

**Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture  
Section 106 Consulting Parties Meeting #13**

**Date of Meeting:** August 3, 2011  
**Project:** Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture  
**Location of Meeting:** 600 Maryland Avenue, NW, 5<sup>th</sup> Floor  
**Time of Meeting:** 9:00 am – 11:30 am

**Attendees:** Sharon Park, SI OFEO  
Amy Ballard, SI OFEO  
Dreck Wilson, ASAALH and NTHP  
Jud McIntire, SI OFEO  
Brenda Sanchez, SI OFEO  
Patsy Fletcher, AAHGS  
Perry Wheelock, NPS-NCR  
Andrew Lewis, D.C. Historic Preservation Office  
Sarah Batcheler, CFA  
Thomas Luebke, CFA  
Louise Brodnitz, ACHP  
Ann Trowbridge, SI OFEO  
Jane Passman, SI OFEO  
Dawud Abdur-Rahman, GSA  
Susan Bemis, AECOM  
Daria Gasparini, Robinson & Associates  
David Levy, NCPC  
Phil Freelon, The Freelon Group  
Rodrigo Abela, Gustafson, Guthrie, Nichol  
Amy Cragg, Gustafson, Guthrie, Nichol  
Judy Scott Feldman, National Coalition to Save Our Mall  
**cc:** Judith Robinson, Robinson & Associates

**MEETING SUMMARY**

Sharon Park (SP), SI OFEO, brought the meeting to order at 9:10 a.m., stating that the objectives of the meeting were to present updates on the building and landscape designs and to review the Programmatic Agreement (PA), including a discussion of the proposed mitigation measures. SP introduced Amy Cragg from Gustafson, Guthrie, Nichol and Susan Bemis from AECOM.

Next, SP invited Judy Scott Feldman (JSF), National Coalition to Save Our Mall, to address the issue of 15<sup>th</sup> Street boundary and the Washington Monument Grounds. JSF stated that the Coalition has submitted to the Smithsonian two proposals for mitigation. The first proposal was for a study of the foundation of the Washington Monument, and the second was for an amendment to the relevant National Register nominations related to the L'Enfant Plan. JSF explained that she has uncovered a potential error in the National Register documentation for the L'Enfant Plan, which identifies the historic boundary of the Washington Monument Grounds as 14<sup>th</sup> Street on the east. JSF explained that in her review of the primary sources related to the L'Enfant Plan, the edge of the Washington Monument Grounds was historically 15<sup>th</sup> Street. She cited the 1797 Dermott Map and the 1793 Ellicott Plan, among

other sources. JSF stated that the 15<sup>th</sup> Street boundary is essential to the vision and geometry of the L'Enfant Plan. JSF clarified that she realized 14<sup>th</sup> Street would be used as the eastern edge of the Washington Monument Grounds for the purposes of the NMAAHC project, but noted that future projects should be informed by the correct data. JSF added that she spoke with National Park Service officials about the matter, and they are aware of the inconsistencies. JSF suggested that amendments to the relevant National Register nominations could be folded into NMAAHC mitigation.

SP thanked JSF and confirmed that the inconsistencies in the Washington Monument Grounds National Register nomination would be corrected if appropriate or explained in the updated nomination that is planned as part of mitigation. SP added that there is a potential timing issue in that the updated nomination will most likely be completed in fiscal year 2016, which is not within the timeframe that she thinks the Coalition is looking for.

JSF clarified that the Coalition has already submitted an amendment to the DC HPO. The Coalition does not want the National Register nominations entirely rewritten, only amended to revise the specific text related to the historic origins of the Washington Monument Grounds boundary. JSF noted that this could be a very simple amendment that would ensure that any future research is based on the correct information.

Andrew Lewis (AL), DC Historic Preservation Office, responded that the DC HPO will review the amendments. The NPS would have to make the final decision. AL noted that the DC HPO would rather see all of the possible amendments to the Washington Monument Grounds nomination addressed simultaneously rather than through several amendments. AL thanked JSF for putting together the presentation, noting that the documentation was very interesting. AL asked that JSF submit a copy of the presentation to the DC HPO.

Perry Wheelock (PW), NPS-NCR, commented that the National Mall Plan Programmatic Agreement requires an update to the National Mall nomination and that this information will feed into the updated documentation.

JSF concluded by stating that the Coalition would like to see the L'Enfant Plan National Register nomination included in the mitigation as well as related HABS documentation, Cultural Landscape Inventories, and Cultural Landscape Reports.

SP invited Jud McIntire (JM), SI OFEO, to give a brief update on the gas line. JM stated that SI has partnered with Washington Gas to relocate a 24-inch gas line and that the digging was completed. This work was necessary before construction can start and testing and final work is scheduled to be completed by mid-September, if not sooner. The line is being relocated closer to Constitution Avenue. SP added that the DC HPO archaeologist has been on site as part of this work. The upper layer of the soil was confirmed to be fill material. Findings included a few wood pilings, and these were photographed for the forthcoming report.

### **Design Presentation**

Phil Freelon (FP), Freelon Group, introduced Rodrigo Abela (RA) and Amy Cragg (AC) from Gustafson, Guthrie, Nichol to give an update on the landscape design.

RA discussed the changes to the landscape design since the last Consulting Parties meeting. These included removing the skylight from the west side of the site, shifting the oculus towards the center of

the north facade, moving the south building entry/exit to the center of the facade, and refining the design of the Constitution Avenue sidewalk. RA added that the north landscape elements relate to the site history, the reading groves address cultural history, and the south water feature serves as a reflection on the future.

RA discussed changes to the Constitution Avenue sidewalk design. The design team studied the landscape elements along Constitution Avenue to better understand the overall context. Changes included introducing the language of raised curbs into the sidewalk area and altering the water feature to take a back seat to the avenue. An effort was made to make the water feature feel more like a space between two walls, evoking the historic canal.

RA explaining that the design team designed the north landscape as a welcoming site by using blue planting materials (blue being the color historically associated with the entry or threshold), designing wide curbs along the water feature so that visitors could safely approach it, and by designing the oculus as a welcoming beacon. The oculus measures approximately five feet high and features glass walls to bring light into the interior below grade. Water will cascade down the sides of the oculus. The north landscape also features reading groves, which will be seating areas within informal groupings of trees. Elements of the reading groves will be etched with inspirational quotations or other wording, and the design team is working with the museum to identify themes to associate with each of the reading groves.

Next, RA discussed the south plaza, which has not had too many changes since the last presentation. RA noted that the water feature will be a combination of still and moving water and will have a 30-inch-wide band of stone around the north side. This will create an edge to better articulate the porch as a porch.

Sarah Batcheler, CFA, asked for confirmation that the etched elements would be thematic and would not include donor recognition. RA replied that the etchings would not be related to donors.

Dawud Abdur-Rahman (DAR), GSA, suggested that, as currently designed, the references within the landscape to cultural associations with water, such as the Middle Passage, were too subtle. RA noted that the themes associated with each of the reading groves could be more specific and overt.

Louise Brodnitz (LB), ACHP, commented that she thought that design of the water feature in the north landscape was too formal with too many hard edges. Thomas Luebke (TL), CFA, responded that his commission was concerned that the former design of the water feature looked like a drainage ditch along Constitution Avenue. He noted that Constitution Avenue has for many years been a constructed landscape and that naturalistic features at this location would be inappropriate. TL added that the revised design seems calmer and more resolved.

SB commented that she would like to see the height of the oculus reduced so that people will be able to experience the calm pool of water on the top of the oculus contrasting with the falling water along the edge. SB added that the north water feature has to balance programmatic requirements with symbolic requirements.

Dreck Wilson (DW), ASAALH and NTHP, commented that there seems to be a lack of program for the landscape design. RA responded that while there is no specific program, the design team has been trying to achieve a flexible outdoor space for the museum, to accommodate visitors, and to create a usable

day-to-day space. DW commented that he does not think the landscape design has any historic or symbolic meaning to African Americans. He noted a lack of references to cultural touchstones and a lack of art and sculpture. He added that the plant palette could be chosen to have historic meaning to African Americans. DW wants to see a movement of the objectives and goals of the museum to the outdoors. PF responded that there are spaces in the landscape that can accommodate outdoor artwork. He noted that messages, words, and familiar prose will be placed in the landscape as a part of elements such as benches and curbs. Brenda Sanchez (BS), SI OFEO, clarified that Kinshasha Conwill, SI NMAAHC, is responsible for identifying outdoor sculpture for the museum and locating it on the site. DW added that the hole in the ground created by the oculus could be interpreted as a negative cultural reference. PF noted that the oculus is no longer a hole. It is covered and serves as a clerestory to bring in light. BS added that the oculus is meant to represent a beacon of light and serve as a subtle reference to safe houses. DAR commented that the program for the landscape design is too subtle and suggested that strengthening the relationship between the landscape design and the program could help address the concerns raised by DW.

DW asked about the location of the cooling tower. JM responded that although the engineering and cost estimate feasibility studies have not been completed, the museum is very confident that a cooling tower will not be necessary. DW commented that he hoped the museum would have programming that would allow visitors to use the site at night.

Next, PF discussed modifications to the corona and the porch. He explained that the design team is working to reduce the footprint of the corona, the size of the porch, and the height of the building. PF noted that the design team understands that the roof is really a fifth facade and clarified that in the current design the sawtooth roof will be below a parapet so that it will not be visible. PF added that in the current design, the dimensions of the porch are smaller.

PF discussed night lighting for the museum, stating that the lighting consultants have done an extensive survey of the night lighting conditions of the Mall. The brightest structures are the Washington Monument and the Capitol. Other buildings along the Mall range from 0.2 to 0.9 candelas per square meter. The target range for night lighting of NMAAHC will be 0.1 to 0.5 candelas per square meter. The design team anticipates lighting of the bridges over the water feature and the seating areas in the north landscape, light standards along the pathways, standard street light standards along the perimeter of the site, light from the oculus, and lighting of the egress court on the east. PF added that controlled and consistent light will emanate from the building through the perforated skin of the corona. The night lighting will be planned to avoid glare and hot spots. LB asked if light from the roof would be visible from the Washington Monument. PF responded that there will be light from the roof, but it will be low level light because the skylights face north. DW asked about the discrepancy between earlier illustrations of the building at night, which showed much brighter lighting, and the current presentation. JM replied that the museum has to follow night lighting guidelines. SB stated that night lighting is an issue that the CFA is currently addressing with other projects. She noted that night lighting has been evaluated carefully whether the lighting is a localized spot illumination or a uniform glow, such as the NMAAHC.

SP thanked the design team for their presentation, noting that they are still working on some issues for the upcoming agency submissions.

## **Review of Programmatic Agreement**

SP stated that SI has been working with the DC HPO since February on the draft PA. SP explained that since there is no final design, the PA will use the September agency submission materials as the established baseline.

SP summarized the most recent changes to the preface clauses and summarized the section on minimization measures. AL commented that minimizing the visibility of the sawtooth roof feature should be added to the PA. Ann Trowbridge (AT), SI OFEO, responded that she is reluctant to build it into the agreement because the change has not been presented to the agencies yet. AL agreed to hold off adding it to the draft, but asked that the suggestion be kept on the table. LB suggested adding it to the section about ongoing issues. AL asked that specifications and timeframes be added to the draft PA.

Next, SP reviewed the proposed mitigation. Regarding the mitigation related to funding the Olin Design landscape plan for the Washington Monument Grounds, LB asked if the Olin plan needed to be modified because it did not take into account current conditions – the fact that a building is going to be constructed on the site. PW noted that there has been a whole generation of modifications to the Olin plan that have been approved. AL responded that the mitigation will be based on the Olin plan as modified by agency approval except for the NMAAHC site which has a current design influenced by the Olin plan, but unique to the site.

Regarding the mitigation related to the National Register nomination for the Washington Monument Grounds, AL noted that the update will address the boundary issue.

Regarding the mitigation related to the exhibit at NMAAHC, DW asked that the Consulting Parties be included in the notification as to when the exhibit becomes available for display at other locations. PW suggested that the archaeological findings from related projects on the Washington Monument Grounds, such as the levee project, be incorporated into the exhibit.

Regarding the mitigation related to the statue of George Washington by Horatio Greenough, SP noted that a curator at the National Museum of American History has done extensive research on the sculpture. TL asked about the intent of the mitigation, noting that at one point there was discussion about moving the sculpture. SP responded that the purpose of the mitigation is to improve interpretive material on the sculpture. AL noted that at one point the DC HPO was interested in having SI investigate other locations for the sculpture, but this has been dropped. DAR suggested that as part of ongoing consultation and to encourage public participation, NMAAHC produce a short video on the design and post it on the project website. The video should request the feedback on specific elements of the design, which would help focus public participation. DAR also suggested modifying the language on the project website, which in his experience is too formal and technical for the general public.

SP presented the mitigation schedule, explaining that it was broken out into fundable components and time-sensitive components. AL asked that the submission of annual reports to the DC HPO be added to the mitigation schedule.

The meeting adjourned at 11:45 a.m.