



SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION
SOUTH MALL CAMPUS MASTER
PLAN

PUBLIC SCOPING REPORT

June 2015

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1) PROJECT SUMMARY

The Smithsonian Institution (SI) is developing a Master Plan for the South Mall Campus on the National Mall in Washington D.C. The South Mall Campus encompasses the Smithsonian campus from the Freer Gallery of Art on the west to the Hirshhorn Gallery and Sculpture Garden on the east, between Independence Avenue and the National Mall (see Figure 1 in Appendix A). The proposed Master Plan is subject to the review of the National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC) under the National Capital Planning Act. NCPC is the lead federal agency and is working in cooperation with the SI to comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

The purpose of the proposed action is to develop and implement a Master Plan that will better align Smithsonian facilities with their strategic plan, increase public access, and realize benefits from the efficiencies of an integrated plan. Integrated planning for projects within the South Mall Campus will allow the Smithsonian to optimize the benefits of connections between the projects and to take advantage of cost and space saving synergies between facilities. A primary goal of the Master Plan is also to improve and expand visitor services and education by providing spaces for public gatherings and programming as well as retail and food service.

The project is needed to provide a coordinated approach to revitalize, replace, and renovate current buildings and building systems, such as mechanical and electrical systems, within the South Mall Area that are reaching the end of their useful life. The Master Plan is also needed to improve access to, circulation within, and visibility of the South Mall Campus. Specific needed improvements will be made in the following areas:

- Smithsonian Castle
- Quadrangle Building
- Arts and Industries Building
- Sackler Gallery and the African Art Museum
- Hirshhorn Museum
- Visitor Center and Public Programs
- Visitor Experience

Objectives of the Master Plan are to:

- Provide a cohesive, integrated campus with the SI Castle as the Gateway to the SI as a whole on the National Mall
- Provide conformance with the SI security policy and federal building and perimeter security requirements
- Allow for the safe and efficient movement of collections from delivery to exhibition
- Expand SI's capacity to provide access to a wide range of digital and in-person educational programs
- Improve space to meet the goals of the programs located within the South Mall (HMSG, NMAfa, FGA, AMMSG)

- Maintain and enhance the Smithsonian Gardens' ability to extend the museums' exhibits and learning environment in a public garden setting while shaping the overall visitor experience of the SI
- Conform to SI's historic preservation policy including applicable Secretary of the Interior Standards for Historic preservation
- Maximize reliability and durability of the SI's building systems for uninterrupted operations
- Locate loading and service areas underground and away from pedestrian circulation, where possible
- Provide for expanded and improved retail space and special events support to enhance the visitor experience
- Provide a sustainable environment for visitors, staff, volunteers and collections
- Responsive to adopted plans including those for the Monumental Core, the National Mall, Department of Agriculture, and the Southwest EcoDistrict

2) PUBLIC SCOPING PROCESS SUMMARY

Public involvement and participation is an essential element of the NEPA and NHPA processes by engaging citizens in the decision-making process through planning and development. NEPA regulations require an "early and open process for determining the scope of issues to be addressed and for identifying the significant issues related to a proposed action." To determine the scope of issues to be analyzed in depth in the Environmental Assessment for the project, on December 2, 2014 SI and NCPC announced a scoping period from December 16, 2014 through January 30, 2015 (Appendix B). The announcement was sent via electronic mail to community groups and individuals who were identified as having potential interest in the project (Appendix C). A public scoping meeting was also held on December 16, 2014 from 5:00 pm to 7:00 pm in the Smithsonian Castle Commons area on the first floor. The SI also has created a project website located at <http://www.southmallcampus.si.edu>. This scoping announcement and scoping materials were placed on the project website. In addition, NCPC has a project page on its website (<http://www.ncpc.gov/project/southmall/>) that links to the SI website. NCP sent an e-card to its mailing distribution list announcing the public scoping meeting. Members of the public were invited to submit comments in writing via mail, email or on the Master Plan website (<http://www.southmallcampus.si.edu>). The SI also provided an Informational Briefing to the Commission of Fine Arts on January 22, 2015.

a) Public Scoping Meeting

On December 16, 2014 a public scoping meeting was held at the Smithsonian Castle. The meeting provided a forum for the project team to present the proposed action to the public and explain the NEPA and NHPA processes. The meeting began at 5:00 pm and continued until 7:00 pm. Meeting attendees were asked to sign-in upon arrival and were given an agenda of events for the evening.

The meeting began with an open house to allow attendees to view informational displays of the NEPA and NHPS processes and the potential Master Plan alternatives. At around 5:30 pm, the SI and their project team gave attendees a presentation outlining, in further detail, the NEPA/106 processes and the various potential alternatives for the Master Plan (Appendix D). After the presentation concluded, the audience was given an opportunity to ask questions. The meeting was then opened up to an open house format to again allow attendees to further view the informational displays and investigate the project in further detail. SI and consultant staff were on hand to address additional questions and receive public comments. Comment forms were made available at the meeting and a court reporter was on-hand to record the oral testimony of meeting attendees (Appendix E).

A total of 63 individuals signed-in at the public scoping meeting (Appendix F). Five formal written comments were provided by the public at the meeting (Appendix G). The written comments received at the public meeting were as follows:

- Desire for the Smithsonian to extend the public scoping period (3 comments)
- The loading dock situation should be addressed because of safety issues (1 comment)
- Support for design concepts (1 comment)

b) Public Scoping Meeting Transcript

A stenographer was on hand at the public scoping meeting to record the oral presentation given by the SI and their staff and to record verbal comments from attendees. Based upon the oral testimony received at the scoping meeting, the public in attendance asked questions regarding the larger context of the Master Plan in relation to the Mall, the range and feasibility of the alternatives and the potential removal of the Haupt Garden. The following is the summary of the verbal comments and testimony received during the public meeting.

- Want to ensure historical plans like the L'Enfant Plan were included in the historical impacts
- Who contributed to the development of the Master Plan and did the Board of Regents approve the Master Plan?
- Provide further clarification on communication and access between the buildings of the South Mall Campus
- Anticipated costs of each alternative and sources of funding
- Encouraged a longer public comment period to give time for the public to fully understand all aspects of the Master Plan
- Would like to ultimately pick and choose favorable items from each alternative
- Concerned about connectivity and openness to the Mall
- Will upgraded technologies and building systems be implemented?
- Expressed concern regarding the removal of the Haupt Garden
- How will national security be considered in the Master Plan designs?
- Update on the Arts and Industries Building
- Timeframe for implementation of Master Plan
- Projects will be disruptive and inconvenient for visitors

- Request clarification on Section 106 and how it will be resolved considering the lifespan of the Master Plan

c) Informational Briefing to the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts

The SI also provided an Informational Briefing about the Master Plan to the Commission of Fine Arts on January 22, 2015. Meeting minutes from the meeting were provided to the SI (Appendix H). The Commission expressed support for the concept for transforming the quadrangle, but the conceptual precedent for the proposed design should extend beyond A.J. Downing’s curvilinear landscape for the Mall with more consideration given to the Haupt Garden. The Commission recommended that careful consideration of how the project’s new elements interact with the existing museums as the central landscape and museum entrances are developed as a concept design, and encouraged careful study of the conditions of physical interaction with and visibility through the long arrays of skylights. Commission members supported the idea of enhancing the physical connections to the Hirshhorn Museum across the campus and underground to the sculpture garden. However, they agreed the enclosed character of the Hirshhorn site is a central feature of the design and they recommended that the fundamental role of the walls in creating a protected landscape and setting for the museum should be retained.

d) Nature of Written Comments Received During the Scoping Period

A total of 81 pieces of correspondence were received during the scoping period (Appendix I). Correspondences were received from the District of Columbia, Maryland, Virginia, Florida, Maine, and New York. In addition, the Commission of Fine Arts January 2015 meeting minutes have been included with the scoping comments.

One federal government office, the National Park Service (NPS) provided comments on the project. The NPS in their correspondence requested to be a consulting party with the SI and NCPC. The NPS also commented about their concern regarding projects that have the potential to affect NPS land, their interests under Section 110(f) of the NHPA with respect to the Castle and the Arts and Industries Building, and concerns over the expedited schedule for the NEPA and NHPA compliances. The NPS also asked how the SI and NCPC will integrate the NPS in the NEPA and 106 processes.

Nine correspondences were received from civic associations and special interest groups. These include:

- Committee of 100 on the Federal City
- National Coalition to Save Our Mall
- National Trust for Historic Preservation
- Waterfront Gateway Neighborhood Association
- American Society of Landscape Architects
- Bethesda Community Garden Club
- University of Maryland
- American Folk Art Museum
- Guild of Professional Tour Guides

Generally, the correspondence received was in support of renovations to update and modernize the Smithsonian Castle and not in support of the removal of the gardens

within the South Mall Campus. The comments received were placed into different categories based on the theme of the comment. Below is a summary of the comments received in each category.

Museum Accessibility (13 Correspondences)

- Not in favor of removing pavilion entrances to Sackler and Museum of African Art
- Improved signage is the preferable method to address accessibility concerns
- Agree accessibility is an issue
- Not in favor of underground improvements
- In favor of underground improvements
- Does not see a need for improved connectivity between the museums

Arts and Industries Building (13 Correspondences)

- In favor of converting the building into a visitors center instead of constructing a new underground space

Budget (6 Correspondences)

- Concerns about the potential cost of implementing the Master Plan
- Need more clarification on the cost of each alternative

Castle Renovations (25 Correspondences)

- Renovations, seismic upgrades and system updating should be top priority while preserving the historical integrity of the castle
- Not in favor of new underground construction

Historic/Design Concerns (18 Correspondences)

- Not in favor of "dip" design; thinks it detracts from views of the castle and surrounding buildings
- Fear design does not fit with rest of mall or follow historical planning documents
- Want further studies on how design concepts would impact historically significant structures and features on the South Mall Campus
- Expressed concern with introducing natural light to art collections which may cause damage
- Concerned that design conflicts will detract from renovation needs of the Castle
- The National Park Service voiced concerns with historical implications of the Master Plan and requested to be a cooperating agency under the project

Environmental (4 Correspondences)

- Think climate change and sea-level rise should be considered in design concepts
- Support adding trees and vegetation to achieve environmental goals
- Encourage implementing renewable energy resources in design concepts

Gardens (52 Correspondences)

- Do not support the removal of any of the gardens in the south mall campus

Hirshhorn (10 Correspondences)

- Not in favor of lowering of the walls surrounding the sculpture garden
- Support renovations to allow access from the Mall

Other Notable comments

- Generally unsupportive of the entire Master Plan
- Support for Master Plan and design concepts
- Would like the Smithsonian to explore other potential planning and expansion options on the Mall
- Consider the possibility that low visitor rates are not due to accessibility issues but instead a lack of interest for alternative art museums
- A U.S. firm should have been hired to design the Master Plan
- The loading dock situation should be addressed

In addition to the written comments, 68 questions were received requesting clarification on various aspects of the Master Plan. Questions were asked about the following topics:

- The strategic plan
- Origination of the Master Plan
- Overall planning
- Alternatives
- Castle renovations
- Arts and Industries Building
- Freer Building
- Historical resources
- Sackler Gallery
- Ripley Building
- The gardens
- Renwick Gates
- Hirshhorn Museum

3) COMMENT ANALYSIS

Table 1: Correspondence Count by Organization Type

Organization Type	Number of Correspondences	Percentage
Federal Government	1	1.23%
Non-Governmental	10	12.35%
Unaffiliated Individual	70	86.42%
TOTAL	81	100

Table 2: Correspondence Distribution by Correspondence Type

Type	Number of Correspondences	Percentage
Letter	5	6.17%
Email	71	87.66%
Comment Form	5	6.17%
TOTAL	81	100

Table 3: Correspondence Distribution by State

State	Number of Correspondences	Percentage
DC	31	38.27%
Maryland	6	7.41%
Virginia	4	4.94%
Florida	1	1.23%
New York	3	3.70%
Maine	1	1.24%
Unidentified	35	43.21%
TOTAL	81	100%

Table 4: Major Comment Topics

Topic	Number of Correspondences	Percentage
Proposed garden removal concerns	52	64%
Castle Renovation is priority	28	35%
Historical/design concerns	18	22%
Improve signage to improve accessibility	15	19%
Convert AIB to Visitor's Center	15	19%
Proposed Hirshhorn design concerns	10	12%
Not consistent with Mall or planning document designs	8	10%



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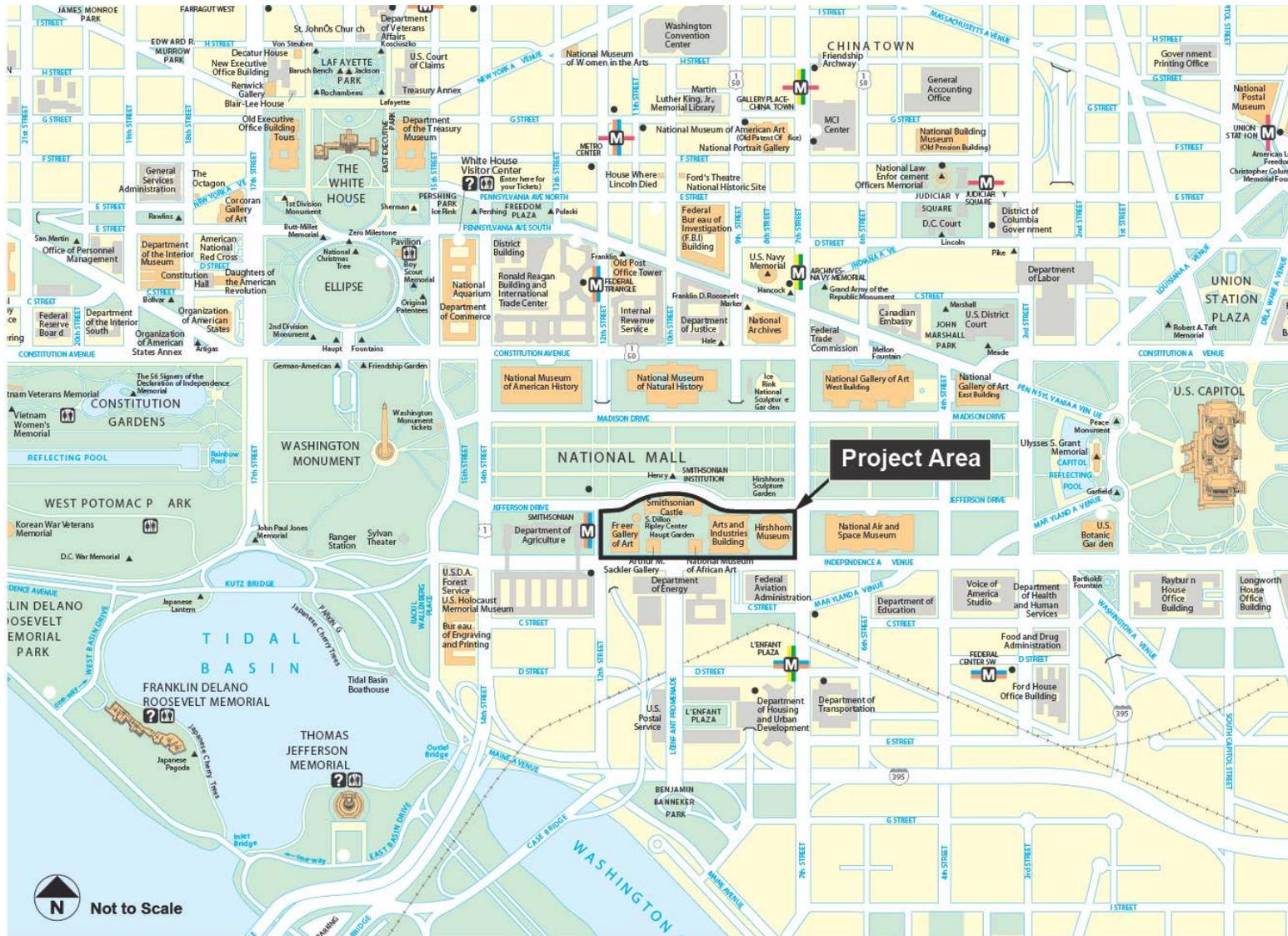


Figure 1: Project Area