

# STAFF RECOMMENDATION

E. Keller

NCPC File No. 6383



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**GEORGETOWN WATERFRONT PARK**  
REVISED LANDSCAPE DESIGN FOR THREE OVERLOOK LOCATIONS  
3000 K Street, NW  
Washington, DC

Submitted by the National Park Service

September 29, 2005

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## Abstract

The National Park Service (NPS) has submitted revised preliminary site development plans for the three overlook areas at the river within the Georgetown Waterfront Park (GWP), which were endorsed as a concept by the Commission in 2004. The submitted revised site plans have been altered in response to a disapproval action by the Commission of Fine Arts in June 2005 after concern was expressed regarding the tall sculptural elements of the overlooks.

## Commission Action Requested by Applicant

Approval of preliminary 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:

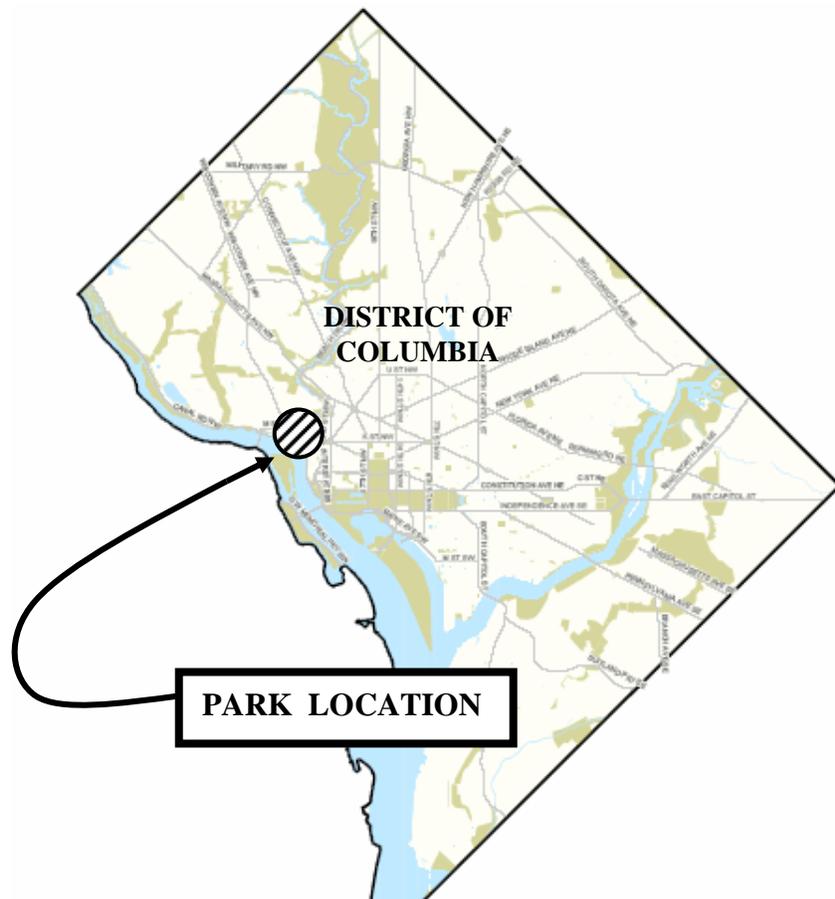
- **Approves** the preliminary site development plans for the Georgetown Waterfront Park Revised Landscape Design for Three Overlook Locations, as shown on the NCPC Map File No. 72.00(70.00)-41686,
- **Requests** in the submission of the overlook area final site development plans that seating and backdrop material samples, exact structuring layout, and complete description and details of landscaping, pavement, and graphic artwork information are provided to the Commission.

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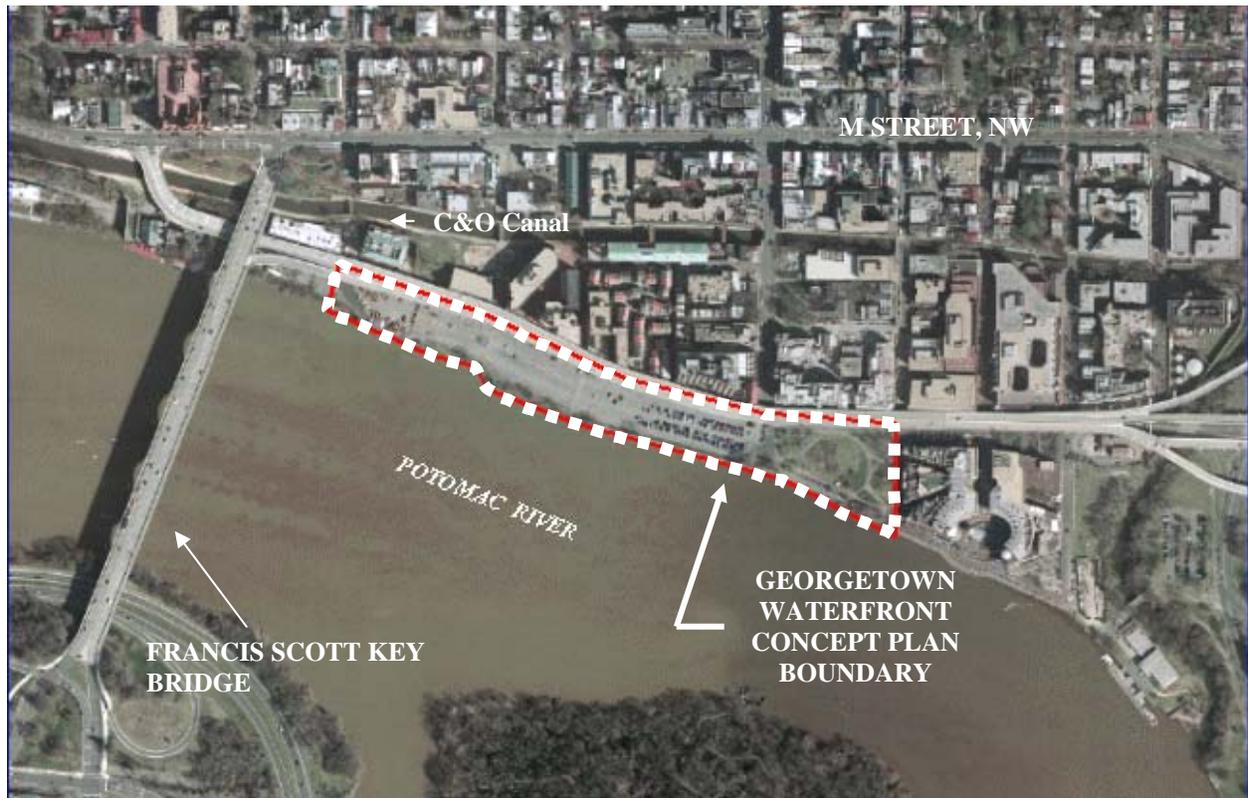
## PROJECT SUMMARY

### Site Description

The National Park Service's submitted site development plans involve only a very limited portion of the waterfront at the vicinity of the Park. This area involves the three overlooks at the river edge that are adjacent to the park's seawall and bulkhead. Each overlook area comprises only 1,500 to 2,000 square feet of pedestrian pavement space, but serves as an important spatial focus at the water's edge. The preservation of the shoreline vistas from these view points adjacent to the pedestrian promenade, and the Wisconsin Avenue to Potomac River connection, 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, Wisconsin Avenue Terminus, in June 2005. At that time the Commission approved the preliminary site development design for the Wisconsin Avenue Terminus, as shown on the NCPC Map File No. 72.00(38.00)-41626, but excepted from the approval:

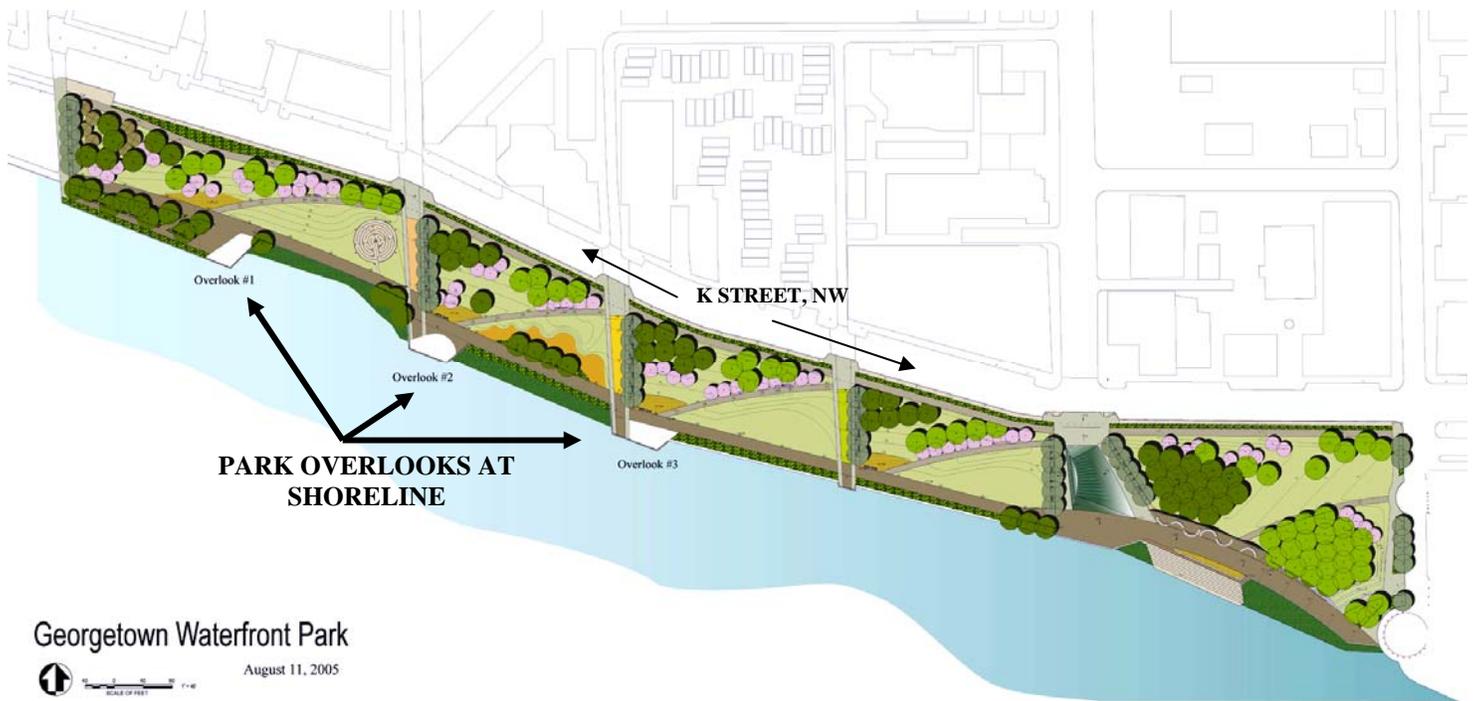
- The proposed design of the pergola structure and its attendant seating, which is deferred until more detailed information is provided by the National Park Service on the structure's material composition, exact structuring layout, and complete description and detail of the overarching roof material.
- The pedestrian sidewalk north extension at Wisconsin Avenue, which should be either further revised as a receptive and refinedly designed entry point, or eliminated from the park sidewalk design entirely.
- Use of the multiple-lamp Washington Globe at the Wisconsin Avenue park entrance.

Proposal

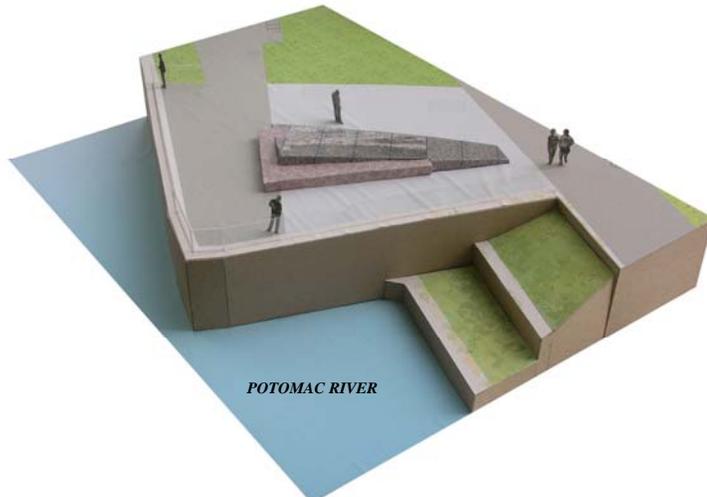
The National Park Service has submitted revised site development plans for landscaping and site development features at the three shoreline overlook areas, which have been significantly modified by removing any tall or vertical design elements from the park’s overlook design. Additionally, the pedestrian pavement materials have been reduced to the use of only granite pavement blocks at the overlooks.

The new preliminary design exhibits paved granite sidewalk areas with granite benches and a slanted granite interpretive graphic backdrop element. The granite bench and graphic backdrop are diverse and large colored granite blocks, with the bench element always being red granite and situated as one solid low seating area facing the river. Each overlook would differ from the others in the exact configuration of the granite mass, its horizontal extent, and the graphical images portrayed at each overlook location (see examples of overlook models below). In general, the graphics to be inscribed on the black granite would relate to the history of the Georgetown waterfront, but no detailed graphic designs are identified at this time.

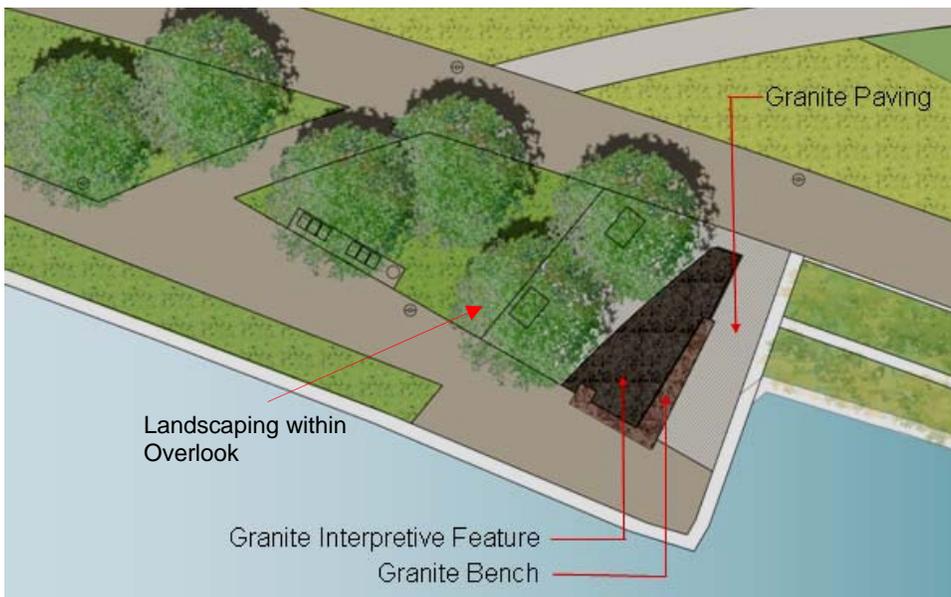
The revised design responds to the disapproval of the featured areas by the Commission of Fine Arts in June 2005. The redesign now omits any tall or elevated structural elements at the overlook areas, which were the focus and concern of the disapproval.



**GEORGETOWN WATERFRONT PARK OVERLOOK LOCATIONS**

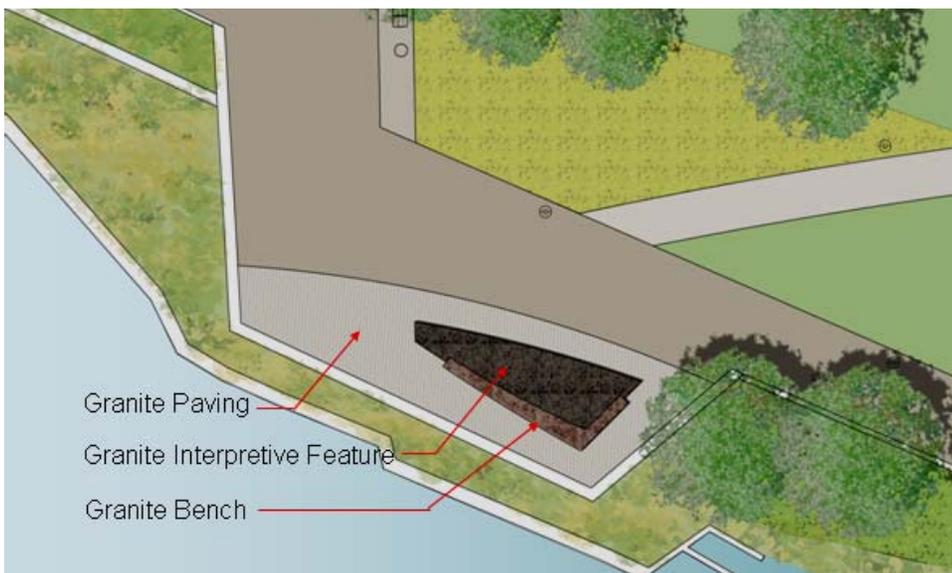
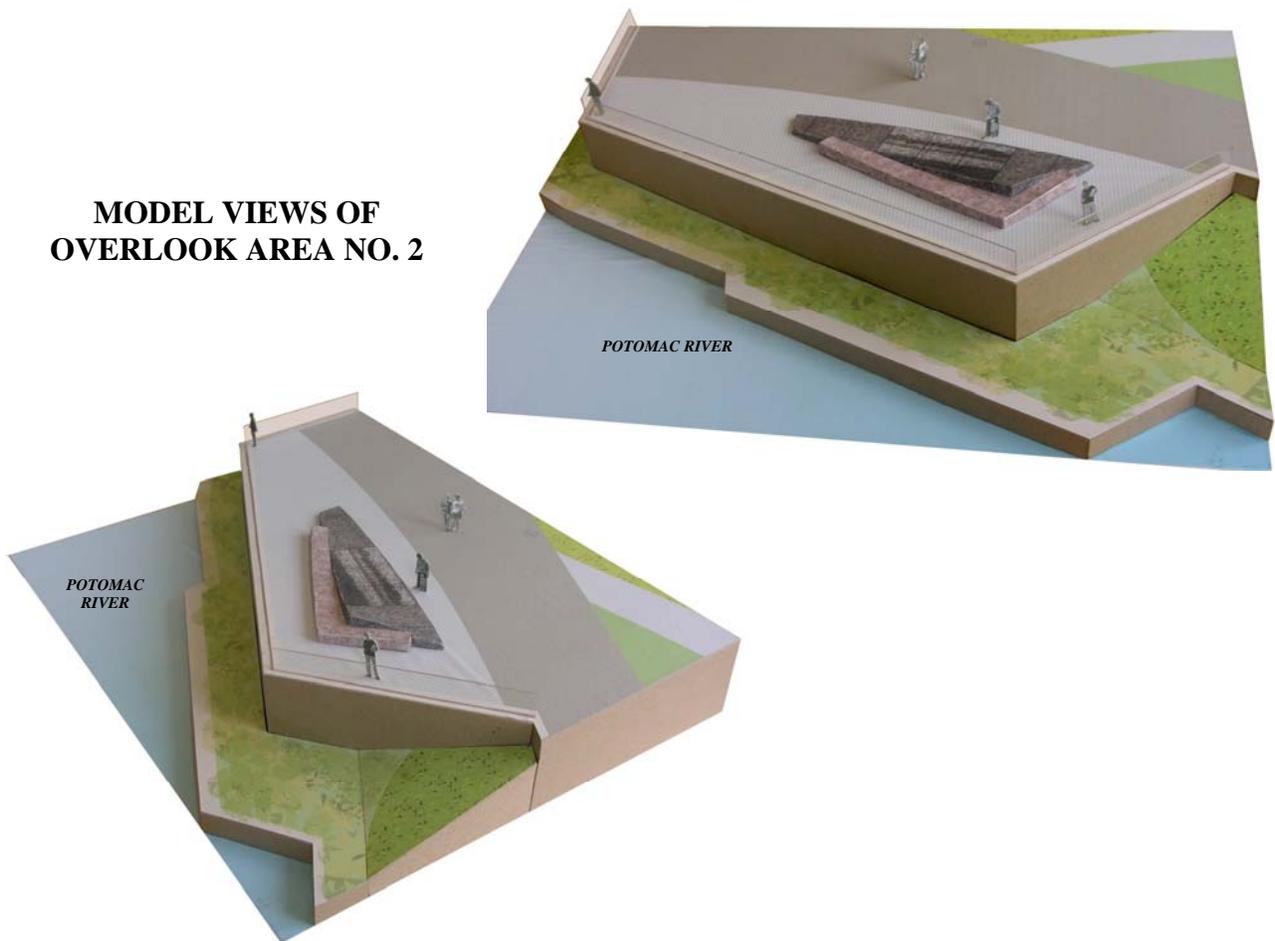


**MODEL VIEWS OF  
OVERLOOK AREA NO. 1**



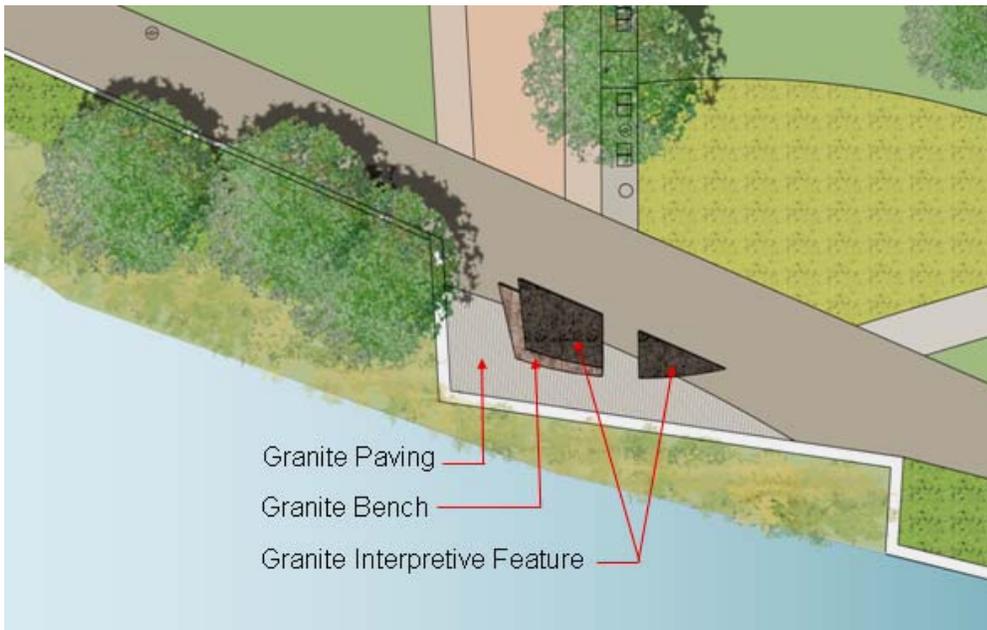
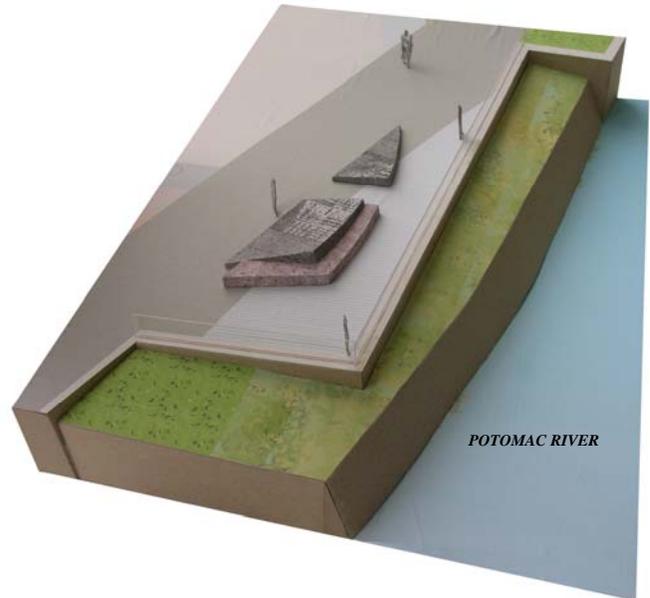
**PRELIMINARY SITE  
DEVELOPMENT PLAN OF  
OVERLOOK AREA NO. 1**

**MODEL VIEWS OF  
OVERLOOK AREA NO. 2**



**PRELIMINARY SITE  
DEVELOPMENT PLAN OF  
OVERLOOK AREA NO. 2**

**MODEL VIEW OF  
OVERLOOK AREA NO. 3**



**PRELIMINARY SITE DEVELOPMENT PLAN OF OVERLOOK  
AREA NO. 3**

## Development Program

Applicant: The National Park Service

Architect: Wallace, Roberts and Todd, LLC, landscape architects  
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: 10± acres for the total park

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 preliminary site development design** for this portion of the Georgetown Waterfront Park. The overlooks are now low and open areas for viewing the river expanse. No vertical aspect of the earlier design concept is maintained since that was a point of considerable public concern in reviewing the park overlook design in June 2005. Because the viewing areas are now more low-key in their appearance and stature, their presence melds to the low horizontal lines of the shoreline and takes a more recessive role toward featuring the river and its views as the primary focus for the pedestrian or visitor viewing the river's edge.



**SIMULATED VIEW OF PROPOSED OVERLOOK REVISED SITE  
DEVELOPMENT AS SEEN FROM PARK PROMENADE**

## PROJECT CONFORMANCE

### Comprehensive Plan

The proposal for the overlook areas of the Georgetown Waterfront Park is consistent with policies contained in the Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital. The Parks and Open Space Element designates river and waterfront settings of the Nation's Capital. The Comprehensive Plan policies state:

The federal government should:

1. Link open space along the waterfront to provide a continuous public open space system.
4. Complete the waterfront parks in Georgetown and Alexandria.

(Parks and Landscapes Policies; Waterfront Parks p. 111)

Additional Plan objectives noted include:

The federal government should:

1. Enhance parks and preserve open green space for future generations.
2. Maintain and conserve federal open space as a means of shaping and enhancing urban areas.
3. Preserve open space that is crucial to the long-term quality of life of a neighborhood or the region.

(Preservation and Maintenance Policies; p. 104)

### 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 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 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. As the design to be implemented is developed beyond the concept stage, further consultation may be warranted.

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 FCIP report, fiscal years 2005-2010, the Commission recommended the project for future programming.

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. 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 America's National Parks to encourage the tradition of private philanthropy for our national parks.

## COORDINATION

### Coordinating Committee

The Coordinating Committee reviewed the proposal on September 14, 2005. The Committee 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 District Department of Transportation; the Department of Housing and Community Development; the Fire Department; the General Services Administration; the National Park Service; and the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority.

### Commission of Fine Arts

The Commission, at its meeting of September 15, 2005, approved the revised design of the three overlook areas in the park, but requested further details on the pedestrian pavement area material finishes and better information on the elements involving the graphic backdrops.

Some of the concerns expressed by CFA Commissioners about the overlook features primarily focused on the height of the graphic areas, the potential misuse of the slanted block areas for skateboarding or sitting, and the interpretive information to be presented at those locations.

Public Comment

The Commission staff announced the proposed revisions to the site development design of the Georgetown Waterfront Park in the tentative agenda for the October 6<sup>th</sup> Commission meeting, which was issued on September 16, 2005.