

# STAFF RECOMMENDATION

E. Keller

NCPC File Nos. 6383

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## GEORGETOWN WATERFRONT PARK

Wisconsin Avenue and 34<sup>th</sup> Streets, NW  
Washington, D.C.

Submission by the National Park Service

May 26, 2005

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### Abstract

The National Park Service (NPS) has submitted final site development plans for a portion of the Georgetown Waterfront Park (GWP), endorsed by the Commission in September 2004. The submitted final site plans have been simplified and respond to material changes requested by the Commission in its earlier review.

### Commission Action Requested by Applicant

Approval of final site development plans pursuant to 40 U.S.C. § 8722(d) and Section 5 of the National Capital Planning Act (40 U.S.C. § 8722(b)(1))

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### Executive Director's Recommendation

The Commission:

**Approves** the final site development plans for Georgetown Waterfront Park from 34<sup>th</sup> Street to Wisconsin Avenue, as illustrated in NCPC Map File No. 72.00(38.00)-41623.

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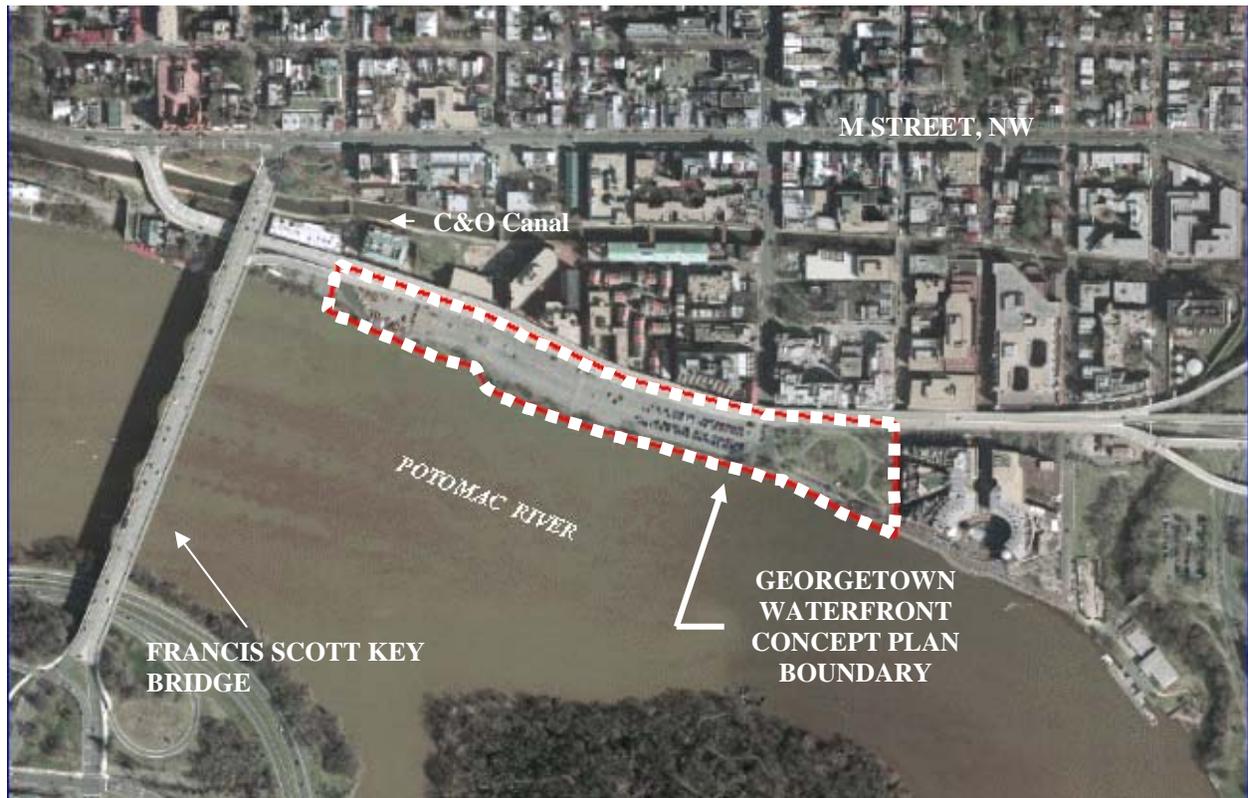
## PROJECT SUMMARY

### Site Description

The National Park Service's final site development plans involve only a limited portion of the overall waterfront at the vicinity of the Park. The design takes in an area that extends back from the shoreline approximately 185 feet to K Street, NW, and essentially under the Whitehurst elevated Expressway. The Whitehurst Expressway, above K Street, defines the length of the northern edge of the site and creates a visual barrier between Georgetown and the planned park. However, the Wisconsin Avenue view-corridor leads directly into the park and is oriented north/south under the elevated road. The preservation of the vista from Wisconsin Avenue to the Potomac River and a pedestrian connection along the river's edge at this area of the Park that links the shoreline from Rock Creek are major attributes established by the overall plan.



**VICINITY LOCATION OF GEORGETOWN WATERFRONT PARK**



### **BOUNDARY OF OVERALL GEORGETOWN WATERFRONT PARK CONCEPT**

#### Background

The Commission last reviewed aspects of the Georgetown Waterfront Park in September 2004 as a delegated action by the Executive Director to approve the preliminary site development. Earlier, in 2004 the Commission took the action of approving the revised design concept for Georgetown Waterfront Park at the Wisconsin Avenue Terminus, as illustrated and described in the report titled: *Georgetown Waterfront Park-Wisconsin Avenue Plaza*, dated June 2004, and approved in July 2004.

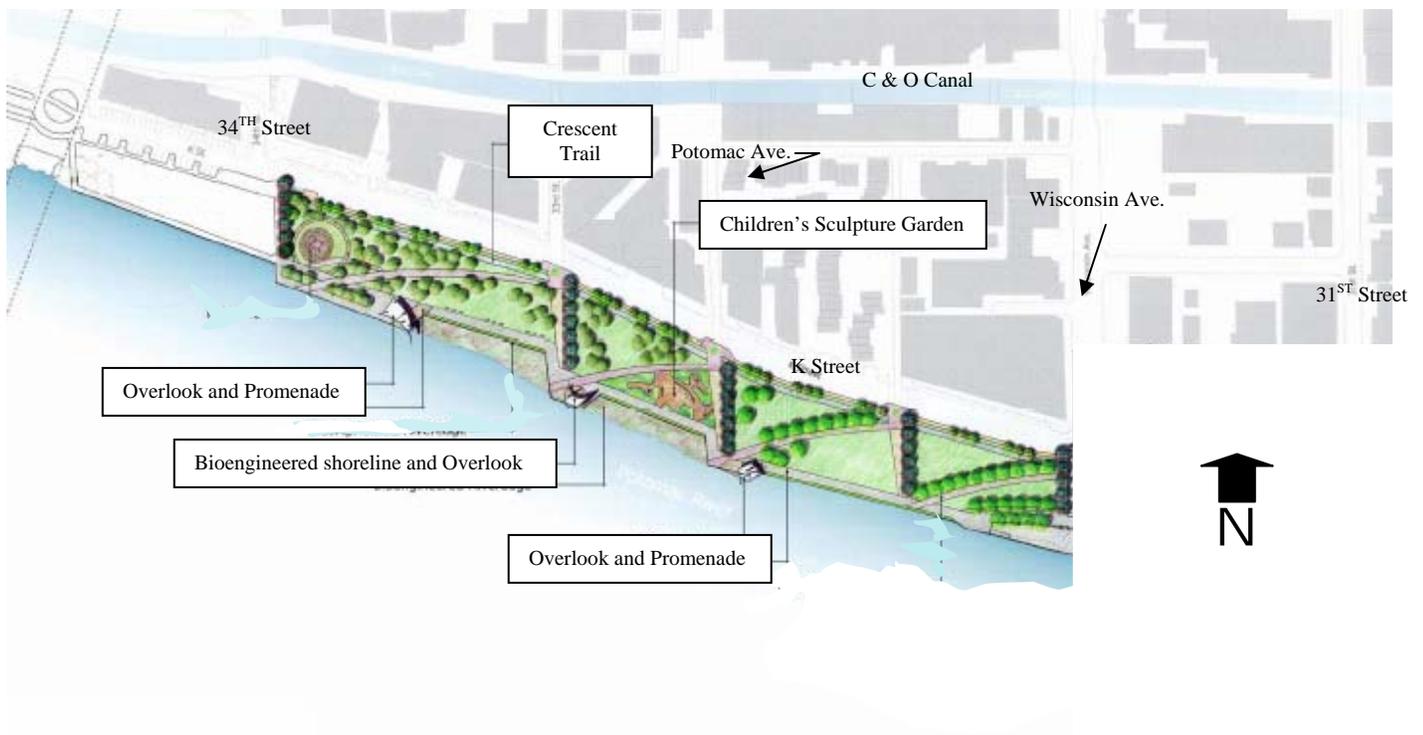
#### Proposal

The National Park Service has submitted final site development plans for new park landscaping and site development features, in conformance with the preliminary plans approved by the Commission in September 2004.

The final plans include the design of all site grading, sidewalks, site lighting systems, renovation of the seawall bulkhead, bulkhead railings, paved promenade, new bioengineering of the river shoreline, asphalt bike path, and all plant materials and landscape irrigation. The proposed pedestrian shoreline overlook structures, pergola with seating area, the fountain area, and stepped

bulkhead are not part of the current submittal and will be presented for later review when available.

The submitted plan responds to the Commission's request to simplify paving materials within the park.



### COMMISSION APPROVED PLAN OF SEPTEMBER 2004

Moreover, other elements of the final site development plans include:

- Revised grading and contouring of the riverbank shoreline to better accommodate variations of water levels and maintenance of a vegetated soil bioengineering system in the design.
- Enlargement of the river's edge that permits pedestrians to view the river directly from a railing. All walking surfaces are completely accessible.

The final landscape design for the majority of the park area has been simplified to better transition and refine elements of the whole composition.

#### Development Program

Applicant: The National Park Service

Architect: Wallace, Roberts and Todd, LLC, landscape architects  
Jody Pinto Studios, landscape sculpture structures  
Parson, Brinckerhoff, Quade, and Douglas, site engineering  
With support of Robbin B. Sotir & Assoc., Delon Hampton & Assoc.,  
Grenald Waldron Assoc. and Oehrlein Assoc.

Square Footage: 8± Acres

Estimated Cost: Approximately \$12-15 million, based on estimated current scope for full  
10 acre park development.

## PROJECT ANALYSIS

### Executive Summary

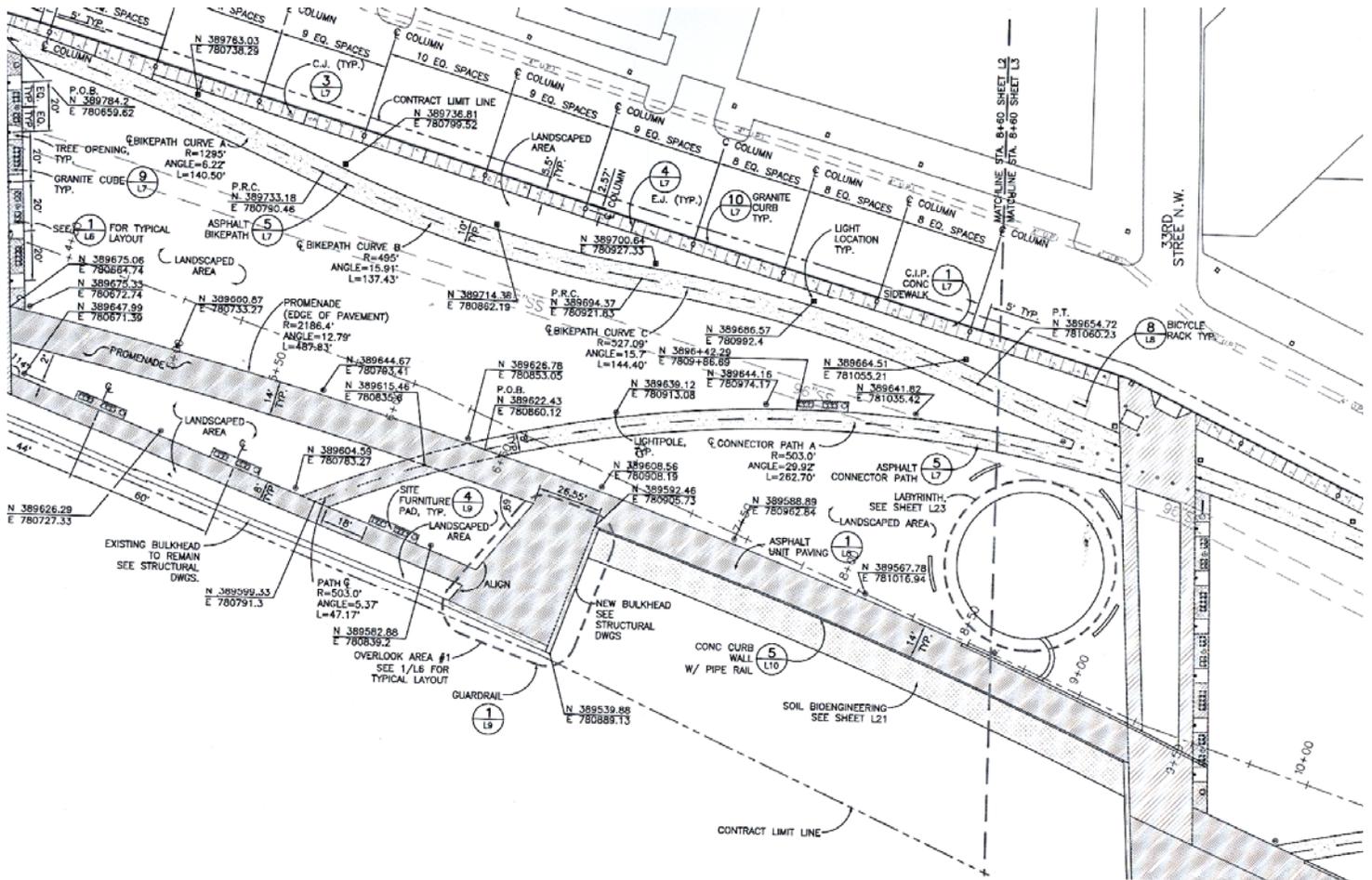
Staff **recommends approval of the final site development design** for this portion of the Georgetown Waterfront Park. Improved access and Americans with Disabilities Act compliance for all park walks is achieved in the final site design. The project, which involves no built building areas, is consistent with earlier concept and preliminary plans approved by the Commission and would have no adverse impact on land uses or environmental resources of the general site. The final design also provides the contrast, view arrangement, and openness sought by the Commission's earlier reviews in 2003 and 2004. The design maintains the Crescent Trail alignment through the park at K Street, providing the connectivity to the wider regional trail network.

## PROJECT CONFORMANCE

### Comprehensive Plan

The final site development design for this major portion of the Georgetown Waterfront Park is consistent with policies contained in the Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital. The Parks and Open Space Element designate river and waterfront settings of the Nation's Capital as primary goals objectives for planning. The Comprehensive Plan policies state:

- The entire Anacostia and Potomac Rivers system should be a constant source of enjoyment, urban orientation, and visual delight. Its major features should be retained and enhanced as great open space resources and as recreational opportunities for residents and visitors, and water quality restored.
- Efforts should be continued to improve the quality of water in the Potomac and Anacostia Rivers to allow for both restored natural habitats and increased recreational use and to help meet the goals of the Chesapeake Bay 2000 agreement.
- As the water quality improves, swimming, boating, and fishing facilities, as well as water-oriented tourist activities should be encouraged, while protecting the integrity and health of the shoreline eco-system.

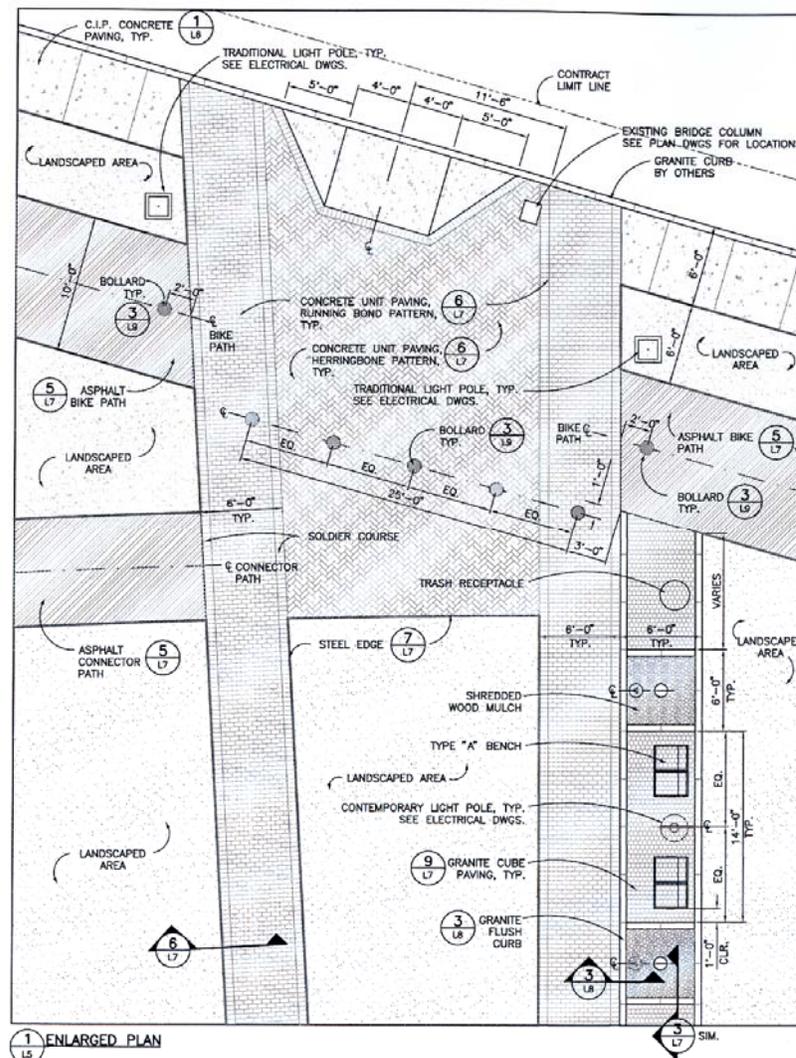


### SITE LAYOUT PLAN OF WEST PORTION OF GEORGETOWN WATERFRONT PARK

- The shoreline of the Anacostia and Potomac Rivers in the National Capital Region should be preserved, restored, and enhanced as a matter of federal interest.
- In urban waterfront areas that are determined appropriate for development, the following guidelines should be applied:
  - a. Construction in environmentally sensitive areas should be avoided.
  - b. Degraded areas of shorelines should be restored, stabilized, and/or improved and landscaped.
  - c. Development along or near the shoreline should be limited and integrated with the generally low and continuous line of river embankments...In areas characterized as

urban waterfronts, such as the Georgetown Waterfront, the Southwest Waterfront, and areas of Southeast near the Southeast Federal Center/Washington Navy Yard, there may be defined areas where building heights may be expected to be higher.

- The location of waterfront development, especially within the District of Columbia, such as boat docks and houses, plazas, water taxis, piers, docking areas, or appropriate waterfront buildings, should be consistent with the waterfront objectives contained in *Extending the Legacy* and Commission-approved plans for waterfront improvements. Proposed waterfront development on public land should be coordinated with the Commission in accordance with applicable laws and requirements.
- All lands within 150 to 200 feet of the water's edge along the Potomac and Anacostia Rivers should be managed in a manner that will encourage the enjoyment and recreational use of water resources, while protecting the scenic and ecological values of the waterways.



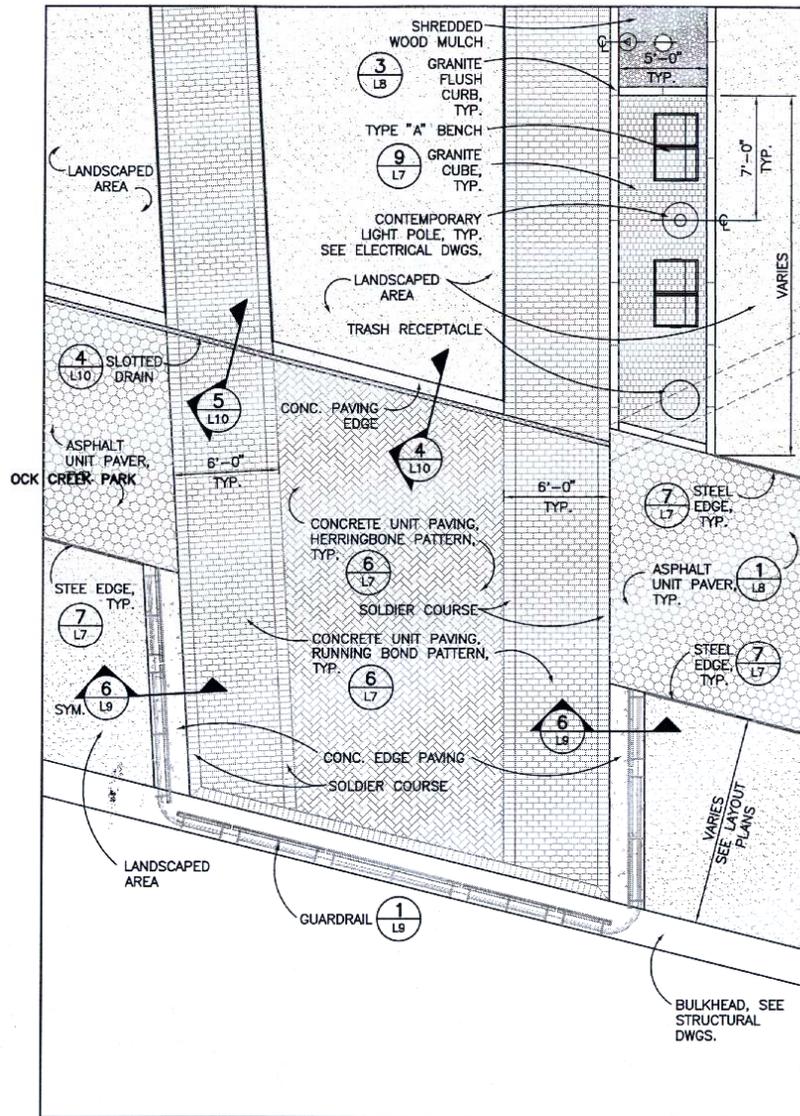
**TYPICAL FINISH OF SITE CIRCULATION AREAS OF GEORGETOWN WATERFRONT PARK FINAL SITE PLANS**

National Historic Preservation Act

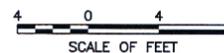
The Park Service has completed its Section 106 responsibilities for the revised concept plan, determining that the implementation of the concept would have no adverse effect on the historic or architectural character of the waterfront area.

The D.C. State Historic Preservation Officer (DC SHPO) determined that the 1986 concept plan for the Georgetown Waterfront Park would have no adverse effect on the National Register qualities of the Georgetown Historic District or the C&O Canal National Historical Park. The project was also reviewed by the D.C. Historic Preservation Review Board at that time. The effect determination was reached with two conditions: that each request for demolition be considered individually, and that the location and design of future bathouses be reviewed. The level of archaeological assessment was commended, as was the “sensitive landscape design, which avoids archaeological resources.”

The current proposal does not extend nor significantly deviate from the area of that reviewed design. Most of the park can be installed without digging beneath the



2 ENLARGED PLAN  
L5



**TYPICAL FINAL CIRCULATION AREA AT BULKHEAD ADJACENT TO RIVERSHORE**

disturbed top layer; for tree plantings and some other features, archaeological monitoring will take place during construction to ensure that artifacts remain *in situ* and are not disturbed. The landscape design was developed to avoid disturbance.

NPS has conferred with the DC SHPO again about the current concept plan submission. The 1986 determination of no adverse effect is still considered valid, given the similarity of the plans, as well as the review protection for any demolitions and the archaeological monitoring.

The Advisory Council on Historic Preservation also commented on the concept plan in 1986, stating that the implementation of the plan would improve the appearance of the waterfront and enhance the public's enjoyment of the river as a major recreation area.

### National Environmental Policy Act

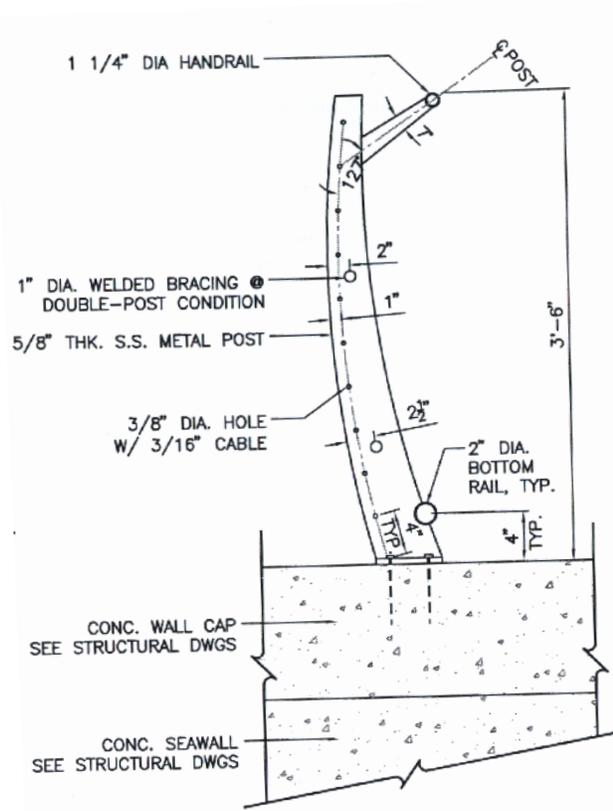
Pursuant to the regulations implementing the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the National Park Service and the Commission arrived at a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) through the completion of an Environmental Assessment in June 1984.

Staff has reviewed the current revised design plans and finds them fully consistent with the analysis and conclusions found in the original evaluation. Staff has reviewed the action for extraordinary circumstances as sanctioned by NEPA and determined the FONSI remains valid in accordance with the Commission's procedures.

### Federal Capital Improvements Program

In the Commission's recent FCIP report, fiscal years 2003-2008, the Commission recommended the project for future programming.

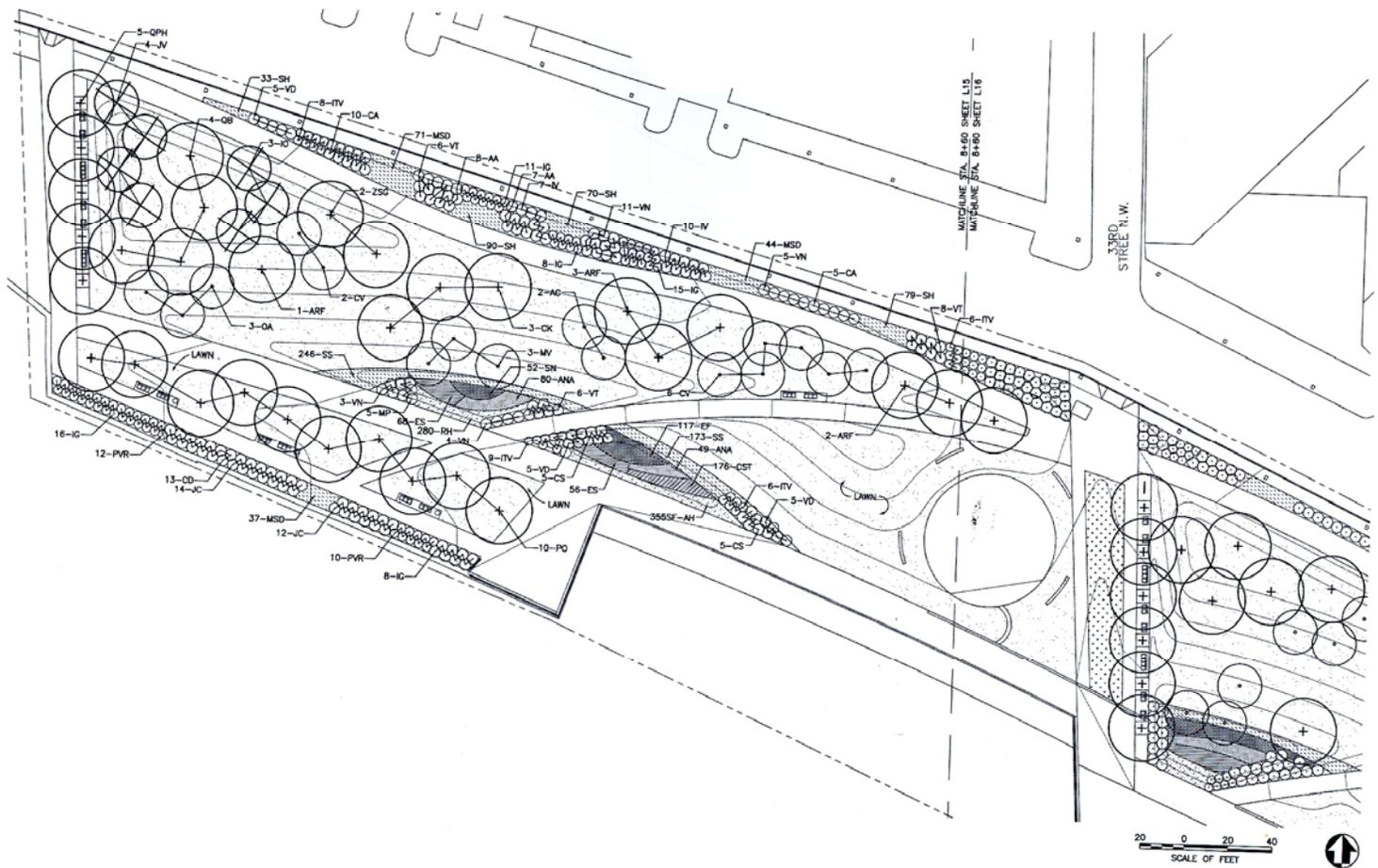
A portion of the Georgetown Waterfront Park project is included in the Federal Capital Improvements Program (FCIP) fiscal years 2001 – 2005, adopted by the Commission on August



**PARK PROMENADE GUARDRAIL AT  
SEAWALL**

3, 2000. The costs associated with restoration of canal and seawall areas are estimated at approximately \$1.7 million. The need for funding of the overall Park has been identified by the Commission since 1981.

The Department of Interior's overall focus for development costs of the Georgetown Waterfront Park is through public/private funding initiatives as major portions of the park are finalized in design.



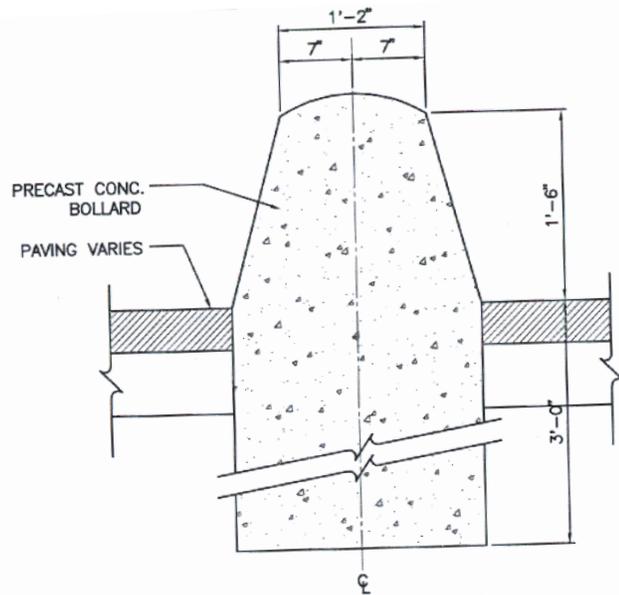
**LANDSCAPE PLAN OF WEST PORTION OF GEORGETOWN WATERFRONT PARK**

A part of this funding effort involves The Georgetown Waterfront Park Fund that is managed by the National Park Foundation, a 501(c) (3) organization, chartered by Congress in 1967 as the official non-profit partner of National Parks to encourage the tradition of private philanthropy for our national parks.

## COORDINATION

### Coordinating Committee

The Coordinating Committee reviewed the concept design revisions for the park at its meeting on August 13, 2003 and forwarded the proposal to the Commission with the statement that the project has been coordinated with all agencies participating. The current submission does not deviate from that concept or its essential elements that were review and approved. The participating agencies of the review were NCPC; the District of Columbia Office of Planning; Fire Department; the General Services Administration; the National Park Service; and the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority.



**CONCRETE BOLLARD LOCATED AT PARK  
ENTRANCES ON K STREET, NW**