



Commission Action

June 7, 2018

PROJECT South Mall Campus Master Plan National Mall between 7 th Street, Jefferson Drive, 12 th Street, and Independence Avenue, SW Washington, DC	NCPC FILE NUMBER 7630
SUBMITTED BY Smithsonian Institution	NCPC MAP FILE NUMBER 1.41(05.00)44755
REVIEW AUTHORITY Advisory per 40 U.S.C. § 8722(a) and (b)(1)	APPLICANT'S REQUEST Approval of final master plan
	ACTION TAKEN Approved final master plan with comments

The Commission:

Approves the final South Mall Campus Master Plan as a guide for the development of the campus over the next 20 to 30 years.

Supports the goals of the South Mall Campus Master Plan, which address the Smithsonian's need to meet its long-term space requirements and address physical and operational deficiencies across the campus that impact visitor use and experience as well as the Smithsonian's ability to effectively and safely implement its programs.

Finds the master plan seeks to increase campus functionality, improve the visitor experience, and enhance connectivity both within the site and to the surrounding city and neighborhoods, while balancing planning, urban design and historic preservation goals.

Notes the Master Plan identifies elements and general locations of projects to be implemented over time; and further, that individual projects contained within the Master Plan, including new pavilions and gardens, will be subject to additional Commission review and approval at the time when detailed designs are developed.

Notes that at the April 5, 2018 meeting, the Commission supported SI's preferred Alternative F as the basis for the master plan and the preferred alternative to be identified in the Final Environmental Impact Statement.

Notes that pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act, the Final Environmental Impact Statement was released on April 20, 2018 and a Record of Decision (ROD), based upon the preferred alternative, was prepared.

Adopts the Record of Decision (ROD) for the South Mall Campus Master Plan Final Environmental Impact Statement.

Notes a Programmatic Agreement (PA) was prepared pursuant to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act that describes the process and steps necessary for further consultation regarding the individual projects implemented as part of the master plan. The Smithsonian Institution will consult with the National Capital Planning Commission, District of Columbia State Historic Preservation Officer, National Park Service, and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, as well as other consulting parties, as the designs of individual projects are developed in order to avoid, minimize, and mitigate adverse effects to historic properties.

Finds that throughout the development of the master plan, many public comments were received, with a focus on retention of the campus gardens and preservation and protection of the historic buildings.

Finds that in response to those comments, the Smithsonian altered the initial master plan design to remove the large dip in front of the Castle, retain a garden setting in lieu of an expansive open lawn, include only minimal changes to the Hirshhorn site walls, eliminate the proposed realignment of Jefferson Drive, and reduce the proposed sub-basement excavation below the Castle.

Notes the US Commission of Fine Arts reviewed and approved the master plan at its April 19, 2018 meeting.

Reiterates the findings that were the basis for the Commission's support of the draft master plan:

- The Master Plan must consider the context of a changing city, particularly the SW Ecodistrict and Southwest Waterfront, which will change the character of Independence Avenue and the southern approach to the campus.
- The South Mall campus provides an important physical and cultural link between the Smithsonian Institution, the National Mall and Southwest Washington, DC; and further, this connection will be strengthened with the implementation of the master plan and continued coordination and collaboration among all stakeholders.
- The Castle is the physical and symbolic center of the Smithsonian Institution as well as the South Mall Campus, and therefore is the more appropriate location for a centralized visitor center.
- The relocation of a number of support facilities for the visitor center to an adjacent below-grade space will allow for the restoration of the Castle, including the Great Hall, to its period of significance while improving the visitor experience.
- The Smithsonian Institution has a need for large-scale event and exhibition space that does not exist elsewhere on the campus, and further, the Arts and Industries Building can provide that space in a way that is consistent with its historic use and character.

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- Adding a visitor center and related uses into AIB would require adding new walls, rooms and other elements that would be inconsistent with the goals of the building restoration.
 - The relocation of the pavilions will help improve the functionality of the below-grade Quadrangle Building spaces, and notes the new facilities and improved spaces will help provide additional programming, events and educational opportunities for residents and visitors.
 - The relocation of the pavilions opens up the Haupt Gardens, the Smithsonian Castle, and the National Mall to Independence Avenue and the rapidly evolving southwest neighborhood.
 - The relocated pavilions and addition of large-scale ramps to a lower level could alter the setting of the Castle and the Arts and Industries Building and may have undesirable effects on these two National Historic Landmarks.
 - The Haupt Garden provides a view to and setting for the Castle as seen from the south; and further, the intimate character and scale of the existing garden is a beloved component of the South Mall campus, and is an important counterpoint to the scale and openness of the National Mall.

Requires that at the time of planning and design of the individual projects implemented under the master plan, the Smithsonian shall:

- Evaluate the size and scale of any proposed ramps or stairs to help minimize their impact on the setting of the Castle while balancing circulation and access needs. SI will further engage the relevant review agencies and consulting parties through the Section 106 process.
- Retain the parterre, and maintain a high-quality landscape for the Haupt Garden, along with its intimate character, when the exact design and layout of the remainder of the garden is determined. The design of the future garden should balance the desire to maintain a space of intimate character and scale, commensurate with its importance and prominence, with the need to improve the Quadrangle Building, and desire for greater access and visibility across the campus.
- Consider opportunities to reuse existing garden elements, where appropriate, to provide a link between the history of the garden and its future iterations.
- Evaluate opportunities to save, store and replant trees and other plantings after construction has been completed.
- Ensure the gardens will continue to accommodate a variety of native plants as well as those that will help support pollinator health.

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- Ensure the garden design will prevent net loss of tree canopy in accordance with the policies set forth in the *Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital*.
 - Ensure future project submissions for the sculpture garden describe the proposed program needs, the existing and proposed functionality of the space, and how the project might affect the garden's original design intent.

Notes the Smithsonian has acknowledged they will use the Commission's recommendations to inform the planning and design of the individual projects at the time of their development.

Notes that any changes to the master plan in the future will require review and approval by the Commission.

Notes the Smithsonian must coordinate with the National Park Service regarding any actions involving National Park Service land, including obtaining any necessary permits.

Notes that the Smithsonian must obtain from the District of Columbia all necessary permits for the temporary occupancy of, and permanent alterations to, public space under the jurisdiction of the District of Columbia.

Julia A. Koster
Secretary to the National Capital Planning Commission

