



Executive Director's Recommendation

Commission Meeting: October 2, 2014

PROJECT Constitution Gardens Rehabilitation The National Mall Washington, DC	NCPC FILE NUMBER 7421
SUBMITTED BY United States Department of the Interior National Park Service	NCPC MAP FILE NUMBER 1.43(70.00)44007
REVIEW AUTHORITY Approval per 40 U.S.C. § 8722(b)(1) and (d)	APPLICANT'S REQUEST Approval of comments on concept design
	PROPOSED ACTION Approve comments as requested
	ACTION ITEM TYPE Staff Presentation

PROJECT SUMMARY

The National Park Service (NPS) has submitted concept plans for the rehabilitation of Constitution Gardens. Located between the Lincoln Memorial and the Washington Monument, Constitution Gardens was designed as a pastoral landscape with a natural lake and was intended as an oasis that was separate from the remainder of the National Mall and bustle of the surrounding city. The park was dedicated in 1976 to celebrate the nation's Bicentennial. Within a few years of opening, the conditions of the lake and trees began to decline. Poor soil conditions kept many of the trees from reaching full maturity and many of the walkways have deteriorated over the years.

The purpose of the proposed project is to rehabilitate Constitution Gardens to improve the ecology, accessibility, cultural and recreational opportunities, and visitor services of the area. NPS in partnership with the Trust for the National Mall developed three alternatives to fulfill the purpose of the project. The alternatives differ in their approach with Alternative 1 focused on sustainability strategies, Alternative 2 focused on social interactions, and Alternative 3 blends the strategies of both alternatives to create a sustainable and vibrant park.

KEY INFORMATION

- Constitution Gardens is a contributing site of the East and West Potomac Parks Historic District, a property listed in the National Register of Historic Places.
- The National Mall Plan recommended that Constitution Gardens be a pleasant place for visitors to the National Mall and provide opportunities for entertainment, enjoyment, and recreation.
- The project will be constructed in two phases with Phase 1 focusing on the northeast corner of the site. Phase 1 will include the relocation of the Lockkeeper's House, a new entry plaza

at Constitution Avenue and 17th Street, the construction of a temporary event terrace, and the construction of a portion of a garden wall and landscape improvements along Constitution Avenue and 17th Street. Phase 2 will include the construction of a new pavilion, improvements to the lake, modifications to the circulation paths, and the remainder of the landscape improvements.

- NPS is working in partnership with the Trust for the National Mall to prepare the rehabilitation plan; the Trust for the National Mall organized a national design competition in 2012 and selected PWP Landscape Architecture to design the rehabilitation plan.

RECOMMENDATION

The Commission:

Provides the following comments on the Constitution Garden Rehabilitation:

Strongly Supports the project and the National Park Service's efforts to partner with the Trust for the National Mall to improve the condition of Constitution Gardens and establish a destination that serves visitors and residents by providing opportunities for entertainment, enjoyment, and recreation.

Notes that the project is consistent with recommendations in the National Mall Plan to establish a pleasant environment within Constitution Gardens that accommodates a variety of activities.

Comments favorably on the proposed Hybrid Alternative that combines ecological functions with socially vibrant spaces to create an accessible, flexible, and sustainable park.

Notes that the proposed concept for the pavilion at the east end of the park seems to be of an appropriate mass, scale, and height for the setting of Constitution Gardens.

Recommends that the National Park Service coordinate with the District of Columbia Department of Transportation on the design and location of the proposed pavilion service entrance on 17th Street and the modifications to the curb radius at Constitution Avenue and 17th Street.

Requests additional simulations of the surrounding views and vistas, both to and from the park, in order to better understand:

- The implications of proposed changes to topography and construction of walls along Constitution and 17th Street.
- The impacts of the pavilion design and lighting on views to and from the World War II Memorial and from other important vantage points along the National Mall.

PROJECT REVIEW TIMELINE

Previous actions	October 2012 – Information Presentation
Remaining actions (anticipated)	Preliminary and Final Approval

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9/24/2014

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I. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Site

The National Mall in Washington, DC, stretches west from the U.S. Capitol to the Potomac River, and north from the Thomas Jefferson Memorial to Constitution Avenue. Constitution Gardens occupies a 52 acre area located within West Potomac Park, northeast of the Lincoln Memorial grounds. Designed in the 1970s by the Washington office of Skidmore, Owings, and Merrill, with the well-known Modern landscape architect, Dan Kiley, Constitution Gardens opened in 1976. The Vietnam Veterans National Memorial was completed on a two acre site at the west end of Constitution Gardens in 1982. In the same year construction began on the 56 Signers of the Declaration of Independence Memorial on the island in the lake within Constitution Gardens. In 1986, President Reagan proclaimed that Constitution Gardens was to be recognized as a site commemorating the U.S. Constitution. More recently, in 2004, the World War II Memorial was completed just south of Constitution Gardens.

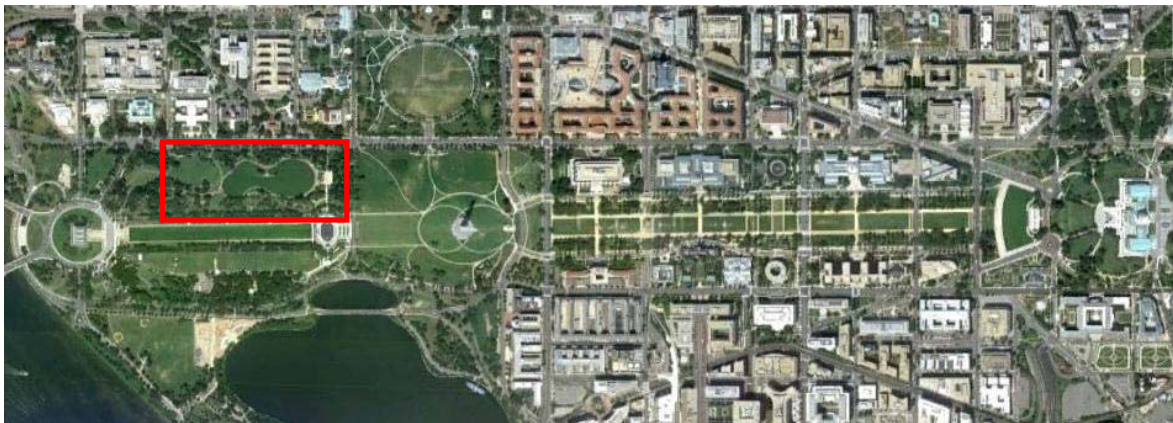


Figure 1: Project location

Background

When originally developed by NPS for the Bicentennial celebration in the 1970s, Constitution Gardens was intended to provide a pastoral setting for passive recreation and event use. Within a few years of opening, the conditions of the lake and trees began to decline. Poor soil conditions have kept many of the trees from reaching full maturity and many of the walkways have deteriorated over the years. In addition, the visitor facility that was envisioned for the east end of the lake was never implemented.

NPS and the Commission approved the National Mall Plan in 2010. The National Mall Plan provides a framework to rehabilitate and refurbish the National Mall so that high levels of use can continue and the needs of all visitors and users can be met in an attractive, high-quality, energy-efficient, and sustainable manner. When the National Mall Plan was developed, a vision was put forward for Constitution Gardens as a pleasant place for visitors to enjoy as they toured the National Mall. The National Mall Plan envisioned Constitution Gardens as a place to accommodate small scale demonstrations and special events, while also serving as a restful, visitor destination with opportunities for entertainment, enjoyment, and recreation. Following adoption

of the National Mall Plan, the Trust for the National Mall sponsored a national competition to identify a designer that would work towards developing a design to implement the recommendations of the National Mall Plan. PWP Landscape Architecture was selected to work with the NPS and the Trust for the National Mall on the Constitution Gardens Rehabilitation project.

Proposal

The purpose of the rehabilitation of Constitution Gardens is to improve the ecology, accessibility, cultural and recreational opportunities, and visitor services of the area. NPS and the Trust for the National Mall have developed the following three alternatives to address the purpose of the project:

- Alternative 1: Sustainable Garden
- Alternative 2: Social Park
- Alternative 3: Hybrid Alternative

Common concepts to all the alternatives include respecting the original design intent of Constitution Gardens as a pastoral landscape; improving the health and beauty of the lake and landscape; improving the pedestrian experience; creating protection from street noise; providing a visitor pavilion and restrooms; improving bus movement along Constitution Avenue and 17th Street; rehabilitating the landscape on the 56 Signers of the Declaration of Independence Memorial island; protecting the Virginia Avenue view corridor; enhancing the walking connection to the World War II Memorial; and adding a Capital Bikeshare station. All three alternatives address issues related to natural resources, cultural resources, circulation, visitor facilities, and visitor enjoyment and education. The alternatives are further described in detail below.

Alternative 1: Sustainable Garden

Alternative 1 conceives of Constitution Gardens as a sustainable landscape that improves the ecology of the site. This alternative would combine a variety of sustainability strategies to establish a place where the architecture and landscape act as a cohesive unit. As part of Alternative 1, treated stormwater, blackwater, and graywater would be reused and integrated with a well-functioning lake and land ecosystem.

Under Alternative 1, natural resources including the landform and topography of the site would be addressed in combination with the lake. The lake would be excavated in order to deepen it and allow for colder temperatures that promote water circulation. The fill from the lake excavation would be used to amplify and raise the topography of the area directly adjacent to Constitution Avenue, approximately eight to ten feet to establish an upland woodland. This woodland planting would enclose the site and insulate the garden from the movement and traffic of Constitution Avenue. Hill slopes would be 4:1 and the hills would meet a 30 inch tall retaining wall along Constitution Avenue and 17th Street. The average height of the hills relative to Constitution Avenue would be approximately ten feet. Along with the amplified topography, the condition of the soil would be remediated and a continuous drainage layer installed to promote healthier plant growth.

The existing soil and sub-soil material would be used to establish the new topography, and additional fill will be imported as needed to reach the desired topographic elevations.

As far as the treatment of the trees and vegetation under Alternative 1, larger tree species would be preserved in place, but unhealthy, hazardous, and dead trees would be replaced. Juvenile and moderately-sized healthy trees and plants would be temporarily relocated to nearby NPS sites while the soil is remediated and the landscape rebuilt. The overall planting strategy would focus on establishing meadows with a woodland understory. In addition, trees removed as part of the 17th Street Levee project would be replaced.

Alternative 1 proposes to use a 15 foot aquatic shelf on the perimeter of the lake to reinforce the line of the pond wall and improve the health of the lake. Drifts of aquatic plants would filter runoff and lake water, reduce algae growth, and attract a variety of songbird and butterfly species. The lake would be used to capture, treat, and reuse stormwater and blackwater. Treated stormwater would be used to fill the lake, and the treated blackwater will be used to irrigate the landscape. The main body of the lake would have depths of between two to ten feet, with a gravel bottom replacing the current concrete; this would amount to a volume of approximately 10 million gallons, circulated and filtered by both natural and mechanical means. Additionally, a 57,000 square foot water ring, filled with treated stormwater runoff, would be built at the east end of the lake for visitor activities.



Figure 2: Alternative 1 - Sustainable Garden

This alternative calls for the relocation of the historic Lockkeeper's House. The building would be relocated 30 to 40 feet west and 30 to 40 feet south of its current location, protecting it from traffic turning from Constitution Avenue onto 17th Street. It would be adaptively rehabilitated according to the Secretary of Interior's Standards, with a 750 to 1000 square foot basement added. Once completed, the building could potentially be used for donor recognition, visitor information, history and/or sustainability education, classroom space, or restrooms. There would also be an

adjacent outdoor plaza for educational exhibits and school groups. Along with the relocation of the Lockkeeper's House, accessibility to the 56 Signers of the Declaration of Independence Memorial would be improved. A perimeter path would be added to the island and plantings around the memorial would be restored and rehabilitated.

Under Alternative 1, circulation paths and dimensions throughout Constitution Gardens would be reconfigured. The path leading to the World War II Memorial would be widened from 15 feet to 20 feet. Paths around the western knoll would be realigned to better connect Constitution Gardens to the surrounding areas. Entries from Constitution Avenue would be widened to between 70 and 80 feet, and would include two 15 foot paths with low plantings between. The path around the lake would be widened from 14 to 20 feet. All other general paths would be approximately eight feet wide and constructed with a vehicular base to allow surface access for maintenance. Other circulation improvements include modifications to the turn radius at the corner of Constitution Avenue and 17th Street which would be widened from 30 feet to 50 feet in order to allow a tour bus to safely turn from the outside lane. A Capital Bikeshare station would also be added to the site near the corner of Constitution Avenue and 17th Street.

Alternative 1 proposes a pavilion with a limited basement area at the east end of the lake as called for in the Skidmore, Owings, and Merrill plan. This building would create a portal to Constitution Gardens from the east, and bring visitors down to the lake. The location of the pavilion responds to the site's original design and the lake's morphology; it has been sited slightly to the west of the path that leads from Constitution Avenue to the World War II Memorial. The building will provide an arrival point and a point to take in all of Constitution Gardens. The upper level would feature a restaurant and a lower, lake-side level would have seasonal recreation rentals, a bookstore, a snack bar, kitchen, storage, and public restrooms. A shade structure will cover the pavilion and the 3,700 square foot restaurant; the lower level will include 21,000 square feet. Service access would be at-grade, using general walkway paths. The building would be designed to maximize sustainability principles and achieve a United States Green Building Council Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Platinum rating. The goal is to design a net zero energy building, relying on such systems as geothermal heating and cooling, graywater and blackwater reuse, photovoltaic cells, and a 1,000 square foot green roof over the lower level.

In terms of visitor services, a portion of the lake edge on the east end would feature a new lake ring so that visitors could fish in the main body of the lake. The new lake ring could be used for model boating during the summer and partially drained to create a 17,000 square foot ice skating rink in the winter, with space for a temporary Zamboni and ice melt hut. Directly adjacent to the proposed pavilion, large groups will be able to gather on an 8,800 square foot terrace. There would also be a gathering space at the west end of the lake at the site of the existing concession stand, which would be removed. In addition, a portion of the landscape would be reserved and designed as a lawn amphitheater that could host regular performances and concerts. Educational programs would be continued or expanded by implementing ranger walks, bike tours, technology-based interpretative programs, and a Master Gardener program. Major educational/interpretative themes would include ecology, sustainability, Washington Canal history, the 17th Street Levee, the Constitution, and the Declaration of Independence.

Alternative 2: Social Park

Alternative 2 focuses on improving the access and visitor services, education, recreation and entertainment of Constitution Gardens by providing flexible spaces that offer seasonally different experiences. Similar to Alternative 1, the landform and topography of the site would be addressed in combination with the lake. The lake would be excavated in order to deepen it and create colder temperatures that promote water circulation. However, the amplification of the topography would not be as great as under Alternative 1; the land would be raised four to six feet with a maximum hill slope of 3:1. The hills would meet an 18 inch tall retaining wall along Constitution Avenue and 17th Street. The average height of the hills relative to Constitution Avenue would be seven feet. Along with the amplified topography, the condition of the soil would be remediated and a non-continuous drainage layer installed to promote healthier plant growth. The existing soil will become the sub-soil material to establish the new topography.



Figure 3: Alternative 2 - Social Park

As far as the treatment of vegetation and trees, Alternative 2 is similar to Alternative 1 in that large caliper trees would be preserved in place. Juvenile and moderately-sized healthy trees and plants would be temporarily relocated to nearby NPS sites while the soil is remediated and the landscape rebuilt, or to other locations within Constitution Gardens. In addition, trees removed as part of the 17th Street Levee project would be replaced and unhealthy, hazardous, and dead trees throughout Constitution Gardens would be replaced. Overall, the primary difference between this alternative and Alternative 1 is that the planting strategy for Alternative 2 focuses on creating spaces for lawns. In addition, under Alternative 2, an aquatic shelf would not be added to the perimeter of the lake.

A new on-site well would be drilled under Alternative 2, and this well water would be used to fill

the lake, with potable water as a backup option. Stormwater would be collected and used to irrigate the landscape. Similar to Alternative 1, the lake would have depths between two and ten feet, and a gravel bottom would replace the current concrete bottom. The lake would contain a volume of approximately 10 million gallons, circulated and filtered by both natural and mechanical means. Additionally, a 57,000 sq. ft. water ring filled with potable water would be built at the east end of the lake and used for visitor activities. The size of the water ring is identical in the two alternatives; the primary difference is the source of the water.

Alternative 2 also includes relocation of the Lockkeeper's House, but under this proposal the building would be moved 500 feet to the west of its current location. The idea is that the building could be used to mark the entry to the park at Constitution and 18th Street. The building would be rehabilitated according to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards, and a 550 square foot basement would be added. As far as use for the Lockkeeper's House, similar to Alternative 1, the building would be used for donor recognition, visitor information, history and/or sustainability education, class room space, or restrooms. There would also be an adjacent outdoor plaza for educational exhibits and school groups. Some of the functions proposed for the Lockkeeper's House could also be incorporated into the existing concession stand at the west end of the lake. Treatment of the 56 Signers of the Declaration of Independence Memorial would be similar to Alternative 1, but would include the addition of another path of stepping stones to provide another connection to the mainland.

Improvements to the circulation system would be identical to Alternative 1 - the path leading to the World War II Memorial would be widened from 15 feet to 20 feet. Paths around the western knoll would be realigned to better connect Constitution Gardens to the surrounding areas. Entries from Constitution Avenue would be widened to between 70 and 80 feet, and would include two 15 foot paths with low plantings between. The path around the lake would be widened from 14 to 20 feet. The general paths would be widened to 10 to 15 feet and constructed with a vehicular base to allow surface access for maintenance. The turn radius at the corner of Constitution Avenue and 17th Street would be widened from 30 feet to 100 feet in order to allow two articulated buses to turn at the same time. A Capital Bikeshare station would also be added to the site near the World War II Memorial at 17th Street. With regard to circulation, the primary difference between Alternative 1 and 2 is the width of the general paths and the modification to the curb at the corner of Constitution Avenue and 17th Street.

Similar to Alternative 1, Alternative 2 proposes a pavilion at the east end of the lake, but the pavilion would be slightly larger with an expanded basement area. The pavilion would feature similar uses to Alternative 1 and feature a restaurant in the upper level and seasonal recreation rentals, bookstore, snack bar, kitchen, storage, and public restrooms on the lower level. A shade structure would cover the pavilion and the 3,700 square foot restaurant; the lower level would include 30,000 square feet (increase of 9,000 square feet from Alternative 1). Service access would be below grade and accessed from 17th Street through a new driveway. The building would be designed to maximize sustainability principles and achieve a LEED Silver rating. The building would rely on a VRV (variable refrigerant volume) mechanical system, graywater reuse, and an 8,000 square foot green roof over the lower level.

In terms of visitor services, a portion of the lake edge on the east end would feature a new lake ring so that visitors could fish in the main body of the lake. The new lake ring could be used for model boating during the summer and for ice skating in the winter, with space for a temporary Zamboni and ice melt hut. Directly east of the proposed pavilion, large groups will be able gather on an 8,800 square foot terrace. In addition, the park will feature a 27,000 square foot lawn amphitheater on the south side of the lake and 58,000 square feet of open gathering spaces on the knoll. Educational programs would be continued or expanded by implementing ranger walks, bike tours, and wayside information markers. Major educational/interpretative themes would include the National Mall, Constitution Gardens, Washington Canal history, the 17th Street Levee, the Constitution, and the Declaration of Independence. Regarding visitor services, the difference between Alternative 1 and 2 is the size of the ice skating rink as well as the increase in open lawns and gathering spaces that would be provided under Alternative 2.

Alternative 3: Hybrid Alternative

Alternative 3 combines elements of Alternatives 1 and 2 to create a rehabilitation plan that maximizes sustainability strategies while providing improved visitor services and activating the park.



Figure 4: Alternative 3 - Hybrid Alternative

To address the poor soil condition and health of the lake, the topography of the site would be amplified along Constitution Avenue and raised approximately four to eight feet from its existing condition with fill from lake excavation. This would create more ground plane undulation and hill slopes would be 3:1 or 4:1. The hills would meet an 18 inch retaining wall along Constitution Avenue and 17th Street. The average height of the hills relative to Constitution Avenue would be six and a half feet. The condition of the soil would be remediated and a continuous drainage layer installed to promote healthier plant growth. The existing soil and sub-soil material would be used

to construct the new topography, and additional fill would be imported as needed to reach the desired topographic elevations.

As far as the treatment of vegetation and trees on the site, large caliper trees would be preserved in place. As many large (8 inch diameter at breast height) and high quality trees would be preserved in place with a focus on those identified in good or fair condition. Juvenile and moderately-sized healthy trees and plants would be temporarily relocated to nearby NPS sites while the soil is remediated and the landscape rebuilt. Additional review by arborists and reforestation specialists will be required to determine the feasibility and impact of relocating any trees. In addition, trees removed as part of the 17th Street Levee project would be replaced and unhealthy, hazardous, and dead trees throughout Constitution Gardens would be replaced. Overall, the planting strategy would focus on creating a mixture of spaces; approximately 64 percent of the site would be lawn, 24 percent would be devoted to woodland understory, and 12 percent would be meadows.

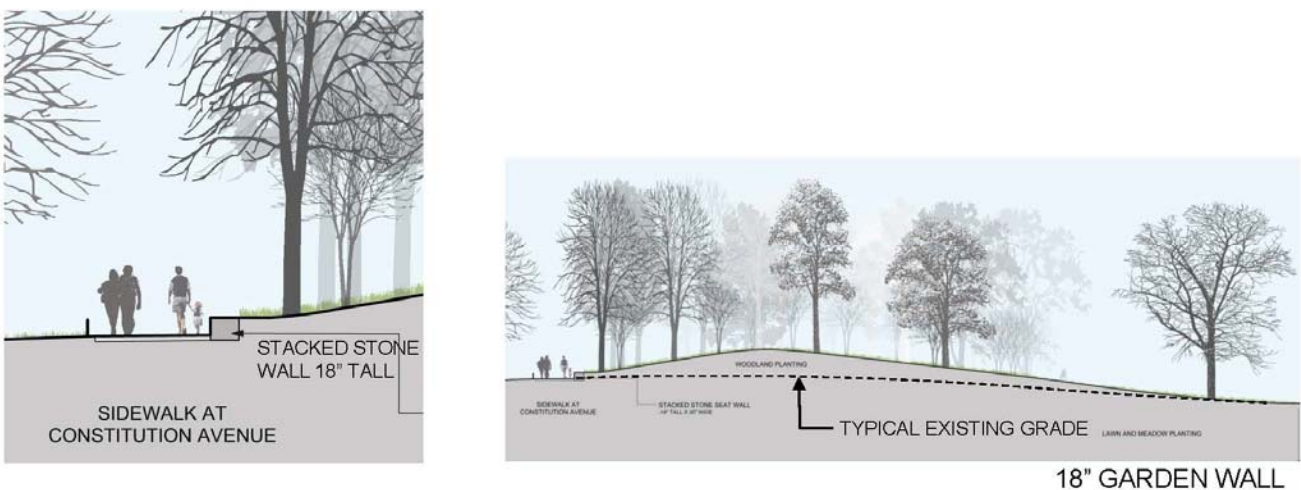


Figure 5: Proposed 18 inch wall and grade modifications

As proposed under Alternative 1, the Hybrid Alternative would include a 15 foot aquatic shelf on the perimeter of the lake with a wetland between the mainland and the 56 Signers of the Declaration of Independence Memorial. The lake would be used to capture, treat, and reuse stormwater and blackwater. Stormwater would be used to fill the lake, and the treated blackwater would be used to irrigate the landscape. The lake would be excavated and have depths of between two to ten feet, with a gravel bottom replacing the current concrete; this would amount to a volume of approximately 10 million gallons, circulated and filtered by both natural and mechanical means. Additionally, a 57,000 square foot water ring, filled with treated stormwater runoff, would be built at the east end of the lake for visitor activities.

Under the Hybrid Alternative, the Lockkeeper's House will be moved to the location proposed under Alternative 1 (30 to 40 feet west and 30 to 40 feet south of its current location) and rehabilitated. Rather than a 750 to 1000 square feet basement addition, a 350 square foot basement will be added for mechanical equipment and storage space. Once complete, the building could be

used for donor recognition, visitor information, or history and/or sustainability education. There would also be an adjacent outdoor plaza for educational exhibits and school groups. Accessibility to the 56 Signers of the Declaration of Independence Memorial would be similar to Alternative 2; a perimeter path would be added along with a second path of stepping stones to improve connections to the mainland.

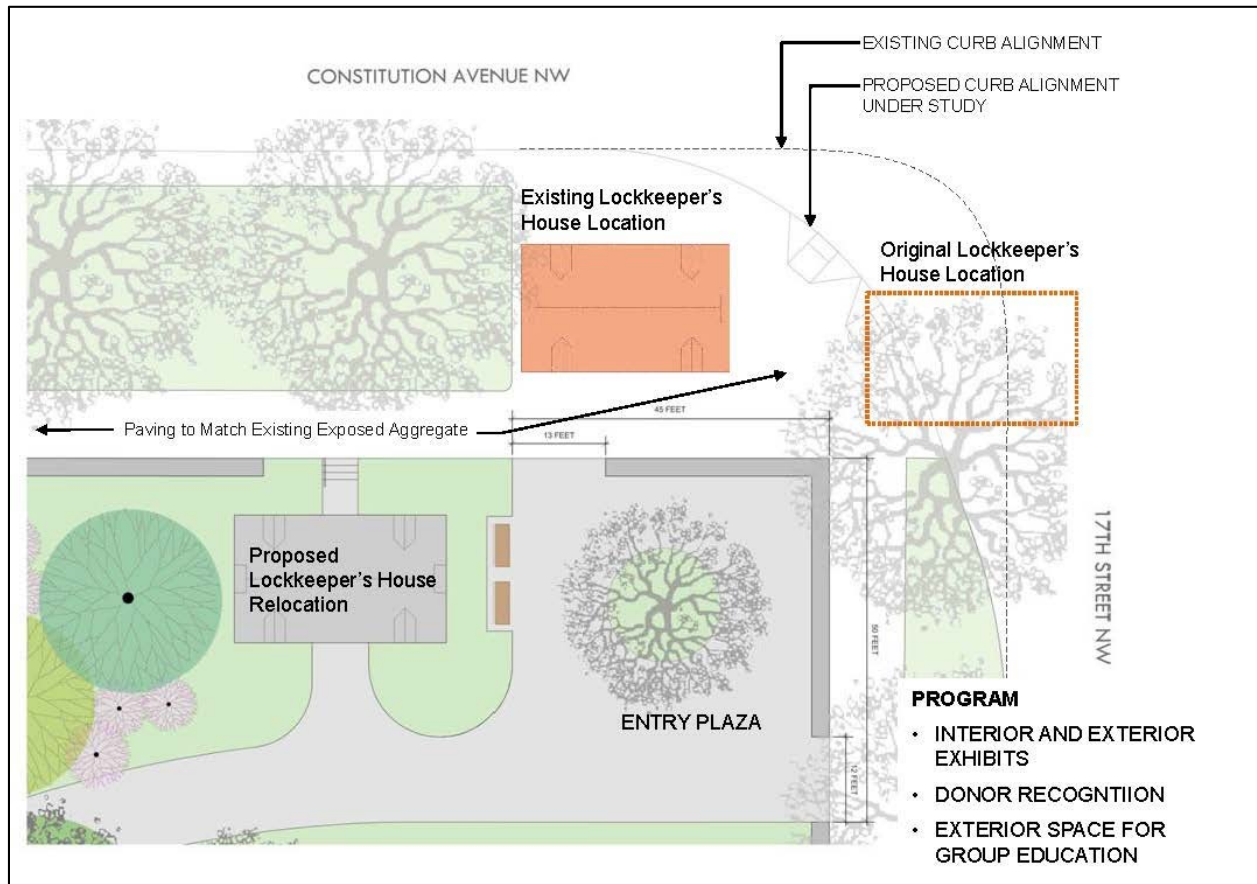


Figure 6: Plan for Lockkeeper's House and new entry plaza

Circulation paths under the Hybrid Alternative would be reconfigured and essentially treated as described under Alternative 2 – the path leading to the World War II Memorial would be widened from 15 to 20 feet. Paths around the western knoll would be realigned to improve connections to the surroundings areas. Entries from Constitution Avenue would be widened to between 70 and 80 feet, and would include two 15 foot paths with low plantings between. The path around the lake would be widened from 14 to 20 feet. The general paths would be widened to 10 to 15 feet with a few eight foot paths and constructed with a vehicular base to allow surface access for maintenance. The turn radius at the corner of Constitution Avenue and 17th Street would be widened from 30 to 50 feet and transition to 80 feet to allow two coach buses to turn at the same time. This configuration will require the relocation of crosswalks and signals. A Capital Bikeshare station would also be added to the site near the World War II Memorial at 17th Street.



Figure 7: View of entries along Constitution Avenue

The pavilion proposed under the Hybrid Alternative would be the equivalent to what is proposed under Alternative 2. At the east end of the lake, the building will feature a restaurant on the upper level and on the lower, lake level the building will feature a bookstore, snack bar, kitchen, storage, public restrooms, and seasonal recreation rentals. Service access would be below grade and accessed from 17th Street through a new driveway. The building would be designed to maximize sustainability principles and achieve a LEED Platinum rating. The building would rely on geothermal heating and cooling systems, graywater and blackwater reuse, and an 8,000 square foot green roof over the lower level.



Figure 8: New Pavilion and event plaza at east end of the lake

In terms of visitor services, the Hybrid Alternative would be very similar to Alternative 1. A portion of the lake edge on the east end would feature a new lake ring so that visitors could fish in the main body of the lake. The new lake ring could be used for model boating during the summer and partially drained to create a 17,000 square foot ice skating rink in the winter, with space for a temporary Zamboni and ice melt hut. A new terrace, approximately 8,800 square feet will be located directly adjacent to the new pavilion and will provide an additional gathering space. Educational programs would include ranger walks, bike tours, technology-based interpretative programs, and a Master Gardener program. Major interpretative themes would include the National Mall, Constitution Gardens, ecology, sustainability, Washington Canal history, the 17th Street Levee, the Constitution, and the Declaration of Independence.

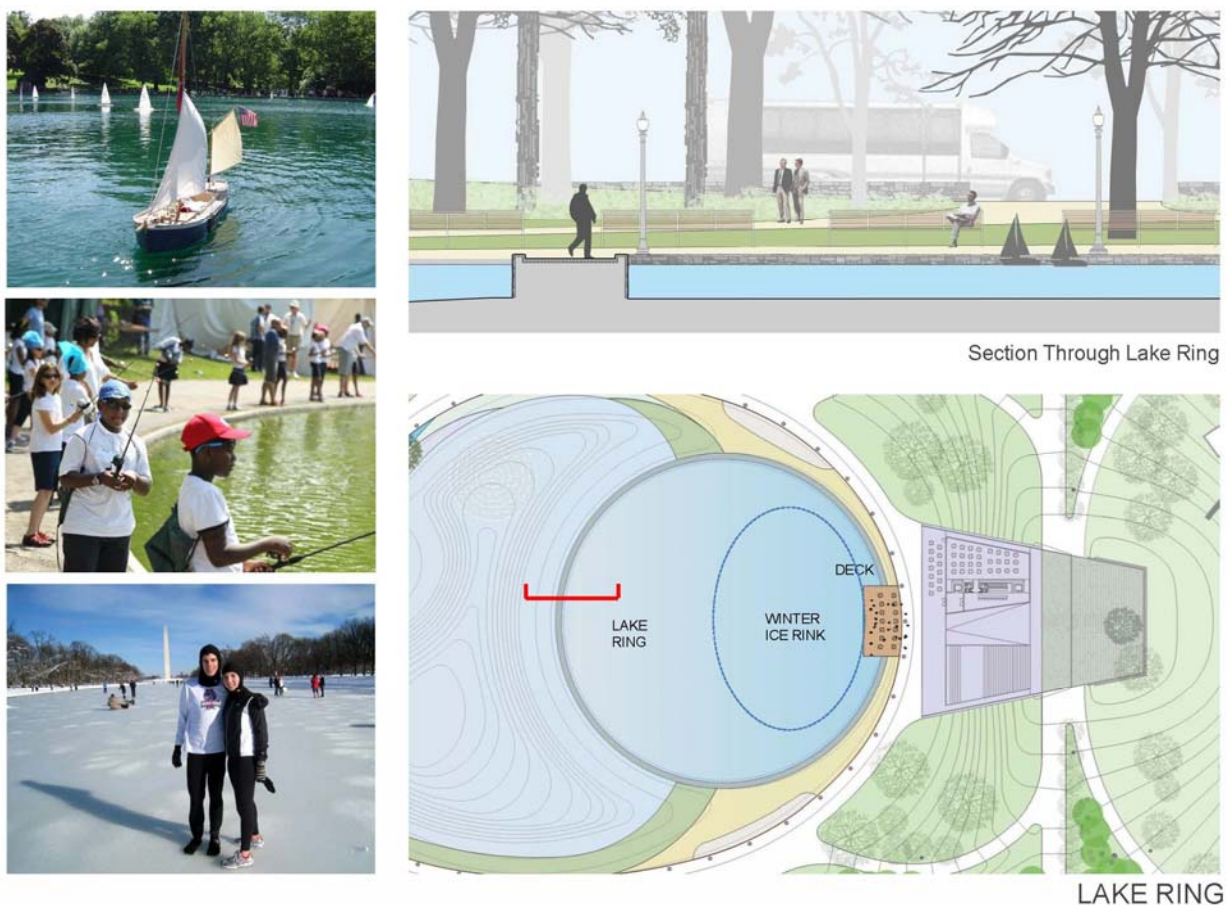


Figure 9: Proposed lake ring

Project Phasing

The project will be designed and constructed in two phases. Phase 1 is focused on the northeast corner and the northern edge of the site and will include the relocation of the Lockkeeper's House, the new entry plaza at Constitution Avenue and 17th Street, the construction of a temporary event terrace, and the construction of a portion of the garden wall and landscape improvements along

Constitution Avenue and 17th Street. Phase 2 would include the new pavilion, improvements to the lake, modifications to the circulation paths, and the remainder of the landscape improvements.



Figure 10: Project Phasing

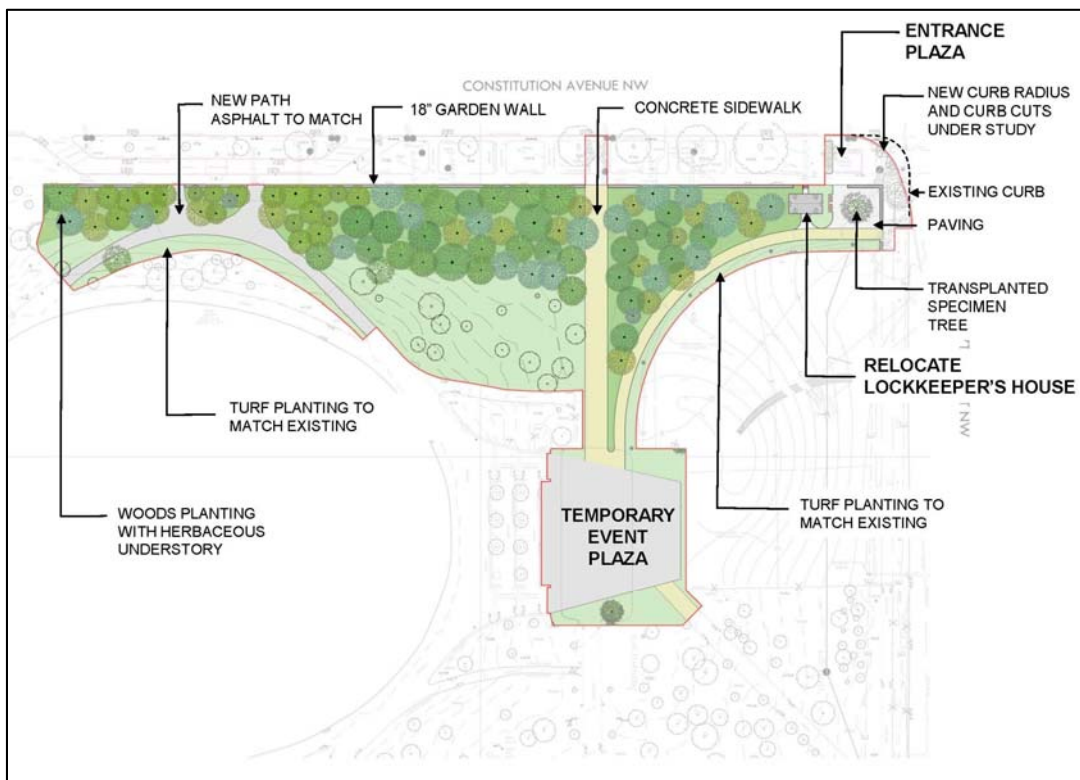


Figure 11: Phase 1 Plan

II. PROJECT ANALYSIS/CONFORMANCE

Executive Summary

The proposal to rehabilitate Constitution Gardens conforms to policies and objectives in the National Mall Plan as well as the Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital. The project responds to the objectives in the National Mall Plan to maintain the original vision of Constitution Gardens as a symbolic landscape or “front yard” for the nation and to develop upon and improve that vision into a place that is accessible, flexible, and sustainable. The project will improve the conditions of Constitution Gardens by amending the soils, upgrading the circulation system, reconstructing the lake as a sustainable water feature, provide a multipurpose visitor facility, promote a new use for the Lockkeeper’s House, and offer a variety of flexible spaces that can be used for different types of events. The project would activate Constitution Gardens during the day and night throughout the year as a place of recreation, entertainment, relaxation, and a location for small scale events and demonstrations. Staff recommends that the Commission **strongly support the project and the National Park Service’s efforts to partner with the Trust for the National Mall to improve the condition of Constitution Gardens and establish a destination that serves visitors and residents by providing opportunities for entertainment, enjoyment, and recreation.**

Analysis

NPS has developed three alternatives that respond to the problems and issues present in Constitution Gardens. Poor quality soils have stunted tree growth, and the concrete-lined shallow lake contains 5.5 million gallons of potable water without a circulation system which has resulted in water quality problems. In addition, the existing asphalt walks embedded with small stones are deteriorating and difficult to maintain. Furthermore, the Lockkeeper’s House is currently not being used, requires preservation work and its location impacts pedestrian visibility and safety. All three alternatives address issues related to natural resources, cultural resources, circulation, visitor facilities, and visitor enjoyment and education. All alternatives have the potential to be successful in creating an environment that can be enjoyed by residents and visitors and provide a restful place while also accommodating a variety of special events and activities. Staff is recommending that **the Commission note that the project is consistent with recommendations in the National Mall Plan to establish a pleasant environment within Constitution Gardens that accommodates a variety of activities.**



Figure 12: View towards east with new pavilion and lake ring

While Alternatives 1 and 2 contain individual elements that will meet the objectives of the National Mall Plan to improve conditions within Constitution Gardens, the two alternatives are not as compelling as the Hybrid Alternative. Alternative 1 would alter the topography with berms that would be eight to ten feet tall. The height of these berms could adversely alter the character of Constitution Gardens and the experience of pedestrians as they travel along Constitution Avenue. While the berms proposed under Alternative 2 are lower (seven feet) than Alternative 1, the treatment of the Lockkeeper's House, specifically the proposal to relocate the building 500 feet to the west is not preferable. Relocation of the building at such a distance from its existing location would further separate the resource from its original location, alter its setting, and is not an appropriate preservation approach. In comparing the location of the proposed service access between Alternative 1 and 2, there are advantages to both approaches. Alternative 1 would not require the insertion of a driveway in the landscape, but could cause conflicts with pedestrians as service vehicles would need to use the garden paths. Alternative 2 requires a new driveway, and additional details are needed regarding the design so that it is executed in a sensitive manner. However, there are advantages to underground loading in reducing the visibility of trucks that will be servicing the building and also minimizing the potential for conflicts with visitors or pedestrians in the park. The hybrid alternative proposes to improve the ecological health of the park while also accommodating a variety of activities and therefore, staff is recommending that **the Commission comment favorably on the proposed hybrid alternative that combines ecological functions with socially vibrant spaces to create an accessible, flexible, and sustainable park.**

The strength of the Hybrid Alternative is that it maximizes sustainability principles while also providing improved visitor services that will activate the garden. With the Hybrid Alternative a low wall (18 inches) would be constructed along Constitution Avenue and 17th Street to define the edge of the space and establish a threshold for entering and exiting the park. At 18 inches in height, the wall will likely not be a visual obstruction into the setting of Constitution Gardens. Combined

with the proposed changes to the topography to accommodate the upland woodland area, views into and from Constitution Gardens may be impacted due to the height of the landforms. The topography will be amplified and raised four to eight feet from existing conditions, using fill from the lake excavation. The average height of the hills relative to Constitution Avenue will be six and a half feet. The change in the topography has the potential to alter and block views towards Constitution Gardens from Constitution Avenue as well as from within the garden out towards the street and towards the buildings along Constitution Avenue. The buildings along Constitution including the Federal Reserve Board, American Pharmacists Association, and the National Academy of Sciences help to establish the setting of the park and these views should be considered as the project moves forward. Therefore, staff is recommending that the Commission **request additional simulations of the surrounding views and vistas, both to and from the park in order to better understand the implications of proposed changes to topography and construction of walls along Constitution and 17th Street and the impacts of the pavilion design and lighting on views to and from the World War II Memorial and from other important vantage points along the National Mall.**

In addition, under the hybrid alternative, the Lockkeeper's House would be relocated slightly to the southwest of its current location. As the oldest structure in East and West Potomac Park and the only structure related to the Chesapeake & Ohio and Washington City Canals, shifting the building slightly to the southwest so that it can maintain its historic spatial relationship is a more appropriate preservation approach than moving the structure almost 500 feet to the west (proposed under Alternative 2). The Lockkeeper's House is proposed to be used for small exhibits as well as donor recognition. Additional consultation under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act is required to understand the modifications proposed for the interior of the space and the preservation implications.

With the hybrid alternative, large caliper trees will be preserved in place and a number of unhealthy, hazardous, and dead trees will be removed. While some trees will be temporarily relocated to nearby NPS sites while the soil is remediated, it is not clear what the extent of tree removal will be. Therefore, as the designs are refined and advanced NPS should consider how best to minimize tree removal in order to maximize the number of healthy and historic trees that can be left undisturbed.

The hybrid alternative includes a pavilion with a large basement area at the east end of the lake. It is envisioned that the pavilion will house a high-end restaurant, a grab and go café, bookstore, recreational rentals, and restrooms. The original 1970s design for Constitution Gardens called for a multipurpose visitor center at the east end of the garden, but it was eliminated due to budget constraints. The design intent was clear that the structure would be located on the east in a slightly elevated position to provide views of the lake. The proposed pavilion has been sited on the east end of the lake, but slightly to the west of the pathway that leads visitors from Constitution Avenue towards the World War II Memorial. By siting the pavilion in this location, views towards the memorial will be maintained as well as the pathway that leads to the memorial. The pavilion has also been sited to maximize opportunity for natural ventilation, daylighting, and solar heating. The design of the pavilion will be refined as the project moves forward, but it has been conceived of as a modern, sustainable structure that responds to the users, community, and environment. The

strategy of the design for the pavilion is focused on the need to provide an elegant and low-energy system that responds to the seasonal demands of the climate and its usage. Along with the Lockkeeper's House, the design of the pavilion is anticipated to be further discussed in the Section 106 consultation in order to evaluate the effects of the proposed design on the character of the park. However, the mass, scale, and height of the proposed pavilion seems appropriate for the setting of Constitution Gardens and the placement of the building appears to be in line with the original design intent of the Skidmore, Owings, and Merrill plan of the 1970s. Therefore, staff recommends that **the Commission note that the proposed concept for the pavilion at the east end of the park seems to be of an appropriate mass, scale, and height for the setting of Constitution Gardens.**



Figure 13: View towards lake and new pavilion from western knoll

Access for service vehicles to the pavilion is proposed off of 17th Street to avoid conflicts with pedestrians walking in the garden as well as tour-bus drop off and pick-up points. The design and location of this service drive requires additional refinement and will require coordination and consultation with the District of Columbia Department of Transportation (DDOT). The size of the driveway should be kept to the minimum required. Coordination with DDOT will also be required

for the proposed modifications to the curb radius at Constitution Avenue and 17th Street. While staff recognizes the need to address congestion of the intersection and accommodate tour buses, pedestrian safety should be prioritized over vehicles. Therefore, staff is recommending that the Commission **recommend the National Park Service coordinate with the District of Columbia Department of Transportation on the design and location of the proposed pavilion service entrance on 17th Street and the modifications to the curb radius at Constitution Avenue and 17th Street.**

Recommends that the National Park Service coordinate with the District of Columbia Department of Transportation on the design and location of the proposed pavilion service entrance on 17th Street and the modifications to the curb radius at Constitution Avenue and 17th Street.

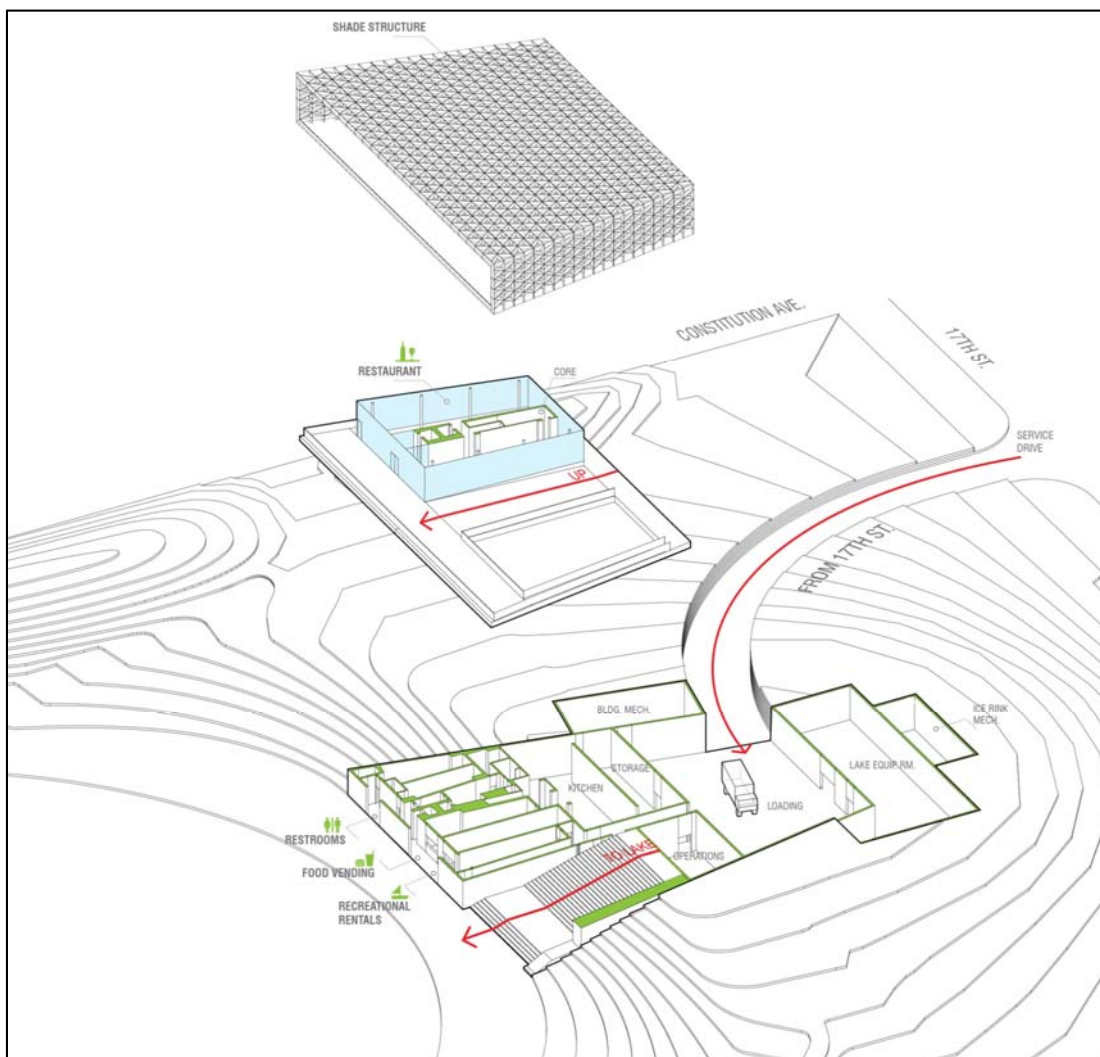


Figure 14: Proposed loading access from 17th Street

Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital

The Constitution Gardens Rehabilitation project would not be inconsistent with the Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital. The project conforms to various policies in the Federal Environment, the Parks and Open Space, the Preservation and Historic Features, and Visitors Elements as noted below.

The project conforms to the following policies in the Federal Environment Element:

- Encourage the use of innovative and environmentally friendly “Best Management Practices” in site and building design and construction practice, such as green roofs, to reduce erosion and avoid pollution of surface waters.
- Encourage the implementation of water reclamation programs at federal facilities for landscape irrigation purposes and other appropriate uses.

The project conforms to the following policies in the Parks and Open Space Element:

- Enhance parks and preserve open green space for future generations.
- Use monumental parks and landscapes to provide settings for public buildings, monuments, and memorials, and to create special environments for limited activities.
- Maintain East and West Potomac Park as an extension of the Mall, as a valuable recreational open space, and as a space that can be used for outdoor cultural events, gatherings, and celebrations.
- Establish and preserve historic parks as important legacies of natural, historic, architectural, and landscape significance.

The project conforms to the following policies in the Preservation and Historic Features Element:

- Plan carefully for appropriate uses and compatible design in and near the monumental core to reinforce and enhance its special role in the image of the nation's capital.
- Protect and enhance the vistas and views, both natural and designed that are an integral part of the national capital's image.
- Identify and protect both the significant historic design integrity and the use of historic landscapes and open space.
- Protect the settings of historic properties, including views to and from the sites where significant, as integral parts of the historic character of the property.
- Develop the monumental core in accordance with the principles of the Legacy Plan and the policies of the Memorials and Museums Master Plan. The National Mall's historic open space and monumental character should be respected and preserved for the benefit of future generations. New development should not infringe on the integrity of the National Mall and the surrounding monumental core, and should be excluded from the Reserve (in accordance with the Commemorative Works Act, as amended).

The project conforms to the following policies in the Visitors Element:

- Continue to support food and retail vendor services at designated locations, while addressing any adverse visual impact to nearby attractions, and any impacts to pedestrian and vehicular accessibility.

- Continue to sponsor displays, special events, and arts, cultural, and recreational activities in, on, and around federal facilities in the monumental core, in other areas of the District, and throughout the region.

National Mall Plan

The National Mall Plan seeks to rehabilitate and refurbish the National Mall so that very high levels of use can be perpetuated and the needs of all visitors and users can be met in an attractive, high-quality, energy-efficient, and sustainable manner. The plan establishes a framework to protect memorials and landscapes while maintaining large areas of un-programmed open space. The plan seeks to balance contemporary uses while respecting the planned historic landscapes of the L'Enfant and McMillan plans.

In terms of Constitution Gardens, the National Mall Plan called for a pleasant place for pedestrians to relax as they visited the National Mall. The National Mall Plan called for Constitution Gardens to be a restful, high-quality, multipurpose visitor destination that would provide food service and opportunities for entertainment, enjoyment, and recreation. Specifically, the National Mall Plan noted that a multipurpose visitor facility with a design that reflects indoor/outdoor garden character would be added near the east end of the lake along with a flexible program or performance space. In addition, the National Mall Plan indicated that the Lockkeeper's House could be relocated and reused for visitor services including information, exhibits, a bookstore, retail sales, recreation equipment rentals, and space for NPS partner activities. Recommendations in the National Mall Plan indicated that the landscape would be improved in accordance with the NPS Cultural Landscape Inventory (2008) and that pedestrian circulation systems would be upgraded with coordinated paving and improved operational access. Other issues specific to Constitution Gardens addressed in the National Mall Plan included the lake in Constitution Gardens; the vision in the plan was that the lake would be rebuilt to be self-sustaining, include a water filtration system, and the use of a non-potable water source would be explored. The National Mall Plan also recommended that urban recreational activities such as fishing or model boating be increased in Constitution Gardens, but not conflict with commemorative experiences or nearby memorials.

The proposed rehabilitation of Constitution Gardens is consistent with the vision put forward in the National Mall Plan.

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)

NCPC and NPS each have an independent responsibility to comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA); NCPC's responsibility stems from its approval authority over the project. NPS is serving as the lead federal agency in the preparation of an Environmental Assessment (EA) and NCPC is a cooperating agency on the EA. A public scoping meeting was held on May 22, 2014 to inform the public, interested stakeholders, and agencies of the project and solicit feedback on environmental issues.

National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA)

NCPC and NPS each have an independent responsibility to comply with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA). NPS has initiated consultation the District of Columbia State Historic Preservation Officer (DC SHPO) as well as other consulting parties. A Section 106 meeting was held on August 7, 2014 to present the alternatives under consideration and solicit comments from consulting parties.

III. CONSULTATION

Coordinating Committee

The Coordinating Committee reviewed the proposal at its September 10, 2014 meeting. The Committee 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 District of Columbia Office of Planning; the State Historic Preservation Officer; the District of Columbia Fire and Emergency Medical Services, the General Services Administration; the National Park Service and the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority.

U.S. Commission of Fine Arts

At its meeting on September 18, 2014, the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts (CFA) reviewed concept plans for the project. CFA approved the concept plan for the Hybrid Alternative and noted its overall support for the project. CFA raised several issues to address as the plans move forward including the design of the access driveway off of 17th Street, the proposed modifications to the curb radius at Constitution Avenue and 17th Street, and the design of the pavilion structure.