

COMMISSION ACTION

NCPC File No. 5087



NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE AMERICAN INDIAN PERIMETER SECURITY

The Mall, between Maryland Avenue, 3rd Street, Jefferson Drive and 4th Street, SW
Washington, DC

Submission by the Smithsonian Institution

August 7, 2003

Commission Action Requested by Applicant

Approval of final 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)).

Commission Action

The Commission:

- Approves the final site development plans for the perimeter security enhancements at the National Museum of the American Indian, as shown on NCPC Map File No. 1.41(38.00) 41198.
- Requires that if Maryland Avenue is realigned, the Smithsonian shall redesign and resubmit plans for restoration of the security elements to conform to the new road alignment.

Deborah B. Young
Secretary to the National Capital Planning Commission

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

NCPC File No. 5087



NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE AMERICAN INDIAN PERIMETER SECURITY FINAL SITE DEVELOPMENT PLANS

The Mall, between Maryland Avenue, 3rd Street, Jefferson Drive and 4th Street, SW
Washington, DC

Submitted by the Smithsonian Institution

July 31, 2003

Abstract

The Smithsonian Institution (SI) has requested final site development plan approval for perimeter security enhancements at the National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI). The Commission approved preliminary project plans at the July 10, 2003 meeting, but had a number of recommendations for SI to consider before submitting for final approval. The specific recommendations include: provide additional breaks in the 4th Street planter wall; relocate the security line in the two large planters on Independence and Maryland Avenues from the street side to the museum side; relocate the bollard line at the corner of 4th Street and Independence Avenue; remove the raised bollards on the two easternmost planters on Maryland Avenue; and, work with WMATA on a hardened bus stop on Independence Avenue. SI has responded with revised plans detailing each issue area and an additional drawing showing numerous underground utilities affecting the site, as well as a minimum standoff drawing. With the exception of the security line along the street side of the large planters on Maryland and Independence Avenues, SI has proposed modifications to all of the security features recommended by the Commission. Where the security line has not changed along Maryland and Independence Avenues, Smithsonian has provided sufficient justification as to why it is not feasible, although staff recommends that if Maryland Avenue is realigned in the future, Smithsonian redesign this security line to conform to the realignment.

Commission Action Requested by Applicant

Approval of final 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)).

Executive Director's Recommendation

The Commission:

- **Approves** the final site development plans for the perimeter security enhancements at the National Museum of the American Indian, as shown on NCPC Map File No. 1.41(38.00) 41198.
- **Requires** that if Maryland Avenue is realigned, the Smithsonian shall redesign and resubmit plans for restoration of the security elements to conform to the new road alignment.

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BACKGROUND AND STAFF EVALUATION

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSAL

SI has requested final site development approval for perimeter security enhancements for the NMAI. NMAI is being constructed on the last available building site on the Mall. The building is over 50 percent complete and the museum is scheduled to open in September 2004. SI intends to have the perimeter security in place when the building opens to the public.

Site

The NMAI is located on the south side of the Mall and is bounded by Jefferson Drive on the north, 3rd Street on the east, Maryland and Independence Avenues on the south, and 4th Street on the west.

Revised Design Plans

Smithsonian Institution has submitted revised perimeter security drawings that specifically address each issue raised by the Commission. Further, SI has provided a detailed site plan showing the numerous underground utilities that traverse the site, particularly around the corner of Independence Avenue and 4th Street. Smithsonian has also provided a drawing showing a minimum standoff of 50 feet, which was established by following Interagency Security Criteria (ISC) parameters. Each proposed modification or justification is detailed below.

4th Street Planter wall

Smithsonian proposes two additional breaks -- for a total of four breaks -- in the 4th Street retaining wall to further articulate the long granite wall. The two 9-foot openings will have a single granite bollard placed in the middle to provide the necessary security, whereas a hardened light standard will protect the other two openings. The southern end of the wall has also been curved to match other site walls at the museum. This results in one additional bronze bollard next to the retractable drive aisle bollards.

Maryland Avenue Security Line

The Smithsonian has not made any modifications to the location of the security line proposed on the street side of the two large planters along Maryland and Independence Avenues, but has provided additional justification as to why this location is most desirable. Smithsonian points out that:

- In order to maintain the minimum 50-foot setback the security line would have to be located in the center of the planter, resulting in the loss of two mature elm trees.
- The use of bollards in this area provides a more porous edge, which is important because this is the bus loading and unloading area for the school/group museum entrance.
- The alignment of the existing and proposed street trees can achieve the radial alignment of Maryland Avenue as laid out by Pierre L'Enfant.
- The unique mission of the museum -- where the site is an integral part of the museum because in native culture the site and building are "one" -- argues for keeping the planters on the outside edge of the planter in the public space so that the majority of the site can be incorporated into the museum. As originally approved, the Smithsonian proposed using the planters to grow meadow plantings, and extending the granite paving, which includes a celestial events feature, out from the entrance to the curb.

Bollard Line at the Corner of 4th Street and Independence Avenue

The Smithsonian has modified the bollard line at the corner of Independence Avenue and 4th Street by pulling the bollards toward the museum, in a straight line behind the ramp, the small planter and the bus stop on Independence Avenue. There is a limited area for modifications at this corner because the site is burdened by numerous utilities (a 24 inch gas line and an electric duct bank with eight, 4-inch conduits in a concrete encasement).

Two Raised Planter Bollards at Eastern End of Maryland Avenue

Smithsonian has proposed removing not only the raised bollards on the two easternmost planters on Maryland Avenue, but also bollards on a third planter along Maryland Avenue. To provide the required security at this location, the seating wall to the west of the museum entrance will be raised and reinforced, the granite paving at this entrance would be widened slightly and a line of bronze (entrance) bollards will connect the street side bollards to the raised site wall. The bronze bollards will follow the curved line of the granite paving.

Hardened WMATA Bus Stop

Smithsonian has consulted with WMATA on the feasibility of installing a hardened bus shelter on Independence Avenue in front of the museum to eliminate the need for the four proposed bollards behind the shelter. WMATA has expressed a willingness to modify certain features of the bus stop such as underground footings, but to date no hardened bus shelter has been designed. Because it is feasible that a hardened bus shelter would be available in the future,

Smithsonian has indicated that removable bollards will be installed behind the existing shelter that could be removed when the current shelter is updated.

PREVIOUS COMMISSION ACTION

On July 10, 2003 the Commission took the following action:

The Commission:

- **Approves** the preliminary site development plans for the perimeter security enhancements at the National Museum of the American Indian, as shown on NCPC Map File No. 1.41(38.00) 41198.

- **Recommends** that prior to submission of final site development plans, SI:
 - Provide additional breaks in the granite planter wall along 4th Street.
 - Relocate the bollard fence line, and boulders if feasible, from the outside edge of the two large planters on Independence and Maryland Avenues to the museum side of the planter.
 - Relocate the existing bollard line at the corner of Independence Avenue and 4th Street toward the museum so that it does not impede pedestrian traffic.
 - Remove the raised bollards on the two easternmost planter boxes on Maryland Avenue because they are redundant security measures.
 - Work with Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority on using a hardened bus stop along Independence Avenue instead of the existing bus stop with bollards behind.

EVALUATION

Since the Commission's July meeting, the Smithsonian has modified many of the security elements recommended by the Commission. Smithsonian has also provided additional justifications and site drawings that clearly outline the site constraints and show the minimum setback proposed by the museum. With one exception, staff supports the modifications and justifications made by the Smithsonian. Below is a discussion of each of the issue areas identified by the Commission and staff's recommendation, as well as a discussion of how this project relates to the Urban Design and Security Plan.

Urban Design and Security Plan (UDSP)

Of the proposed perimeter security enhancements at the NMAI several components of the security plan comply with the UDSP; however, there are also several areas that are inconsistent. The UDSP is a tool that does not prescribe specific treatments for every federal facility, but rather is a planning document to guide permanent perimeter security around the Nation's Capital. The Plan's precursor, *Designing for Security in the Nation's Capital*, specifically states that security elements in the building yard are appropriately designed in accordance with the architectural context of the adjacent building; and elements within the sidewalk or public realm

should be designed in accordance with overall streetscape security. Each of the building's streetscapes is discussed below.

Jefferson Drive and 3rd Street

The use of the tribal recognition wall and grandfather rocks as security elements is consistent with the UDSP because the features are located in the building wall and are designed elements of the museum site. The use of the museum-specific entrance bollards is also consistent with the Plan. In particular, staff supports the use of approved building features to provide necessary security.

4th Street

While planter/retaining walls are typically found in the building yard, the use of a planter wall constructed of American mist granite in the public space is generally consistent with the museum's original approval that had the planter boxes surrounded by a curb constructed of granite. The proposed planter walls are designed to the same height and material as the tribal recognition wall (30 inches) and are similar to other walls around the museum site. The minimum standoff and the presence of underground utilities dictated the location of the planter wall; however, it is compatible with the use of retaining walls at the Air and Space Museum across 4th. For these reasons, staff finds the planter wall consistent with the UDSP. The additional breaks provided in the wall, as well as the curving of the wall where it terminates at the southern end, provides additional visual relief along this streetscape.

Maryland and Independence Avenues

The UDSP discusses Independence Avenue and Maryland Avenue as monumental avenues that are important streetscapes to be considered as a whole rather than a series of different parts, but acknowledges that there is significant variety in building setbacks, street trees and architecture, particularly on the north side of Independence. For the north side of Independence, the Plan identifies the most feasible solution being a combination of plinth walls and custom-designed solutions. For Maryland Avenue the plan recommends a solution of bollards placed within a hedge or planter with street trees.

The location of the NMAI security solution along Maryland Avenue, and its design within the museum design vocabulary is inconsistent with the UDSP. However, after thorough consideration and given additional documentation (utility drawings and security stand-off details) staff supports the proposed design. The NMAI site does not fit easily into the UDSP recommendations – the site is at the easternmost edge of the Mall and the intersection of Independence Avenue and Maryland Avenue provides a transition point to the continuous streetscape west of the site on Independence Avenue (Smithsonian has just recently initiated the process to develop a Mall-wide security plan for the remainder of the Mall and has indicated that the NMAI-specific security elements will not be proposed for the remainder of the Mall). Further, the museum's overall design intent has always been to incorporate the larger site beyond the building as part of the overall museum experience consistent with the native American principles of "oneness" (site elements and materials, such as the American mist granite paving at

the entrances, the use of granite as planter edging and the demonstration planting of meadow grasses in the two large planters was approved by the Commission in July 2000).

As a result of the additional documentation submitted by the Smithsonian, staff now supports the proposed location of security elements – consisting of a planter wall, boulders and bollards – on the outside edge of the planters along Maryland Avenue. To require that the security line be located on the museum edge of the two large planters as originally suggested would mean that security would be located within the museum’s minimum stand off distance. To place the security line at the 50 foot setback, which is almost the same as the Maryland Avenue cartway, would mean that the security line would have to run through the middle of the planters, destroying two existing elm trees intended for preservation. The Smithsonian has also indicated that the security line as originally proposed has the least impact on the root system of the elm trees. Staff is satisfied that the solution proposed by the Smithsonian, which maintains the Maryland Avenue view corridor through the placement of existing and proposed street trees is sufficient to define the Avenue, at least until the Maryland Avenue cartway can be reestablished. As a related item, staff recommends that if Maryland Avenue is realigned in the future, the Smithsonian should be required to resubmit perimeter security plans which conform to the new road realignment. Staff recommends that the meadow grasses in the two planters be tall enough to minimize the appearance of the bollards at the edge of the two planters.

Bollard Line at the Corner of 4th Street and Independence Avenue

Smithsonian’s original revision moved the security line to the back site of the corner apron at 4th Street and Independence Avenue, which created a number of areas where the bollard line jogged. After additional study the Smithsonian was able to further set back this row of bollards, in line with the backside of the small planter and bus stop. There are limited opportunities to setback this bollard line because of the existing gas lane and its associated no-build set back. Staff recommends approval of the proposed solution.

Maryland Avenue Raised Planter Bollards

Staff recommends approval of the revised plan that removes the curbed bollards from the three easternmost tree planters on Maryland Avenue. Although the revision results in a line of bollards across the sidewalk, staff finds this preferable to the use of redundant security features and results in fewer security elements along this streetscape, which will further open up the southeast corner of the site. This end of the site is immediately across the street from the U.S. Botanical Gardens site, which is a largely open space feature associated with the grounds of the Capitol.

Hardened WMATA Bus Stop

Smithsonian has consulted with WMATA about whether a hardened bus stop could be installed at the Museum so that SI would not have to install bollards behind it. Although WMATA has not developed a hardened bus stop, the Smithsonian’s solution of locating removable bollards behind the bus stop until a hardened bus stop is available provides the opportunity for fewer security elements in the future. Staff supports this solution.

CONSULTATION

Coordinating Committee

The Coordinating Committee reviewed this item at its meeting on June 18, 2003, and forwarded the proposal to the Commission with the statement that the project has been coordinated with all agencies participating. The participating agencies were NCPC; the District of Columbia Office of Planning; Fire Department; the Department of Housing and Community Development; the District Department of Transportation; the General Services Administration; and the National Park Service.

Commission of Fine Arts

At their meeting on July 17th, 2003, CFA approved the perimeter security elements at the NMAI, provided that the Smithsonian study: reducing the diameter of the granite bollards, making the lower level of the guard booth door opaque to match the remainder of the guard booth, and using bronze instead of the proposed bronze-colored metal for the NMAI bollards.

CONFORMANCE

National Historic Preservation Act

NCPC initiated consultation with the DC State Historic Preservation Office (DC SHPO) on behalf of the Smithsonian, determining that the project overall had many commendable features but that the retaining wall on 4th Street would have an adverse effect on the character of the public space of the 4th Street right-of-way, a contributing element of the L'Enfant Plan. On 4th Street, the retaining wall near the curb, outside the tree line, is a higher and more solid form than would be typically seen along a street edge. A consultation meeting among SI, NCPC and the DC SHPO was held on June 24, 2003 at the site. The parties agreed that creating additional breaks in the retaining wall could minimize the adverse effect. Further, it was suggested that the outer edge of the retaining wall at the end next to the guard booth be curved, to conform to the driveway curb cut and to make the wall more compatible with the curvilinear character of the building itself.

As a result of the revised design for the retaining wall on 4th Street, including the inclusion of two more breaks in the wall and the curvature of the wall at the south end, the DC SHPO has concluded that the project will have No Adverse Effect on 4th Street as an element of the L'Enfant Plan. NCPC has concluded its Section 106 responsibilities on behalf of the Smithsonian Institution.

National Environmental Policy Act

Pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act, the Smithsonian Institution determined that this proposal did not require an environmental impact statement. In lieu, thereof, the Smithsonian prepared and submitted an environmental assessment (EA) in September 1993. In May 1996, the Commission took responsibility for the scope and content of the environmental

assessment in its review of the schematic development plans for the museum. This action completed the Commission's NEPA responsibility for the review of the project outside of any substantial change to the plans that would have a significant environmental impact. The staff finds the current submittal does not affect, in any significant way, the environmental conclusions of the 1996 NEPA determination.