

STAFF RECOMMENDATION



Hinkle
NCPC File No. 6383

GEORGETOWN WATERFRONT PARK, PHASE III DEVELOPMENT OF BIKEWAY AND PROMENADE FROM THOMPSON BOAT CENTER TO THE KENNEDY CENTER

Northeast Washington, D.C.

Submitted by the United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

December 30, 2010

Abstract

The National Park Service (NPS) has submitted final site development plans for an area known as Phase III of the lower Georgetown Waterfront Park, between the Thompson Boat Center and the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts (the Kennedy Center). The project has already been constructed following concept review by the Commission at its May 4, 2006 meeting. The NPS modified this area to separate bike traffic from pedestrians by providing a new pedestrian promenade with seating along the river shore. The project also includes improvements to the existing bikeway/trail and bridge across Rock Creek; and new landscaping, including the re-establishment of street trees along the Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway.

Commission Action Requested by Applicant

Approval of final site development plans pursuant to 40 U.S.C. § 8722(b)(1) and (d).

Executive Director's Recommendation

The Commission:

Approves the final site development plans for the Georgetown Waterfront Park, Phase III, Development of Bikeway and Promenade from Thompson Boat Center to the Kennedy Center, as shown on NCPC Map File No. 1.33(70.00)43216.

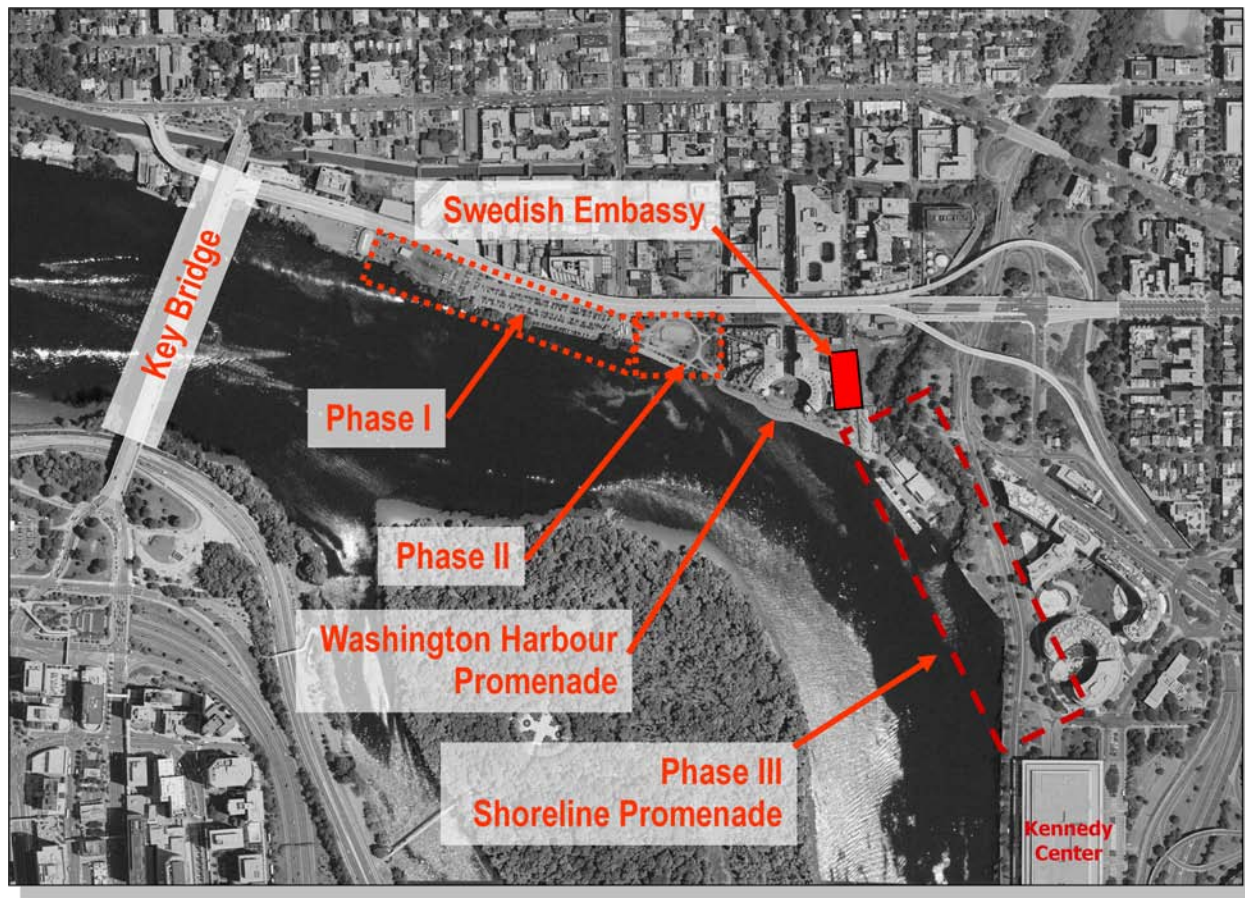
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PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Site

The project site is located within a portion of the Georgetown Waterfront Park southeast of Washington Harbor, between the Thompson Boat Center (commonly known as Thompson's Boathouse) and The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts (the Kennedy Center). The site is part of the Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway. The portion of the Parkway that extends roughly south of Virginia Avenue NW is managed by the National Mall and Memorial Parks division of the National Park Service (NPS); the portion of the Parkway that extends roughly north of Virginia Avenue NW is managed by the NPS's Rock Creek Park division.

The project, also known as the Shoreline Promenade by the NPS, is the third phase of the NPS's Georgetown Waterfront Park project. It was made possible through a Congressional add-on to the Federal Highway Administration's FY 2004 budget for the purpose of extending the existing Georgetown Waterfront Park Promenade from the Swedish embassy (the House of Sweden) to the Kennedy Center, filling the final gap in the approximately 200 mile long stretch of multi-purpose trail which extends from the western edge of the C&O Canal National Park in Cumberland, Maryland to the National Mall in the monumental core of Washington, D.C.



(Source: NPS)

Location of Georgetown Waterfront Park, with Phase III shown between the Swedish embassy and the Kennedy Center

Background

The Commission reviewed concept site development plans for the Georgetown Waterfront Park, Phase III at its May 4, 2006 meeting. At the time, the Commission commented favorably on the concept site development design for the bikeway and pedestrian promenade from Thompson's Boat Center to the Kennedy Center, but also requested that the NPS's subsequent submissions include additional details of: the design of the seating area; the layout of the overlook; the bridge improvements; the promenade design; and the planting materials and pavement.

According to the NPS, when Phase III was originally conceived, the project's designers intended to extend the more contemporary palette of materials, street furnishings, and landscape design from Phases I and II of the Georgetown Waterfront Park between 31st and 34th Streets, NW along the Potomac River). This concept is what was reviewed by the Commission in 2006. Following further development of the project, the NPS determined that there was a noteworthy physical separation between the Phase III area and the other two phases of the project. The NPS thus decided to use typical materials, furnishings, and plantings found along the adjacent Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway and in the National Mall and Memorial Parks so that the project would have a clearer relationship with its immediate surroundings.

In 2009, the NPS proceeded with its plans to improve the Phase III area, determining that the project, as modified, would not constitute a change in character to the existing area and therefore would not be subject to further NCPC review. The project was completed in the fall of 2009.

Since completion of the project, it has been brought to the attention of staff that members of the surrounding community have concerns regarding new sycamore trees planted along the Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway, which may grow to block views of the Potomac River from the Watergate complex across the Parkway. Through discussions with staff, the NPS's current representatives agreed to submit to the Commission the final site development plans of the project for Commission approval.

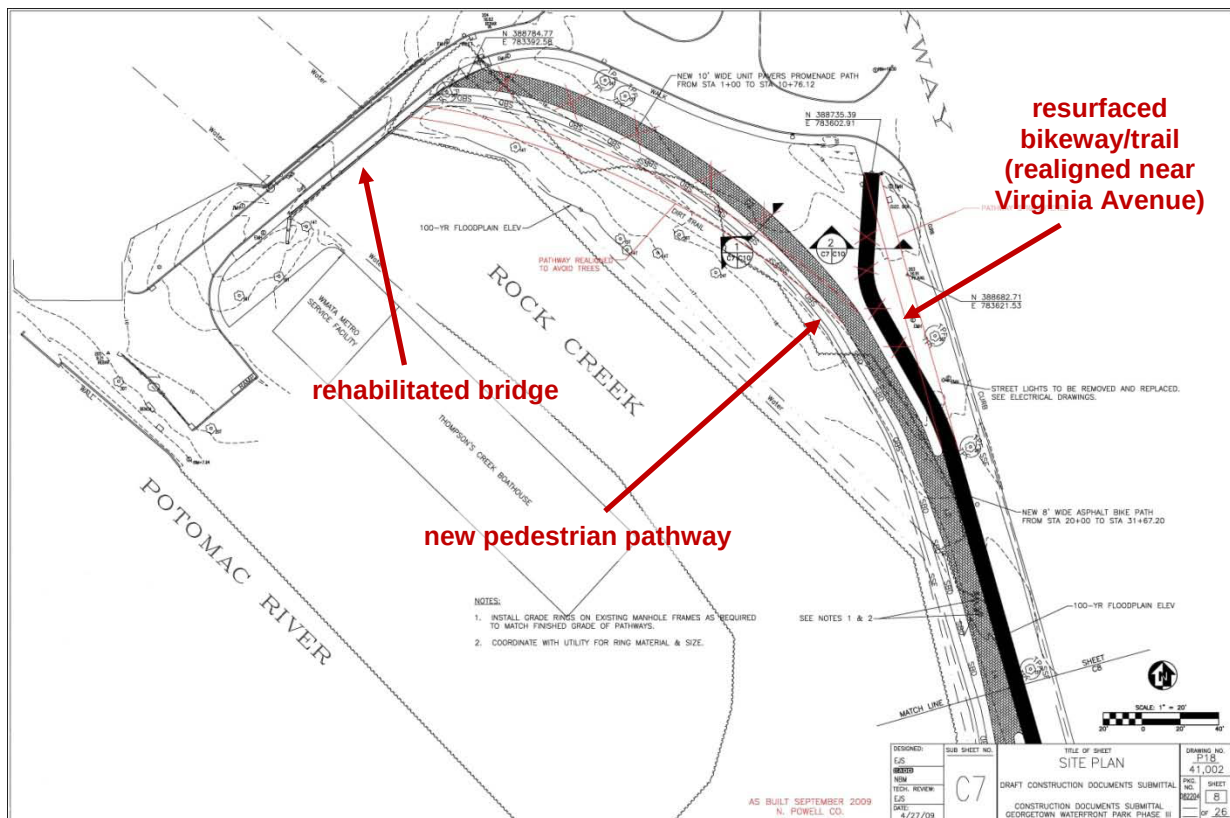
Proposal

The National Park Service has submitted final site development plans for Phase III of the Georgetown Waterfront Park, which is near Rock Creek and also known by the NPS as the Shoreline Promenade project. The project runs along the Potomac River shoreline, between the Thompson Boat Center and the Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway to the pedestrian crossing for the Parkway at F Street, NW, near the Kennedy Center.

The project consists primarily of a resurfaced asphalt bikeway in the approximate location of the existing bikeway/pedestrian trail; a new asphalt-tile pedestrian promenade where social trails previously existed; a new surface on the bridge crossing Rock Creek; and new plantings that include the re-establishment of street trees along the Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway that have been lost over the years. New site furnishings are also included, specifically: Washington globe streetlights (14'); black-rubber coated U-shaped bicycle racks mounted on concrete pads; 5-foot long, armless, cast iron and wood NPS Mall-style benches mounted on concrete pads; and trash receptacles mounted on concrete pads.

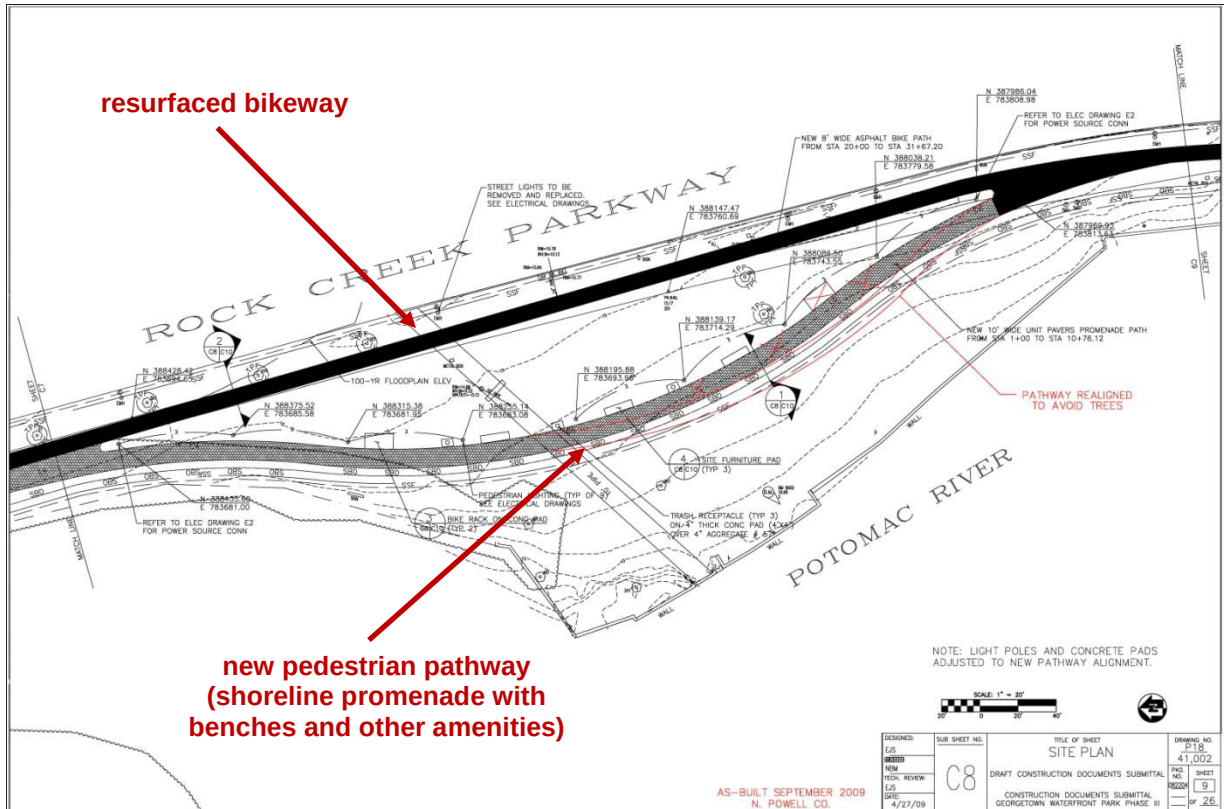
According to the NPS, the project seeks to enhance both the safety and visitor experience of the pedestrian environment. It includes improved accessibility, lighting, and guard rails on the bridge and safer crosswalks at Virginia Avenue and F Street, NW. It also separates the bicycle path from the pedestrian promenade in the area immediately south of where Rock Creek empties into the Potomac River. This separation not only improves circulation but also provides visitors with better opportunities to enjoy the river's edge with a new walkway. This new walkway replaces previously existing social trails and incorporates new benches, lighting and plantings for the enjoyment of park users.

Illustrative site plans were not provided by the NPS, however, as-built plans of the site (in three sections) were provided by the NPS and are shown below. The first site plan (sheet C7) shows the area of the site adjacent to the Thompson Boat Center. The second site plan (sheet C8) shows the “middle” area of the site where the pedestrian promenade was added towards the river's edge. The third site plan (sheet C9) shows the area of the site closest to the Kennedy Center. The site plans show the as-built location of the bike pathways and pedestrian pathways, and the locations of other site features such as lighting and benches. New landscaping is not included within these site plans, but can be seen on the aerial below.



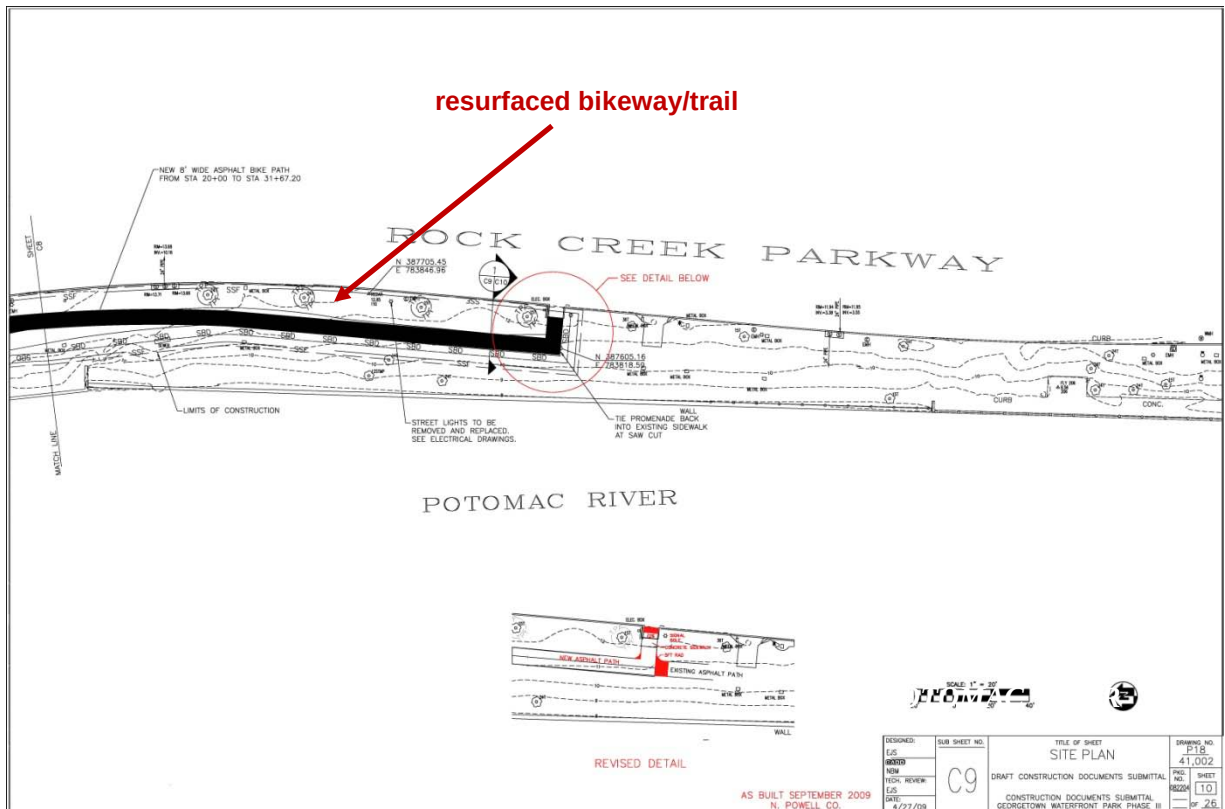
(Source: NPS)

Site plan of area adjacent to the Thompson Boat Center (sheet C7)



(Source: NPS)

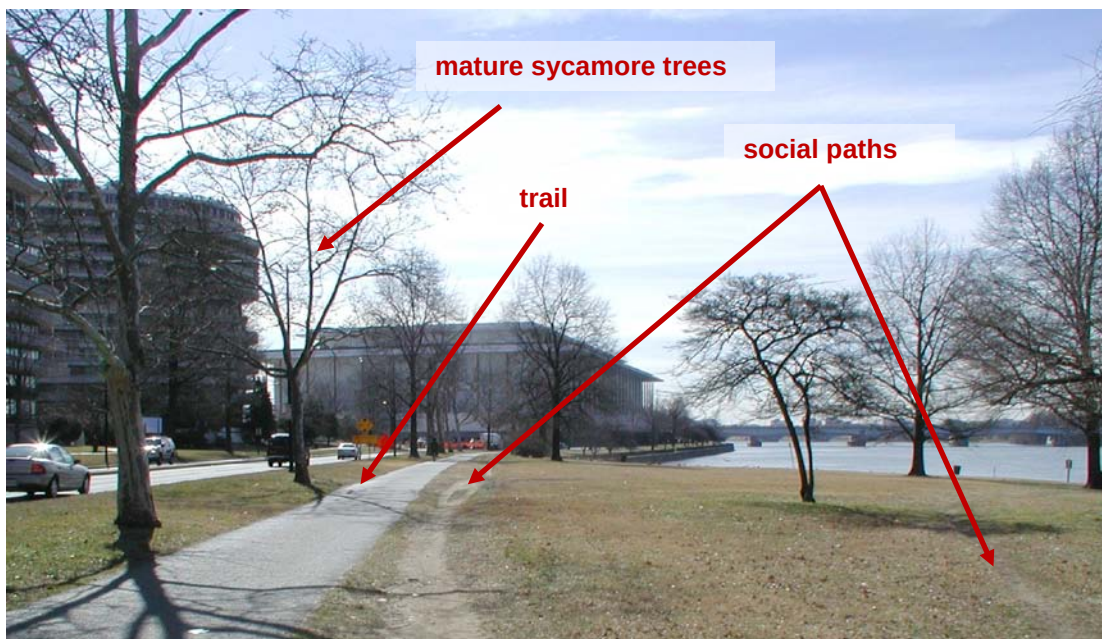
Site plan of "middle" area of the site where the pedestrian walkway was added (sheet C8)



(Source: NPS)

Site plan of the area closest to the Kennedy Center (sheet C9)

For landscaping, the NPS added to the existing landscaping 14 serviceberry trees, 10 red maple trees, three (3) river birch trees, and nine (9) American sycamore trees. Most of the serviceberries, red maples, and river birches were located in the area between the bike pathway and pedestrian promenade; the American sycamores, however, were placed between the bikeway and the Parkway, to infill where trees are missing among the mature sycamore street trees.



(Source: NPS)

Previous condition of the regional trail and landscaping (looking south)



(Source: NPS)

New condition of the regional pathway and landscaping (looking south)



(Source: NPS)

New condition of the regional pathway (right), pedestrian promenade (left), and landscaping (looking north)

The bridge across Rock Creek has been resurfaced to better accommodate pedestrians and new railings have been installed. Below is a view of the bridge's previous condition, followed by views of its improvements.



(Source: NPS)

Previous condition of the bridge over Rock Creek (looking towards the Potomac River)



New condition of the bridge over Rock Creek (looking towards the Potomac River)



New condition of the bridge over Rock Creek, showing the new railing (looking east)

PROJECT ANALYSIS

To analyze the final site development plans for the Georgetown Waterfront Park, Phase III, staff examined the Commission's favorable comments on the concept design, the National Register of Historic Places listing of the Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway, and policies within the *Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital* (Comprehensive Plan). Staff also considered benefits to the public that the final site development plan provides. Within this analysis, staff paid particular attention to the planting of sycamore trees to replace trees which the National Park Service believes previously existed along the Parkway.

Review of concept plans by the Commission

At its May 4, 2006 meeting, the Commission commented favorably on the concept site development design for the Phase III portion of the Georgetown Waterfront Park. At the time, it was determined that the submitted plans were consistent with the general Georgetown Waterfront Park plans previously approved by the Commission. Additionally, it was determined that the proposed plan provides much improved pedestrian circulation and access to the park shoreline at this section of the river, and that the upgrading of facilities is consistent with major goals of improving shoreline and riverfront access to the Potomac River outlined in the Comprehensive Plan.

The concept plan included many of the same elements as the current final site development plan, including improvements to the Rock Creek bridge, a separate pedestrian promenade at the shoreline, a tree grove between the bikeway and pedestrian promenade, and the infill of street trees (identified as "Street Tree Enhancement" in the concept site development plan below).



(Source: NPS)

Illustrated concept site development plan of Phase III area (from 2006)

During this review of the concept plan, the Commission found that additional information from the NPS was necessary for clarification in the development of the preliminary project submission. The Commission requested that the NPS's subsequent submissions include additional details of: the design of the seating area; the layout of the overlook; the bridge improvements; the promenade design; and the planting materials and pavement.

As noted above, according to the NPS Phase III was originally conceived by the project's designers to extend the more contemporary palette of materials, furnishings, and landscape design from Phases I and II of the Georgetown Waterfront Park. Following further development of the project, the NPS determined that there was a noteworthy physical separation between the Phase III area and the other two phases of the project. The NPS thus decided to use typical materials, furnishings, and plantings found along the adjacent Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway and in the National Mall and Memorial Parks so that the project would have a clearer relationship with its immediate surroundings.

For this current review of the final site development plan, the NPS has provided as-built drawings and construction details of the seating area design, bridge improvements, promenade, and detailing of landscape planting materials and pavements. The primary difference between the concept plan and the as-built plan is the elimination of the proposed overlook. As discussed below, the as-built landscape is similar to what was represented in the concept plan, including soldiered trees along the Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway and the tree grove between the bikeway and the pedestrian promenade. In addition, the placement of other elements, such as the park benches, has not been altered from the concept plan to the final site development plan.

Consistency with the Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway listing in the National Register of Historic Places

In 2005, the Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway park was listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Section 7, page 2 of the nomination documentation notes that the "dominating feature of the park is the Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway [itself]. Authorized in 1913, the parkway was established to provide a landscaped connection between the Mall and Potomac Park, at the heart of the city, and the National Zoological and Rock Creek Parks, in the northwest quadrant. The approximately 3.1 miles of roadway begins at Lincoln [Memorial] Circle, extends along the Potomac riverfront, and then traverses the entire lower valley."

Section 7, page 8 of the nomination documentation identifies the sycamore allée as a Contributing Site. It notes that "Along the riverfront, the roadway runs between narrow strips of grass. Originally, this area was planted with rows of widely spaced sycamore trees to function as a graceful transition between the monumentally designed national Mall (and Potomac Park) and the natural landscape of the Rock Creek Valley. A remnant of the allée remains today. Although compromised, the site maintains integrity."



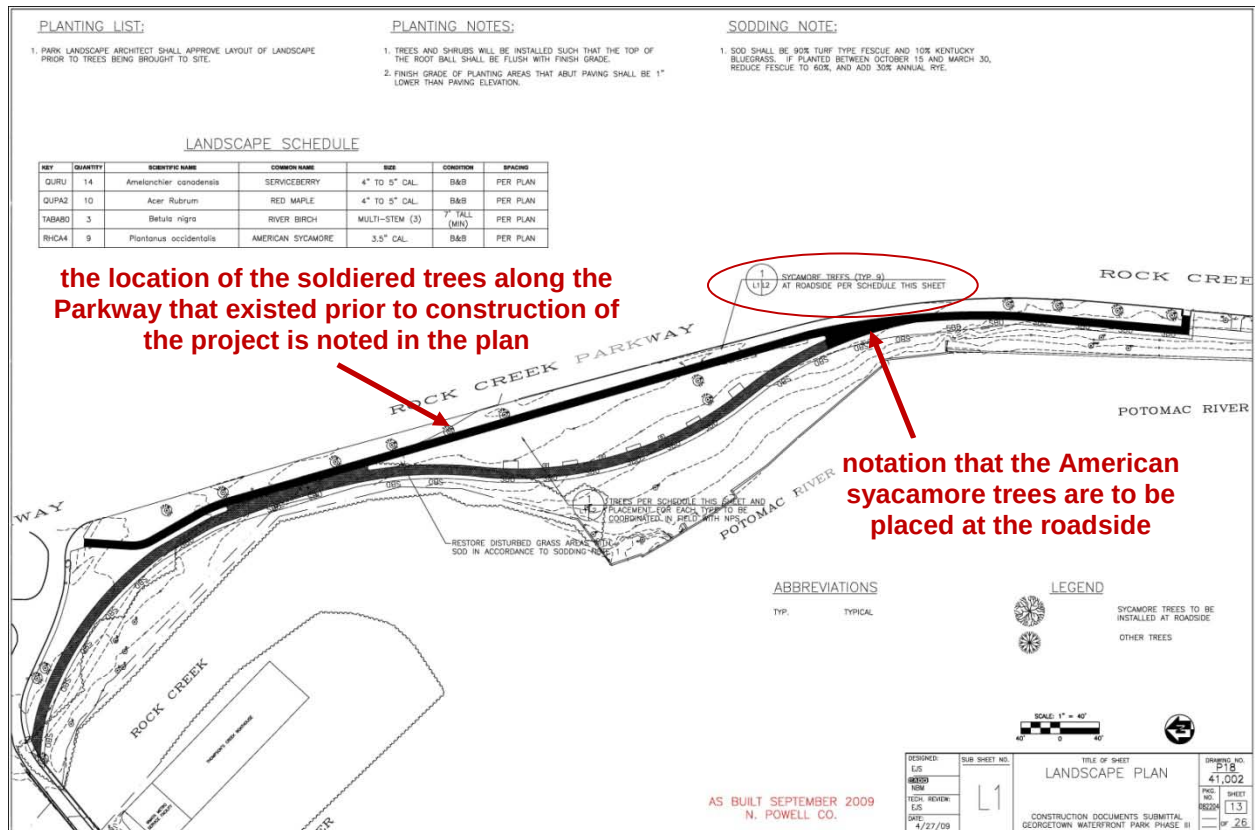
(Source: The GW and Foggy Bottom Historical Encyclopedia; Special Collections Research Center; Gelman Library; Courtesy of Mary E. Brown; http://encyclopedia.gwu.edu/gwencyclopedia/index.php?title=Foggy_Bottom:_Slide_Show)

The Titanic Memorial in the 1940s, located along the waterfront at the current site of the Kennedy Center. In the background soldiered trees can be seen along the side of the Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway

Further, in a discussion on existing landscaping in Section 7, page 22, the nomination documentation notes that “Across from the Watergate complex at the southern end of the parkway is a discontinuous row of sycamores (*Platanus* sp.- probably Oriental plane). Though they date as early as parkway construction in the 1930’s, these trees are likely somewhat younger. A planting plan dated from November 1934 depicted a new sea wall for the Potomac River shore, and showed Oriental plane trees staggered on either side of a walk along the sea wall and also along the parkway.... Today, the plane trees stand between street and sidewalk. Beyond the sidewalk, a lawn spreads to the riverfront.”

As stated by NPS, the planting scheme for the new sycamore trees replaces trees that the NPS believes previously existed along the Parkway and that are identified within the Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway National Register of Historic Places listing as contributing features.

While the as-built landscape plan submitted by the NPS for this final review (below) does not identify the specific locations for the sycamore trees, the plan does note that nine (9) American sycamore trees are to be placed at the roadside, and that the park landscape architect is to approve the landscape layout prior to trees being brought to the site.



(Source: NPS)

Landscape plan of the Phase III area (note that specific new tree placement was determined by the park landscape architect prior to the trees being brought to the site)

An examination of a current aerial of the area (below) shows the new sycamore trees planted along the edge of the Parkway, with the other trees planted throughout the park site. The planting of sycamore trees along the Parkway continues the existing pattern of soldiered trees along the Parkway south of the project area, as also seen within the aerial.

Consistency with the Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital: Federal and District Elements

The *Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital* is comprised of two parts—the Federal Elements and the District of Columbia Elements (District Elements). The Federal Elements address matters related to federal properties and federal interests in the national capital region. The District Elements, which are developed by the District of Columbia government, provide overall guidance for future planning and development of the city. The Georgetown Waterfront Park, Phase III final site development plan is consistent with both the Federal and District Elements of the Comprehensive plan, and supports a number of individual policies as described below.



new sycamore trees along the Parkway

soldiered trees along the Parkway, south of the project area

(Source: Google Maps)

Aerial view of the Phase III area showing the existing landscaping (including the placement of new trees)

Federal Elements

The Federal elements of the Comprehensive Plan contains policies that, among other things, promote the preservation and enhancement of the region's natural resources and environment and protect historic resources and urban design features that contribute to the image and functioning of the nation's capital.

The Georgetown Waterfront Park, Phase III final site development plan is consistent with parks and open space policies for waterfront parks (page 111 of the Federal Elements of the Comprehensive Plan). The park plan, in particular, supports the policies to link open space along the waterfront to provide a continuous public open space system, and to complete the waterfront parks in Georgetown and Alexandria. The park plan is also consistent with parks and open space policies for historic parks (page 112), specifically the policy to establish and preserve historic parks as important legacies of national, historic, architectural, and landscape significance.

The park plan is also consistent with other parks and open space policies for trails (page 124). In particular, the park plan supports policies to: develop new trails and complete partial trails that connect to parks, schools, businesses, and other community amenities to provide a system of contiguous regional trails for extensive recreational and transportation use; and, to maintain and improve trail quality for a variety of users, as appropriate.

Under the preservation and historic features policies related to the national capital image (page 161), the park plan is consistent with supporting the protection and enhancement of vistas and views, both natural and designed, that are an integral part of the national capital's image. The NPS, in developing the park plan, has also followed a policy under the stewardship of historic properties (page 164) that states that the federal government should identify and protect both the historic design integrity and the use of historic landscapes and open space.

The park plan is also consistent with federal environmental policies related to land resources and vegetation (page 145), and in particular supports the policy to enhance the environmental quality of the national capital by replacing street trees where they have died or where they have been removed due to development.

Additional Federal Element policies that supported by this project are related to the preservation and maintenance of parks and open space (page 104). These policies include: enhancing parks and preserving open green space for future generations; maintaining and conserving federal open space as a means of shaping and enhancing urban areas; and, preserving open space that is crucial to the long-term quality of life of a neighborhood or the region.

District Elements

The District Elements of the Comprehensive Plan contains policies that, among other things, promote the protection of the District's environment and physical design and visual qualities; and, address the future of the District's parks and the important role they play in recreation, aesthetics, neighborhood character, and environmental quality.

The Georgetown Waterfront Park, Phase III final site development plan is consistent with District Element environmental protection policies for protecting natural and green areas. In

particular, the park plan supports policies on street tree maintenance and landscaping, which state:

- “Plant and maintain street trees in all parts of the city, particularly in areas where existing tree cover has been reduced over the last 30 years. Recognize the importance of trees in providing shade, reducing energy costs, improving air and water quality, providing urban habitat, absorbing noise, and creating economic and aesthetic value in the District’s neighborhoods.” (page 6-3 of the District Elements of the Comprehensive Plan, policy E-1.1.1); and,
- “Encourage the use of landscaping to beautify the city, enhance streets and public spaces, reduce stormwater runoff, and create a stronger sense of character and identity.” (page 6-3, policy E-1.1.3).

The park plan is also consistent with urban design policies in the District Elements for improving waterfront identity and design. In particular, the park plan supports policies for strengthening the District’s identity as a waterfront city, for developing public space at the waterfront and ensuring continuous public access to the waterfront, and for requiring excellence in waterfront design. These policies state:

- “Strengthen Washington’s civic identity as a waterfront city by promoting investment along the Anacostia River, creating new water-related parks, improving public access to and along the shoreline, and improving the physical and visual connections between the waterfront and adjacent neighborhoods.” (page 9-10, policy UD-1.3.1);
- “Develop public gathering spaces along the waterfronts, including promenades, viewpoints, boating and swimming facilities, and parks. Such space should be designed to promote continuous public access along the rivers, and to take full advantage of site topography and waterfront views. Design treatments should vary from “hardscape” plazas in urban settings to softer, more passive open spaces that are more natural in character.” (page 9-10, policy UD-1.3.2); and,
- “Require a high standard of design for all waterfront projects, with an emphasis on shoreline access, integration of historic features and structures, an orientation toward the water, and the creation of new water-oriented public amenities.” (page 9-10, policy UD-1.3.3).

Under the parks, recreation, and open space policies related to reclaiming the waterfront, the park plan is consistent with protecting waterfront open space, maximizing the scenic and recreational value of the rivers, and conserving the open space along the Potomac waterfront. These policies specifically state:

- “Recognize the importance of the city’s waterfronts for recreation, public access, ecological protection, and scenic beauty.” (page 8-24, policy PROS-3.2.1);
- “Require the design and planning of waterfront parks to maximize the scenic and recreational value of the rivers. Activities such as parking lots and park maintenance facilities should be located away from the water’s edge, and environmentally sensitive resources should be protected.” (page 8-26, policy PROS-3.2.7); and,
- “Partner with the National Park Service and other federal agencies to conserve open space along the Potomac waterfront and to protect the wooded and scenic qualities of the Potomac Palisades and adjacent islands and shoreline, including the creation of the Georgetown Waterfront Park.” (page 8-26, policy PROS-3.2.7).

Park benefits to the public

As noted within the introduction of the Federal Elements of the Comprehensive Plan (page 11), the Commission envisions “A vibrant world capital that accommodates the needs of our national government; enriches the lives of the region’s residents, workers, and visitors; and embodies an urban form and character that reflects the enduring values of the American people.” Likewise, Section 1-301.62 of the D.C. Official Code states that, among other things, the purpose of the District Elements of the Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital is to “guide private and public development in order to achieve District and community goals.” As such, many policies within both the Federal and District Elements are focused on the support and enhancement of public benefits through federal actions.

The final site development plan for the Georgetown Waterfront Park, Phase III provides significant public benefits that are improvements over the previous conditions of the park. These benefits include improved circulation, safety, and landscaping and correlate with the regional and local Comprehensive Plan policies on recreation, aesthetics, neighborhood character, and environmental quality discussed above for parks in the District.

While the NPS does not maintain a count of the people that use the trail (either bicycling, walking, or running/jogging), the NPS has indicated that it is a heavily used trail. Observations by staff are corroborative with this assessment. The separation of the bikeway from the pedestrian promenade in the project area improves the circulation and safety of bicyclists, walkers, and runners/joggers in this congested area. Public safety is further enhanced by improved trail and walkway surfaces and wider trails and walkways, as well as improved lighting within the park.



The separation of trails for bicyclists and pedestrians supports a number of Comprehensive Plan policies, including maintaining and improving trail quality for a variety of users; and, improving public access to and along the shoreline.

View of the Phase III area showing the new bikeway (left) and pedestrian shoreline promenade (right) (looking south)

Improved landscaping within the area between the bikeway path and the pedestrian promenade provides a screen between the busy Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway and bikeway and the promenade, which is designed to provide pedestrians a calmer area to enjoy the river's edge. This new pedestrian promenade has replaced unsightly social trails and provides visitors with better opportunities to enjoy the river's edge (and incorporates new benches and other park furniture for the further enjoyment of the park).



Landscaping in the area between the bikeway and the pedestrian promenade, and benches oriented towards the river, focus the promenade users on the river. This supports a number of Comprehensive Plan policies, including enhancing vistas and views that are an integral part of the national capital's image; designing waterfront parks to maximize the scenic and recreational value of the rivers; and, developing public gathering spaces along the waterfronts, including promenades and viewpoints.



Two views of the Phase III area showing the new pedestrian shoreline promenade (top: looking north; bottom: looking west)

The soldiered sycamore trees planted along the edge of the Parkway not only respect the historic planting of trees in the area, but will function as a graceful transition between the monumentally designed National Mall (and Potomac Park) and the natural landscape of the Rock Creek Park and, when mature, provide significant shade to users of the bicycle path during the hot summer months. The line of sycamore trees along the Parkway will also provide a barrier between Parkway traffic and users of the bikeway, and frame the eastern edge of the park, separating the park from the city and enhancing the experience of park users.



The infill of sycamore trees among the existing row of sycamore trees adjacent to the Parkway supports the Comprehensive Plan policies to: preserve historic parks as important legacies of national, historic, architectural, and landscape significance; plant and maintain street trees in all parts of the city, recognizing the importance of trees in providing shade, reducing energy costs, improving air and water quality, providing urban habitat, absorbing noise, and creating economic and aesthetic value in the District's neighborhoods; and, enhance the environmental quality of the national capital by replacing street trees where they have died.

View of the Phase III area showing the soldiered sycamore trees along the Parkway (looking north)

In April 2009, District of Columbia Mayor Adrian Fenty signed an Urban Tree Canopy Goal for Washington, D.C. The goal will increase the percentage of urban tree canopy in the District from the present 35% to 40% by 2035. The setting of this goal supports an environmental protection policy within the District Elements (page 6-4, policy E-1.1.F) to “determine the extent of the District’s tree canopy at a sufficient level of detail to establish tree canopy goals for neighborhoods across the city.” The addition of new trees throughout the Phase III area contributes to the achievement of this goal, and supports the District government’s effort to meet this goal by increasing the urban tree canopy in all land ownerships as described as Priority Issue 1 within the *District of Columbia Assessment of Urban Forest Resources and Strategy* (Urban Forestry Administration, District Department of Transportation, District of Columbia, June 2010). The assessment cites improved air quality; increased ground water retention that minimizes runoff and flooding; temperature moderation; improved aesthetics; and an improved environment for wildlife as some of the benefits of an increased urban tree canopy.

Project Analysis Summary

Staff recommends that the Commission approve the final site development plans for the Georgetown Waterfront Park, Phase III, Development of Bikeway and Promenade from Thompson Boat Center to the Kennedy Center. This recommendation is based on the park plan's general consistency with: the concept site development design for the park, which the Commission commented favorably on; the Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway National Register of Historic Places listing; and the Comprehensive Plan. In addition, the park plan provides multiple benefits to the public that support many Comprehensive plan policies.

CONFORMANCE

Comprehensive Plan

As described above in further detail under Project Analysis, the final site development plan for improvements of the Georgetown Waterfront Park, Phase III, is consistent with policies contained in the *Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital: Federal Elements*. In particular, it is consistent with policies related to: Waterfront Parks, Historic Parks, Trails, and Preservation and Maintenance within the Parks and Open Space Element; Vegetation within the Federal Environment Element; and, National Capital Image and Stewardship of Historic Resources within the Preservation and Historic Features Element.

The final site development plan is also consistent with many policies contained in the District Elements of the Comprehensive Plan. In particular, it is consistent with policies related to: Protecting Natural and Green Areas within the Environmental Protection Element; Improving Waterfront Identity and Design within the Urban Design Element; and, Reclaiming the Waterfront within the Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Element.

National Historic Preservation Act

The National Park Service has completed its National Historic Preservation Act Section 106 responsibilities for the Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway, Potomac River Promenade from the Thompson Boat Center to the Kennedy Center in accordance with 36 CFR 800.3 of the regulations of the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation. The Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway was listed as a historic district on the National Register of Historic Places in 2005. On December 15, 2008 the D.C. State Historic Preservation Officer concurred that the proposed project will not have an adverse effect upon the cultural resources of the Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway National Register Historic District. NCPC staff also concurs with the NPS' determination of no adverse effect.

National Environmental Policy Act

Pursuant to the regulations implementing the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), compliance for the project was completed in two components. The portion of the project from Thompson Boat Center, across the Rock Creek bridge, and to the parking lot was included in the Environmental Assessment (May 2005) and Finding of No Significant Impact (October 11, 2005) which examined the rehabilitation of the Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway from Virginia

Avenue to P Street, NW by the Federal Lands Highway Program within the Federal Highway Administration. The portion of the project to the south of Rock Creek was analyzed by the National Mall and Memorial Parks division of the National Park Service. The NPS, on September 7, 2007, found that the project area has been heavily impacted by volunteer trails as well as construction of the existing vehicular, pedestrian, and bicycle circulation systems and the depth of excavation of the proposed work is not expected to exceed 10-12 inches. The NPS thus categorically excluded the project from further analysis under NEPA. The categorical exclusion is pursuant to Section 3.4 C (17) of NPS Director's Order 12 (DO-12), as follows: Minor landscaping in areas showing clear evidence of recent human disturbance. The NPS further noted that no exceptional circumstances or conditions in DO-12, Section 3-6 apply and that the action is fully described in section 3-4 of DO-12.

Given its approval authority over the project, NCPC also has an independent responsibility to satisfy the requirements of NEPA in accordance with NCPC's environmental policies and procedures and CEQ's regulations. Based on a thorough review of the information provided by NPS and staff's judgment that the final project has been scaled back from what was presented to the Commission for concept plan review, staff has determined that the proposed action meets the criteria of NCPC's Categorical Exclusion 8(C)(2), which reads as follows: Repair, replacement, and routine installation of components such as windows, doors, roofs; and site elements such as site or building identification signs, sidewalks, patios, fences, retaining walls, curbs, or gates. Additional features include water distribution lines, and sewer lines which involve work that is essentially replacement in kind.

COORDINATION

Coordinating Committee

The Coordinating Committee reviewed the proposal at its December 15, 2010 meeting and forwarded the proposal to the Commission with the statement that the proposal has been coordinated with all participating agencies. The participating agencies were: NCPC; the National Park Service; the General Services Administration; the District of Columbia Office of Planning; the District Department of Housing and Community Development; and the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority.

Commission of Fine Arts

The Commission of Fine Arts (CFA), at its meeting of April 20, 2006, approved the concept design with the only comment indicating that the National Park Service should investigate providing additional trees to the shoreline side of the new pedestrian walkway. To date, the CFA has not reviewed the final site development plan.