



## Commission Action

January 4, 2018

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<b>PROJECT</b> <b>South Mall Campus Master Plan</b> National Mall between 7 <sup>th</sup> Street, Jefferson Drive, 12 <sup>th</sup> Street, and Independence Avenue, SW Washington, DC	<b>NCPC FILE NUMBER</b> 7630
<b>SUBMITTED BY</b> Smithsonian Institution	<b>NCPC MAP FILE NUMBER</b> 1.41(05.00)44050
<b>REVIEW AUTHORITY</b> Advisory per 40 U.S.C. § 8722(a) and (b)(1)	<b>APPLICANT'S REQUEST</b> Approval of comments on concept master plan and draft EIS alternatives
	<b>ACTION TAKEN</b> Approved comments on concept master plan and draft EIS alternatives

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The Commission:

**Supports** the goals of the South Mall Campus Master Plan, which address the Smithsonian's need to meet its long-term space requirements and address physical and operational deficiencies across the campus that impact visitor use and experience as well as the Smithsonian's ability to effectively and safely implement its programs.

**Notes** that pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act, a Draft Environmental Impact Statement was prepared, and public comments are sought on the alternatives and impacts through January 16, 2018. These comments will inform the Commission's selection of a preferred alternative at the draft master plan review in the spring.

**Notes** the Master Plan will be implemented over the next 20-30 years; and further, that individual projects contained within the Master Plan will be subject to Commission review and approval at the time when detailed designs are developed.

**Requests** the Smithsonian Institution prepare a phasing plan to be included in the next draft master plan submission.

**Notes** a Programmatic Agreement will be prepared pursuant to the National Historic Preservation Act that will describe the process and steps necessary for developing the detailed designs for individual projects at the time of their implementation.

**Finds** the Master Plan must consider the context of a changing city, particular the SW Ecodistrict and Southwest Waterfront, which will change the character of Independence Avenue and the southern approach to the campus.

**Notes** that six action alternatives have been developed (A through F). Three alternatives (B, D, and F) have been advanced to the Draft Environmental Impact Statement, in addition to the no action alternative. The Smithsonian Institution, as project owner, has indicated that currently Alternative F best meets their needs.

**Finds** the action Alternatives (B, D, and F) generally contain a number of common projects, including:

- Renovation and restoration of the Castle;
- Protection of the Castle to address seismic vulnerabilities;
- Removal of the Ripley Pavilion to facilitate views and circulation from the Mall to the center of the campus;
- Consolidation of the Quadrangle and Arts and Industries Building loading areas and parking into a single underground, centralized loading facility to serve the campus;
- Creation of a new underground central utility plant to increase efficiency, sustainability and cost-effectiveness, and help maintain the critical Smithsonian collections;
- Creation of a below-grade visitor center between the Castle and the Quadrangle, and reconfiguration of the Castle basement level as new visitor and interpretive space;
- Addition of a new accessible entrance off the east façade of the Freer Gallery to provide a direct pedestrian connection to the Haupt Garden;
- Retention of the Arts and Industries Building as a flexible space for temporary exhibits and events until such time as a permanent use is identified; and
- Upgrades to underground utilities and perimeter security.

**Supports** these projects as they help improve visitor service, increase access across the campus, and modernize facilities, while recognizing that program and functionality must be balanced with historic preservation, planning and urban design goals.

**Requests** the master plan indicate that potential conversion of the Arts and Industries Building into a museum is reasonably foreseeable as a long-term project, regardless of the final occupant; and further, the master plan should describe any implications for such a use.

Regarding the Quadrangle Building and Pavilions:

**Notes** the Quadrangle Building and pavilions are not eligible for individual listing on the National Register of Historic Places, but are contributing elements to the National Mall Historic District. The Quadrangle Historic District has been identified at the local level.

**Finds** the current location of the pavilions affects the configuration and functionality of the below-grade Quadrangle interior spaces, as well as views of the Castle from Independence Avenue and 10<sup>th</sup> Street, SW to the south.

**Finds** that Alternative B retains the pavilions in their current location, allowing only limited improvement to the functionality of the Quadrangle interior spaces.

**Finds** that Alternative D and F replace the existing pavilions with smaller pavilions closer to the Castle, allowing for improvements to the functionality of the Quadrangle interior spaces.

**Finds** that the new pavilion locations would create greater visibility for the Sackler Gallery and National African Art Museum as seen from the National Mall.

**Finds** that smaller, relocated pavilions could improve views of the Castle and the National Mall from the south, and over time guide visitors from the Southwest Quadrant of the City, including the SW Ecodistrict, the Wharf and Waterfront, which are connected along 10th Street, SW, and are undergoing tremendous growth.

**Finds** that the relocated pavilions and addition of large-scale ramps to a lower level could alter the setting of the Castle and Arts and Industries Building and may have undesirable effects on these two National Historic Landmarks.

Regarding the Haupt Garden:

**Notes** the garden forms the roof of the Quadrangle Building and the roof will need to be removed and replaced for maintenance purposes.

**Finds** the garden provides a view to and setting for the Castle as seen from the south; and further, the intimate character and scale of the existing garden is a beloved component of the South Mall campus, and are an important counterpoint to the scale and openness of the National Mall.

**Notes** Alternative B would replace the garden in its current configuration and character; Alternative D proposes a large grade change in front of the Castle with a new open configuration and different, park-like character; and Alternative F retains the existing grade and characteristics but reconfigures the garden layout to include two new entrance ramps and skylights.

**Does not support** the large sloped entry in Alternative D as it would greatly change the character of the garden and the setting of the Castle.

**Finds** that, while the Master Plan will not include a specific design for the garden, changes in circulation, vertical access and daylighting of the Quadrangle Building will influence the future garden design.

**Recommends** the design of the future garden balance the desire to maintain a space of intimate character and scale, commensurate with its importance and prominence, with the need to improve the Quadrangle Building, and desire for greater access and visibility across the campus.

**Notes** the Smithsonian Institution has publicly committed to maintaining the intimate character and high-quality landscape of the garden as the design is developed.

Regarding the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden:

**Finds** that a modest opening in the western site wall would facilitate pedestrian connections to AIB, while larger alterations of the wall will change the character of the Hirshhorn Museum site.

**Supports** the reestablishment of the existing below-grade connection between the Museum and Sculpture Garden.

**Requests** the applicant provide additional details, including sections that describe the proposed expansion of the tunnel and the addition of gallery space below the Sculpture Garden, as shown in Alternatives D and F, so the Commission may better understand the relationship of the proposal to the setting of the National Mall.

Regarding the extent of Castle sub-basement excavation:

**Notes** that Alternative D includes the greatest amount of excavation beneath the Castle.

**Finds** the Alternative B and F minimize the amount of sub-basement excavation by accommodating the program elsewhere in the campus.

<u>//Original Signed//</u>	<u>1/5/2018</u>
Julia A. Koster	Date
Secretary to the National Capital Planning Commission	