

**Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture
Section 106 Consulting Parties Meeting #4**

Date of Meeting: March 17, 2010
Project: Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture
Location of Meeting: 600 Maryland Avenue, NW – 5th Floor
Time of Meeting: 9:30 am – 12:00 noon

Attendees: Sharon Park, SI OFEO
Zena Howard, The Freelon Group
Judith Robinson, Robinson & Associates
Dreck Wilson, ASAALH
Louise Brodnitz, Advisory Council on Historic Preservation
Felicia Bell, U.S. Capitol Historical Society
Nona McKay, U.S. Capitol Historical Society
Brenda Sanchez, SI OFEO
Thomas Luebke, U.S. Commission of Fine Arts
Sarah Batcheler, U.S. Commission of Fine Arts
Perry Wheelock, National Park Service
Andrew Lewis, D.C. Historic Preservation Office
Kelan Dyer, SI OFEO
Melissa Hatcher, AECOM
Nancy Witherell, National Capital Planning Commission
Peter Cook, Davis Brody Bond Aedas
Rodrigo Abela, Gustafson, Guthrie, Nichol
Phil Freelon, The Freelon Group
Hal Davis, SmithGroup
Elsa Santoyo, SmithGroup
Amy Tarce, National Capitol Planning Commission
Daria Gasparini, Robinson & Associates
Judy Scott Feldman, National Coalition to Save Our Mall
Patsy Fletcher, AAHGS
Ken Walton, National Capital Planning Commission
Harry Rombach, SI OFEO
Lynn Chase, SI NMAAHC
Jane Passman, SI OFEO
Jud McIntire, SI OFEO
Amy Ballard, SI OFEO

Objective: For the consulting parties to review the three alternatives and begin the matrix exercise as part of the Cultural Resources analysis of effects as outlined in the EIS. The criteria for the categories in the matrix will be extracted from the Design Principles. It is expected that the matrix exercise will continue into the April meeting.

Meeting Summary

Sharon Park (SP), SI OFEO, brought the meeting to order at 9:30 am. SP began by reviewing the agenda and the objectives of the meeting and updating the consulting parties on progress since the last

meeting. SP noted that the purpose of the meeting was to review the refined alternatives and introduce the Tier II effects matrix.

1. Powerpoint Presentation

Phil Freelon (PF), The Freelon Group, began the presentation of the refined alternatives with a discussion of the Plinth Scheme. Within the context of the Mall buildings, this scheme aligns the corona with the north and south facades of the American History Museum, while the southern edge of the plinth aligns with the south facade of the Natural History Museum. Next, PF described the internal programming of the museum, noting that at the ground level the primary entrance is located on the south. A secondary entry is located off Constitution Avenue. On the penthouse level, the Plinth Scheme features a terrace/memorial, a VIP area, and a cafe. In section this scheme consists of an elevated plinth that forms the base for a two-tiered corona.

Next, PF discussed the Plaza Scheme in which the museum program is split into two structures – an office building and the corona – separated by an outdoor plaza. PF described the alignments of the buildings, stating that the corona is moved south on the building site while the office building, or support building, is located along Constitution Avenue. The primary entry to the corona is from the south off the Mall. A secondary entrance is located on the north from the plaza. There is also an entrance from the plaza to the cafeteria, which is located in the office building. A ramp leads from Constitution Avenue to the plaza, which features a circular opening to a memorial space below. In this scheme, the upper levels of the support building contain offices, and the upper levels of the corona contain galleries. The internal ramping has been compressed. On the roof level, the Plaza Scheme features a terrace, a cafe, and VIP/special event area. In section this scheme consists of a three-tiered corona element and a three-story office building. The two buildings are connected below grade at the concourse level.

PF described the Pavilion Scheme last, noting changes since the last time it was presented to the consulting parties. The size of the corona has been reduced, and it has been moved south to allow for diagonal views and access through the site. PF related the alignment of the corona in this scheme to the “in and out cadence” of the southern alignments of the Mall buildings. Additionally, this scheme now includes a ground-level cafeteria in the northwest corner of the site. The cafeteria features glass walls that allow for views to the Washington Monument. In this scheme, the main entry to the museum is located on the south off the Mall. PF described the floor plans noting that the concourse level connects the corona with the cafeteria below grade. The first and second levels of the corona contain gallery space, while the third and fourth levels contain offices. The penthouse level includes a VIP area, a cafe, and a terrace. In section the Pavilion Scheme consists of a three-tiered corona and a one-story cafeteria.

Following PF’s presentation, Rodrigo Abela (RA), Gustafson, Guthrie, Nichol, spoke in more detail about the landscape plans for each alternative. First he described the elements common to all of the schemes. Each took lessons from the 1939 development plan for the Mall published by the National Capital Parks and Planning Commission in which the allee of trees along the Mall terminated at 14th Street, the site served as a transition from a formal to an informal landscape, and the diagonals of Madison and Jefferson Drives reflected the diagonals at the east end of the Mall in front of the Capitol. A second element common to all of the schemes was the need to create a landscape that related to the museum while at the same time respecting the landscape of the Washington Monument Grounds. Third, the integration of perimeter security into the landscape design was important to all of the schemes. To achieve this, the design team explored methods of integrating programming into security features and using materials that were evocative of the history told within the museum. Lastly, each scheme features

two water elements – one to serve as an entry piece and a second to serve as “working water” while creating an ambiance of a southern bayou.

Next, RA described each landscape plan in detail starting with the Plinth Scheme. This scheme features an entry piece water element on the south side of the museum that serves as a reflecting pool. South of the water element is a sloped lawn. A second water feature is located along Constitution Avenue on either side of the secondary entrance. On the west side of the building a bermed landscape provides security. RA provided diagrams illustrating the primary circulation patterns for this scheme and diagrams of key views.

The next scheme RA illustrated was the Plaza Scheme. In this scheme, the plaza feature that links the office building with the corona is at a higher elevation than the street. Therefore, the landscape plan features a sloped ramp that leads from Constitution Avenue to the plaza. A working water feature at the north edge of the site provides a buffer between the office building and Constitution Avenue. RA explained that the orientation of the buildings frames views to the Washington Monument and that these views are slowly revealed as one proceeds up the ramp to the plaza. The plaza includes a circular opening to a memorial space below. This opening features a ring of water that also acts as a guard rail. On the west, the plaza steps down to the sidewalk level. There is a second water feature located south of the corona. RA provided diagrams illustrating the primary circulation patterns for this scheme and diagrams of key views.

Lastly, RA discussed the Pavilion Scheme. In this scheme, there is a highpoint at the northwest corner of the site that creates a valley in the landscape north of the corona. A path leads diagonally through the valley and provides views of the Washington Monument. RA noted that the design team plans to use of the valley to create an outdoor space for the museum and suggested that one slope could be used as an amphitheater. This scheme also features a circular opening to a lower-level memorial north of the corona and a reflecting pool to the south. A water feature wraps around the cafeteria and acts as a “moat” to provide security. RA noted, however, that the design team has not yet entirely worked out the perimeter security for this scheme. RA concluded by providing diagrams illustrating the primary circulation patterns for this scheme and diagrams of key views.

2. Group Discussion of Alternatives

Judith Robinson (JR), Robinson & Associates, opened the group discussion by asking about the porch in the Pavilion Scheme. PF responded that the porch element has been moved closer to the corona. RA clarified that the porch was a one-story detached element. PF noted that it needs further refinement.

Louise Brodnitz (LB), Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, asked to return to the rendering that illustrated views of the Pavilion Scheme and commented that she considered the cafeteria an exciting development. RA noted that at the edge of Constitution Avenue there will be a water element that will serve as a buffer between the sidewalk and the cafeteria.

SP asked for clarification of the evolution of the bayou concept and the idea of using the “working water” element as a filtration system. SP had been concerned that the bayou was too foreign a concept to use along Constitution Avenue and noted that it seems to have evolved into a more controlled, geometric feature. RA stated that by using the word bayou, the designers were trying to evoke an ambiance rather than recreate a swamp. RA also noted that the rule for using planted water called for 30-50% open water. PF clarified that all of the water features in the northern portion of the site are to act as storm water management systems.

Dreck Wilson (DW), ASAALH, commented that the McMillan Plan took a lot of landscape cues from the Place de la Concorde in Paris, which doesn't have water features. DW expressed concern that a water element so close to Constitution Avenue would have environmental consequences with trash and debris ending up in the water. PF responded by stating that in all cases there is a horizontal or vertical separation between the street and the water element.

Thomas Luebke (TL), U.S. Commission of Fine Arts, also expressed his concern about water elements along Constitution Avenue. He noted that all elements – built or landscape – along Constitution Avenue are set back and that it would be unprecedented to have something located within the setback zone.

Perry Wheelock (PW), National Park Service, asked if there were existing NCPC guidelines for Constitution Avenue that would guide its treatment. Nancy Witherell (NW), National Capital Planning Commission, responded that she would check. Harry Rombach (HR), SI OFEO, clarified that studies have been done, but he didn't believe they were ever actually adopted by the Commission and may be dated.

Andrew Lewis (AL), D.C. Historic Preservation Office, asked if the National Aquarium was also proposing a water feature. Sarah Batcheler (SB), U.S. Commission of Fine Arts, clarified that the aquarium plans no longer feature a water element.

TL recalled that there was the preexistence of the canal on the site and that a water feature should not be entirely ruled out. NW agreed that it could play out as a security barrier.

SB raised questions about the design team's thoughts behind resurrecting the 1939 plan. NW clarified that she had passed it on to the design team early on in the project. PW noted that the 1939 plan represents what was thought should be implemented from the Olmsted plan.

NW commented that views open up as one travels westward along the Mall. TL noted that the 1939 plan was only partially implemented. NW applauded the design team for looking at the site as a transitional landscape.

SB asked to hear more about the design team's idea of creating a dense "cap" of trees to terminate the Mall elm walks. She noted the treatment could be less dense, allowing views through the site.

SP commented that at the next meeting it would be very helpful to get back the model. This would give a better sense of how viewsheds might be impacted. AL concurred. RA noted that the site model is in the process of being redone.

AL stated that in reviewing the alternatives it jumped out at him that all of the schemes have adopted a feature in the northwest corner of the site. He reminded the design team that moving the corona to the south has been identified as an adverse impact. AL noted that suggesting the L'Enfant diagonal through the site may not be as important because of the changes in the plan that occurred with the development of Federal Triangle. RA clarified that the diagonal is more about opening up the view to the Washington Monument. TL mentioned that he would give up the view from 14th Street and Constitution for more important north/south views.

PF offered the opinion that it was the allee of trees that framed views along the Mall, not the building alignments. Judy Scott Feldman (JSF), National Coalition to Save Our Mall, agreed, noting that the trees are the feature that defines the space.

TL asked to see ground-level views for all of the schemes.

Felicia Bell (FB), U.S. Capitol Historical Society, asked to return to the illustration of the Pavilion Scheme and inquired about the setback of the cafeteria's glass wall from the street. PF responded that it was about 100 feet. FB expressed concern over the effects of the elements on the water features.

DW asked if the cafeteria would open up for outdoor seating. PF noted that it is a possibility.

DW stated that he is interested in nighttime lighting for the whole area and would like to see illustrations of this. Zena Howard (ZH), The Freelon Group, responded that night lighting studies will be done as part of the sustainability studies.

AL asked to return to the Pavilion Scheme. He was curious about the penthouse and asked if it would be visible. AL expressed concern that the purity of the corona form would be compromised by this feature. PF responded that the design team tried to pull the penthouse in on the east and west and especially the south. The goal was to keep it within 15 feet of the floor level. RA raised the question of whether hiding the penthouse by increasing the height of the top tier of the corona was of greater value than compromising the proportions of the corona. Peter Cook (PC), Davis Brody Bond Aedas, noted that the placement of the penthouse was bound by interior constraints.

LB brought up the issue of purity of view from the Washington Monument and requested multiple illustrations of this view. LB expressed concern about the impact of the 14 Street service area on the built features across the street within the American History Museum grounds. PF noted that there would be screening devices in this area.

SP raised concern about the Bulfinch gateposts noting that their location may conflict with the glass wall of the Pavilion Scheme. RA stated that he thought that the building was pulled back far enough that there would not be an issue. SP commented that she thought the use of step seating on the lifted turf of the Pavilion Scheme was clever.

Patsy Fletcher (PFI), AAHGS, asked about the message that was meant to be conveyed through the memorial. PF responded that it was meant to be a quiet, contemplative site with water and light. PFI noted that it would be helpful in comparing the alternatives if there was a single illustration showing cross-sections of all three schemes.

NW asked for a copy of the powerpoint presentation.

TL brought up the Commemorative Works Act, noting that "memorial" is a term of art used by the agencies for a different purpose. He advised the design team to be careful about using this term when what they are presenting is in fact a feature to be used for contemplation or quiet reflection. TL asked for a study of the axis of the Mall, which is tipped a degree or two, as related to the museum.

DW asked how rain would be captured on the roof to meet LEED requirements. ZH responded that the team was not yet at the point of deciding on a strategy. Brenda Sanchez (BS), SI OFEO, clarified that once there is a preferred alternative, there would be more work done on this.

LB noted that there is some ambiguity whether the museum is part of the Washington Monument Grounds or part of the "march of buildings" along the Mall. She noted that the building is rectilinear

therefore it speaks to the buildings on the Mall. LB expressed the idea that relating the landscape more to the Washington Monument Grounds would buffer this characteristic.

JSF commented on the 1939 plan stating that the landscape concept is naturalistic and curvilinear and that the tree lines followed the walkways because they were meant to be shaded.

SP questioned if the bus traffic drop off on Madison Drive would be a material change. RA noted that it is an existing layby.

NW requested more information on the 14th Street service area for the next meeting.

SP asked for additional questions, thanked the design team, and suggested a break before evaluating the matrices.

3. Validation of Effects Matrix

The following materials were distributed to the group: the Tier I Effects Matrix, the Design Principles, and the Draft Tier II Effects Matrix.

SP asked the group to comment on the idea of adding a fourth column to the draft matrix to evaluate a fourth scheme – the previous iteration of the Pavilion Scheme, which consisted of a low three-tiered corona located in the middle of the site.

SB remarked that asking for a fourth scheme would have a serious impact on the designers and commented that she did not think any of the three schemes presented were within the guidelines identified in Tier I.

TL commented that he considered the Pavilion Scheme presented at the meeting as a completely different scheme.

Jud McIntire (JM), SI OFEO, asked if, for the purposes of analysis, the diagrams and illustrations of the previous Pavilion Scheme had to be fully realized. JM noted that massing and location diagrams are available.

AL noted that as they currently stand all three schemes have some element in the northwest corner of the site, which is new.

PFI noted that if the previous Pavilion Scheme was not considered it would imply that the heights of the current schemes had been accepted by the consulting parties. Ken Walton (KW), National Capital Planning Commission, stated that the Commission has moved past the original Pavilion Scheme and accepted the height of the alternatives, but wants the setbacks respected.

SB suggested asking the design team to change the setback of the current Pavilion Scheme rather than analyzing a fourth alternative.

TL noted that the concept of a “prevailing setback” is up to interpretation. TL commented that there is no longer an alternative where the building is in the middle of the site with no feature in the northwest corner and noted that in the current Pavilion Scheme the purity of the original idea has been lost. He remarked that he did not think it was appropriate to take the “pure” scheme off the table.

SP stated that the best way to review new or modified schemes would be as part of the matrix, which would also include the lower profile alternative presented in the previous Pavilion Scheme.

Jane Passman (JP), SI OFEO, commented that the Section 106 alternatives do not necessarily have to be the same as the EIS alternatives.

BS noted that a preferred alternative has to be identified soon.

PW expressed concern that there was a lot of work done during the Tier I process that has not been reflected in the current alternatives and questioned whether the heights of the alternatives are within the parameters of the Design Principles.

JP stated that all of the alternatives are within the Tier I parameters, measuring 105 feet from average grade, which is equivalent to an elevation of 118 feet. (This does not include the height of the penthouse, which adds another 15 feet to the alternatives.)

SP remarked that she thought from a process point of view the fourth alternative has to be considered and that the team should be told that there are grave concerns about moving the corona to the south.

JR described the methodology followed to create the Draft Tier II Effects Matrix. She noted that it is derived from the Design Principles, which were a synthesis of the Tier I matrix.

AL noted that although he wasn't involved in developing the Tier I matrix, he thinks that it makes sense to use the Design Principles to evaluate effects.

SP asked the consulting parties to take a careful look at the matrix to see if there are other aspects to add.

PW commented that it would be most useful to use all three tools together – the Tier I Effects Matrix, the Design Principles, and the Draft Tier II Effects Matrix.

AL noted that a critical first step is to determine if a fourth alternative is going to be evaluated.

SP suggested adding the fourth alternative to the matrix for evaluation but clarified that it will not be shown to the agencies.

AL recommended that as the process moves forward, the outcomes of the matrix evaluation go into a document for the design team to review before alternatives are dropped.

JR stated that the matrix will be used to identify possible adverse effects, avoidance, and/or minimization, and suggested altering the last column to read Avoidance/Minimization.

SP noted that the effects identified in the matrix can be weighted using a system similar to that used in the Tier I Effects Matrix. SP remarked that a subgroup can be set up so that work on populating the matrix can begin before the next consulting parties meeting.

AL noted that views are absolutely critical to evaluating effects. SP responded that she will request views of the fourth alternative.

DW suggested naming the fourth alternative "Scheme 4" to clearly identify it.

SP thanked the group for participating in the discussion.

4. Next Steps

SP will convene a working group to begin the process of populating the effects matrix. An additional column will be added to the matrix and a fourth alternative will be evaluated. Viewshed illustrations will be completed and made available for the next consulting parties meeting on April 22, 2010.

The meeting adjourned at 12:15 pm.

Action Items

- SI/design team to provide views from the top of the Washington Monument.
- SI/design team to provide ground-level views for all of the schemes.
- SI/design team to provide NCPC with a copy of the March 17, 2010 Consulting Parties Meeting presentation.
- SI/design team to provide additional information on the 14th Street service area.
- SI to advise the design team that there were concerns regarding the location of the corona in the Pavilion Scheme.