

Executive Director's Recommendation

Commission Meeting: October 5, 2017

PROJECT
Central Parking Facility
National Zoological Park
3001 Connecticut Avenue, NW

Washington, DC

SUBMITTED BY

Smithsonian Institution

REVIEW AUTHORITYFederal Projects in the District per 40 U.S.C. § 8722(b)(1) and (d)

NCPC FILE NUMBER

7911

NCPC MAP FILE NUMBER 2.00(38.00)44610

APPLICANT'S REQUEST

Approval of comments on concept

design

PROPOSED ACTION

Approve comments on concept

design

ACTION ITEM TYPEStaff Presentation

PROJECT SUMMARY

The Smithsonian Institution (SI) has submitted a proposal related to the previously approved Central Parking Facility (CPF) at the National Zoological Park (NZP) in Northwest Washington, DC. SI is requesting an increase in the number of parking spaces for the structured parking garage previously approved by the Commission in the 2008 master plan. SI is also seeking comments on the garage massing/design to inform its request for proposal process. Upon selection of a consultant, the SI will submit a concept design for the facility in 2018.

The CPF was originally proposed as an effort to consolidate surface parking and expand parking capacity in the facility's 2008 master plan. It would be constructed at the northeastern edge of the facility—above the General Services Building and Parking Lot C adjacent to the Beach Drive portion of Rock Creek Park. The applicant is requesting approval of 1,285 spaces for the garage, which is 166 more visitor spaces than the 2008 master plan proposal. The number of employee and volunteer parking spaces remains the same as the 2008 master plan.

SI is also seeking comments on a high-level massing concept and viewshed analysis for the proposed CPF based on 1,285 spaces. The applicant has noted that they are in the procurement phase to establish a public-private partnership (P3) for the design, construction, operation, and maintenance of the facility. They have indicated that Commission comments on this concept massing will be used to inform the selection process and eventual design alternatives. SI plans to work with the selected P3 team to further develop feasible design options, which will be submitted to the Commission for a future concept review. Close coordination between SI, the National Park Service (NPS), and NCPC is anticipated as the process continues.

KEY INFORMATION

Increase in Visitor Parking Spaces

- The SI requested 1,454 parking spaces for visitors and 166 parking spaces for employees/volunteers in its 2008 master plan submission.
- NCPC denied 300 visitor spaces and 35 employee/volunteer spaces at that time, citing a lack of adequate traffic analysis. The Commission approved 1,019 parking spaces for visitors and 166 spaces for employees/volunteers.
- To address the Commission's disapproval of 335 spaces in 2008, SI has conducted a comprehensive traffic analysis that evaluates the impact of 166 additional vehicles on adjacent roadways. DDOT has reviewed this analysis, and has found that the proposed mitigation would sufficiently address any impacts to the transportation network.
- SI is now asking for an increase of 166 visitor parking spaces. They are not changing the number of spaces for employees/volunteers from what the Commission approved in 2008. These spaces meet the NCPC parking ratio goal of 1:4.
- While the Commission's 2008 disapproval of 335 spaces was solely based on lack of sufficient traffic analysis, staff believes that, nine years later, the need and rationale for additional parking spaces should be evaluated based on new trends in visitor and transportation data.
- The NZP is unique among federal facilities in Washington because it serves as a regional family attraction and is surrounded by a residential neighborhood and sensitive natural habitat in Rock Creek Park.
- The typical visitor is a family with young children (61% of visitor groups include children), and unlike other SI facilities in Washington, there are limited public/shared parking areas nearby. The nearest Metrorail station, Woodley Park-Zoo Metro Station, is a half-mile walk to the zoo entrance. In addition, the Olmsted Walk is as an approximately one-mile walk at a steep incline through the zoo itself.
- Neither NCPC nor the District Department of Transportation (DDOT) has policies that provide parking guidance in this unique context; therefore, the project must be individually evaluated considering available data and the neighborhood setting. Accordingly, staff analysis is based on data related to visitation trends, mode split, and trip origin.
- SI has based its proposal and accompanying parking supply analysis on the assumption that visitation would increase to 3.5 million annual visitors by 2027-2032, as described in the 2008 master plan. NCPC staff believes that this assumption is still valid given visitation trends and population forecasts for the region.
- NCPC staff believes that recent shifts from automobile usage (from 65% in 2007 to 53% in 2015) indicate a commitment by the SI to reduce parking demand to the extent practicable—considering the typical visitor profile of families with children.
- SI staff has indicated that the NZP is unique in its regional draw, noting that many visitors are taking day-trips to the city and need to park their vehicle to visit the zoo.

Garage Design and Massing

- The CPF would be constructed above the General Services Building and existing Parking Lot C, which are built into the hillside at northeastern edge of the zoo along the North Road.
- There are significant topographic shifts in this area of the zoo, with the proposed CPF location steeply sloping down to the immediately adjacent Rock Creek stream valley.
- Much of the stream valley is administered by the NPS as part of Rock Creek Park, and is maintained in a natural state—with dense vegetation that largely screens views from Beach Drive to the adjacent zoo and neighborhood.
- This proposal is highly conceptual at this point in the process. SI has not verified that the
 proposed massing can be structurally supported on top of the General Services Building,
 but has conducted studies that indicate that, in general, a garage of this size could be
 accommodated at this site.
- Commission comments will be used to inform the selection of a P3 team that will develop
 a more detailed proposal for the future garage (15% concept design), which will then come
 back to NCPC for a second concept review.
- The approximately 118,000 square-foot, six-level parking facility would provide a pedestrian bridge connection over North Road to the zoo's Olmsted Walk.
- The 166 spaces that require NCPC approval would only marginally increase the size of the garage relative to the original design.
- Viewshed analyses indicate that the massing of this larger garage could be effectively screened to minimize visual intrusion from Olmsted Walk, and from Klingle and Adams Mill Roads.
- Because of the adjacent natural habitat, staff further believes that the CPF should be developed to effectively reduce stormwater runoff and emphasize sustainability.

RECOMMENDATION

The Commission:

Site Context

Notes that NCPC approved 1,285 parking spaces for the National Zoological Park (NZP) in 2008, which included the development of a structured parking garage. The Smithsonian Institution (SI) is requesting an increase of 166 spaces.

Notes that the proposal would consolidate four of five surface parking lots into a Central Parking Facility (CPF) to reclaim space for new animal habitat and stormwater management.

Notes that, unlike other federal facilities and SI attractions in Washington, the location and use of the zoo is unique. It is a regional family attraction in a residential neighborhood with limited public/shared parking options.

Notes that the nearest Metrorail station is a half-mile walk from the entrance to the zoo, and the Olmsted Walk within the zoo is a one-mile route on a steep incline, which can be challenging for many of the zoo's visitors, such as families with young children.

Notes that the SI projects that annual visitation will increase to 3.5 million over the next 10-15 years, which is approximately one million more visitors than current conditions. An increase of this magnitude will require a comprehensive transportation strategy that places greater emphasis on alternative transportation as a means to meet visitation demand.

Finds that there are no District or federal policies that address visitor parking in this unique context, and therefore, the project must be individually evaluated considering available data and the neighborhood context.

Parking Increase

Finds that data on transportation impacts, visitor statistics, and transportation mode split suggests that an increase in parking would help meet parking demand, and that the impacts of an increase could be mitigated through the implementation of transportation demand management (TDM) strategies. Such strategies are described in the submission, and include working with the District Department of Transportation (DDOT) to provide a stop at the NZP for the DC Circulator bus, extending a shuttle bus to Cleveland Park Metro Station, and eliminating free parking for zoo employees.

Finds that SI has provided a new comprehensive traffic analysis to address Commission concerns expressed in its 2008 disapproval of an additional 335 spaces. DDOT has reviewed the analysis and supports its conclusions.

Finds that the requested increase of 166 spaces, which would still result in the NZP turning vehicles away 69 days of the year, is a reasonable request to address parking deficiencies in the short term, but long-term solutions are needed to accommodate visitation increases and reduce parking demand into the future.

Supports an increase in parking spaces at the NZP from 1,285 to 1,451—a difference of 166 spaces that would be located in the proposed CPF.

Comprehensive Transportation Strategy

Requests that the SI updates the TDM strategies outlined in the 2008 transportation management plan and 2017 comprehensive transportation analysis within two years to include creative approaches to promoting alternative transportation and reducing parking demand, such as:

- Demand-based pricing for parking;
- Timed entry passes for vehicles;
- Storage lockers for visitors without personal vehicles;

- Dedicated areas for rideshare pickup and drop off;
- Reconsideration of unlimited free parking for zoo members; and
- Improved navigational signage and wayfinding for bicycles.

Requires that the SI demonstrates measurable progress over time in reducing vehicular travel as a share of total mode split among zoo visitors before any future parking increases are considered by the Commission.

Garage Design and Massing

Notes that the proposed CPF sits at a topographic high point adjacent to an important visual corridor and sensitive riparian area in Rock Creek Park.

Requests that, in the continued development of the CPF, the SI:

- Pursues a design and massing that would minimize visual intrusion from Olmsted Walk and Rock Creek Park, with particular emphasis on views from Beach Drive and adjacent recreational trails;
- Protects the adjacent natural habitat by retaining and treating stormwater on-site to eliminate runoff into Rock Creek; and
- Follows best management practices related to low-impact development and sustainability, such as incorporation of green roofs, vegetated walls, and solar infrastructure.

Requests that, for the next submission, the SI submits:

- An updated viewshed analysis that includes views from Beach Drive and adjacent recreational trails; and
- Alternative garage treatments that would reduce visual impacts.

PROJECT REVIEW TIMELINE

Previous actions	October 2008 – Approval of National Zoo Master Plan, which included the Central Parking Facility		
	February 2011 – Approval of comments on concept design for North Road/General Services Building Retaining Wall in preparation for Central Parking Facility		
	June 2012 – Preliminary and final approval for North Road/General Services Building Retaining Wall		
Remaining actions (anticipated)	Approval of comments on concept design for Central Parking Facility		
	- Preliminary and final review of Central Parking Facility		

PROJECT ANALYSIS

Submission Proposal

To frame the analysis, it is important to first understand master planning and visitation trends at the National Zoological Park (NZP). In its 2008 master plan, the Smithsonian Institution (SI) proposed a complete overhaul of parking across the facility. This was, in part, to reclaim space for new animal habitat and stormwater management, but was also intended to help meet an anticipated increase in visitor demand. The zoo had experienced a jump in visitation at this time, which hit a then-peak of approximately 2.6 million annual visitors in both 2006 and 2007. The SI expected to increase further, and planned to provide adequate facilities to accommodate 3.5 million annual visitors by 2027-2032.

In part to facilitate this increase, the SI suggested consolidating four surface parking lots along North Road—the park's main access road—into two parking garages. The first garage was proposed as a subsurface structure that would provide 300 spaces under Parking Lot A, near the Connecticut Avenue zoo entrance. The second was an above-ground, 1,128-space parking garage that would be built on existing Parking Lot C, which sits above the zoo's single-story General Services Building. The only surface lots retained as part of the plan were Parking Lot E (172 spaces), and employee-only parking at Holt House in the Research Hill area of the zoo (20 spaces). The former surface parking lots would be reclaimed for new animal habitat and stormwater management. In total, the master plan requested 1,620 spaces, which represented an increase of 732 spaces from the existing 888. Included in this total were 201 spaces for employees/volunteers, which meets the NCPC 1:4 parking ratio at the National Zoo, as well as 1,419 visitor spaces. Given the SI forecast of 3.5 million visitors by 2027-2032, it is estimated that this increase would meet visitor demand on 85% of days—meaning that the parking supply would not meet demand 15% of the time (55 days). SI staff has indicated that this is the ideal parking scenario at the NZP, accommodating visitors on all but the busiest days of the year.

In its October 2008 review of the master plan, NCPC conducted a comprehensive evaluation of the parking proposal. At that time, the Commission ultimately elected to disapprove the 300-space underground garage proposed at Parking Lot A, as well as 35 spaces that were to be designated for official vehicles and volunteers (335 spaces total). The Commission Action noted that the accompanying transportation management plan (TMP) was not able to demonstrate that the provision of these spaces conformed to the Transportation Element of the *Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital*, and that the plan had not adequately addressed potential adverse traffic impacts on surrounding roadways and intersections. Staff's presentation to the Commission articulated that the proposal's inadequacy to conform to the Transportation Element was based on a lack of analysis for traffic congestion. While the Executive Director's Recommendation did not provide a detailed breakdown of which spaces were approved in which locations, the review resulted in a final NCPC approval of 1,285 spaces for the National Zoo. Included in this total were 166 spaces for employees/volunteers, and 1,119 visitor spaces. This approval would allow the zoo to meet future visitor demand 75% of days, while parking would not meet demand 25% of the time (91 days).

SI staff has indicated that 91 days of inadequate parking, where zoo staff must turn away vehicles, is contrary to the NZP educational mission, and detrimental to adjacent neighborhoods that are burdened by spillover parking from displaced visitors. To help address these concerns, the SI is requesting an increase of 166 visitor spaces in the current proposal, which is roughly half of the amount that the Commission denied based on lack of traffic data in its review of the 2008 master plan. The number of employee/volunteer spaces that the Commission approved in 2008, which met NCPC's parking ratio of 1:4, would not be changed. SI's proposal would result in a total of 1,451 parking spaces for the entire zoo, with 1,285 spaces (visitors) in the CPF and 166 employee/volunteer spaces in the retained Parking Lot E and Research Hill employee parking. Should the NZP reach its projection of 3.5 million visitors by 2027-2032, it could meet visitor demand 81% of days, while parking would not meet demand 19% of the time (69 days). This and other parking supply analyses are summarized in Table 1.

	# of Parking Spaces (including 166 spaces for employees/volunteers)	# of days there is enough parking (% of the year)	# of days people can't park (% of the year)
Existing Condition	888	234 (64%)	131 (36%)
SI Request in 2008	1,620 (1,454 for visitors)	310 (85%)	55 (15%)
NCPC Approval in 2008	1,285 (1,110 for visitors)	274 (75%)	91 (25%)
Current Proposal	1,451 (1,285 for visitors)	296 (81%)	69 (19%)

Table 1. Parking Supply Analysis (for projected 3.5 million visitors/year by 2027-2032)

Analysis

The following analysis is organized around the two main components of the submission—an increase in the number of parking spaces at the zoo, and the proposed massing for the CPF concept.

Increase in Visitor Parking Spaces

While the Commission's 2008 disapproval of 335 spaces was solely based on lack of sufficient traffic analysis, staff believes that, nine years later, the need and rationale for additional parking spaces should be evaluated based on new trends in visitor and transportation data. The NZP is unique among federal facilities in Washington because it serves as a regional family attraction and is surrounded by a residential neighborhood and sensitive natural habitat in Rock Creek Park. The typical visitor is a family with young children (61% of visitor groups include children), and unlike other SI facilities Washington, there are limited public/shared parking areas nearby. The nearest Metrorail station, Woodley Park-Zoo Metro Station, is a half-mile walk to the zoo entrance. In addition, the Olmsted Walk is as an approximately one-mile walk at a steep incline through the zoo itself. Neither NCPC nor the District Department of Transportation (DDOT) has policies that provide parking guidance in this unique context; therefore, the project must be individually

evaluated considering available data and the neighborhood setting. Accordingly, staff analysis is based on data related to visitation trends, mode split, and trip origin.

Visitation Trends

SI based its proposal and accompanying parking supply analysis on the assumption that visitation would increase to 3.5 million annual visitors by 2027-2032, as described in the 2008 master plan. Visitor counts indicate that visitation dropped from its 2006/2007 peak of 2.6 million visitors in the years immediately following the NCPC master plan approval, but there has been an upward trend since that time—reaching a new peak of 2.7 million in 2016. NCPC staff believes that the assumption that visitation could reach 3.5 million is still valid, given events and activities planned for the zoo, as well as population forecasts for the region. The Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments predicts that regional population will grow significantly in the coming decades, reaching a total population of just over 6 million by 2025, and continuing to more than 6.8 million by 2045. Should this population growth translate to an increase in NZP visitation, a comprehensive transportation strategy is needed that places greater emphasis on alternative transportation as a means to meet visitation demand.

Mode Split and Transportation Demand Management

In its 2008 master plan, SI tied its parking request to the development of transportation demand management (TDM) strategies to manage increased traffic and reduce automobile use. At that time, SI noted that 65% of NZP visitors arrived via automobile, while 22% took Metrorail and 12% walked. These figures showed a clear preference for vehicular travel. More recent data shows that automobile use has dropped, reaching a low of 28% in 2013. The most recent survey (2016) notes that automobile rates have increased slightly to 53%, but this is still a significant improvement from numbers reported in the master plan. Additionally, it is important to note that visitors arriving at the NZP by automobile averaged 2.7 people per vehicle, rather than the single-occupancy vehicles seen at most federal facilities in the region.

NCPC staff believes that these recent shifts from automobile usage indicate a commitment by the SI to reduce parking demand to the extent practicable—considering the typical visitor profile of families with children. This commitment is evident from the zoo website, which states that the zoo has "extremely limited" parking, and advertises that public transportation is the "best way to get to the zoo." Further, SI has sought to reduce the burden on parking facilities at the zoo through a partnership with Parking Panda, which allows visitors to plan ahead to find parking in the limited number of public/shared lots nearby.

Despite these efforts, SI staff has indicated that parking supply remains a problem. As parking lots reach capacity on busy days, staff closes vehicular entry to the zoo and directly manages traffic and parking. Groups of vehicles are then "pulsed" through the gates as other vehicles leave, and staff directs them to open lots. While many vehicles wait for entry, others have looked for parking elsewhere, which, in many cases, includes on-street spaces on

residential streets in adjacent neighborhoods. The zoo has received regular complaints from area residents and advisory neighborhood commissions that represent these communities. Visitor surveys indicate that 33% of visitors that drove to the zoo are not parking in the zoo's lots and presumably parking in the neighborhood, though data does not provide specifics on where.

Trip Origin

SI staff has also indicated that the NZP is unique in its regional draw, noting that many visitors are taking day-trips to the city and need to park their vehicle to visit the zoo. Surveys indicate that approximately 30% of visitors live in DC neighborhoods adjacent to the zoo or inner suburbs north and west of the city, which means that 70% of visitors are coming from elsewhere within the region and beyond, making alternative transportation options more challenging.

New Traffic Analysis

To address the Commission's disapproval of 335 spaces in 2008, SI has conducted a comprehensive transportation analysis in 2017 that evaluates the impact of 166 additional vehicles on adjacent roadways. The analysis indicates that two intersection approaches near zoo entrances that already perform poorly under existing conditions would experience periods of continued poor performance, but the impacts of the additional spaces could generally be mitigated through TDM strategies. Such strategies include providing a stop for the DC Circulator bus at the NZP, extending a shuttle bus to Cleveland Park Metro Station, and eliminating free parking for National Zoo staff. DDOT has reviewed this analysis, and has found that the proposed mitigation, in conjunction with the strategies identified in the 2008 TMP, would sufficiently address any impacts to the transportation network. As an initial step, the zoo is actively working with DDOT to provide a turnaround for the DC Circulator bus at Parking Lot A, which would be repurposed as part of the CPF consolidation. Accordingly, NCPC staff believes that previous Commission comment regarding insufficient analysis have been adequately addressed in the current proposal.

In summary, visitation data indicates that the zoo is on target to reach visitor projections established in its master plan, and traffic analysis suggests that the expansion would have only minimal effects on adjacent roadways with the implementation of traffic mitigation strategies, including the introduction of a DC Circulator stop at the zoo. Additionally, the unique profile of zoo visitors have specific challenges associated with travel by public transportation. Accordingly, staff recommends that the Commission supports an increase in parking spaces at the National Zoological Park from 1,285 to 1,451—a difference of 166 spaces that will be located in a new Central Parking Facility. This increase would still result in the NZP turning vehicles away 69 days of the year, which staff finds in a reasonable request to address parking deficiencies in the short term, but long-term solutions are needed to accommodate visitation increases and reduce parking demand into the future.

Because of adjacent development constraints, staff believes that the SI must focus on promoting alternative modes of travel to meet future visitation demand rather than the continued expansion of transportation facilities. Accordingly, staff recommends that the Commission requests that the SI updates the TDM strategies outlined in the 2008 TMP and 2017 comprehensive transportation analysis within two years to include creative approaches to promoting alternative transportation and reducing parking demand. Further, staff recommends that the Commission requires that the SI demonstrates measurable progress in reducing vehicular travel as a share of total mode split among zoo visitors before any future parking increases are considered by the Commission.

Building Design and Massing

The second component of the SI submission is the conceptual design and massing of the proposed CPF. As previously noted, the facility would be constructed above the General Services Building and existing Parking Lot C, which are built into the hillside at northeastern edge of the zoo along the North Road. There are significant topographic shifts in this area of the zoo, with the proposed CPF location steeply sloping down to the immediately adjacent Rock Creek stream valley. Across Rock Creek is the Beach Drive portion of Rock Creek Park, and then another steep slope up to Klingle and Adams Mill Roads in the Mount Pleasant neighborhood of Washington, DC. Much of the stream valley is administered by the National Park Service as part of Rock Creek Park, and is maintained in a natural state—with dense vegetation that largely screens views from Beach Drive to the adjacent zoo and neighborhood.

A parking garage has been planned for this location since the General Services Building was constructed in 1976. It was approved by NCPC in its 1975 review of the building, and then again as part of the 2008 master plan. A retaining wall, which was approved by the Commission in June 2012, was later constructed along North Road to stabilize the hillside in preparation for the garage. Challenged by lack of funding, the SI is only now moving forward with conceptual designs for the facility. It is important to note that this proposal is highly conceptual at this point in the process. SI has not verified that the proposed massing can be structurally supported on top of the General Services Building, but has conducted studies that indicate that, in general, a garage of this size could be accommodated at this site. Accordingly, SI staff has noted that Commission comments will be used to inform the selection of a P3 team that will develop a more detailed proposal for the future garage (15% concept design), which will then come back to NCPC for a second concept review.

The SI proposes constructing an approximately 118,000 square-foot, six-level parking facility. Parking Lot C would be incorporated into the design as the first level, with five additional levels constructed above to accommodate the 1,285 proposed parking spaces. The parking levels would be tiered, with the most parking proposed on the first level, and the least on the sixth level (See Table 2). A bridge connection would provide Americans with Disabilities Act-compliant access from the CPF to Olmsted Walk over North Road. The 166 spaces that require NCPC approval would only marginally increase the size of the garage relative to the original design. These spaces would be incorporated into an extension of parking area on the surface level (existing lot), and small additions are proposed on levels 4, 5, and 6.

	# of Parking Spaces
Level 1 (Ground)	298
Level 2	174
Level 3	244
Level 4	208
Level 5	164
Level 6	109

Table 2. Parking Spaces per Level

Viewshed analyses indicate that the massing of this larger garage could be effectively screened to minimize visual intrusion from the zoo's Olmsted Walk, and from Klingle and Adams Mill Roads. NCPC staff believes that additional views from Beach Drive and recreational trails in Rock Creek Park are also important to determine visual impacts. Because of the adjacent natural habitat, staff further believes that the CPF should be developed to effectively reduce stormwater runoff and emphasize sustainability. Accordingly, staff recommends that the Commission **requests that, in the continued development of the CPF, the SI:**

- Pursues a design and massing that would minimize visual intrusion from Olmsted Walk and Rock Creek Park, with particular emphasis on views from Beach Drive and adjacent recreational trails;
- Protects the adjacent natural habitat by retaining and treating stormwater on-site to eliminate runoff into Rock Creek; and
- Follows best management practices related to low-impact development and sustainability, such as incorporation of green roofs, vegetated walls, and solar infrastructure.

To ensure that NCPC has adequate information to evaluate the next iteration of the CPF, staff recommends that the Commission **requests that, for the next submission, the SI submits:**

- An updated viewshed analysis that includes views from Beach Drive and adjacent recreational trails; and
- Alternative garage treatments that would reduce visual impacts.

CONFORMANCE TO EXISTING PLANS, POLICIES AND RELATED GUIDANCE

Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital

The CPF at the National Zoo is generally consistent with the policies established in Federal Elements of the *Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital*, though, as noted in the analysis above, NCPC does not have policies that address visitor parking in this context. Consequently, recommendations regarding parking were made based on an assessment of visitor and transportation data rather than compliance with *Comprehensive Plan* policies. Further

recommendations presented in the EDR aim to ensure compliance with relevant policies presented in the Transportation, Federal Environment, Historic Preservation, and Visitors & Commemoration Elements.

National Historic Preservation Act

At the time of NCPC review of the 2008 master plan, SI and DC State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) had agreed that SI would conduct Section 106 reviews of individual projects, such as the CPF, and seek to avoid and, if necessary, minimize and mitigate adverse effects to the National Zoo Historic Site and other historic structures in the area. Because of this early stage in the design process, SI is not yet pursuing SHPO review of the CPF, though they plan to formally initiate Section 106 consultation as design details are further developed.

National Environmental Policy Act

An environmental assessment (EA) was completed for the 2008 master plan, which included a general overview of traffic/transportation/parking impacts, and the 2017 comprehensive transportation analysis provided more detail based on the current proposal. NCPC staff will work with SI as the review and approval process continues to ensure that required environmental documentation is completed as required.

CONSULTATION

Coordinating Committee

The Coordinating Committee forwarded the proposed comments on concept design to the Commission with the statement that the proposal has been coordinated with all participating agencies, except the DC SHPO. The Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority noted that confirming the structural analysis was important. The DC Office of Planning noted that a public space permit and Public Space Committee approval will be required. The DC Department of Energy & Environment noted that the project requires stormwater permits, and their interest in a campus-wide stormwater master plan; noted that the site drains to a large, visible outfall that should be considered for removal, and asked if solar panels are under consideration for the roof. NPS noted their interest in learning more about the project and its potential impacts on Rock Creek Park, and requested briefing opportunities with the SI. A briefing has since been conducted. The SHPO is not coordinating because Section 106 consultation has not been initiated for this project, which is not required by NCPC at this point in the review process.

U.S. Commission of Fine Arts

As this is an early concept review, SI has not yet submitted the CPF to the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts. The SI will submit for review and approval at a later date, when design details are further developed.

ONLINE REFERENCE

The following supporting documents for this project are available online:

- Project Synopsis
- Submission Letter
- Submission Materials

Prepared by John Gerbich 09/15/2017

ATTACHMENTS

- Letter in Support from Councilmember Mary M. Cheh
- Letter in Support from Advisory Neighborhood Commission 3C
- DDOT Traffic Analysis Review Letter
- Powerpoint



Council of the District of Columbia 1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W. Washington, DC 20004

Mary M. Cheh

Councilmember, Ward 3 Chair, Committee on Transportation and the Environment Office: (202) 724-8062 Fax: (202) 724-8118 mcheh@dccouncil.us www.marycheh.com

September 26, 2017

Office of the Secretariat National Capital Planning Commission 401 9th Street NW Washington, DC 20004

To Whom it May Concern,

I understand that the Smithsonian National Zoo hopes to add an additional 166 parking spaces to its planned parking structure, and I am writing today to voice my strong support for that. Ward 3 is fortunate to have the Zoo as its neighbor, and making it more accessible and available to both our residents and our out-of-town guests—all in a manner that improves exhibition space and storm-water retention—is a significant benefit. That the Zoo's proposal now includes an additional 166 spaces will further alleviate the stress on neighborhood parking currently produced by the venue's popularity. And, better still, all these goals will be achieved in a manner that preserves the scenic character of Rock Creek Park and the Zoo's environment.

I support the plan and encourage the National Capital Planning Commission to do the same.

Regards,

Mary M. Cheh



ADVISORY NEIGHBORHOOD COMMISSION 3C GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

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Single Member District Commissioners 01-Lee Brian Reba; 02-Gwen Bole; 03-Jessica Wasserman 04-Beau Finley; 05-Emma Hersh; 06-Angela Bradbery 07-Maureen Boucher; 08-Malia Brink; 09-Nancy MacWood P.O. Box 4966 Washington, DC 20008 Website http://www.anc3c.org Email all@anc3c.org

September 26, 2017

Marcel Acosta Executive Director National Capital Planning Commission 401 9th Street, NW Washington, DC 20004

RE: Smithsonian Institution ~ National Zoological Park ~ Central Parking Facility

Dear Mr. Acosta:

We are writing to respectfully urge that the National Capital Planning Commission's "Executive Director's Report" recommend approval of an additional 166 parking spaces in the proposed National Zoo Central Parking Facility. With this approval, we fully understand that the proposed additional parking spaces still will not guarantee parking on some of the high volume visitor days, according to the Smithsonian's submission. Therefore, we will be recommending that the Smithsonian and the National Zoo explore timed entrances (e.g., for example the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture) on historically busy visitor days, in order to prevent overflow parking demand within the adjacent neighborhoods. We believe such a system would help to manage the on-site parking and ensure that families and other visitors will not be disappointed and frustrated as they tour our community—resulting in finding no places to park their vehicles.

As long-term Advisory Neighborhood Commissioners (ANC 3C) representing the neighborhoods directly impacted by the popularity of our National Zoo, we are keenly aware of the increased parking demand at this unique site. The available street parking in our neighborhoods cannot meet the demand for residents and shoppers, as well as, the huge numbers of visitors to the National Zoo, who are unable to secure parking on Zoo grounds. While there are two metro stops within walking distance of the National Zoo—and we strongly encourage use of public transit—it is unreasonable to expect families with children, grandparents, strollers, and supplies intended for a long visit at the Zoo to choose public transportation. The Metro and its access and egress features are unreliable, and schedules are often limited, especially on holidays and weekends. Even if Metro were a gold-star operation, we would still recommend additional on-site parking as an option at the National Zoo.

In addition, we believe the National Zoo has efficiently planned the Central Parking Facility to tuck into a hillside, resulting in the transformation of surface lots into additional exhibition space. We also strongly support the proposal to expand the Circulator route to the National Zoo, so visitors who are using Metro will find an easy and inexpensive way to the Zoo's main entrance. This option will obviously take time and funds to accomplish. In the interim, we will continue working with the National Zoo to urge as many people as possible to walk from Metro, so they can discover and enjoy our beautiful neighborhood and wonderful shops and restaurants along the Connecticut Avenue corridor. Conversely, we really do not want to be unrealistic or perceived as unfriendly to families who might avoid going to the National Zoo with their children if it appears too daunting an excursion. We strongly believe additional parking and timed entrances would go a long way in mitigating some of these community issues.

We thank you for allowing the ANC and the public to submit written testimony to be included in the official staff report.

Sincerely,

Lee Brian Reba

Lee Brian Reba, ANC 3C01 (Woodley Park / National Zoological Park District)

Gwendolyn Bole

Gwendolyn Bole, ANC 3C02 (Woodley Park District)

Nancy MacWood

Nancy MacWood, ANC 3C09 (Chair, ANC3C)

Cc: Diane Sullivan

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION



d. Planning and Sustainability Division

June 21, 2017

Jeff Parker, Project Manager RK&K, LLP 300 M Street SE, Suite 560 Washington, DC 20003

RE: Comprehensive Transportation Review for the Parking Expansion Amendment to the Smithsonian National Zoological Park Facilities Master Plan

Dear Mr. Parker:

The District Department of Transportation (DDOT) appreciates the opportunity to submit a letter detailing DDOT's review of the Comprehensive Transportation Review (CTR) for an additional 166 vehicle parking spaces on-site. DDOT is committed to achieving an exceptional quality of life in the nation's capital by encouraging sustainable travel practices, constructing safer streets, and providing outstanding access to goods and services. As one means to achieve this vision, DDOT works with federal projects to ensure that impacts from new developments take advantage of the District's multimodal transportation network and minimize impacts on neighborhood streets and the broader transportation network. To accomplish this, all federal projects are expected to develop a CTR to appropriately document and mitigate their impacts on the District's transportation network.

It is DDOT's understanding that there are currently 888 vehicle parking spaces at the National Zoological Park (NZP) and that total will increase to 1,285 spaces under the already approved 2008 Facilities Master Plan, as Lots A (100 spaces), B (112 spaces), and D (221 spaces) are proposed to be closed and consolidated with 397 additional new spaces on Lot C (1,093 spaces after consolidation). The 2008 plan does not anticipate any changes to Lot E (172 spaces) or Research Hill Lot (20 spaces).

Per the CTR provided for the 2017 amendment currently under consideration, Lot C is anticipated to be expanded by 192 spaces to 1,285 spaces, while Lot E would be reduced by 26 spaces to 146 spaces, and there will be no changes to the Research Hill Lot (20 spaces). These proposed changes would result in a net increase, beyond the 2008 approval, of 166 vehicle parking spaces on-site for a total of 1,451 spaces.

After an extensive review of the CTR dated April 2017, DDOT finds:

Site Design

- Primary vehicular access to the site is proposed to continue to be provided from Connecticut Avenue NW, Beach Drive NW, and Harvard Street NW;
- The closing of Lots A, B, and D, in conjunction with the reduction of 26 spaces in Lot E and addition of 192 vehicle spaces at Lot C will not have a significant impact on the balance of traffic distributed to each of the three access points; and
- This amendment to the Facilities Master Plan will result in a net increase of 166 vehicle parking spaces provided on-site.

Travel Assumptions

- The CTR estimated Saturday hourly traffic based on hourly visitor counts that were collected in 2006, which is the most current available dataset. NZP estimates that daily visitor totals have not changed much over the last 11 years;
- The CTR only studied the Saturday afternoon peak hour because that is the day of the week with the highest number of visitors;
- The additional 166 parking spaces are anticipated to generate approximately 108 vehicle trips (66 in, 42 out) during the 1-2 PM Saturday hour. All 166 spaces will be filled over the course of several hours, not just in this one hour;
- The 1-2 PM study hour was determined to be the busiest hour for the overall transportation network and thus the period studied in the CTR. The busiest hour for the Zoo is 11 AM-12 PM, generating 150 vehicle trips; and
- Based on NZP survey results, approximately 65% of visitors arrive by automobile.

Analysis

- The addition of 166 vehicle spaces will not directly lead to an increase in walking, biking, or transit ridership;
- According to the CTR, the additional traffic generated by the increase of 166 vehicle parking spaces would result in two intersection approaches, currently at LOS F, worsening by more than 5 seconds of delay:
 - Rock Creek Parkway and Potomac Parkway/Beach Drive NW & Shoreham Drive NW (6.3 seconds)
 - Connecticut Avenue NW and Calvert Street NW (19.1 seconds)
- There is an existing Transportation Management Program (TMP) as part of the Facilities Master Plan that was released in December 2008; and
- The proposed mitigation measures, in conjunction with the existing TMP, sufficiently address impacts to the transportation network from the addition of 166 parking spaces.

Mitigations

As part of all major development review cases, DDOT requires the Applicant to mitigate the impacts of the development in order to positively contribute to the District's transportation network. The mitigations must sufficiently diminish the action's vehicle impact and promote non-auto travel modes.

This can be done through Transportation Demand Management (TDM) measures, physical improvements, operational changes, and performance monitoring.

DDOT's preference is to mitigate vehicle traffic impacts first through establishing an optimal site design and operations to support efficient site circulation. When these efforts alone cannot properly mitigate an action's impact, TDM measures may be necessary to manage travel behavior to minimize impact. Only when these other options are exhausted will DDOT consider capacity-increasing changes to the transportation network because such changes often have detrimental impacts on non-auto travel and are often contrary to the District's multi-modal transportation goals.

NZP currently has a Transportation Management Program (TMP) in effect, released in December 2008, which was developed in conjunction with the Park's Facilities Master Plan. The TMP lays out numerous transportation improvements on-site to manage the transportation needs of visitors. The plan for Alternative C (highest parking scenario) contains a mix of TDM strategies (eliminating free parking for employees and coordinating with bus/shuttle operators to include upper turn-around area on routes) and mostly non-TDM strategies (such as construction of roundabouts and providing real-time parking information to visitors).

The following are transportation mitigations proposed in the April 2017 CTR for this amendment to the Facilities Master Plan:

- Provide new bus turnaround on-site to facilitate the extension of Circulator service to the Zoo
 from its current terminus at the Woodley Park/Adams Morgan Metrorail Station. This new
 transit connection will have the largest impact in offsetting the traffic impacts generated by the
 proposal as it will further encourage visitors and employees to take non-automotive modes of
 travel. NZP should construct the turnaround and ensure access is allowed to DDOT when the
 Zoo is closed;
- Eliminate free parking for NZP staff on-site. It is DDOT's understanding that this is planned to be
 implemented in 2017/2018. Removing free parking for employees is an important strategy for
 encouraging non-automotive travel and reducing demand for vehicle parking on-site. DDOT
 recommends NZP consider using funds collected from employee parking to subsidize transit
 usage, in the forms of Capital Bikeshare memberships or preloaded SmarTrip cards, for
 employees; and
- Information will be provided on the NZP website explicitly stating that "the best way to get to the Zoo is by public transportation" and warning of the challenges of finding parking on-site during busy periods.

DDOT finds that the three proposed mitigation measures, noted above, in conjunction with the strategies identified in the 2008 TMP, will sufficiently address impacts to the transportation network generated by the addition of 166 parking spaces on-site. In particular, NZP should construct the bus turnaround as soon as possible following the closing of Lot A, as proposed, and ensure DDOT is allowed access to it when the Zoo is closed.

Continued Coordination

NZP should work with DDOT Circulator staff on the appropriate location and design of the proposed bus turnaround so that it can be used by Circulator as well as other transit and tour buses. Please coordinate with Sean Egan, Deputy Associate Director for Transit Operations, sean.egan2@dc.gov, or 202-671-1358.

DDOT's review and comments on the Facilities Master Plan Amendment should not be viewed as an approval of public space elements. If any portion of the project has elements in public space requiring approval, NZP is required to pursue a public space permit through DDOT's permitting process. Please refer to the Titles 11, 12A, and 24 of District of Columbia Municipal Regulations (DCMR) and DDOT's Design and Engineering Manual (DEM) for specific controls of public space. A summary can also be found in DDOT's Public Realm Design Manual.

Conclusion

Should you have any questions, please contact Aaron Zimmerman, the Case Manager for the project, at aaron.zimmerman@dc.gov or 202-671-2356.

11.00

acting Associate Director



NCPC File #: 7911

National Zoological Park Central Parking Facility

3001 Connecticut Avenue NW Washington, DC

Smithsonian Institution

Approval of Comments on Concept Design





Commission meeting date: October 5, 2017

NCPC review authority: 40 U.S.C. 8722(b)(1) and (d)

Applicant request: Approval of Comments on Concept Design

Delegated / consent / open / executive session: Open Session

NCPC Review officer: J. Gerbich

NCPC File Number: 7911

Project summary:

The Smithsonian Institution (SI) has submitted concept designs for a Central Parking Facility (CPF) at the National Zoological Park in Northwest Washington, DC. The parking garage was originally proposed as an effort to consolidate surface parking and expand parking capacity in the facility's master plan in 2008, and received conceptual approval from NCPC at that time. The current submission provides further detail on the proposal, which includes an increase in the number of spaces proposed in the master plan.

The CPF would be constructed at the northeastern edge of the facility—above the General Services Building and Parking Lot C adjacent the Beach Drive portion of Rock Creek Park. The applicant is requesting approval of 1,285 spaces for the garage, which is 166 more visitor spaces than the 2008 master plan proposal. The total request is for 1,451 spaces for visitors, SI official vehicles, volunteers, and employees.

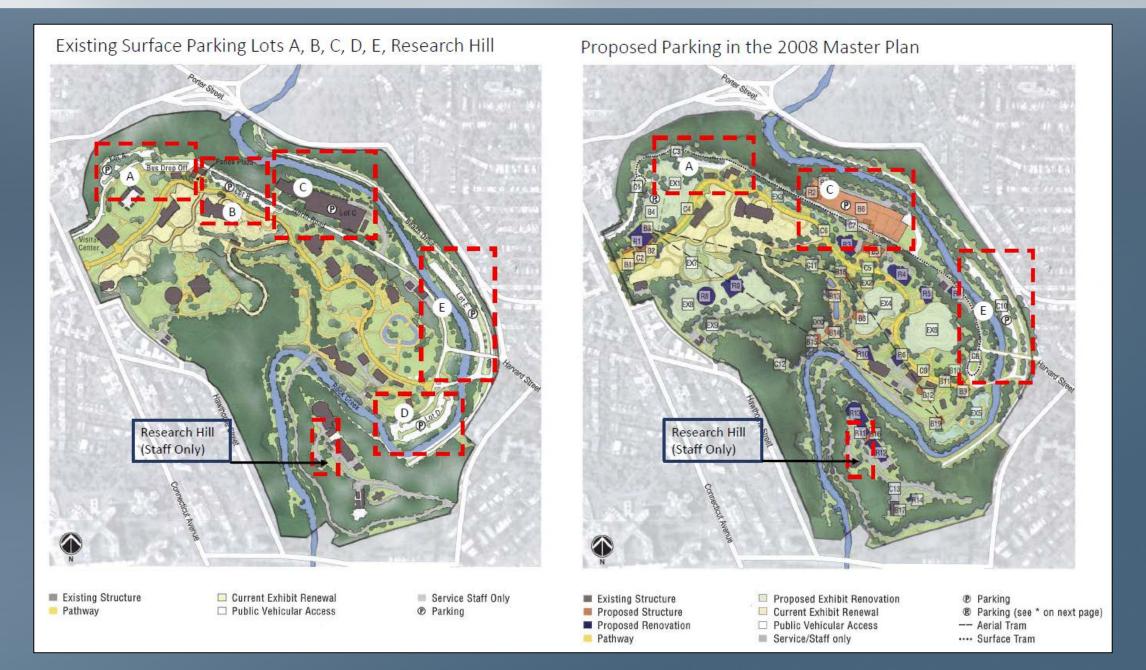
To assess the potential impact of these changes on intersections and roadways in the vicinity of the zoo, the SI commission a traffic study in consultation with the District Department of Transportation (DDOT) in 2016-2017. During this study, DDOT proposed extending its Circulator bus service to the zoo's Connecticut Avenue entrance to help mitigate traffic impacts, which the SI is interested in exploring further. DDOT has concluded that the impact of 166 additional spaces could be effectively addressed through the implementation of this and other proposed mitigation measures presented in the existing transportation management plan for the facility.

The current submission includes a massing concept and viewshed analysis for the proposed CPF based on 1,285 spaces. The applicant has noted that they are in the procurement phase to establish a Public Private Partnership for the design, construction, and operation of the facility, and that they will be in close coordination with NCPC as the process moves forward.





Existing and Proposed Parking (2008 Master Plan)





NZP PARKING LOCATION		CURRENT COUNT	REQUESTED IN THE MASTER PLAN	APPROVED BY NCPC	CURRENT PROPOSED CONCEPT
Lot A	100	99	300	0	0
Lot B	112	110	0	NA	0
Lot C (Proposed Garage)	263	243	1128	Not called out	1285
Lot D	221	208	0	NA	0
Lot E	172	164	172	Not called out	Bus Parking, Employee and official vehicles, overflow for special occasions 111 Employee 35 Service
Research Hill	20	20	20	Not called out	20 No visitors
TOTAL	888	844	1620	1285	1451
NZP PARKING BY USER TYPE					
Visitor	678		1419	1119	1285
Employee (1:4 for 520+) including volunteers	210		131	131	131
Official Veh/Voluteers	Included with Employees		70	35	35
TOTAL	888	844	1620	1285	1451



PARKING LOT C EXISTING CONDITIONS

IV. Massing Study





LEVEL 1 - PARKING LOT C
PARKING LOT EXPANSION - TOP VIEW - CONCEPT



OFFICE TOWER INCLUDED IN THE MASTER PLAN IS **NOT** PART OF THIS PROJECT.

PROPOSED DECK –
CONCEPT STUDY 11.03.11

VERTICAL CIRCULATION – CONCEPT STUDY 11.03.11 NEW DECK MODIFICATION

ADDITIONAL LANDSCAPE SCREENING AREA (TREES, SHRUBS)



PARKING LOT C - MASSING MODEL

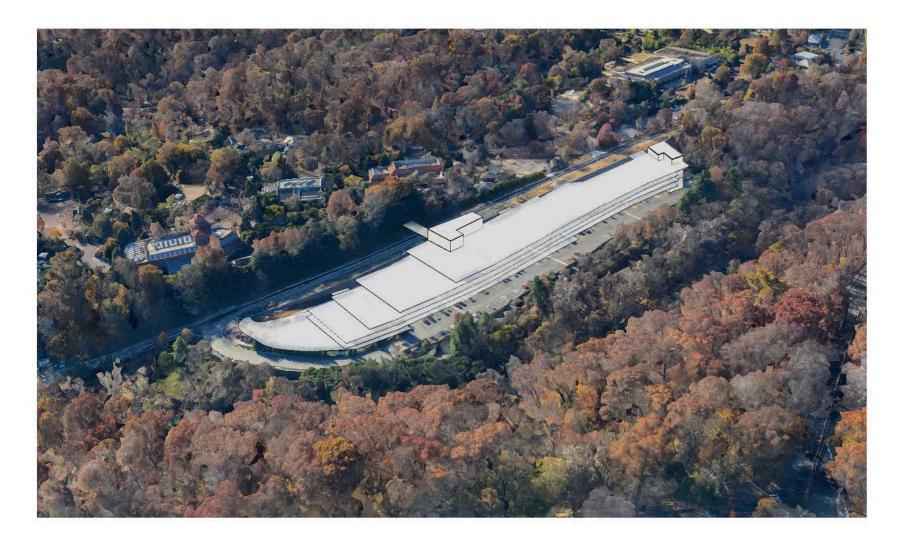
SITE CONTEXT & MASSING



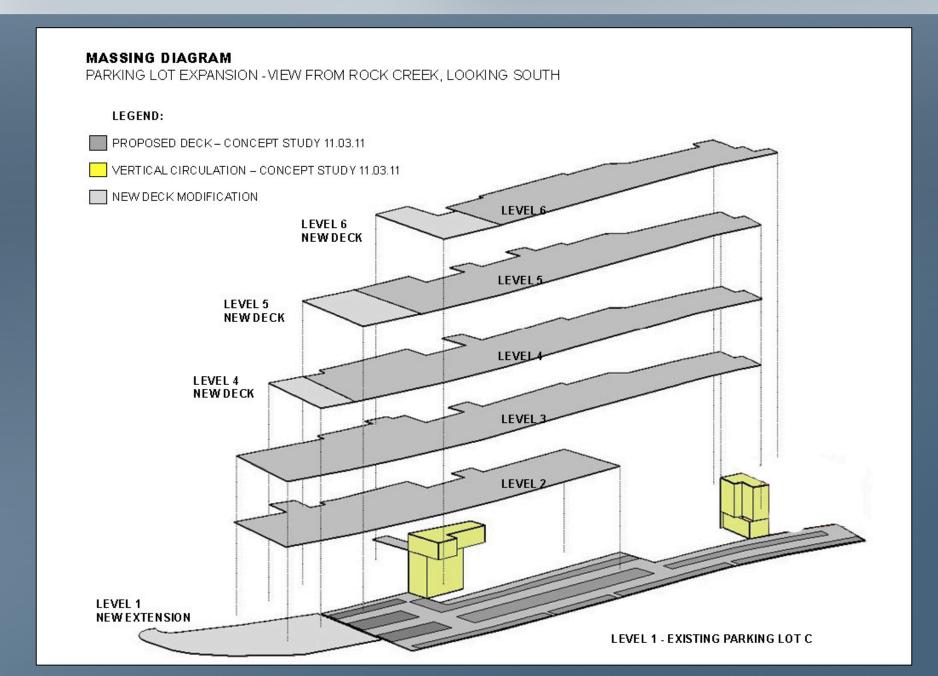


PARKING LOT C - MASSING MODEL

SITE CONTEXT & MASSING











PARKING LOT EXPANSION - ELEVATION

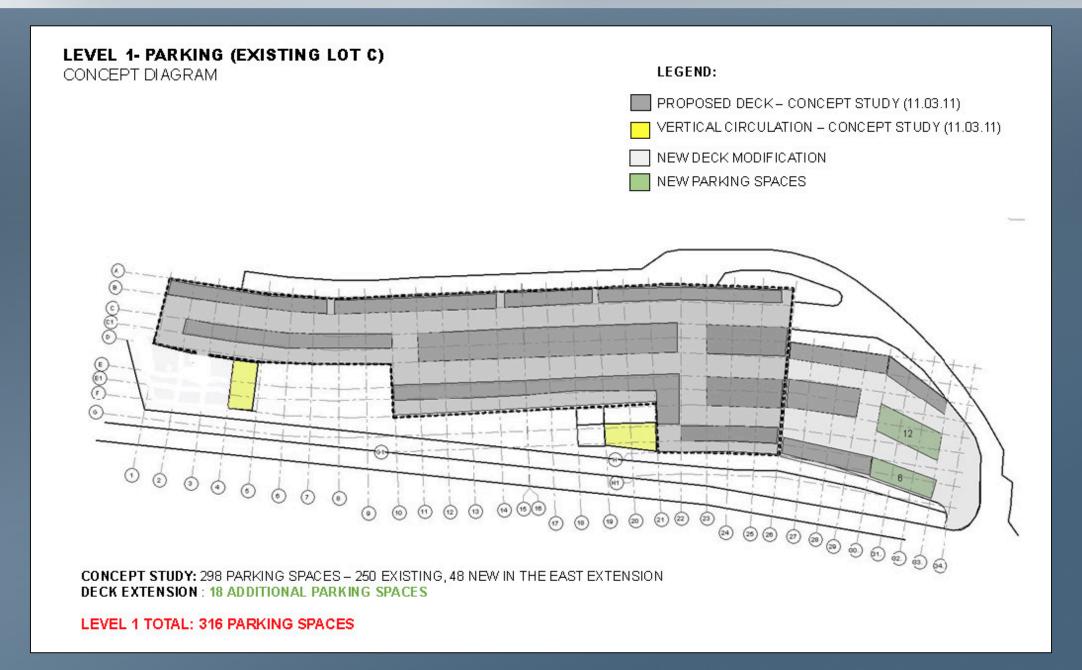
LEGEND:

- PROPOSED DECK CONCEPT STUDY 11.03.11
- VERTICAL CIRCULATION CONCEPT STUDY 11.03.11
- NEW DECK MODIFICATION

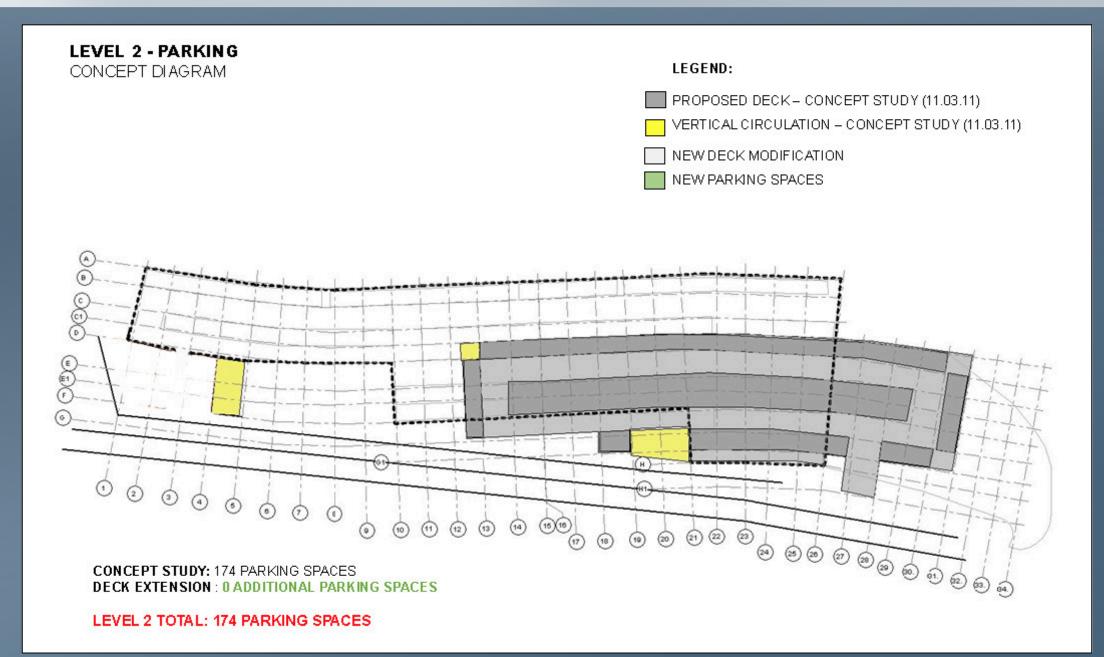


ELEVATION - VIEW FROM NORTH ROAD, LOOKING NORTH

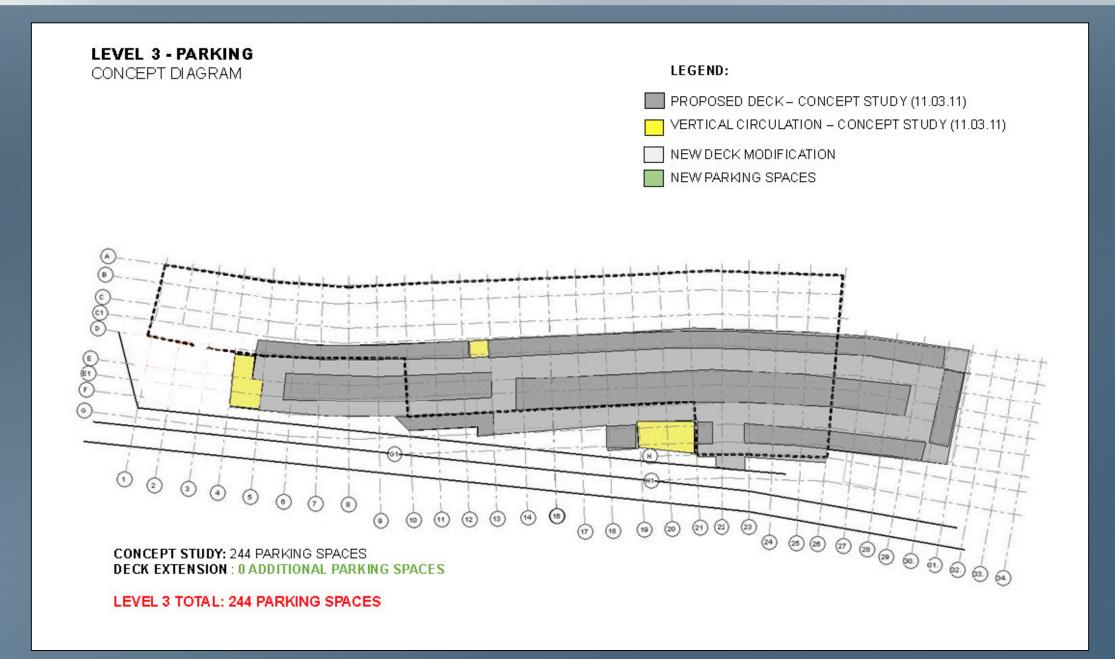




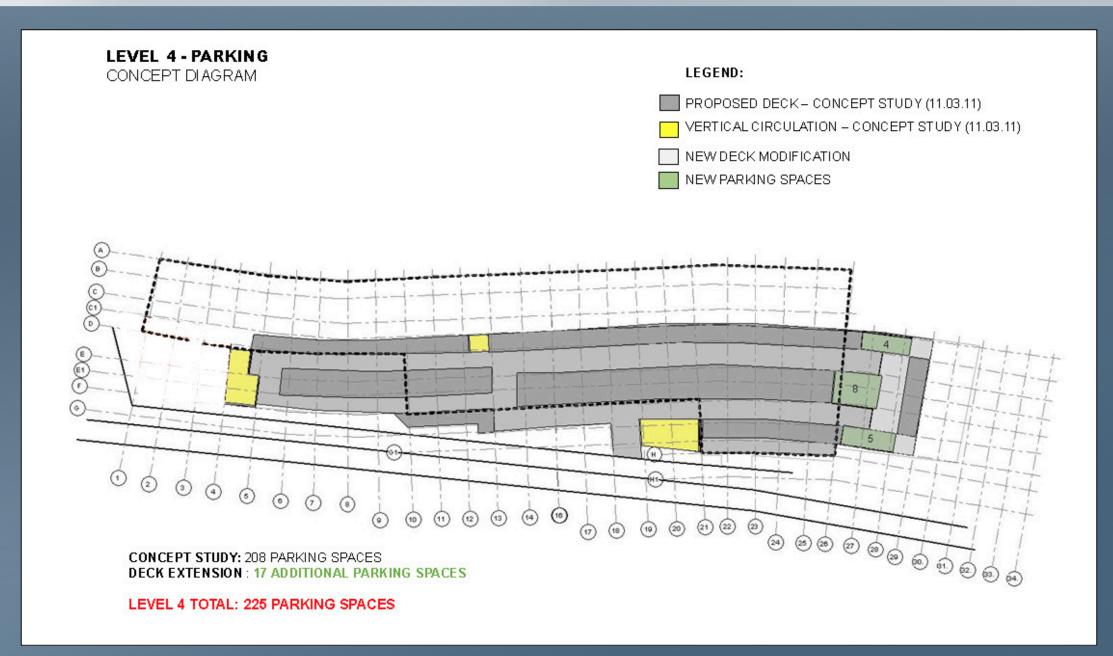




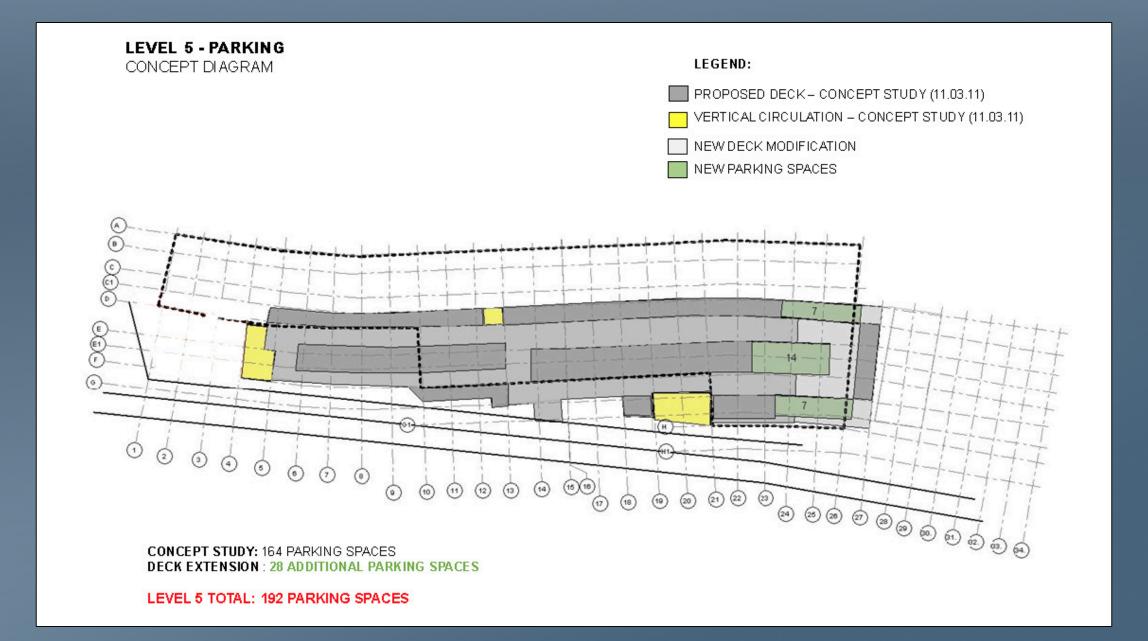




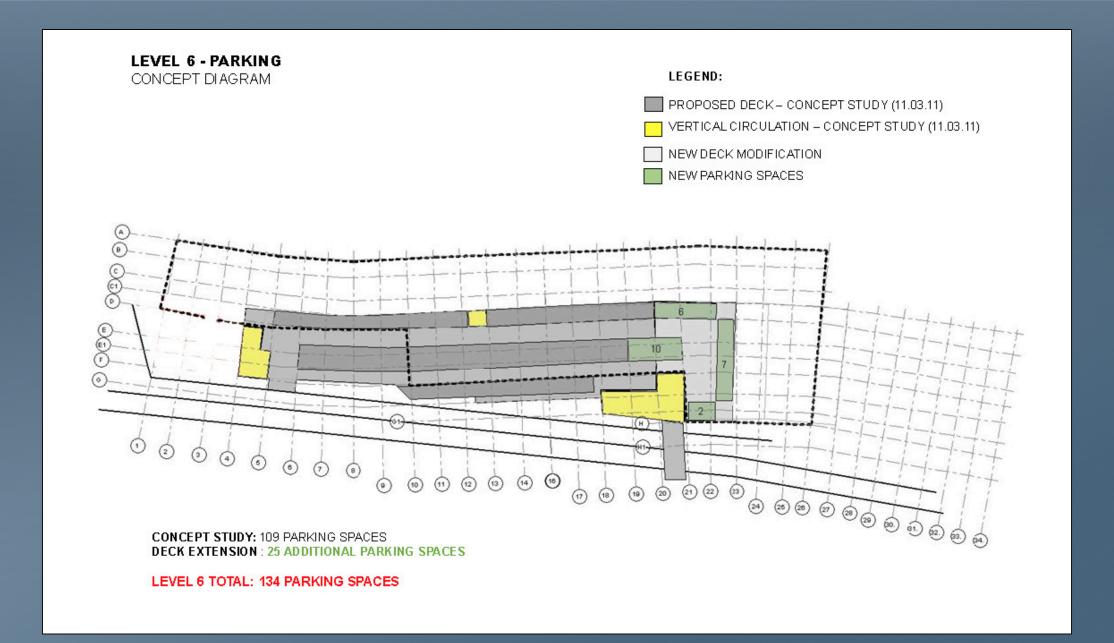














SITE ANALYSIS

ADAMS MILL RD NW (1 - 3) / KLINGLE RD NW (4 - 5) - POINT O: VIEW 1 - 5

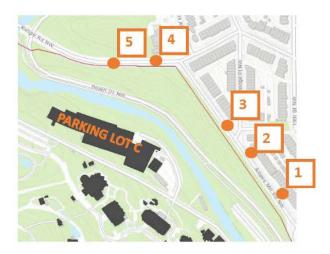












Note: Due to the high density of trees surrounding the neighborhoods and parking area, the retaining wall and new parking deck would be nearly impossible to see.

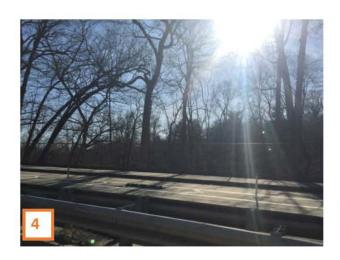


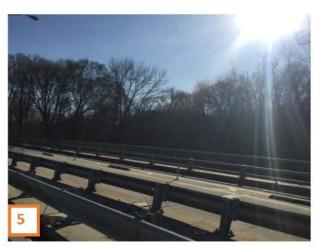
KLINGLE RD NW - POINT P: VIEW 1 - 5















OLMSTED WALK - PANDA PLAZA / PARKING LOT B - POINT A: VIEW 1 - 3











OLMSTEAD WALK - POINT C: VIEW 1 - 2









OLMSTEAD WALK - SMALL MAMMAL HOUSE - POINT D: VIEW 1 - 5















PATH BEHIND SMALL MAMMAL HOUSE - POINT E: VIEW 1 - 2









PATH BEHIND SMALL MAMMAL HOUSE - POINT F: VIEW 1 - 3











NORTH ROAD - BEHIND PARKING LOT B - POINT L: VIEW 1 - 3











NORTH ROAD – PARKING LOT C – POINT M: VIEW 1 - 2









NORTH ROAD - PARKING LOT C - POINT N : VIEW 1 - 2





