

# STAFF RECOMMENDATION



K. Walton  
NCPC File No. 6331

## THE SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY AND CULTURE

Constitution Avenue and Madison Drive between 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> Streets, NW  
Washington, DC

Submitted by the Smithsonian Institution

March 31, 2011

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### Abstract

The Smithsonian Institution has submitted a revised concept design for a new museum building to house the National Museum of African American History and Culture on the grounds of the Washington Monument between Constitution Avenue and Madison Drive, NW and 14th and 15th Streets, NW. The 372,000sf museum will contain state-of-the-art galleries, offices for program and administrative staff, and an education center. Since the concept submission the Smithsonian has begun to address many of the questions raised in the September Executive Director's Recommendation.

### Commission Action Requested by Applicant

Comments on revised concept design pursuant to Public Law 108-184 and 40 U.S.C. § 8722(b)(1) and (d).

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### Executive Director's Recommendation

The Commission:

**Comments favorably** on the revised concept design for the National Museum of African American History and Culture (NMAAHC), at the corner of 15<sup>th</sup> Street and Constitution Avenue, Northwest Washington, DC as shown on NCPC Map File No 1.42(38.00)43285.

**Commends** the Smithsonian for addressing the concerns raised at the September Concept Review that have resulted in reductions in the high knolls on the North side of the site, improvements to the service access along 14<sup>th</sup> Street, and sustainability efforts in the landscape and building design.

**Recommends** that in the continued development of the site and building designs, the applicant consider the following:

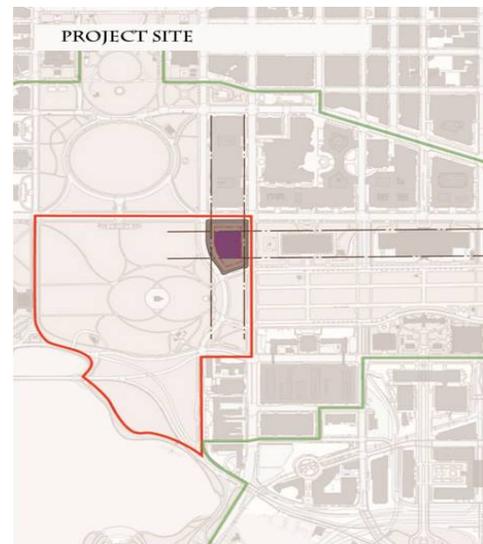
- **Refine service access and east courtyard** to ensure that all elements on the east side of the building fit within existing 85' foot setback and that no additional changes need to be made to the building's position to accommodate the service drive and egress changes.
- **Minimize the building's mass** while maintaining overall design integrity.
- **Reduce the size of the west skylight** to bring it into scale with the landscape and to relate it to other landscape elements and pathways.
- **Study** night lighting in the context of the Washington Monument and the National Mall as the glazing and skin are further refined.
- **Continue to analyze** the geotechnical conditions at the project site and the surrounding Washington Monument grounds.

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## PROJECT DESCRIPTION

### Site

The site is located on the Mall at the end of a row of museums along Constitution Avenue NW and Madison Drive, NW between 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> Streets, NW. The specific site involves the northeastern corner portion of the Washington Monument grounds at Constitution Ave. and 15<sup>th</sup> Street NW. The site area is approximately 5.0 acres of property that currently serves as open space adjacent to the National Mall. The National Park Service transferred administrative jurisdiction of the property to the Smithsonian Institution, effective June 1, 2007, but will continue to operate the site as parkland until construction of the National Museum of African American History and Culture commences.



## Background

Public Law 108-184 (December 2003) created the National Museum of African American History and Culture (NMAAHC), authorizing the Smithsonian Institution Board of Regents to designate a museum site. After a site selection process that included recommendations from the Chairman of the National Capital Planning Commission and the Commission of Fine Arts, and began with twelve (12) potential building sites, the Smithsonian's Board of Regents selected the Washington Monument site. Congress authorized the National Park Service to transfer land to the Smithsonian for the purpose of establishing a new National Museum of African American History and Culture Tier I Environmental Impact Statement states that based on "The Time Has Come: Report to the President and Congress" in 2003, the project is needed to: "provide a national meeting place for all Americans to learn about the history and culture of African Americans; establish an Institution that can respond to the interests and needs of diverse racial constituencies; and build a national venue that can serve as an educational healing space to further racial reconciliation."

The museum will be dedicated to the collection, preservation, research, and exhibition of African American historical and cultural materials reflecting the breadth and depth of the experience of individuals of African descent living in the United States.

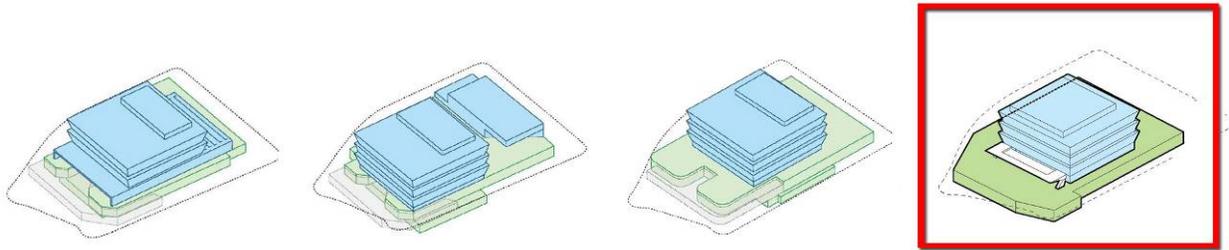
## Proposal

At its September 2, 2010, meeting the commission commented favorably on the concept design for the museum. At that time the Smithsonian presented the Refined Pavilion as a favored alternative concept for the museum. This scheme showed a Corona of 210 feet total width set on a mounded landscape with the primary entrance on the south, a projecting porch element on the south, and bermed landscape on the north to provide clearance for gallery spaces below and the potential for future skylights. Comments from the Commission encouraged the Smithsonian to consider finding ways of eliminating the berm to returning the site to a gently rolling landscape, to study the porch and how it would be viewed along the Mall and to consider ways of using skylights to provide light to the lower level public spaces. NCPC also encouraged the Smithsonian to work with the District of Columbia's Office of Planning to resolve issues of service access along 14<sup>th</sup> street. In addition, due to the early nature of concept design, the Smithsonian was encouraged to further study the geotechnical aspects of excavation impacts on surrounding buildings and monuments, the integration of perimeter security into the landscape, the depiction of the building with night lighting and the development of a more specific vegetation plan showing tree and planting layouts.

In the intervening six months, the Smithsonian has made substantial progress in responding to these comments. NCPC staff has met along with other Agencies and the Consulting Parties to look at a number of schemes for the landscape, perimeter security, water features, skylights, service access, Corona skin, the porch element, and other elements of the museums design. The Smithsonian has continued geotechnical studies with the consolidation of available information and planning for extensive testing beginning once the building perimeter is finalized.

The site has been staked twice to show the extent of above grade dimensions, once in January and again in March.

At the September 2 2010 Commission meeting the Smithsonian presented three design alternatives that were developed to address environmental mitigation under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). These alternatives were in addition to the Smithsonian's favored alternative "The Refined Pavilion" which the design team as continued to advance.



Plinth Alternative

Plaza Alternative

Pavilion Alternative

Refined Pavilion

At the September meeting the Executive Directors Report related several planning elements that needed continued study. The concerns identified in the Commission's review of the concept design included:

1. Service Access
2. Massing Development Along Constitution Ave
3. Geotechnical Conditions
4. Perimeter Security
5. Landscape
6. Night Lighting Study

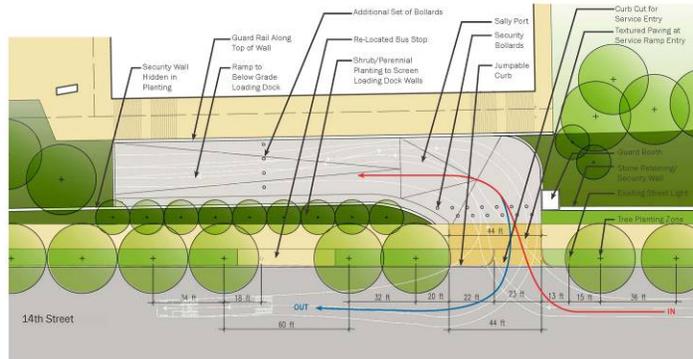
In addition commissioners commented on the museums position on the site in relationship to the National Mall and the building setback to the sites south.

The Smithsonian has made substantial progress in responding to these comments, and they have been addressed as follows:

### **Service Access**

The museum site presented service access challenges because all sides front onto important streets. The Smithsonian selected 14<sup>th</sup> Street as the service entry point because it has the least impact of the alternatives. The District of Columbia Department of Transportation (DDOT) and the District of Columbia Office of Planning (DCOP) raised questions about the location due to high traffic volumes at peak hours, and the streets gateway prominence. In response to these concerns the Smithsonian improved the sites access along 14th street to allow for more green space to soften the truck entrance. This change was done in consultation with NCPC staff, DDOT, DCOP, National Park Service (NPS) and other federal partners. Adjustments were made on site to allow for security screening to accommodate a 73' truck and allow for the proper truck

turning radius from 14th street. It was determined that a covenant could be provided to ensure that the large 73' tractor trailer truck deliveries occur between 11:00 pm and 6:30 am to minimize traffic interruptions during daytime hours. Other considerations discussed noted that keeping the service access on site would allow the museum construction activity to be limited to the NMAAHC site The Smithsonian will continue to work with DDOT as project proceeds.

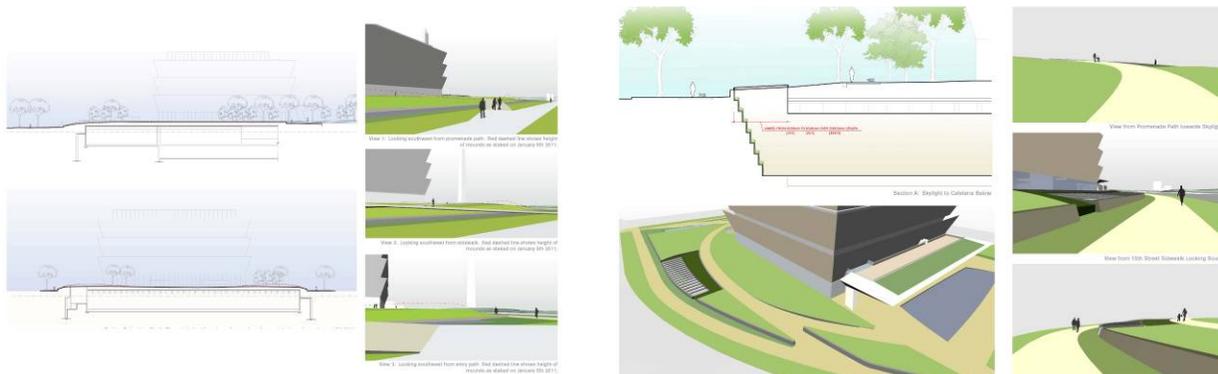


Service Access Studies

Massing Development

The design at the September concept presentation did not show a location for the skylight elements required for the lower level gallery spaces. It was also indicated that the building yard on the north side of the site between Constitution Avenue and the building face should continue to read as landscape rather than building. A large earthberm (knoll) had been planned on the north side to cover a portion of the lower level gallery space that will house very large permanent exhibits.

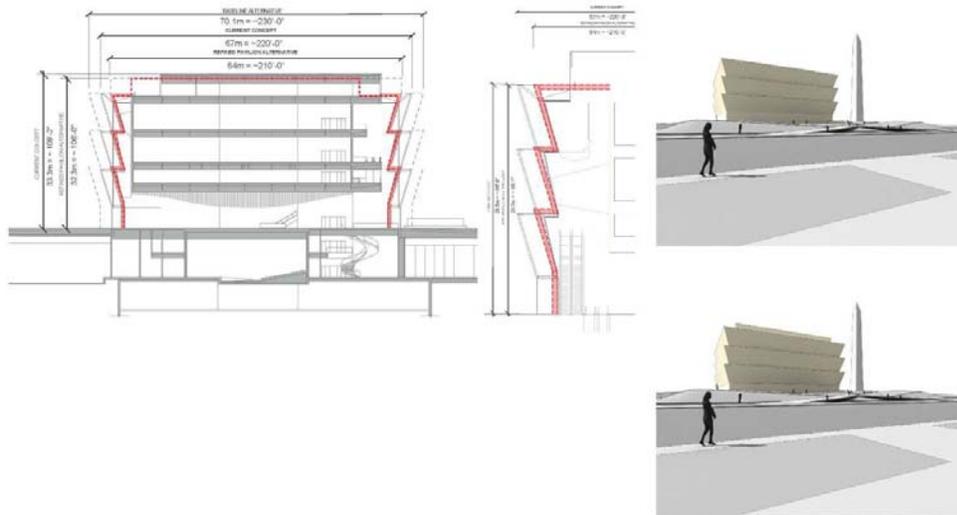
The Smithsonian has responded by reducing the profile of the subsurface concrete construction and soil overlay to remove the high knolls from either side of the north entrance to the museum. These steps resulted in developing a more fluid low profile landscape both at the north entrance, and around the west side of the site to reflect the rolling landscape of the Washington Monument Grounds. The designers also added a lower profile set of skylights on the west side (15<sup>th</sup> Street) of the site as recommended by the Commission of Fine Arts. These elements represent a reduction in the overall impact of skylight glazing, but their scale still requires further study.



### Site Massing and Skylight Development

The Smithsonian has also developed a skin concept, a pierced metal façade for the Corona with viewports and glazing for outward views to major monuments and site features. These design elements add a great deal to the museums character. The structural armature for the Corona skin however has added an additional five feet to the mass of to each side of the building.

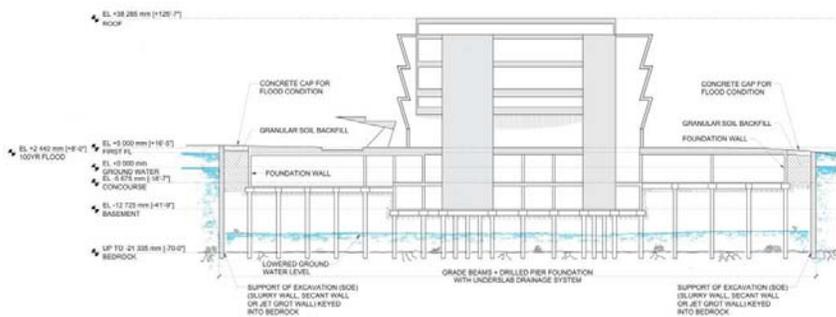
While this does not impact key views, the overall reduction of the building mass which was noted as being commendable at the concept presentation has been increased, and the design team should continue to study options that reduce the buildings overall mass.



### Building Massing Development

#### Geotechnical Conditions

The Smithsonian was asked to continue analyzing the geotechnical conditions at the project site. Geotechnical studies have been continued with the consolidation of available information and planning for extensive testing beginning once the building perimeter is finalized. The use of slurry wall construction has been selected as having the least impact on dewatering of the site, which is the major contributor to adjacent property concerns. Site monitoring will be carried out throughout the construction process to assure the protection of adjacent foundations.

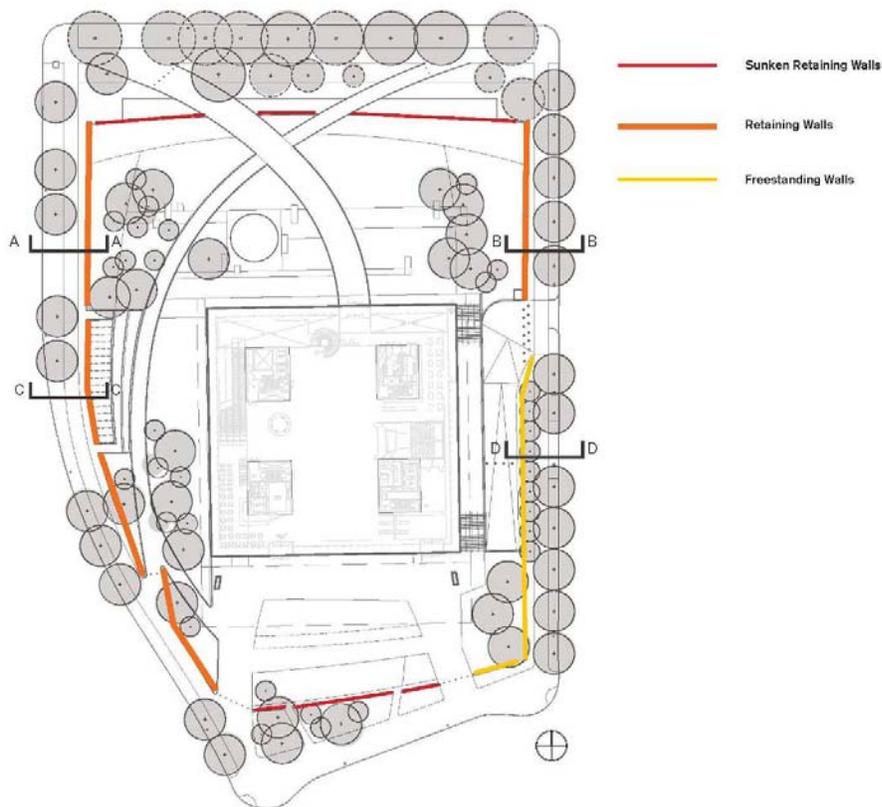


#### Slurry Wall Cross Section

### Perimeter Security

The design team eliminated bollards except where necessary, while more seamlessly integrating perimeter security walls, and site furnishings. The request at concept was that security elements should be integrated into the landscape to the extent possible in order to reduce visual impacts on the adjacent environment.

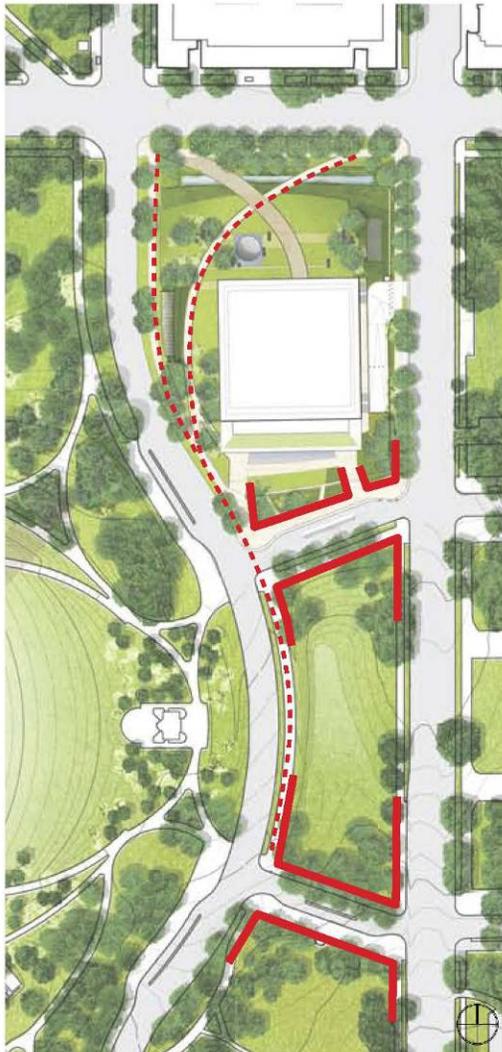
A combination of bollards and retaining walls, capable of resisting the impact of the design basis vehicle threat, are to be installed along the site perimeter to meet the security requirements of the project. This secure perimeter has been integrated with the site design as much as possible to minimize its effect on the pedestrian experience. Bollards will only be used at path entries and are being held back from the sidewalk edge to minimize the visual effect on the sidewalk. On the north and south edges of the site, security retaining walls are integrated with and hidden within planted areas so that the site appears open and welcoming to visitors at the main site entries. On the east and west edges of the site, security walls are integrated with the edge of the landform. These walls are pulled away from the sidewalks so that the sidewalks have planting on both sides of them. The loading dock entry is equipped with retractable hydraulic bollards along the sidewalk edge. Trucks will be screened within the loading dock itself. The west wall of the loading dock will be designed to be capable of resisting the impact of the specified threat.



Security Plan

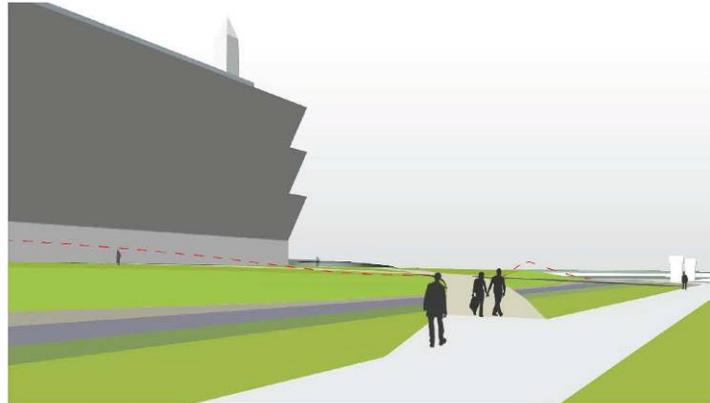
**Landscape**

The landscape design first situates the site within the larger context of the Mall as part of the composition that frames the Washington Monument and Grounds. The overall site design relates to the context of the Mall and Washington Monument Grounds through the major 2-dimensional site geometries as well as the 3-dimensional shaping of the ground.

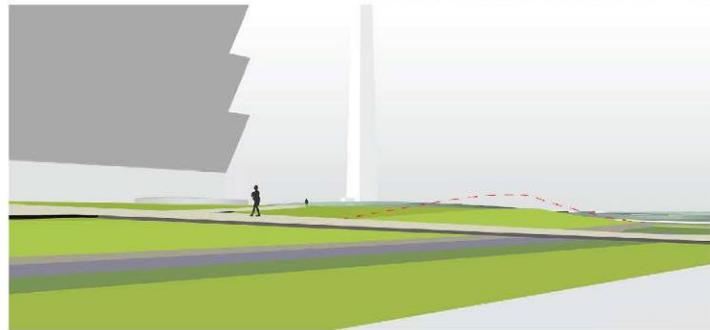


Site Geometries

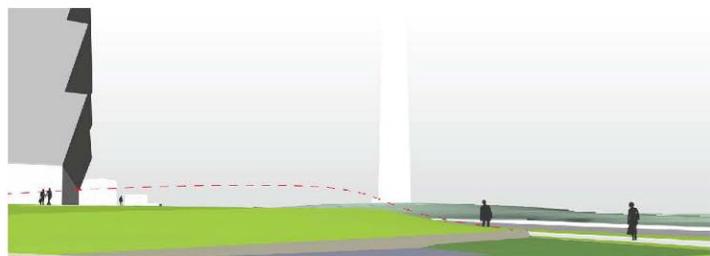
Two-Dimensional Site Geometries



View 1: Looking southwest from promenade path. Red dashed line shows height of mounds as staked on January 5th 2011.



View 2: Looking southwest from sidewalk. Red dashed line shows height of mounds as staked on January 5th 2011.



Three-Dimensional Ground

The landscape design has begun to identify shrub and perennial planting areas as well as outdoor rooms which can be used as areas for contemplation and storytelling. The sites water features have been reduced in the north and south, to bring them in a more harmonious scale with the site and to allow for the traditional double row of trees along Constitution Avenue. These changes also provide more green space on each side of the sidewalks, east and west, to ease the rise of landscape and make a more pleasing pedestrian experience.

### The North Landscape

Long sweeping curved paths, careful groupings of trees, and soft rolling topography in the site design reference the context of the Washington Monument Grounds. Together, these elements help to frame and define strategic views out to the south and west while re-enforcing the urban edge on the north and east.

Water is integrated into the visitor entry experience at both the north and south edges of the site. A water element along the northern edge of the site recalls the location of Tiber Creek – part of the canal system that once ran along what is now Constitution Avenue. Visitors cross over this water to enter the Museum, a symbolic act recalling the historic crossing over water of the African American people. A reflective water feature surrounds the Oculus, a skylight to a contemplative space within the building below. Together, the water feature and the Oculus skylight serve as the focal point of the northern landscape and tie the contemplative experience below ground to the experience in the landscape above



### South Landscape

On the south, a water feature at the heart of the entry plaza provides a focal point to the gathering space, and the porch which is seen as an extension of the building out into the landscape, creating an outdoor room that bridges the gap between the interior and exterior of the museum. This covered area creates a microclimate where breezes combine with the cooling waters to generate a place of refuge from the hot summer sun. An outdoor, patio on the porch rooftop is accessed from the mezzanine level within the building. Less than half of this rooftop is habitable and the remaining area is planted with indigenous, drought resistant plants.



The designers have been working to keep the porch element within a scale, height and projection compatible with the tree cover and screen viewing from the Mall. However the porch continues to extend 32 feet beyond the established setback of 445 feet from the center panel of the National Mall and will require further study.

**Night Lighting Study**

Staff also requested visual depiction of the building’s nighttime appearance and site lighting to indicate the intent and character of the project light enhancements. Night lighting has been indicated as a subdued palette. An initial rendering give a preliminary indication of the building’s appearance during evening hours, but until the glazing and skin are more refined, it is an area of study which the Smithsonian’s design team will continue.



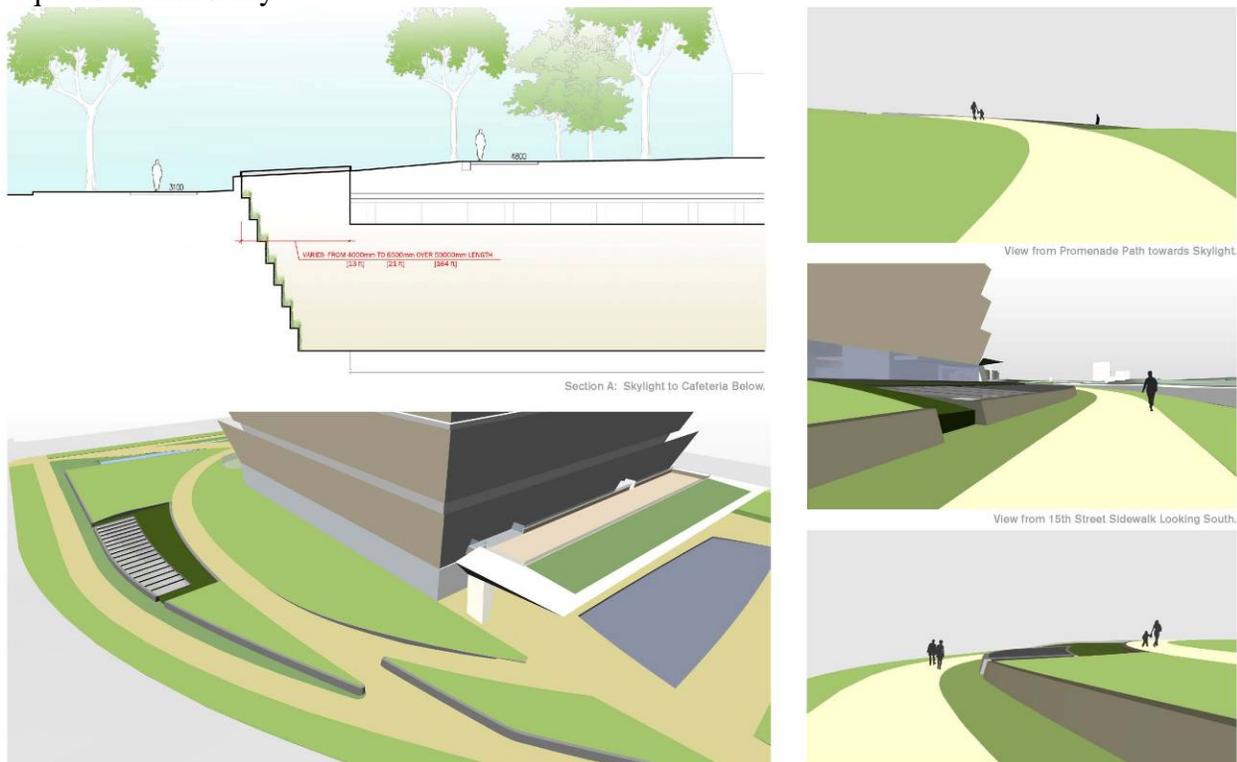
Lighting Intent and Character

**Continued Evolution**

While the Smithsonian continues to refine the museums building plan, the most progress can be seen in three areas, the landscape design, corona development, and the porch which is seen as a critical link between the site and the building by the museum. Two additional areas of the landscapes design that have critical relationships to the building are the west skylight and the East courtyard.

## West Skylight

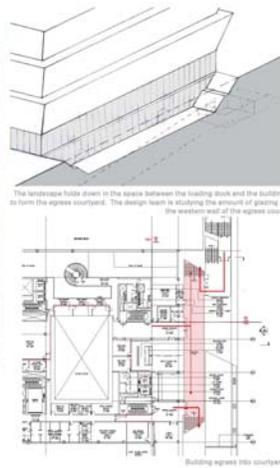
In order to provide light to the below grade public spaces a skylight has been incorporated along the edge of the 15th Street sidewalk. The skylight edge is the same height and material as the security walls and landform so that it is visually integrated into the edge of the site. The ground around the skylight is terraced down and planted with hedges. This keeps the skylight low to the ground, maintains clear views out to the monument grounds from the site and the building and serves to deter pedestrians from walking over the skylight. These elements represent a reduction in the overall impact of skylight glazing, and their location which is view of the Washington Monument Grounds is at the recommendation of the Commission of Fine Arts. The scale of the new skylight however, because of the adjacency of the Washington Monument Grounds still requires further study.



## West Skylight Diagrams

### East Courtyard- Egress

In between the loading dock and the building there is an egress courtyard that is central to the egress strategy of the building. The courtyard provides the egress needed for the levels below grade through this one space. Therefore, building egress elements like staircases are kept out of other areas of the landscape. The courtyard also allows light to get to the mezzanine level of the building.

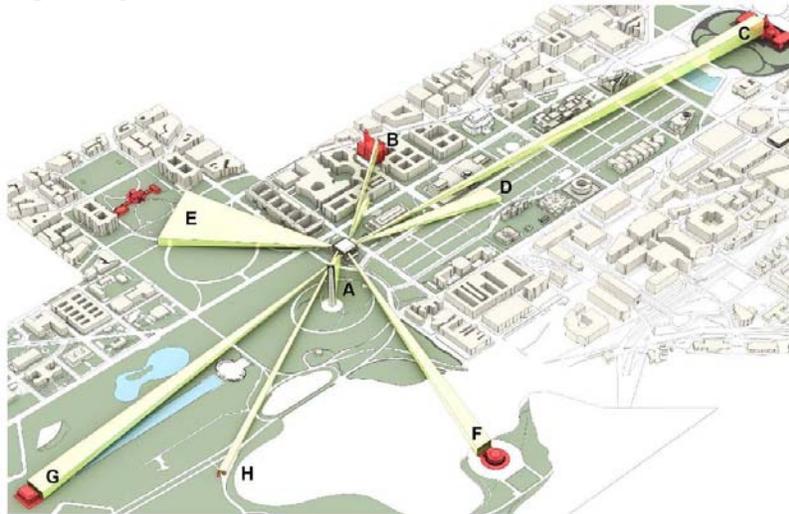


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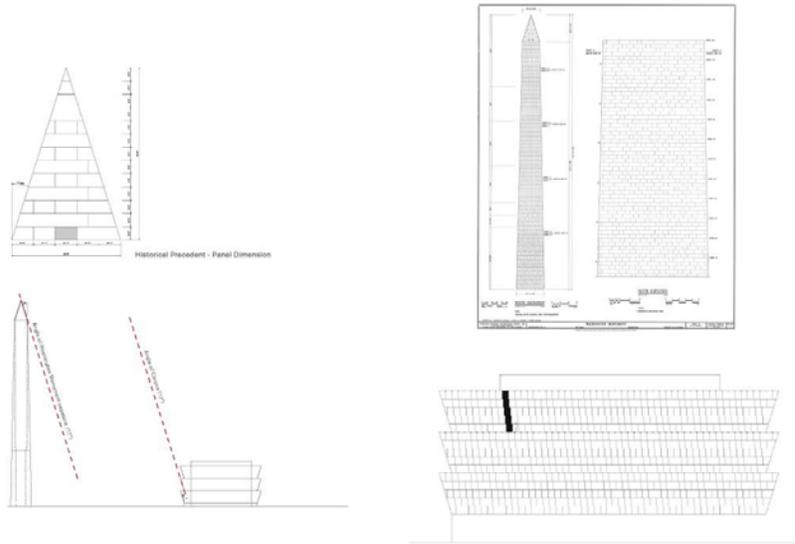
## Courtyard- Egress

### Skin Concept

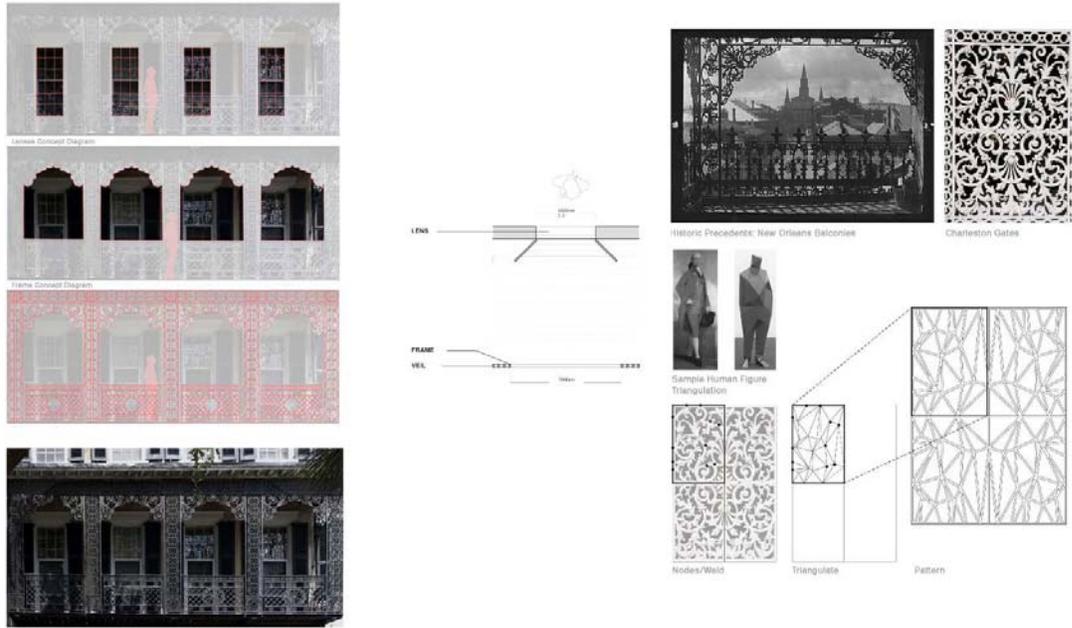
As mentioned the Smithsonian has a more developed skin concept, a pierced metal façade for the Corona with viewports and glazing for outward views to major monuments and site features all improving the overall museums character.



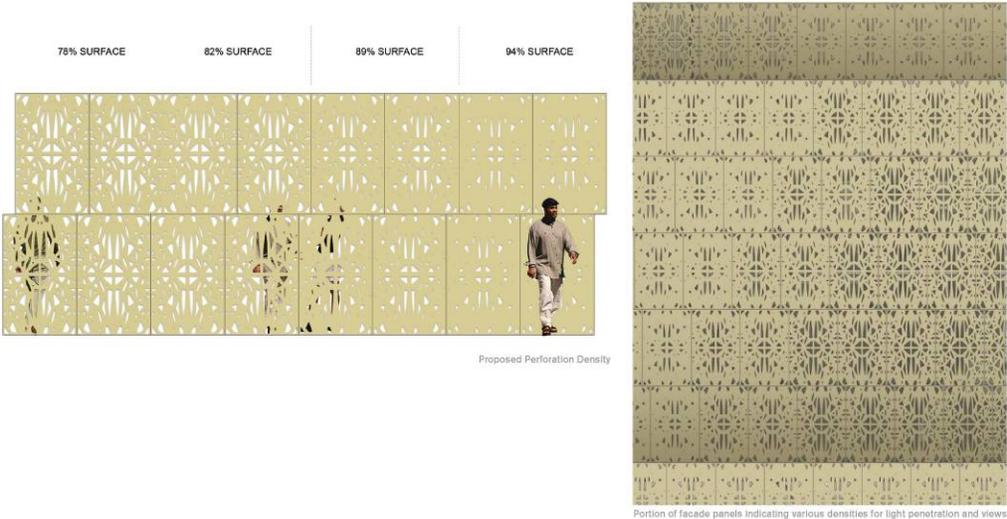
Emphasis has been placed on the sites relationship to the Washington Monument and its grounds throughout the design process. In the design of the skin the Smithsonian has established a direct correlation between the Monument and the primary form of the Museum - the Corona. The angle of the sloping corona walls closely matches the 17 degree angle of the capstone atop the Monument. The Washington Monument is composed of a stone ashlar pattern, which is referenced in the layout of the Corona façade panels.



The design team researched the historic precedents of African American iron work grilles from Charleston, SC and New Orleans, LA to develop the pattern of the corona panels. The 18th and 19th century ornament was transformed to a modern pattern by abstracting the pattern of the historic grille work into a new triangulated pattern for the corona panels.

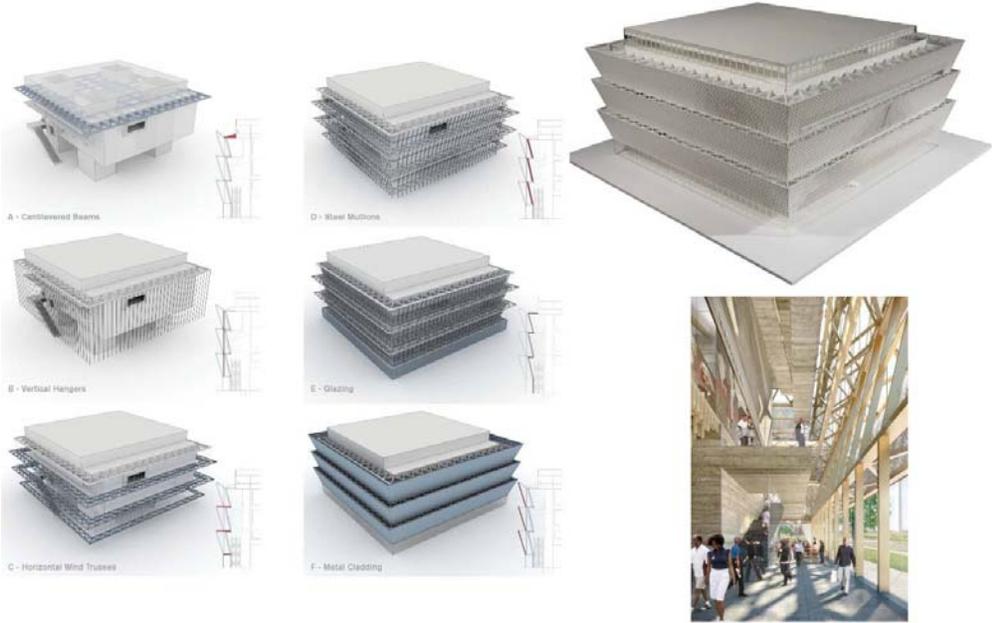


The new pattern modulates the opacity of the panels from 78% - 94% solid to address performance with views and solar control.



**Corona Structural Design**

The structural design for the corona consists of a series of three horizontal trusses hung from a plane of vertical hangers (cables) which extends to the top of the storefront glazing. The glazing is supported off angular structural steel struts and the metal corona skin is supported on struts which are exterior to the plane of hangers, this sandwich of structural elements work together to support the façade. This entire system is hung from cantilevered beams located at the 5<sup>th</sup> floor which tie back into the four structural cores of the building from which the entire above grade structure is supported. The Smithsonian maintains that this system as structural advantages and results in lighter more slender system; it also addresses the maintenance and drainage requirements for the façade system.



## PROJECT ANALYSIS

### Executive Summary

The Staff recommends that the revised concept site and building plans be favorably commented upon by the Commission, with recommendations. Staff finds that the building massing elements that have emerged reflects the comments and suggested direction received from Commission as well as the agency staff. The use of African American iron work grilles to develop the pattern for the Corona panels; adds a great deal of character to identity of the new structure. The improvement to the landscape design also keeps the strong relationship with the Washington Monument grounds and the National Mall, and also adds to the unique overall identity of the museum.

Since the previous submission of the Refined Pavilion alternative, the design has been further developed and refined. The floor plans include a higher level of detail and the current layout accounts for all of the spaces identified in the original program document. The vertical core elements have been sized and configured to reinforce the original idea of the ‘four pillars’ of the museum. The cores are now uniform in size and are positioned in plan to enhance and frame views outward from the great hall on the ground level. Structurally, the cores also provide the primary load-bearing support for the gallery floors and roof above. This approach also allows for clear spans in the primary galleries, unobstructed by a grid of columns. The cores house the museum elevators, exit stairs, toilets, mechanical shafts, and other support spaces.

With over 50% of the building placed underground, the incorporation of natural light into the lower levels of the museum has become a priority as the design has progressed. Light wells, skylights, and recessed courtyards are among the strategies that have been brought forward. Daylighting will continue to be a focus as the design process moves forward.

Above grade, the corona itself becomes the building element which controls and filters light into the museum. Both visually and structurally, the corona hovers above the ground floor. This is accomplished by a system of trusses at the fifth level which support a series of vertical hangers and steel mullions holding the glazing and corona cladding in place from above. The result is a clear glass wall at the ground level which affords open views and light in and around the great hall.

The Smithsonian has taken a different approach to perimeter security. The secured perimeter represents the closest distance a potential threat, in the form of the distance a stationary vehicle bomb can advance toward the museum facility. The Interagency Security Committee (ISC) Security Criteria recommends a minimum standoff distance to mitigate this risk; however, the Smithsonian subsequently eliminated this prescriptive requirement and chose to establish standoff based on performance of the building. Therefore, there is no minimum standoff distance required for this project. The building structure must be designed for the specified Design Basis Threat located at the controlled perimeter of the site. As a result a combination of bollards and retaining walls, capable of resisting the impact of the design basis vehicle threat, are being installed along the site perimeter to meet the security requirements of the project. This secure perimeter has been integrated with the site design as much as possible to minimize its effect on the pedestrian experience.

The overall improvement the building and site design reflect well on the Commissions comments at concept.

## CONFORMANCE

### Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital

The project is in conformance with the Comprehensive Plan in particular the Visitors Element.

#### Visitors Element

Visitors often come to the National Capital Region to enjoy the many national symbols and memorials and to educate them about American culture. They come to commemorate important public events, to petition their elected government officials, to conduct business and to do research. The nation's capital averages almost 20 million domestic and international visitors each year and consistently rates as one of the nation's most popular tourist destinations. Visitors to the region are particularly interested in the major federal visitor attractions located along the National Mall that tell the story of American history, hold invaluable artifacts and display the artistic, technological, and scientific achievements of our society. In 2002 the Smithsonian Institution recorded 24 million visits which included visitors who live in the area and from outside the region.

The federal government recognizes the importance of the monumental core and the National Mall as the center of national government and a symbol of national pride whose historic open space and urban design qualities should be protected for future generations.

The NMAAHC seeks to recognize this important site by creating an efficient building helping the Smithsonian to reduce the size and visual impact of the new museum and adding a new symbol of national pride to the Mall.

### Monumental Core Framework Plan

The Monumental Core Framework Plan was developed to create destinations in proximity to the National Mall to protect it from overuse, while increasing the accessibility and sustainability of the surrounding area. The overarching theme to achieving these goals is the creation of destinations that are in proximity to the mall however, would offer distinct amenities and experiences. The creation of these destinations would also alleviate much of the pressure on the National Mall experienced from the demand associated with tourism and from District residents. The Federal Triangle, which provides an opportunity to link downtown to the National Mall, is one of the primary destinations in the Framework Plan. This would be done through the creation of mixed-use destinations that would add to the public realm along Pennsylvania Avenue.

### Federal Capital Improvements Plan (FCIP)

The applicant's submitted project is identified in the Commission's FCIP report, fiscal years 2010-2015. Funding is organized as a public-private partnership. The U.S. Congress appropriated \$245 million for the museum.

### National Capital Urban Design and Security Plan Objectives and Policies

#### *Security*

Policy for the Design and Review of Physical Perimeter Security Improvements (adopted by the Commission on January 9, 2003) Agencies requiring physical perimeter security improvements should design such improvements in accordance with guidance included in The National Capital Urban Design and Security Plan, as adopted by the Commission on October 3, 2002.

1. Incorporate building hardening into new and existing construction to meet blast resistance requirements when it is important to maintain a building line that provides accessible ground floor uses and ... viable street-level activity.
2. When building new construction and when making improvements to existing buildings, integrate security threat counter measures, such as building hardening and blast-resistant glazing, into the physical design of the structure and the site to minimize the impact of perimeter building security on the public realm.
3. Incorporate security needs into the design of buildings, streetscapes, and landscapes using urban design principles in a manner that:
  - a. Enhances and beautifies the public realm, resulting in coherent and welcoming streetscapes.
  - b. Does not excessively restrict or impede operational use of sidewalks or pedestrian, handicap, and vehicular mobility.
  - c. Does not impact the health of existing mature trees.

The Smithsonian's design team will integrate perimeter security elements throughout the site that meet the standards of the Urban Design Security Plan.

### National Environmental Policy Act Tier II (NEPA)

NCPC's Environmental and Historic Preservation Policies and Procedures do not require a NEPA document at the concept design stage. In preparation for the preliminary design approval, NCPC and the Smithsonian Institution are preparing an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) in compliance with NCPC Policies and Procedures, NEPA, and the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations implementing NEPA. The EIS that is being prepared describes and documents the affected environment, provides an estimation of potential impacts, and recommends mitigation measures related to the establishment of the proposed museum. The EIS also evaluates a No Action Alternative, as required by CEQ. The EIS addresses short-term construction-related impacts, long-term operational impacts, and cumulative impacts that would result from the Smithsonian Institution's action, or other projects that have been recently completed, are currently under development, or are proposed within the project area. NCPC staff expects that the draft EIS will be available late summer, 2010. The public review and comment period will be 45 days with all comments to be provided to NCPC and the Smithsonian.

### National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA)

The Smithsonian Institution is conducting the Section 106 consultation for this undertaking. The Section 106 review is analyzing the effect of the proposed museum on historic properties in the Area of Potential Effect, particularly on the visual effects of the building—day and night—on monuments and parks. A gateway to the monumental core, the site is visible from the Washington Monument and White House. The building will be seen in the context of the historic Plan of Washington (L’Enfant and McMillan Plans); the Washington Monument and National Mall; the row of Beaux Arts-style institutional buildings facing Constitution Avenue; and adjacent Smithsonian Museums and the 14<sup>th</sup> Street gateway.

The Smithsonian has held monthly consultation meetings since January 2007 during which the proposed building massing and concepts were reviewed through the use of visual simulations and computer modeling of various alternatives, diagrams, plans elevations sections, physical modeling, photography, montage and animation. The measured brightness of nearby memorials and buildings were compared to the predicted brightness of the proposed building through physical modeling and photography. At the meetings, the height, bulk, mass and setback of the proposed building were also compared with the buildings facing Constitution Avenue, views from the Washington Monument and the National Mall.

Consulting Parties Section 106 public participants include the D.C. State Historic Preservation Office, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, NCPC, the National Park Service, the D.C. Office of Planning, the Commission of Fine Arts, and the National Coalition to Save our Mall, the D.C. Preservation League, and the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

### The Memorials and Museums Master Plan

The Memorials and Museums Master Plan ensures that future generations will have preeminent sites for memorials and museums in the national capital. The plan shows how to meet demand for museums and commemorative works while protecting the National Mall and preserving other existing museum and memorial settings. The plan

1. Identifies the 100 most suitable sites for future memorials and museums
2. Describes and evaluates site conditions
3. Establishes a commemorative zone policy for siting memorials and museums
4. Inventories existing memorials and museums
5. Forecasts demand for new museums and memorials

NCPC developed the plan in consultation with the two other review bodies that approve the location and design of commemorative works on federal land—the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts and the National Capital Memorial Advisory Commission. The project does not conform to the Memorials and Museums Master Plan.

## CONSULTATION

### Coordinating Committee

The Coordinating Committee reviewed the revised concept at its March 16, 2011 meeting and forwarded it to the Commission with the statement that the proposal has been coordinated with all participating agencies. The participating agencies were NCPC; the National Park Service; the General Services Administration; the District of Columbia Office of Planning; The District Department of Transportation; the Department of Housing and Community Development; and the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority. The District of Columbia Office of Planning noted that the building massing has expanded as a result of the “skin” that is being attached to the building. The SHPO believes strongly that the final building massing must fall within acceptable limits. The Commission of Fine Arts reviewed the Smithsonian NMAAHC revised concept design at its meeting on March 17, 2011.