



Delegated Action of the Executive Director

PROJECT Preservation of Meridian Hill Park - Phase V and VI Meridian Hill Park 2400 15th Street, NW Washington, DC	NCPC FILE NUMBER 7642
SUBMITTED BY United States Department of the Interior National Park Service	NCPC MAP FILE NUMBER 32.00(70.00)44953
	ACTION TAKEN Approve final site development plans
	REVIEW AUTHORITY Approval Per 40 U.S.C. § 8722(b)(1) and (d)

The National Park Service (NPS) has submitted final site development plans for proposed improvements at Meridian Hill Park. The park is a National Historic Landmark, significant for its design based on Italian hill gardens and its elaborate architectural features constructed of exposed aggregate concrete. It is a 12-acre formal landscape designed and built between 1912 and 1936. The park is located between 15th and 16th Streets to the east and west, and Euclid and W Streets to the north and south in northwest Washington, DC. The topography slopes downward from north to south, with generally steep grades on 15th and 16th Streets. The park is divided into two main areas. The lower park includes a fountain and cascade of linked basins, symmetric stairways and a large reflecting pool surrounded by a plaza. The upper park includes an open mall, wooded areas flanking the mall, and a broad terrace overlooking the Lower Plaza.

As part of the project, architectural features at the Lower Plaza and Great Stair will be rehabilitated, including repairs to concrete paving, walls, and decorative elements. The character of the original landscape will be restored at the Lower Plaza and the Allee. Plant species will be updated and replaced as necessary. Other improvements will include stabilization of the Buchanan Memorial; pleaching of trees at the Allee; and drainage improvements and repairs at the Great Stair. Rehabilitation of the park began in 2004, and has included repairing and restoring the unique structures and landscape. Previous projects had focused on concrete repairs throughout the park, restoration of the cascade and fountains, and restoration of the Lodge House. Future phases will focus on the Great Terrace

The addition of barrier-free access to the Lower Plaza is the most significant change to the site. As noted during preliminary review, the topography of the site required many flights of stairs, including steps from 16th Street into the Lower Plaza and steps from the Lower Plaza to the Buchanan Memorial. As such, the Lower Plaza is not currently accessible to those with mobility needs. To address this issue, an accessible route consisting of three sloped walks is proposed at the Lower Plaza. The walks will connect 16th Street to the three levels of the Lower Plaza. The walks will be sloped so that handrails and railings are not necessary. The route will enter the park just south of an existing pier in the 16th Street perimeter wall, and a new pier will be constructed to flank the new opening. Another two sections of walkway bridge the smaller grade changes to the

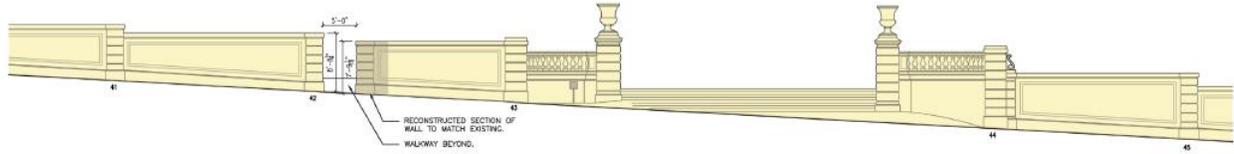
east. The curbs of the new walks will be continuous in size and material with the existing curbs, a golden tan exposed aggregate concrete. New lighting will be provided at the lowest level of the walks from low bollards. The proposed entrance and walkway will minimally alter the existing park design and will accommodate improved accessibility. There have been no significant changes since preliminary review.

NPS has determined that the project is eligible for a categorical exclusion (CATEX) under its National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) policies and procedures and has submitted all required documentation. Because it has an approval authority in the review of this project, NCPC has an independent obligation to comply with NEPA, and has applied categorical exclusion #2, which allows for the approval of minor site elements, such as, but not limited to, identification signs, sidewalks, patios, and fences. No extraordinary circumstances were identified, as any potential impacts were address through the Section 106 process of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA). The District of Columbia State Historic Preservation Office (DC SHPO) and NPS have prepared a memorandum of agreement (MOA) to address adverse effects resulting from the new accessible entrance. NCPC has designated NPS as the lead agency for compliance with NHPA and was a signatory to the MOA.

The Coordinating Committee reviewed the proposal at its June 19, 2019 meeting. The participating agencies were NCPC; the DC SHPO; the District of Columbia Department of Transportation (DDOT); the District Department of Energy and Environment; the General Services Administration; the National Park Service; and the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority. The Committee forwarded the proposed final site development plans to the Commission with the statement that the proposal has been coordinated with all participating agencies.



Figure 1: Proposed new barrier-free entrance and walkway from 16th Street, NW



2 WEST ELEVATION AT LOWER PLAZA - FROM 16TH STREET
1/8"=1'-0"

Figure 2: Proposed elevation of new entrance in existing wall, as seen from 16th Street, NW

* * *

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 final site development plans for the Preservation of Meridian Hill Park - Phase V and VI, submitted by the National Park Service, and located at 2400 15th Street, Northwest in Washington, DC.

// Original Signed //

Marcel Acosta
Executive Director

July 2, 2019

Date