

MEETING NOTES

SI NASM National Mall Building Restaurant Addition Replacement (RAR)

SI Project # 1806103

ABA Project # 02003.01

Topic: **Consulting Parties Meeting #1**
Meeting Date: 9/29/2020
Location: Zoom Webinar
Panelists: Carly Bond, Smithsonian Institution (SI)
Rick Flansburg, SI
Chris Browne, SI
Sharon Park, SI
Mike Henry, SI
Mary Ellen Slattery, Smithsonian Enterprises (SE)
John Gentry, EHT Traceries (EHT)
Philip Chen, Ann Beha Architects (ABA)

Attendees:

Deborah Palazzo, SE	Elizabeth Merritt, Saving Places
Stephanie Free, NCPC	Ann Trowbridge, SI
Francisco Torres, SI	Kelsey Bridges, DC SHPO
Charles Obi, SI	Michael Carrancho, SI
Andrew Lewis, DC SHPO	Johnny Taggart, SI
Hana Kim, SI	Susan Wertheim, NGA
Kristen Starheim, ABA	Hillary Lord, NGA
Justin McClenahan, SI	Frederick Lindstrom, CFA
Jane Passman, SI	Kevin Storm, DC SHPO
Judy Scott Feldman, National Mall Coalition	Jackie Mossman, ABA
Melinda Whicher, SI	William Hellmuth, HOK
Matthew Flis, NCPC	Daniel Fox, CFA
Suzette Goldstein, HOK	Kristi Tunstall Williams, GSA
Elizabeth Waytkus, DOCOMOMO	Thomas Luebke, CFA
Lee Webb, NCPC	Mina Wright, GSA
Jim Evans, SI	de Teel Patterson Tiller
Emilie Twilling, AOC	Sarah Batcheler, CFA
Beatrice Mowry, SI	Yue Li, NPS
Christopher Wilson, ACHP	Lauren McCunney, SI
Jeff Winstel, WMATA	Ed Rice, ABA
Lindsey Vanderday, SI	Sara Trigo, SI

1. KEY POINTS/ACTIONS

- 1.1. Smithsonian Institution (SI) will distribute today's presentation, which will be available at <https://airandspace.si.edu/restaurant-project>. Written comments on today's presentation will be accepted through October 29, 2020 and can be emailed to BondC@si.edu.
- 1.2. Although the NASM is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion G, the Restaurant Addition does not meet this criterion.
- 1.3. The Determination of Eligibility (DOE) is being updated by SI and will be completed by the end of 2020. Once complete, it will be posted and available for review.
- 1.4. A second Consulting Parties meeting is anticipated as part of the Section 106 process and will be held in December 2020. A presentation to the Commission of Fine Arts (CFA) will be held in February 2021, and a National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC) hearing will be held in March 2021.
- 1.5. Concept Design will be complete in April 2021.

2. OVERVIEW OF THE SECTION 106 PROCESS

- 2.1. Carly Bond introduced the Section 106 process and its relationship to the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum Restaurant Addition Replacement project.
- 2.2. The Restaurant Addition Replacement project is currently in Step 1, which is the initiation of the Section 106 process. This meeting will move to Step 2 in the process.
- 2.3. As part of the Section 106 initiation, consulting parties have been identified and will be involved in a series of meetings which will identify, assess and resolve adverse effects to historic properties within the Area of Potential Effects for this project.
- 2.4. Located on the National Mall, the Area of Potential Effects for this project will include the National Mall Historic District as well as the surrounding buildings.
 - NR = National Register of Historic Places
 - NHL = National Historic Landmark

3. PROJECT GOALS

- 3.1. Chris Browne reviewed the timeline of the National Air and Space Museum (NASM), and the role of the restaurant within this timeline.
- 3.2. The heavy visitation at NASM has taken a toll on the 1976 building and resulted in the current Major Revitalization project for the main museum.
- 3.3. Chris Browne noted that food and beverage has, and continues to be, an integral part of the visitor experience at NASM and throughout the Smithsonian museums.
- 3.4. The current Restaurant Addition was not a part of the original Museum. Constructed from 1987 to 1988, the addition was implemented to remove food service from the main museum, expand and enlarge food service facilities and protect the museum collections.
- 3.5. The Restaurant Addition is currently a key revenue generator for the Smithsonian, operating most recently as a McDonald's until the lease expired. A grab and go has been temporarily installed in the space but does not meet the level of service required for the museum visitors.
- 3.6. Numerous studies have been conducted over the years to evaluate how to improve the operation and performance of the restaurant addition, in order to bring the building up to current code, security requirements and to accommodate the type and scale of food service required for the

museum. These studies confirmed that the current Restaurant Addition and its systems do not meet the museum's goals for function and sustainability.

- 3.7. Timing for the restaurant replacement would ideally align with the on-going Major Revitalization, with work for the restaurant beginning when the work on the eastern half of the building begins (Phase 2).
- 3.8. The relocation of the Observatory to a more permanent location is also being included as part of these studies.

4. EVALUATION OF HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE

- 4.1. Sharon Park reviewed the historic of the Restaurant Addition, which was designed by Gyo Obata for HOK and completed in 1988. The design was presented and reviewed by the Commission of Fine Arts (CFA), and conceived as a "pavilion in a garden."
- 4.2. Sharon reviewed the initial configuration of the east terrace, from its initial configuration as a large plaza with plantings in the early to mid-1970s, and the modifications that occurred with the construction of the Restaurant Addition in 1988. It was noted that the east terrace, and subsequent addition are constructed on the roof of the basement level.
- 4.3. Sharon noted that the east terrace was not included as part of the 2018 Major Revitalization Final Site Design submission.
- 4.4. NASM is part of the National Mall Historic District, is eligible for individual listing on the National Register of Historic Places and has been designated as a contributing resource, with a period of significance of 1972-1976.
- 4.5. The Restaurant Addition is considered a compatible addition to the main museum, but from further study, does not appear to rise to the significance of the main museum. The nomination form for NASM does not include the addition.
- 4.6. SI will be updating the Determination of Eligibility (DOE) as part of the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) for the main museum. This effort was previously paused by request of the State Preservation Office to study the effect of the cladding replacement on the main museum. It is anticipated that the DOE will be complete by the end of 2020.
- 4.7. Other 1980s buildings on the Mall provide architectural context for the Restaurant Addition. An investigation of the Smithsonian Quadrangle's (1983-1987) eligibility for inclusion on the National Register determined that the collection of buildings was not eligible due to their age. There is little scholarly research on other 1980s architecture.
- 4.8. Sharon reviewed a summary of Gyo Obata's work, including his notable commissions. The restaurant addition expresses design similarities with other designs during the 1980s period, including the space frame, glass and stepped form.
- 4.9. The team has undertaken research to analyze the review of the restaurant addition at the time of opening.
- 4.10. SI noted that it is not the responsibility of this project to create post modern context on the National Mall.
- 4.11. Carly Bond clarified that the Restaurant Addition does not meet Criterion G, for properties that have achieved significance within the last 50 years, although the main museum does meet this criterion.

5. BUILDING DEFICIENCIES

- 5.1. Mike Henry noted that Smithsonian Facilities has undertaken a number of in-house studies over the years, which have focused on strategies to retrofit or enhance the existing structure to bring the building up to current codes, security and energy performance requirements.
- 5.2. The deficiencies identified for the building can be categorized into three areas – site, envelope and structure, and are inherently tied to the character defining features of the building.
 - The cruciform shape of the building results in underutilized areas between the addition and the museum and provides limited opportunities for gathering space or public use of the east terrace.
 - The building's stepped, glazed form and internal gutter system are prone to leakage, causing damage to the building interior and at times, standing water in the dining area.
 - SI Facilities undertook a project to reseal the glazing as a stopgap measure to extend the lifespan of the existing envelope until a more permanent solution could be developed and implemented.
 - The space frame structure is not able to meet loading requirements for blast. Foundations are unable to support the added weight of a blast-compliant structure and would likely require reinforcing.
 - The fully glazed form results in substantial heat gain, resulting in uncomfortable interior environments for visitors, particularly periods of high occupancy. This problem is further exacerbated at the open mezzanine, rendering this seating area unusable for summer months when the seating is most needed to accommodate a peak in visitors to the museum.
 - The addition most recently served as a McDonald's and was later transitioned to a grab-and-go type food service. This is not the best type of food service for visitors to the museum and is inadequate to meet the museum's long-term needs.
 - The routing of kitchen exhaust and ventilation issues result in odor migration and grease build up at the terrace level, as well as migration into the museum, risking damage to the museum collections.
- 5.3. The result of these studies demonstrated that substantial alteration to the restaurant's character defining features would be required in order to meet the museum's purpose and need.
- 5.4. Full envelope replacement with larger mullions, reinforced space frame and connections and the introduction of a solid roof would result in a full reconstruction of the existing restaurant. The correction of the grease and ventilation issues, which are functional requirements of a restaurant, would also require visible mechanical equipment to be placed on the roof, which is not compatible with the stepped form and glazed skylights.
- 5.5. The oversized systems required to accommodate a fully glazed envelope would result in unsustainable energy costs and would not meet Smithsonian sustainability goals.
- 5.6. It is based on the findings of these studies that SI has elected to pursue replacement of the restaurant addition with a new compatible addition that will be able to meet the purpose and need of the museum.

6. SITE & CONTEXT

- 6.1. Philip Chen reviewed the key characteristics of the site and context for the restaurant addition.
- 6.2. It was noted that the Observatory, constructed in 2009, is currently situated in a temporary location. A more permanent location for the popular Observatory will be evaluated as part of these studies.
- 6.3. The scale of the addition is deferential to the main museum, and views to the east have been impacted by the 2004 National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI), across 4th street.

7. DESIGN PRINCIPLES

- 7.1. The goal of the replacement is to provide a high-performing restaurant that will meet the Museum's purpose and need.
- 7.2. The design will consider its setting and explore strategies to improve the visitor, and public experience. In addition, it will expand access and enhance the mission of the NASM.
- 7.3. The program of the replacement will be similar to the existing restaurant and will be optimized to accommodate a high level of visitorship, with two distinct dining experiences split between the terrace and an upper level.
- 7.4. Philip shared initial studies which have examined access to views from the restaurant, as well as the impact on the public space, shape of the replacement and its impacts on the terrace.
- 7.5. Its replacement will be similar in size and scale but will address the deficiencies and meet the needs of a modern restaurant facility.

8. Q&A

- 8.1. *Lee Webb - Has the Smithsonian team been able to discover if any of Obata's work has been recognized or listed at the local level?*
 - John Gentry responded that EHT has found two HOK projects that are currently listed on the National Register of Historic Buildings – the American Zinc Company building in St. Louis, which means Criteria C and has a period of significance of 1967 and the Plaza Square Apartments Historic District, which is eligible under Criteria A and C with a period of significance of 1959-1961. EHT's research has not yielded any local designations for HOK projects to-date, but can continue to research this moving forward.
- 8.2. *Daniel Fox - Has the firm HOK been contacted to participate as a consulting party?*
 - Carly Bond confirmed that HOK has been contacted regarding the project and that members of the firm are present for this meeting.
- 8.3. *Andrew Lewis - I've heard/read some conflicting statements. I realize the NR nomination is somewhat vague and more research would be beneficial, but does the SI consider the restaurant addition a contributing element of the National Mall HD or not?*
 - Carly Bond confirmed that SI does consider the Restaurant Addition as contributing to the National Mall Historic District under Criteria A.
- 8.4. *Lee Webb - Just for clarification, has the glazing or the envelop of the restaurant building been altered since construction was completed in 1988?*
 - Mike Henry confirmed that the glazing has been altered and/or replaced since the completion of the addition. The skylight glazing was replaced in the early 2000s, following the replacement of the glazing in the main Museum. SI's Office of Protective Services also

completed a project to apply film to the curtain wall glazing throughout to mitigate blast concerns and improve safety.

8.5. *Daniel Fox - The recent renovation of the Javitz Center in New York, a similar crystal palace-type building from the same era by I. M. Pei and Partners, could serve as a model for improving the energy performance of this building while retaining the original form and vision of Obata. Has a similar high-performance curtain wall and skylight system been explored? If not, why? It seems we currently lack the ability to judge the significance of this building given the dearth of research on architecture from this era. Why not renovate the building to meet modern standards now, allowing for additional research and the passage of time so we can better understand this building's significance?*

- Mike Henry noted that SI did undertake a study on how to renovate the building, which indicated that renovation measures required would be so substantial that it would dramatically alter the character defining features and are integral to the buildings shape, interior configuration and enclosure. The studies indicated that it would be more cost effective to replace the building compared with retrofitting.
- Philip Chen added that while some of the issues related to the envelope could be renovated, they would require complete replacement and effectively rebuilding the restaurant in place. Resolving the systems issues present a significant operational and maintenance challenge and in order to comply with modern codes and best practices, would require grease exhaust and equipment to be placed on the roof.
- Sharon Park noted that the Javitz Center project is also ~1.8 million square feet, and therefore was of a scale that could be substantially retrofitted to meet energy requirements. The team can review the project in more detail to see what can be learned.

8.6. *Daniel Fox - Preservation principles are not necessarily concerned with cost effectiveness.*

- Mary Ellen Slattery, with Smithsonian Enterprises noted that their group is tasked with providing functional services that are revenue generators within SI. She noted that the current restaurant design is functionally inadequate in a number of different capacities. The heat gain issues with the mezzanine have rendered it unusable and substantially reduces the amount of available seating. The current configuration of the servery also causes queues which stretch from the addition into the main museum, further exasperating the issue of grease migration from the restaurant into the museum. It also does not provide a positive experience for visitors; available seating is not visible from the point of sale and even with signage, there are issues with navigation and circulation throughout the space. Even with a full renovation, the function is bound by the structure and its inadequacies. The original design was intended to meet a certain capacity, which is now exceeded based on the number of visitors to the museum. The design intends to expand and provide different types of dining experiences.

8.7. *Lee Webb - When looking at approaches for activating the terrace space for the public around the restaurant structure, how does the Museum envision balancing this with their approach for the activating the space on the west side of the Museum, as well as on the north and south?*

- Philip Chen noted that as part of this project, the design team will provide space for the permanent location of the Observatory.

- Chris Browne noted the Observatory is very popular and the new design will expand its attractiveness and create a more accessible Astronomy Park with amenities in a way that would meet the needs of the guests and visitors who choose to visit the Observatory.
- 8.8. *Daniel Fox - If the building is significant, then it should be preserved.*
- Carly Bond noted that SI's previous analysis and the draft DOE found the main building of NASM to be eligible under criteria A, C and G. The team has taken a renewed look at the analysis, completed additional on the addition, Obata's career, how it fits within Obata's career and what was available for context for other 1980s comparable examples. As a result of this research, SI is intending to propose in the DOE that the Restaurant Addition continues to contribute to the National Mall Historic District due to Criteria A, but does not meet Criteria G and does not contribute to the individual eligibility of the NASM.
 - Sharon Park added that SI feels that it's a nice building in terms of its design and that Obata and HOK did a respectful addition to the museum, but it is fraught with problems. Even a full rebuild of the structure in the same configuration would change the proportionality of the fine details and might look similar, but not the same.
 - Sharon also noted that if the 32-year old project were going to be an outstanding work of a master, through the course of the research, it would be expected to find testimonials that note it to be an outstanding piece of architecture. The team has been rigorous in looking at the available information using the National Register criteria and has made this determination based on its findings.
- 8.9. *Lee Webb - You may want to clarify that the period of significance for the National Mall is to the present, hence why the restaurant can be deemed contributing to the National Mall District, but not for the individual DOE for NASM, with period of significance ending in 1977!*
- Carly Bond confirmed this clarification.