



Commission Action

March 6, 2025

PROJECT Tidal Basin Development Concept Plan National Mall and Memorial Parks Tidal Basin Washington, DC	NCPC FILE NUMBER MP314
SUBMITTED BY United States Department of the Interior National Park Service	NCPC MAP FILE NUMBER 1.51(05.00)45962
REVIEW AUTHORITY Approval of Master Plans for use by the Commission per 40 U.S.C. § 8722(a) and (b)(1)	APPLICANT'S REQUEST Approval of comments on concept master plan
	ACTION TAKEN Approve comments on concept master plan

The Commission:

Approves the following comments on the concept master plan for the Tidal Basin:

Supports the National Park Service's project goals for the Tidal Basin area to expand the connectivity of multi-modal circulation, transportation, and infrastructure; enhance the year-round visitor experience, vistas and viewsheds, and gathering spaces; manage ecological impacts sustainably; protect cultural resources; and provide perimeter site security at the Jefferson Memorial.

Notes the project is part of the stipulations agreed upon by the National Park Service, the District of Columbia Historic Preservation Office, and National Capital Planning Commission in a Memorandum of Agreement to resolve the adverse effects resulting from the project for the Rehabilitation of Tidal Basin and West Potomac Park Seawalls, approved in September 2023.

Notes that NPS intends to raise the remaining sections of the existing Tidal Basin seawalls in the future in a method similar to that used in Phase I of the seawall project, as funds become available.

Notes that growing visitation, escalating costs, and the lack of consistent federal funding have left the NPS unable to keep pace with repairs needed at the Tidal Basin. In particular, the cherry trees are in constant need of replacement as the trees cannot survive in current conditions of trampled, compacted soils and the twice-daily inundation of brackish water in areas.

Supports the applicant's goal to disperse visitors to other areas in the Tidal Basin, especially towards the Potomac River, and to expand other opportunities for experiences, including recreation and respite activities.

Supports the applicant's intent to improve circulation within the Tidal Basin area, while integrating more opportunities for pedestrians and bicyclists, and less reliance on automobiles and surface parking.

Notes the submission includes three alternatives for the Tidal Basin area. The development of each alternative was guided by a few key themes.

Finds that all three alternatives would help address increased visitor and maintenance demands; balance project needs and goals, historic preservation, public safety, and design; address resiliency; and enhance the National Mall's Tidal Basin area as a destination for both local residents and visitors from across the country consistent with policies of the *Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital*.

Finds the three alternatives each contain successful components (as noted below) that may be interchanged or combined in the development of a preferred alternative.

Three Alternatives

Alternative A

Notes Alternative A prioritizes expanding the connectivity of multi-modal circulation, transportation, and infrastructure around the Tidal Basin area.

Notes Alternative A includes two primary pedestrian circulation routes that allow visitors to experience the Tidal Basin landscape at an upper and lower level, with ancillary paths braided through the landscape to connect the more prominent pathways.

Finds the cherry blossom tree canopies support a pedestrian hierarchy within the landscape surrounding the Basin, direct views, and provide a backdrop for viewing this historic landscape, which is intended to relieve overcrowding on the inner ring adjacent to the water.

Finds the roadways and parking areas are designed to provide larger, contiguous space for flexible uses and gatherings, while bicycle and scooter infrastructure is paired with pedestrian circulation for efficient access to points of matriculation or the city fabric beyond.

Notes perimeter site security in Alternative A proposes layered low walls, topographic changes, and bollards along with a number of openings to allow for pedestrian movement.

Alternative B

Notes Alternative B prioritizes the year-round visitor experience, enhances vistas and viewsheds, and expands gathering spaces.

Finds that vistas and viewsheds are a key organizational component of this alternative which formalizes existing viewsheds to key features and cultural resources within the Tidal Basin and

adjacent landscapes; emphasizing reciprocal viewsheds; and creating intimate viewsheds that may be experienced at a more personal level.

Finds that Alternative B uses topography, cherry blossom tree canopy, and pedestrian pathways as view-framing devices, and gathering spaces are made accessible and easily identifiable throughout the landscape providing moments of pause along an episodic journey.

Finds that Alternative B adjusts existing vehicular circulation around the Basin to reduce the amount of time a pedestrian or cyclist spends at crosswalks entering the site, and redundancy in bicycle infrastructure provides options for commuter and tourism-focused cyclists to navigate in a safe manner.

Notes perimeter site security in Alternative B proposes a mostly continuous low wall, topographic changes, and bollards, but with more limited openings for pedestrian movement as compared to Alternative A.

Alternative C

Notes Alternative C emphasizes proposed tidal intrusions both at the Basin's edge and the interior of the larger site, connecting the current iteration of this landscape to the tidal flats that existed prior to the mid-1800s.

Finds that Alternative C reduces parking and paved space and prioritizes the use of alternative transportation methods with proposed ride-share drop-offs, bus stops, and Americans with Disability Act (ADA)-accessible connections.

Finds the continuous ring of cherry blossom trees along the entire Basin edge merges the cultural and ecological history of the site into a modern representation.

Notes perimeter site security in Alternative C proposes a meandering, mostly continuous low wall that follows a pedestrian path, topographic changes, and bollards, and incorporates bioretention at low points to capture water from planted areas and roadways. The number of pedestrian access points is similar to Alternative B.

General Recommendations

Recommends the applicant continue to refine the alternatives, following public input, to ensure they are clear and discrete, and so that the potential tradeoffs between different priorities can be evaluated.

Recommends that the master plan consider approaches to avoid impacts to the contemplative and reflective spaces associated with existing memorials.

Recommends the master plan include, as part of the next submission, a narrative and associated graphics that describe the proposed seawall improvements that form the baseline flood protection of all alternatives.

Recommends the applicant use the Tidal Basin's cultural landscape as a lens to refine the alternatives in a manner that does not adversely affect the contributing elements of the landscape and built environment.

Supports the potential use of cantilevered walkways along the Tidal Basin seawall as shown in alternatives **A and B** and **requests** the applicant provide an analysis of the criteria used to refine their locations.

Supports the applicant's intent to introduce additional concentrations of Cherry Trees away from the Tidal Basin rim, assisting in dispersing visitors to other locations in the Tidal Basin area.

Supports the need to develop a more comprehensive approach to perimeter security at the Jefferson Memorial that is compatible with the cultural landscape.

Recommends the proposed perimeter security approaches for the Jefferson Memorial should avoid long uninterrupted walls, to assist pedestrian movement, while limiting interventions that alter the landscape.


Recommends that the applicant consider using the historic geometry of the Jefferson Memorial's landscape to inform the approach to new perimeter security.

Further Consultation

Recommends the applicant conduct additional coordination with the District's Department of Transportation regarding potential physical and transportation impacts resulting from any reconfiguration of Maine Avenue.

Recommends the applicant coordinate with the Department of Energy and Environment regarding potential stormwater management approach and other issues related to water resources.

Recommends the applicant continue to coordinate with all the appropriate stakeholders and consulting parties through the National Environmental Policy Act and National Historic Preservation Act Section 106 processes.

 3/7/25

Meghan Hottel-Cox
Secretary to the National Capital Planning Commission

