

## The National Mall Plan (NMP) – Section 106 Meeting Notes

Monday May 18, 2009

Handouts included excerpts from Cultural Landscape documents available online:

- DC War Memorial Cultural Landscape Assessment
- Thomas Jefferson Memorial – Cultural landscape Inventory
- East and West Potomac Park Historic District list of resources

NPS has provided response at the end of the discussion.

**Attendees:** Cynthia Field – Latrobe Society of Architectural Historians; Richard Westbrook – Guild of Professional Tour Guides / Committee of 100; Russell Preble - Guild of Professional Tour Guides; Nell Ziehl – National Trust for Historic Preservation (NTHP); Judy Feldman – National Coalition to Save Our Mall; Kent Cooper - National Coalition to Save Our Mall; Nancy Witherell – National Capital Planning Commission; Andrew Lewis – DC SHPO; Billie Kaiimaya – AIA; Edwin Fountain – DC Preservation League; Pete McCall – Guild of Professional Tour Guides; Elizabeth Miller – NCPC; Ray Saikus – Equal Honor for All (via conference call)

**NPS:** Jennifer Talken- Spaulding – Cultural Resource Mgr; Perry Wheelock – Chief of Resource Mgt.; Susan Spain – Project Exec – National Mall Plan; Gary Scott – NCR Historian

### Section 106 Discussion

#### LOCKKEEPER’S HOUSE

**Perry:** When we reviewed Constitution Gardens, we said we would get back to the Lockkeepers House (LKH). The NPS has received funding for a Lockkeepers House Historic Structures Report. Virginia Avenue view to the Washington Monument would remain open under levee construction or relocation of the Lockkeepers House.

Plans and photos of the house were shown; including an 1861 and 1862 maps. The mounting block was also shown.

**Cynthia:** It was moved slightly because it was in the street. Relationship between the house and the street/canal and closeness to the street is meaningful. That relationship does not improve by moving the house

**Andrew:** DCSHPO is in favor of the move to protect the building; its orientation would remain the same and it is a small relocation.

**Cynthia:** Then the historic relationship may make this OK.

**Gary:** The older aesthetic was closer to the street.

The plans showed the building was to be located 35’ from B Street and 48’ from 17<sup>th</sup>. B Street was widened into Constitution Avenue.

**Ray:** I have questions about the Levee.

**Perry:** The levee will be located south of the Lockkeepers House and will need to have an underground facility for storing the post and panels associated with the closure structure. The top of the storage facility could serve as a plaza between the LKH and the levee. The LKH HSR

also serves as a stabilization plan required under the levee Programmatic Agreement. Rehabilitation is needed and pointing needs to be done to the outside.

Gary: The levee is no longer relevant (does not affect the LKH).

Pete: How much will it cost in time and dollars?

Andrew: This is a stabilization plan

Nell: It is difficult to determine effects

Richard: Don't bother to move it; fix it; and keep it as a closed building.

Jennifer: The building has had many different uses by NPS – while it is not being used now it has been a restroom; and a USPP holding area. There is a severe crack in one corner; there appears to be nothing original inside – maybe some beams. The engineering team that moved the Cape Hatteras Lighthouse has studied the feasibility of relocating the house. Interpretation in the area is about the water based economy.

Susan: The proposal in the NMP is to move and adaptively reuse the LKH for visitor services such as information/education – but not as restrooms. Moving improves circulation and sense of entry and welcome. All locations need to remain flexible.

Perry: funding to study the relocation of the LKH came from DC- DOT; who would like us to move it.

Cynthia: When it comes to historic buildings all opinions are not equal. The identity of the historic object is supreme.

Edwin: There will be further section 106? Yes. Moving the LKH is OK as part of intersection improvements as long as it keeps same orientation and relationships and is not encroached on by Constitution Gardens.

Judy: We are looking at the details without the data; where is the science? What determines public use? The cross axis is important. Constitution Avenue may be narrower in the future; it is possible we may have a 50 cent trolley all over. We need to look to a future without the car.

Cynthia: Narrow the streets.

Perry: Street functions can change; lanes can be converted to bicycle use or transit. There are at least two themes for use of the building – one includes adaptive reuse for visitor services is proposed in the National Mall Plan.

Ray: What is the square footage of the building? (18x30) We should use water and bring back canals as security; beauty and safety net with the building to compliment it. At Lincoln there can be a moat and cascade into the pool.

There was general discussion about flooding and drainage issues. The purpose of the the levee is protection from river flooding.

Perry: NCPC has been leading the study to address urban drainage flooding.

Nancy: This a joint effort of the part of federal government and the city,

Ray: You need to address infrastructure first.

Nell: When will the HSR be completed?

Perry: HSR has been funded and will be undertaken in September 2009. The results will be completed within a year.

#### ASH WOODS AREA

Perry and Jennifer: A DC War Memorial Cultural Landscape Inventory is being prepared. It will address the memorial area that extends about 50' into the woods on the east and west.

Kent: You need to reconsider this and include Ash Woods. I hope you reconsider something that NPS has been stonewalling about since 2004 – the USPP Stables. In the heart of the commemorative area there is a utilitarian structure. The NMP approach is face saving. This is the location for a major memorial or interpretive site – possibly a National War Museum. Ash Woods should be treated as a cultural landscape.

Perry: You are recommending that you want a Cultural Landscape Report at the least?

Judy: Those buildings should go. This is a destination for trucks. This is a place where you can appreciate the riverfront. This should be an open connection. Move the USPP facilities to preserve open access.

Kent: If you do that the interpretative need will disappear. The senate hearing...

Judy: Senator Craig Thomas. We gave evidence at the hearing. They dropped it – John Parsons said the USPP needed the stables and Sen. Thomas said he liked to ride. This was not science – and there is a new administration.

Gary: The Horse Guard Museum in London is beautiful.

Richard: (See his notes). This is the ideal site for a full service visitor facility; it is on the way to MLK and the need will be huge. It needs to be structure of suitable size.

Nancy: About the character of Ash Woods?

Perry: The round restrooms are not historic – the wooded character is; but there has been infill planting (shrubs).

Cynthia: Shade is for people.

Perry: The shrub layer is not historic.

Jennifer: The immediate surroundings to the DC War Memorial is wooded land with filtered views through the woods. There are N- S views and views (on the north edge) to the Washington Monument.

Ray: I'm following on google map and there are mistakes on the map.

Richard: There are big sycamores in line with the sewage outfall (along Independence Avenue).

Perry: Yes, these are some of the oldest trees.

Cynthia: The DC War Memorial model had benches.

There was a small discussion about permanent seating. Temporary seating is supplied for concerts.

Judy: Recreation is not in keeping with McMillan.

Perry: The space was defined by the WWII tempos (temporary military structures). Are you saying the that active recreation could be more aesthetic?

Kent: Put that into a Master Plan for Ash Woods.

Judy: It is unfinished and incompatible. The area could be transformed. Only McMillan and SOM had design concepts for this area. This is undersigned.

Elizabeth: There is more need for recreation, but recreation and aesthetics are not mutually exclusive.

Jennifer: There was a lot of use in this area during the inauguration.

Susan: The JFK hockey fields see a great deal of use and are permitted by the city for recreation. Open spaces are flexible. The NMP is seeking to meet the needs of all users, from local recreational users to visitors to memorials in a flexible way.

#### NEW DISCUSSION - TIDAL BASIN AREA

Susan presented the ideas from the preliminary preferred alternative which included widening the walks, more choice in boating; separation of circulation types, increased visibility and emphasis on views.

Richard: The walks around the Tidal Basin are a serious problem, a hazard to pedestrians.

Gary: At one time the boats were swan boats (like Boston Common).

Andrew asked about the condition of the Tidal Basin seawalls.

Richard: It is not the whole perimeter.

Perry: Contributing components are the seawall and the memorial trees.

Judy: Think ahead; reduce the way people drive. It is a problem that there is no left turn to get to EPP from Maine Avenue. Develop a parking structure; go right into the landfill and develop diagonal parking; develop low cost transit. This presents opportunities to rethink tour buses so they get on a low cost transit. Provide rental bikes.

Perry asked NCPC for some input at this point.

Elizabeth: In the long term the Framework Plan proposed that the bridges would be consolidated and that more room would be provided south of the Jefferson Memorial. A widened land bridge south of Inlet Bridge could improve access to EPP – and this could happen more quickly. Hop on and off low cost transit is a goal for all of us. There is a question about Independence and the Maine Avenue corridor and opportunities to improved circulation.

Cynthia: The goal of the area should be to restore the bucolic character. Arrange the roads and bridges within the character which is informal.

Susan: The plan goals in this area concur; with vehicular traffic being accommodated within a park setting.

Perry: The Washington Monument Cultural Landscape Inventory (now underway), will get the DCSHPO to identify what is contributing and what is non- contributing on the the monument grounds south of Independence Avenue.

Nancy asked when it would be done and noted the schedule (this summer) will make it compatible with the review of the NMP in the fall.

Richard: Recognizing traffic would increase – in the 1960s there were proposals to tunnel under the area.

Perry: Components are the walks, and seawalls. There is concern about the character of the seawalls. On the riverfront the NMP proposes a bioengineered solution rather than rebuilding the seawall.

Gary: Col Peter Hains pumped sludge behind the walls; this is a very huge structure. Why the need for a riparian solution?

Ray: What is the volume of water?

Andrew: We might recommend restoration.

There was a general discussion about the seawalls and difference in construction and character between areas. With the riverfront the bioengineered solution is proposed south of Memorial bridge because the walls are under water and have been damaged.

Ray: What about integrity? Is the US Army Corps of Engineers involved? If this is susceptible to erosion you could lose control.

Elizabeth: I have kayaked the area for a water orientation. The conditions are deplorable. A natural system can be attractive.

Judy: Where is the data? Reroute the landfill. The EIS – this is the opportunity for all kinds of science – to determine potential effects. This is too narrow.

Ray: Too narrow a vision and not prepared for the future. This is a treasure and need to look to future.

Susan pointed out that the newsletters and section 106 were to provide an early opportunity for input that could be part of the analysis.

Nell: What is the character of the Tidal Basin seawalls? The pathway is part of the design and you are expanding it to provide room for trees?

Perry: The seawall is blocky, rubble dry laid wall. The seawall in front of the Thomas Jefferson Memorial has a veneer face. There are three types of seawalls – the Tidal Basin; the Potomac Riverfront; and the EPP park walls. I'd encourage you to look at the NCPC Framework Plan to see what a bio-engineered solution could look like. Repairs are needed in all areas – in fact nearly half the deferred maintenance for the National Mall and Memorial Parks is for seawalls.

Gary: The Tidal Basin is a flushing mechanism for the Washington Channel. It probably needs to be mucked out.

Perry pointed out the forthcoming report on Jefferson seawall and north plaza offers an opportunity to explore how much silt has built up.

Richard: Ease the pedestrian circulation. Sasaki looked at this. Washington Waterfront Footbridges were proposed and are in the Legacy and Framework Plans. This could happen quickly.

There was a general discussion about circulation in the area and pinchpoints (pedestrian, bike and vehicular). Pedestrian access on bridges and jaywalking were discussed.

Nancy: Could you talk more about types of user groups and types of solutions?

Susan: The NMP recognizes there are opportunities to connect with the waterfront, Maryland Avenue and the need to revise circulation – particularly in the intersection of Maine, Raoul

Wallenberg and I 395. The plan calls for revisions and addressing the pinch points without going into design. We want to know about how you feel about proposed solutions and their effect on historic resources. Kutz bridge for example – you could add another bridge to the south; you could move all the traffic lanes to one side and gain about three more feet in walkway; or you could move the south wall to allow for a much wider area (bike and pedestrian lanes) while keeping the historic character. We are asking you to comment on this type of proposal.

Judy: Don't understand. How is this a EIS?

Nancy: This is iterative – now is the early cut on organizing principles, resource protection and character.

Susan: The ideas expressed in newsletter 4 is in advance of an EIS. The newsletter does not include analysis. These discussions present an opportunity for you to provide information to be used in analysis. The 106 process will continue as the planning is completed and a 106 memo of agreement prepared.

Andrew: A programmatic agreement will be prepared.

Judy: The process and the Jefferson EA – this concerns me that projects are going forward. We get a 30 day response time without knowing the broader historic preservation and long- term thinking.

Perry: The projects that are moving forward are common to all.

The meeting adjourned at 4pm. The next meeting will be held at the same location on Wednesday May 27 from 9am to noon.