

# STAFF RECOMMENDATION

NCPC File Nos. 6383



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**GEORGETOWN WATERFRONT PARK, PHASE 3  
DEVELOPMENT OF BIKEWAY AND PROMENADE  
FROM THOMPSON'S BOATHOUSE TO THE KENNEDY CENTER  
Washington, DC**

Submission by the National Park Service

April 27, 2006

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## Abstract

The National Park Service (NPS) has submitted concept site development plans for an area of the lower Georgetown Waterfront Park (GWP), near Rock Creek and featuring an existing bikeway and pedestrian walk. The Park Service proposes modifying this area to separate bike traffic from pedestrians and provide a new walking Promenade, with seating and a small overlook, along the river shore leading to the vicinity of the Kennedy Center.

## Commission Action Requested by Applicant

Comment on concept site development plans pursuant to 40 U.S.C. § 8722(d) and § 8722(b)(1).

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## Executive Director's Recommendation

The Commission:

- **Comments favorably** on the concept site development design for the Georgetown Waterfront Park, Third Phase Development of Bikeway and Promenade from Thompson's Boathouse to The Kennedy Center, as shown within the graphic report titled, *Phase III Development of Georgetown Shoreline Promenade-Schematic Design Summary*, dated April 2006.
- **Requests**, in the Park Service's subsequent preliminary site development plan submission, that the seating area design; structuring layout of the overlook, bridge improvements, promenade, and details of landscape planting materials and pavements be provided to the Commission.

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## PROJECT SUMMARY

### Site Description

The National Park Service's has submitted a concept site development plan for a very limited portion of the waterfront at the vicinity of Georgetown Waterfront Park southeast of Washington Harbor and Rock Creek. This area (approximately 5-6 acres) involves the existing bike travel lanes adjacent to the Potomac and Rock Creek Parkway near the Kennedy Center, at the river's edge. The existing parkland area is an important spatial focus at the water's edge. The preservation of the vistas at this shoreline extends views from a planned pedestrian promenade at Wisconsin Avenue south along the Potomac River, as highlighted in the original park boundary approval by the Commission in 1988 and the Commission's *Legacy Plan* of 1997.



**VICINITY LOCATION OF GEORGETOWN WATERFRONT PARK**

Background

The Commission last reviewed aspects of the Georgetown Waterfront Park in October 2005. At that time the Commission approved the preliminary site development design 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, and requested, in the submission of the overlook area final site development plans, that the seating and backdrop material samples, exact structuring layout, details of landscaping, pavement, and graphic artwork be provided to the Commission. These facilities were located at the central and northwest area of the GWP, near the Francis Scott Key Bridge.



**GEORGETOWN WATERFRONT PARK PHASE 3 AREA LIMITS**

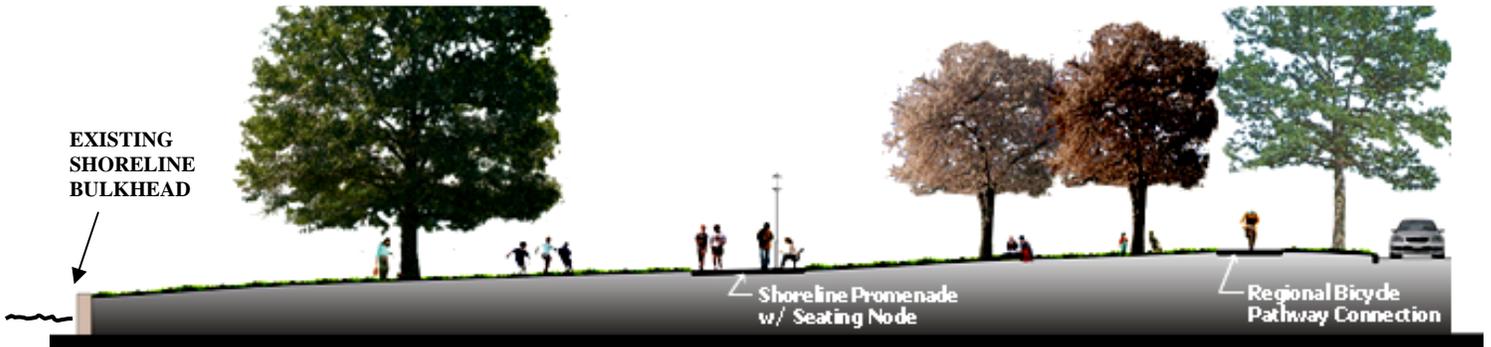
## Proposal

The National Park Service has submitted concept site development plans for landscaping and site development features at the lower southeast shoreline of the parkland adjacent to the Potomac River. The extent of the modifications is limited but important to making the waterfront a more connected and accessible area for all users, particularly pedestrians.

The plans include renovation of several existing features, such as the bikeway within property and the bridge at Rock Creek. The design includes landscape improvements; new area lighting of the travel ways; and a new promenade for pedestrians, which would extend south along the parkland terminating at the north end of the existing walkway at the Kennedy Center. The new design features would also include asphalt pavers for the promenade and pedestrian benches established along the promenade route. A minor overlook is proposed at the river shoreline along the promenade. Specific design for many features, including the overlook and benches, is still outstanding—and is not provided at this time in the submission.



**CONCEPT SITE PLAN OF GEORGETOWN WATERFRONT THIRD PHASE**



**TYPICAL PHASE THREE DEVELOPMENT SECTION**



**EXISTING ROCK CREEK BRIDGE**



**PROPOSED IMPROVED ROCK CREEK BRIDGE**

### 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: 6.0± acres of existing parkland

Estimated Cost: \$1.3 million for construction, including necessary bridge renovation.

### PROJECT ANALYSIS

#### Executive Summary

Staff **recommends favorable comment by the Commission on the concept site development design** for this portion of the Georgetown Waterfront Park. The submitted plans are consistent with the general park plan approved by the Commission in the late 1980s, with minor revisions in 2003. Additionally, the proposed improvements provide much improved pedestrian circulation and access to the park shoreline at this section of the river. The upgrading of facilities is consistent with major goals of improving shoreline and riverfront access to the Potomac River as specified in the Commission's Comprehensive Plan.

Staff does find that additional information from the Park Service is necessary for clarification in the development of the preliminary project submission. The preliminary planning submission should move forward to include added explanation of the seating area design, structuring layout of the overlook, bridge improvements, and promenade, and detailing of landscape planting materials and pavements. Consequently, staff recommends the Commission note these requirements in the concept review action.

### PROJECT CONFORMANCE

#### Comprehensive Plan

The proposal for improvements of the Georgetown Waterfront Park, Phase 3, 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 Comprehensive Plan objectives 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)



**SIMULATED VIEW OF BIKEWAY AND PEDESTRAIN PROMENADE  
AS SEEN LOOKING SOUTH**

### National Historic Preservation Act

The Park Service has completed its Section 106 responsibilities for the 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 the original federal waterfront plan. Most of the Phase 3 proposal can be implemented without digging

significantly beyond the disturbed top layer of shoreline. For tree plantings and some other features, archaeological monitoring will take place during construction to ensure that artifacts, if any, remain *in situ* and are not disturbed. The landscape design is developed to avoid disturbance.

NPS has conferred with the DC SHPO 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 initial Georgetown Waterfront concept plan in the late 1980s, 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 (EA) for the original park plan, of which this phase of development is a portion.

Staff has reviewed the current design plans and finds them consistent with the earlier EA analysis and conclusions found in the original evaluation. The National Park Service has indicated it will review the detailed effects of the Phase 3 improvements during preliminary design development of the project as required by the Commission's submission review procedures.

#### Federal Capital Improvements Program

In the Commission's FCIP report, fiscal years 2006-2011, the Commission recommended the Georgetown Waterfront for future programming.

The Department of Interior's overall focus for funding of 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 national parks.

#### COORDINATION

##### Coordinating Committee

The Coordinating Committee reviewed the proposal on April 12, 2006. 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 Fire Department; the General Services Administration; and the National Park Service.

Commission of Fine Arts

The Commission of Fine Arts, at its meeting of April 20, 2006, approved the concept design with the only comment indicating the Park Service investigate providing additional trees to the shoreline side of the new pedestrian walkway.