NATIONAL CAPITAL PLANNING COMMISSION

COMMISSION MEETING

OPEN SESSION

THURSDAY,
JUNE 6, 2019

The meeting convened in Room 5115, Suite 500, 401 9th Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20004, at 1:00 p.m., Thomas Gallas, Vice-Chairman, presiding.

NATIONAL CAPITAL PLANNING COMMISSION MEMBERS PRESENT:

THOMAS GALLAS, Vice-Chairman
Presidential Appointee
SAJEEL S. AHMED, Department of Defense
LINDA ARGO, Mayoral Appointee
EVAN CASH, Office of the Chairman of the Council of the District of Columbia
ARRINGTON DIXON, Mayoral Appointee
WENDY GINSBERG, U.S. House of Representatives
PETER MAY, Department of the Interior
DANIEL SPINO, U.S. Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs
ANDREW TRUEBLOOD, Office of the Mayor of the District of Columbia
BETH WHITE, Presidential Appointee
MINA WRIGHT, General Services Administration
NCPC STAFF PRESENT:

MARCEL C. ACOSTA, Executive Director

JULIA KOSTER, Secretary to the Commission

ANNE SCHUYLER, General Counsel
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(1:03 p.m.)

ACTING CHAIR GALLAS: Good afternoon and welcome to the National Capital Planning Commission's June 6, 2019 public meeting.

Would you all please rise and join me in the Pledge of Allegiance?

(Pledge of Allegiance.)

ACTING CHAIR GALLAS: For all in attendance, today's meeting is live-streamed and will be available as a video.

Noting the presence of a quorum, so I'm glad everyone's here today, I would like to call this meeting to order.

[INSERT - AGENDA]
ELECT COMMISSIONER TO RUN THE OPEN SESSION

ACTING CHAIR GALLAS: Before we proceed with the rest of the agenda, there is one procedural matter that we must attend to.

In the absence of a chair of the Commission, the bylaws require the Commission to elect a member to perform the functions of the chairman at the start of each meeting, with the understanding that the vice chairman is the likely person to be elected. So the Commission must nominate and vote on who should run the June open session.

Would someone like to make a motion?

MEMBER WRIGHT: So moved.

ACTING CHAIR GALLAS: So moved. Is there a second?

MEMBER WHITE: Second.

ACTING CHAIR GALLAS: What is the motion?

MEMBER WRIGHT: The motion is that you run the meeting.

ACTING CHAIR GALLAS: Thank you. I
just wanted to be --

MEMBER WRIGHT: I was trying to take

the shortcut.

ACTING CHAIR GALLAS: Thank you.

Thank you. Well, I am insecure, so I need --

(Laughter.)

ACTING CHAIR GALLAS: So the motion

has been seconded.

All please signify approval by saying

aye.

(Chorus of aye.)

ACTING CHAIR GALLAS: Any opposed?

(No audible response.)

ACTING CHAIR GALLAS: The motion

carries.

Thank you very much, fellow

commissioners.

REPORT OF THE VICE CHAIRMAN

ACTING CHAIR GALLAS: Agenda Item 2 is

the report of the Vice Chairman.

So, two things on my report today.

The first, the Commission took a notational vote
on our comments for the concept design of the Eastern Market Metro Park submitted by the D.C. Department of General Services last month. This was approved unanimously, with two abstentions, on May 7th.

Also today, several of us had the great pleasure of a wonderful tour of the Georgetown Section of the C&O Canal. That is going to be, obviously, an important part of today's open session agenda. We really appreciate the hospitality of the National Park Service and the informative tour the Georgetown Heritage Foundation also really tremendously valuable in helping us understand the vast undertaking that is envisioned here. So, we look forward to hearing more about that in the open session today.

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

ACTING CHAIR GALLAS: Okay, Agenda Item 3 is the report of the Executive Director, Mr. Acosta.

MR. ACOSTA: Thank you, Mr. Chairman
and good afternoon.

We are pleased to welcome three summer interns who have recently joined the Commission, so I will take this moment to introduce them.

First we have Adam Gordon. He has joined the Office of Public Engagement. Adam is a junior at Harvard University, where he is pursuing a bachelor's of art in architectural studies and Germanic language and literature.

Next we have Alex Baylor. Alex is a graduate student at the University of Maryland, where he is working on his master of community planning. Alex is working in our Physical Planning Division on the Pennsylvania Avenue Initiative.

And finally, we have Audrey Wilkes. Audrey is a senior at the University of Maryland, where she is working towards completing her bachelor of landscape architecture. Audrey is also assigned to the Monumental Core Streetscapes Project in our Physical Planning Division. So, welcome to all of you.
You have a written report in front of you, so that concludes my presentation for today. I will be happy to answer any questions, if you have any.

[INSERT - REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR]
ACTING CHAIR GALLAS: Thank you, Mr. Acosta. I would like to certainly acknowledge the two Terps in the room, fellow Terps. I'm glad the representation is here.

But this is going to be an exciting summer. We have got a huge agenda, Commission. I think you are going to learn a lot. It is going to inform your careers in a wonderful way. So, welcome.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

ACTING CHAIR GALLAS: Agenda Item 4 is the Legislative Update by Ms. Schuyler.

MS. SCHUYLER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman -- Mr. Vice Chairman.

I do have something to report. I want to advise you about House of Representatives Bill 24020 and Senate Bill 1267, both known as the National Museum of the American Latino Act. It was introduced in the House and it's been referred to the respective committees.

The text of the two bills are nearly identical and specify the following terms. They
establish within the Smithsonian Institute the National Museum of the American Latino. They create a Board of Trustees to work with the Smithsonian Institute Institution Board of Regents to plan, construct, and manage the museum.

It requires the Board of Regents to designate a site within two years of enactment of the Act from among the following four options. And these are very specific sites and this selection has to be made as only between one of these four.

The first is the Arts and Industry Building. The second is a site under the jurisdiction of the National Parks Service bounded by 14th Street, Northwest; Jefferson Drive, Northwest; Raoul Wallenberg Place, Southwest; and Independence Avenue, Southwest.

The third is a site under the jurisdiction of the Architect of the Capitol bounded by 3rd Street, Northwest; Constitution Avenue, Northwest; 1st Street, Northwest; and
Pennsylvania, Northwest.

And the final, which I have to profess while trying to figure this out on a map, is a little unclear but it is a site under the jurisdiction of the Department of Agriculture on the National Mall, bounded by 12th Street, Northwest; and 14th Street, Northwest; and Jefferson Drive; and Independence Avenue, Southwest.

So once a site is selected, the entity with jurisdiction over the selected site must transfer jurisdiction as soon as possible.

The museum is not subject to the requirements of the Commemorative Work Act but the Board of Regents must confer with NCPC and CFA, among others. The Act specifies that the size of the museum shall be not less than that identified in a report prepared by a commission formed to study the creation of the museum under a prior law.

And finally, the Act authorizes use of appropriated funds at a level of 50 percent to
include a $20 million authorization in the Act for 2020 and 50 percent of the remaining funds will come from private sources.

Thank you.

ACTING CHAIR GALLAS: Thank you very much. We look forward to learning more about how that plays out.

Thank you.

CONSENT CALENDAR

ACTING CHAIR GALLAS: Okay, Agenda Item 5 is the Consent Calendar. There are seven consent calendar items on this month's agenda, Items 5A through 5G.

The first is for a tennis pavilion at the White House Complex submitted by the National Parks Service.

The second is for an antenna at Building 52 at the United States Naval Observatory submitted by the Department of the Navy.

The third is for the entrance alterations at Building 10, the Naval Support
Activity, Bethesda, as submitted also by the Department of the Navy.

The fourth is for the firing range facility expansion at Joint Base Andrews, also submitted by the Department of the Navy.

The fifth item is for an antenna installation at the U.S. Department of Agriculture South Building submitted by the General Services Administration.

The sixth item is for approval of preliminary and final building plans for the Whittle School improvements at 3700 Tilden Street.

And the final item is for a photovoltaic facility and boiler conversion at the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center in Cheltenham, Maryland submitted by the Department of Homeland Security.

[INSERT - WHITE HOUSE TENNIS PAVILION]
[INSERT - FIRING RANGE FACILITY EXPANSION]
[INSERT - USDA ANTENNA INSTALLATION]
[INSERT - FEDERAL LAW ENFORCEMENT TRAINING CENTER]
ACTING CHAIR GALLAS: Is there a motion to approve the Consent Calendar?

MEMBER WRIGHT: So moved.

ACTING CHAIR GALLAS: It's been moved.

MEMBER WHITE: Second.

ACTING CHAIR GALLAS: Seconded.

All in favor of moving on the Consent Calendar, please signify by saying aye.

(Chorus of aye.)

ACTING CHAIR GALLAS: Any opposed?

(No audible response.)

ACTING CHAIR GALLAS: Thank you. That motion carried unanimously.

Okay, we have a very full open session agenda today. So we will jump right in.

FILE NO. 8078 - U.S. DEPT. OF INTERIOR,

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, THE CHESAPEAKE AND OHIO CANAL BETWEEN 28TH AND 36TH STREETS, NW,

WASHINGTON, D.C. - CHESAPEAKE AND OHIO CANAL NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK - GEORGETOWN CANAL PLAN

ACTING CHAIR GALLAS: We now start with Agenda Item 6A to provide comments on the concept
plans for the Georgetown Canal Plan, which
addresses the first mile of the C&O Canal
National Historic Park.

Several commissioners, as I mentioned
earlier, had the opportunity today to see this
area and I would like to again thank the National
Park Service for hosting this informative field
trip.

Ms. Dowker, please help us see it
through.

MS. SPIGLE DOWKER: Good afternoon,
Members of the Commission.

The National Park Service, in
cooperation with the Georgetown BID, Georgetown
Heritage, and the District Office of Planning has
submitted concept plans for the Georgetown Canal
for your review and comment.

The project is located at the first
one-mile segment of the C&O Canal, which runs
184.5 miles in total length from Washington, D.C.
to Cumberland, Maryland. While much of the canal
is in rural settings, the first mile is in an
urban condition.

The project is within the Georgetown Historic District and includes the canal segment between the zero mile marker to the east near the Thompson Boat Center, all the way to the Alexandria Aqueduct to the west near the Key Bridge.

The canal was engineered by James Geddes and Nathan Roberts and was constructed between 1828 and 1831. The canal had an industrial and transportation use. Canal boats shipped goods and raw materials between the Potomac River and Allegheny Mountains.

President Eisenhower proclaimed the C&O Canal a national monument in 1961. The canal was dedicated a National Historical Park in 1971 and was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1979.

The applicant and landscape architect, James Corner Field Operations, have inventoried the canal's spatial configurations, materials, and characters, including open vistas and views.
to the Potomac, intimate enclosures focused on the canal or pocket parks, historic fabric and material in areas with industrial or garden-like character.

In 2018, the National Park Service completed a cultural landscape inventory, which documents the elements that contribute to the canal's historic integrity and character, as you can see on this map.

The National Park Service identified project goals, which include improving safety ABAS-compliant access, which I will refer to as universal access, connections to the Georgetown community, and improvements to the visitor and educational experience.

Today's presentation is organized around elements of the concept plan, including improvements to the towpath, access to the towpath, and interventions at seven locations.

So first the towpath. It is a pedestrian path of varying width between two to ten feet wide which runs parallel to the canal.
The towpath retains historic integrity of location on the north side or the berm side of the canal between 29th and 34th Streets. The towpath runs continuously on the north side of the canal and is discontinuous on the south of the canal.

Three types of bridges connect the north and south sides of the canal and towpath. Bridges on the western end of the site connect the north and south pedestrian towpaths. Bridges near the center of the site connect between elevated buildings or plazas, which are above the towpath level. And bridges on the eastern end of the site provide vehicle connections with road level pedestrian crossings for towpath users.

These photos from the western end of the site show the three historic bridge crossings that connect the north and south towpaths.

To assess needed improvements, the applicant analyzed the varying widths of the towpath. And that's referring to the gravel path shown on the image in the lower right. The red
areas in the diagram indicate where the towpath is less than four feet wide and this generally occurs on the north side of the canal, west of Potomac Street.

The applicant also studied the total available width, so that's the space between the canal edge and the retaining walls, where the towpath could be widened through leveling and removing of vegetation. This diagram shows that much of the available space along the canal is between six and ten feet wide. And it is staff's understanding that for accessible circulation, the towpath needs to be at least eight or nine feet wide.

Therefore, this diagram shows pinch points where the towpath is less than eight feet wide and applicant is exploring options to widen the towpath at these points, which are mostly on the north side.

Today, the towpath has an informal character consisting of a gravel path lined with grass and vegetation at the top of the canal
prism. The canal prism refers to the open channel that forms the canal waterway and the canal prism wall is right here.

The photographs illustrate that today's towpath conditions reflect what existed a century ago. The drawing shows that the existing towpath and narrow pinch points where the gravel path is only two to four feet wide. And staff notes that this condition poses challenges for people with limited mobility but recommends that the applicant consider preserving the existing towpath character, especially in areas where the towpath does not need to be universally accessible.

Because of the canal's historic integrity and status as a national monument, historical park, and its listing on the National Register of Historic Places, it is important to weigh needed improvements and programmatic changes against impacts to this historic resource. So in addition to the no action alternative, the applicant is presenting two
alternatives: Option A, which is generally minimal change; and Option B, which is generally more significant change.

The Commission's comments on the options presented today will inform what is included in the environmental assessment and assessment of effects report.

The Park Service is proposing changes to the existing towpath to meet universal accessibility standards, while also considering that the towpath will be shared with guided mules leading interpretive canal boats. These boat tours were popular in the 1980s and the Georgetown Heritage has been working to reinstate them.

The applicant proposes two options for improving the towpath. Option A levels the walking surface, removes vegetation, and applies a curb edge within the available space.

Option B is similar to Option A but also cantilevers the towpath over the canal prism wall to achieve a minimum width of eight to nine
feet to meet accessibility requirements and
provide circulation for guided mules. Staff
anticipates this treatment would occur at the
narrow pinch points shown earlier.

To avoid changing the character of the
canal's open waterway, staff recommends that the
applicant consider applying Option B only in
limited locations, so not for long stretches
along the canal, and using Option B to function
as a lay-by perhaps located under bridges where
this is less visible.

Staff finds that there is a way to
provide universal access while maintaining the
historic integrity of the site and recommends the
applicant consider identifying an accessible
route through the historical park, if possible,
alternating between the north and south towpaths.
So for example, running along the north side
here, switching over to the south side here,
where the towpath is wider, and applying a
mixture of towpath options A and B.

At preliminary review, staff requests
diagrams showing the proposed circulation for pedestrians, bicycles, guided mules, and universal access and the details of the hybrid approach to the towpath, showing where towpath options A and B would be applied, as well as the proposed materials and dimensions.

Next, I will discuss access to the towpath. The canal's towpath is generally confined between buildings and retaining walls, which result in challenging grade changes and connections from streets, bridges, and plazas, down to the towpath level.

The towpath and the bridges that cross the canal are accessed by a series of stair and ramp connections indicated here in yellow and blue.

Staff finds that elevators are needed for universal accessibility and supports the proposed elevators and ramps, which would make the pedestrian bridges universally accessible. And staff requests additional information regarding the elevator proposed at the western
end of the site near the Key Bridge, which is over here.

Next, I will discuss the interventions at seven locations where site and landscape improvements are proposed. For clarity, I will present these from east to west. These include the mile marker zero, the Rock Creek confluence, the locks, the Wisconsin Avenue cutout, the Market Plaza, Stone Yard, and aqueduct. And I will walk through each location and discuss the proposed options A and B.

So first the mile marker zero. Staff notes that this currently underutilized area contains the zero mile marker for the entire 184.5 mile C&O Canal Trail. Photos of the site show its current condition. It is difficult to see and access, as it is located on the southern end of the peninsula and hidden behind existing boat storage. Staff notes that contributing resources here include the Waste Gate Ruins, the Tide Lock, the Mole, which refers to the earthen peninsula, and the Rock Creek Basin.
Option A retains the existing boat storage, proposes a new bridge, improvements to the Tide Lock, including the Potomac Terraces, which step down to the water.

Option B relocates the boat storage to the Thompson Boat Center parking area, proposes a new bridge, landscaping, and river terraces. Staff finds that the mile marker zero area can support more significant change as shown in Option B and this has less potential to impact historic character.

An additional element of Option B is a pedestrian and bicycle bridge. This plan shows the proposed K Street Bridge location, which is indicated here at number 4; the boat storage relocated to the parking area here and here, indicated in number 3; the existing vehicle and pedestrian bridge to Thompson Boat Center here; and the proposed bridge to mile marker zero here, number one here.

Staff finds that the addition of the K Street bridge enhances bicycle connections.
between the K Street Cycle Track and the Rock Creek Park Tail, and buffers pedestrians from the Parkway traffic.

Next we have the Rock Creek confluence. This area joins the Georgetown level of the canal with Rock Creek. Staff notes that contributing resources here include the Rock Creek Basin, the canal prism, the towpath, Lock 1, Boat Basin 1, and the 29th Street Bridge.

This location only has one option, Option A, which proposed a bridge over the confluence connecting to private lands to form a trail connection all along the western bank of Rock Creek and puts pedestrians away from Parkway traffic.

Staff finds that the confluence area can support minimal change as shown in Option A.

Then we have the locks. This area is the location of the National Park Service C&O Canal Visitor Center. The locks and the canal walls were recently restored here and this will be the place where interpretive mule-led canal
boats will be ticketed with passengers and depart westward along the canal.

Staff notes that contributing resources here include the towpath, Lock 3, Boat Basins 2 and 3, the 30th Street Bridge, the Thomas Jefferson Street Bridge, and Lock 4.

Option A proposes rehabilitating the existing Visitor and Education Center, enhancing the mule yard lawn and tree groves, incorporating an interactive lock model, and improving the canal boat waiting area.

Option B proposes a new Visitor and Education Center to the north of the site, which is located up here, enhancing the mule yard and lawn and tree groves, incorporating an interactive lock model, and improving the canal boat waiting area, which would be co-located with the mule staging.

Staff finds that this area can support more significant change, as shown in Option B, to meet Park Service Visitor and Education Center space and program needs.
Next we have the Wisconsin Avenue cutout. Staff notes there is a large grade separation between Wisconsin Avenue and the Canal Towpath at this location. Here, the canal is tightly framed by retaining walls and the towpath occurs on the north side.

Staff notes that contributing resources here include the towpath, the canal prism, the water intake, the Wisconsin Avenue Bridge, the commemorative obelisk, and the north retaining walls.

Option A proposes an elevator at the current location of the obelisk, an expanded linear staircase, and stone archway, and seating steps. Staff recommends that the applicant consider relocating the elevator to a less visible location that does not impact the historic location of the commemorative obelisk.

Option B proposes an elevator further set back from the street, a compressed stairway, the stone archway and seating steps, and a boardwalk along the southern side of the canal,
which you can see here.

Staff finds that this area can only support minimal change, as was shown in Option A, as it has more potential to impact historic character. Staff finds that the stone archway and seating steps do not create a welcoming space for pedestrians to linger and recommends the applicant evaluate the usage and need for the stone archway and seating steps and consider options without these elements, while still providing ample circulation for elevator and stair egress.

Next we have the Market Plazas. The Market Plaza area is a spatially constrained section of the canal, tightly framed by buildings that are three to eight stories tall. The Market House Plaza is to the north. We were here this morning. So here you see the retaining wall and a small plaza overlooking the canal. And the Fish Market Square is to the south, you see it here with the water intake. These plazas provide open areas for gatherings and activities.
Staff notes that contributing resources here include the towpath, the canal prism, the Potomac Street Bridge, the Water Intake Ruins, and the north retaining walls.

Both Options A and B include an elevator for universal access to the towpath. Staff supports the location for the proposed elevator at the Market House Plaza adjacent to the Georgetown Park Building Turret.

Staff finds that Options A and B for the Market Plaza area have strengths and weaknesses. Option A includes an elevated sky deck for viewing the canal, and Fish Market Grove, and Gongoozling Platform. I will just note that a gongoozler is a British term for someone who enjoys watching canal activity.

ACTING CHAIR GALLAS: We were that today.

MS. SPIGLE DOWKER: Staff finds that Option A protects the historic character, particularly the north retaining wall framing the canal, and maintains a level plaza area for
outdoor programming and events. However, it does not provide a strong north-south visual and spatial connection between the two plazas.

Option B includes terrace seating at the Market House Plaza on the north side and an open air canopy within the Fish Market Square on the south side. Staff finds that Option B provides a north-south visual and spatial connection between the two plazas, as well as additional seating space for pedestrians. However, it has more potential to impact historic character, particularly the north retaining wall which frames the canal. Option B also impacts the circulation and service access on Potomac Street, which provides entrance to adjacent buildings and businesses.

Therefore, staff requests additional documentation, including the feasibility and practicality of constructing Option B's terrace seating and related improvements, including how one would access the Georgetown Market House and surrounding buildings and regrading along Potomac
Street, if necessary.

   Additionally, staff requests
information on how visitors will use and
experience the spaces in Options A and B and
visualizations for the proposed designs.

   Regarding Fish Market Square, which is
the plaza area to the south, staff finds that the
proposed open air canopy overwhelms the intimate
space that exists there today and recommends the
use of temporary canopy structures, when needed.

   Next we have the stone yard. The
stone yard has a wide towpath and adjacent
vegetated open space south of the canal. Staff
notes that contributing resources here include
the towpath, the canal prism, the 34th Street
Bridge, the dual water intake, and the north
retaining wall.

   Option A proposes the kayak boat
launch and seating area south of the towpath,
which you see here in number 2.

   Option B proposes a combined seating
and boat launch area and staff finds that this
area can support minimal change, as was shown in Option A, and recommends that the applicant consider relocating the kayak boat launch from this area, the stone yard, westward to the aqueduct to avoid potential conflicts between the floating dock and its associated recreational programming and the interpretive mule-drawn boats.

Lastly, we have the aqueduct. The aqueduct begins a transition from the canal's urban condition on the east to a more naturalized condition on the west, which is more typical of the majority of the C&O Canal Trail.

There are several contributing resources at the aqueduct, including the towpath, canal prism, the Alexandria aqueduct abutments, and the Washington Canoe Club.

Both Options A and B propose improved connections between the towpath, which is up here at a higher elevation, and the Capital Crescent Trail, which is down here at a lower elevation.

Option A includes a meadow and
boardwalk between the abutments with a platform overlooking the Potomac River.

Option B proposed a trestle pavilion mimicking the former historic structure and planted terraces overlooking the Potomac River. Option B also includes a recreational kiosk and boat launch.

Staff finds that this area can support minimal change, as was shown in Option A and has more potential to impact historic character.

So to summarize, we are seeking to balance improved visitor experience and universal accessibility with historic preservation.

Therefore, it is the Executive Director's recommendation that the Commission supports the National Park Service's goals for improving the canal, while also maintaining its unique historic character, supports goals for making the existing towpath more accessible, recommends that the applicant consider a hybrid approach to the towpath to maintain its character and requests additional documentation on this hybrid approach,
related circulation patterns, materials, and
details at preliminary review, supports the
proposed elevators and ramps, and requests
additional information regarding the elevator
proposed near the Key Bridge.

Now, I have summarized these comments
for each location during the presentation, which
find that mile marker zero can accommodate Option
B; the Rock Creek confluence can support Option
A; the locks can accommodate Option B; the
Wisconsin Avenue cutout can support Option A, but
recommend reevaluating the elevator location, and
stone archway, and seating steps; the Fish Market
Plazas have strengths and weaknesses and a
request for additional documentation on the
feasibility of constructing Option B, how
visitors will use and experience the spaces, and
visualizations for these options; and finds that
the stone yard and aqueduct can support Option A,
and requests that the applicant provide further
details as plans are further developed.

So that concludes my presentation. I
am happy to answer questions. We also have staff
from the National Park Service and Georgetown
Heritage here to answer questions as well.

[INSERT - CHESAPEAKE AND OHIO CANAL NATIONAL
HISTORICAL PARK]
ACTING CHAIR GALLAS: Wow. Thank you for a very comprehensive presentation. There is a lot to take in but it was great to see the space today and help envision some of the things that are being proposed.

Any questions for Ms. Dowker before we go to our six registered speakers?

Okay, let's first ask Pat Tiller, on behalf of the Committee of 100 on the Federal City, to provide your five minutes of remarks, please.

[INSERT - LIST OF REGISTERED SPEAKERS]
MR. TILLER: Thank you. Good afternoon. My name is De Teel Patterson Tiller, I also go by Pat Tiller, representing the Committee of 100 on the Federal City, the District's oldest planning advocacy non-profit. And we will be celebrating our hundredth anniversary very soon.

Before joining the Committee of 100, I proudly served for 30 years with the U.S. National Park Service out west and the last ten years here in Washington as the agency's associate director or deputy associate director for cultural resources. With that happy personal connection to America's most beloved federal agency, I am kind of sad to come before you today critical of my alma mater.

The Committee applauds the goal of rehabilitating, restoring, and increasing public access and enjoyment on this one-mile segment of the canal but the historic integrity must not be subordinated to recreational, economic, and tourism interests, as we fear many aspects of
this plan do.

The conceptual touchstone of this plan appears to be the wildly popular and successful High Line in New York City on the lower West Side. It's wonderful; everybody agrees. I've walked it three times. It is one of the great wonders of this era.

But unlike the High Line, we argue the C&O Canal is a different kettle of fish. It is not obsolete. It does not require rescuing, nor repurposing, and it requires a higher level of care than currently proposed, we argue, in the concept plan. Moreover, while the High Line is historic, it is, at best, locally significant. It is a locally-significant historic property.

The C&O Canal, all 184.5 miles of it, is a nationally-significant treasure. President Eisenhower, as you heard, declared it a National Monument. It is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. And finally, it is a unit of the great U.S. National Park System and more respectful tactics, we argue, are mandatory.
The C&O Canal neither needs repurposing nor reimagining, as has been offered, as the leitmotif for driving concept of this plan. The Georgetown Canal segment does not need to be jazzed up. It does not need to be high-lined.

Not appropriate are the wide-scale use of landscapes, perennials, tree groves, all while pretty, all while wonderful, everybody will love them, are not appropriate for the historic canal, whose historic nature was and continues largely gritty and industrial. Historically, the canal was neither garden nor local recreational park. The aqueduct ruin is neither a wildflower garden nor the setting for an ersatz historic bridge trust.

The wholesale introduction of recreational floating boardwalks, conversation pits, and hammocks we believe are inadvisable. They no doubt, again, will be wildly popular. These choices are incompatible with National Park Service policies and incompatible in material
design and historic character with the canal, particularly at mile marker zero.

No better example of this tension exists than the proposal to reimagine the historic towpath. The plan considers paving, widening, even cantilevering it out over the canal in ways that never existed historically, remembering again, this is a nationally historic property. All this is to provide wide berth for jogging and walking.

The towpath is an historically emblematic element of the canal, as much so as the locks, the water, sidewalls. Looking at 19th century photographs, as you saw, the towpath today is largely unchanged from its historic period.

The recent National Park Service Cultural Landscape inventory by Elder and Weldon is a remarkable document and the Park Service accepted it. The superintendent for the canal signed off on it. In it, the towpath is described as nationally-significant and
recommends no change whatsoever as the preferred treatment. Why is this not being followed in this plan?

The Georgetown segment of the C&O Canal is not a local park. It's not a playground. It's not a park horse. It's not a gym. The park's primary charge is not recreational, particularly at the expense of historic integrity. The park's primary purpose is to preserve, instruct, interpret, tell the story of this remarkable nationally-significant chapter in Americans' industrial heritage. This is hard to view when peeking through herbaceous perennial borders, floating docks, and hammocks.

Importantly, federal law, regulation, the National Park Service Administrative Procedures and Management policies are clear here. Important citations include the Secretary of Interior Standards for Archeology and Historic Preservation, NPS 40 -- NPS 28, NPS Management Policies and significantly, Section 110(f) of the National Historic Preservation Act.
Of course, recreation, enjoyment, access, and interpretation are legitimate functions and responsibilities of the National Park Service. We don't argue with that but to the degree that the historic integrity of the canal is not compromised, which we believe many of these proposals are. A better balance needs to be struck with the canal concept plan.

The Committee of 100 believes, regrettably, the National Park Service has lost its way, excessively deferring to economic and tourism interests. In fact, many people in Washington now call the project the Disney-fication of the C&O Canal.

We would not tolerate a wet and wild water slide in the title basin, nor would we a cantilevered Starbucks on the escarpment over Great Falls.

Some aspects of the concept plan are terrific. Some are, I think, equally inappropriate. We need to reimagine, I think, the plan.
Thank you for your attention. Please take the time to get it right. The byword, I think, needs to be take it easy; get it right. Right now, we don't believe it is in that state. The canal is too important an historic treasure for my hometown to be treated inappropriately. Future generations are depending on you all and all of us to make sure that happens.

The Committee of 100 on the Federal City appreciates this opportunity to speak to you today on the 75th Anniversary of D-Day.

Thank you all very much.

ACTING CHAIR GALLAS: Thank you, Mr. Tiller, for expressing clearly your point of view for the Committee of 100.

The next speaker is Mr. Rick Murphy from ANC2E05. Is Mr. Murphy here?

Okay, thank you.

Well, next is Ms. Alyson Steele. Ms. Steele, you will have three minutes to provide your testimony.

MS. STEELE: Good afternoon. Thank
you for having me here this afternoon. I'm Alyson Steele, an architect at Foggy Bottom. I have worked within walking distance of the canal for over 20 years and I am here in support of the concept plan.

The Georgetown Canal Plan brings much-needed revitalization to the first mile if this unique National Historical Park. Along with material and structural repairs, the proposed accessibility, wayfinding, and interpretive improvements are essential to fulfilling the next step in this urban landscape's evolution.

The canal, and particularly this section passing through Georgetown, has always been a busy and changing landscape. Even before the canal was constructed, the Georgetown waterfront was the setting for a busy tobacco port, a lumber yard, cement works, and of course the Washington Flour Mill. The canal's construction brought another layer of activity. At one time in the 1870's, over 500 craft were on the canal at once.
Since 1971, the park's purpose has continued to be active to preserve and help visitors discover the history, nature, and recreational opportunities of the place but physical deterioration has hindered this over time.

The proposed concept plan establishes a positive vision for the Georgetown section of the canal with its attention to authenticity, access, and interpretation. Authenticity is very important, as we have heard. The plan represents major, major investments in maintaining and repairing the canal's historic fabric. The extensive work is critical for the structures to welcome and safely serve visitors for this generation and the next. Care is being taken to retain character-giving features, such as the stone walls, their alignments, and the scale and industrial nature of this place.

As importantly, proposed new elements are designed to be clearly of our time and the temptation to create a false sense of historicity
is resisted.

Secondly, accessibility -- the plan corrects major deficiencies in accessibility for persons with mobility issues along the main areas of the park. Nearly 30 years after the Americans with Disabilities Act came into law, it is time to remove the barriers and safety hazards of steep grades, cross-loops, and pathways, and uneven ground. It should not be too much to ask that a veteran or multi-generational family group be able to enjoy a stroll at this national park in our nation's capital.

And finally, interpretation. Places for storytelling, for learning, and small gatherings are needed to provide opportunities to learn about the canal, its history, and its ecology. These are scaled proportionately with the spatial character of the canal itself, and provide variety, adaptability, and opportunities for pausing and learning that are essential components of meaningful engagement, which is the foundation for any preservation action.
The Georgetown section of the C&O Canal is an exceptional and unique urban park that provides wide-ranging needs and opportunities. The concept plan developed by this project leadership team of the National Park Service, Georgetown Heritage, the D.C. Office of Planning, and the BID addresses them appropriately and coherently, which isn't easy, considering, in such a way to encourage the sense of life and discovery that has always been part of the canal's identity. That is no small feat and I ask you to support them.

ACTING CHAIR GALLAS: Thank you, Ms. Steele.

The next speaker is Adam Metz, the Georgetown Heritage Board's Chair and speaking on their behalf.

Mr. Metz, you will have five minutes to provide your testimony.

MR. METZ: Good afternoon. I would like to start by thanking NCPC for allowing me to speak on behalf of Georgetown Heritage. As you
know, Georgetown Heritage is an official 501(c)(3) non-profit partner of both the C&O Canal National Historic Park and a portion of the Rock Creek Park.

As you mentioned, my name is Adam Metz. I am a resident of Georgetown and I am here representing Georgetown Heritage Board of Directors. I am not the chairman of it, though. I am actually chairman of the Infrastructure and Planning Committee we have of that Board. I am on our Executive Committee. And it is my pleasure to be here today with you.

You know as people have discussed, the canal has a long and storied history, all leading to the place we are today as part of the National Park System as a monument, an historic monument. Unfortunately, the National Park Service has a, I think as of 2016, a maintenance backlog of something in roughly the range of $12 billion and the C&O Canal is no exception.

We just completed a recent engineering report highlighting tens of millions of dollars
of infrastructure improvements within this just
one-mile area. When you walked the canal earlier
today, I hope you were impressed and awed by the
beauty and engineering marvel of the space. At
the same time, one can't but notice some
crumbling canal walls and other areas in need of
attention and care. We created Georgetown
Heritage for the express purpose of addressing
these issues.

As Alyson mentioned, we formed a
partnership among the National Park Service,
Georgetown BID, the D.C. Office of Planning, and
Georgetown Heritage to address these needs and
reimagine what the canal could be. In addition
to the physical improvements, our goal is to
create programming to share the history of the
canal and to create a place to enjoy its
incredible natural beauty with a strong
connection to the past in the city for the
enjoyment of our local residents, the citizens of
D.C., as well as our many visitors.

We anticipate this one-mile stretch
being an inviting center for social gatherings, art, immersive learning, contemplation, and recreation. And let me just quote from the enabling legislation. The purpose of the park is -- and here is where the quote starts -- to preserve and interpret the 19th century transportation canal from Washington, D.C. to Cumberland, Maryland and its associated scenic, natural, and cultural resources, and to provide opportunities for education and appropriate outdoor recreation.

As I previously mentioned, the preliminary design plans presented today are the result of a four-way partnership with the entities we mentioned. We have also had a number of community meetings to solicit public input. This is a unique national park in that it is a narrow ribbon running through a densely populated section of the city. It is not a typical national park that has one or two entrances that can be closed at night. It is an integral part of the fabric of Georgetown.
We are trying to balance with our design the mandate of the national park with the needs of an urban park surrounded by businesses and residences. By increasing activity, we expose this historic gem to more people, establish a new generation of park stewards, but also through increased activities, we can also help address some security concerns of the immediate neighbors.

We are dedicated to highlighting its historic significance by preserving the canal's history and then enlivening the park through programming. The programming has served as a cornerstone of the project and in many ways is the driving force of why we created Georgetown Heritage and began this effort to create a place where people could learn about, experience the history of the canal and Georgetown.

I want to just hit a couple highlights on the history that would come out through the storytelling that we would have available here. George Washington actually had a dream of
connecting the Potomac and Ohio Valleys, which
was kind of the background for the canal. The
canal rose in the mid-19th century, followed by a
decline during the Civil War and a brief
resurgence after. The story of American's
railways, the catalyst leading to the canal's
final decline by the 20th century. The story of
the Civilian Conservation Corps restoring the
canal under President Roosevelt in 1938. The
story to fend off the transformation of the canal
into a highway in the '50s led, in many ways, by
Justice William O. Douglas. The story of
generations of Americans who built, worked on,
and preserved this place and its history.

The story of the canal, in many ways,
has changed and transformed over time. It is not
a static story.

We hope to bring these stories to life
through programs and on the canal boat, and also
to help inform and inspire the design.

So in conclusion, if the canal is to
be preserved for future generations, we cannot
resign ourselves to the current trajectory. We will be left with nothing but a relic of American history. By bringing these groups together, we believe the only way to preserve this national historic park for future generations to come is to restore, honor, and elevate its significance through our collaborative efforts.

Today, we have an historic opportunity to move forward to unlock the canal's potential and shape its next chapter.

Thank you.

ACTING CHAIR GALLAS: Thank you very much, Mr. Metz.

The next speaker is Bob Peck with Gensler. Welcome, Mr. Peck. You have three minutes to provide your testimony.

MR. PECK: Thank you. Thank you.

It's a pleasure to be here. I want to emphasize I am here as a private citizen. I have served as a volunteer advisor to Adam's Infrastructure Committee on Georgetown Heritage but I have been -- I am a former commissioner of the Public
Building Service and I have been a GSA designee to NCPC in the past.

I have also lived in this area almost my entire life and I have lived in the District continuously since 1973. And for a very long time, the canal towpath was part of my regular running route.

Finally I will just say I have been involved in lots of projects in which there has been a partnership with the National Parks Service and I don't think I have seen one in which the partnership has worked more effectively.

What I would like to emphasize are some accessibility issues. And to note that it is a wonderful resource, it is in fact a national park but also an urban park. It needs to serve visitors to Washington. It needs to serve the historic Georgetown community. And there is an opportunity to do that while emphasizing the mission that the park has of interpreting and reflecting on its industrial history.
I would like to note that the Director's Order 42 on accessibility, and let's just talk about the classic sense of accessibility for those who are disabled, says that the NPS will seek to provide the highest level of accessibility reasonable, not simply the minimum level. And while of course that means that it has to be taken into -- the historic issues need to be taken into account, I would also note that running down the towpath, walking down the towpath these days is a challenge. And going back and forth over the canal, yes, is partly an historic condition but I would note that the original engineers intended that there be a 12-foot wide towpath all the way through Georgetown and that is something that I think we could consider as part of restoring that would make it more accessible to citizens.

Moreover, and I think as noted in the Executive Director's report, there are some accessibility issues that are less controversial probably just in dealing with access from the
streets of Georgetown down to the canal towpath itself.

I guess I would like mostly to just do a plead for the balance that is required to make this a resource that can be enjoyed. When I have visitors, I always bring them to Georgetown, want them to see the towpath and the waterfront park and it is particularly difficult to access.

There is an opportunity here to balance history and interpretation with the best aspects of an urban park in our time.

Thank you for your time.

ACTING CHAIR GALLAS: Thank you very much, Mr. Peck.

And the last speaker today is Ms. Stephanie Bothwell, representing the Citizens Association of Georgetown. Welcome, Ms. Bothwell. You will have five minutes to speak.

MS. BOTHWELL: Thank you. Thank you and good afternoon. I have come to you as a Board Member of CAG and the newest chair of a new committee called the Historic District. CAG is
pleased to review these proposals for the C&O Canal, which offer many interesting and innovative ideas.

We would like to see the following core goals guide decisions on design: to preserve and highlight the historic features of this unique place; to help visitors understand and interpret its history; to preserve green space and natural features; and to enhance the general beauty and accessibility of the area.

The proposals support these goals in many ways though, in CAG's view, some elements could overpower the historic character, authenticity, and sense of place that the sponsors recognize need to be preserved. A simpler approach, as outlined below, would not only be more in keeping with the historic character of the area, but could also be considerably less expensive.

The pinch point proposals -- Alternative 1 proposes maximizing towpath width along its length by regrading; Alternative 2
calls for widening of the towpath to eight or nine at the narrowest points with some sort of projecting structure. CAG believes that Alternative 1 is the better choice, as it would preserve the historic integrity of the path and the historic width of the canal. Natural materials should continue to be used on the towpath and a narrow band of grass and/or mule kick, as it's proposed, could line the canal's side of the path for safety and aesthetic reasons.

Mile marker zero proposals -- the proposal identifies five key places along the canal to do more major projects. The first is mile marker zero, where Rock Creek empties into the Potomac. This is already a lovely area and can be enhanced at relatively modest cost with landscaping, and seating, and perhaps with the proposed new pedestrian and bike bridges, depending on cost.

CAG would like to see the history of the canal emphasized here through historic
markers, as in the waterfront park. Some of the
more flashy proposals in Options A and B,
including nets, kiosks, and steps do not seem
necessary and threaten to diminish the historic
integrity of this important site.

The Rock Creek confluence next to the
West Heating Plant, the proposal calls for
stabilizing the creek edge and adding a
pedestrian bridge, which CAG has long-supported
in this location. It also calls for a platform
overlooking Lock 1, which is a nice
embellishment.

The locks. This is a good location to
add features, as it is spacious, and readily
accessible, and has fewer historic features.

CAG supports either Option A or B,
though B may have more implications for traffic
and parking, given its larger Education and
Visitor Centers.

Adding a path and ramp south of the
canal between 29th and 30th Street would remove
green space and depart from the historic
integrity of the site. We presume there would be
public restrooms in the Visitor Center and they
should be large enough to handle expected
pedestrian traffic along the one-mile length of
the canal renovation.

The Market Plazas west of Wisconsin
Avenue, CAG prefers the more modest approach in
Option A to the more expansive one of Option B.
Option A improves access to the towpath and CAG
agrees that this would be an appropriate place
along the canal to install an elevator.

The gongoozling platform seems like a
good addition on the south side of the canal but
we question the need for a water intake feature
as the canal, itself, is the key water feature.

The removal of significant parts of
the stone wall for seating in both options should
be avoided, as the wall is an important historic
feature, whose integrity should be preserved.

Adding a new boardwalk and dock on the
south side, as proposed in Option B, also seems
questionable, as these features would squeeze the
canal and would likely get only modest use.

The open air modern canopy is not historically appropriate and more natural ways to provide shade through landscaping should be considered instead.

And lastly, the aqueduct and stone yard, CAG supports the idea of adding seating in stone yard area but does not think the boat launch, dock, or platform, Option B to be needed. Accessibility to the area is limited and intrusions into the canal should be kept to a minimum.

CAG generally likes the proposal in Option A for the aqueduct, including the path and landscape, though the cantilever overlook may not be needed. The kiosk and pavilion in Option B are not appropriate for this quiet and contemplative spot.

This does seem to be the best place along the canal for a boat launch dock. Providing seating and shade along the canal near the dock would be helpful but should be done in
as natural a manner as possible.

Thank you so much.

ACTING CHAIR GALLAS: Well, thank you very much to all of the members of the community who have expressed opinions about this. It is quite extraordinary to see so much collaboration and community input on such an important topic.

So I think now I would like to turn to the Commission to open up for discussion on this expansive topic.

Who wants to start? Mr. Trueblood.

MEMBER TRUEBLOOD: Thank you. I want to say the Office of Planning has been working with NCPC, with Georgetown Heritage, and the BID on this and I think, overall, I am very impressed by the presentation and by the options.

I will say for me, personally, the thing I am most compelled by is what Mr. Peck spoke about in terms of accessibility. I think you know it shouldn't be a privilege to be able to enjoy this national park. It should be a right and I think that that -- so I was happy to
see the interventions there, especially I am interested in seeing what the -- I noticed the staff asked for a map of what the universally accessible path will look like. And so that is something I am interested in. But as it gets to the actual -- the path itself I think widening it in order to maintain accessibility is something that would be valuable.

ACTING CHAIR GALLAS: Would that include any cantilevering in some locations?

MEMBER TRUEBLOOD: So I think I agree with what the staff said, which is try to minimize it but, where it is necessary, especially under bridge crossings, as we saw, those bridge crossings can have low overhead and tough paths. I think that makes -- I think it would be important.

ACTING CHAIR GALLAS: Okay. Anyone else want to jump in?

Commissioner Cash.

MEMBER CASH: So sorry I couldn't stay for the whole tour today. It was pretty hot out
there.

But I want to agree with Mr. Trueblood. I mean I think that accessibility is really important and there can be some improvements there. But I think one of the speakers said this is kind of like the high lining of Georgetown. I almost see this as the wharfing of Georgetown. Like if you want all that cool, interactive water stuff, you've got a great booming part of the city there.

I think that maybe, and I don't think I say this often, I think maybe there is some over-programming here. I mean there were the boat tours for years on this with the towpaths as they are. Maybe we can think about reprogramming it. We don't need the mules here. Go up to Great Falls is you want to take the mule ride and we can have some motorized boats.

I just think that trying to really scale back the amount of stuff that we're doing here is really important to I think balance with that historic character. I mean and also
mentioned I mean there is the proposed kayaking and putting things into the canal. You are literally a hundred yards away from the boathouse, where you can boat on the Potomac.

So I just want to be careful that we are not taking away from other assets and other great things in a water city like ours, by trying to shove it all into this Georgetown historical site, which a lot of these others aren't.

So I would just really advocate for as light of a touch as possible but I think the accessibility is actually something that everyone would benefit from from the current users to people that can't use it right now. So, I just advocate for a very light touch.

ACTING CHAIR GALLAS: Commissioner Cash, would you expand on that a little more, just on the boat launch notion down at the aqueduct, whether you think that recommendation makes sense or do you have an opinion about that?

MEMBER CASH: Well, I mean I just don't see that many people necessarily kayaking
in a five-foot deep canal when you can kayak literally a hundred yards away in -- I can't remember is it Thompson or Fletcher, what is the one over -- Thompson boathouse, which is right there in the Potomac and you can go and boat around and go to the island and all of that stuff. And then you have the other boat launch down at the mile marker zero side.

So I just feel like for having to put a big platform into the water, the use that it is going to get, I think it is a great idea if we were maybe up in Great Falls, where there is a similar thing to this but I mean there's plenty of other facilities for this stuff. And I think for dumping a big barge into the historic canal, it might not get that much use and it might not actually be that necessary. There is a nicer experience of going literally a hundred yards to the west and renting a kayak there, which is already a Park Service concessioner.

So I would just -- yes, I think that we don't want to be too duplicative here.
ACTING CHAIR GALLAS: Thank you very much.

Commissioner Wright.

MEMBER WRIGHT: It's just too much to kind of take in all at once and it's too much to comment on all at once, for me, anyway.

I tend to agree with the Committee of 100 but not this time because I think if the canal is not adapted to contemporary use and in tuned, it will look like it looks today, which is pretty dreary.

I actually asked a question about trash because I was surprised at how little trash there was and I was quickly told that there is a great effort to pick up the trash on a regular basis.

Having said all of that, it feels like too much. It feels to clever in places by half and there is a difference between adaptively reusing and reinventing for a completely disparate use. And in parts, particularly the market spaces, feel -- I didn't really have a
feel for it because we started at the Dean and DeLuca site, but as I reflect on what we saw today, I don't know why we would try so hard to change this too much. It's already got the bones in place and it felt like maybe a little cosmetic surgery is in order but not major medical.

And so I would urge, again, throughout the entire program, balance and not going too far and making it -- I guess that was an insult to call it the high lining of Georgetown, which was kind of weird because I think the High Line is a hugely successful, wonderful place to visit but it is one of a kind. And in a different way, the canal is one of a kind and should be allowed to be that.

It just feels like the balance could easily tip if we do too much intervention. Regardless of choice of materials, and plant selection, and all that, it could lose its -- I don't know the word I am looking for but character comes to mind -- authenticity is a good one. I mean I think it is the industrial story
that it tells is really important to remember and it is going to be really important 50 years from now to remember if it's not under water.

So I would just urge restraint and I look forward to seeing it in digestible chunks.

ACTING CHAIR GALLAS: Thank you.

MEMBER TRUEBLOOD: Mr. Chair, I have a question, actually. May I?

ACTING CHAIR GALLAS: Perfect, absolutely.

MEMBER TRUEBLOOD: Okay and it is really to follow-up on these observations, as well as Mr. Tiller's comment, which is it wasn't necessarily clear here where there might be vending, or concessions, or commercial activity. So is that even a part of this? Has that been considered as part of this application about what those would be and what that would be?

MS. SPIGLE DOWKER: Well I might actually defer to the Park Service on that.

MS. STIDHAM: So that is a level of detail we haven't gotten into yet, as far as
commercial activity or vending. We are really focused on what is the repair and rehabilitation that needs to happen as an underlying principle for the entire park and what interventions are appropriate to further the interpretation and education of the site.

Sorry, I am Tammy Stidham. I am the Deputy Associate Regional Director for Lands and Planning for the National Park Service.

MEMBER TRUEBLOOD: Thank you.

ACTING CHAIR GALLAS: Thank you.

Commissioner Wright.

MEMBER WHITE: White.

ACTING CHAIR GALLAS: White, sorry.

Pardon me. We have Wright and -- I can't win.

MEMBER WHITE: I so appreciate the previous comments and agree with them all, and I love the word restraint.

And I also like what Mr. Peck had to say of pleading for balance and I think that's what we're trying to achieve here.

And in the parks and open space world,
there is this big push for activation and
programming and every inch of public space needs
to be programmed, that it can't just be enjoyed
for being public space. And I think that's -- I
think I see that in this concept plan, although,
for most of the plans that I see like this, this
does show some restraint but I think it does need
to be pulled back even further, particularly
around kayaking. I totally agree you can go a
couple hundred feet away and kayak.

But I also think from the historic
integrity of the site, and celebrating, and
enhancing the user experience, you want people to
understand what that canal was about. So I
wouldn't want to move the mules. I think that's
what makes it really compelling when they are out
and operating and people can see what a
constrained space this is. Those historic photos
are fantastic when you see the five boats tied up
alongside.

So I would advocate to keep the mules
and get rid of the kayaks.
The other thing about the space as it is, there is a certain beauty to it and you know the decay of it is one thing but you do need to make sure it is accessible and I think that is the key driver here to do the minimal intervention to make sure it is a right, not a privilege, to be able to get down there and appreciate that experience. And for someone who is temporarily mobility-limited, it was challenging today to get down there. So I can't imagine if you couldn't do stairs what that would be like.

So I think that the other thing I want to say is I really commend the staff for the thoughtful and thorough review of this proposal, and the level of detail and analysis that each of these options that we're looking at. I thought it was really well done and I agree with everything that you recommend, particularly the areas where we need further focus.

And getting out there today and seeing it makes me appreciate the analysis all the more.
So I'm glad that we're looking at it at this stage.

    And I completely agree we have got to chunk it down. It's just too much to take in at once. So I'm glad we have some time to really think this through because it is unlike any other place in the world and we need to really appreciate that.

    So I am very grateful for the partnership and what people are trying to achieve. I just think most of these Option Bs are just a little too much. So dial it back a little bit.

    Those are my remarks.

    ACTING CHAIR GALLAS: Thank you, Commissioner White.

    Commissioner Argo.

    MEMBER ARGO: Yes, I just wanted to say a couple of things and I made some notes, as the other commissioners have.

    And I think that I agree with a lot of -- I'm not quite as concerned about the over-
programming as some are. I think it probably
could be scaled back some but I wouldn't think
that would be dramatic for me.

        I remember when we took our tour today
probably the most, maybe it's because I have got
a slew of grandchildren right now that are
school-age, but it was -- remember how all the
kids came down? Didn't we agree they were like
6th or 7th grade or something like that and like
you see all over Washington this time of year and
then further into the summer? And they were
coming down the towpath. They were looking
around. It really highlighted for me what the
experience could be from an educational
standpoint for young people, as well as everybody
else.

    And they were like I was, you know
stumbling along this kind of cruddy rocky path
right now that is, I would say, dangerous in some
places and difficult to walk. I mean those
things are obvious, I think, in terms of what
need to be done. But this is more to support the
nation of education -- I mean the notion of
educational programing. And the space that is
envisioned -- now I'm trying to remember what
part that is -- and I thought that was so
important for carrying through on what everybody
has talked about, too, and several people have
said, sort of unlocking the potential of
conveying what the important history is here,
what this was like, and what kids in the 6th and
7th grade right now can't even imagine. And
where do they have a chance to see that now in
old history books or I guess online but the
pictures are the same. Right?

So I wanted to make a point like that
and I think it was Ms. Steele, was it, that was
talking about the busy waterfront, what it was
like historically, the tobacco trading, all of
that kind of business, preserving the -- to me,
there is no conflict between preserving
authenticity, unlocking potential of an exciting
and authentic place that was unique, without
destroying the historical character. And I think
by and large, the plans do that. I mean that's my feeling.

And I think there was one other comment somebody made that I thought was really interesting. I think it was, yes, Bob Peck said balancing the history and interpretation of that history with the best aspects of an urban park, which I thought was a comprehensive kind of comment on that.

And someone else I think from the Georgetown Heritage Board said there is really the possibility of unlocking potential and not having it remain a relic, which if you had walked down that path today, it is pretty sad. And you know there is not a hint, really, until you get to some of the places where the locks are being repaired and everything for really pulling in and understanding what this place was you know and how interesting that is.

So those are my comments.

MEMBER DIXON: Mr. Chairman.

ACTING CHAIR GALLAS: Commissioner
MEMBER DIXON: Well first I am always impressed with the work of the staff and the community's engagement with them. And my colleagues have said much more than I can speak to but I agree with all of them collectively.

But I am also excited about the fact that this is a great educational opportunity for young people because they won't have to go to the Suez Canal or the Panama Canal to understand what a lock system is. I mean that is a very -- that's an engineering feat and a concept which was used so long ago that has to be -- kids need to understand that to elevate, raise things to another level.

So I think it is great that we're doing this and I think the educational value, particularly in my perspective, the engineering side of the lock systems is very important.

ACTING CHAIR GALLAS: Thank you.

Commissioner May.

MEMBER MAY: Okay, thank you very
much. Thank you, everyone. And I appreciate the
staff's report and I appreciate all the comments
that we heard today. And that's exactly what we
are looking for at this moment because we are
very early in the process, even though some of us
have been involved in it for several years now
and, in some ways, several exhausting years
because of the challenges that are inherent in a
project like this, given its location, given its
age, given the use that it has had, and given the
challenges that we have in simply maintaining it
the way it has been.

And it has been an extraordinary
effort so far and I appreciate the comparisons to
other prominent projects, linear park projects
that have demonstrated the extraordinary
potential of an asset like this.

It is inherently different from the
High Line and that is something that we have said
repeatedly and tried to keep everyone's
expectations in line because the last thing that
we can do is have something like the High Line
replicated here. It would wind up being, I think, a terrible experience and would do too much damage and would not be sustainable. We can't handle the crowds' effect. Even the High Line can't handle the crowds that they get now but we couldn't do it here.

So we have always been trying to exercise a certain amount of restraint. And where we are in terms of our process is that we want to understand what the limits are of what we can do. And I think that we will wind up ratcheting back on some of these things and restraining things a little bit more as it develops. And it is obviously something that is going to happen in pieces.

I mean it is very difficult to even show this as an overall plan simply because there are so many components to it and we would never be able to bring all of this at once and get sort of everything design-wise at once. You know it's going to be a challenging thing as we try to advance any of these concepts.
But we are glad to show everyone what it looks like right now and get this initial feedback and see where things go.

In terms of some of the particulars comments that have been made, it was not obvious today because there is no water in the canal but people actually do kayak and canoe on the canal as it is right now. And they rent boats at Fletcher's and they come all the way down into Georgetown.

And we have been talking for years with the Georgetown BID about putting in a temporary dock that would test the idea of people being able to do that right from Georgetown. And believe it or not, there is I think a substantial interest in it. And if we can go ahead and do a temporary, we may do that. We would be able to test it so we understand whether it really makes sense or whether it is more trouble than it's worth. We don't really know.

Certainly, the canal boat itself and the operation of mules is something that has been
in the works for a very long time. You know we I think ordered the boat and it's not been -- because you know the old boat went out of business a while ago. It was not in good shape.

And so that will happen and we will have the mules. I don't think there is any question about that. That is something that we have previously done and we will continue to do.

I think that some of the other aspects of this, you know I think that we want to take advantage of some of those spots that we have. Certainly where the locks, what we have on the screen right now, that is a tremendous educational opportunity. It is also -- I mean it is one of the wider sections, where you can get a better view of everything that's around it and you can actually have people assemble. And there have been concerts and events that have occurred there over the years. We want to be able to do things like that.

We also live in fear of over-activation in many parks. I mean we know that
that is the -- I can't tell you how many -- I
don't think I can go into a room with a landscape
architect without somebody telling us about
need to activate a particular space. And I
appreciate that and understand the desire to it
but sometimes we also have to have our quiet
places as well.

And the canal is unique in that it can
offer both. It is a place you can walk through
and you can experience that huge crowd that might
be gathered here, or the big gang of student who
will be trooping through, or a bunch of cyclists
riding through, but there are also these quiet
moments where you can stop and sit on the wall
and just see what's going on.

So anyway, it is a very exciting
opportunity. It is also an exhausting
opportunity and we look forward to bringing it
back as it is developed further.

MEMBER DIXON: Mr. Chairman, I just
want to add you know I am going to speak in favor
of the mules, of course, and also the kayaks.
I tell you one of the things that impressed me most in other canals that I have observed, the Suez, Panama, and others, that when you see a sailboat go through along with a huge boat, you realize this has some human value here. And that's what the kids would get, the others would get with the kayaks going through the canal. They would see that it is not just made for hauling large boats with cargo on it but for individuals to use and to get you from one point into another point. So, we'll see how it works.

ACTING CHAIR GALLAS: Okay, well thank you. I think just to -- I'm not going to repeat any of this because there was so much and I think the staff and everyone, the collaboration has been extraordinary. I really appreciate that.

I just want to add that the notion of creating the kind of opportunity to experience the canal in which today it is primarily not accessible to most people, it is a curiosity. It is a sort of how do you get there. How do I understand it? And then what is the story? And
if we can achieve that through this, it is I think a very exciting intervention that will be certainly seems achievable within the ambitions laid out in the concept plan.

MEMBER DIXON: So I would move -- I would make a motion.

ACTING CHAIR GALLAS: Thank you. We have a motion to accept the comments as proposed.

Do I have a second?

MEMBER WHITE: Second.

ACTING CHAIR GALLAS: All in favor, please signify by saying aye.

(Chorus of aye.)

ACTING CHAIR GALLAS: Any opposed?

(No audible response.)

ACTING CHAIR GALLAS: Thank you all very much. We appreciate that feedback. And thank you for all the speakers.

FILE NO. 8018 - SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION,

4TH STREET AND INDEPENDENCE AVENUE, SW,

WASHINGTON, D.C. - NATIONAL NATIVE AMERICAN VETERANS MEMORIAL

Neal R. Gross and Co., Inc.
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ACTING CHAIR GALLAS: Next is Agenda Item 6B, approval of preliminary site development plans for the National Native American Veterans Memorial submitted by the Smithsonian Institution.

Ms. Lee will make her presentation.

MS. LEE: Good afternoon, Mr. Chairman and good afternoon, members of the Commission.

The Smithsonian Institution has submitted preliminary site development plans for the National Native American Veterans Memorial located on the grounds of the National Museum of the American Indian.

Constructed in 2004, the National Museum of the American Indian is located on the southeast end of the National Mall in southwest Washington, D.C. The museum is bounded by Jefferson Drive to the north, 3rd Street to the east, 4th Street to the west, Maryland and Independence Avenues to the south. The east wing of the National Gallery is located to the north across the National Mall. The Air and Space
Museum is to the west. The Botanic Garden and the U.S. Capitol Building are located to the east.

The memorial will be located in the existing wooded area on the northeast corner of the museum grounds near the intersection of Jefferson Drive and 3rd Street.

As you may recall, the Smithsonian provided a site visit and information presentation to the Commission four months ago. Since then, the project team has refined the memorial design and provided details about the materials and landscape.

Authorized by Congress in 1994, the memorial will give all Americans the opportunity to learn of the proud and courageous traditional service of Native Americans in the Armed Forces of the United States. The memorial has four design principles: encompass all Native American communities of the United States; include all service branches of the Armed Forces; honor past, present, and future Native American veterans and
create a contemplative area within the existing landscape. The memorial will be completed by Veterans Day 2020.

The next few slides show images of existing conditions. Here, you can see the memorial site from Jefferson Drive here in the winter, the adjacent sidewalks along 3rd Street and Jefferson Drive, and the low perimeter security wall that surrounds the museum grounds.

Here, you can see the river walk flanked by trees on the Mall side and the linear water feature on the building side. Also, you can see the constructive wetlands, here.

Here, you can see the grandfather rocks and the welcome plaza.

The original landscape design for the museum consists of forest and wetlands located to the north and east, meadows and crop lands located to the south. Here is the existing circulation diagram. You can see pedestrian crosswalks at the intersections shown in blue, plus drop-off areas along Jefferson Drive shown
in orange, and the museum loading dock along 4th Street, shown in red.

The building has a unique access experience. It is the only museum with an east-facing main entrance and without direct access from the National Mall. The museum has two entrances, each entrance has an adjacency to a particular plaza. The main entrance is located to the east, facing the U.S. Capitol and the secondary entrance is located to the south at the intersection of Independence and Maryland Avenues. Most visitors enter the museum grounds from the northwest corner of the site. They walk for about 430 feet until they reach the welcome circle. The main entrance can also be accessible from the southeast corner of the site near the intersection of Maryland Avenue and 3rd Street.

Here, you can see the memorial in context with the museum grounds. The river walk and the welcome circle are shown in red and the memorial footprint is shown in pink.

The memorial will cantilever over the
existing wetlands. As you can see, the memorial will require minor changes to the existing landscape, however, it will avoid disrupting the existing cistern that provides stormwater management for the museum.

The memorial design is inspired by four elements: drum vibrations to encourage people to gather; four cardinal directions to provide different access points; wind to activate prayer cloths; and light touch to respect the landscape. You can see the slender concrete piers that will support the memorial.

The memorial will occupy a total of 2,837 square feet. The design consists of a circular contemplative gathering space with a vertical sculpture as a centerpiece. The memorial components include an eight-foot wide approach wall, a title wall, an outer path of life, an inner path of harmony, circular seat walls, benches, and open areas for wheelchairs, four lances on top of the seat walls, a fountain that symbolizes a drum, the Warrior's Circle of
Honor sculpture on top of the fountain, concentric light fixtures integrated into the fountain and the railing.

The title wall will be three feet and six inches in height. It will be clad with Virginia Mist granite, which is the same paving and side wall materials for the museum grounds. The wall will support stainless steel letters. The five seals of the Armed Forces will be etched into the granite cladding.

The lance materials consist of a stainless steel shaft with bronze letters on top. Integrated rings at the base of the lance will allow visitors to tie prayer cloths.

The seat walls step down to meet the water and after there is a sidewalk to create a buffer from the street noise. The sculpture and fountain will be approximately 13 feet in height. The proposed fire at the base of the sculpture will be used during ceremonies.

You can see a close-up view of the sculpture. The vertical ring will be made out of
stainless steel. The paving, seat walls, and fountain will be also constructed of Virginia Mist granite consistent with the museum grounds material pallet.

Here is a view from the corner of 3rd Street and Jefferson Drive towards the memorial.

And here is a view from the Welcome Circle near the museum's main entrance.

So moving on to staff analysis, the staff analysis is organized into four topics, including visitor experience, environment, railing design, and lighting.

During the information presentation in February, the Commission commented on the lack of direct access to the museum memorial from the National Mall and suggested that we can explore a new midblock pedestrian connection along Jefferson Drive, near the existing amphitheater.

As I mentioned earlier, the memorial will be served by the two existing routes that lead to the museum entry today; one from the northwest corner of the site, which is
approximately 500 feet away from the memorial; and the other near the southeast corner of the site, which is approximately 250 feet away.

Smithsonian has responded that any direct access into the memorial would detract from the memorial procession and contemplative character. Staff supports this position. However, we still find that a new midblock access point along Jefferson Drive could improve museum access because it would provide a more direct and visible connection from the National Mall. We also understand the timing and budget considerations. Therefore, staff recommends Smithsonian analyze visitation increase and circulation patterns to see whether it may warrant a separate project in the future. A modest access point could be located in the vicinity of the existing amphitheater connecting the Jefferson Drive sidewalk with the river walk to avoid disrupting the contemplative memorial experience and minimizing changes to existing landscape.
The Commission also recommended careful attention to the memorial scale to avoid overpowering the wetlands. Smithsonian performed an occupancy analysis and determined that the memorial is appropriately sized for its program. However, to minimize impacts to the wetlands, the design team reduced the diameter of the circular gathering space by approximately 3 feet and 3 inches from 50 feet to 46 feet and 9 inches.

The proposal also includes changes to the wetland edge. The wetland is a water feature constructed in 2004 as part of the museum landscape design. The wetland collects rainwater and has an overflow drain to release water into a sewer in a major storm event. The black line indicates the original wetland footprint as built in 2004. Over the last 15 years, the wetland has grown 30 percent larger than the 2004 boundary due to erosion at the banks, as shown in blue.

The proposed design, shown in red, will reduce the existing wetland by 12 percent to accommodate the memorial. Although the footprint
will change, the proposed wetland will be larger than the original 2004 design shown in black. The project will include edge stabilization to limit erosion at the north edge through rocks and deep-rooted plantings.

Staff supports Smithsonian's efforts to protect and restore the wetland's edge biodiversity to enhance the site's ecological quality and scenic character.

The museum landscape is unique to the National Mall, given the dense forest and wetland ecosystem. The design intent is to preserve the integrity of the landscape and provide a national framework for the memorial. Five trees, shown in red, will be removed due to conflicts with the memorial. Six new trees, shown in darker green, will be planted consistent with the original museum landscape pallet.

The landscape plan will include native trees, shrubs, and perennials, aquatic plants, and meadow plants. As the design evolves, staff recommends the applicant provide a landscape plan.
that addresses tree replacement in compliance
with the comprehensive plan.

As I mentioned, both the cistern and
the wetland serve as stormwater management
practices for the museum. The project includes
small bioretention area close to the memorial
site integrated into the landscape. Staff
requests a stormwater management plan that
addresses compliance with federal and local
regulations.

The design includes a protective
guardrail at the southern edge of the approach
walk and around the circular gathering space, as
shown in the blue dashed line. The metal railing
system is composed of horizontal rails with
secondary vertical elements and intermittent path
lighting integrated into the railing.

The guardrail along the approach walk
protects people from falling into the wetland.
Here, you can see the guardrail along the water
edge.

Staff recommends that the applicant
simplify the railing design to minimize the
visual impacts and its heavy composition, and
avoid competing with the memorial elements,
landscape, and the museum's architecture.

Finally, the design includes lighting
integrated into the fountain, the railing, the
path, and the base of the seat walls. Staff
requests a lighting plan and night views
consistent with the overall lighting design of
the museum to minimize light pollution and
respect the U.S. Capitol as the most prominent
feature in the nighttime skyline.

To conclude, the Executive Director's
recommendation is for the Commission to approve
the preliminary site development plans for the
Native -- for the National Native American
Veterans Memorial, recommends Smithsonian analyze
visitation increase and circulation patterns to
evaluate whether an additional access point could
improve access from the National Mall, recommends
that the applicant simplify the railing design,
requests that the applicant provide a lighting
plan, and night views, a landscape and stormwater
management plan.

With this, I conclude my presentation.

I am happy to answer any questions and the
applicant and design team are available as well.

Thank you.

[INSERT - NATIONAL NATIVE AMERICAN VETERANS
MEMORIAL]
ACTING CHAIR GALLAS: Thank you very much, Ms. Lee.

I want to remind everyone this is for Preliminary Site Development Plan comment. So, I'd like to open up for any comments or questions.

MEMBER ARGO: Just a quick comment. I really appreciate the work on this. And I just wanted to make sure I heard. I think I heard you correctly. The railing, and you had staff recommendations to do what exactly? The railing looked very busy to me in terms of, yes, that were obstructive, essentially, to the view that they were trying to create. And I just wanted to be clear because we went through that pretty fast.

MS. LEE: Yes. So, basically, we wanted to simplify the design because it's too heavy --

MEMBER ARGO: Yes, yes.

MS. LEE: -- and it's broken views and competing with the building, museum, the
MEMBER ARGO: Yes.

MS. LEE: And I feel the simplicity of the memorial.

MEMBER ARGO: Right, simplicity, yes, that's exactly right, a little more -- that was all. That caught my eye and I wanted to make sure I heard the staff report correctly. Thank you.

ACTING CHAIR GALLAS: Thank you.

Commissioner Wright?

MEMBER WRIGHT: What's the annual visitation for the museum?

MS. TROWBRIDGE: Good afternoon, Commissioner Gallas and other Commissioners.

The annual -- I'm Ann Trowbridge, Associate Director for Planning -- the annual visitation is approximately 1.1 to 1.2 million visitors per year to the museum.

MEMBER WRIGHT: Okay. So, the reason I ask that -- and would you say that the museum feels like that they want to -- okay, everybody
always wants more of everything. But is the
museum, does that feel like a number that the
museum is desperate to increase?

MS. TROWBRIDGE: We're always wanting
to increase our visitation --

(Laughter.)

MEMBER WRIGHT: Right.

MS. TROWBRIDGE: -- in person and
online.

MEMBER WRIGHT: I'm assuming that.

MS. TROWBRIDGE: But that museum has
the capacity to accommodate more visitors very
comfortably.

MEMBER WRIGHT: Yes. I mean, the
reason I'm asking is because I don't think I
agree with the midpoint, the mid-block access
recommendation. And the reason I don't think I
do is because I don't know if the juice is worth
the squeeze.

You would be disrupting a really
beautiful composition, I think, by doing that.
And I get it if you were getting, you know,
250,000 people a year, but given the numbers, I mean, relatively speaking, a million people year is nothing to sneeze at. And I wonder if the disruption of this, what I think is already a beautiful composition in terms of landscape -- bifurcating that block, for lack of another term, seems a risky business.

And the accommodations that Ms. Lee described for the memorial seemed to be very sensitively approached and aren't doing that. So, I hate to say this because it's in the EDR, but I don't think I agree with that. I also think that we're so lazy as Americans. If you have to walk a half a block to get into the building, which you can clearly see from the Mall, well, maybe you should. Maybe you should go that extra 500 feet, or whatever it is, and move it around the block and find the entrance.

I think, so far, so good on this. When we saw the memorial in the information presentation in February, I was really charmed by all of it, the story, the logic, the logical
underpinnings for the design. So, I guess what I'm hoping that we just leave it alone after the memorial is put in because it's a very subtle change or a series of subtle changes that are going to be made to the landscape and the hardscape, and I think we should just leave it at that.

ACTING CHAIR GALLAS: Thank you.

Other comments?

Mr. May?

MEMBER MAY: Yes, so I think, generally speaking, I agree with the Executive Director's recommendation. I do think that there's been some positive evolution of the design. I think it's gotten a little bit smaller and a little bit simpler.

From the beginning, I was recommending that the circle was too big and that it needed to shrink a bit, and I think it has gotten a little smaller or at least feels a little smaller. And I absolutely agree that this rail needs to be simplified because it is, I mean, while there is
some affinity between the vertical members and
the aquatic vegetation that we're seeing or the
wetland vegetation that we're seeing there, it's
still just too busy and obstructs too much of the
view. And I think something that's simpler would
be better.

I know it's not an easy thing doing a
curved rail like that and not have it be
perceived as having a lot of density when you
look at it on the angle like that, but I think
that there's certainly some things that can be
done. So, I strongly agree that that's something
that needs to be studied further.

And as far as the access, the
additional access I guess directly to the north,
the Mall, I tend to agree with Commissioner
Wright on this. Initially, I wasn't necessarily
in that camp when we first started discussing
this design. Based on the site visit -- yes, go
back to the site, the overall site, yes. Thank
you.

So, yes, I'm not persuaded that there
needs to be another access point. And I think that in many ways it would be disruptive to the commemorative and contemplative nature of the memorial to encourage, you know, those additional access points, wherever they might be.

At one point, I was worried that people would, particularly some of the younger people visiting the memorial, would hop up on the low wall and come through the planted area, the forest, whatever you want to call that area. But I'm less concerned about that now, and I think that that's something that should be managed through the type of vegetation that's planted to discourage that kind of cut-through. We certainly don't want to have people cutting through at any point along that northern side and creating sort of a social trip through the woods. But I think that it's important to kind of keep it the way it is. So, I would be supportive of tweaking the EDR, if that's where Commissioner Wright would like to go.

I do think that the wetland itself
might be improved by a kayak dock.

(Laughter.)

Just kidding.

You know, it's going to be a long day.

So, we've got to enjoy it.

(Laughter.)

ACTING CHAIR GALLAS: I think so.

Any other comments at this point?

Commissioner White?

MEMBER WHITE: First, I'd love to hear

the staff's response to the mid-block. I wasn't

here in February. And so, I didn't have the site

visit. So, I'd like to understand a little

better where the recommendation came from. From

the materials, it said that the Commission

commented. So, if we could just hear a response?

And I appreciate that things evolve over time,

and as the plan evolved, it may change folks'

minds. But I'd like to understand that

background.

But I just wanted to say about the

memorial itself that I think it's really stunning
and the simplistic is really powerful and the symbolism. So, I congratulate the artist and the designers because it's a really beautiful plan. And I think the staff review and how the details were so important in working through.

Again, I'm agnostic on the mid-block connection, but the rest of it I think is really very well done and look forward to seeing the further plans.

MS. TROWBRIDGE: Thank you. I'm sure our team in Oklahoma is listening to the webcast.

MEMBER WHITE: Good.

ACTING CHAIR GALLAS: Did someone want to comment on the mid-block connection? Yes?

MS. LEE: Yes, so that was something that came up during the site visit in February. Because right now, as you saw in the pictures, there is a side wall around the museum grounds. So, you can only access it from the northwest corner. And so, for people like in wheelchairs, there is a small round pier. So, you have to go like 500 feet. So, I think that's what it came
from. But with wheels on, there's times that
this is the experience of the museum, that you
come through a riverwalk, and then, there is very
beautiful landscape and forested areas. And so,
that's where it came from.

MR. ACOSTA: And just to also clarify,
the EDR does not necessarily condition this
approval on providing the walk or the midpoint
access. It asks to study it based on the
visitation trends and some of the things that you
asked for.

I think at the end of the day the
question really is, this may benefit the museum
more than the memorial. So, you don't
necessarily want to burden this memorial project
with that larger decision. So, this was asking
for a study. It wasn't necessarily asking for it
to be provided at the end of the day.

ACTING CHAIR GALLAS: So, Commissioner
Cash?

MEMBER CASH: So, I think at the last
meeting I mentioned that I thought that this
could be something useful to look at, because I think that my concern, when we went out there to the site last time, is that it felt like there was no connectivity to the Mall itself. And for folks that might be interested in going and visiting a memorial, and not necessarily going to the museum itself, it almost like directed you to go all the way around and into the museum's front door. So, I think that was the thought at the time.

I'm not necessarily wedded to it one way or the other, but I remember when we were on the site there was some concern, especially in the northeast corner, that people might be jumping over to get into there, to maybe have some kind of connection to discourage that, which I think the new fence definitely discourages that.

So, I think that was some of the thought behind it, just kind of having more access for the memorial itself. Because I think that I had expressed some concern last time, too,
that this will be the Smithsonian's kind of first crack at actually running a memorial site versus NPS doing it. And you might have folks that just want to come down for the memorial and just create a better connection to the Mall itself. But I'm not necessarily wedded to it one way or the other. I'm just one of the lazy Americans. I'm not a planner.

(Laughter.)

ACTING CHAIR GALLAS: Commission Dixon?

MEMBER DIXON: I think there's some philosophical comment that it's about the journey; it's not about the destination. And I think when the presentation was made to us, there's some name they gave that path. And it was part of the symbolism of the memorial that you would want that path to get to it. And I think that there is something about that that I think we should maintain.

And I remember the discussion. I thought maybe it was a good idea myself when I
heard it, but now I think that it does break the idea of the journey to the memorial as being meaningful and thoughtful by the time you get there. We don't want to have a shortcut to it, you know.

MEMBER WHITE: Path of Life.

MEMBER DIXON: Path of Life, yes. I knew there was a name.

MEMBER WHITE: So, you're saying that's part of the experience?

MEMBER DIXON: Yes.

MEMBER WHITE: Yes.

MEMBER DIXON: Isn't the journey always part of the experience?

ACTING CHAIR GALLAS: Wow.

(Laughter.)

I don't know if we can follow anything with that.

(Laughter.)

I can't follow that kind of depth. I have a very minor question about the fence or the railing. Just as you investigate that a little
bit more, I would just encourage you to think about whether that becomes a climbable thing. We don't want to encourage that, of course. So, just understanding that aspect of it as you consider the possible design direction there would be of value.

MS. TROWBRIDGE: Yes, we will.

ACTING CHAIR GALLAS: Thank you.

Commissioner Argo?

MEMBER ARGO: Just a quick comment to echo Commissioner May's comment. And I think this is maybe intuitive already. But those of us who stood during the presentation on that corner where we thought people could cut in, I guess, the northeast corner -- is that right? -- that to have a robust, and I think you already mentioned this, Peter, but to have in the next phase of the design a robust landscape plan that would be addressing that concern about that being a potential access point; that's all. And to have that called out in the plan I think would be really helpful.
Thank you.

MS. TROWBRIDGE: Thank you.

ACTING CHAIR GALLAS: Okay. I think at this point I'm going to ask Commissioner Wright whether you want to amend the EDR, or are you okay with it the way it's written in terms of study only? It doesn't mandate any approach.

Can we go back to the --

MEMBER WRIGHT: I don't know. It just asks consideration of it, right? It doesn't ask for a full-blown study, does it? Consider? No, that's not the same, right?

ACTING CHAIR GALLAS: Recommends this -- "analyze visitation, increase in circulation patterns".

MEMBER WRIGHT: And evaluate.

Smithsonian, have you analyzed circulation patterns and visitation numbers and evaluated an additional access point already, as part of design development?

MS. TROWBRIDGE: Yes and no. As part of this project, we have analyzed the capacity of
the memorial path and the memorial itself to accommodate visitors, and we believe it is satisfactory.

The idea of a shortcut, so to speak, between Jefferson and the riverwalk at the museum has been looked at before in the previous study. We also discussed it last year with the original landscape architects, Roger Courtenay, formerly with EDAW --

MEMBER WRIGHT: EDAW, yes.

MS. TROWBRIDGE: -- and, also, Johnpaul Jones of Seattle. And their feeling was that, if we were in the future going to consider it, which we are right now, that the appropriate place to consider might be in conjunction with opening up at the North Cardinal Rock, which is kind of directly on access with the center of the circular lobby along that north edge. If they had to pick a place --

MEMBER WRIGHT: Is that on a site map?

MS. TROWBRIDGE: So, I think going forward in a few years after this opens, if we
find that, for some reason, we think that will be
a good idea, to start, we'd think about that. It
would be to the left of where Vivian has shown,
kind of due north of the center of the main
lobby. There is a rock that marks the north
access at the museum.

MEMBER WRIGHT: And those set of
considerations took place before the plans for
the memorial were even --

MS. TROWBRIDGE: Before the memorial
competition.

MEMBER WRIGHT: Okay.

MS. TROWBRIDGE: So, our preference
would be to study this, if needed, in the future
and not be part of this project.

MEMBER DIXON: Mr. Chairman?

ACTING CHAIR GALLAS: Mr. Dixon?

MEMBER DIXON: I am finding this
actually humorous and annoying.

(Laughter.)

And I think that, in the future, I'm
not going to wear this hat because it may be
affecting me. I don't know.

(Laughter.)

Actually, I've got this in Madagascar.

So, I like it. Once in a while, I'll put it on just for fun.

(Laughter.)

But we are now trying to figure out how to create a pathway through a Native American memorial. Is this an oil line? Is this a pipeline we're putting through? What are we doing here? I mean, are we going to get in here and start modifying a spiritual memorial because we're trying to find passageways to other things. I don't know.

ACTING CHAIR GALLAS: So, would you like to amend the EDR to remove this?

MEMBER DIXON: I think we should delete without any discussion about studying this. I mean, obviously, things evolve, but I don't think we should be a part of it right now.

MEMBER WRIGHT: I think that's kind of my inclination, too, is to leave it alone for
now. And after the memorial is built, if social
trails are being made, if people are jumping over
the walls, you'll know it.

MEMBER DIXON: And just check with the
Natives when that happens, the Native Americans
who belong.

MEMBER WRIGHT: It does feel maybe
that right now is not the time to ask for this.
So, if we amended the -- I don't want to drag us
through this bureaucratic process if people are
going to vote it no. Are we in the mood to
strike this from the EDR?

MEMBER MAY: I'm inclined to strike
the "recommends the Smithsonian analyze
visitation, increased circulation" --

MEMBER DIXON: A secondhand motion.

(Laughter.)

MEMBER MAY: It's not critical to this
memorial. It is something that the Smithsonian
needs to be thinking about, anyway, on their own.

MEMBER WRIGHT: Right, in the future.

MEMBER MAY: They don't need us to
tell them to do it.

MEMBER WRIGHT: Okay.

MEMBER MAY: And they've got enough to do to design this. I want to make it easier on them.

MEMBER WRIGHT: So, I move that we strike the recommendation for --

MEMBER MAY: Second.

MEMBER WRIGHT: -- further consideration of the mid-block egress --

ACTING CHAIR GALLAS: And how about the "finds"?

MEMBER WRIGHT: Well, that's part and parcel of it, right?

MEMBER MAY: So, the "finds" statement and the "recommends".

MEMBER WRIGHT: So, "finds" and the "recommends".

(Second.)

ACTING CHAIR GALLAS: Okay. any discussion on that recommended amendment to strike reference to the mid-block connection?
Any further discussion?

Okay. Oh, Commissioner White?

MEMBER WHITE: I guess I just have a question to understand what I thought I heard Ms. Trowbridge say, that they would prefer to wait and see how this works, and then, look at it. Do we want to make reference to that? Or just that the Smithsonian will do that?

MS. TROWBRIDGE: We're happy to do that on our own. We don't need the recommendation.

(Laughter.)

MEMBER WHITE: Okay. But you intend to -- I just want to make sure I was clear that you intend to do that in any event, because you want to see --

MS. TROWBRIDGE: We may. We might.

MEMBER WHITE: -- how circulation --

MS. TROWBRIDGE: We're going to see how it goes.

ACTING CHAIR GALLAS: But it's not related to this memorial.
MS. TROWBRIDGE: It would be a new project, new funding.

MEMBER WRIGHT: If people are jumping over the walls to get to a memorial, they're going to have to do something, right? I mean, they'll know that, I think.

MS. TROWBRIDGE: Yes, prickle bushes would be cheaper, but we'll see.

(Laughter.)

Thank you.

ACTING CHAIR GALLAS: Okay. Any further discussion on the amendment?

(No response.)

Do we need to read --

MEMBER WRIGHT: So, we need to vote on the amendment?

MS. KOSTER: I think that the action is to strike the two components, the one that says "finds," the one that says "recommends," and it's just striking those from the EDR.

MEMBER WRIGHT: Correct.

ACTING CHAIR GALLAS: Okay. Let's
signify. It's been moved and seconded. So, let's take a vote on this amendment. All those in favor of striking the language referring to the mid-block connection please signify by saying aye.

(Chorus of ayes.)

All opposed?

(No response.)

Okay. That motion is carried. The EDR is amended.

Are we ready to move onto a motion to approve the amended EDR?

MEMBER MAY: So moved.

MEMBER WRIGHT: Second.

ACTING CHAIR GALLAS: And seconded.

Any further discussion?

(No response.)

All those in favor of the amended EDR please signify by saying aye.

(Chorus of ayes.)

Any opposed?

(No response.)
Thank you very much. Nice work, Team.

HIRSHHORN MUSEUM SCULPTURE GARDEN REVITALIZATION

ACTING CHAIR GALLAS: Okay. Now I think we're bring in the model. We're excited to see the Hirshhorn Sculpture Garden model that will be brought into the middle of the room.

All right. I'll go ahead and introduce Agenda Item 6C, which is the approval of comments on concept design for the Hirshhorn Museum Sculpture Garden Revitalization, submitted by the Smithsonian Institution.

And Mr. Webb will make the presentation.

MR. WEBB: Thank you.

Good afternoon, Members of the Commission.

The Smithsonian Institution has submitted concept design plans for the Hirshhorn Museum Sculpture Gardens Revitalization for your review and comment.

The concept design presents an opportunity to rehabilitate and revitalize the
Sculpture Garden to expand opportunities for additional museum programming while addressing much-needed accessibility and maintenance issues. The project is expected to be submitted for preliminary and final reviews by the Commission in early 2020.

The Sculpture Garden is located at 700 Independence Avenue, Southwest, on the National Mall, and is part of the Hirshhorn Museum Complex. The Hirshhorn Complex is framed by 7th Street to the east, the Mary Livingston Ripley Garden to the west, and across Jefferson Drive, the Sculpture Garden opens to the National Mall along its northern edge. Jefferson Drive is controlled by the National Park Service.

The museum and garden are organized around the H Street north-south access aligning with the National Gallery Art's Sculpture Garden and the National Archives across the National Mall to the north.

Now before I walk you through the concept design components, I would like to
provide you a brief history of the Sculpture Garden. Staff notes that, in 2016, the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden were determined eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places, while already considered contributing elements to the National Mall Historic District's listing.

Designed by Gordon Bunshaft of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill as a component of the Hirshhorn Museum Complex, and completed in 1974, Bunshaft's design for the Sculpture Garden was shaped by concrete retaining walls on the east, south, and west, with a planted berm opening to the National Mall at the north. Within these bounds, sculpture was displayed through a series of gravel/paves austere terraces and framed by a few internal concrete walls and hedges. It was accessed by a single set of broad stairs from the north and a pair of lateral stairs from the south, with a second series of wide stairs leading to the central reflecting pool.

Staff notes that the remaining...
Bunshaft design features have been determined to contribute to the National Register eligibility of the garden, including the sunken plan, the concrete perimeter, and inner partition walls, the reflecting pool, the north and south stairs, and the setting for display of rotating sculpture. In addition, staff finds that the sunken garden space is a fundamental feature of the original Bunshaft design, and the proposed revitalization will not alter the relationship of the garden's elevation to the National Mall.

Soon after opening, the Sculpture Garden proved inhospitable due to the expanse of gravel and lack of shade in the hot, humid D.C. summers. Additionally, visitor access to the sunken garden was entirely dependent on stairs, making it inaccessible to visitors with strollers or wheelchairs and persons with limited mobility.

Landscape architect Lester Collins made modifications to the garden that were completed in 1981, layered on top of Bunshaft's design to improve accessibility and visitor
comfort through the introduction of ramped 
walkways, shade trees, and groundcover plantings. 
The visitor pathways that are now paved in brick 
were defined by planting beds or lawn. As such, 
staff finds that the Sculpture Garden has changed 
substantially over time in response to improving 
visitor access and environmental comfort.

Staff also notes that the Collins-era 
design elements introduced to the garden in 1981 
will need to be reevaluated as part of the 
Section 106 consultation process to determine if 
they now contribute to the significance of the 
Sculpture Garden.

Before we look at the concept design 
and its objectives, here are a few slides of the 
existing conditions of the garden. The Sculpture 
Garden is in a prominent location on the National 
Mall, and changes should ensure a high-quality 
space that supports the mission of the museum and 
engages the surrounding context.

As identified by the Applicant, the 
goals of the concept design for the garden
include reinforcing connections between the
National Mall, the Sculpture Garden, and the
museum, and enhancing visitor experience and
public engagement.

As a reminder, the Commission approved
the Smithsonian's South Mall Campus Master Plan
on June 7th, 2018. It included recommendations
to improve and revitalize both the Hirshhorn
Museum and the Sculpture Garden, and the
Commission supported the reestablishment of the
existing below-grade connection between the
museum and the Sculpture Garden to help improve
access between the two areas. This is included
in today's concept design.

As I mentioned earlier, the
Applicant's design presents an opportunity to
rehabilitate and revitalize the Sculpture Garden
to address the following goals of the Hirshhorn
Museum:

Reinforce the connections between the
National Mall, the Sculpture Garden, and museum;

Enhance visitor experience and public
engagement;

Create flexible space for artists working to push the media of sculpture and performance forward into the 21st century;

Show the museum's historically-significant bronze sculpture collection to its strongest effect;

Revitalize and build upon the historic framework of the Sculpture Garden and replace failing infrastructure to meet current code requirements and design for resilience and sustainability.

The museum has selected renowned artist and architect Hiroshi Sugimoto to realize the project's curatorial and programming goals. As such, staff recognized that the Commission supports the Smithsonian's intention to revitalize the Hirshhorn Sculpture Garden to improve the visitor experience, public engagement, and to accommodate the museum's mission and contemporary programming needs.

Further, staff recommends that the
Commission find that the components of the revitalization can reinforce and improve the connections between the Mall, the Sculpture Garden, and the museum. And further, the revitalization must balance the visitor experience, program needs, and historic preservation considerations.

Now we will shift to a discussion of the Applicant's programming goals. One of the goals of the project is to accommodate new and flexible spaces for the presentation of contemporary sculpture and performance art.

While the mission of the museum remains the same, the types of art and the potential for exhibition continue to change. And the garden should accommodate those changes. In particular, staff notes that the museum and garden has a need to accommodate interactive art, larger sculpture, and other contemporary installation, in addition to the bronze sculpture collection displayed today, and finds that the Sculpture Garden should be revitalized to

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accommodate new, flexible, and varied opportunities for museum programming.

The concept design responds to the museum's vision by creating distinct garden spaces and galleries, as shown in the following renderings:

The East Garden will contain a series of interconnected, open galleries for the Hirshhorn's collection of modern bronze sculptures, allowing them to increase the number of rotating sculptures on display by 50 percent.

The West Garden will provide an open, flexible lawn to showcase temporary exhibitions, interactive installations, public programming, and monumental sculptures by contemporary artists.

The reflecting pool and performance area includes a shallow-water feature in the central garden that will serve as a focal point for visitor engagement and reflection.

Sugimoto's concept integrates a performance stage, a stacked stone backdrop, and
shaded amphitheater seating to form an inviting venue for the performing arts.

Improved entrances and new overlooks are envisioned on all sides of the garden, as shown outlined here on a rendering in red. The north entrance will provide an enhanced front door to the National Mall, providing space for pause and reflection, with clear vistas of the entire garden.

Destination artworks positioned around the perimeter will draw visitors in, encouraging flow between the garden and the museum. New shaded seating will provide opportunities for rest and contemplation.

As such, staff recommends the Commission finds that the Sculpture Garden should be revitalized to accommodate new, flexible, and varied opportunities for museum programming.

Now I'll walk you through the concept's proposed alterations to the garden and the vicinity, focusing on the underground tunnel passageway, the reflecting pool, the walls, and
the overlooks.

As shown in the top right image, when the Hirshhorn opened in 1974, it featured an underground passage below Jefferson Drive, creating an important pedestrian link between the sunken Sculpture Garden and the museum plaza. The tunnel connecting the plaza and the garden were closed in 1993, due to safety concerns. Currently, as shown in the bottom left photo, a large-scale artwork sits over the plaza tunnel entrance.

The tunnel was later enclosed for use as an art lab/educational space, shown in the center bottom photo. The original granite stairs are still present at the back of the art lab, as shown in the bottom right photo.

The tunnel's closure has impeded the original flow of visitors ever since, requiring visitors to exit the Sculpture Garden and cross Jefferson Drive to access the Hirshhorn Museum. The concept design proposes to reopen the tunnel connection.
As proposed, the majority of the tunnel will remain intact. The north end will be widened to increase daylight into the space. The extant stairs will be restored and salvaged stair treads will be used to reopen the pedestrian link to the museum plaza.

The size of the original plaza stair opening was just under 36 feet in length and surrounded by a concrete balustrade. The concept plan proposes to introduce more light into the stair as you descend into the tunnel. This was one of the challenges with the original stair design, as it was dark and uninviting. The concept plan includes several alternatives to address this concern.

The first alternative proposes to restore the stair entrance to its original opening size and install a walkable skylight over the base of the stairs to provide the desired daylighting.

A second alternative proposes to maximize the enlargement of stair passage to the
tunnel, but results in bisecting the historic monumental plaza entrance stairs. The third alternative, and the Applicant's preferred, proposes to enlarge the stair opening to bring daylight to the base of the stairs. This design would not impact the historic monumental plaza stairs rising from Jefferson Drive.

The tunnel's original granite stairs would be restored. The balustrade would resemble the original design, but would meet current building codes.

After review, staff supports reopening the tunnel between the museum and the garden to improve connectivity between the two areas and finds that the design alternatives to the stair opening to the tunnel, each has historic preservation challenges, including introducing new materials such as the skylights or potentially altering the historic monumental plaza entrance stairs.

The stairs and the tunnel should be
inviting to users, and additional daylighting will be beneficial. As such, staff recommends that the Commission supports the Applicant's preferred approach for the stair opening to the tunnel under Jefferson Drive, to expand the stair opening to the top of the monumental plaza entrance stairs without bisecting the stairs, which allows for the desired daylight into the stair entrance and tunnel.

Now we will shift to a discussion of the reflecting pool contained within the garden. Bunshaft's 1974 design included a rectangular reflecting pool on the northern end of the sunken central garden with dimensions that link it to the windows and balcony on the north side of the museum building. The reflecting pool is a character-defining feature for the Sculpture Garden's eligibility for the National Register. Thus, staff finds the reflecting pool is a fundamental feature of the Bunshaft design and it relates the north window and balcony of the museum to the garden.
While the Section 106 consultation process has begun, the Applicant has not made a determination of effects on the garden's historic elements based on their proposed concept. While this will occur in the next step of the 106 process, as the concept design moves forward, staff requests the Applicant provide additional details regarding the proposed pool modifications, including the design of the proposed stage and pedestrian paths, to demonstrate the impacts of any changes on the historic character of the pool and the visitor experience. Furthermore, staff recommends that the Applicant explore a pool alternative that retains the historic character-defining dimensions of Bunshaft's pool design.

As part of the concept review under your consideration today, the Applicant has included several alternatives for a redesign of the garden's reflecting pool, all of which significantly enlarge the size of the pool as it is today. And now we'll look at the proposed
alternatives.

The first alternative incorporates an enlarged shallow reflecting pool with a performance stage and sculptural pedestals. The enlarged pool would be approximately 85 feet by 56 feet compared to the existing reflecting pool of 62 feet by 14 feet. The pool would be 6 inches in depth and could be drained for performances.

A second alternative expands the reflecting pool, includes a performance area, but would incorporate the existing dimensions of the Bunshaft pool with a depth of 6 inches below grade, and the majority of the pool would be 3 inches below grade of the surrounding paving.

A third alternative incorporates the dimensions of the pool within the enlarged reflecting pool, but does not have a stage or pass through the pool, but could be drained for performances.

A final pool alternative proposes to enlarge the pool and the performance stage, but
would reduce dimensions to correspond to the actual width of the museum balconies' north windows.

All the alternatives shown in the concept design would use honed, black granite for the pool surface and stage components and a lighter stone for edging.

Now I'll walk you through the proposed alteration to the garden's walls. Within the Sculpture Garden, the walls mark the overall garden boundary while serving as retaining walls, given the sunken nature of the garden.

Under the concept plan, the original perimeter concrete aggregate walls would be replaced with in-kind materials. These walls are indicated on this site plan circled in black. The replacement is needed due to the structural failing of the original walls. These walls will be rebuilt in the original locations with in-kind material consisting of sandblasted exposed crushed granite aggregate. These walls will also be slightly raised to meet the current building
Thus, staff notes that the existing perimeter walls and stone aggregate are contributing elements to the garden design and directly relate the Sculpture Garden to the museum building itself. Staff recommends that the Commission supports the efforts to replace the failing original perimeter aggregate walls of Bunshaft's design with in-kind materials to maintain these character-defining elements.

Staff also notes that the design proposes to remove the remaining Bunshaft design interior partition walls, including the central partition wall, as shown on this site plan outlined in red. The removal of the western partition walls allows for the creation of the western garden and the new accessibility ramps from both the north and south sides of the garden. The central partition wall will be replaced with a new stacked stone backdrop wall.

Staff also notes the design proposes to remove the walls and ramps introduced by
Collins in 1981 on the north side of the garden, as shown in black on this drawing. New perimeter walls in the north will complete the shape of the garden at its perimeter, as well as to define two new elements of the garden, the enlarged north overlook and the new ramped west entry to the garden.

The material will be concrete aggregate to complement the original Bunshaft wall material. The Collins-designed ramps and stairs in the interior of the garden will maintain their alignment, but they will be reconstructed.

Sugimoto’s concept design proposes new stacked stone gallery walls meant to function as backdrops for art and further define new programmatic spaces for the garden. As shown in this diagram in blue, the new stone walls are always slightly lower than the concrete perimeter walls, as the Applicant is attempting to form a distinctly different secondary system of organization. Therefore, staff recommends that
the Commission supports the introduction of the new walls to define space in the garden and serve as a backdrop for the sculpture collection. And here is a rendering of how the new stone gallery walls would look and photos that they use for inspiration.

Staff has recommended the Applicant continue to explore ways in which the new stone walls can be compatible with the historic perimeter materials, but differentiated through material, color tone, or stacking pattern.

Both on the outside of the perimeter walls and the new overlooks and within the garden, new planter walls are proposed that frame raised planters and function as visitor seating benches. The raised planters alternate with plantings at the pavement level and create benches at strategic locations throughout the Sculpture Garden. At the reflecting pool, benches are provided in tiers to serve as amphitheater seating.

The concept plan includes alterations
to the overlooks around the Sculpture Garden.
For the north overlook, the north entry will be
widened to create a stronger connection to the
Mall and the east and west overlooks, with a
transition zone between the surrounding site and
the garden, while providing accessible view
opportunities, shaded seating, and the display of
sculpture along 7th Street and the Mall walkways
for visitors.

Therefore, staff recommends that the
Commission supports the reconfiguration and
introduction of the overlooks to improve the
connectivity of the garden with the National
Mall.

The original garden, as I mentioned,
was not accessible, as it predated ADA
requirements. The changes by Collins in the
early 1980s incorporated ramps along the north
side of the site and within the garden to allow
for an accessible route down to the sculpture.
Today, there is not accessible entrance or exit
from Jefferson Drive, and the ramps at the north
can only be reached via the gravel walk along the National Mall. As such, visitors from the south must travel completely around the site to gain access to the garden.

The concept design proposes ramps accessible from both the north and south, providing new universal access for all visitors. This is indicated on the drawing with the red arrow. The southern ramp is located across from the accessible entry on the museum plaza to help strengthen the campus connection. These changes will help shorten the travel distance for visitors. Thus, staff supports the improvements that enhance accessibility to and through the Sculpture Garden for visitors of all abilities.

In addition, staff does request that the Applicant work with the National Park Service regarding any potential alternatives for Jefferson Drive that also improve pedestrian access.

Now we'll shift into the landscaping and paving concepts. The primary purpose of the
Hirshhorn Sculpture Garden is the display of art and the creation of a venue for programming such as performances and other events. Therefore, the Hirshhorn's mission distinguishes the Sculpture Garden from other public gardens.

The landscape concept expresses this need through the creation of a subdued and restrained plant pallette which encourages a focus on art display and the comfortable viewing of artworks. Turf is limited to the west lawn to create a comfortable and inviting space for visitors.

For the ground pallette, simple planes of groundcover plants will provide a complementary base, and a single species per bed will create lush, textured carpeting of planting. The selection of hardy species will ensure limited maintenance needs and long-term sustainability of the landscape.

The number of trees, their canopy-type, shape, and location were carefully studied to balance the need for open display areas with
the critical need for shade. While most of the
proposed trees are deciduous, some evergreens are
provided in select locations to enhance the
experience of the garden during the winter.

Thus, staff recommends the Commission
finds the inclusion of trees and plantings
throughout the garden enhance shade and are
important for visitor comfort.

In terms of materials, the garden sits
surrounded by exposed aggregate and fine gravel
of the National Mall. The overlook and stair
entrances from the north and south will use
salvaged Bunshaft stair treads with matching
pavers to welcome visitors into the garden. The
lower levels will integrate new granite stone
pavers to coordinate with the existing stairs and
the new gallery stone walls.

In regards to lighting, the Applicant
has begun looking at a lighting plan that is
appropriate for the garden's location on the
National Mall and for its use and function. As
the concept design moves forward, a more detailed
lighting strategy will be provided.

Overall, the concept design presents an opportunity to rehabilitate and revitalize the Hirshhorn Sculpture Garden for 21st century function in a way that seeks to retain its historic character while addressing the museum's programming needs.

Therefore, it is the Executive Director's recommendation that the Commission supports the Smithsonian's intention to revitalize the garden to improve the visitor experience and public engagement and accommodate the museum's mission and contemporary programming needs; finds that the proponents of the revitalization can reinforce and improve the connections between the National Mall, the Sculpture Garden, and the museum, and finds that the revitalization must balance visitor experience, program needs, and historic preservation considerations.

I've already covered the rest of the recommendations in my presentation. So, I will
conclude now.

I would like to introduce Ann Trowbridge of the Smithsonian and Melissa Chiu, the Director of the Hirshhorn Museum, who are here to convey some remarks to the Commission and will also help answer any questions you may have.

Thank you.

[INSERT - HIRSHHORN MUSEUM SCULPTURE GARDEN REVITALIZATION]
ACTING CHAIR GALLAS: Thank you, Mr. Webb.

As Ms. Trowbridge and Ms. Chiu come up, I'd like to also just mention we received a letter from Ms. Nancy Slade commenting on the Collins landscape design.

Welcome back, Ms. Trowbridge.

MS. TROWBRIDGE: Thank you, Mr. Webb.

And Good afternoon again, Chairman Gallas and Members of the Commission.

We are very pleased to be moving forward with this wonderful project that will contribute very significantly to the revitalization of the Hirshhorn as the Smithsonian's premier museum for modern and contemporary art on the National Mall.

Our next steps in public outreach include an open house for consulting parties, including NCPC, to observe mockups of stacked stone wall options in early August. We are planning our next consulting party meeting in September. At that meeting, we will discuss...
further investigation into reevaluating the contributing elements to the Sculpture Garden, as we begin an assessment of effects on historic resources as part of the Section 106 process.

We also invited the Cultural Landscape Foundation to meet with us to discuss research they are conducting, and we will include Lee Webb in that discussion.

Our team is here today to answer your questions.

I now have the great pleasure to introduce Melissa Chiu, the Hirshhorn's Director, to speak the museum's goals for the project.

MS. CHIU: Thank you. Thank you, Ann. Thank you, Commissioners. Thank you, Mr. Webb.

We're very excited about this plan, primarily because it's mission-driven. But, really, this whole process came about because we wanted to fulfill our mission of presenting modern/contemporary art out of the 20th and 21st centuries. And we feel like the size of our Sculpture Garden, through this new concept
design, allows us to link two campuses from the National Mall right through to the building.

I had some other things to say about this project, but mostly that our founding collection -- it's mostly 20th century -- through this new concept design really allows us to show it at its best. We have wonderful national treasures by artists like Rodin, Giacometti, Matisse, and Barbara Hepworth. And through this design, we are creating really intimate viewing circumstances to really appreciate these national treasures.

We also know that art of the 21st century has really changed. When we were created over 40 years ago, art was mostly human-scale and certainly sculpture was more domestically-scaled. And so, this new concept design allows us to show some of the work that today has gotten so much larger in scale, sometimes even gigantic. And so, with the opening-up of the Sculpture Garden, especially in the West Gallery, we're able to accommodate some of that work.
In the Central Gallery, we would very much like to focus some of our efforts on showing performance art. We recently started to acquire performance art. We have some on display at the museum right now, and we would like to have a dedicated space in the garden to really ensure that the garden is seen as an extension of the museum's program, not a static space.

I mentioned before that the concept really emphasizes this connection to the larger museum campus and its urban context. And I think that this is a really important thing that we've achieved through the overlooks and new entrances.

And finally, I think it's this renovation that's necessary to fulfill the mission of the Hirshhorn, and it's timing is critical. The Hirshhorn is the nation's museum of modern and contemporary art. And so, we have a duty to serve all of our audiences.

The garden renovations are vital to improve the visitor experience and to make them more universally-accessible. And we talked a
little bit about the change to the accessibility from Jefferson, which I think is a really important one because, right now, visitors are finding it difficult to get access to go directly onto the National Mall to do that.

We want to create the right setting for our collection, as it continues to grow and evolve, and to provide the critical infrastructure repairs, such as replacing the perimeter walls, amongst other things.

Thank you very much for your time.

ACTING CHAIR GALLAS: Thank you very much, Ms. Chiu and Ms. Trowbridge.

Let's open up for discussion.

MEMBER WRIGHT: Okay, I'll go first.

ACTING CHAIR GALLAS: Commissioner Wright?

MEMBER WRIGHT: I really like this plan. I like almost everything about it. And what I don't, what I can't quite get there with is the stacked stone, but not for the reasons that other people seem to have a problem with.
It's not about period of significance or preservation issues. It's more about exhibit design.

And I can't help but think about, if I think about installing a monumental piece with the stacked stone as a backdrop -- well, let me back up. Because I understand, I think I understand the design impetus for it because there are more rooms in the garden and it's a more complex, almost interior design in a way. There are more walls, it feels like. And I understand the idea of providing some variety because it could potentially start to feel rather maze-like.

But I think about the stacked stone as a backdrop for work as I would think about sort of a shining wallpaper or a crinkly wallpaper in a gallery for paintings, and one would never do that because it -- so, in short, maybe it needs to be stone. It needs to be varied from the smooth concrete, but does it need to be so busy as the backdrop for -- I get it. You wouldn't
notice so much for a Henry Moore, but you would
notice it for a Rodin possibly or a piece that
has more texture.

So, I would just urge that there may
be some other ways to vary the interior room or
the exterior rooms that are being created. I'm
sure you're going to hear plenty from the
historic preservation community about the stacked
stone and probably already have. But that's not
my reason.

And I just wonder if there isn't
another way to provide variety without so much
texture that it might be distractive.

And that's it for me.

ACTING CHAIR GALLAS: Do others want
to comment on that particular issue before we go
to others?

Yes, Commissioner May?

MEMBER MAY: Yes. I saw the
presentation of this at the Commission of Fine
Arts, and I thought that the totality of that
presentation was fairly compelling when it came
to these additional walls, but it did kind of stick with me and the comments that we had seen, and, of course, being in the report here. And then, looking at the model, where it really does come off as very busy. And for me, it's not just about sort of the busyness of the backdrop, but the sort of total enclosure that occurs in some locations. And I feel like there's just maybe too much wall. But I agree it's too busy, but it feels like there's actually too much length of wall, and some of it is kind of oppressively high.

I mean, I think some of this is going to get worked in the further discussions with the Commission of Fine Arts and in the other, the section conversations, or whatever else has to happen.

Those are my thoughts on the wall.

ACTING CHAIR GALLAS: Other comments on the wall features?

Commissioner White?

MEMBER WHITE: No, I would just concur
with those comments. And I think when you
picture yourself in there, it feels a little
overwhelming and like I'm in Maine somewhere.

(Laughter.)

It's just a little jarring for me.

And seeing it in model, not so bad, but not, to
me, it's not the Hirshhorn, I guess. So, I think
just some tweaking would be helpful to see what
they come back with.

ACTING CHAIR GALLAS: I have one
comment about, in particular, the wall that I
guess is called the new stone partition wall.
That one, of all, is the one that is hanging me
up. I'm trying to understand its purpose. I
heard something in the presentation about the
need to amplify the backdrop for performance art,
I think is what I heard. I'm not buying that. I
feel as though it will really change the
character of really that view from the garden up
to the museum itself, the indoor museum.

And so, I really would like to have a
little bit more feedback on why that particular
wall needs to even be introduced.

MS. TROWBRIDGE: I have to call on Melissa Chiu to talk about it. Are you talking about the new wall at the underground passage?

ACTING CHAIR GALLAS: No.

MEMBER WRIGHT: No.

ACTING CHAIR GALLAS: I'm talking about, if you want to go back to 44, it's what's called "new stone partition wall". And I don't know if that's the blue one or the red one.

MS. TROWBRIDGE: That's actually the Bunshaft. It's the blue one is the --

ACTING CHAIR GALLAS: The blue, so I'm talking about the blue one that is the backdrop to the reflecting pool.

MS. CHIU: Shall I speak?

ACTING CHAIR GALLAS: Certainly.

Thank you. You might want to grab a mic.

There's a hand-held mic there.

MS. CHIU: Okay. So, you're referring now to this?

ACTING CHAIR GALLAS: Yes.
MS. CHIU: Yes. So, what I would say to that is that it was very much a part of Sugimoto's thinking to create a hierarchy between the walls; that, in fact, the hierarchy would be that all of the Bunshaft or in-kind walls that are being replaced would all be higher. And so, you can see that perhaps not so clearly, but most of these white perimeter walls -- but this, even though this is a new wall, this is actually much higher than this Sugimoto wall, and that was intentional.

I think that the way that we're thinking of the stone walls, that Sugimoto has kind of developed something of an expertise right now because he's been doing these stone walls in a number of different architectural projects, especially in Japan, is that they're like his curatorial intervention, if you like. It's a little bit like what you were saying in that he's thinking of these walls in terms of being backdrops for art and performance. So, your summary was correct in that here we have
platforms for both sculptures and also the stage for performance, and that this is considered something of a backdrop for those.

He's also trying to create some level of continuity in his intervention, in that you have a wall here with the increased accessibility access. You have this here, and then, more of a focus on his, if you like, his curatorial walls that are backdrops, then, for our modern sculptures, mostly of bronze, and a kind of -- they're more intimate spaces because they're more domestic-scaled, human-scaled sculpture.

So, in some ways, he's using this wall to link the two spaces visually because you have this here, this defining, and then, that, and then, that. So, it was kind of more of a visual approach.

ACTING CHAIR GALLAS: So, my reaction simply is that, while the other walls seem to have a purpose, this one doesn't seem to have the same need or purpose and has the biggest impact on the visual connection between the sunken
garden and the indoor museum.

So, please just pass that along in terms of our question or concern.

Okay. Any other comments on the wall?

(No response.)

Okay. Are we ready to move to other aspects of the plan?

Commissioner Cash?

MEMBER CASH: Well, it's a new aspect, I will say. Maybe we can take that old Air and Space wall, which is flat, but not too flat, and create the new rules of that.

(Laughter.)

So, I guess I've become a cynic when it comes to water features. And I blame that on Pershing Park. I blame that on Freedom Plaza.

(Laughter.)

But I always get nervous now when I see these big, new water features because I feel like I've been burned too many times, that they won't be there. And if this is going to be empty all the time, I think it really does a disservice
to this space, especially if we're taking out
greenspace, because that area in there is already
so hot in the summer and it's, I mean, I don't
want to say brutalist because I'm not an art
critic or anything by any means. It's not what
it's supposed to be. But I think, in seeing some
of the renderings, what it looks like when those
are empty, if it's going to be year-round, I just
really worry if we're going to greatly expand a
water feature that's going to be empty all the
time. And think about maybe looking at
preserving the relation of the windows to one of
those pieces of the water feature and maybe
retaining some of the grass. And that can be a
performance space. You can always put risers on
it instead of draining something.

So, I guess I've just become a cynic
like with bollards and antennas, that I just
always get very nervous about. Whenever I see a
water feature now, I think of Air and Space and I
think of Pershing Park, and I just get really
worried that, unless it's going to be really high
priority to be maintained, I just get nervous about that.

But I also want to also thank the Smithsonian for providing pencil drawings for our concept review rather than very, very detailed renderings, which have gotten us in trouble and in some knots before.

But I, overall, think that it's a great improvement to what's a great space, but I would just ask you to really think about the water features and if that's really sustainable over the long term.

ACTING CHAIR GALLAS: Commissioner Ginsberg, yes.

MEMBER GINSBERG: I think this is lovely. I think one of the questions that I have is that at the introduction we talked about making this more accessible, and I didn't see anything in the proposal that actually makes the access better for those with disabilities. So, I'd just like to hear a little bit more about how this makes it more accessible.
MS. TROWBRIDGE: Right now, the
accessibility from the museum side to the south
of Jefferson Drive, if you were at the museum and
wanted to visit the Sculpture Garden, you would
need to walk on the path along the upper side of
the Mall, around to, across gravel in your
wheelchair or on your crutches or with your baby
carriage, and then, go down one of the ramps left
or right of the center of the north side of the
Sculpture Garden.

The improvement we're proposing, there
is a ramp down to the middle of the west side
from the Mall as well as one down to the middle
of the west side from the Jefferson sidewalk.
And then, a ramp down, continuing down towards
Jefferson on one side and a small flight of
stairs on the other. So, it's much more
convenient for someone who wants to visit both
the museum and the Sculpture Garden to use these.

MEMBER MAY: Is it possible to bring
up the -- there was another drawing that showed
the actual ramps and plan. There we go. Stop.
One more. One more back. There we go.

So, we see here, all those ramps are shown with the diagonal lines crossing them. So, that way, we can see. As it is right now, the only way to get access would be to go all the way around to that side. So now, you can cross Jefferson and go down that series of ramps.

ACTING CHAIR GALLAS: Okay. Other comments about accessibility or anything else related to this?

Commissioner May?

MEMBER MAY: Just a couple of quick things. I think that the report recommends for the coordination of Park Service about Jefferson Drive, and that's important to us.

I think, also, can you go to the image at the very end? Well, no, actually, go back and just show the landscape plan. Stop. Right there we go.

So, the flowering trees that are shown on the northern side there, I mean, do those relate to what's existing? Is that a
continuation of what's existing or is that
something that's new? I couldn't tell from -- I
couldn't remember and I couldn't tell from what
I --

MS. TROWBRIDGE: Let me introduce Faye
Harwell, our landscape architect for the
project --

MEMBER MAY: Yes.

MS. TROWBRIDGE: -- to talk about the
trees.

MEMBER MAY: Yes.

MS. HARWELL: Good afternoon. I'm
very happy to be here and answer the question.

There is a grouping, a sort of
sporadic grouping, of flowering trees along that
edge right now in various stages of condition and
age. And the idea is to lighten the character of
the plantings along that edge slightly, since the
focus on the Mall in that area is statuesque and
sort of the sentinel trees of the Mall, the elms
that are on both the east and the west side of
the garden.
And also, the emphasis is on shade within the garden, and there have been issues and questions raised from actually the Commission of Fine Arts to make sure that we make every effort to keep shade a priority for the garden in the lower area.

So, the idea was that we would have something lighter, a little bit more delicate, and something that suggests that there is an entrance to the museum up at that edge. So, we have selected flowering cherries, both compatible with what's there now, but a new arrangement and species to be determined.

I should say that, with all of the tree selections, we are working very closely with Smithsonian Institution Gardens, and we haven't figured out all of the tree species at this moment. These are all preliminary.

So, comments are welcome.

MEMBER MAY: Have you had discussions with the National Park Service about that?

MS. HARWELL: Yes, as well, and they
have submitted --

MEMBER MAY: Okay. Because, I mean, the reason I bring this up is that it just seems like it's much more extensive in terms of the flowering trees there. And I'm not totally convinced that that's consistent with what we would want.

Now, again, I haven't been part of any of those discussions myself, but I would urge that there be more conversation with the staff of the National Mall and Memorial Parks because we don't really -- I'm not sure that we would be in line with something where it's -- there's a lot more flowering trees in that section, simply because the look of the Mall right now, when you look down the Mall, it's the elms that flank the lawn panels. And to have something that, at least for a few weeks out of the year, is going to be --

MS. HARWELL: Different.

MEMBER MAY: -- bright and different and the rest of the year isn't going to be that
different, or it's going to be much smaller
trees, I'm not sure that that's the right answer,
either. I don't know what the right answer is.
I just think it's something that we have to
discuss.

MS. HARWELL: I appreciate the
comment. I think one of the things that we did
talk about, when we had one of the meetings with
the Park Service team, was the possibility of
continuing the elms along that edge. And because
we have them on the east and the west side of the
garden, we felt that it would be a bit heavy to
be down in the garden and have the elms so close
to you up above your head, and you'd be really
experiencing the trunks more than the canopy.

So, more discussion is probably a good
idea.

Anything else on the plantings?

MEMBER MAY: Thank you.

ACTING CHAIR GALLAS: Any other
comments?

Commissioner White?
MEMBER WHITE: I just wanted to say, first of all, thank you for providing a model that is just so helpful to understand how the space works. And notwithstanding my prior comments around the wall, I think this is really a very thoughtful approach to making that space work.

And I really appreciate having the Director here to hear the vision for what you want to achieve by making these changes to the Sculpture Garden and the previous discussion about the Canal. It's really hard to take this space that means so much to people and make it work better, because change is hard. But I think providing the shade is so critical to really having people enjoy it.

So, I'm sure you'll work out the issues with the National Mall and the Park Service. But I just wanted to compliment you for the sensitivity in adding accessibility. And I think it will be an extraordinary space.

ACTING CHAIR GALLAS: I had two quick
questions, one about the preferred alternative
for the stairway and the lighting. I understand
why we want to make that a more inviting space.
This one, yes. Good. And so, I guess, you know,
is this the only way to do it? This is a kind of
serious intervention. I really love the original
stairwell opening. I think it's beautifully-
scaled. This is less lovely to me, but I do
agree that having it without anyone wanting to go
in it because it's too dark -- so, the question
is, how much more of an extension is this, and is
it going to have -- are we convinced that it's
going to have the effect we're seeking, since
we're still going to go into a tunnel underneath
the road? And so, I'm just curious what your
thoughts are.

MS. TROWBRIDGE: Let me invite Felix
Ade of the YUN Architecture, who is collaborating
with Mr. Sugimoto on the design.

I don't know if you have the sections
through the stairway.

MR. WEBB: We didn't include them in
this, no.

MS. TROWBRIDGE: Okay. We had included some cross-sections in our submission booklet that might illustrate this. I don't know if we can call them up, but we'll definitely provide them in the next submission.

ACTING CHAIR GALLAS: Okay. Thank you.

MR. ADE: Yes, Felix Ade, YUN Architecture.

The section would, indeed, be very helpful because what I'd like to point out is that this opening widens to the north so much that the sun will actually now be able to clear the building, the top of the building, and bring sunlight all the way down to the bottom of the stair. That is sort of important to us to actually get that achieved, where the light really comes down and hits the bottom. So, when you come down, you see lights at the bottom of the stair. And that's why this opening is so wide.
ACTING CHAIR GALLAS: Commission Cash, did you have a question?

MEMBER CASH: Actually on the stairs. So, it was touched on in the EDR. I think that it was originally closed due to safety concerns, but didn't really expand on that much. Could you talk a little bit about, was it just because it was dark and people didn't use it? I mean, what was the safety concern?

MS. TROWBRIDGE: It was dark. It was occupied by people, and visitors did not want to go in there. It was a maintenance problem. Various reasons that it was closed. But the darkness was a contributing factor to that.

It is currently -- the stair is still there behind walls and covered plaza. And the space is used as the art lab, which is an after-school program for teenagers.

MEMBER CASH: So, what's going to be changed, other than more light, this time that you think will avoid the dangerous feeling?

MS. TROWBRIDGE: Well, we've
introduced an intervening art piece in the curved infinity walls that will be of a textured stainless steel material, and that will further, I think, reflect light and give the space more reason for people to go in it and use it more, I think. So, we think it will be quite improved. But light is important to that.

MEMBER CASH: And also, what's going to happen with the art lab space? Is that being contemplated? Is it going to be something that Smithsonian just tries to move somewhere else or?

MS. TROWBRIDGE: We have another project beginning work on an interior renovation study that would relocate that to a part of the museum that's now the galleries near the auditorium in the basement level.

Thank you.

MR. WEBB: Commissioner Gallas, if you have your EDR, starting on 64, we did include the sections within the EDR attachment to the report. So, for the preferred, it would be page 65.

ACTING CHAIR GALLAS: No, I think
hearing the explanation of the sun angle passing, you know, with the building not blocking it most of the part of the day is a brilliant intervention, I would say, and one that is really needed to make that connection. Because if you're on the Hirshhorn side and you want to cross over, it's kind of prohibitive today. It's really not an inviting thing to do. So, I'm really welcoming the intervention.

My other comment has to do with the reflecting pool, option alternative four. You know, I didn't want to like any of these -- (Laughter) -- because the scale of the reflecting pool as it was was pretty much perfect. I'm very much attracted to, though, the notion of making the pool be part of an active element in the space, even though I don't like that wall behind it.

But alternative four seems to get it just right to me in terms of understanding how we can both respect that dimensional sort of aspect of connecting back to the interior window in the
indoor museum. And so, I just wanted to
cомpliment that choice.

Okay. Any other comments?

(No response.)

Okay. So, can we have a motion to
approve the comments on the concept design?

MEMBER ARGO: So moved.

ACTING CHAIR GALLAS: And second?

MEMBER WRIGHT: Second.

ACTING CHAIR GALLAS: All those in
favor signify by saying aye.

(Chorus of ayes.)

Any opposed?

(No response.)

Thank you for the unanimous -- thank
you very much for your input.

Good luck. We look forward to hearing
the next phase of this.

UNIFORMED SERVICES UNIVERSITY OF THE
HEALTH SCIENCES EDUCATION AND RESEARCH BUILDING

ACTING CHAIR GALLAS: Okay. We're
sorry to see the model go. It's beautiful.
Laughter.)

Thank you. Come back anytime.

The final open session item is the Commission's preliminary review of the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences Education and Research Building, submitted by the Department of the Navy.

Thank you, Mr. Gerbich, for your presentation on this.

MR. GERBICH: All right. I think we've got the technical glitch worked out over here.

I know some folks are still looking at the model.

(Pause.)

ACTING CHAIR GALLAS: Okay, Mr. Gerbich, please proceed.

MR. GERBICH: Of course. All right.

ACTING CHAIR GALLAS: Inform us.

MR. GERBICH: Good afternoon, Members of the Commission.

The U.S. Department of Defense,
Department of the Navy, has submitted revised preliminary site and building plans for a new Education and Research Building for the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences, or USUHS, at the Naval Support Activity Bethesda in Bethesda, Maryland.

As you may recall, the Commission reviewed the concept design and provided comments at its June 2018 meeting and reviewed and approved a preliminary design in September 2018. This revised preliminary submission is intended to respond to Commission concerns in previous reviews, which will be the focus of this presentation.

So, the Education and Research Building is proposed at the eastern end of the NSA Bethesda Campus in Montgomery County, which sits adjacent to the Capital Beltway and lies directly to the east of the National Institutes of Health Campus.

The location of the proposed building is highlighted here with a yellow circle. The
location of the building can be seen here in relation to the larger campus transportation network. You can also see the Medical Center Metrorail Station to the west, which is located across Rockville Pike.

Access is provided to the proposed building via campus shuttle, which is shown here with a gray line; pedestrian routes, which are shown in blue, and automobile, which is shown in green. As can be seen, primary building access via most travel modes would occur along South Palmer Road.

The map on this slide shows the detail of the proposed location for the Education and Research Building, along with existing buildings and facilities in the area. To the west is the Armed Forces Radiobiology Research Institute, or AFRRI, and the remainder of the USU campus sits to the east. To the north and south of the proposed location are natural areas with mature trees and walking trails.

As noted here with red shading, two
buildings on the University campus would be
demolished to accommodate the new building, as
would an existing surface parking lot.

This slide shows the overall site plan
for the project, with the proposed building
outlined in yellow, and how it would integrate
with the University and Research Institute
campuses.

The proposed building is intended to
interface with both campuses, with laboratory
spaces on the west that connect to lab spaces at
AFRRI, and offices to the east that are
accessible to the USU campus.

Before I get into details regarding
previous Commission comments, I first want to
review a couple of important changes that have
influenced the building design in this
submission. As you may recall, in previous
iterations a bridge connection was proposed to
link the new building with the adjacent AFRRI
building to the west, which is highlighted here
with a yellow circle. This one-story connection
was intended to transport materials between laboratory spaces. In the updated design, which is shown here, this connector has been expanded to two stories, which will allow it to accommodate the safe and efficient transport of both materials and pedestrians.

The other major design decision is the elimination of a three-story bridge connector that was initially proposed between the new building and Buildings 70 and 71 of the USU campus, which can be seen on the right side of this image. The Applicant has indicated that a direct connection between these buildings is no longer required to meet programmatic needs.

The updated rendering can be seen here with this connection removed, which the Applicant has noted also serves to open up the plaza. A two-story bridge connection has been retained to Building 70, as can be seen at the far right of the image.

I next want to review Applicant responses to specific Commission concerns.
MEMBER WRIGHT: Can you back up? Can you back up? Yes.
So, this whole thing? And what's the "F" doing?

MR. GERBICH: It was in the rendering.

MEMBER WRIGHT: Oh, okay. All right. So, can you just -- okay. All right. Sorry to interrupt.

MR. GERBICH: No, you're fine, and you'll get a better view of this as we go with some aerial views as well.

MEMBER WRIGHT: Yes.

MR. GERBICH: Okay. So, again, I next want to review some specific responses to Commission concerns, the first of which relates to the amount of landscaping here on the eastern plaza. So, this is the preliminary design from September 2018. So, in its previous review, the Commission expressed concerns with the large amount of hardscaping and lack of vegetation and tree cover for shade.

So, at that time, the Applicant
indicated that the plaza sits on top of a
proposed radiobiology facility which restricts
planter depth and tree heights. The Applicant
has since clarified that the amount of vegetation
on the plaza is further restricted by emergency
vehicle access and antiterrorism force protection
requirements, and that, more broadly, the
location of underground utilities and
bioretention facilities further restrict
vegetation across the project area.

So, the Applicant has provided a
revised landscape plan, which can be seen here,
with the emergency vehicle access on the eastern
plaza shown in red.

Given the identified challenges, the
Applicant has replaced a proposed planter bed on
the plaza with five additional tree planters,
which are identified here with orange circles.
They've also proposed additional tree planters on
the western plaza, which is actually here at the
top of this slide.

An updated rendering of the eastern
plaza can be seen here. The Applicant has indicated that this is the extent of landscaping that can be provided, given the existing site constraints. While staff appreciates the effort to break up the hardscape to the extent practicable, we generally find that the proposed trees on the plaza would still not provide adequate shade relief. If further landscaping cannot be provided, staff requests that the Applicant consider the use of tables, chairs, and either built-in or non-permanent shade structures to provide further seating and shade relief on the plaza.

The next set of Commission concerns relates specifically to elements of the building design, including solar exposure on the western facade. So, as you may recall, in previous reviews the Commission expressed concerns regarding the likely amount of heat and daylight that would filter into the laboratory spaces in the afternoon sun. While the Applicant provided clarification that the glazing system would
consist of transparent glass interspersed with spandrel panels to reduce infiltration of sunlight, the Commission continued to question the appropriateness of the design decision, asking whether the Applicant could reorient the building to reduce solar exposure.

The Applicant has continued to emphasize the importance of natural daylight in the laboratory spaces, which can only be achieved on the western facade due to existing buildings to the east. Further, the building orientation is also dictated by the building program, which requires that the lab spaces are directly accessible to the AFRRI lab building to the west, and that the offices are accessible to the USU campus to the east, as is demonstrated here.

The Applicant has not made major design changes to this western facade, but has provided additional information regarding solar performance, specifically noting that the glazing system has been extensively evaluated and that it exceeds solar heat gain performance criteria.
The analysis indicates that the glare would be mitigated with internal roller shades and that the building would still maintain good thermal comfort performance.

The last major area of concern related to building access from the northwest stairs, which is shown here in the current design. In previous reviews, the Commission raised issues with the overall back-of-house feel at this location, as well as the number of stairs required to access the western terrace, specifically requesting that the Applicant consider adding ground-level building access at this location.

The Applicant has not made major design changes here, but has noted that the multi-story stair at this location functions primarily as building egress, and that building access from here would be minimal because of the existing pedestrian network, which generally directs pedestrians through the eastern plaza.

Most building access that occurs from the
northwest would be from the relatively few on-street parking spaces along the adjacent roadway here.

Regarding ground-level access as an alternative to the stairs, the Applicant has indicated that direct building access cannot be provided near the stairs because the space contains mechanical equipment that serves the laboratory spaces. Ground-level access, however, will be accommodated through an elevator in the adjacent parking garage, which is just a short trip past the loading zone, which is marked here with a pink circle.

This is the extent of changes and clarification provided by the Applicant, though they are available to answer any further questions the Commission may have about the project and building program.

So, I've reviewed a lot of these recommendations kind of moving through the presentation, but just a few things I would like to point out.
It is the Executive Director's recommendation that the Commission approves the revised preliminary site and building plans for the Education and Research Building at NSA Bethesda.

Regarding landscaping, the Commission requests that the Applicant consider the use of tables, chairs, and either built-in or non-permanent shade structures to provide further seating and shade relief on the eastern plaza.

And finally, the Commission notes that the Applicant will submit site and building plans for final review upon completion of environmental and historic preservation compliance.

So, that concludes my presentation. As noted, members of the project team are here to answer any questions about the project.

Though before you begin your discussion, Commander Carlton Dodson, the MILCON Program Manager and Defense Health Agency Facilities Region Director, would like to briefly address the Commission.
Thank you.

ACTING CHAIR GALLAS: Welcome,

Commander Dodson.

COMMANDER DODSON: Good afternoon, Mr. Webb and Commissioners.

Before I start, on behalf of the leadership at the Defense Health Agency and the Uniformed Services University, I want to thank you for the opportunity to be able to speak to you in regards to this project, as well as having you be able to set aside your valuable time to provide your subject matter expertise in regards to the planning and development of the federal facilities and infrastructures that's here in the National Capital Region.

I was planning to do an hour-and-a-half briefing, knowing I was going to be the last presentation. 

(Laughter.)

But I did that mainly because I was thinking about the rush-hour traffic trying to get out of the place.
(Laughter.)

I know that a lot of you are tired. So, we're going to go ahead and I'll try to make this as brief as possible.

We are very excited today to present and discuss our latest design developments for this new medical and military construction project to enhance our Military Health System capabilities.

The Uniformed Services University was originally built on the foundation of academic and scientific excellence. Selection of students and faculty would reflect this posture. To bring in the best of the best, it is critical to have the latest and greatest technologies and infrastructure necessary to draw interest. Therefore, buildings do matter, not just for providing state-of-art capabilities, but also having a modern look and feel that could span through the 21st century.

Building infrastructure sends messages, whether they are perceived or actual.
In this case, image portrays university quality.

The Military Health System exists in a very competitive medical school market for students, faculty, research scientists, technicians, leaders, and administrative personnel.

Exit interviews with prospective students referenced outdated appearances and capabilities of a campus. As a result, the decision to use glass facade as extensively as we did and in such a visible location was quite deliberate, made by the President of the University, the Dean of the Medical School, and the Director of Research after soliciting input from various staff and students that are currently attending. Both President Thomas and Dean Kellerman believe that the glass facade would help blend the campus buildings and AFRRI together and provide a more forward-looking campus that will better position the University in the competitive recruitment of top-quality students and recruitment and retention of world-class faculty. The glass facade also provides
significantly more natural light into work areas and lab spaces, which is particularly important because of the large footprint and the overall purpose of the building.

We, as the Military Health System, as specifically the Defense Health Agency and the Uniformed Services University, are very pleased with the current design solution, as it follows DoD medical world-class standards. With its balanced facade treatments and material articulation, the new design makes its own statement as an inviting education and research laboratory center, as we move further along in the 21st century, while keeping with the Installation Design Guide and the Base Master Plan.

The new design creates an appealing building that promotes efficiency in design and construction, establishing a desirable learning and research environment for faculty, students, patients, and other staff.

The exterior design concept works to
celebrate the creative process of how ideas take flight and develop. As a medical education and research facility, it helps amplify the notion of being more open with creativity and helps with bringing the much-needed daylight deep into the laboratory spaces.

We must be able to successfully compete with the best medical institutions in the nation in order to attract the best talent to serve as care providers and to create medical solutions to our nation's sons and daughters who fight for our freedoms, our veterans, and foreign nations population.

Thank you for your time.
ACTING CHAIR GALLAS: Thank you very much, Commander Dodson.

I think I'm going to start, since you were speaking directly to me in many ways, because my comments were particularly pointed at the glass facade. So, I would like to just have a little bit of exchange, if you don't mind.

I'm particularly moved by the seeking the best and brightest. I think that's what we want for our uniformed services, and that would be the last thing I would want to do, is inhibit that kind of thing. Having a building that attracts the best and the brightest is something all of us, as Americans, would want to have for your mission.

There are many ways to do beautiful buildings. Glass is one of them. I think that we've fallen in love with the glass facade. It's a beautiful facade, frankly. I think it's quite nice, and I think it will achieve your goal of attracting people who are interested in state-of-the-art.
The thing that I recall -- and some of my memory is getting a little less good over my years as I advance -- but one of the things that I remember about the original presentation was there was a photograph of us looking from inside the lab, looking at the -- it was showing how the blinds were pulled. Okay? And what that showed me was, geez, we really don't want all that light in the lab.

Now I hear that it sounds like we need light deep into the lab, and I heard your comment. But it does belie the original presentation which showed almost exactly the opposite of that point.

So, I was responding to seeing a photograph of a lab space from the inside with the shades drawn, really unattractive in terms of what that space would be. And it said to me that we really don't want direct western sun, which is going to be very intense, coming into this space.

I appreciate the work to have the glazing system and all of that, but I do want to
be clear, too, that my comments weren't about asking you to reprogram the building and move the lab space to the other side. That's up to you. I think the adjacencies are really obviously important, and I respect those. Okay?

I think it's really about the choice of what do you need. And I do appreciate that you've commented on you need that deep light into the space, which, again, belies the original presentation.

And I want to say I want to be convinced, but I hope you know what you're asking for when you get what you get here. Because the sun is going to be intense. And to show me now a diagram that says, oh, it's only 50 percent -- I think I understood the spandrel design when I saw it the first time, and it's, like I said, very attractive. But only 50 percent is really -- I'm not sold, but, you know, I just wanted you to hear my comments.

Commissioner Wright?

MEMBER WRIGHT: Well, I am not happy,
either, and I don't think you've been responsive
to the comments. I don't believe, frankly, that
you have no options for the plaza in terms of the
-- I understand the engineering and all of that.
But you have the possibility, if nothing else, if
you have no options to create shade, then it
defies logic that you would adhere to, you know,
this vast hardscape. I mean, no one in their
right mind is going to want to be out there. So,
if what you're trying to do is get people to
hustle into the building, this design
accomplishes that because nobody is going to want
to be there.

So, here's an alternative suggestion:
get rid of 30 percent of the hardscape and put in
grass panels. Because at least you won't be
creating a heat island that will completely repel
people.

I get it if you can't, if it can't
carry the weight of trees to provide shade.
Then, reduce the hardscape. What's the point in
having it if nobody wants to be out there? And
it will be cheaper and you'll save money.

It feels a little -- I have to say,
you know, I agree with; I think that people in
the military deserve the finest of the fine
because they don't have to do what they're doing.
And I'm almost always disappointed in the
submissions that come through here because we say
that, on the one hand, but we don't seem to do
it. We seem to make choices that result in poor-
quality design over and over and over again.

And I'm not talking to the Navy and
you specifically right now. I'm just thinking
about all of the installations that we've looked
at that look like, you know, big box stores, and
it's just disappointing. You might as well just
buy a building that comes out of a box and you
put the parts together.

Can we go back and look at the back of
house piece again? I give up on this.

(Laughter.)

I give up. But you'd better hope a
lot of people aren't coming in this way because
they sure as hell won't want to. And it could have been fixed with design, but it just looks like people don't want to. And so, I wave the white flag. I wish that this had stayed on the consent calendar because it's just made me mad.

(Laughter.)

And I just think that we owe people, especially people who are in service to this country, better than this.

And I'm finished ranting now.

ACTING CHAIR GALLAS: Mr. May and Mr. Dixon.

MEMBER MAY: So, I have to agree with pretty much everything that's been said so far. I mean, I had concerns about this design.

I do actually have a question. If we can go back to the plaza for a sec? So, explain to me again -- this needs to be plaza because of vehicular access needs?

MR. GERBICH: So, the plaza is related to the -- there's a facility underneath this.

MEMBER MAY: Yes.
MR. GERBICH: The emergency access is actually highlighted here. So, it's basically just saying that this area that is highlighted in red has to be clear for emergency vehicle access. That's what that was referring to.

MEMBER MAY: Okay. So, where is that red on the image that you just showed us?

MR. GERBICH: It's running right where the pedestrian is walking.

MEMBER MAY: Okay.

ACTING CHAIR GALLAS: And how wide is that, by the way? How wide is that?

MR. GERBICH: I don't know offhand. I might ask someone from the design team to --

ACTING CHAIR GALLAS: That's all right.

MR. SEELY: Yes, it's actually 20 wide.

MS. SCHUYLER: And it's, I think, one important factor when we talk about fire lanes is that it's unobstructed. It's got to be somewhat hard. Obviously, there are other solutions
there, but this made the most sense for this particular design. I think the key, though, is unobstructed.

MEMBER MAY: All right. So, let me ask a question.

You can sit down.

Let me ask --

MR. SEELY: I'm John Seely. I'm an architect with HKS.

MEMBER MAY: Okay. Well, and maybe you'll need to come back again, but I don't know.

So, what you're telling us, though, is that we need to have emergency access to drive fire trucks through here, a 20-foot-wide space, but it's not strong enough to hold up a tree? I find that hard to believe. I mean, I'm not a structural engineer, but I find it hard to believe that it's not possible, that we have to have these tiny, little trees here in this space, but we're going to drive fire trucks down the middle of that. It just does not make any sense to me.
And I agree with Commissioner Wright that, at the very least, some of this should be taken out and grass should be put in wherever it can be. And I'm not suggesting that that should be where the fire lane is. A 20-foot-wide, paved area is perfectly fine. What we have here is 50-feet wide and it's all hard and there's no shade. So, I also think shade structures of some sort would be important.

And I think all of this is in support of the statement that we first heard about making this a superior facility that attracts the best and the brightest. I mean, this is not -- you know, the building may be perfectly fine, but how you get to it is going to be an awful experience, and I don't think you want that.

So, I don't know what more to say. We've said it three times over now.

And I agree on the back side of the building; I give up on that, too. It is astounding to me that we could talk about the same thing three times over and it doesn't
change; it doesn't get any better. And it could
and it's not that hard.

MEMBER DIXON: Mr. Chairman?

ACTING CHAIR GALLAS: Mr. Dixon?

MEMBER DIXON: I just want
information. Are these trees going to grow more
maybe? These are small trees in your diagram.

MEMBER WRIGHT: No, they're saying
they can't take the weight.

MEMBER DIXON: They won't take the
weight? That's the answer, I guess. Oh, I see,
that's the answer.

MR. AUSTIN: I'm Calvin Austin. I'm
Design Manager for an Epic Washington, but I'm
also a structural engineer. So, I figured I
would jump in at this time.

Can I go to the --

ACTING CHAIR GALLAS: Well, you would
have to take the mic with you. Please take the
mic.

MR. AUSTIN: Not everything in the
landscape area has offices below. So, there are
areas where we could possibly get some trees.  
Some of this is -- there's a portion of this that  
lies below, but there's some portions that are  
slab on -- sorry -- ground underneath it. So, we  
could have some -- but we also have utilities  
that run through that area as well, too.  

One thing that's not noted on this is  
we have a lot of utilities running over the place  
in this area, and we're trying to add more. And  
that also restricts some of our tree placement.  
But there is portions that are not -- have  
offices below it, that we could possibly put some  
trees in those areas. But they're very small  
strips of slab on grade.  

So, I just wanted to say that as a  
structural engineer.  

ACTING CHAIR GALLAS: Commissioner  
Cash?  

MEMBER CASH: Did I hear Mr. Gerbich  
correctly in saying that part of the problem here  
with not having more trees was bioretention as  
well?
MR. GERBICH: So, they've indicated, not so much on the plaza, but in the landscape I know there are some issues that areas that are intended to retain water for bioretention purposes. And while they had initially proposed some landscaping in those locations, I think they had concerns with kind of the long-term sustainability of plantings in those areas.

MEMBER CASH: Well, I guess the first thing I'd say on that note is that, even if it's retention, not here, but the plaza seems like a very contributing factor for the need for bioretention. So, I think that when I heard that, I kind of had to do a double-take.

But I just want to kind of echo a lot of the comments I've here, too. I mean, the back side of the building and that staircase was what I thought was the most awful part of the whole thing last time.

(Laughter.)

And one of the things I love about being on the Commission is seeing how these plans
evolve after they come to us. We put our comments in and we see a new iteration of it. And I have to agree, especially these DoD projects, but this one in particular, we don't get any new design. We get double the pushback. And maybe if we're getting to the point where we have that much design problem and the team says that they just can't work with any of the suggestions, that maybe it's time to go back to the drawing board and come up with a design that actually addresses some of the concerns and not just dig in on this.

So, I'm really disappointed by the lack of progress on this. I mean, maybe the only saving grace is that .5 percent of the population will ever actually be on this campus to see it or have to walk up those stairs.

(Laughter.)

But I'd also like to say that, being now one of the D.C. people here on this panel, if the Department of General Services were to push back on NCPC or a federal agency the way that
we're getting pushed back with all of our recommendations, we'd have a congressional appropriations rider in a year telling us not to build the thing because it's a bad idea.

So, institutionally, I think it's just a little bit disappointing, the same way that we get parking minimums when we talk about the Pentagon, and everything else. And I just think that I was a big advocate for this when we came to Pershing Park, but sometimes you just might need to step back and start over because we have a design that I don't think has really changed at all, and the plaza might have actually gotten worse.

So, sorry to kind of be a "Debbie Downer". Maybe it's getting towards dinnertime, but I just had to put that on the record from an institutional standpoint.

ACTING CHAIR GALLAS: Any other comments?

Commissioner, excuse me. Yes, please.

COMMISSIONER AHMED: So, this is the
first time I've seen this one and I've reviewed it. I was not here when it first came in with this one. But I think, as one of the gentlemen mentioned, that we need to go back and just take a look at what we could do with the project itself.

So, for the Navy team, I think we just have to take a look at that. So, we'll look at it.

And I think the general comments for the DoD projects, obviously, working with the Commission, we'll keep working with the CFA and just make sure we are bringing the appropriate designs.

ACTING CHAIR GALLAS: Let me ask, Commissioners, I'm sensing the room a little bit. And we haven't had a motion yet. It seems to me that the options are we can take a vote and see where we are. We could defer, as your team goes back to look at this again. And I'm wondering if you would entertain -- maybe you want to consult with your team about what we want to do here.
But I'm concerned about getting a motion of approval on this.

COMMISSIONER AHMED: So, let me talk to the team and see what they want to do from the timelines.

ACTING CHAIR GALLAS: Do you want to take a short, brief recess and step aside, please, for a second?

Thank you. Thank you.

(Whereupon, the foregoing matter went off the record at 4:29 p.m. and went back on the record at 4:37 p.m.)

ACTING CHAIR GALLAS: Thank you, Commissioners.

Sajeel, you have the floor.

COMMISSIONER AHMED: So, thank you.

Thank you for a few minutes. Thank you for giving us some time.

I think what we would like to do is to defer it for a couple of months, whenever the next chance would be. So, the design team will have a chance to go back and take a look at the
two items which I'm watching as the issues that we need to work.

One is the plaza, the landscaping piece. Take a look at what other stuff could be done for that. So, I think the team is going to take a look at that.

And then, also, take a look at the back stairs, and those have been called "back of house," but, basically, to relook at that because there's not really an entry space. It's there in the back. So, I think the team just needs to go back and take a look at that.

So, I think if you could have those two items, then we'll come back in about a couple of months or whenever it's scheduled.

ACTING CHAIR GALLAS: So moved.

Is there a second?

MEMBER WHITE: Second.

ACTING CHAIR GALLAS: All in favor of deferring this item today please signify by saying aye.

(Chorus of ayes.)
Any opposed?

(No response.)

Thank you very much. Thank you for listening. Good luck to all of us. We look forward to it. Godspeed. Thank you.

The Commissioner hearing is adjourned.

Thank you.

(Whereupon, at 4:39 p.m., the hearing was adjourned.)
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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the foregoing transcript

In the matter of: Commission Meeting

Before: NCPC

Date: 06-06-19

Place: Washington, DC

was duly recorded and accurately transcribed under my direction; further, that said transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings.

__________________________
Court Reporter