

November 5, 2010

Notice of Availability of the Tier II Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture in Washington, DC

The Smithsonian Institution with its joint-lead and responsible federal agency, the National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC), in cooperation with the National Park Service (NPS), announce the availability of the Tier II Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), which evaluates the potential environmental impacts associated with construction and operation of the National Museum of African American History and Culture (NMAAHC).

The Smithsonian Institution and NCPC invite the general public, civic groups, organizations, federal agencies, and District agencies to submit written comments concerning the analysis and alternatives addressed in the Tier II Draft EIS. These parties are also invited to participate in a Public Hearing where oral testimony and written comments on the Tier II Draft EIS will be received. The Public Hearing will be held on Wednesday, November 17, 2010 from 5:30 pm to 8:30 pm at the National Museum of American History, Kenneth E. Behring Center, Carmichael Auditorium, 14th and Constitution Avenue, NW, Washington, D.C. The Public Hearing will consist of an information open house from 5:30 pm to 6:00 pm, a brief presentation on the project from 6:00 pm to 6:40 pm, and the taking of oral testimony from 6:40 pm to 8:30 pm. All individuals wishing to provide oral testimony on the Tier II Draft EIS will be given three minutes to do so, while government agencies and organizations will have five minutes. A court recorder will transcribe all oral testimony.

Persons wishing to provide oral testimony should contact NMAAHC.EIS.Comments@aecom.com, or sign up at the Public Hearing. If there are more speakers than time permits, comments will also be accepted in writing. All comments will be given equal consideration.

DATES: The public comment period for the Tier II Draft EIS will end 60 days after publication of the Notice of Availability (NOA) in the Federal Register by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. **Comments on the Tier II Draft EIS will be accepted from November 12, 2010 through January 11, 2011 (60 days).** All comments received during this time period will be considered for inclusion in the Tier II Final EIS.

ADDRESSES: Comments may be submitted electronically on the NMAAHC EIS website at: <http://www.nmaahceis.com/> or by email at NMAAHC.EIS.Comments@aecom.com. Please send written comments on the NMAAHC Tier II Draft EIS to: NMAAHC Tier II DEIS Comments, c/o AECOM, 675 N. Washington Street, Suite 300, Alexandria, VA 22314.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Public Law 108–184, the National Museum of African American History and Culture Act enacted by the Congress of the United States on December 16, 2003, established a museum within the Smithsonian Institution to be known as the National Museum of African American History and Culture. It recognizes that such a museum “would be dedicated to the collection, preservation, research, and exhibition of African American historical and cultural materials reflecting the breadth and depth of the experience of individuals of African descent living in the United States.”

Section 8 of the Act, “Building for the National Museum of African American History and Culture,” directed the Smithsonian Board of Regents to select one site among four in Washington, DC for the

construction of the museum. Following a site evaluation study and consultation with parties specified in the legislation, the Board of Regents of the Smithsonian Institution voted to select the area bounded by Constitution Avenue, Madison Drive, 14th and 15th Streets, NW, now commonly known as the Monument site. The decision was announced on January 30, 2006.

After consultation with the Council of Environmental Quality, the Smithsonian Institution and NCPC decided to tier the EIS process (40 CFR parts 1502.20 and 1508.28). The Tier I EIS was completed with a Final EIS issued on June 27, 2008, and a Smithsonian Institution Record of Decision (ROD) issued on August 8, 2008. The identity and description of the action to be addressed in both EIS tiers derive primarily from the language of Public Law 180–184, its legislative history, studies by the “National Museum of African American History and Culture Plan for Action Presidential Commission” that led to the law’s enactment, and the Phase II Site Evaluation Study of November 15, 2005.

The Tier I FEIS analyzed a “no build” alternative along with six diagrammatic massing alternatives on the site. Alternatives addressed context, siting, mass, orientation, form, exterior spaces, and profiles. The Tier I FEIS concluded that the Build Alternatives all had comparable effects on the majority of resources analyzed. This highlighted the need to develop more concrete design concepts in order to assess fully the impacts of the NMAAHC on cultural and visual/aesthetic resources. Therefore, the SI chose to express the Tier I Preferred Alternative as a set of physical parameters related to heights, setbacks, and configuration. The physical parameters resulted in a Smithsonian Preferred Alternative of about 350,000 gross square feet that was bounded between 60 and 105 feet in height, a minimum 50 foot setback from the inside face of the sidewalk of the surrounding streets; and a subsurface volume not lower than 45 feet. The massing parameters ranged from orthogonal and contextual to free-form and non-contextual. While NCPC and the Smithsonian Institution worked cooperatively on the Tier I EIS alternatives, the Smithsonian Institution did not submit a design to NCPC for review until later in the process (Tier II). Alternatives were presented to the US Commission of Fine Arts at its meeting on April 15, 2010. Concept submissions were presented and favorable comments were received at the September 2, 2010 meeting of the National Capital Planning Commission and the September 16, 2010 meeting of the US Commission of Fine Arts.

In addition to the physical parameters, the SI developed a set of design principles to help future design architects to minimize adverse effects on historic resources. The principles speak to the importance of relating to and respecting the character, views, and spatial arrangements of the National Mall; the character, scale, and historic context of the Washington Monument Grounds; and the relationship of the NMAAHC to adjacent architectural and urban contexts.

The Tier II Draft EIS was prepared in accordance with the implementing regulations of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), and is being conducted in coordination with the Section 106 process of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) to concurrently satisfy the EIS public scoping process and public participation requirements of the NHPA’s implementing regulations, 36 CFR 800. The Tier II Draft EIS built upon the conclusions and design principles determined in the Tier I Final EIS and ROD. From these findings, several alternatives were developed and subsequently evaluated in the Tier II Draft EIS. These alternatives include a “No Action” Alternative and four action alternatives: Alternative 1: Plinth Scheme, Alternative 2: Plaza Scheme, Alternative 3: Pavilion Scheme, and Alternative 4: Refined Pavilion Scheme. The action alternatives provide a range of

building configurations, placement within the site, and programmatic amenities. A preferred alternative will be identified in the Tier II Final EIS.

The Tier II Draft EIS considers potential impacts to the natural and manmade environments including land use, planning policies, visitor experience, historic resources, visual resources and urban context, geology, soils and groundwater, conservation of natural resources including open space resources, site performance, greenhouse gas emissions, and transportation including traffic and roadways, pedestrian and bicycle access and service and loading.

FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: To request a digital version of the Tier II Draft EIS on CD, or a printed copy, please contact: Jane Passman, Smithsonian Institution, P.O. Box 37012, 600 Maryland Avenue, Suite 5001 MRC 511, Washington, DC 20013–7012, or by phone at: (202) 633–6549. The Tier II Draft EIS is publicly available to all interested parties and can be found on-line at <http://www.nmaahceis.com/>. Hard copies can be reviewed at:

- Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Library, 901 G Street NW, Washington, DC 20001
- Northeast Branch Library, 330 7th Street NE, Washington, DC 20002
- Southeast Branch Library, 403 7th Street SE, Washington, DC 20003
- Southwest Branch Library, 900 Wesley Place SW, Washington, DC 20024
- National Capital Planning Commission, 401 9th Street NW, Suite 500, Washington, DC 20004
- Smithsonian Institution Planning Library and Resource Room, Capital Gallery, 600 Maryland Avenue SW, Suite 5001, Washington, DC 20024



Ann Trowbridge, AIA
Associate Director for Planning
Smithsonian Institution



Marcel C. Acosta
Executive Director
National Capital Planning Commission