questioned the accuracy of the illustration. Kelan Dyer (KD), SI OFEO, confirmed that the stairs work as illustrated. Andrew Lewis (AL), D.C Historic Preservation Office, asked if the addition of the stairs required shifting the loading dock ramp to the east. RA clarified that the stairs are under the ramp.

RA spoke about the skylight on the west side of the site, stating that the goal is to bring daylight into the space below ground. The design team studied various ways to incorporate the skylight into the site without obstructing views and settled on a “carved in” approach. The skylight will be integrated into the security wall along the perimeter sidewalk. The stepped down terrace adjacent to the skylight will be planted to deter people from stepping onto it. The tiers under the skylight will also be planted to reintegrate the cut that is created in the landscape back into the site.

AL asked if the design team developed a rendering of the skylight as viewed from the top of the Washington Monument. RA replied that this view has not yet been developed. Patsy Fletcher (PF), AAHGS, asked about alternatives for the cooling tower. RA replied that the Smithsonian was looking into sharing a cooling tower with the National Museum of American History (NMAH). Jud McIntire (JM), SI OFEO, added that sharing a cooling tower is feasible, but there are issues that would need to be working out. DW asked if the perimeter security wall on the west could be hidden or camouflaged. RA replied that the design team has studied this but found that it was not an appropriate solution because the use of hedges would set the site apart from the context of the Washington Monument Grounds (which does not feature that type of planting). Peter May (PM), NPS-NCR, commented that the NPS has spoken out about using less shrubbery on the west side of the site. PM added that the NPS has concerns about the skylight as well. It will introduce a foreign element into the landscape. PM noted that, as it was originally presented, the landscape design was sympathetic with the Washington Monument Grounds and now it is getting built out. Louise Brodznit (LB), Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, observed that there was also a discussion about activating the site for public use.

DW commented that he finds the landscape program weak and underwhelming. He would like the museum to take another look at more intensely programming the space to create outdoor rooms with various public functions. TL asked if DW thought the current landscape plan responds to his comments about programming. DW replied that it does, but in a weak way. Judy Scott Feldman (JSF), National Coalition to Save Our Mall, agreed with comments about programming the space to make it as active as possible. JSF noted that school groups are usually larger than 15 to 20 people and asked how the current design plans to accommodate larger school groups.

JSF stated that she has reviewed NPS documentation on the Washington Monument Grounds and other resources and noted considerable change since the 1930s. She noted that Madison Drive and Fifteenth
Street are noncontributing elements and suggested that this means the streets could be adapted to allow the museum to create a better site. JSF commented that a more rectangular site would help the design and the museum should allow for or anticipate a change in the configuration of the roads. SP responded that the Smithsonian is dealing with what we have been handed in terms of the boundaries of the site, adding that the museum is not in the position to ask the NPS to redesign roads and give the Smithsonian more square footage. SP added that the more critical issue is how to create a landscape that deals with the site as a transitional space. JSF stated that the Coalition is concerned about the integrity of the Mall and its future, adding that whatever happens on this site will cement an attitude towards the landscape in regard to future development. JSF added that she feels the NPS interpretation of historic documents regarding the definition of the site is flawed. TL asked if JSF was advocating for the site to be designed as if the changes that occurred to the Washington Monument Grounds in the 1980s and 1990s did not occur. TL would argue that altering the streets would actually create a smaller site. LB noted that, in terms of Section 106, the issue of defining the site should be considered a closed issue due to the fact that the site has been taken into account already.

TL commented that the sinuous curving paths and views across the site are important features to maintain as the landscape plan is developed. TL noted that he thought it was possible to increase capacity for programming while maintaining the primacy of these features. He added that it might be possible to incorporate a contemplative feature in the northeast corner of the site. TL questioned the symbolism behind the oculus and asked if it is conceptually connected to the museum. TL commented that placing the round oculus in a square element is a weak design that introduces too many shapes into the landscape. TL stated his concerns about the size of the skylight on the west, adding that it is a large element that currently clogs up the integrity of the open landscape. TL suggested reducing the size of the skylight and incorporating it into the security wall. Regarding the courtyard on the east, TL commented that the heavy masonry stairs conflicts with the lightness of the diaphanous skin.

PM commented that the reshaping of the mounds in the north landscape is a tremendous improvement, adding that he will be able to get an even better sense of this at the site stake out in March. PM noted that the NPS is not against activating the site. He thinks that keeping the landscape compatible with the Washington Monument Grounds is not in conflict with the desire for programmable space. PM added that the oculus may need to be designed very simply so that other spaces in the landscape can have life. There is a risk of cluttering up the landscape with too many elements. PM agreed with TL's comment about the size of the skylight, adding that the way it engages with the path is problematic.

Don Hawkins (DH), Committee of 100 on the Federal City, commented that the landscape does not seem like it has an overall coherent design. SP noted that the landscape is still being refined. LB added that she would like to get a better sense of how the landscape could be strengthened in terms of programmable space. DW commented that creating outdoor rooms in the landscape would enhance the overall experience of the museum. DW noted that the design is not unified. DW added that it would be wonderful if the design could reference the historic location of Tiber Creek. RA responded that the water element on the north is in the same location as the creek. LB asked if there are photos or maps of Tiber Creek that could be used for reference. Judy Robinson (JR), Robinson & Associates, replied that there are. Perry Wheelock (PW), NPS-NCR, added that these materials are included in the Tier I EIS documentation.

**Building Design Presentation**
PC began the presentation with a discussion of the evolution of the panel dimensions. PC noted that the design team has studied how the building and the site will respond to the Washington Monument and
the Grounds. PC noted that the shape of the corona reflects the shape of the top of the Washington Monument.

PC explained that the design team studied the best way to break down the tiers of the corona to achieve the most satisfactory proportion between the size of the tier and the size of the panels. The design team settled on five panels per tier. The design of the panels has to allow natural light to enter the building and allow views out. In designing the panels, the team looked at historical images of Charleston, Savannah, and New Orleans and studied the African American tradition of ornamental ironwork. The design of the panels is an abstraction of historic ornamental ironwork found in the South. PC explained that by manipulating the width of the lines in the pattern of the panels, the porosity of the skin can be manipulated.

PC identified the places in the building where openings will occur to allow for views. The base of the building has clear glazing on all four sides. The porosity of the skin, or “veil,” will fluctuate in response to movement within the building. At the gallery levels, visitors will experience “lenses,” or openings in the skin that will allow for views out. The west side of the top tier is open to allow for a panoramic view of the Washington Monument Grounds. PC showed illustrations of the corona to demonstrate the fluctuating porosity of the skin and the location of the lenses.

PC described the structural system of the corona. The structure is based on four cores that penetrate up through the entire building. Gallery massing is placed around the cores. Circulation and a panoramic viewing balcony are located on the west. The structure uses a system of trusses and tensile cables. PC explained that as the design advanced, the structure expanded in each dimension and now measures 220 feet by 220 feet. The vertical dimension of the building currently stands at is 109 feet, which the design team is working to reduce.

PC showed illustrations of the night lighting as viewed from the Washington Monument Grounds. FB asked if there were illustrations of the night lighting from the grounds of the Capitol. SP noted that earlier viewed analysis demonstrated that the building would not be visible from the Capitol because it would be blocked by trees. TL noted that with the increase in height, the building might now be visible above the tree line at night. LB asked if the fluctuations in porosity of the skin will be visible with the night lighting. PF asked how visible the interior lighting will be at night. PC replied that the building will read differently depending on where you are looking at it and depending on the distance from which it is being viewed.

DH questioned the necessity and relative value of the lenses. He added that the lenses make the skin appear torn. SP replied that the lenses are a response to previous comments that it is important to have views out of the building. DH commented that he thought the idea was that the skin screen would allow views out and that the lenses signify that the designers are only kidding about the porosity of the skin. LB had a similar reaction to the lenses and was also under the impression that the skin would allow views out. FB commented that focusing on the views out distracts from the important content of the building program.

DW commented that the corona had previously been illustrated as having a plain facade and seeing the panel articulation is startling. DW added that the rectangular lenses appear foreign to the concept of the corona as an abstraction of the West African headdress. Seeing the design of the panels reminds him of the Montgomery County detention center. DW noted that the skin reminds him of Arabic grills and suggested that the design team use this idea as a design source for how to handle the lenses.
PF noted that the design of the ironwork grills was adapted from European precedents. She would like to see the design derived from West African sources. PF thought that the skin would be uniformly porous. She noted that in examples of his architecture, David Adjaye has demonstrated the ability to create transparent facades.

AL asked if the structural elements will be in the lenses and obstruct views. He suggested that the top of the rectilinear openings of the lenses undulate to allow them to blend in better with the skin.

TL suggested that the porosity of the skin should be even, so that the lenses are not necessary. As it stands now, the designers have created “holes in the veil.” TL commented that giving the panels a three-dimensionality rather than a flat incised cut could be more lively. TL added that he can not comment on how his Commission will respond to the lenses, but suggested that the vertical lens on the west be shifted toward the Washington Monument. TL added that the increase in size of the corona raises Section 106 issues. He noted that the skin is five feet from the glazing and questioned if it was necessary to have both the interior structure and the exterior skin take on a saw-tooth form. TL suggested that the design team study a scheme using a vertical plane of interior glazing, which would also help decrease the size of the corona. DH supported TL’s suggestion, adding that simplicity would help the building. PC noted that a five foot gap between the skin and the interior glazing was required for maintenance.

LB asked if the exterior skin was envisioned to be shimmering. PC responded, yes, and clarified that the skin will be composed of a composite material.

DH asked if the lenses are view boxes, rooms that one walks into. PC replied, yes.

AL agreed that the increase in volume of the corona is a Section 106 issue. He suggested bringing the skin closer to the building and asked for future studies by the design team. SP noted that the change in size relates to the need for floor space in the galleries. TL questioned if the double saw-tooth design is worth the increase in volume and cost. TL added that the idea that the corona floats above the glazed base is very important and suggested pulling back the glass at the ground level.

PM agreed with TL’s comment that the glazing at the base needs to be pulled back. He stated that growing the building is problematic because the consulting parties have worked so hard up to this point to get it to a compact form. PM noted that the double saw-tooth design was a surprise and he always imagined the interior to be a vertical plane. He added that, in the long run, the building will be difficult to maintain and operate. PM also agreed with previous comments about the skin not being as porous as he imagined. PM noted that the farther the distance from the skin, the more solid it will appear. PM commented that he likes the idea of having moments where views are captured, but thinks that right now they seem heavily constructed. He suggested creating these moments in a more subtle way.

Ken Walton (KW), National Capital Planning Commission, agreed with comments made by PM and TL on the landscape design. He added that he likes having voids in the skin, but added that they should be more accidental.

FB commented that the design reads more African than African American. The porch is the only American feature now.

KW noted that views out to landmarks such as the Washington Monument tie visitors back to the American experience. KW reiterated that no one wants to see the building getting bigger. KW noted that
he would like to see additional information on the porch, adding that it will be an issue if the porch extends into the McMillan setback.

SP concluded by stating that in terms of Section 106, the size of the building will continue to be an issue.

Programmatic Agreement Discussion
SP noted that over the course of the Section 106 process, the consulting parties have identified many ways to minimize adverse effects. The design team has responded to these comments by modifying the landscape design and building design in various ways. SP discussed the ways in which adverse effects have been minimized. They include, but are not limited to, the following:
- the primary circulation paths follow broad, curvilinear lines to relate to the surrounding context;
- the north landscape includes a double allee of trees;
- the perimeter security wall along Fifteenth Street has been pulled in from the sidewalk;
- the scale of the south water feature has been reduced;
- the north water feature has been pulled in from the sidewalk along Constitution Avenue;
- the height and location of the mounds in the north landscape have been modified;
- the circulation paths in the south landscape have been reconfigured; and
- there is transparency of the building at the ground level;
- the building height and volume has been reduced; and
- the penthouse on the roof of the corona is more symmetrically located.

SP stated that the Smithsonian, the D.C. Historic Preservation Office, and others will be developing an agreement document with the appropriate signatories. The Programmatic Agreement will identify mitigation measures, and the consulting parties are invited to be concurring parties to the document.

SP reviewed upcoming dates: the site visit to view the stake out will take place on March 16; the CFA presentation will be on March 17; and the NCPC presentation will be on April 7. There is a tentative consulting parties meeting scheduled for April 27. The agenda for the April meeting will be to discuss the agreement document.

Conclusion
LB apologized for missing the beginning of the meeting and the discussion of public outreach efforts. She added that she did not see any summary of public comments. SP responded that the only public comments were related to the cafeteria and the auditorium. LB added that she did not get the impression that the design presentations specifically solicited feedback on effects to historic resources. SP suggested a follow up meeting with the ACHP to get ideas on ways the Smithsonian can get additional comments to satisfy Section 106.

PF asked if there was a rain date for the stake out. SP replied that there is not an alternative date.

The meeting was adjourned at noon.
Design Presentations to African American Audiences

Wednesday, Feb. 23, 2011
Smithsonian Institution – Capital Gallery

A Partial Listing of Events
Compiled and presented by
LaFleur Paysour
NMAAHC
Media Relations and Public Affairs
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Presentations to African American audiences
At Museums, Professional Organizations, and Universities:

The Congressional Black Caucus

The Congressional Black Caucus Foundation

The Yale University Gilder Lehrman Institute

Association for the Study of African American Life and History

The New England African American Historical and Genealogical Society
at the request of the New Bedford Historical Society

The Florida African American Preservation Network:
Meetings at museums and historic homes in Central Florida
Eatonville, Sanford, New Smyrna, Mims, Bartow St Petersburg, Tampa, Bradenton

The Association of African American Museums
Annual meetings in Baton Rouge, Pittsburgh, Birmingham, Washington, DC

Smithsonian Affiliates, Charleston, SC

South Carolina State College
The National Council of Judges
National Park Service, Richmond
Tredgar Civil War Center, Richmond
Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond
The Sixth Baptist Church, History Society in Richmond
The Richmond Slave Trail Commission

African American staff associations at the following Washington, DC-based offices:
Office of Court Supervision, the Office of the US attorney, and the Federal Judicial Center

International sites – the African Diaspora and cities with keen interest in African American History and Culture
Visits arranged by John Franklin, NMAAH C’s Director of Partnerships and International Programs

Dakar, Senegal, 50th Anniversary of Senegal’s independence, in April 2010
Bunch and Franklin made presentation to chief curator of the Institute Fondamentale
d'Afrique Noir, Dr. Ibrahima Thiaw,
US- trained archaeologist.
gave overview of the design and showed the Flythrough

As a guest of the US Embassy in France, Franklin spoke to French museums in cities that were key to the Slave Trade: Marseille, Bordeaux, LaRochelle, Nantes

UNESCO meeting on the Slave Trade, Paris

African Diaspora Heritage Trail Conference in Bermuda, November, 2010

The World Black Arts Festival in Dakar, Senegal

Maritime Museum and Black Cultural Center in Halifax, Nova Scotia

Presentations by members of the Design Team:

Phil Freelon has given presentations to the following groups:
Rice University, of Houston, TX, the African American Students Union
St. Ambrose Episcopal Church, Raleigh NC
The African American Museum of Houston, TX
The Design Department at Harvard
David Adjaye has talked to a number of groups at a number of sites in the Africa, Great Britain and the US including Cornell, Harvard, Cooper Hewitt and Cooper Union.

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In development: “Spotlight on the Design of NMAAHC -- A National Tour”

A Special Project of the Department of Media Relations and External Affairs

Members of the Design Team, working together or separately, and with key staff from NMAAHC to give slide-illustrated presentations on the design

The goal:
  Create excitement for The Museum
  Stimulate contributions of money and collections items and money

First event in the series:

- Thursday, Feb. 24, 2011 – Peter Cook makes presentation (with fly-through) to the Tuskegee University School of Architecture

- April 7-9, 2011: Dedication of the Robert Robinson Taylor School of Architecture at Tuskegee (To be confirmed)

Taylor (1868-1942) entered MIT in 1888 as the first African American student

Designed most of the buildings on the campus of Tuskegee Institute (those built before 1932) Science Hall, 1893; The Chapel, 1895, The Oaks, 1899

Served as second in command to Tuskegee founder and president Booker T. Washington

- The National Meeting of the AKA directors in Chicago, November 2011

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