



Commission Action

July 7, 2016

PROJECT Building Exterior, Vestibules and Site Improvements National Air and Space Museum The National Mall Washington, DC	NCPC FILE NUMBER 7585
SUBMITTED BY Smithsonian Institution	NCPC MAP FILE NUMBER 1.41(38.00)44186
	APPLICANT'S REQUEST Approval of comments on concept design
	ACTION TAKEN Approve comments as requested
	REVIEW AUTHORITY Approval per 40 U.S.C. § 8722(b)(1) and (d)

The Commission:

Comments favorably on the overall concept design for the Building Exterior, Vestibules and Site Improvements at the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum (NASM), National Mall Building. The Commission suggests the following comments on the project:

Building Envelope

Notes that the existing exterior stone cladding must be completely replaced due to extensive deterioration caused by the original wall system design.

Recommends that the applicant continue to work closely with NCPC, the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts, and the District of Columbia State Historic Preservation Office to identify an appropriate cladding material that meets the performance criteria. If Tennessee Pink Marble, the original stone, is determined to be infeasible, consider ways to achieve a seamless transition between the exterior cladding and the interior stone treatment, and to avoid, minimize, or mitigate adverse effects on the National Air and Space Museum Building and the National Mall Historic District.

Terrace Improvements Alternatives

Notes that the Smithsonian has submitted two alternatives to improve the terraces.

Supports *Scheme A: Ground Plane* option (Smithsonian Preferred Alternative), because this scheme better achieves the terrace improvement design objectives, in addition:

- Creates a welcoming, and inviting public space for people.
- Provides a balanced transition between building massing, landscape and human scale.

- Minimizes solid walls by eliminating planters and providing ground level planting beds which improves public safety and visibility.
- Accommodates wider walkways, which enhances circulation and creates a sense of openness.
- Provides shade canopy trees by accommodating adequate soil volume and extended root zones.
- Enhances view corridors between the museum grounds and the National Mall.

Does not support *Scheme B: Planter* option, which proposes a raised planter system that follows the “building sitting on a plinth” architectural vocabulary because the design:

- Creates narrower walkways, with taller planters which obstructs visibility and affects circulation.
- Provides less shade by limiting soil volume which constrains plant selection to smaller species.

Perimeter Security

Recommends the applicant address the following comments to improve “*Scheme A – Ground Plane*” perimeter security:

- Minimize the use of bollards and explore integrated perimeter security elements that also function as a public amenity, such as seating, decorative light poles, signage, trash receptacles, bike racks, public art and other streetscape elements.
- Remove or adjust proposed bollards within planting bed areas at corner conditions to achieve a better transition between different security elements, avoid conflicts with landscape and ease maintenance.
- Further refine the design and material of the proposed perimeter security walls to complement the architectural character of the NASM and landscape approach.
- Ensure that the proposed perimeter security is consistent with the existing *Mall-Wide Perimeter Security* plan previously approved by the Commission and is compatible with the placement of security barriers for other buildings along the National Mall.
- Evaluate placement and alignment of existing bollards at the south entrance along Independence Avenue, SW to improve pedestrian circulation and reduce visual clutter; particularly, near pedestrian cross walks and bus stops to allow safe pedestrian waiting and drop off areas.

Streetscape Amenities

- Further evaluate the relocation of the existing Continuum sculpture on the museum grounds in collaboration with NCPC, the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts, and the District of Columbia State Historic Preservation Office. The proposed sculpture location along 4th Street, SW on the east terrace is preferable, as it establishes a focal point along the urban corridor and reinforce the building east-west axis. Viewshed studies should be prepared for each of the proposed locations to analyze visual impacts.

- Confirm exterior lighting will not detract from the setting of the National Mall and respects the hierarchy of monuments, important civic buildings and spaces in the nation's capital, with the U.S. Capitol and Washington Monument the most prominent features in the nighttime skyline.
- Explore opportunities to better accommodate existing street vendor venues into the streetscape design to activate the museum grounds and consider locations with high levels of pedestrian activity. Ensure that vendor facilities do not detract from accessibility or aesthetics of the museum while maintaining a pleasant environment.

Circulation and Visitor Experience

- Provide seating and shade in proximity to existing bus stops, where possible.
- Improve bicycle facilities, provide additional bike rack locations around the site, in particular along 7th Street, SW, and consider future Capital Bikeshare stations as a way to encourage sustainable transportation alternatives.

Landscape

- Maximize landscape and planting areas in lieu of additional hardscape where possible, specifically at the northwest corner of the building along Jefferson Drive and on the west side of the large exhibit driveway curb cut along Independence Avenue.
- Preserve mature trees to the maximum extent possible, and when tree removal is necessary, replace trees on-site to prevent a net tree loss to the project area in accordance to the District of Columbia tree canopy protection regulations.

West Terrace

- Provide seating opportunities, considering orientation and placement, to enjoy views towards the existing sculpture and water feature.
- Preserve the natural character of the existing memorial tree grove located on the west portion of the site. This green space is the portal to the park-like setting of the National Mall and reinforces the symbolic connection along 7th Street.
- Further explore the proposed perimeter security treatment along the 7th Street frontage to ensure a graceful transition between the existing perimeter security walls along the west lawn and the proposed fountain and avoid introducing bollards adjacent to the fountain and near the existing bus stop.
- Align existing bollards with other perimeter security elements if possible, particularly at the large exhibit driveway curb cut along Independence Avenue, SW.

Security Vestibules

- Protect the significant vista along Independence Avenue by ensuring that the proposed south vestibule does not project into this L'Enfant Plan right-of-way.

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- Provide a viewshed study along Independence Avenue to determine potential visual impacts on the L'Enfant right-of-way and evaluate if the proposed south vestibule scale and massing is compatible with the existing context.
 - Examine whether and how the proposed north vestibule will impact reciprocal viewsheds between the NASM and significant buildings, including the National Gallery of Art West Building, the U.S. Capitol, and the Washington Monument.

//Original Signed//

07/05/2016

Julia A. Koster

Date

Secretary to the National Capital Planning Commission

