

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

Friday April 24, 2009

Handouts:

- Summary from Constitution Gardens (COGA) includes Vietnam Veterans Memorial Cultural Landscape Inventory.
- Excerpts from NPS Policy - Major Elements of Park Planning and Decision Making.

NPS has provided response at the end of the discussion.

Attendees: Cynthia Field – Latrobe Society of Architectural Historians; Richard Westbrook – Guild of Professional Tour Guides / Committee of 100; Linda Doyle – Tourmobile; Russell Preble - Guild of Professional Tour Guides; Kelly Fanizzo – Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP); Nell Ziehl – National Trust for Historic Preservation (NTHP); Judy Feldman – National Coalition to Save Our Mall; Kent Cooper - National Coalition to Save Our Mall; Nancy Witherell – National Capital Planning Commission;

NPS: Jennifer Talken- Spaulding – Cultural Resource Mgr; Perry Wheelock – Chief of Resource Mgt.; Steve Lorenzetti – Deputy Superintendent; Dr. Stephanie Toothman – Acting Supt; Susan Spain – Project Exec – National Mall Plan; David Hayes – NCR Regional Planner and Transportation Liaison; Gary Scott – NCR Historian

Announcements and General Information:

Perry Wheelock announced that \$55.8 million was allocated to three National Mall projects in the American Recovery and Revitalization Act.

- \$30.5 million to repair the Lincoln Memorial Reflecting Pool, including walks for improved pedestrian circulation, lighting, repairs to the Reflecting Pool, improved handicapped access, irrigation, and rehabilitation of the Lincoln Memorial lower approach- way plaza.
- \$18 million to restore the Jefferson Memorial Plaza and Seawall
- \$7.3 million to restore the District of Columbia War Memorial at the National Mall & Memorial Parks, including restoring lighting systems, correcting water drainage systems, and restoring the landscape to allow the memorial to be used as a bandstand.

Section 106 Discussion – COGA, Vietnam, Lincoln areas

Jennifer showed photos from the history of Constitution Gardens and the proposed plans for food service – the East End Pavillion.

Susan reviewed the proposals for COGA in the NMP. Changes included adding food service in conjunction with the levee and relocated Lockkeepers House; reusing the concession building for recreation rentals; replacing the restroom using an identifiable timeless style; revising circulation near intersections to increase space for events; providing a flexible space for programs and performances near the food service; improving condition of water and plantings.

General discussion about how the levee changed historic design elements and made COGA more contained, the Lockkeepers house history (previous movement). Improvement of soil and plantings needs to be done as individual trees are replaced.

NPS provided information about the history of planting (poor soils, tree drowned, stunted growth of most trees).

Kent: Will there be any reworking of the trees and plantings and soil conditions as part of this plan. Get in touch with Henry Arnold who was with SOM on Constitution Gardens (COGA). He said the soil preparation was inadequate and the number of trees was cut in half so it never became a dense forested area. Densification of the forest is important along with infill of trees.

NPS: We have been in contact with both Henry Arnold and George Dickie, who were part of the SOM work. The NMP does look at improving conditions of soil and plantings. We can look at in-fill, and instructions were given to the landscape architect for the levee, since some trees will be affected.

Kent: Not just the levee but the whole site – you can do more

What do you think the impacts to developing a restaurant would be to WWII?

NPS: Hard to say – become almost like another entrance to WWII

General discussion – like the SOM design, it goes with the period of significance for COGA.

Cynthia: The proposed architecture had a southern influence. Also kind of goes with the new AAHCM style.

Kent: Was this the SOM original?

Susan: Yes. The building was sized to seat around 130 indoors; and somewhat more on the outdoor terraces. The kitchen was at a lower level.

General discussion about architecture – do we have the same design for restrooms and concessions on the NM to preserve the unique restroom, concession and restaurant at COGA as a separate site?

Judy: The bathrooms are similar to other bathrooms – if they were designed to be compatible why were they contributing? Think about the types of architectural symbolism.

NPS: The round form restroom was modified and clad to be compatible with this site.

Kent: This is taking on a different level of detail than I was expecting

Kelly: NPS is talking about location, function and themes – discussion about character is appropriate.

Perry: When a project such as this gets funded for design and construction, there will be more section 106

See NPS note 1

Richard: there was a joint committee looking at affect on designated landmarks. The COGA designer is now deceased. Provide a visitor center(contact station), bookstore made this area much more active than it is now. This should be a first class restaurant (Tavern on the Green model) and consider a full two stories below ground to be directly open to the pond.

Nell: this is almost a memorial garden. Do more facilities such as restaurant conflict with the proximity to memorials?

NPS: that comment goes to the eventual design and whether it provides sit down and enclosed or an open air pavillion. The plan proposes respecting memorial character and contemplative experiences.

Jennifer: With the probable impact of use on memorials, an indoor solution may be of help.

General discussion talked about food and rats.

Perry: NPS uses integrated pest management to control impacts.

Judy: What are visitor projections for use? This may change over time as WWII generation leaves.

NPS: Incremental increases are projected over the next 50 years – have not seen a decline at sites. KVME/Lincoln/VVME to WWII represents a major node of visitation

Kelly: NPS provided links to the visitation figures

Gary: There was another memorial proposed for this area – the Black Revolutionary Patriots Memorial.

NPS: The authorization expired.

General discussion: how far into the future are we talking for facilities. 50 years? The life of a facility is 30 years. However, everyone knows that even temporary facilities often far outlive their life.

Kent: It will come up over and over again – circulation – the path goes through the restaurant.

Susan: The newsletter contains diagrams – development of a food service facility would need to address circulation, the levee, traffic patterns from tour bus drop offs.

Perry: The lake is manmade with a concrete bottom; water doesn't recirculate; it uses city treated water; it is stocked with fish – it is not a natural environment. NPS keeps fish alive for fishing days (catch and release). Water is a draw. The NMP proposes a new water source; recirculation and filtration; and many more green practices. However more active water could change reflectivity. There is a significant population of geese.

General discussion about geese impacts (year round droppings, water quality issues, insects, and odors).

Cynthia: Still have to retain the design – keep a hard edge.

NPS: there are no plans to change the configuration of the Lake. The proposal would be an invisible solution except that water would move more.

Judy: I've never liked this – the lake is so big. People walk close to the road because they can't get across it. Should be stepping stones to the island would allow more playful access to the water. Tiber Creek is an underground river that potentially could feed this.

NPS: A more sustainable source of water is recommended in the NMP – including water sources such as those water sources that are close to the surface and dewatering from federal buildings.

Cynthia: Should bathrooms be uniform? Here maybe not in keeping with 106 and cultural resources because there are different buildings that are not uniform.

Perry: Restrooms were part of a suite of buildings for COGA.

Cynthia: It is a different character and design and doesn't blend.

Jennifer showed more photos, pictures of trees in walks and the impact on vegetation.

Gary: Soils are not the best

Judy: Are tempo footings are still here?

Cynthia: That is what happened at the American Indian Museum

Gary: NPS heard rumors of this during the Bicentennial.

Perry: NPS has had several special funding eras reflected in its history – CCC in 1930s, Mission 66 and the Bicentennial.

Cynthia: Surprised at the activity proposed then.

General discussion about uses proposed in the 1960s (underground garages, festival site for Folklife), the green nature of the area, the separation from the east west primary axis by the levee, and the changes from the McMillan images.

Perry: A levee was never considered in McMillan – it dates from the 1930s. Plans for COGA acknowledged the presence of the levee and used it for separation and enclosure. COGA is actually the area where we see the suite of building themes for visitor services used by NPS – they march down the landscape in a vocabulary of buildings

- the overlook pavilion
- restroom facility – round had different cladding to fit in COGA
- concession building
- VVME information kiosk – similar to Tourmobile kiosks, hexagonal recognizable as a visitor contact station of the bicentennial building type
- new concession facility north of Lincoln – in the approved 1990s style similar to those on the Mall (Mary Oehrlein design).

General discussion about architectural style followed. The approved design had simple form (square or cruciform), dominant copper roofs with wide overhangs, stucco with timbers, similar colors (grays and greens).

John F: How about deliveries to locations?

Susan: That is a current operational issue that does need to be provided as areas are changed.

Judy: There is a problem with crossing streets – the pedestrian experience and the pedestrian are not being served. The architecture, location, consolidation of services and transportation will be undergoing a major change. Need to relocate facilities and consider safety.

Susan: NPS agrees that pedestrian experience needs to be addressed – it is a critical part of the NMP. That includes convenient and identifiable facilities for pedestrians. Most people experience the National Mall as pedestrians.

General discussion about the visitor contact stations (both VVME and KWME) followed, including questions about the directory/locator stands and whether they will still be needed.

NPS: Proposals for VVME include addressing the need for volunteer programs and space for seating (aging population) and contemplation for people who have an association with a section of the wall. After hours need for directory/locator stands remains likely. Possibly combine VVME contact station function into the VVME center.

Steve: The ranger contact stations are out of the viewshed; from a pedestrian viewpoint they are a one minute walk to Lincoln and convenient to bus riders. Street crossing is a factor on both sides of Lincoln where new visitor food service buildings are larger versions of facilities on the Mall, but are across the street.

NPS: Future could include mid- block crosswalks.

Nell: My recommendation is to consolidate and eliminate the kiosks to have less structures.

Judy: Shelters are important. Food service (N/S Lincoln) serves the vehicular need not the pedestrian – it is not nice to sit and eat and look at buses.

Perry: As we discuss architecture – I'm hearing recommendations about location, character and common themes.

Richard: Kiosks may be too brightly colored – mute and compatible and add overhangs

Judy: The whole National Mall as unified but with individual cultural landscapes. Bathrooms should last only 30 years – be ephemeral structures and styles with less presence. A permanent structure such as a restaurant should be in keeping with the landscape.

Gary: I'd like to speak in favor of the restrooms more like the Mary Oerhlein designs because of their inspirational connection with Paris. This should not be overturned.

Edwin: Spare the next generation – so that they won't have to change. This is not about the history of kiosks on the National mall. There is something to be said for a unifying palette. A high value should be placed on commonality; they should be recognizable.

Kent: Overhang need is real and should be used as much as possible. The need to consider shelter on the National Mall is huge. Discrete shelters with seating can be made to blend.

Edwin: Don't want too big to be an impact or so small it doesn't serve enough people

John: Think about connections. Peace Institute programs and look further ahead to the redevelopment of the Kennedy Center (circulation / Framework Plan)

Judy: GOGA lake – VVME contemplative seating is nice away from the memorial; maybe the mound at the west end has the potential to be something; it is not near the Mall; most seating faces away from views and contemplation

Richard: Hold concerts at edge of lake, provide seating and increase programming

Judy: When I drive by on the south side of Constitution, the mound sticks out on a rise. Somehow disguises dumpsters, recycling etc. which are intrusive into vistas. Do larger structures so you can hide some things. Update the Lincoln reflecting pool – look to the McMillan plan report in the Mall systems it was part of a unified system. The west half was never achieved. Fountains were in the McMillan Plan – like Apollo sculpture – it is an active water feature. Consider freezing coils for ice skating. This was a historic use from the 20s through the 70s. The reflecting pool would not interfere with recreation.

Lincoln – little is proposed really, other than expanded restroom facilities inside the memorial, a larger bookstore and improved exhibits. (Steve suggested returning a viewing window to the area below the memorial.) Near the south refreshment stand restrooms are proposed that would look like they had always been part of the design.

Judy: Maybe move the south concession building because it impedes the view to Lincoln.

Steve: Ice skating is allowed on COGA lake when the ice is thick enough. No facilities are provided.

General discussion supported ice skating as a recreational use that doesn't alter a water feature during the peak season when reflectivity is a concern.

- See note 2

Cynthia: There is too much around Lincoln.

Perry: there is an iteration of development and history of plans – some uses were not planned – such as lighting of walks along the reflecting pool or even walks near the reflecting pool. We have known about the problematic walks (social trails) around the reflecting pool.

General discussion about views driving where people walk – the views along the reflecting pool are enjoyed.

Steve: We are talking about differences in ceremonial vs recreational uses.

Richard: There were model boat competitions in the 1940s that were a big deal.

Perry: That type of use was moved to COGA.

Cynthia: These uses are part of the history that don't change design.

Judy: What happened? Was there a policy change

Perry: There were lots of recreational uses that no longer occur – at one time golf courses. Archery, swimming and tennis were seen as appropriate. As the National Mall became more commemorative in the early twentieth century as the result of the McMillan most of this type of use was moved to East Potomac Park. (Note that tempos replaced some recreational use as well.)

Gary: The McMillan Plan was never considered holy – it was an idea – and some of it didn't get built

Judy: McMillan was very definitely about recreation

- See note 3

Cynthia: The design elements included water features such as Lincoln

Edwin: The reflecting pool – don't want to lose reflectivity, this is an icon and a viewshed.

Kelly: The fountains were not built. We deal with what was built. Remember as we move forward it is OK to have an adverse impact under Section 106. We would then consult to determine appropriate mitigation.

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Perry: Ice skating may work

Steve: Rental ice skating requires more facilities. Allowing skating does not – people are responsible for bringing what they need.

Susan: So this use would be intended to meet a local need and would not address the visitor (who doesn't bring their skates along)?

Cynthia: McMillan dealt with the whole – but there are problems with water and geese. There are reasons to suggest that fountains could be built.

Kent: The cross axis of the reflecting pool was not built – it is a long dull walk. Have something along the way that doesn't interrupt the views. Flank entrance to toilet areas with niches for sculpture – this is an important part of the visitor experience.

Judy: Find a connection from the water out to areas; think about interest points that connect with circulation

Richard: Expand DC War Memorial to include all DC participation in wars since WWI. Provide big facility between the stable and DC War that is multipurpose

John: Activity in COGA – has enough been suggested. There will be better signs – does all this add up to more active?

Perry: Yes – lots of programming is proposed; reminder that the levee affects new design to the north of its location.

Gary: Think of the Olmsted connection with Ash Woods

Jennifer: Consider the differences - memorial trees , the designed landscape with trees at 50' on the Mall – Ash Woods was intended to be wooded with no fancy planting. It was wooded as rest and relief.

General discussion about improved access to the woods with walks and seating. The area will receive more use as the MLK memorial comes in. The group agreed a plan was needed for the Ash Woods area. The proposal at KVME is to widen the walks on the west side.

Cynthia: It is a challenge, but moving water can still provide reflection

Judy: Transportation should have been addressed first because use of spaces is really impacted; the reflecting pool – is there a previous policy that gets people off – people like to be by water

Kelly/Susan: The agreement was to talk about individual areas and then at the final meeting on May 22 we can look at issues that cover all areas.

The meeting was adjourned at 4pm. The next meeting on Monday May 18 will look at the Tidal Basin and Riverfront. The final meeting before a DEIS is issued on Friday May 22 will look at overall issues.

NPS RESPONSE OR NOTES

1. Planning in differing areas of the National Mall will address different levels of need. In some areas we have a better sense of what kinds and even size of facility is being proposed, or a better sense of levels of use. The agreement at the end of the NMP Section 106 process will spell out when future compliance is needed. For some projects additional section 106 compliance may not be needed. Compliance will help refine program and criteria that go to future design teams.

2. The NMP preliminary preferred alternative does not preclude skating here or at other location on the National Mall. Alt C proposed skating in Union Square. As part of sustainable water use and green development geothermal approaches could potentially aid in freezing areas for recreational use.
3. The McMillan plan addressed various types of recreation and supported a Regional approach to planning overall and established links to other recreational areas.