

# STAFF RECOMMENDATION

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NCPC File No. 6786

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## DIAMOND TEAGUE PARK

First Street and Potomac Avenue, SE  
Washington, D.C.

Submitted by the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Planning  
and Economic Development

August 28, 2008

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### Abstract

The District of Columbia's Office of Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development is submitting preliminary and final site development plans for Phase I of a new public park on District owned land along the Anacostia River at First Street, SE and Potomac Avenue, SE. The proposal for Diamond Teague Park, comprised of approximately one-third of an acre of land, will incorporate the former Capitol Pumphouse and include new maritime piers for commercial and recreational vessels, a boardwalk that builds a portion of the Anacostia Riverwalk, a garden area and a demonstration wetland. A memorial to Diamond Teague, a fallen member of the Earth Conservation Corps, is envisioned to be located at this park. The gardens, riparian areas, and recreational piers will be designed to showcase the diverse environment of the Anacostia River and educate the public on the challenges of its restoration.

### Commission Action Requested by Applicant

Approval of preliminary and final site development plans pursuant to 40 U.S.C. § 8722(b)(1).

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### Executive Director's Recommendation

The Commission:

**Approves** the preliminary and final site development plans for Phase I of Diamond Teague Park, as shown on NCPC Map File No. 41.11(70.00)42392.

**Commends** the applicant for linking this project to planned open space along the waterfront to provide a continuous public open space system along the Anacostia River; for developing a portion of the Anacostia River as a high-quality urban park with a mix of recreational opportunities that emphasizes the river’s ecological and scenic qualities and character; and for providing accommodations for a water taxi system to serve the neighborhood and the Washington Nationals’ baseball stadium.

**Recommends** that the applicant coordinate with adjacent property owners to reinforce the link between the Anacostia River and the grand staircase of the Washington Nationals’ baseball stadium by maintaining and enhancing ground-level pedestrian views and access between the stadium and the river.

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**PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

Site

The planned park is sited on District owned land at the terminus of First Street SE along the Anacostia River. The site includes the former Capitol Pumpouse, which is leased by the District of Columbia to the Earth Conservation Corps (ECC), a steward of the Anacostia River and its adjacent parks and open space, for the purposes of environmental education. The new Washington Nationals’ baseball stadium is immediately northwest of the site and across Potomac Avenue, SE. Adjacent sites include privately held land to the southwest (Florida Rock Properties) and additional lands controlled by the District of Columbia to the northeast (WASA occupied). Potential redevelopment of the WASA occupied site will allow a future phase of the park to extend northeast and connect with the waterfront park at The Yards development (not part of this submission).



**PARK SITE LOCATION**

## Proposal

Diamond Teague Park is proposed to be a key waterfront gateway to the emerging Capitol Riverfront neighborhood, creating a strong linkage between the Anacostia River and the Nationals' stadium. The Park is envisioned as an iconic and welcoming civic gathering space serving as a critical connection and access node along the Anacostia Riverwalk and as a waterfront attraction of diverse experiences and activities for residents, workers and visitors.

The Park will demonstrate environmental stewardship through the use of sustainable practices and strategies, and its site allows for a unique opportunity to increase public awareness of the riparian environment. As such, the ECC will use the new Park to promote its river restoration mission and activities, and to educate visitors on Anacostia River contamination and trash accumulation problems as well as WASA operations including combined sewer overflow issues.

Elements proposed for the Park in the preliminary and final design include the former Capitol Pumphouse, new maritime landings for water taxis and other commercial vessels, a garden area, a boardwalk that continues the Anacostia Riverwalk, and piers for environmental education and temporary moorings of recreational boats in a managed setting.

ECC will retain its activities within the historic pumphouse. A combination of wood composite, aluminum, and concrete piers will surround the Pumphouse and provide space for ECC operations and public outreach, water taxi service, and police, fire and EMS operations. Access to the Pumphouse and piers will be from a patterned concrete and wooden pier that provides space for queuing for the water taxi service.

The same concrete and wood materials used on the pier to access the Pumphouse will continue upland across the site to the Potomac Avenue, SE and First Street, SE terminus, creating a gateway at the streets into the Park. Patterned concrete used for an adjacent overlook pier will also be continued upland to join the other surfacing and create a triangular plaza. A site for a memorial to Diamond Teague, a fallen member of ECC, will be incorporated into the plaza design.

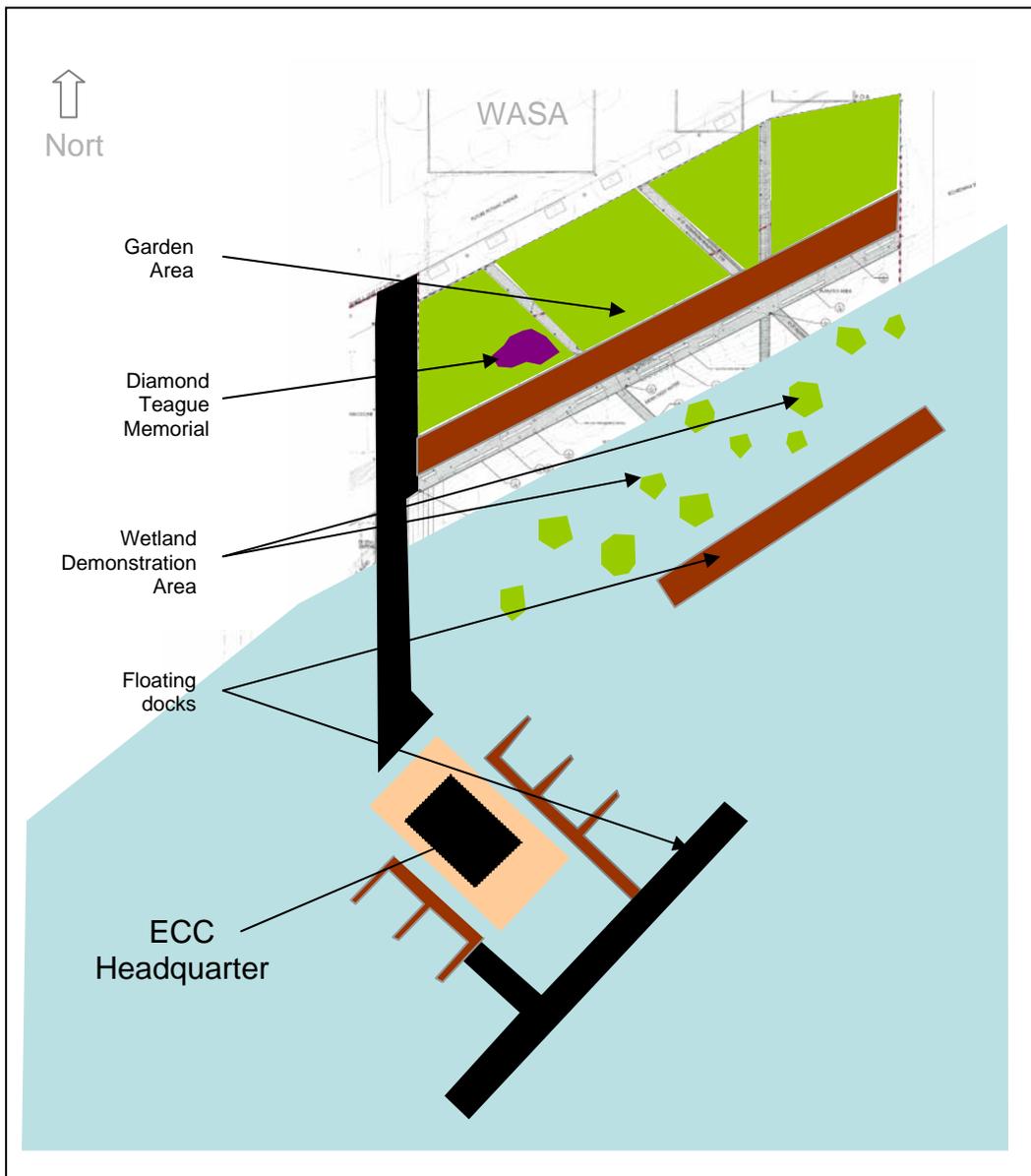
Adjacent to the plaza and across the upland area of the site will be garden areas designed to demonstrate environmental stewardship. Decomposed granite paths through the garden, when combined with the plaza area, will provide space that can accommodate large events or other gathering activities. Benches in this area will provide for passive enjoyment of the Park. The Park's design has followed the assumption that Potomac Avenue, SE may be extended along



## **Diamond Teague Memorial**

its main alignment following redevelopment of the adjacent WASA occupied site. No major element of the Park would be affected by such an extension. A small triangular shaped portion of the Park in the northwest corner, considered temporary, would be eliminated should Potomac Avenue ever be extended.

A thirty-foot wide boardwalk of wood and metal grating will traverse the site along the river's edge, connecting with the adjacent parcels to continue the plan to complete the Anacostia Riverwalk. From the boardwalk, four small metal piers will connect with a sixteen-foot wide wooden pier. This wooden pier will be used for public enjoyment, ECC education activities, and temporary moorings of recreational craft. Additional benches along the edge of the boardwalk and on the wooden pier will provide another amenity for Park visitors.



**Diamond Teague Park Plan**

### Diamond Teague Park Site Plan

The Park site is one of the last waterfront segments in the area not to have been bulkheaded. As such, development of the Park represents a unique opportunity to showcase the diverse environmental restoration challenges faced with the Anacostia River as well as the opportunity to create a “green oasis” in an area which will be likely built out with numerous hardscape waterfront esplanades. To do so, the design incorporates the existing mature riparian canopy and sloping riverbank.



**SECTION OF BOARDWALK AREA AND FLOATING DOCK (FAR LEFT)**

#### Development Program

Applicant: Office of the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development

Architect: Landscape Architecture Bureau LLC

Land Area: 1.1 acres

Estimated Cost: \$6 million

#### PROJECT ANALYSIS

##### Executive Summary

NCPC's *Legacy Plan* envisioned new growth and development south and east of the U.S. Capitol and parks along the Anacostia River to support an associated increase in workers, residents, and visitors. Through the Anacostia Waterfront Initiative (AWI) the federal and District of Columbia governments have partnered to move this vision forward. A critical component of AWI is providing new waterfront public spaces and developing a riverwalk trail system along both sides

of the Anacostia River. Diamond Teague Park contributes to this component by developing a portion of the Anacostia River as a high-quality public urban park and developing a critical piece of the Anacostia Riverwalk that links planned open space along the waterfront.

The Park also provides access from the neighborhood to the river's edge, reinforcing the enhancement of pedestrian links between the National Mall and the Anacostia River as promoted in NCPC's *Legacy Plan*, *Federal Capital Improvements Plan* and *Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital: Federal Elements*. In addition, the program for the Park anticipates high numbers of people recreating before and after ballgames, utilizing the water taxi service, and attending baseball associated events and other gathering activities. **Staff recommends** that the Park reinforces the link between the Anacostia River, the neighborhood, and the grand staircase of the stadium across Potomac Avenue, SE with a design of the plaza area that maintains and enhances ground-level pedestrian views and access between the stadium and the river.

## CONFORMANCE

### Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital

Staff has determined that the preliminary and final site development design plan for Diamond Teague Park is consistent with the *Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital: Federal Elements*, in particular the Parks and Open Space Element. The Park promotes public access to the region's waterways and helps to complete connections between other public parks and open space. In addition, the proposed project is consistent with the Transportation Element through its support of the development of a water taxi system serving the District of Columbia and the surrounding jurisdictions. This water taxi system envisioned in the Transportation Element is intended to promote an alternative commuting mode, to coincide with waterfront redevelopment opportunities, and to serve waterfront attractions.

### Memorials and Museums Master Plan

NCPC's *Memorials and Museums Master Plan* identifies the sites adjacent to Diamond Teague Park as candidate memorial and museum sites. The site of the waterfront park within The Yards development to the northeast of the Park is identified as Site 37 within the *Master Plan* and offers a dramatic waterfront setting. The Florida Rock property to the southwest is identified as Site 38 within the *Master Plan* and offers a location of high prominence at the South Capitol Street terminus and the Anacostia waterfront. While the *Master Plan* does not specifically call out a memorial site at the terminus of First Street SE on the Park site, the design of the Park has been developed to accommodate future commemorative works such as the elements incorporated in the preliminary and final site development design plan that are dedicated to the memory of Diamond Teague.

### CapitalSpace

The CapitalSpace initiative is a multi-jurisdictional effort to improve access, quality, use and management coordination for the federal and local park system in the District of Columbia. Key

partners include the NCPC, the National Park Service, and the government of the District of Columbia. Staff encourages the District of Columbia to continue working with the other CapitalSpace partners and coordinate with adjacent property owners to the Diamond Teague Park site to develop, enhance, and connect parks along the Anacostia River and to ensure that they remain important pieces of our local and regional identity, provide for publicly accessible passive and active recreation, and contribute to the restoration and protection of our natural resources. Staff also encourages the District of Columbia to ensure proper maintenance of the park into the future after the park is developed.

#### National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA)

As a significant percentage of the project represents construction in the Anacostia River, the project triggers the Army Corps of Engineer's Section 10 Permit, which anticipates river construction without the alteration of the existing flood plain or flood way and does not include any alteration to the profile of the river bottom. The Army Corps states that granting of this permit constitutes a discretionary federal action and is currently being processed by the Army Corps of Engineers under its nationwide permitting authority for which the Army Corps has fulfilled all compliance under NEPA. Staff has received a copy of the Section 10 permit and reviewed it as part of this preliminary and final submission. A requested has submitted for a special use permit from the National Park Service, the federal agency with jurisdiction over the river bed.

Environmental review requirements for the District of Columbia government, not the federal government, apply to this District owned site. Since NCPC is advisory for District of Columbia projects outside of the Central Area, it has no independent NEPA obligation for this project.

#### National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA)

The Section 10 Permit also triggered a review by the Historic Preservation Advisory Council and a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Army Corps and the Advisory Council has been signed.

The National Historic Preservation Act does not apply to review of this project. The Commission's role is advisory, since the park is District of Columbia public land outside the Central Area.

## CONSULTATION

#### Coordinating Committee

The Coordinating Committee reviewed the proposal on August 12, 2008, and forwarded the proposal to the Commission with the statement that the project has been coordinated with all agencies represented. The participating agencies were: NCPC, the District of Columbia Office of Planning; the National Park Service; the District Department of Transportation; the Department of Housing and Community Development; the General Services Administration; and the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority.

### Commission of Fine Arts

The Commission of Fine Arts reviewed the proposal at its September 20, 2007 meeting. The Commission members commented that the park should be designed to accommodate large groups arriving or departing the stadium and recommended that the open spaces and internal connections be larger in scale and recommended that simplifying and strengthening these features would improve the design. The Commission supported the concept of maintaining the existing line of the riverbank on the site and did not object to the type and configuration of the proposed piers and floating docks.

In response to CFA's comments, the proposal was revised was presented a second time to the Commission on November 15, 2007. The revised plan included a widening of the boardwalk along the river (from 20' to 30'); a widening of the smaller, floating dock to the East; and a simplification of the design of the upland park area. Final design plans have not been submitted for approval.