



**NATIONAL ARBORETUM
FLOWERING TREE WALK PLAZA**

3501 New York Avenue, NE

Washington, D.C.

Submitted by U.S. Department of Agriculture

Delegated Action of the Executive Director

September 25, 2008

Pursuant to delegations of authority adopted by the Commission on October 3, 1996 and 40 U.S.C. § 8722(b)(1) and (d), I comment favorably on the concept plans for the construction of the Flowering Tree Walk Plaza at the National Arboretum in Washington, D.C., as shown on NCPC Map File No. 52.00(70.00)42613.

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The Department of Agriculture has requested concept review of site development plans for a new plaza at the northeast side of the Flowering Tree Walk. The proposed project replaces a section of existing asphalt road that crosses the walkway and is located between the National Bonsai and Penjing Museum and the National Herb Garden. The plaza features a level, 20 ft. by 228 ft. promenade consisting of gray Eurocobble open-joint pavers, bordered by two-foot bands of concrete. Existing identity signs at the site and adjacent low-level bollard lights will be removed, saved, and reinstalled with the proposed construction of the plaza in their identical locations.

The proposal is consistent with the Arboretum master plan of 2000 and revised master plan of 2006, approved by the Commission, and is a project that is being privately funded. The improvements are directly associated with the two access points of the existing Flowering Tree Walk bordering the Herb Garden, and would not adversely affect any other planning issues of the Arboretum campus.

The entire Arboretum has been designated a Category II Landmark or "Historical Place" and is listed on the National Register of Historic Properties. The National Historic Preservation Act, Section 106 consultation, is being addressed during project design, and initial concept review

material was provided to the District of Columbia State Historic Preservation Office in late August 2008. Coordination and Section 106 consultation with the District of Columbia State Historic Preservation Office will continue with development of the preliminary design and the establishment of a determination of affect by the National Arboretum as required by Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. Section 106 consultation is required to be concluded before final design approval.

The plaza area is a portion of the master plan analyzed by an Environmental Assessment (EA) in late September 2000. The Arboretum issued a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) in late October 2000. No significant or substantial variation of the plaza, as described in the EA, is indicated by the concept design and no change in the definition of the project impact's context or intensity occurs as a result of the proposed design and its potential implementation. NCPC does not require an environmental document at the concept stage. The NCPC project review policies and procedures require the applicant to prepare an EA, EIS or categorical exclusion at the preliminary design review stage. NCPC will continue to review the project as it moves into a more detailed design phase.

The Coordinating Committee reviewed the project on September 10, 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 District Department of Transportation; the General Services Administration; the National Park Service; and the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority.

The applicant is reminded that the Commission's policies on donor recognition prohibit donor recognition on federal land; these policies apply to this proposal.

Marcel C. Acosta
Executive Director