

The National Mall Plan (NMP) – Section 106 Meeting Notes

March 30, 2009

Handouts: NPS provided copies of the following materials:

- 1 page handout related to NPS Management Policies on Movement of Historic Structures
- 1 page handout on the Sylvan Theater on the Washington Monument Grounds

Attendees: Richard Westbrook – C of 100 and Guild of Professional Tour Guides; John Fondersmith – C of 100; Tony Simon – CFA; Nancy Witherell – NCPC; Judy Feldman – Coalition to Save Our Mall; Edwin Fountain – DC Preservation League; Nell Ziehl – NTHP; Cynthia Field – Latrobe Society of Arch Historians; W Kent Cooper – Save the Mall; Gary Scott – NPS; Linda Doyle – Tourmobile; Kelly Fanizzo – ACHP; Andrew Lewis – DC SHPO;

NPS: Jennifer Talken- Spaulding – Cultural Resource Mgr; Maureen Joseph – Historic LA; Gary Scott – Historian; Perry Wheelock – Chief of Resource Mgt.; Steve Lorenzetti – Deputy Superintendent; Dr. Stephanie Toothman – Acting Supt; Susan Spain – Project Exec – National Mall Plan

Introduction and followup with last meeting.

Perry W – Began with an introduction of progress at the last meeting and what the meeting was to accomplish. We need to talk about historic properties and potential changes on the National Mall (NM). We need to focus 106 discussions on affected properties.

Judy F – We need to spend time talking about Transportation – it has a major effect on amenities. VTS EA of 2006 – only dealt with NPS interpretive bus transit. We need to reassess the plan purpose. The National Mall Plan is not a transportation plan. According to NPS policy this is a 4th level planning effort - where is the foundation plan, where is the general management plan? Change title to NM visitor facilities and amenities plan. There needs to be transparency and we have had no response to Dec 19, 2008 letter.

Steve - NPS does several levels of planning.

Susan – the National Mall Plan is like a General Management Plan but since it does not address all areas that the park manages it is simply called the National Mall Plan. A foundation statement has been provided to you and is posted on-line. The December 19 letter has been reviewed, revised and reviewed again. We expect to send it out soon.

(Note: NPS utilizes tiered planning. The General Management Plan (GMP) is typically the top tier plan that guides a park and other plans are developed to implement the vision in the GMP. These might include plans such as a bear management plan or construction plans for a specific project called out in the general management plan. In central Washington DC,

NCPC's Extending the Legacy (Legacy) provides the highest level of visionary guidance as a successor to the McMillan and L'Enfant Plans. The National Mall Plan is the NPS top tier plan under Legacy to develop a vision for the National Mall area that the park manages. Other plans are also outgrowths of Legacy, including the NCPC Memorials and Museums Master Plan and the Framework Plan.)

Kelly – I appreciate Judy's comments. It is important to realize the planning effort is complicated and there may be differences in what NPS is planning from what some groups may prefer. That is where challenges may lie. There are many proposals in the plan that have different purposes- and some of them affect historic properties. We will need to focus our discussion on assessing those aspects of the plan that impact historic properties. This is the opportunity to discuss alternatives to avoid and minimize potential adverse effects to historic properties in the development of the preferred alternative. The consideration of impacts to broad landscapes, viewsheds, etc. (beyond impacts to individual historic properties) should be addressed when we look at the impacts of the plan to the whole Mall area, after reviewing the specific areas.

Nancy – Suggested that we have a briefing on the Visitor Transportation Service.

(Note: Alexa Viets, NPS Transportation Planner, will be returning to the park in late May and would be the best person to provide a briefing.)

Edwin – we all agree that we need to move forward on improvements. NPS should advocate for a commission for the 3rd century.

Richard – There is danger in the emphasis on providing “historic character.” The NM is changing still. At one time NCPC wanted to look the topographic bowl that would be about 50’ above the tree line. We worked with Arlington County and were able to reduce some impacts – not all impacts to the historic spaces.

Perry – views and vistas are part the NMP discussions.

Cynthia – There is a relationship between L'Enfant and McMillan. You have to admire L'Enfant (L) for the sense of order and thinking big - a city plan to lift a vision – a great leap. L emphasizes axis and views to Washington Monument (WAMO). L's avenue became the green swath. The McMillan Plan had to figure out how to deal with the actual location of WAMO (7 degrees off to the SW) to bring back a sense of compositional order, harmony and to address the problems that had emerged.

Perry – it is a painterly solution that was possible because of the reclaimed land.

Cynthia – historic character and unity came from the McMillan Plan.

Nancy and Nell – reminder that we were going to be discussing areas before looking at the NM as a whole.

Judy – we are always made aware of the historic green space at the center of the city – that reflects the government – executive, legislative and judicial. NPS purview is public use.

Cynthia – D Burnham was planning for democratic unity in the plan of (1893). Henry Adams is the grandfather of national unity. And the whole is more important than the parts.

Kelly – That is where the area of potential effects (APE) comes in. Section 106 provides for the consideration of effects to historic properties within the APE. The APE may extend beyond the immediate project area, and in this case, includes areas both inside and outside NPS' jurisdiction. The effects of actions on the NM could extend beyond the actual boundary of the plan.

THE MALL SECTION 106 DISCUSSION

Perry – the plan proposes a number of new things, such as new crosswalks, removal of gravel walks, and elimination of some north south walks.

Judy – This is about preservation – the McMillan concept. There were changes there – but many are not carried fully out though.

Nancy – it is important to think about McMillan as the qualities that did get implemented – the collected body (vision) and the period of significance.

Stephanie – We are not talking about preservation - this will be adaptive rehabilitation. Important to examine character defining features and we need to think cumulatively.

Andrew – we need to look microscopically at the proposals and look at the field of history.

Judy – there are two periods of significance listed for the Mall. 1791- 1792; and 1902- 1975 when Air and Space Museum was completed and the tempes (temporary buildings from WWI and WWII) were removed.

There was general discussion regarding the period of significance of 1932- 36, as described in the CLI for the Mall, when the McMillan Plan was implemented.

Stephanie – NPS typically plans in 15- 20 year cycles because things change.

Nell – are the following the character defining features? Kiosks and carousel?

Perry – they were not in the NR listing of 1981. Sometimes listings are out of date and need to be reexamined. The Cultural Landscape Inventory (CLI) for the Mall listed views and vistas, for example.

Cynthia – character defining is the whole composition – a beauty and order of composition – including the trees, grassy sward. Don't think enlarged crosswalks should be added and amenities should be put in another place.

Richard – I think character defining is how the buildings (museums) relate.

Cynthia – Olmsted designed a place not of grandeur, but of power and dignity.

Richard – the problem is too many gatherings.

Cynthia – put in temporary facilities

Kelly – reminded the group to focus on impacts to historic resources

Jennifer – let's talk about intrusions. Are the existing buildings (NPS and concession) intrusions or responsive to public needs?

Judy – existing buildings – the Commemorative Works Act allows no memorials or visitor centers. There needs to be a visitor services building plan. Restrooms should be put in vicinity of museums. Food can be mobile and provide attractive alternative. The 1970s buildings were transportable.

Jennifer – how do people feel about the 1970s and 1990s buildings?

1970s – ugly

Andrew – we need to identify alternatives to adverse effects

Kent – the basic problem is fragmented management. Move facilities to the Smithsonian Institution (SI) buildings, carefully consider building mass and provide the least intrusive.

Andrew – changes were proposed on the 12th street axis.

Nell – symmetry is important – need to consider paving and clear (views); use SI facilities if possible; otherwise should be symmetrical.

Cynthia – Air and Space has possible public access to the restaurant area.

Nancy – I'd like to pursue Air and Space, Natural History and American History to provide needed facilities. I'd like to see facilities north of Pennsylvania Avenue for Union Square. I don't think that symmetry is necessary.

Edwin – like the SI discussion – but this would need to consider recognizability. There are problems with facilities in panels and this seems pragmatic.

(Note: identify impacts of facilities in tree panels on historic resources.)

Judy – use Air &Space; and Arts &Industries also offers a good opportunity.

Gary – the Mary Oehrlein (MO) cruciform shaped buildings with stucco and timber siding and copper roofs were approved by CFA for use in the tree panels and throughout the NM.

General discussion about the character of buildings. The MO buildings were preferred over the 1970s buildings.

Linda D – Tourmobile no longer needs some buildings of the 1970s building style) and NPS has used them.

(Note: NPS moved one to a location at 12th and Madison for use as a temporary visitor information station. It was put in a location approved in the 1970s.)

Judy – buildings have a 30 year life space – there are opportunities to program a new building and combine several things – solar, a work of art, and innovation.

(Note: NPS' preliminary preferred alternative includes multi- purpose facilities with that kind of criteria.)

Cynthia – symmetry is about balance

Stephanie – just a reminder that the MO facilities recently installed near the Lincoln Memorial are examples of implementing NPS policies related to green building – they are geothermal.

Perry – paving is another area where changes are proposed. There are some proposed changes in walks crossing the Mall.

(Note: The paving materials were not listed as contributing to the historic character. The circulation system from the 1930s is listed.)

Cynthia – there is an adverse effect on paving along roads.

Stephanie – Not all impacts are adverse; there are conceivable design solutions.

Judy – a fountain was critical to McMillan (8th street axis) – not hidden, but in the central panel.

(Note: Cynthia and Judy departed at this point in the discussion.)

Kelly – we need to keep moving forward. We need to schedule some additional – possibly three - meetings.

General discussion: We need to assign topics to dates, and comments that are outside of Section 106 should be submitted in writing.

Nancy – maybe it would be helpful to provide a brief summary or list of what is in the preliminary preferred alternative for the area under discussion prior to each meeting.

Andrew – suggested developing a matrix that could identify adverse or not adverse effects.

(Note: similar matrices will be included in the draft plan.)

Kent – there are also decisions about larger multi- purpose facilities and we are not there yet – such as for Sylvan Theater and Ash Woods.

NPS – we will seek to hold additional meetings as soon as possible.

(Note: NPS has since scheduled four additional meetings at the same time and in the same location – 1100 Ohio Drive SW – training room B from 1- 4pm on Monday April 13, Friday April 24, Monday May 18th and Friday May 22, 2009.)

The meeting adjourned at 4:10 so that people could make it to the NPS shuttle.