

Meeting Minutes

FROM: EHT Traceries
SUBJECT: Smithsonian South Mall Campus Master Plan
Section 106 Consulting Parties Meeting #6
DATE: April 13, 2016

The following minutes represent comments received during the April Section 106 consulting parties meeting for the Smithsonian South Mall Campus Master Plan.

Lead/Cooperating Agencies & Project Team

Sharon Park	SI
Ann Trowbridge	SI
Christopher Lethbridge	SI
Michelle Spofford	SI
Jane Passman	SI
Nancy Bechtol	SI
Debra Nauta-Rodriguez	SI
Eve Erickson	SI
Jennifer Hirsch	NCPC
Matthew Flis	NCPC
Mike Commisso	NPS
Peter May	NPS
Aran Coakley	BIG
Sean Franklin	BIG
Daniele Pronesti	BIG
James A. Lord	Surfacedesign, Inc.
Laura Hughes	EHT Traceries
Bill Marzella	EHT Traceries
Liz Estes	Stantec
Shane Maxemow	Silman
Nathan Hicks	Silman

Webcast Participants

To be added	
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Consulting Parties

Andrew Lewis	DC HPO
Thomas Luebke	CFA
Mina Wright	GSA
Pat Tiller	Committee of 100
Kate Perry	Committee of 100
Elizabeth Merritt	NTHP
Anne Nelson	NTHP
Robert Snieckus	USDA
Megan Kanagy	DDOT
Brian Lusher	ACHP
Milton Grenfell	National Civic Art Society
Ellen Malasky	Guild of Professional Tour Guides of Washington DC

Additional Attendees

Annie Sauser	Sylvia Cabus
Don Clark	David Maxfield
Doug Evelyn	Christine Bialek
Janine Berger	Beth Kutz
Kristin Taddei	Mo Ahun
Darrel Eaton	Rindy O'Brien
Shirley Neff	Pat Taylor
Natalie Matta	Cynthia Field
Lani Held	E. Bruce Held

Presentation

1. Sharon Park (SP), Associate Director of Architectural History and Historic Preservation, opened the meeting, welcomed attendees, and introduced Mike Carrancho, Deputy Director for Engineering and Design Division, who would act as meeting facilitator.
 - a. Mr. Carrancho provided some background on the project and consultation process thus far.
 - b. He clarified the role of the facilitator and outlined the general meeting structure and protocol for providing comments
 - c. Mr. Carrancho noted that the meeting was being webcast live and interpreted in American Sign Language.
2. SP provided an overview of the meeting agenda and introduced the presenters.
3. SP reviewed the Purpose & Need statement, Section 106 process, draft Area of Potential Effect, and historic resources within the site.
4. SP introduced Ann Trowbridge (AT), Associate Director for Planning, to present the alternatives.
 - a. AT clarified that the visioning renderings prepared for the Master Plan Steering Committee and Board of Regents were intended to aid in the understanding of relationships and kind of spaces being proposed. They do not represent final designs. Each individual project will undergo a full design process and there will be opportunities for public input at that time.
 - b. AT presented an overview of the four alternatives under consideration, including the No Action Alternative.
 - c. AT presented elements that are common to all Action Alternatives, including:
 - i. Castle restoration and seismic upgrade;
 - ii. A new accessible entrance on the east side of the Freer Gallery;
 - iii. Replacement of the Quad roof membrane and reestablishment of the Haupt Garden;
 - iv. Renovation of Hirshhorn Museum building; and
 - v. Retention of Folger of Ripley gardens.
 - d. AT presented Alternative A: Limited Above & Below-Grade Changes, and opened the floor to questions.
 - i. An unidentified attendee asked if this alternative included the retention of the Moongate Garden. AT responded that the garden has not yet been designed, but that it could easily be reintegrated.
 - ii. Milton Grenfell, National Civic Art Society, questioned the viability of maintaining a below-ground structure. He asked if SI had considering building a new aboveground facility, possibly across Independence or Constitution Avenues. SP responded that such a project would entail coordination with GSA or any other property owners in those locations, as SI does not currently own property there. Mr. Grenfell asked if there was any possibility of building a new above-ground facility within the South Mall site. SP responded that it would not be possible without building atop an existing garden, and it had been dismissed as an option.
 - iii. Sylvia Cabus, a resident of Southwest DC, read a prepared statement regarding the importance of the Haupt Garden as a cultural and recreational landmark. She noted the online petition she had created in support of preserving the Haupt Garden. SP thanked her for expressing her concern, and noted that the Haupt Garden would remain a garden in all alternatives. She reiterated that the visioning renderings produced early in the planning process were focused on spatial relationships and did not fully represent the vision for the gardens. SP also referenced the contribution of SI Gardens and their mission to create beautiful, educational gardens. She added that any work on the gardens would not occur for another five to ten years.
 - iv. Cynthia Field asked for clarification regarding the highlighted area of the Hirshhorn Sculpture Garden. AT clarified that the highlighted portion indicated that the walls would be repaired under this alternative.

- v. Betsy Merritt, National Trust for Historic Preservation, requested clarification regarding the changes made in the alternatives since the October meeting. AT responded that the written summary, graphics, and labeling may have changed, but otherwise Alternative A had remained the same.
 - vi. Tom Luebke (TL), Commission of Fine Arts, requested greater specificity in the amount of excavation required beneath the Castle in Alternative A. SP responded that floor would be lowered to a necessary degree to accommodate amenities and services for the Castle Visitor Center and some staff space. The existing groin vaults would be restored. SP stated that the plan had not determined an exact dimension but that it could be provided.
- e. AT presented Alternative B: Limited Above-Grade Change, and opened the floor to questions.
- i. Andrew Lewis, SHPO, asked if the Ripley Pavilion would be relocated or removed. AT responded that it had not yet been designed, but that had not yet been determined. A new entrance would be provided in either case.
 - ii. Mr. Grenfell stated that he believed the Victorian (Haupt) Garden was important in Washington and should be retained or recreated as a Victorian Garden.
 - iii. A number of consulting parties expressed confusion regarding the intent of the circulation diagrams, which were drawn in straight lines rather than meandering pathways.
 1. SP and AT clarified that the diagrams were intended to illustrate master planning goals of improving connectivity and circulation. The pathways themselves had not yet been designed.
 2. An unidentified attendee stated that the east-west axis shown in the plan diagram eliminated the charming, meandering qualities of the existing plan. SP responded that the plan did not intend to limit circulation options, but rather to allow access to the Arts and Industries Building (AIB). The attendee responded that he was specifically commenting on circulation in the Haupt Garden. SP clarified that the plan would provide for direct means of circulation but would not prevent a diversity of options.
 3. An unidentified attendee asked if it was the intention that AIB would become a path of circulation between the Haupt Garden and the Hirshhorn. SP responded that it would.
 4. Ms. Field stated that she also had difficulty interpreting the diagram; for example, is it intended that the path of circulation move directly through the fountain in the central rotunda of AIB? SP responded that the diagram was intended to show a new means of travel made available by the conversion of the loading door to a public entrance.
 - iv. TL requested additional information regarding the depth of excavation necessary for the new loading dock. SP responded that the level of the new loading dock would correspond to that of the existing. AT added that the floor-to-floor height for a typical loading dock is 18 feet. The excavated mechanical space falls outside the footprint of the Castle.
- f. AT presented Alternative C: Maintain Flat Plane with Changes Above and Below, and opened the floor to questions.
- i. An unidentified attendee asked is anyone from the DC Department of Transportation (DDOT) was present to speak relevant to the proposed loading ramp design.
 - ii. Megan Kanagy, DDOT, responded that they had met with SI to address loading. Analysis and study would be required to determine the effects of the new loading configurations. Typically, DDOT does not allow curb cuts so close to an existing intersection; however, there is potential for managing the scheduling of deliveries to reduce impacts. The process has been approached similar to a development project, with the goal of identifying and mitigating impacts.

- iii. Pat Tiller, Committee of 100, questioned the rationale for the demolition of the Quad museum pavilions and if doing so would achieve master planning goals. SP responded that the relocation of the museum pavilions would allow for the consolidation of visitor services along the north edge of the Quad. Mr. Tiller added that historic buildings are often in unlikely or inconvenient locations, which should be reconciled with contemporary needs and priorities.
 - 1. *Editor's Note: Mr. Tiller, in his comments, suggested that the Quadrangle pavilions were designated historic buildings. The Quadrangle has been identified as a contributing building to the forthcoming National Mall Historic District Amendment and Boundary Expansion. A determination of eligibility study is underway to determine the individual eligibility of the Quadrangle and Haupt Garden for National Register listing.*
- iv. An unidentified attendee asked if surveys had been conducted to identify problems and to aid in decision making. AT responded that visitor surveys had been conducted, including by the SI Office of Policy and Analysis, which regularly conducts visitor surveys, the findings of which were incorporated into the planning process.
- v. TL asked for additional information regarding the footprint of the existing Castle relative to the proposed excavation. He asked for clarification regarding the method of support for the existing masonry structure, which SP confirmed would require a steel frame to support the Castle from below. SP added that SI had studied a number of projects that had successfully implemented similar projects, including the DC Courts Building. TL responded that it was his understanding that the excavation was limited to beneath the stairs. SP responded that a study of similar projects was underway and that the findings of that research could be shared.
- vi. Mr. Tiller asked if SI had made any progress in locating the inverted arches that may be present within the Castle foundation? SP responded that exploratory excavation had not revealed any inverted arches; however, this and other aspects of the Castle construction would continue to be explored as the renovation is designed. If inverted arches are discovered, they would be incorporated into the design.
- g. AT presented Alternative D: Plane Changes Above and Below Grade, and opened the floor to questions.
 - i. AT noted that this alternative included a potential option to realign Jefferson Drive to provide additional standoff distance for the Castle perimeter security. AT noted that this option could be present in all alternatives, but the exact dimension might be reduced as a result of structural improvements to the Castle.
 - ii. Ms. Kanagy asked if this alternative proposed the widening of the Independence Avenue sidewalk. AT responded that a potential widening of the sidewalk was no longer proposed within the scope of the South Mall Master Plan. Although removing lanes of traffic to create a wider sidewalk along Independence Avenue between USDA and the Botanic Garden might be beneficial, it would require greater coordination. Ms. Kanagy asked that it be removed from the diagrams, and AT confirmed that it would be.
 - iii. Mr. Tiller asked for the rationale for the removal of the Hirshhorn Plaza walls. SP responded that the removal of all of the walls was the result of earlier studies; the approach is now being reconsidered in favor of a smaller opening between the plaza and Ripley Garden, with the goal of minimizing any potential adverse effect.
 - iv. Ms. Field provided an explanatory statement regarding the historical development of the Quadrangle. She stated that the pavilions were placed to provide the sense of an academic quadrangle desired by Secretary Ripley.
 - v. An unidentified attendee added that the pavilions were intended to act as a framing device for views toward the Castle, based on his conversations with the architect Jean-Paul Carlhian. He said it was not necessary to tear them down to achieve a wider viewshed.

- vi. An unidentified attendee asked for additional clarification regarding the dashed lines showing the depression to the new at-grade entry, and whether they denoted the removal of the gardens (see slide 69). AT responded that the diagram proposed a change in topography that would allow direct access, but the space would remain a garden.
- vii. Ms. Merritt asked for clarification regarding the square in the diagram showing a new entrance (see slide 66) directly south of the Castle. AT responded that it was a diagram intended to show a new entrance below the level of the current grade. It would not be an above-ground structure or pavilion.
- viii. Mr. Tiller asked if the dashed lines shown on slide 69 represented the large glazed entrance shown in the visioning renderings. SP clarified that it represented an entrance on grade that could facilitate a variety of entrance and egress scenarios, but that had not yet been designed. Mr. Tiller expressed concern over the character of the renderings, and SP responded that the concerns were being considered.
- ix. Kate Perry noted that it appeared one decision had been fully made, that the Haupt Garden would not be restored in its current design in all alternatives. AT responded that alternatives A and B allow for the restoration of the Haupt Garden to its existing configuration. Mr. Perry responded that the text and images posted to the website did not support this, and nowhere is the term “restoration” used. She requested that the possibility of restoration be added explicitly to the alternatives description, given public comment and concern.
 - 1. *Editor’s Note: Several consulting parties have expressed concern that Smithsonian has been updating the alternatives and other materials on the project website and in presentations. The purpose of the Section 106 and NEPA processes, broadly, is to consider alternatives to a proposed undertaking in response to public comment. Therefore, Smithsonian has and will continue to update alternatives and analysis as the consultation process progresses. In the interest of full disclosure, those materials will remain on the website, even once they have become outdated or superseded.*
- x. An unidentified attendee asked why the visioning renderings were still posted to the website. AT responded that the renderings are a part of the project record. They do not represent a completed design, but they were a useful tool for understanding and furthering the design.
- xi. TL asked for clarification regarding the footprint of the excavation in Alternative D relative to that proposed by Alternative C. AT responded that it represented an area of 80,000 versus 60,000 square feet.
 - 1. TL noted that the discrepancy between program need and additional building area was being accommodated by additional excavation beneath the Castle, but perhaps a better alternative would be the utilization of AIB for a visitor service and orientation center. He cited the various potential benefits of that use. He noted that the suggestion had been raised several times before and urged Smithsonian to consider an alternative that includes such a use for AIB. TL referenced the presentation of John Lapiana at the previous consulting parties meeting regarding the agreement over the utilization of AIB. TL asked if Smithsonian could provide verification or record of this agreement.
 - 2. AT responded that, during much of the period of development of the master plan, there has been a bill before Congress that directs Smithsonian to conduct a feasibility study for AIB to become the home of the Museum of the American Latino. She added that the bill was introduced four or five years ago, reintroduced at the last Congress, but had not been reintroduced to the current Congress. TL and an unidentified attendee noted that if a bill had not been introduced to the current Congress, it was not considered active.

- xiii. An unidentified attendee asked for clarification regarding next steps after a preferred alternative had been identified. AT responded that once the Section 106 and NEPA processes were completed, the preferred alternative would be presented both to NCPC and the Smithsonian Board of Regents. Future projects that require additional square footage require Congressional approval in addition to funding approval.

Conclusion and Next Steps

1. Bill Marzella presented an overview of the project schedule, which has been expanded to allow for additional analysis and public comment.
 - a. *Editor's Note: Following the meeting, TL requested that the CFA review schedule be noted in future meetings.*
2. Mr. Marzella asked for written comments to Michelle Spofford at SpoffordM@si.edu by Wednesday, April 27.
3. Mr. Marzella stated that the presentation will be posted on the website (www.southmallcampus.si.edu).
4. Mr. Carrancho invited any closing comments or questions regarding next steps.
 - a. Brian Lusher, Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, asked how and when Smithsonian would be revising the alternatives to respond to public comments, specifically in the context of identifying and resolving adverse effects. AT responded that the comments received during the meeting would be considered, which may result in the modification of alternatives. Revision of the alternatives would be ongoing throughout the process.
5. Mr. Carrancho closed the meeting.

Minutes prepared by Bill Marzella, EHT Traceries, April 28, 2016