



Information Presentation

Commission Meeting: March 3, 2022

PROJECT

New Smithsonian Museums

Site Evaluation Study

Washington, DC

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SUBMITTED BY

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The purpose of this information presentation is to provide an update on the Smithsonian Institution's (SI) site evaluation study for two new museums: the National Museum of the American Latino and the American Women's History Museum. SI has initiated the site evaluation process, which will include consultation with NCPC, among others. The study will cover both museums and will occur concurrently. SI provided an introduction and overview of their process in December 2021. The presentation will review the proposed site evaluation criteria, sites under consideration, as well as an overview of stakeholder feedback thus far.

As a reminder, the legislation that established the two new museums provides that the SI Board of Regents (BOR) designate sites for the museums within two years (December 2022). The sites shall be within the District of Columbia and articulates a Congressional intent that the museum should be located on or near the National Mall. The BOR must carry out site selection in consultation with, among others, the Chair of NCPC. As such, NCPC has an advisory role.

Based on the first information presentation and continued discussions with SI, staff has identified a few initial comments:

- *Sites for Consideration* – It is likely the study will be relevant for the siting of other future museums. As such, we support fully evaluating all sites on the short list. Some sites may not be viable for the two museums under consideration now, but they may be contenders for future museums. It may also be helpful to also acknowledge which sites may be more feasible in the short or medium term as opposed to the long term.
- *Evaluation Criteria* – Staff found the evaluation criteria generally well-conceived and thorough. They capture the range of factors that should be considered in selecting potential museum sites. However, we do suggest that environmental considerations be reflected in the potential for building re-use. Such factors may include embodied carbon and energy efficiency.
- *NCPC Plans* - Staff appreciates that “compatibility with NCPC plans” is reflected as a criterion. NCPC plans can help guide the placement of the proposed museums and help

frame the future vision of areas around the National Mall. While the existing conditions are important, the transformative opportunities of many sites around the Monumental Core should also be considered.

NCPC Plans as Guidance

Many of the potential sites presented at the information presentation in December 2021 are identified in NCPC's earliest plans, which together, serve as an important tool in guiding site selection for new commemorative works and museums. A progression of ideas first laid out in the L'Enfant and McMillian Plans, NCPC's Legacy Plan, Museums and Memorials Master Plan, and Monumental Core Framework Plan, create distinctive settings for new memorials and museums, transform federal precincts surrounding the National Mall, provide more vibrant and sustainable places to visit, work and live; and improve connections between the National Mall the downtown, and the waterfront.

More recently, NCPC's work on the SW Ecodistrict Plan and Pennsylvania Avenue Initiative highlight the significant transformations underway in two areas adjacent to the National Mall. The initial list presented to the Commission in December captures several sites within these areas – sites which could benefit from the transformations underway and also serve as catalysts for future change. Pennsylvania Avenue, deeply symbolic with its strong civic identity, and Southwest/Independence Avenue, a prominent connection from the Mall to the newly revitalized waterfront, should continue to be evaluated for future museums.

SW Ecodistrict Plan

The *SW Ecodistrict Plan: A Vision for a More Sustainable Future* is a long-range, comprehensive approach to transform a 110-acre, isolated federal precinct into a well-connected, mixed-use neighborhood, workplace, and cultural destination linking the National Mall and the Southwest Waterfront. As buildings and infrastructure are rehabilitated or redeveloped, the plan proposes district-scale environmental practices to achieve greater energy and water management efficiency and performance. The plan strives to meet future space needs of a modern federal workforce, identifies new public and private development opportunities and partnerships, and seeks to establish the district as a sustainability showcase. The area has transformed significantly since 2013, with the new Spy Museum, Museums of the Bible, and Wharf project all implemented.

The plan identifies two locations for cultural use, anchoring the north and south ends of 10th Street, on axis with the Smithsonian Castle. These two potential development areas for new cultural campus sites are the Banneker Park site, as well as the northern area of the district, called Independence Quarter.

Pennsylvania Avenue Initiative

A second area of consideration is Pennsylvania Avenue. The initial list includes several sites located along the Avenue. NCPC, along with the General Services Administration (GSA), the

National Park Service (NPS), and the District of Columbia Government formed an Executive Committee and launched the Pennsylvania Avenue Initiative to consider near- and long-term improvements to the Avenue. Pennsylvania Avenue is one of Washington’s most recognized streets, physically and symbolically connecting the U.S. Capitol with the White House. A major redevelopment effort led by the Pennsylvania Avenue Development Corporation (PADC) from the 1970s to the 1990s shaped the design and character of the street and surrounding neighborhood. The Initiative aims to improve the Pennsylvania Avenue experience.

ATTACHED:

- Overview and Map

PROJECT TIMELINE

Previous actions	December 2021 – Initial Information Presentation
Remaining actions (anticipated)	Through 2022 - Ongoing consultation on site evaluation process Future - Review of site and building plans for proposed museums

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Background

- In December 2020, H.R. 133 was signed into law, which establishes two new museums within the Smithsonian Institution – American Women’s History Museum and National Museum of the American Latino
- Legislation provides that the Smithsonian Institution Board of Regents (BOR) designate sites for the museums within two years (December 2022)
- The Smithsonian Institution has initiated the site evaluation study, which will include consultation with NCPC Chair, among others
- The study will cover both museums and will occur concurrently
- SI provided first briefing in December 2021

Background

- The Board of Regents must consult with, among others, the Chair of NCPC.
- NCPC has an advisory role.
- Chair can provide letter with recommendations to Board of Regents.
- Following site selection, NCPC will have approval authority over site and building plans for the museums in accordance with the Planning Act.

Initial Staff Comments

- Sites for Consideration – support fully evaluating all sites on the short list. It may be helpful to also acknowledge which sites may be more feasible in the short or medium term as opposed to the long term.
- Evaluation Criteria – evaluation criteria are generally well-conceived and thorough. Suggest that environmental considerations be reflected in the potential for building re-use. Such factors may include embodied carbon and energy efficiency.
- NCPC Plans - Appreciates that “compatibility with NCPC plans” is reflected as a criterion. NCPC plans can help guide the placement of the proposed museums and help frame the future vision of areas around the National Mall.

Framework Plan Excerpt

