

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

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NCPC File No. 6804



PROPOSED PARTIAL CLOSING OF G STREET, SE IN SQUARE 1104 (S.O. 06-5665)
Congressional Cemetery
Washington, D.C.

Submitted by the D.C. Surveyor
January 31, 2008

Abstract

The D.C. Surveyor, on behalf of the Association for the Preservation of Historic Congressional Cemetery, has submitted a proposal for the partial closing of G Street, SE in Square 1104 within Congressional Cemetery. The street is a “paper” street and although it is an original right-of-way of the L’Enfant Plan, it has been within the boundary of Congressional Cemetery since the cemetery’s founding in 1807. Many of the paper streets within the cemetery have been closed over the years for cemetery purposes, which is the proposal here. The D.C. Office of Planning and the D.C. Historic Preservation Review Board supported the street closing.

Commission Action Requested by Applicant

Approval of comments to the Council of the District of Columbia pursuant to D.C. Code § 9-202.02.

Executive Director’s Recommendation

The Commission:

Comments **favorably** on the proposed partial closing of G Street, SE in Square 1104 east of 19th Street, SE within Congressional Cemetery as shown on NCPC Map File No. 41.00(44.40)42443.

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PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Site

Congressional Cemetery, founded in 1807, is located south of the District of Columbia institutions in Reservation 13, such as the Jail/Correctional Treatment Facility Complex and the

Morgue. Anacostia Park, managed by the National Park Service, is to the east and south of the cemetery.

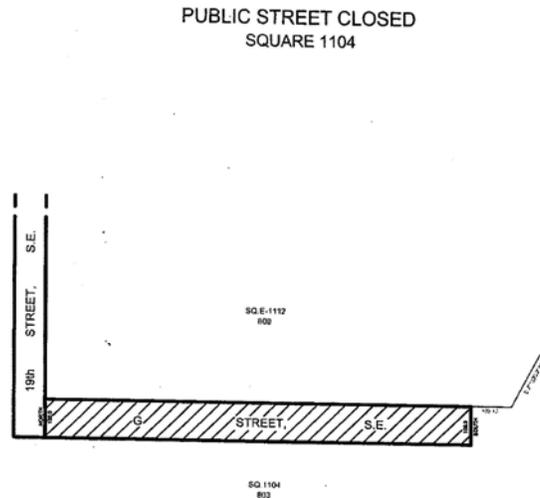


Proposal

The Association for the Preservation of Historic Congressional Cemetery proposes closing 878 linear feet of the G Street right-of-way between the east side of 19th Street, SE until the right of way ends at 22nd Street, SE near the left bank of the Anacostia River. The right-of-way, which has always been a paper street within the cemetery, is in the northeast corner of the cemetery and is immediately south of the boundary between the cemetery and Reservation 13. The road has always been used solely for cemetery purposes and leads to the cemetery's chapel.

The cemetery association plans to landscape the right of way to formalize its use for cemetery purposes—specifically to construct a columbarium near the north boundary and to create a landscaped edge for Congressional Cemetery. The cemetery's stated long-term goals include becoming a leader in historic conservation and environmental landscaping by giving seminars and "leading by example," being an interpretive site for local history by providing tours and events, and playing an integral role in the Anacostia Waterfront Initiative by developing the eastern end of the cemetery with a conservation and visitors center and a gateway near the eastern end of the G Street right of way.

The cemetery does not propose physical improvements to the portion of G Street to be closed. The area will be landscaped in furtherance of the long-term improvements proposed for the land immediately adjacent to the right of way.



PROJECT ANALYSIS

The identified federal interests are Congressional Cemetery, which is listed in the National Register of Historic Places, and the L'Enfant Plan, also listed in the National Register. G Street and other streets of the L'Enfant Plan that continue into the cemetery are paper streets within the cemetery's fence line, and are used and maintained solely by the cemetery and surrounded by burial sites. This portion of G Street does not appear or function as a representative element of the Plan. The dominant characteristics of the historic site are the cemetery's marked boundary, landscaping, and surrounding burial monuments, and its use as a cemetery and as green open space.

Congressional Cemetery was founded in 1807, almost as early as the establishment of the federal capital. The closure of G Street between 19th Street, SE and the termination of the right-of-way near the river at what would be 22nd Street, SE would offer protection to the historic landscape of Congressional Cemetery. Staff believes that the commission's federal interest in the L'Enfant Plan would not be adversely affected by the closing of this portion of G Street, SE and that the closing would enhance the historic cemetery use and landscape setting of Congressional Cemetery.

The D.C. Historic Preservation Review Board approved the G Street right of way closing within Congressional Cemetery at its December 2006 meeting. The adopted staff report noted that

as a privately maintained and fenced-off roadway, it appears that the portion of G Street within the cemetery boundaries has never been a significant or representative attribute of the L'Enfant Plan. Although it exists only as a paper street for the city, it

does function as an integral part of the cemetery property and leads to the cemetery's chapel. Its closing would not adversely affect the L'Enfant Plan and would, in effect, add protection to the historic landscape of Congressional Cemetery.

The D.C. Office of Planning concluded in a memo dated January 8, 2007 that "the proposed closing will not have any adverse impact on burial function at the cemetery, nor will the surrounding community be adversely affected if this application is approved."

CONFORMANCE

Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital

Staff has determined that the proposed project is consistent with the *Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital: Federal Elements*, in particular the Parks and Open Space Element.

Preservation and Maintenance:

1. The federal government should 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.

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)

Because of its advisory role, NCPC does not have independent obligations under the National Environmental Policy Act.

National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA)

Because of its advisory role, NCPC does not have independent obligations under the National Historic Preservation Act.

CONSULTATION

Coordinating Committee

The Coordinating Committee reviewed the proposal at its January 16, 2008 meeting and forwarded the proposal to the Commission with the statement that the proposal had been

coordinated with all participating agencies. The participating agencies were NCPC, the National Park Service, the General Services Administration and the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority.