

For Immediate Release  
September 11, 2023

Stephen Staudigl  
[stephen@ncpc.gov](mailto:stephen@ncpc.gov)

Julia Koster  
[julia@ncpc.gov](mailto:julia@ncpc.gov)

## **NCPC Approves Preliminary Constitution Gardens Rehabilitation Plans** *Commission Hears Beyond Granite Pilot Exhibition Update*

**Washington, DC**—At its [September 7, 2023 meeting](#) the National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC) approved preliminary site development plans submitted by the National Park Service, in partnership with the Trust for the National Mall, for the **second phase of the Constitution Gardens Rehabilitation**. Plans would reconstruct Constitution Gardens' lake into a sustainable, social, and ecological garden while respecting the original design's legacy. Constitution Gardens occupies 43 acres on the National Mall south of Constitution Avenue, NW.

Improvements include improving soil conditions, diversifying plants, increasing the lake's depth, providing biological and mechanical filtration, upgrading pedestrian paths, improving lighting, and creating a variety of flexible useable spaces. Phase 1 of the Constitution Gardens rehabilitation, completed in 2018, included the Lockkeeper's House relocation and plaza construction at the corner of Constitution Avenue and 17th Street, NW. Constitution Gardens was constructed in 1976 as part of the nation's Bicentennial celebration.

Commissioners strongly supported the plans and the partnership to implement them. They were excited about the possibility of adding children's play components. They had a few design recommendations, including creating a centralized accessible route and access to the terraces, designating consolidated fishing areas, and incorporating native pollinator plantings such as common milkweed.

The Commission approved final site development plans submitted by the National Park Service for the repair and rehabilitation of approximately 6,800 linear feet of **seawall along portions of the Tidal Basin and West Potomac Park**. Over time, the seawalls have significantly settled, leading to overtopping and poor drainage during certain times. The National Park Service only has funding for rehabilitation and repair and is therefore taking a phased approach. The first part will be stabilizing sections of the wall and restoring the historic functional height. This will allow the Park Service time to consider additional measures.

Commissioners supported the project goals, noting that while this is a short-term solution it should improve public accessibility and convenience. However, flooding along the seawall will persist and worsen due, in part, to increased rainstorms. They noted that long-term solutions to address rising sea levels could have more significant impacts on the landscape and nearby memorials and will need to consider historic preservation, visitor experience, sustainability, and program needs and be well-coordinated among stakeholders.

Commissioners approved revised final site development plans submitted by the National Park Service, in collaboration with the National Desert Storm War Memorial Association, for the **National Desert Shield and Desert Storm Memorial**. The memorial, to be located at the southwest corner of the 23rd Street and Constitution Avenue, NW intersection, will honor those who served on active duty as members of the Armed Forces in support of Operation Desert Storm and Operation Desert Shield.

—MORE—

Four updates were proposed for the design previously approved by the Commission. These include pedestrian safety improvements at the corner of 23rd Street and Constitution Avenue; revised stormwater management; an updated planting palette; and the addition of a flagpole. Commissioners approved the revised plans, finding that they will not significantly alter the previously approved memorial design. They noted that the refined planting palette uses pollinator-friendly species, including milkweed, in response to their previous comments.

NCPC reviewed proposed **Text Amendments to Subtitles C, I, X, Y, and Z for Rules of Practice and Procedure** submitted by the Zoning Commission of the District of Columbia. The text amendments include corrections to citations along with other changes. NCPC reviews zoning and map amendments as referrals from the District of Columbia Zoning Commission. NCPC does not review changes to Subtitles X, Y and Z and Commissioners found that the Text Amendments to Subtitles C and I are not inconsistent with the *Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital's* Federal Elements and would not adversely impact any identified federal interest.

Before adjourning, agency staff discussed *Beyond Granite*, a joint initiative between NCPC, the Trust for the National Mall, and the National Park Service. *Planning Together*, the pilot exhibition, consists of six artworks that address the question “What stories remain untold on the National Mall?” Funded by a grant from the Mellon Foundation, the pilot is using a curated exhibition to test the potential of using temporary artworks on the National Mall as a means to expand storytelling. The pilot exhibition was curated by Monument Lab.

*Beyond Granite* will help NCPC examine potential policy and practice updates while functioning as a test for establishing *Beyond Granite* as a long-term program. An evaluation process of the pilot will result in a Key Findings Report with lessons learned and a better understanding of the pilot recommendations for future program iterations. *Beyond Granite: Pulling Together* is on display on the National Mall from August 18 – September 18, 2023.

[Commission actions and related materials are available online.](#)

*The Commission approved three items on the Consent Calendar (no presentations were made). Unless otherwise noted, all projects are in Washington, DC.*

1. Preliminary and final site development plans for the Lincoln Memorial Accessible Ramp, 2 Lincoln Memorial Circle, NW. (7866)
2. Preliminary site and building plans for the National Institutes of Health Multi-Level Parking Garage 12, 9000 Rockville Pike Bethesda, Maryland. (8481)
3. The final master plan for the James J. Rowley Training Center, 9200 Powder Mill Road Laurel, Maryland. (MP63)

*The Executive Director approved eight items under authority delegated by the Commission. Unless otherwise noted, all projects are in Washington, DC.*

1. Preliminary and final site and building plans for the National Environmental Museum and Education Center Signage, 1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW. (8476)
2. Preliminary and final building plans for the Armed Forces Retirement Home Mechanical Yard Expansion, 3700 North Capitol Street, NW. (8478)
3. Comments to the Council of the District of Columbia for the Land Dedication for Street Purposes at Square 621, Lot 251 - S.O. 23-04108, 100 L Street, NW. (8484)
4. Preliminary site and building plans for the Alice Deal Middle School Classroom Addition, 3815 Fort Drive, NW. (8485)

—MORE—

5. Preliminary and final building plans for the One White Flint North Antenna Modifications, 11555 Rockville Pike, Rockville, Maryland. (8477)
6. Final site and building plans for the Beltsville Agricultural Research Center Building 002 Modernization, 10300 Baltimore Avenue, Beltsville, Maryland. (8277)
7. Preliminary and final building plans for the Naval Support Activity - Bethesda Building 27 and 61 Antennas, 102 Wood Road, Bethesda, Maryland. (8480)
8. A report to the Zoning Commission of the District of Columbia for the Map Amendment from NC16 to NC-17 at Square 890, Lot 69, 721 H Street, NE. (ZC 23-05)

*The National Capital Planning Commission is the federal government's central planning agency in Washington, DC and surrounding counties of Maryland and Virginia. The Commission provides overall guidance for federal land and buildings in the region. It also reviews the design of federal projects and memorials, oversees long-range planning for future development, and monitors capital investment by federal agencies.*