



## Commission Action

November 2, 2017

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<b>PROJECT</b> <b>Building Exterior, Vestibules and Site Improvements</b> National Air and Space Museum Independence Avenue at 6th Street, SW Washington, DC	<b>NCPC FILE NUMBER</b> 7585
<b>SUBMITTED BY</b> Smithsonian Institution	<b>NCPC MAP FILE NUMBER</b> 1.41(38.00)44627
<b>REVIEW AUTHORITY</b> Approval per 40 U.S.C. § 8722(b)(1) and (d)	<b>APPLICANT'S REQUEST</b> Approval of comments on revised concept design
	<b>ACTION TAKEN</b> Approved amended comments on revised concept design

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The Commission:

Provides the following comments on the revised concept design for the National Air and Space Museum Building Exterior, Vestibules, and Site Improvements:

### West End of the Site

**Finds** that the west end of the site, which contains the “Delta Solar” sculpture, contributes to the series of public spaces located along Seventh Street that connect the National Mall, the Southwest Waterfront and downtown.

**Notes** that the Delta Solar sculpture was originally installed in a shallow reflecting pool on the west end of the National Air and Space Museum in 1977. The pool has not been operational since 1995; however, the sculpture maintains its original configuration.

**Finds** that the reflection of the sculpture in the water is an integral part to the sculpture composition. The sculpture and its associated water feature contribute to the historic character of the museum and the National Mall.

**Notes** that the July 2016 concept design included the relocation of the Delta Solar sculpture closer to the corner of Independence Avenue and Seventh Street. The proposal included the replacement of the shallow pool with a plinth that had a similar proportion to the original pool. The plinth functioned as a water feature and an integrated perimeter security measure for the base of the sculpture.

**Does not support** the revised configuration of the Delta Solar consisting of a dry plinth without a water feature as the sculpture base, because it does not create a welcoming entry to the museum and the National Mall, and negatively impacts the integrity of the sculpture, and therefore;

**Recommends** that the Smithsonian consider how this portion of the site could reinforce the network of active gathering spaces along 7th Street.

**Requests** that the Smithsonian submit a revised design for the west end plaza that incorporates the following:

- A water feature that operates year-round and maintains the relationship with the Delta Solar sculpture in a creative and sustainable manner.
- Programming for outdoor cultural events, gatherings, celebrations, and passive recreation. Flexible areas to accommodate congregating and place-making activities.
- Site amenities, including benches that take into account views toward the sculpture.
- Food vendors and its associated signage, as well as movable tables and chairs for casual seating areas.
- Low impact paths within the existing grove of trees to allow visitors to experience the park and permeable pavers on the plaza.
- An integrated space that incorporates the adjacent exhibit access area as part of the plaza composition.
- Night views of the southwest corner, depicting the lighting approach for the plaza elements, including the water feature, sculpture and benches.
- Interpretive signage to inform the public regarding the history and design intent of the Delta Solar.

**Recommends** that the Smithsonian evaluate the perimeter security along 7<sup>th</sup> Street to allow greater accessibility and visibility into the plaza. The applicant should also consider opportunities to integrate perimeter security elements that also function as public amenities, such as benches, bike racks, landscape and other streetscape elements.

**Notes** that since the project submission to the National Capital Planning Commission, and the Commission of Fine Arts' review on October 19, 2017, the Smithsonian has committed to retaining a water feature for the Delta Solar, which will be incorporated into the preliminary and final design.

### Overall Site

**Requests** a streetscape plan that incorporates the following amenities:

- Benches located near bus stops, building entrances, and terrace corners at the sidewalk and terrace levels.
- Bicycle facilities such as bicycle racks and a Capital Bikeshare station near the museum entrances and in proximity to guard booths.

**Recommends** that the Smithsonian work with the National Park Service to improve the streetscape surrounding the museum consistent with the *National Mall Streetscape Manual*, where applicable.

**Recommends** that the Smithsonian coordinate with the National Park Service regarding the relocation of the "Ad Astra" sculpture to the sidewalk space along Jefferson Drive, and ensure that

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the placement of the sculpture does not disrupt pedestrian flow and provides sufficient clearance for bus drop off and pick up areas.

**Notes** that all paving, soil, and planter systems need to be removed to replace the terrace roof waterproof membrane. Therefore, 97 percent of the existing trees will be removed from the museum grounds.

**Requests** that the Smithsonian submit landscape plans at preliminary review that include tree replacement to prevent net loss of tree canopy in accordance with the procedures established in the policies related to *Tree Canopy and Vegetation* in the *Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital*.

**Requests** that the Smithsonian retain the south entrance canopy as a desirable option if future funding permits.

//Original Signed//

11/03/2017

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Julia A. Koster

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Date

Secretary to the National Capital Planning Commission