

**Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture
Section 106 Consulting Parties Meeting #14**

Date of Meeting: September 21, 2011
Project: Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture
Location of Meeting: U.S. Commission of Fine Arts, Conference Room
Time of Meeting: 9:30 am – 12:00 noon

Attendees: Sharon Park, SI OFEO
Thea Scott-Fundling, SI OFEO
Dreck Wilson, ASAALH and NTHP
Alan Harwood, AECOM
Ken Walton, NCPC
Hal Davis, SmithGroup
Sarah Batcheler, CFA
Jennifer Hirsch, NCPC
Andrew Lewis, D.C. Historic Preservation Office
Ann Trowbridge, SI OFEO
Judith Robinson, Robinson & Associates
Daria Gasparini, Robinson & Associates
Amy Ballard, SI OFEO
Perry Wheelock, NPS-NCR
Louise Brodnitz, ACHP

MEETING SUMMARY

Sharon Park (SP), SI OFEO, brought the meeting to order at 9:45 am, stating that the objectives of the meeting were to discuss the status of the Programmatic Agreement (PA) and to review the latest refinements to the preferred alternative design that are being prepared for CFA and NCPC review in the upcoming months. SP noted that the PA currently posted on the EIS website (www.nmaahceis.com) is being amended because there were additional NPS comments. The attachments to the PA will not change. SP added that SI has a draft of the archaeological report that was completed as part of the gas line work on the site. SP introduced Thea Scott-Fundling, SI OFEO.

SP invited Hal Davis (HD), SmithGroup, to give a presentation on the design refinements. SP added that the design team is preparing submission materials for the CFA commission meeting on October 20 and the NCPC commission meeting on November 3.

Design Presentation

HD discussed the Height Act and presented slides illustrating the height of the current scheme, which measures approximately 125' above mean sea level to the top of the roof, compared to the adjacent Commerce Building, which measures approximately 126' to the top of the roof. Andrew Lewis (AL), DC HPO, asked for clarification on the symmetry of the roof. HD explained that the terrace will be covered so that the roof reads as symmetrical. Sarah Batcheler (SB), CFA, commented that she never noticed that the building is not centered on Commerce. HD noted that it was at one point, but it has subsequently been shifted to open up views of Federal Triangle and to increase the landscape.

HD discussed the sectional differences between the 210' corona and the current 216' corona and described the corona's structural system. Dreck Wilson (DW), ASAALH and NTHP, asked if there will be any rainwater capture incorporated into the design. HD replied that drainage will be collected at the ground level and captured into a cistern for recycling. HD described changes to the roof, stating that the sawtooth element is now recessed into the 5th floor. The elevator core areas will be covered with horizontal louvers to hide them from views from the top of the Washington Monument. The material of the louvers will be of a uniform color.

Next, HD discussed the porch massing studies, stating that the design team looked at altering the length and depth of the porch. In the current design, the length of the porch has been shortened to align with the glazing of the corona. The depth of the porch has been reduced to 44', but it still projects over the McMillan line. DW questioned why the reductions were made, and HD explained that it was in response to previous comments. HD added that proportionally, the design team considers the current design to be a better solution. The design team also studied how changes to the depth of the porch related to sun exposure and shade. DW asked for the height of the underside of the porch. HD replied that it will measure 15' to form a continuous line with the glazing at the entrance. DW questioned if the porch will block views looking out from the second floor. HD clarified that the café will align with the terrace level which will be accessible. DW asked about the material that will be used for the perimeter wall of the terrace. HD clarified that it will most likely be a glass railing. DW asked about the design of the vertical porch supports and how they relate to the angle of the corona tiers. HD replied that the tiers of the corona are angled at 17 degrees, which corresponds to the angle of the top of the Washington Monument. HD added that the supports are angled to carry the necessary loads and follow a design that David Adjaye prefers.

HD described the design team studies to resolve the connection between the corona and the ground-level glazing. The design team considered a protruding band, but decided on a recessed condition to break and provide relief between the two points. Louise Brodnitz (LB), ACHP, asked why the design team dismissed the projection. HD explained that the design team felt it was an intrusion that created a shadow line and an unwanted ledge.

HD continued the presentation with a discussion of the south water feature. HD described the water feature as having two components – a lifted edge with moving water and a larger flat area with still water. HD explained that the lifted edge will incorporate inscribed text so that it could be filled or drained and noted that the still water will reflect light under the porch. The water feature will have a very clean aesthetic with no visible hardware. LB asked if the design team has planned for the fact that kids might step into the water. HD replied that the depth of the water will be very shallow. DW asked about lighting. HD replied that although at the moment the water feature will not be lit, there will be path lighting. DW urged the design team to consider adding some night lighting. SB commented that the design team needs to be confident that the water feature will be maintainable so that it will stay on and work and noted that the water scirms at the Kogod Courtyard have been turned off. She added that the construction of a water feature over occupied space can pose difficulties. HD described barriers and protections.

HD identified the reading grove locations and themes, which include spirituality, optimism and hope, freedom, resiliency, and future. HD noted that the oculus is now an enclosed area with water cascading down the edges. SP asked if HD could discuss colors and materials. HD replied that the design team considered marble for the exterior benches, but they have concerns about porosity and stains. The design team is looking at a denser marble or granite. HD added that the design team is studying ways to

integrate a quilted pattern into the landscape using grass strips and different paving materials. SB commented that there are practical concerns to consider related to the maintenance of grass strips. DW commented that stone is monotonous and a variety of pavement colors could be used to add texture. DW added that he considers the building to be a natural, warm form and that stone is not organic. He urged the design team to consider softer, more organic materials for the seating materials, such as wood or a simulated wood. SB commented that the presentation is showing very polished stone with a hard geometry, adding that stone can be treated in lots of different ways. She suggested not ruling out the material entirely. DW noted that the stone, as it is being shown, is too engineered.

Next, HD discussed the idea of designing a food service area as part of the site development. It will include an outdoor pavilion – to accommodate a standard food cart and associated vendor equipment – and a seating area. HD explained that the design team hopes that by anticipating this need, the NMAAHC food service area will have an aesthetic that is in keeping with the design of the museum. The food service area will be located in the southeast corner of the site. The food pavilion and guard booth will form bookends that anchor the north and south edges of the loading dock. DW cautioned against overdesigning and expressed skepticism and concern about adding that type of structure to the site. He suggested looking at Bryant Park in New York City as a model, stating that this park provides seating and food service without additional structures. SB stated her opposition to the food pavilion, expressing concern about the fact that there will inevitably be paraphernalia and junk associated with it. She noted that it is directly adjacent to the entrance to the museum and added that if it must be constructed, a low enclosure may be preferable. She commented that if the food truck is at the curb, at least it will not look like the museum’s mess. HD explained that the design team is looking at lowering the wall behind the glass enclosed space of the guard booth to reduce the opacity of this feature.

DW suggested that the design team consider using different paving materials for the sidewalks or introducing curves to integrate the sidewalk design with the rest of the site. PW noted that there is an interagency agreement that defines the treatment of the sidewalks so that they do not become a patchwork of different treatments. HD added that the sidewalks around the site will be exposed aggregate concrete. DW commented that as long as the sidewalks meet the minimum dimensions, it might be possible to create an undulating inside edge. SB noted that DDOT also has established guidelines for the sidewalks. She added that it is important that a sidewalk can be clearly read as a continuous public pedestrian thruway and questioned if a sidewalk should take on the character of each individual site. DW added that he does not think that the sidewalk should have to conform to a rigid geometry as long as they meet the minimum requirements. DW noted that currently there is no place along the sidewalks for pedestrians to rest and suggested incorporating benches or seating areas along the sidewalk. PW added that if the café area had stone wall bench seating, it could serve a dual purpose by also providing a place for pedestrians to rest. SB suggested rotating the food pavilion to face the sidewalk to make it more inviting.

HD finished the design update by playing the flyover animation to illustrate spatial and contextual relationships.

Programmatic Agreement Discussion

SP gave an update on the PA. SI is currently making amendments to the PA in response to comments from NPS. A fresh version will be available as soon as possible. The attachments will not be changed. SP added that the DC HPO requested that it be a completely merged document so that the component parts cannot be separated. LB asked if there was a rough date for getting the final PA. SP replied that it

could be ready as soon as Friday or Monday because the changes won't alter the substance of the document. It will need to be recirculated for signatures.

SP noted that the archaeology report for the gas line work is ready. She added that the articles found in the fill layer included stakes, bottles, and pot shards. As part of mitigation, SI will develop a contract to provide for archaeology throughout the construction period.

LB asked if the earthquake damage changed any conditions of the PA. SP replied that the threshold levels for monitoring vibrations have been tightened. PW added that NPS recently had a public meeting for the Washington Monument security screening proposal where they shared the most recent info on the stability of the Washington Monument. This information has been posted to the NPS PEPC site for public distribution.

SP noted that SI has started research on the Bullfinch gateposts. It is a long-range project, but they have begun to consolidate information.

Jennifer Hirsch (JH), NCPC, asked if the changes to the PA were extensive. SP responded that one change addresses the termination date for NPS responsibility for site maintenance. September 15 was the date that terminated NPS maintenance of the site, and so all management decisions on the site now reside with SI. Other changes relate to the thresholds for monitoring vibrations, the timing for halting construction, and the language related to consultation on temporary furniture. SP added that the definition of temporary furniture needs to be better defined in the PA. PW commented that NPS wants to change some of the wording to get more clarity so that the document can be understood five years from now. SP reiterated that the changes will not be extensive and that SI is moving as quickly as they can. The revised PA will be distributed to the signatories with tracked changes.

SP discussed the schedule, stating that the next CP meeting will probably not be until after the first of the year. Currently, the design team is working on preparing submissions for the CFA commission meeting on October 20 and the NCPC commission meeting on November 3. Ann Trowbridge (AT), SI OFEO, added that the final design will be presented to the agencies next summer, with several early construction packages before that. SP noted that annual reports are one of the mitigation products, and they will be sent out electronically. LB requested that the consulting parties are notified periodically of upcoming submissions. SP agreed to do this and added that the submission packages will be made available to the DC HPO and others. PW noted that NPS typically puts their submission materials on the PEPC site the day after the review meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 11:30 am.