



Delegated Action of the Executive Director

PROJECT Smithsonian Zoological Park - New Lower Zoo Kiosk and Bandshell Smithsonian Zoological Park 3001 Connecticut Avenue, NW Washington, DC	NCPC FILE NUMBER 7862
SUBMITTED BY Smithsonian Institution	NCPC MAP FILE NUMBER 2.00(38.00)44507
	ACTION TAKEN Approve as requested
	REVIEW AUTHORITY Approval Per 40 U.S.C. § 8722(b)(1) and (d)

The Smithsonian Institution has submitted preliminary and final site and building plans for the construction of the new Friends of the National Zoo (FONZ) *Lower Zoo Kiosk and Bandshell* at the National Zoological Park (Zoo). The project is located near the National Zoo's Lower Entry Plaza, along Olmstead Walk, the Zoo's primary pedestrian spine. The Lower Entry to the Zoo is the entry point from Harvard Street, Beach Drive, and two of the Zoo's parking lots, providing access to pedestrians entering from the Adams Morgan neighborhood, or visitors coming from shuttle or bus. Nearby visitor amenities, include a police station, a restaurant, and a multi-use event space and public restroom building that was approved by the Commission on June 2, 2016.

The project entails construction of two small pavilions to replace the existing FONZ kiosk and bandshell with more functional and attractive structures to enhance the visitor experience. The project includes a total of 4,395 square feet, comprising a new kiosk, stroller storage, vending area and bandshell, as well as 10,289 square feet of landscape improvements. The limit of disturbance for the project is 0.42 acres (18,424 square feet). The project was included in the National Zoological Park Master Plan that was approved by the Commission on November 6, 2008. The master plan included revitalization and reconfiguration of the lower zoo entry to provide visitor services such as information kiosks, rental, retail, and event space.

The existing pre-fabricated kiosk provides information, parking payment, along with strollers, wheelchairs rental and storage services. The primary transaction window has open wood shutters that counteract any heating and cooling of the interior space. The strollers are stored in an adjacent area surrounded by a low wooden fence and covered with a tarp to protect against the elements. In front of the stroller corral, vending machines are located along Olmstead Walk, and are one of the first things visitors see upon entering the Lower Zoo entrance area. The existing bandshell, located to the east of the kiosk, serves as a performance space and includes a concrete pad with a tensile tarp structure. The front of the bandshell faces Lion/Tiger Hill, while providing a direct view at the rear of the kiosk and stroller storage.

The new information kiosk and rental stroller storage will provide conditioned space for employees, enclosed vending machines, and permanent protection for strollers and wheelchairs from the elements. The intent of the new orientation of the kiosk is to create a direct sight line for

visitors entering the park that aligns with the placement of the bandshell while also preserving an existing specimen oak tree, which is one of a pair of trees along Olmstead Walk that frame the Lower Zoo Entry. The glass kiosk will include a sliding window and metal countertop to allow FONZ staff to assist guests while helping to conserve energy by containing the conditioned air inside the kiosk. The small court between the kiosk and stroller storage area will enable staff to have strollers ready for use while benches located in front of the kiosk and under the shade of the existing oak tree will benefit visitors waiting for strollers. The west side of the stroller storage will incorporate a covered niche in which the relocated vending machines are accessible, but concealed from Olmsted Walk and the Lower Zoo entry plaza.

The placement and design of the bandshell maximizes views for performance and event attendees from Lion/Tiger Hill. The bandshell will include four steel columns supporting a permanent sloping curved metal roof. The curve of the canopy gives a light character to the structure, while allowing for greater views. The bandshell will also contain connections for lighting and sound equipment as well as a space for a catering truck during special events. The bandshell will include composite wood on the underside of the canopy to soften the composition. The stone granite wall of the stroller storage will stretch on a parallel path at the rear of the performance area, acting as backdrop and providing a continuous face from Olmsted Walk, thus enabling the kiosk and bandshell to face opposite directions. The roof of the kiosk will mimic the bandshell roof, with a long sweeping form. The overhanging roof on the south side of the kiosk will provide additional screening from direct sunlight. The shape of the roof and the long parallel walls of the kiosk, storage, and bandshell unite the structures in a complimentary way.

The proposed building materials reflect the existing character of the nearby structures at the Zoo and the unique location within Rock Creek Park, yet with a contemporary approach. The materials include Corinthian Granite stone, glazed aluminum storefront, steel columns, composite wood cladding, and metal roofing. As part of the landscape improvements, the plan list includes evergreen and ornamental trees, shrubs, grasses, and groundcovers to provide a multi-seasonal expression, visual interest, and shade. The plan includes removal of three trees and preservation of twelve mature trees. The planting plan proposes ten understory deciduous trees and three evergreen trees. Overall, the amount and quality of landscaping within the site will increase substantially as a result of the project. In addition, the project includes low impact development strategies to meet local and federal stormwater management requirements, such as a bioretention facility, and permeable pavers to mitigate the increase of impervious surface area from 0.13 acres to 0.18 acres; and capture and treat stormwater runoff within the project site.

The Smithsonian Institution does not have an independent responsibility to fulfill the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) as it is not considered a federal agency for purposes of NEPA. However, as a result of its approval authority over the project NCPC does have an independent NEPA responsibility. NCPC staff evaluated the environmental analysis that the Smithsonian Institution submitted and determined that approval of the project meets NCPC's categorical exclusion §8(C)(21) of the Commission's Environmental and Historic Preservation Policies and Procedures. This categorical exclusion applies to the review and approval of acquisition of occupiable space by lease acquisition, construction, or expansion, or improvement of an existing facility when specific conditions are met. These conditions include the following:

1) the structure and proposed use are in compliance with local planning and zoning and any applicable District of Columbia, state, or federal requirements; 2) the proposed use will not substantially increase the number of motor vehicles at the facility; 3) the site and scale of construction are consistent with those of existing adjacent or nearby buildings; and 4) there is no evidence of community controversy or other environmental issues. Prior to applying this categorical exclusion, NCPC staff determined that no extraordinary circumstances were present as required by the Commission's NEPA procedures.

Both the Smithsonian and NCPC have a responsibility to satisfy the requirements of Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. Following consultation with NCPC staff and the District of Columbia State Historic Preservation Officer (DC SHPO), the Smithsonian determined that the project would not adversely affect historic properties, specifically the National Zoo which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. On January 19, 2017, the DC SHPO concurred with the Smithsonian's determination. NCPC has elected to designate the Smithsonian Institution as lead agency pursuant to 36 CFR § 800.2(a)(2) to satisfy the Commission's Section 106 responsibility.

The Coordinating Committee reviewed the proposal at its February 8, 2017 meeting. Without objection, the Committee forwarded it to the Commission with the statement that the project has been coordinated with all participating agencies. The participating agencies were NCPC; the General Services Administration; the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority; the National Park Service; the District of Columbia Office of Planning; the State Historic Preservation Office; the District Department of Transportation; and the District Department of Energy and Environment.

* * *

Pursuant to delegations of authority adopted by the Commission on October 3, 1996 and per 40 U.S.C. § 8722(b)(1) and (d), I approve the preliminary and final site and building plans for the New Lower Zoo Kiosk and Bandshell at the Smithsonian National Zoological Park, located at 3001 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Washington, DC.

// Original Signed //

February 24, 2017

Marcel Acosta
Executive Director

Date