

## 3.2 LAND USE, PLANNING POLICIES AND VISITOR EXPERIENCE

### 3.2.1 Land Use and Planning Policies

#### 3.2.1.1 Introduction and Summary of Tier I Analysis

The Tier I Final EIS examined the land use conditions on and around the site, relevant zoning policies, and historical and contemporary planning documents that apply to the site. The purpose of the Tier I analysis was to determine the impacts of a range of hypothetical building layouts and forms.

With implementation of the proposed action, five acres of open space on the National Mall that accommodates a variety of uses, including recreation activities and public gatherings, would be lost, as conclude in the Tier I Final EIS. The loss of flexible open space would reduce the options for First Amendment demonstrations and special events (Smithsonian Institution, 2008a).

The site's location on the Washington Monument Grounds places it under the jurisdiction of the federal government, and exempts it from local zoning codes. Previous development efforts for the site include a proposed State Department headquarters in 1910 and consideration for the World War II Memorial in 1995.

Historical plans examined as part of the Tier I analysis included the L'Enfant Plan (1791) and the McMillan Plan (1901-1902). Both of these plans indicated that the NMAAHC site is appropriate for development. The L'Enfant Plan originally proposed the National Mall as the "Grand Avenue" of Washington. Approximately 100 years later the McMillan Plan was developed to reexamine the

configuration of the National Mall as part of the "City Beautiful Movement" of that period. While the McMillan Plan was not fully realized, it guided the land use of the Mall and adjacent areas, calling for the placement of "scientific buildings and for great museums" on the National Mall. Since then, the National Mall has evolved into the grand space present today.

The Tier I Final EIS concluded that there would be no significant effects to either plan because both plans designated the "NMAAHC site as a potential building site at the intersection of a proposed row of Monumental buildings north of the National Mall and the similar row of buildings proposed east of the Ellipse" (Smithsonian Institution, 2008a).

This Tier II Land Use analysis differs from the Tier I Final EIS in that it examines how the physical structure proposed with each alternative would interact with the site, and conform to the relevant policies and plans not discussed in the Tier I EIS. This Tier II analysis is an extension of the Tier I analysis.

#### 3.2.1.2 What Plans and Policies are relevant to the Proposed Action?

A number of planning documents are relevant to the proposed action, the *National Mall Plan* (NPS, 2010), the *Monumental Core Framework Plan* (NCPC, 2009), the *Mall-wide Perimeter Security Improvements Plan* (SI, 2004), and the *Center City Action Agenda* (DC OP, 2008). These plans include land use and planning policies that apply to either the project site or its immediate environs.

## National Mall Plan

The NPS *National Mall Plan*, which was completed in 2010, is the primary management document for the National Mall. It provides various use classifications and restrictions in conjunction with a variety of physical and programmatic improvements. The main focus of the *National Mall Plan* is to protect the cultural resources located on the Mall, continue to allow citizens the ability to express their First Amendment rights, and enhance the experience of visitors to the Mall.

The plan defines the National Mall as the area stretching from Union Square (in front of the U.S. Capitol Building) to the Lincoln Memorial and associated grounds and from Constitution Avenue to the Jefferson Memorial and associated grounds. East of 15<sup>th</sup> Street, the area narrows to the space located between Constitution Avenue and Independence Avenue. These boundaries include the NMAAHC site. However, because the *National Mall Plan* acknowledges the construction of NMAAHC, no specific improvements or use classifications are proposed for the site. Several improvements are proposed around the perimeter of the NMAAHC site and within its vicinity (NPS, 2010).

The overarching goal of the preferred alternative in the *National Mall Plan* is to “establish a sense of place and an overall identity for the National Mall” (NPS, 2010). In order to accomplish this, the plan proposes four conservation zones that provide a range of allowable uses and activities to best improve site functionality and visitor experience. The four conservation zoning areas are:

- **Memorial Area:** In general, Memorial Areas would be the most restrictive areas, allowing visitors to fully appreciate

the memorials located on the National Mall. They would be pedestrian-only, providing a tranquil and contemplative atmosphere for visitors. These areas would also be sufficiently large enough to allow each visitor to interpret, photograph, and experience each memorial without being distracted or interrupted by others. The proposed user density would be 100-200 square feet per person; with linear memorials this number may be reduced. These areas would have the highest maintenance requirements in order to preserve the quality of the memorials and the area immediately surrounding them. Allowable facilities include visitor seating, visitor information areas, exhibits, restrooms, bookstores, or retail in or around the memorial. Limited signage is allowed.

- **Character Protection Area:** Character Protection Areas would be located throughout the National Mall and would essentially serve as a buffer between the memorials and higher-intensity zones. In addition to providing a spatial buffer, the Character Protection Areas protect important views and vistas by restricting the allowable uses. Predominant uses in these areas are landscaped features that accentuate the important views and vistas to and from the memorials and allow for both active and passive recreational opportunities. The desired user density would be 1,000 square feet per person during normal use and slightly higher intensities during peak hours, special programs, or First Amendment demonstrations. Allowable facilities include: pedestrian and vehicular access and circulation; multimodal transportation corridors and intermodal transportation stops; visitor facilities; park

furnishing, outdoor educational wayside exhibits; directional, orientation and transit-related signage; and gardens and reflective or active water features.

- **Multipurpose Area:** Multipurpose Areas would be small, targeted areas located adjacent to the Memorial Areas, where the land forms or other natural features do not allow for high-intensity use or partially obscure views and vistas of important cultural resources. However, these areas present opportunities for signage, pedestrian and vehicular access, programs and activities, events and recreation. Due to the wide variety of uses these areas can accommodate, the proposed user densities range from 50-100 square feet per person in the visitor service areas to greater than 1,000 square feet per person in the recreational areas. Allowable facilities include: pedestrian sidewalks and trails; vehicular circulation; parking and multi-modal transportation corridors; visitor facilities; limited athletic facilities; park furnishings; outdoor wayside exhibits; signage; and gardens.
- **High-Use Area:** High-Use Areas would include the large tracts of land that are able to accommodate large, well-attended activities that include First Amendment demonstrations, national celebrations, and other special events. Additionally, these areas can accommodate active recreation, such as organized and impromptu athletics, and sightseeing. The primary locations of these High-Use Areas are in the central portions of the National Mall, including Union Square; areas north and west of the Washington Monument Grounds, areas adjacent to the Reflecting Pool, and areas southwest of the Tidal Basin. User density within

the High-Use Areas would vary depending on the situation; for large-scale events the density could be as high as 3 square feet per person, however, during periods of normal use this density would be reduced to 100 square feet per person. Allowable facilities include paved areas, pedestrian sidewalks or trails, athletic fields, parking lots, and event infrastructure.

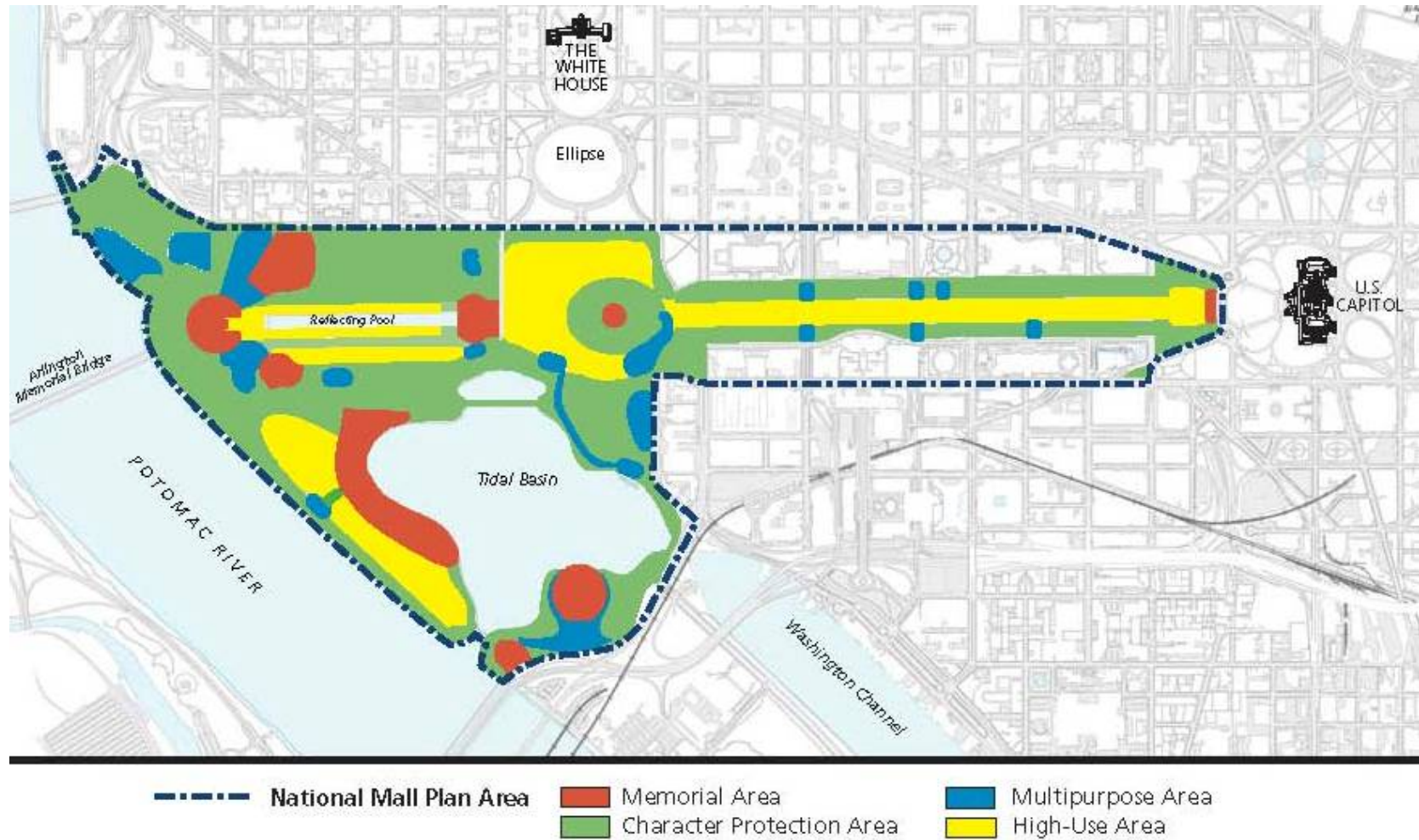
While the NMAAHC site is not identified as a particular type of conservation zone in the *National Mall Plan*, the site shares several characteristics with high use areas. In addition, several zones are located within vicinity of the site.

The conservation zone closest to the NMAAHC site is a Character Protection Area that runs from the intersection of 15<sup>th</sup> Street and Madison Drive north to Constitution Avenue and then west to 17<sup>th</sup> Street. This area would function as a buffer to the High-Use Area that covers the remainder of the Monument Grounds in proximity to the site. Similarly, on the Mall side, in areas south of Madison Drive, a Character Protection Area is designated for the outer Mall panels and a High-Use Area is designated for the central Mall panels (NPS, 2010). Figure 3.2.1 illustrates the locations of the conservation zones proposed under the *National Mall Plan*.

In addition to the conservation zones, the *National Mall Plan* also specifies various standards that dictate the amount of care and maintenance each area should be given. The standards are divided into five "Levels" ranging from Level 1, areas that require the most care and upkeep, to Level 5, areas that would see little use and require little maintenance. It was determined that a majority of the National Mall area would fall within the first three Levels (NPS, 2010).

The *National Mall Plan* recommends several improvements related to pedestrian access and circulation around the project site. To provide safe crossings for visitors and aid in pedestrian circulation, crosswalk improvements at each intersection surrounding the site would include: upgrading walking surfaces, developing consistent and identifiable crosswalks, creating bigger intersections and adjacent waiting areas to accommodate large numbers of people, programming automatic and extended pedestrian crossing times into signal phasing, and traffic –calming measures (NPS, 2010). Improvements to the paved pedestrian areas (sidewalks) along 14<sup>th</sup> Street and Madison Drive adjacent to the NMAAHC site are also included in the *National Mall Plan*.

Roadway improvements around the site call for the separation of bicycle and vehicular lanes on Madison Drive, 15<sup>th</sup> Street, and Constitution Avenue to improve site access and circulation for visitors wishing to bike to, from, and around the National Mall. Other Mall-wide improvements that would occur within the vicinity of the site include improvements to the grass/turf and trees, and the placement of park furniture. Improving the Mall's grass and turf would enhance its visual quality, while placement of park furniture would enhance the visitors' experience (NPS, 2010).



**Figure 3.2.1: Conservation Zoning under the *National Mall Plan* (Preferred Management Plan)**

Source: NPS, 2010

## Monumental Core Framework Plan

The *Monumental Core Framework Plan (2009)*, herein after referred to as the Framework Plan, is a planning document prepared jointly by NCPC and CFA. In part, the plan’s intent is to “help preserve the historic landscape of the National Mall as a place for national gatherings and a place to honor our country’s heroes and cultural heritage” (NCPC and CFA, 2009). The four primary goals of the *Framework Plan* are:

- Protect the National Mall from overuse;
- Create distinctive settings for cultural facilities and commemorative works;
- Improve connections between the National Mall, the city, and the waterfront; and
- Transform the monumental core into a vibrant and sustainable place to visit, work, and live.

An overarching theme to achieving these goals is the creation of destinations near the National Mall that would offer distinct amenities and experiences. These destinations would help alleviate much of the pressure on the National Mall generated by the demand for new memorials, and activities. The intent of the *Framework Plan* is to encourage the location of new memorials, museums, and cultural attractions off of the Mall, thereby improving connections to other parts of the District.

The Framework Plan includes specific recommendations for the four precincts, or focus areas, surrounding the National Mall. The focus area located closest to the project site is the Federal Triangle, which provides an opportunity to link downtown to the National

Mall. Creating mixed-used destinations would add to the public realm within the Federal Triangle.

The first goal of establishing new destinations within the Federal Triangle would be accomplished through redevelopment that would concentrate a mix of office, cultural, and hotel uses on Pennsylvania Avenue between 9<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> Streets while also increasing usability and sustainability. Specific targeted areas for redevelopment include: the Old Post Office Annex and IRS building as a site for cultural and hospitality uses; redevelopment of the J. Edgar Hoover Building with federal office space, street-level retail, and cultural uses; and redevelopment of 10<sup>th</sup> Street to create a welcome forecourt to NMNH and connection to the National Mall.

To improve usability, the plan proposes adding two entrances to existing Metrorail stations; improving Pennsylvania Avenue to increase street life, culture, and commerce; improving pedestrian comfort in Pershing Park and Freedom Plaza; and constructing buildings to the highest sustainability standards.

The second goal of enhancing the public realm within the Federal Triangle would be accomplished by improving the area’s aesthetic quality and increasing visitor amenities. Proposed visitor amenities contained within the plan would include a heritage trail showcasing the missions, history and architecture of the agencies located in the Federal Triangle; provision of year-round services at the Woodrow Wilson Plaza; and improving links between Benjamin Franklin Circle and the Old Post Office Plaza (NCPC and CFA, 2009).

### **Smithsonian Institution Mall-Wide Perimeter Security Improvements Plan**

The Smithsonian Institution developed a plan for providing upgraded, permanent perimeter security around 10 of its buildings located on the National Mall. The security systems would neutralize the threat of explosive-laden vehicles by providing an adequate defended standoff between the security line and the building face. The need for this arises as a means to protect many of the priceless artifacts and cultural resources housed within these buildings (Smithsonian Institution, 2004).

The *Mall-Wide Perimeter Security Improvements Plan* (2004) proposed two approaches to perimeter security treatments, both of which would be used at each building. The first approach is the unified approach, which is proposed for the sides of buildings located along Constitution Avenue. The unified approach would include a low free-standing wall to be placed at the out edge of the building yard. This approach creates consistency between the buildings along Constitution Avenue and reinforces the formal setting of the National Mall.

The second approach is the contextual approach which is proposed for the sides of the building located along Madison Drive and the numbered streets, such as 14<sup>th</sup> Street. This approach responds to the fact that each museum has a different configuration and would need site-specific security features to provide adequate protection. Security features that could be used in the contextual approach include a mix of free-standing walls, bollards, fence panels, hardened street furniture, and tree panels. The ultimate goal is to blend these features into the building fabric and site design to the greatest extent possible (Smithsonian Institution, 2004).

The NMAAHC would have to conform to similar perimeter security requirements as the other Smithsonian Institution museums along the National Mall, which would combine the unified approach along Constitution Avenue with a contextual approach along 14<sup>th</sup> Street, Madison Drive and 12<sup>th</sup> Street. The contextual security features include low free-standing walls along a majority of the site's perimeter with custom bollards located at access points. Guard booths would be located at each driveway, providing the ability to screen vehicles prior to accessing the loading/parking area (Smithsonian Institution, 2004).

### **DC Center City Action Agenda**

The *Center City Action Agenda* (DC OP, 2008) (Action Agenda) is a plan developed by DC OP to enhance the downtown area by capitalizing on emerging neighborhoods, improving transportation resources and investing in significant corridors. The *Action Agenda* proposes investment in the following areas to preserve the existing economic base and create new opportunities for growth:

- Creating great places that can anchor developing areas with key amenities and a mix of uses;
- Improving corridors that can link destinations;
- Developing multi-modal transportation networks that can support an increasing density of residents, employees and visitors and sustain environmental quality; and
- Investing in those areas of the DC economy that need assistance to create a self-sustaining critical mass, such as culture, entertainment, retail and new industry clusters that would diversify and strengthen the city's economy.

The NMAAHC's site is in the vicinity of several identified priority places or corridors. One of the places identified relevant to NMAAHC is the National Mall, which the *Action Agenda* considers the "Heart of the Center City" and the potential threshold connecting the waterfront areas and the rest of downtown DC. To accomplish this, improved pedestrian access, seamless transitions between areas, and enhanced programming are necessary. These improvements are targeted at both enhancing the experience of DC residents, as well as tourists. It is the ultimate goal of the plan to integrate the National Mall "as part of the day-to-day life of the City" (DC OP, 2008).

One of the major challenges the National Mall faces is the perception that the area is a barrier separating work-life from leisure time. To reverse this, the *Action Agenda* calls for improvements to public space, roadways, signage systems, and transit services. Implementing these improvements would create cohesion on both sides of the National Mall and facilitate the movement of people back and forth across it. One of these key provisions is aimed at turning 14<sup>th</sup> Street NW and SW into a mixed-use corridor.

The vision for the corridor is to provide a link, both physically and symbolically, from downtown DC to the Tidal Basin, Washington Channel, and Southwest Waterfront. To achieve the transformation, one major obstacle is to reduce the street's role as a commuter corridor and implement pedestrian-friendly amenities. Physical improvements, such as intersection design, signage, and directional flow would facilitate the change. Constitution Avenue and 14<sup>th</sup> Street is identified as one of the key intersections within the corridor because of its location and potential to improve the connections to the National Mall. In addition to heavy traffic volumes, one of the challenges facing 14<sup>th</sup> Street is its alignment south of the National Mall which infringes on existing memorials and serves to isolate many of the recreational amenities in that area, such as Potomac Park. Possible future realignment of the roadway may be necessary to fully realize the potential of this corridor (DC OP, 2008).



### 3.2.1.3 How would the Proposed Action affect the relevant Planning Policies?

This Tier II analysis builds upon the conclusions drawn in the Tier I Final EIS by evaluating the alternatives design concepts with respect to applicable planning documents and policies.

Impacts were defined using the following criteria:

**No Impacts:** No change or impact on planning policies would be expected as a result of the proposed action

**No Significant Impacts:** No notable changes to applicable planning policies would result from the proposed action. (this corresponds to no significant effect in the Tier I analysis)

**Significant Impacts:** Noticeable changes to applicable planning policies would result from the proposed action.

#### No Action Alternative

With the No Action Alternative, construction of the NMAAHC would not occur and the site would remain as open space. The current use of the site, which includes a temporary concession trailer and periodic public demonstrations, would continue. Further, site administration would also revert to NPS jurisdiction for use as a flexible open space resource consistent with the management of the Washington Monument Grounds.

The *National Mall Plan* is the primary management document used for determining the future land use and site improvements on the National Mall. The document includes the assumption that the

NMAAHC would be constructed; however, continuation of the site as open space with the No Action Alternative would be consistent with the proposed surrounding conservation zones, including Character Protection Areas and High-Use Areas. The proposed pedestrian improvements and visitor amenities would occur independently of the site development and would not be affected.

The *Framework Plan* seeks to protect the National Mall from overuse and to improve the area in and around the Mall through the creation of new destinations and corridors beyond the Mall to disperse visitors and improve their overall experience. Within the vicinity of the NMAAHC site, the *Framework Plan's* also recommends creating destinations and enhancing the public realm within the Federal Triangle. With the No Action Alternative, there would be no additional museum created on the National Mall which would be consistent with the Framework Plan.

With the No Action Alternative, the NMAAHC would not be constructed and no additional perimeter security would be required. Therefore, the No Action Alternative would have no impact on the *Mall-Wide Security Improvements Plan*.

The *Action Agenda* also focuses on strengthening the downtown fabric of the District by improving corridors and emerging neighborhoods. For the National Mall, the *Action Agenda* proposes to improve pedestrian amenities to aid in circulation in and around the area. One of the significant intersections listed in the *Action Agenda* is the corner of 14<sup>th</sup> Street and Constitution Avenue, which is the northwest corner of the project site. With the No Action Alternative, it is likely improvements, such as improved pedestrian crossing and signage, would still occur; however, they may become a lower priority.

With the No Action Alternative, the NMAAHC would not be constructed. There would be no increase in pedestrian activity along 14<sup>th</sup> Street; nor would the demand for greater visitor amenities increase. Consequently, implementation of some of the proposed improvements to the project site and immediate area as proposed in the relevant planning documents may not have as great a priority. Because the related projects and planning policies of the Action Agenda would likely still be implemented even if construction of the NMAAHC did not occur, the No Action Alternative would no impact on the *Action Agenda*.

### **Action Alternative 1: Plinth Concept**

#### *Short-Term Effects*

Construction activities associated with the Plinth Alternative would be contained on site. The current features of the NMAAHC site, including the temporary concession trailer, would be relocated. The short-term effect on land use plans would not be significant.

#### *Long-Term Effects*

The *National Mall Plan* is the primary management document that outlines the future land uses and proposed physical improvements to the National Mall. The *National Mall Plan* was prepared with the assumption that the NMAAHC site would be developed with a museum (NPS, 2010). As such, the Plinth Alternative would be consistent with the *National Mall Plan* in concept; however, the new museum would reduce the amount of open space on the Mall, which is inconsistent with the intent of the National Mall Plan. The most prevalent conservation zone within the *National Mall Plan* in proximity to the NMAAHC site is the Character Protection Area that

is adjacent to the western and southern portions of the site. The intent of these areas is to provide spatial buffers in between National Mall destinations (NPS, 2010).

The existing open space on the NMAAHC site provides a substantial buffer for the Washington Monument. Implementation of the Plinth alternative would create a new destination on the National Mall, which would be required to provide additional open space buffering. However, with the Plinth Alternative, only a limited amount of open space would be located around the site's perimeter in the form of street trees, landscaping areas, and plaza along Madison Drive. Two larger landscaped areas, also containing trees, are found within the interior of the site between the building and the sidewalks on 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> Streets. These two areas would be publically accessible open space, which would help provide a limited buffer between the proposed building and the Washington Monument.

While the concentration of open space in the southern and western portions of the site would be consistent with the adjacent Character Protection Areas proposed under the *National Mall Plan*, the loss of recreational and demonstration space would be inconsistent with the plan.

The *Framework Plan* was developed to create new destinations beyond the National Mall to protect the Mall from overuse, while increasing the accessibility and sustainability of the surrounding area. Adding a new museum of the National Mall would not create new destination outside of the Mall. However, one of the goals of the Plan is to strengthen the Federal Triangle by establishing destinations along Pennsylvania Avenue. While the Plinth Alternative is not on this street, nor in the Federal Triangle, its

proximity could indirectly help increase pedestrian and visitor activity within the Federal Triangle by attracting new visitors to its edge. Overall, the long-term operation of the Plinth Alternative, by creating a new cultural destination on the National Mall, would be inconsistent with the goals and policies of the *Framework Plan*.

The Smithsonian Institution *Mall-Wide Perimeter Security Improvements Plan* requires perimeter security be provided with a combination of design features and hardscape elements. The main entrance to the Plinth Alternative would have a reflecting pool located underneath the plinth that would help protect the facility from vehicular threats. The landscaped area in front of Madison Drive would have a low seating wall around its perimeter providing additional protection. The landscaped areas along 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> Streets would also be lined by low seating walls. In addition to perimeter security, these seating walls would act as retaining walls for the landscaped areas.

The contextual approach elements provided along 14<sup>th</sup> Street, 15<sup>th</sup> Street and Madison Drive would be consistent with the Smithsonian Institution's standards. The second entrance along Constitution Avenue would have a water feature that runs underneath the entryway and extends from the 15<sup>th</sup> Street sidewalk to the 14<sup>th</sup> Street sidewalk. This water feature would be supplemented by two sunken courtyards. Perimeter security would comply with the unified approach, which seeks to place a low freestanding wall along Constitution Avenue. The water feature would incorporate a wall to contain the water. Thus, the Plinth Alternative would provide long-term, permanent protection from threats in accordance with the *Mall-Wide Perimeter Security Improvements Plan*.

The *Action Agenda* seeks to improve downtown DC by capitalizing on emerging neighborhoods, improving transportation resources, and encouraging investment in significant corridors. One of the corridors targeted in the *Action Agenda* is 14<sup>th</sup> Street, with specific attention given to the intersection of 14<sup>th</sup> Street and Constitution Avenue located at the northwest corner of the site. The *Action Agenda* suggests improvements to the design, signage and direction of pedestrian flow of this intersection.

The Plinth Alternative would provide streetscape features, such as seating walls, and widen the sidewalk along Constitution Avenue, which would improve the pedestrian environment and contribute to visitor satisfaction. Providing an entrance to the NMAAHC on Madison Drive would draw museum visitors up 14<sup>th</sup> Street from the south, increasing pedestrian activity within this corridor. Similarly, the entrance along Constitution Avenue would draw pedestrians down 14<sup>th</sup> Street from the north. These actions would be consistent with the Action Agenda goals of improving intersections and creating more pedestrian activity within this important corridor. The Plinth Alternative would also be consistent with the Action Agenda goal of making the National Mall part of everyday life through increasing visitation to the Smithsonian Institution by local residents.

In the long term, the NMAAHC would induce an increased amount of tourism to the area and thus help generate a greater demand for visitor amenities in the site vicinity. This increased demand would encourage implementation of some of the recommendations proposed in the relevant planning documents, as discussed above. From this perspective, the Plinth Alternative would generally be consistent with these planning documents, and there would be no significant effect to planning policies.

## Action Alternative 2: Plaza Concept

### *Short-Term Effects*

Similar to the Plinth Alternative, the Plaza Alternative would contain construction activities within the site. The current features and uses of the NMAAHC site would be removed and relocated from the site during construction and operation of NMAAHC. These impacts would be similar to those discussed in the Plinth Alternative. The short-term effect on land use would not be significant.

### *Long-Term Effects*

The new museum would reduce the amount of flexible open space on the Mall, which is inconsistent with the National Mall Plans. However, the landscaped areas and vegetation features proposed to be implemented as part of the Plaza Alternative would provide limited physical and visual buffering on the site. Additionally, the dual building configuration and landscape design of the Plaza Alternative would help preserve views of the Washington Monument from 14<sup>th</sup> Street at Constitution Avenue. As a result, the Plaza Alternative would not be entirely inconsistent with the intent of the *National Mall Plan's* Character Protection Area. As with the Plinth Alternative, the Plaza Alternative would involve implementation of the pedestrian and visitor improvements consistent with the *National Mall Plan*.

The Plaza Alternative would create an additional cultural and aesthetic destination on the National Mall, which is inconsistent with the *Framework Plan* and the goal of increasing destinations

beyond the Mall. However, the new museum, and particularly the plaza, could contribute to an overall increase in visitation to the Federal Triangle.

The Smithsonian Institution's *Mall-Wide Perimeter Security Improvements Plan* requires perimeter security be provided with a combination of design features and hardscape elements. The south (Madison Drive) entrance to the Plaza Alternative would include a reflecting pool and cluster of trees that would protect the facility from vehicular threats. The landscaped areas along 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> Streets would also include low seating walls and retaining walls. The contextual approach elements provided along 14<sup>th</sup> Street, 15<sup>th</sup> Street, and Madison Drive would be consistent with the Smithsonian Institution's standards. Along Constitution Avenue, a large reflecting pool and low freestanding wall would provide perimeter security for the Office building and would comply with the unified approach for Constitution Avenue. Thus, perimeter security with the Plaza Alternative would comply with the Smithsonian Institution's requirements and provide long-term security from vehicular borne threats.

The Plaza Alternative would be consistent with the *Action Agenda* because it proposes similar streetscape features, sidewalk configurations, and entrance locations as the Plinth Alternative. The Plaza Alternative would incorporate a large, central, plaza providing gathering space and access to the museum from the north. The Plaza Alternative would be consistent with the *Action Agenda's* intention to activate 14<sup>th</sup> Street.

### **Action Alternative 3: Pavilion Concept**

#### *Short-Term Effects*

Similar to the Plinth and Plaza Alternatives, the Pavilion Alternative would contain construction activities within the site. The current features and uses of the NMAAHC site would be removed and relocated from the site during construction and operation of NMAAHC. The impacts would be similar to those discussed in the Plinth and Plaza Alternatives. As such, the short-term effect to land use would not be significant.

#### *Long-Term Effects*

The new museum would reduce the amount of flexible open space on the Mall, which is inconsistent with the *National Mall Plan*. The landscaped areas and vegetation features proposed to be implemented as part of the Pavilion Alternative would provide limited physical and visual buffering on the site. Because the Pavilion Alternative includes more compact building development, more open space would be retained on the NMAAHC site. This alternative would be somewhat more consistent with the intent of Character Protection Areas proposed in the *National Mall Plan*. As with the Plinth and Plaza Alternatives, the Pavilion Alternative would involve implementation of the pedestrian and visitor improvements consistent with the *National Mall Plan*.

The Pavilion Alternative would create an additional cultural and aesthetic destination on the National Mall, which is inconsistent with the *Framework Plan* and the goal of increasing destinations beyond the Mall. However, the new museum could contribute to an overall increase in visitation to the Federal Triangle.

The Smithsonian Institution's *Mall-Wide Perimeter Security Improvements Plan* requires perimeter security be provided with a combination of design features and hardscape elements. The entrance to the Pavilion Alternative would include a reflecting pool on the south side of the building that would protect the facility from vehicular threats. The terraced green space in front of Madison Drive would incorporate a low seating wall around its perimeter providing additional protection. The landscaped areas along 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> Streets would also include low seating walls and retaining walls. The contextual approach elements provided along 14<sup>th</sup> Street, 15<sup>th</sup> Street and Madison Drive would be consistent with the Smithsonian Institution's standards. Along Constitution Avenue, a low freestanding wall would provide structural support for the landscaped area and perimeter security in compliance with the unified approach for Constitution Avenue. Thus, perimeter security with the Pavilion Alternative would comply with the Smithsonian Institution's requirements and provide long-term security from vehicular borne threats.

The Pavilion Alternative would be consistent with the *Action Agenda* because it proposes similar streetscape features as the Plinth Alternative and the Plaza Alternative. While the Pavilion Alternative would provide wider sidewalks than the Plinth Alternative, it does not have an entrance along Constitution Avenue, forcing pedestrians to enter the museum after walking through the site from Constitution Avenue to Madison Drive. The lack of an entrance from Constitution Avenue would not encourage additional pedestrian volumes from the north. The proposed pathways of the Pavilion Alternative would direct pedestrians diagonally through the site instead of along 14<sup>th</sup> Street. The Pavilion Alternative would not be fully consistent with the *Action Agenda's* intention to activate 14<sup>th</sup> Street.

**Action Alternative 4: Refined Pavilion Concept***Short-Term Effects*

Similar to the other Alternatives, the Refined Pavilion Alternative would contain construction activities within the site. The current features and uses of the NMAAHC site would be removed and relocated from the site during construction and operation of NMAAHC. The impacts would be similar to those discussed in the other Alternatives. The short-term effect to land use would not be significant.

*Long-Term Effects*

The landscaped areas and vegetation features proposed as part of the Refined Pavilion Alternative would provide physical open space and visual buffering on the site. Similar to the Pavilion Alternative, the Refined Pavilion Alternative includes an even more compact building development, retaining more open space on the NMAAHC site than the other alternatives. As a result, the Refined Pavilion Alternative would be more consistent with the intent of the *National Mall Plan's* Character Protection Area than the other alternatives. As with the other alternatives, the Refined Pavilion Alternative would involve implementation of the pedestrian and visitor improvements consistent with the *National Mall Plan*.

The Refined Pavilion Alternative would create an additional cultural and aesthetic destination on the National Mall, which is inconsistent with the *Framework Plan* and the goal of increasing destinations beyond the Mall. However, the new museum could contribute to an overall increase in visitation to the Federal Triangle.

The Smithsonian Institution's *Mall-Wide Perimeter Security Improvements Plan* requires perimeter security be provided with a combination of design features and hardscape elements. The south-facing entrance to the Refined Pavilion Alternative would include a reflecting pool and landscaped areas containing a cluster of trees to would protect the facility from vehicular threats. The landscaped areas along 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> Streets would also include low seating walls and retaining walls. The contextual approach elements provided along 14<sup>th</sup> Street, 15<sup>th</sup> Street, and Madison Drive would be consistent with the Smithsonian Institution's standards. Along Constitution Avenue, a water feature would provide perimeter security in compliance with the unified approach for Constitution Avenue. Thus, perimeter security with the Refined Pavilion Alternative would comply with the Smithsonian Institution's requirements and provide long-term security from vehicular borne threats.

The Refined Pavilion Alternative would be consistent with the *Action Agenda* because it proposes similar streetscape features and sidewalk configurations as the other alternatives and it would include entrances from the north and the south. Similar to the Plinth and Plaza Alternatives the Refined Pavilion Alternative has entrances on Madison Drive and Constitution Avenue, which would draw pedestrians along 14<sup>th</sup> Street. The Refined Pavilion Alternative also incorporates a large area of green space to be used for public gatherings. The Refined Pavilion Alternative would be consistent with the *Action Agenda's* intention to activate 14<sup>th</sup> Street.

### 3.2.1.4 What efforts would be made to minimize the impacts on Planning Policies?

#### **Plinth Alternative**

The following mitigation measures are recommended to minimize the long term impact of the Plinth Alternative related to planning policies:

- The Plinth Alternative should explore options for reducing the facility's footprint to increase the amount of open space on site, particularly on the western and southern sides of the building.
- The Plinth Alternative should be located away from the Washington Monument while respecting the urban context and historic setbacks along Constitution Avenue and the other sides of the site.
- The number of trees located to the south and west portions of the site should be increased to enhance the limited buffer to the Washington Monument.

#### **Plaza Alternative**

The mitigation measures for the Plaza Alternative would be identical to those identified for the Plinth Alternative.

#### **Pavilion Alternative**

In addition to the mitigation measures listed with the Plinth Alternative, the following mitigation measure is recommended to minimize long term impacts of the Pavilion Alternative related to planning policies:

- The design of the Pavilion Alternative should be modified to include an entrance on the north side (Constitution Avenue) of the building to allow visitors to enter from both the north and south sides of the site.

#### **Refined Pavilion Alternative**

The mitigation measures for the Refined Pavilion Alternative would be identical to those identified for the Plinth and Plaza Alternatives.

### **3.2.2 Visitor Experience**

#### **3.2.2.1 Introduction**

One of the major considerations for the construction of a new museum is the capability to accommodate the projected increase in the number of visitors to the area. An analysis conducted for the NMAAHC in the Tier I Final EIS found that “when the National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI) first opened, overall Smithsonian Institution museum visitation, including museums on the National Mall, increased by 18 percent.” This is because a new museum attracts new visitors, gives visitors more options, and encourages the potential visitors to extend their stay in Washington, DC. A similar trend is anticipated after the NMAAHC opens, amounting to a projected total of 2.5 million additional visitors. While the Tier I Final EIS concluded that the NMAAHC would have a beneficial effect on visitation to the National Mall, further analysis of Mall and NMAI attendance patterns showed that “after the initial newness of the NMAAHC wears off, normal fluctuations in visitors to the National Mall and Smithsonian Institution museums would resume.” In addition, the Tier I Final EIS concluded that 70 percent of the visitors enter the museums along the National Mall from the south (Mall) side of the site (Smithsonian Institution, 2008a).

The visitor experience section of this Tier II Draft EIS examines how visitors would interact with the museum and the physical layout of the site with each alternative, rather than the quantification of increased visitation levels that was conducted in the Tier I Final EIS.

Additionally, this Draft Tier II EIS discusses the approach each action alternative would take to provide adequate perimeter security and its effect on visitor experience. The visitor experience analysis evaluates the location of museum entrances, the location of visitor access points, the site’s features and uses, and the location of perimeter security features.

#### **3.2.2.2 How do Visitors currently experience the Project Site?**

##### **Character of the Site and the Washington Monument Grounds**

The Tier I Final EIS characterizes the NMAAHC site as a five-acre public open space resource that is “a component of a much larger commemorative landscape that is designated as parkland for a variety of uses” (Smithsonian Institution, 2008a). The site serves as a location for public gathering, informal recreational activities, and First Amendment civil demonstrations. Site circulation is achieved through two pathways that bisect the site; however, due to the open nature of the space, many visitors walk across the grass that covers the site.

One of the pathways extends southwest from the corner of Constitution Avenue and 14<sup>th</sup> Street towards the Washington Monument Grounds and terminates mid-block along 15<sup>th</sup> Street. The other pathway starts at the corner of 15<sup>th</sup> Street and Constitution Avenue and extends southeast towards the National Mall, terminating at 14<sup>th</sup> Street. In addition, sidewalks extend along the perimeter of the site. A grove of trees is located in the northeast corner of the site, providing shade for visitors. Similarly, a smaller grove of trees is found near the southeast corner of the site.



Other amenities found on the site include benches, a bus stop and a temporary concessions stand located in the southwest corner of the site. A Bulfinch Gate, an historic resource from the 1800s canal era that resembles a stone pillar, is located on the northwest corner of the site, similar to those found both on the other sides of 15<sup>th</sup> Street and Constitution Avenue. This provides a common visual and historical link between the corners of this intersection.

In addition to the uses found on site, a visitor's experience is also shaped by the site's accessibility and available amenities. Visitors primarily arrive to the site as pedestrians after reaching the National Mall via Metrorail, Metrobus, the DC Circulator, tour bus, or private vehicle. Parking within the site vicinity is very limited with on-street two-hour parking available during non-rush hours along Constitution Avenue and 14<sup>th</sup> Street. Longer term parking is available within parking garages near the site.

The closest Metrorail station within a ½-mile of the site is the Smithsonian Station, with entrances located on 12<sup>th</sup> Street at Jefferson Drive and another at the corner of 12<sup>th</sup> Street and Independence Avenue. The DC Circulator also offers visitors access to the site with the Purple line running along Constitution Avenue and stopping in front of the NMAH. Several DC Metrobus lines service the site including the following routes: 13A, 13B, 13F, 13G, N3, P1, X1, 11Y, and 52. In conjunction with one another, these services combine to make the project site extremely accessible.

Given its location at 14<sup>th</sup> Street and Constitution Avenue, the NMAAHC site would be adjacent to the NMAH and 670 feet from the Washington Monument. In addition, the relocated entrance currently proposed for the National Aquarium would be directly across Constitution Avenue from NMAAHC and the NMAH would be directly across 14<sup>th</sup> Street.

One of the reasons the National Mall is such a large draw for tourists is the breadth of topics covered by the collection of museums found there. These museums include: NMAH, NMNH, National Gallery of Art, the East Wing of the National Gallery of Art, the Smithsonian Institution Building and Quadrangle, the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, the National Air and Space Museum, and NMAI.

#### **Site Layout and Relationship to National Mall**

The layout of each of the buildings framing the National Mall creates a distinct visitor experience. The open space setting of the Mall is reinforced through adjacent building footprints that occupy less than 50 percent of their respective parcels. A summary of open space percentages of existing buildings in relation to the proposed action alternatives can be found in Table 3.2.1. Most of the visitors to the museums enter from the National Mall side, and thus, the primary entrances to the museums are oriented to the National Mall.

**Table 3.2.1 Relevant Building Footprints and Lot Coverages**

<b>Museum/Building</b>	<b>Ground Floor Square Footage (SF)</b>	<b>Site Area Square Footage (SF)</b>	<b>Lot Coverage</b>	<b>Open Space</b>
Plinth Alternative	85,804	233,349	37%	63%
Plaza Alternative	80,559	233,349	35%	65%
Pavilion Alternative	60,229	233,349	26%	74%
Revised Pavilion Alternative	53,750	233,349	23%	77%
National Museum of American History	170,390	478,550	36%	64%
National Museum of Natural History	238,400	487,600	49%	51%
National Gallery of Art Sculpture Garden	5,300	227,550	2%	98%
National Gallery of Art West Building	177,700	490,060	36%	64%
National Gallery of Art East Wing	71,700	173,540	41%	59%
National Museum of the American Indian	48,700	157,600	69%	31%
National Air and Space Museum	165,800	353,750	53%	47%

Note: At grade roofs of underground spaces are counted as open space and are not included in the lot coverage.

Source: Freelon Adjaye Bond/SmithGroup, 2010; AECOM, 2010

Immediately east of the NMAAHC site is the NMAH, which provides visitor entry from both the National Mall and from Constitution Avenue. The entrance on Constitution Avenue is highlighted by a semi-circle shaped plaza with a central water feature. The plaza is lined by a horseshoe-shaped driveway that allows both pedestrian and limited vehicular access to the museum. At the entrance points on either end of the driveway, are bollards for perimeter security. Vehicular access is restricted to building employees and VIPs. Along the entirety of Constitution Avenue a hardened seating wall provides additional security.

Between the roadways and the building base, manicured lawns and groves of trees exist to reinforce the ceremonial aspect of Constitution Avenue and the National Mall's park-like character. The building's main entrance is located on the south side along Madison Drive and contains a large rectangular plaza. Extending directly south of the plaza is a large crosswalk that provides a link to the National Mall across Madison Drive. Much of the public space available on the NMAH site is found along the building's base, which wraps around the building's entire perimeter. This area provides a location for visitors to relax and take a break from sightseeing. A small gazebo, found in the open building yard along 14<sup>th</sup> Street, is an amenity available for public use.

Further east of the NMAAHC site (and directly adjacent to NMAH) is the NMNH. This building has a much larger footprint than the other buildings on the north side of the National Mall, leaving less open space around its perimeter. The building's main access point is located on Madison Drive and consists of a grand staircase that leads visitors to a formal, column-lined entryway. A small plaza is located on the approach to the building, providing a place for visitors to gather or relax.

On the Constitution Avenue (north) side of the building, a horseshoe-shaped drive leads to the building entrance. Several small garden beds are found within the center of the driveway.

Similar to NMAH, bollards are present and provide security from vehicular threats. A hardened seating wall also stretches around the building's perimeter along the inside edge of the Constitution Avenue sidewalk. Between the seating wall and the face of the building, manicured green space is present; however, it is not generally used by the public. Much of the open space within the vicinity of NMNH is found within these landscaped areas along Constitution Avenue. A large parking lot that is restricted to employees and VIPs is located along the south side of the building, as well as on the east and west sides of the building. The parking lots, however, are recessed below grade to screen them from the view of visitors and thus provide additional building security. A large grove of trees is found in the northeast corner of the site, and street trees are interspersed around the building creating a visual link to other museums on Constitution Avenue and to the National Mall. A butterfly garden is located on the east side of the site, between NMNH and the 9<sup>th</sup> Street underpass, providing visual screening and a safe pedestrian pathway to the National Mall.

The remaining buildings that line Constitution Avenue east of the NMAAHC site are associated with the National Gallery of Art, including: the National Gallery of Art Sculpture Garden, the West Building and the East Wing. The Sculpture Garden is a highly interactive outdoor exhibit that includes large pieces of artwork throughout the site. Pathways connect the sculptures and allow visitors to circulate through the site at their leisure. The site's perimeter defined by a fence and dense plantings. Primary access points are found at the site's corners with a secondary access point

located on 7<sup>th</sup> Street. There is a large water feature in the center of the site that serves as a skating rink in the winter months. Additionally, a food service pavilion is located in the western part of the site.

Directly east of the Sculpture Garden is the National Gallery of Art West Building, the largest of the museums located on the north side of the National Mall. The main entrance on Madison Drive takes the form of a large stairway leading to a formal, monumental entrance lined with columns. Manicured green space around the building's perimeter reinforces its formal setting. Public space is provided on either side of the main entrances in the form of courtyards recessed into the buildings. A large public plaza, located in front of the building's east façade, contains a water feature and a sculpture piece. This area also doubles as a car drop-off location. A secondary entrance is located at the end of a horseshoe shaped driveway along Constitution Avenue. Similar to the main entrance, manicured green space lines Constitution Avenue.

The final building along the row of museums located on the south side of Constitution Avenue is the East Wing of the National Gallery of Art, which contains the modern art collection. The building form and site layout are shaped by the diagonal orientation of Pennsylvania Avenue. The main entrance to the East Wing is on 4<sup>th</sup> Street and is mostly recessed into the building's mass. The site perimeter is defined by green space that is generally not used by the public. Street trees are located within this green space along with several sculptures.

The north side of Constitution Avenue is comprised of large-scale federal buildings. Directly across from the NMAAHC site is the Herbert C. Hoover Building, which houses the Department of Commerce. The building is currently undergoing modernization and renovation that will include relocation of the entrance to the National Aquarium from 14<sup>th</sup> Street on the east side of the building to the south side of the building on Constitution Avenue. This is being done to capitalize on the popularity of the National Mall as a tourist destination and the larger flow of pedestrian traffic along Constitution Avenue. The buildings on the north side of Constitution Avenue, in the vicinity of NMAAHC, have limited setbacks to the sidewalk and little usable green space for visitors or employees. Much of the open space associated with these buildings is in the form of internal courtyards which are largely inaccessible to the public. As a result, tourists may admire the grand architecture or see which department is housed in each building; however, the buildings are generally not intended for visitor enjoyment. One exception is the Woodrow Wilson Plaza located approximately two blocks from the NMAAHC site between the Ronald Reagan Building and the Ariel Rios Building. The plaza provides food, outdoor programming, amenities, and a place for employees and tourists to relax. In addition, the National Archives, which displays the Declaration of Independence and other notable documents, is located within the Federal Triangle between 7<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> Streets.

### 3.2.2.3 How would the Proposed Action affect Visitor Experience?

The following analysis examines how each of the alternatives would affect visitor experience at the site and within the surrounding area. The analysis addresses circulation patterns, accessibility, and overall experience for museum visitors, visitors to the National Mall, and users of NPS open space for public gatherings or recreation. Impacts were determined using the following criteria:

**No Impacts:** No change to visitor experience would be expected to result.

**No Significant Impact:** No noticeable changes to visitor experience within the study area would result.

**Significant Impact:** Noticeable changes to visitor experience within the study area would result.

**Positive Impact:** The impacts would improve visitor experience within the study area.

#### No Action Alternative

With the No Action Alternative, the existing site conditions would remain. The site would continue to be used as a location for public gatherings, informal recreation, and First Amendment demonstrations as part of the Washington Monument Grounds. No permanent structures would be constructed on the site. It would continue to be maintained by NPS and the existing vegetation would remain in their current state. Similarly, the benches, walkways and other visitor amenities, such as the temporary concession trailer, would also remain, at least for the near term.

Transportation resources would remain in their current state and would continue to service the site via Metrobus, DC Circulator and Metrorail. Site access would continue to be provided formally at the four corners of the site and more informally across the green space. Thus, the No Action Alternative would have no effect on the visitor experience of the National Mall as it relates to the amount of visitor amenities offered. However, because the No Action Alternative would not result in the construction of the NMAAHC on the project site, the experiences associated with a new museum would not be realized.

#### Action Alternative 1: Plinth Concept

The Plinth Alternative places the main building feature, the Corona, on top of a base referred to as a plinth. The goal of the design is to create a welcoming “porch-like” atmosphere at the ground level and provide additional outdoor gathering space. The primary access point would be located on the south side of the site. Visitors approaching from the National Mall would encounter a hardscape plaza along Madison Drive and symbolically cross a shallow reflecting pool in front of the entryway. The plinth would extend from the face of the building to provide shade and cover from foul weather at the building’s main entrance.

Additional pedestrians coming from the White House, the Federal Triangle, or other points north, would access the site from either the northeast or northwest corners. The most likely entrance for these visitors would be the entry on Constitution Avenue. When approaching the Constitution Avenue entrance, visitors would pass by sunken courtyards on either side of the sidewalk and symbolically cross over a water feature to enter the building.

The Plinth Alternative would provide two entrances, which would ensure a high level of accessibility to the museum by allowing visitors to enter when traveling from the National Mall or from Constitution Avenue. Transportation resources would remain in their current state and would continue to service the site via Metrobus, DC Circulator and Metrorail. Thus, there would be a positive impact on visitor accessibility.

Sidewalks would extend northwards from Madison Drive along both 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> Streets towards Constitution Avenue. When traveling north along 14<sup>th</sup> Street, visitors would cross over the vehicular access point located near the intersection of 14<sup>th</sup> Street and Constitution Avenue. The driveway would extend south and lead to a sub-grade service and loading dock. According to the proposed landscape plan, the driveway would be screened from view along 14<sup>th</sup> Street through the placement of trees, a low wall and other landscape screening. Along 15<sup>th</sup> Street, visitors would be allowed access to one of the interior landscaped areas for relaxation and contemplation.

To facilitate this, the landscaped area would be terraced to provide seating. Connections to the cafeteria would also allow visitors to eat outside. The retaining wall located along the 15<sup>th</sup> Street side of the building would incorporate seating walls and other visitor amenities at key locations to provide views to the Washington Monument framed by breaks in the locations of the proposed trees, per the landscape plan, as well as provide perimeter security.

Along Constitution Avenue, the Plinth Alternative would widen the sidewalk and provide a water feature. Similar to the entry on Madison Avenue, the secondary entrance would be covered by the plinth.

The Plinth Alternative would remove two pathways that cut diagonally across the site resulting in a slightly longer walk time between the northwest and southeast corners, and between the northeast and southwest corners. Circulation along the 14<sup>th</sup> Street, 15<sup>th</sup> Street, and Madison Drive sidewalks would be similar to the current conditions and the widened sidewalk along Constitution Avenue would enhance pedestrian traffic flow. Thus, the impact on circulation would be negligible with the Plinth Alternative because the pathways that would be lost to accommodate the NMAAHC building would be replaced by enhanced perimeter sidewalks.

The NMAAHC would remove from the National Mall approximately 5 acres of flexible open space used for First Amendment demonstrations, special events, and informal recreation. The Plinth Alternative would provide open space directly adjacent to the building on the east, west and south sides in the form of the hardscape plaza along Madison Drive, manicured green space, and planting areas. Seating walls would be provided within the perimeter security features to allow contemplative space for visitors traveling to the NMAAHC or passing by on Madison Drive to and from the Washington Monument. The hardscape plaza at the south entrance would also provide an opportunity to create performance space at the site.

Visitors would be allowed access to the green space located adjacent to the west side of the building. This area would be used for both relaxation and contemplation. Street trees would be placed around the site on Constitution Avenue, 14<sup>th</sup> Street, and 15<sup>th</sup> Street, according to the landscape plan. These trees would provide shade, frame views to the Washington Monument and, in some locations, visually screen mechanical equipment and the service and loading area.

Overall, while the Plinth Alternative would provide visitor amenities such as a new cultural destination, an enhanced pedestrian environment, passive gathering space, vegetative screening, and outdoor program and performance space, there would be a net loss of open space due to the placement of a building on the site. Therefore, there would be significant positive impact on visitor experience for museum patrons and a negative impact on visitor experience for users of NPS open space.

### **Action Alternative 2: Plaza Concept**

The Plaza Alternative proposes a two-building format that would separate the office and back-of-house components of the museum program from the Corona, which would contain exhibit space. A major component of this alternative is the open plaza that would be created between the two buildings, with a large oculus located in the center revealing exhibit space below. The northern building would be placed along Constitution Avenue and 15<sup>th</sup> Street, and would be accessed from the plaza. The Corona would generally be located in the southeast corner of the site and would have two points of entry. The primary entrance, similar to the Plinth Alternative, would be located on the south side of the building. Visitors approaching from the National Mall and points south would encounter a cluster of trees along Madison Drive, and would symbolically cross over a water feature. The second entrance would be located on the north side of the building and allow visitors access from the plaza.

The Plaza Alternative would provide two entrances, which would ensure a high level of accessibility to the museum by allowing visitors to enter when traveling from the National Mall or from Constitution Avenue. Transportation resources would remain in

their current state and would continue to service the site via Metrobus, DC Circulator and Metrorail. Thus, there would be a positive impact on visitor accessibility.

Sidewalks would extend northwards from Madison Drive along both 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> Streets towards Constitution Avenue. When traveling north along 14<sup>th</sup> Street, visitors would cross over the vehicular access point located near the intersection of 14<sup>th</sup> Street and Constitution Avenue. The driveway would extend south and lead to a sub-grade service and loading dock. According to the landscape plan, the driveway would be screened from view along 14<sup>th</sup> Street through the placement of trees, a low wall, and other landscape screening. Along 15<sup>th</sup> Street, visitors would be allowed access to the plaza for relaxation and contemplation. Along Constitution Avenue, the Plaza Alternative would retain the current sidewalk width and proposes a large water features between the face of the northern building and the sidewalk.

The two paths that currently bisect the site would be removed as part of the Plaza Alternative to accommodate the buildings and the plaza. The plaza, however, would still allow movement across the site between the northeast and southeast corners, similar to one of the paths. The impact on circulation would be negligible with the Plaza Alternative, because despite one of the pathways being lost to accommodate the NMAAHC building, the other sidewalks would remain the same.

The NMAAHC would remove from the National Mall approximately 5 acres of flexible open space used for First Amendment demonstrations, special events, and informal recreation. With the Plaza Alternative, the major open space component would be the large, central plaza located between the two buildings. This area

would serve as a gathering location for visitors and would also accommodate outdoor program space. Additionally, by creating this plaza, the view towards the Washington Monument from 14<sup>th</sup> Street at Constitution Avenue would be preserved. An additional hardscape plaza would be located in the southern portion of the site along Madison Drive. Green space, in the form of manicured lawns, would be located between the sidewalks and street on 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> Streets, as well as Constitution Avenue. Additional green space would be located adjacent to the plaza and on the west side of the Corona.

Similar to the Plinth Alternative, visitors would be allowed access to the green space located adjacent to the west side of the building. This area would be used for both relaxation and contemplation. Street trees would be placed around the site on Constitution Avenue, 14<sup>th</sup> Street, and 15<sup>th</sup> Street, according to the landscape plan. These trees would provide shade, frame views to the Washington Monument and, in some locations, visual screening of mechanical equipment and the service and loading area.

Overall, while the Plaza Alternative would provide visitor amenities such as a new cultural destination, an enhanced pedestrian environment, passive gathering space, vegetative screening, and outdoor program and performance space, there would be a net loss of open space due to the placement of a building on the site. Therefore, there would be significant positive impact on visitor experience for museum patrons and negative impact on visitor experience for users of NPS open space.

### **Action Alternative 3: Pavilion Concept**

The Pavilion Alternative would not include a plinth and would focus on the Corona as the most compelling feature of the museum building structure. The sole access point for the Pavilion Alternative would be located on the south side of the site. Visitors would encounter a hardscape plaza along Madison Drive with a terraced green space located adjacent to the sidewalk and a reflecting pool directly in front of the entryway. The terraced green space could also be used for passive recreation, such as contemplation and relaxation; seating would be established on the slope from the Madison Drive elevation to the hardscape plaza located at the building entrance. The hardscape plaza would provide an area for outdoor performance space.

No second entrance would be provided as part of the Pavilion Alternative. All visitors would need to travel towards Madison Drive along 14<sup>th</sup> or 15<sup>th</sup> Streets when approaching the museum from Constitution Avenue or points north, or they would be directed through a path near the intersection of 14<sup>th</sup> Street and Constitution Avenue towards the southwest corner of the site. This inconvenience would result in a slightly longer walk for visitors coming from Constitution Avenue and could result in confusion for first time visitors who are not aware of the entrance location. Transportation resources would remain in their current state and would continue to service the site via Metrobus, DC Circulator and Metrorail. The negative impacts on visitor accessibility with the Pavilion Alternative would not be significant; however, mitigation is recommended to minimize this impact.



Although no entrance would be provided from Constitution Avenue, the meandering path that would direct visitors from the corner of 14<sup>th</sup> Street and Constitution Avenue to the Pavilion Alternative entrance on Madison Drive would provide an opportunity for visitors to wander through green space and enjoy views of the Washington Monument. Seating would be provided within the perimeter security and retaining wall located adjacent to 15<sup>th</sup> Street. This path would follow approximately the same route as the path that currently exists on the site. It would allow for easy access to the Washington Monument when travelling west on Constitution Avenue.

Sidewalks would extend northwards from Madison Drive along both 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> Streets towards Constitution Avenue. When traveling north along 14<sup>th</sup> Street, visitors would cross the vehicular access point located near the intersection of 14<sup>th</sup> Street and Constitution Avenue. The driveway would extend south and lead to a sub-grade service and loading dock. According to the landscape plan, the driveway would be screened from view along 14<sup>th</sup> Street through the use of trees, a low wall, and other landscape screening. Along 15<sup>th</sup> Street, the sidewalk would curve around a landscaped area and diverge into two paths. One would continue north and connect to the intersection of 15<sup>th</sup> Street and Constitution Avenue. The other path would traverse the site to the east and bring visitors to the corner of 14<sup>th</sup> Street and Constitution Avenue.

Around the perimeter of the site, the Pavilion Alternative would retain the current sidewalk width and would include landscaped green space between the building face and the sidewalk. The Pavilion Alternative would remove one of the pathways that currently allows visitors to traverse the site. Impacts on visitor circulation with the Pavilion Alternative would not be significant because the sidewalks would remain the same; and one curving pathway would be retained to allow access to the Washington Monument.

The NMAAHC would remove from the National Mall approximately 5 acres of flexible open space used for First Amendment demonstrations, special events, and informal recreation. The Pavilion Alternative would provide open space directly adjacent to the building on all sides in the form of the hardscape plaza and the terraced green space along Madison Drive. On the west side, a semi-circular area of green space would abut the building, and a strip of green space and street trees would run along the curb. The edge of the semi-circular green space would be formed by the 15<sup>th</sup> Street sidewalk and the pathway that connects to the corner of 14<sup>th</sup> Street and Constitution Avenue. On the north side of the building, the large green space would mimic the surrounding open space of the Washington Monument Grounds. On the west side of this feature, the grade change would also allow for placement of outdoor programmatic elements or performance space. According to the landscaping plan, street trees would be placed around the site on Constitution Avenue, 14<sup>th</sup> Street, and 15<sup>th</sup> Street. These trees would provide shade and, in some locations, visual screening.

Overall, while the Plaza Alternative would provide visitor amenities such as a new cultural destination, an enhanced pedestrian environment, passive gathering space, vegetative screening, and outdoor program and performance space, there would be a net loss of open space due to the placement of a building on the site. Therefore, there would be significant positive impact on visitor experience for museum patrons and negative impact on visitor experience for users of NPS open space.

#### **Action Alternative 4: Refined Pavilion Concept**

Similar to the Pavilion Alternative, the Refined Pavilion Alternative would not include a plinth and would focus on the Corona as the most compelling feature of the museum building structure. Two access points would allow visitors to enter the museum from the north and south. Visitors approaching from the north would symbolically cross over a water feature that spans the entire block along Constitution Avenue. The main pathway would enter the site from the corner of 15<sup>th</sup> Street and Constitution Avenue and would follow a similar alignment as the pathways in the Ellipse. Another pathway would enter the site near the corner of 14<sup>th</sup> Street and Constitution Avenue and would follow a similar alignment as the current pathway. Visitors approaching from the south would encounter green space that would contain a rolling lawn and clusters of trees along Madison Drive, and would symbolically cross over a water feature.

Providing two entrances with the Refined Pavilion Alternative would ensure a high level of accessibility to the museum by allowing visitors to enter when traveling from the National Mall or from Constitution Avenue. Transportation resources would remain in their current state and would continue to service the site via

Metrobus, DC Circulator and Metrorail. Thus,, there would be a positive impact on visitor accessibility.

Improving on the Pavilion Alternative, the Refined Pavilion Alternative would provide entrances from both Madison Drive and Constitution Avenue and sidewalks and pathways would extend around and through the site. When traveling north along 14<sup>th</sup> Street, visitors would cross the vehicular access point located approximately mid-block. The driveway would extend south and lead to a sub-grade service and loading dock. According to the landscape plan, the driveway would be screened from view along 14<sup>th</sup> Street through the use of trees, a low wall, and other landscape screening. Along 15<sup>th</sup> Street, the sidewalk would curve around a landscaped area and then diverge into two paths. One would continue north and connect to the intersection of 15<sup>th</sup> Street and Constitution Avenue. The other path would follow the current path's alignment and would traverse the site to the east, bringing visitors to the corner of 14<sup>th</sup> Street and Constitution Avenue.

Along Constitution Avenue, the Refined Pavilion Alternative would retain the current sidewalk width and add an adjacent water feature incorporating stormwater management and perimeter security. The green space would be segmented by the proposed walkways that would mirror the current pathways on the site. Sidewalks around the site's perimeter would remain largely unchanged. Impacts on visitor circulation with the Refined Pavilion Alternative would be negligible because the sidewalks would remain the same and the pathways would be retained to allow access to the Washington Monument.

The NMAAHC would remove from the National Mall approximately 5 acres of flexible open space used for First Amendment demonstrations, special events, and informal recreation. The Refined Pavilion Alternative would provide open space directly adjacent to the building on all sides in the form of the hardscape plaza and planted green space along Madison Drive. On the west side an area of green space would abut the building and a strip of green space and street trees would run along the curb. On the north side of the building, the large green space would mimic the rolling landscape of the Washington Monument Grounds. Per the landscape plan, street trees would be placed around the site on Constitution Avenue, 14<sup>th</sup> Street, and 15<sup>th</sup> Street. These trees would provide shade and, in some locations, visual screening.

Overall, while the Plaza Alternative would provide visitor amenities such as a new cultural destination, an enhanced pedestrian environment, passive gathering space, vegetative screening, and outdoor program and performance space, there would be a net loss of open space due to the placement of a building on the site. Therefore, there would be significant positive impact on visitor experience for museum patrons and negative impact on visitor experience for users of NPS open space.

### **3.2.2.4 What efforts would be made to minimize the impacts on Visitor Experience?**

#### **Pavilion Alternative**

The following mitigation measure is recommended to minimize operational effects of the Pavilion Alternative on visitor experience:

- The design of the Pavilion Alternative should be modified to include an entrance on the north side (Constitution Avenue) of the building to allow visitors to enter from both the north and south sides of the site.

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