

**Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture
Section 106 Consulting Parties Meeting #6**

Date of Meeting: May 26, 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: Hal Davis, SmithGroup
Peter Cook, Davis Brody Bond Aedas
Elsa Santoyo, SmithGroup
Sharon Park, SI OFEO
Dreck Wilson, ASAALH
David Maloney, D.C. Historic Preservation Office
Don Hawkins, Committee of 100 on the Federal City
Brenda Sanchez, SI OFEO
Kelan Dyer, SI OFEO
Patsy Fletcher, AAHGS
Tom Whitley, Guild of Professional Tour Guides of Washington, D.C.
Harry Rombach, SI OFEO
Jane Passman, SI OFEO
Amy Ballard, SI OFEO
Ken Walton, National Capital Planning Commission
Mark Isaksen, National Park Service
Perry Wheelock, National Park Service
Nancy Witherell, National Capital Planning Commission
Jud McIntire, SI OFEO
Melissa Hatcher, AECOM
Daria Gasparini, Robinson & Associates
Judith Robinson, Robinson & Associates

Objective: To update the consulting parties on the evolution of the design, to review the effects matrix and evaluations, and to bring the group up to date on the status of the EIS.

Meeting Summary

Sharon Park (SP), SI OFEO, brought the meeting to order at 9:40 am. SP reviewed the agenda and the objectives of the meeting, noting that there would be a presentation of the evolution of the design toward a favored alternative based on the comments and feedback received at consulting parties meetings and agency meetings, a presentation of the viewshed analysis for the favored alternative, a review of the revised effects matrix, and a summary of progress related to the EIS.

1. Update on the Evolution of the Design

SP introduced Hal Davis (HD), SmithGroup, and Peter Cook (PC), Davis Brody Bond Aedas, who would be presenting the favored alternative on behalf of the design team. HD began by pointing out that the corona is located in the center of the site and aligns with the centerline of the museum buildings along the National Mall. HD also noted that in response to concerns about the setback from 14th Street, the corona has been moved about 20 feet to the west. This creates a buffer area along 14th Street. HD discussed the water element south of the corona, stating that it has been shifted out and noted that the

porch has increased in size to provide additional shade and protection. On the south are two entrances from the National Mall, and these cross over the water element. There is also an entrance on the north from Constitution Avenue.

PC reviewed the building plans, which consist of a seven-level structure with three below-grade levels. One level below grade is the concourse level which includes service spaces on the south end and public spaces – a youth gallery, an education space, a cafeteria, and a theater – on the north end. On grade with the National Mall is the central hall space. This includes the four core elements that provide structural support and vertical integration. PC noted that, based on comments from the consulting parties, the design team was thinking about what the top of the building will look like, adding that it is a five-sided structure (including the roof) rather than a four-sided structure.

HD commented that the penthouse has been made more symmetrical in response to comments. The north end of the roof will be inaccessible (due to White House concerns) while the south end will feature an outdoor terrace. HD added that the porch element will also have an accessible terrace. Next, HD reviewed the sun studies. He noted that the design team is still looking at the height of the glass base. Currently, the range is between 18 and 22 feet. The design team is also currently studying the height of the lifted elements along Constitution Avenue and the details of the adjacent water element.

HD stated that the location of the cooling tower is being studied and that the design team is trying to shift it as far south as possible. Dreck Wilson (DW), ASAALH, asked if the top of the cooling tower will be above grade. HD clarified that it will not be above grade and that there will be grating above it and landscaping around it. Brenda Sanchez (BS), SI OFEO, added that this location for the cooling tower is the worst case scenario. The necessity of a cooling tower is still being studied.

HD discussed programming and reviewed the sections and elevations of the favored alternative. He noted that the design team is still studying ways to get light into the concourse level. HD added that the perimeter security is another element that is still being worked out, noting that it will be integrated into the landscape as much as possible.

Next, HD described the site plan and landscaping. On the north, the entrance path from Constitution Avenue has been slightly skewed to 15th Street. HD noted that the alignment of the path has also been looked at from the 14th and 15th street access points. The slope of the ramp leading to the north entrance is very shallow, and handrails will not be necessary. The site plan includes both shaded and sunny areas. On the south, a terrace leads down from the National Mall to the water element, which visitors will pass over in order to enter the museum. HD added that the design team is looking at incorporating movement into this water element. The design team is also studying ways to integrate a water element into the memorial feature on the north side of the corona.

DW commented on the 14th Street side of the site plan, noting that the landscaping looked thin. DW asked if the design team could look at placing decking over the access ramp and putting a plaza above it. HD responded that there are concerns about ramp clearance and that as much of the ramp has been decked as possible. HD noted that if the deck was raised to provide additional clearance and extended, it would block the transparency of the glass base.

DW noted that earlier in the process the consulting parties were shown images illustrating anticipated pedestrian circulation patterns and approaches and asked if the current pathways match these patterns. HD responded that 70% of visitors are expected to come from the south and that the south entrance has been designed as the primary entrance with two approach paths. PC added that the design team is still

studying the proportions of the walkways. HD noted that, in response to comments, the design team is trying to avoid large expanses of pavement on the south side. DW suggested that the pathways could be repositioned to match the direct approaches from the Washington Monument Grounds and the National Mall and asked why pedestrians couldn't be picked up at the corners. HD replied that the landscape is lifted at the corners on the north side. Nancy Witherell (NW), National Capital Planning Commission, requested that the design team continue to study access from 14th Street.

Patsy Fletcher (PF), AAHGS, asked if it was certain that the water element on the south side was going to be so rectangular. HD replied that the shape of the water element is still being studied, but it will have movement and pedestrian paths will cross it rather than go around it. PF urged the design team to consider a more asymmetrical shape or something with rounded edges. SP noted that the current water element responds to comments that the size should be more in proportion with the building.

HD explained that the landscape on the south side of the site will feature low flowering shrubs, shade trees, and an asymmetrical arrangement of benches. PC added that the idea was to move away from big grand exterior spaces towards more intimate spaces. Perry Wheelock (PW), National Park Service, noted that in previous presentations the design team talked about respecting existing landscape plans for the Washington Monument Grounds and questioned whether the features in the favored alternative achieved this. PW asked how the lifted landscape at the northwest corner of the site would relate to the historic gateposts and why the southern edge of the security perimeter extended so far south. HD clarified that the illustration of the security line doesn't necessarily mean that there will be a wall around the perimeter of the site. Rather, the design team is studying ways to integrate security features into the landscape. PW added that the Tier I EIS talked about maintaining movement across and through the site and requested that the security line be woven into the landscape. HD explained that on the east side of the site, the security wall may have to be moved in toward the building to accommodate on-site vehicular screening.

Don Hawkins (DH), Committee of 100 on the Federal City, commented that the landscape on the south side of the site seems unconvincing and suggested loosening it up and reshaping the walkways to reflect the paths people will realistically take.

DW noted that the area under the porch will be dark in the early evenings when a heavy shadow is cast and asked what type of illumination was planned for the porch. HD responded that the issue is still being studied but expects that the light from the interior of the corona will illuminate the exterior space. The design team is trying to limit the amount of exterior light as much as possible. DW noted that the illustrations of the site showed streetlamps and asked if the design team will follow D.C. Department of Transportation (DDOT) standards for these elements. Jane Passman (JP), SI OFEO, commented that there are National Park Service guidelines for street lighting as well as guidelines for features such as paving materials.

Ken Walton (KW), National Capital Planning Commission, asked to see the illustration along Constitution Avenue, noting that when both corners of the landscape are lifted a street wall is created. He added that this makes the north side of the site less public and more private and limits the pedestrian experience across the site. KW requested that the design team continue to study a lifted landscape at only one corner.

2. Viewsheds Update

Elsa Santoyo (ES), SmithGroup, presented the updated viewshed matrix which adds a column for the favored alternative. ES noted that modifications to the penthouse included repositioning it

symmetrically on the roof and pulling it back from the edge of the corona. These changes are visible in the view from the top of the Washington Monument. ES noted that in the view from 14th Street and Constitution Avenue the lifted landscape is not very visible because the scale. Also, because the penthouse is pulled back, more of the Washington Monument is visible from this view. Regarding the view from Madison Drive, ES recognized that there was a request from the agencies to look at it from the north side of the street, but explained that the view was blocked by construction equipment. ES explained that the spot chosen for the view from Madison Drive was where one sees the biggest mass of the building. ES observed that the building is not visible in the view down the National Mall because of existing tree cover. ES noted that in the view from Constitution Avenue looking east the mass of the corona can be compared with the mass of the U.S. Department of Commerce building. ES commented that the height of the building appears lower as seen from a distance because the penthouse is pulled back.

KW requested a view from the northwest corner of 14th Street and Constitution Avenue. BS clarified that this work was underway.

DW questioned if the building was really not visible in the long view down the National Mall. ES replied that the trees block the structure. PW added that the change in grade of the landscape also has an effect.

SP commented that squaring up the penthouse helps with the proportions of the building. HD added that it also helps programmatically. KW asked about the height of the favored alternative. HD replied that the height has not changed.

3. Review of the Effects Matrix

Judith Robinson (JR), Robinson & Associates, opened up the discussion of the revised matrix. JR explained that the previous matrix took comments from the last consulting parties meeting and applied major adverse effect to almost every impact. The revised effects matrix pulls together previous comments with observations from the Tier I EIS analysis and text from the Tier II Preliminary DEIS (PDEIS) to reevaluate the levels of impact. JR noted that the revised matrix also provides additional narrative and cross-compares the different schemes to begin identifying the advantages and disadvantages of the schemes.

SP added that the favored alternative was not evaluated as part of the revised matrix because the scheme is still evolving. She clarified that if at any time the favored alternative becomes a preferred alternative it will be added to the matrix and evaluated in a similar fashion.

JR noted that the Plaza Scheme was not evaluated in the PDEIS and that the Section 106 analysis has followed in tandem. BS clarified that the Plaza Scheme is included in the PDEIS as an alternative considered but rejected because it did not meet programmatic requirements. JP added that the Plaza Scheme was considered quite thoroughly and that the design team picked up some lessons from the process. SP commented that the same process occurred in the Tier I process which looked at many schemes and then narrowed it down. DW noted that he understands the decision to drop the Plaza Scheme but feels that there has been a lack of transparency in the process. JP asked how DW thought the Plaza Scheme should be carried forward. DW replied either in the EIS or in the Section 106 process, adding that the scheme started out carrying the same weight as the other schemes but was dropped and questioned how the public would know that. JP added that the process will be explained in the EIS. NW questioned if the Plaza Scheme should be analyzed at the same level as the other schemes in the Section 106 process. JR noted that a number of negative comments on the Plaza Scheme were recorded

and therefore it did not seem unnatural to drop it from the matrix. SP questioned how the Plaza Scheme could be incorporated back into the Section 106 process and suggested that it be added back into the matrix with analysis. NW noted that the reasons why the Plaza Scheme was not carried forward need to be documented.

JR continued with the discussion of the revised matrix starting with the effects on long views within the National Mall. JR noted that to clarify the analysis the revised matrix divided several of the design principals into separate components.

NW questioned if there was enough difference between the Plinth Scheme and the Blended Scheme to validate the former having major effect on views from the top of the Washington Monument and from the air and the latter having moderate effect. JR replied that the preliminary levels of effect in the current matrix are a draft and comments and feedback are encouraged. PF asked if the effects on views from the top of the Washington Monument could be evaluated when the design of the roof and penthouse have not been finalized. JR replied that the matrix will continue to evolve as more information is available.

KW commented that there is not a significant difference between the Plinth Scheme and the Blended Scheme when evaluating effects on the panoramic views that open and widen on approach to the Washington Monument Grounds from the National Mall or the Ellipse. KW recommended changing the level of effect for the Plinth Scheme to major.

JR moved to the evaluation of effects on the cross-axial spatial organization of the National Mall. NW commented that the NCPD would classify the effects as major, rather than moderate, for all of the schemes. JR asked if there was support for this. PW agreed with NW. KW noted that the same change should be made for the effects on the "hinge" site.

JR stated that the evaluation of the effects on the distinctive characteristics of the historic environment of the Washington Monument Grounds was divided into several components. PW noted that the closer the structure to the Monument Lodge, the greater the impact. NW questioned if the Plinth Scheme and the Blended Scheme should be elevated from moderate to major and added that changes to the landscaping could be used as minimization.

JR moved the discussion on to the effects on the definition, character, and views of the Washington Monument Grounds as seen from the reservation as a whole. ES noted that if the Plaza Scheme is integrated back into the matrix, then a note should be added that it has less effect on pedestrian-level views from the Washington Monument Grounds looking northeast because it allows for greater views of the Federal Triangle buildings. ES also provided the setback distances from Constitution Avenue to the corona for all of the schemes. PW commented that in evaluating effects on the vegetative features of the Washington Monument Grounds, a note should be made that all of the schemes change the character of the vegetation. DW asked what was meant by vegetation. PW replied that vegetation includes turf, trees, lawn, among other things. PW also commented that the effect on land use should be major for all of the schemes, clarifying that the site will no longer be a permanent special event area.

PF asked why there was no analysis in the matrix for effects on the surrounding larger landscape. Daria Gasparini (DG), Robinson & Associates, replied that some evaluations from the DPEIS text matched more than one category of the design principles, on which the matrix was based, and in these cases the text was not repeated. DW requested that these categories not be left blank. JR suggested using references

to other categories. PW commented that she would like to see references to circulation and land use in the evaluation of effects on the surrounding larger landscape.

NW asked that the evaluation of effects on the Federal Triangle buildings be divided into effects on visual impact and effects on setting. NW added that effects of all of the schemes on the visual impact of the Federal Triangle buildings should be major and the effects of all of the schemes on the setting of the Federal Triangle buildings be moderate. NW noted that the analysis of effects on the museum buildings along the National Mall should also be divided between effects on visual impact and effects on setting. KW added that the effect of all of the schemes on the visual impact of the museum buildings along the National Mall should be moderate.

In evaluating effects on the site's position at the western end of the sequence of museum buildings facing the National Mall, PW questioned if the level of effect should be elevated based on changes made in other categories. NW suggested changing the level of effect to major for all three schemes. JR questioned if the Pavilion Scheme has less effect. NW replied that if the exercise is comparing the schemes to current conditions, then the Pavilion Scheme does not have less effect. SP noted that the task is to try to achieve a more refined and nuanced analysis. NW asked if the nuance can come from the annotations.

For the evaluation of effects on the compatibility to adjacent architectural and urban contexts, PW requested that perimeter security be evaluated separately because it is an important issue. PW also noted that the effects of perimeter security cannot be accurately analyzed at this time because more information is needed. JR noted that the annotation for the Blended Scheme relating to the effect of the service entrance along 14th Street will be added to the other schemes.

KW suggested changing the level of effect of the Plinth Scheme on the non-cardinal views and directions of approach to the historic National Mall pathways to major.

PW noted that the character of the non-cardinal views and directions of approach from the Washington Monument and the Ellipse are different from the non-cardinal views and directions of approach from the Old Post office because the former are park and the latter is urban. JR suggested that the analysis for this category be divided.

NW noted that she appreciates the level of analysis in the matrix and is aware of the concern over evaluating all of the effects as major.

SP stated that the matrix will be revised and distributed for further comment. SP asked that comments be submitted within two weeks. PW asked about posting the matrix to an FTP site for distribution. ES replied that it can be posted to the SmithGroup SharePoint site.

PW questioned whether the corona of the favored alternative has moved to the south. HD replied that it has not and that it is in alignment with the museums along the National Mall. Mark Isaksen (MI), National Park Service, noted that the porch is not in alignment with the museum buildings. HD confirmed that this is correct. SP clarified that the porch is a freestanding, sculptural element but has connections to the corona to provide access to the terrace.

SP concluded the discussion of the effects matrix and noted that the June consulting parties meeting will be cancelled because there will not be new information available.

4. Status of the EIS

JP introduced Melissa Hatcher (MH), AECOM, to provide an update on the status of the EIS. MH noted that NEPA scoping was begun in November and completed in December 2009. In addition to the consulting parties meetings, the Smithsonian has met with the GSA, the National Aquarium, District agencies, and the National Park Service. The meeting with the National Park Service included representatives from the White House, the National Park Police, and the National Mall and Memorial Parks. The meeting with the D.C. agencies included DDOT, the Office of Planning (DCOP), the Department of the Environment (DDOE), and the Water and Sewer Authority (WASA). Materials related to the EIS are available on a public website (www.nmaaheis.com). MH concluded by stating that the Draft EIS is scheduled to be made public in July.

SP commented that one of the issues raised by DDOT concerned the ownership of the sidewalks around the site. JP noted that the land was transferred from the U.S. Department of the Interior and that the Smithsonian is working with DDOT to clarify roles and responsibilities. MH noted that DDOT is concerned about who has jurisdiction over the street trees and about the curb cut on 14th Street.

5. Next Steps

The effects matrix will be revised based on comments and distributed to consulting parties for additional feedback.

Unless otherwise noted by email, the next consulting parties meeting will be from 9:30 am to noon on Wednesday, July 21st. SP noted that the objectives of this meeting will be to report on the agency meetings and to report on the preferred alternative. Next steps will include working on mitigation and drafting a Memorandum of Agreement. There is no consulting parties meeting scheduled for August.

Action Items

- The Section 106 team will revise the effects matrix and distribute to the consulting parties via the SmithGroup SharePoint site.
- SmithGroup will notify the consulting parties regarding access to the SharePoint site.
- The design team will provide an additional view from the northwest corner of Constitution Avenue and 14th Street.