

Date: November 1, 2023

Project: Construct Integrated Bezos Learning Center

Purpose: Section 106 Consulting Parties Meeting #2

Panelists:

Name	Organization
Carly Bond	Smithsonian Institution (SI), Office of Planning
Jane Passman	SI, Office of Planning
Charles Obi	SI, Office of Planning
Mike Henry	SI, Office of Planning
Stephanie Free	National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC)
Tina Menendez	Director, Bezos Learning Center
Zena Howard	Perkins & Will
Elizabeth Kennedy	Elizabeth Kennedy Landscape Architects
Scott Shifflett	WSP

Attendees

Name	Organization	Name	Organization
Andrew Lewis	DC Historic Preservation Office	Ann Trowbridge	SI
Matthew Flis	NCPC	Sara de Silvia	SI
Lee Webb	NCPC	Alison Wood	SI
Michael Weil	NCPC	Duane Blue Spruce	SI
Sarah Batcheler	Commission of Fine Arts (CFA)	Kara Katsarelis	SI
Carlton Hart	CFA	Larry Travis	SI
Chris Wilson	Advisory Council on Historic Preservation	Jim Evans	SI

Judy Feldman	National Mall Coalition	Sarah Stephenson	National Gallery of Art (NGA)
Joel Gorder	National Park Service (NPS)	Jamie Kurry	NGA
Jason Theuer	NPS	Susan Wertheim	NGA
Kristi Tuntsall Williams	General Services Administration (GSA)	Hillary Lord	National Gallery of Art NGA
Eliza Voigt	GSA	Pat Tiller	Committee of 100
Shelly Jones	GSA	Jared Oldroyd	Clark Construction
Natalie Zambrano	Events DC	Nell Warren	Clark Construction
Ramon Labrador	DC Department of Buildings	George Conrad	Clark Construction
Kelsey Bridges	DC Department of Transportation	Molly Raglani	Clark Construction
Bridget Lesniak	Perkins & Will	John Edwards	Bonstra Haresign Architects
Kim Daileader	EHT Tracerics	Michael Stelfox	Complete Landscape Design
Laura Huges	EHT Tracerics	Kirill Pivovarov	Page Think
Raj Solanki	N/A	Gregory Rismiller	N/A

Presentation:

The second Consulting Parties Meeting for the project to Construct an Integrated Bezos Learning Center (BLC) at National Air and Space Museum (NASM). C. Bond from Smithsonian began the meeting with the agenda. C. Obi then gave an introduction to the larger NASM Revitalization Project, the integrated BLC scope, and the program summary. T. Menendez gave a brief introduction to the BLC mission. S. Shifflett then described the NEPA process and where the purpose and need, preliminary issues and impact topics, and how to provide comments. C. Bond then gave a brief overview of the Section 106 process, the Area of Potential Effects, and previously identified historic resources then presented the project Area of Potential Effect (APE) and identified the historic resources within it. She then highlighted the contributing views and visual relationships of NASM and the National Mall.

The presentation then paused for the first round of questions.

First Question Break:

1. *S. Batcheler*: How did you determine the important views? There are non-axial views also, and that you haven't shown.

C. Bond: The views that we have shown come directly from the National Register of Historic Places nomination for the National Mall Historic District.

Presentation Continued:

Z. Howard presented the contextual framework of the site and the National Mall, highlighted the McMillan setback, and the surround open spaces, urban edge, and green spaces. She introduced the historic landscaping and context of the site prior to the restaurant addition. Next, she introduced the design concept and spiral galaxy and its formation of a learning courtyard, how the massing progressed with circulation and transparency. North, east and south elevations were presented in context with NASM, as well as site program and site perambulation.

E. Kennedy presented the site plan and spatial organization in connection with the larger NASM site and the National Mall. Two site plan layouts were presented, a spiral concept and an orthogonal concept. The spiral concept responds more closely with the BLC concept design, while the orthogonal concept responds more closely with the existing NASM landscape. Aerial view and early concept renderings were shown.

Second Question Break:

1. *A. Lewis*: Thank you for the presentation, it was very interesting. I had several initial thoughts and questions to get some feedback on.
 - a. The existing Programmatic Agreement (PA) has a design framework for the new addition, that talks about how the new addition would attach to NASM. And we appreciate that it's currently a very light touch, and maybe it is too early for this, but I was wondering if Zena could talk about what the thoughts are about attaching to the building because in all the diagrams it's just a box. The PA encourages the use of glazing so that you can experience the two as you transition from one to the other.
 - i. *Z. Howard*: The design intent is for a gentle touch at the connection, consistent with the PA. We will align it as much as possible with that notch that you see on the east end of NASM. We are currently exploring how that gentle touch will be executed, but the thought is that it will be transparent connection, exactly to your point. There will be a connection and frame of reference on all sides into the museum, learning center, south to Eisenhower, and north to the Mall.
 - b. Can Zena address the alternative views, on pages 44 and 46, views from the south. It was confusing as to what was illustrated there.
 - i. *Z. Howard*: That is showing the difference in the design prior to the second level program of that bridge being removed from the scope. The elimination of the bridge worked very well for NASM's program and BLC's program; but worked really well for the massing because it allowed us to take ten or more feet out of that building. And allowed us to not have as much of a presence up against NASM.

- c. Can you talk a bit more about the “lift”; I think it was tying into the solid pavilions to the south? Just a bit more information about what defined that datum line.
 - i. *Z. Howard*: The idea is to lift up that solid bar with the bulk of the program to a mostly glazed first floor where the restaurant is. That connects almost 360 degrees around the building, will allow visual access to all the surrounding elements of the landscape, astronomy park, and further to Eisenhower and the Mall.
- d. I wanted to point out that while it is still early on, what are the initial thoughts for cladding. Especially given the new stone that is being put on NASM and how that has resulted in quite a change in the appearance of the building.
 - i. *Z. Howard*: We are just now beginning that phase of the design, and clearly there are options. We are excited about all the options we are exploring. And we feel like we are moving in the right direction. They all have different benefits and price points, but what you see represented is just the building as a mass, just to show where we are. We will be engaging with you guys further as we develop the building. Obviously the cladding on the landscape walls, Elizabeth can speak to that.
- e. As far as the landscape is concerned, I see there is quite a bit of power to the spiral design, I think it’s very moving and helps to reinforce the design of the new addition. It seems that that option has benefits. I was curious if the landscape area over the parking garage is going to stay static? How will it be incorporated?
 - i. *E. Kennedy*: We are beginning to explore materials for the landscape and how the two geometries can be brought together that lends itself to the intuitive power of the spiral. We are still working on that, but in doing so we are trying to establish where the revitalized landscape begins and ends, and if it begins and ends. The way the two systems come together horticulturally, spatially, etc. We are currently looking at the area over the loading dock. It begins to be defined as a land bridge. Whether or not the terraces are maintained as part of the formal expression or if there are other ways of thinking about that planted area as both topography and vegetation, is one of the things we are exploring in more depth now as we get into the design. Similarly, we have the same concerns to the south and the east. So we are looking at a lot of different permutations of those issues.
 - ii. *C. Bond*: I want to address the materials in terms of the planter and retaining walls around the site. As per the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) for the museum building revitalization, it was required that we apply the same stone cladding that we are replacing on the building to the site walls. That was an original relationship, the same cladding was used on both the site and the building, and that will continue. The new Colonial Rose granite on the building would be considered under that MOA for any of the site features. So taking that in to account, exploring further if that is still the approach to take, or maybe there are other interventions related to the BLC, is something we need to carefully consider as a group. And I want to mention, there is a PA that oversees the design of this project. It is connected to the demolition of the restaurant addition that was formerly at the east end of the NASM. That PA is available on the project website, and we have that information later in the presentation if you have not yet visited the website. But it is important to note that the PA does have some design framework that we are required to consider as part of the design for the integrated BLC. The design framework, as we have talked about today, is about carefully considering how the addition physically connects to NASM but also that the design concept responds to the formally setting of the National Mall, the architecture of NASM, and that relationship allows NASM to still remain the primary building on the site. The next thing we are going to talk about are the viewsheds and vistas and the PA also outlined those that need to be considered.

Presentation Continued:

Z. Howard presented the viewsheds surrounding the project site and NASM. C. Bond discussed next steps and outlined the proposed schedule.

Third Question Break:

1. *S. Batcheler*: Yes, thank you, I have two questions. One is process and one is about some of the forms that you're showing. Could you please go to one of the viewsheds – I think it might have been 67? Yes, I just wanted to make a comment here about the projecting balcony at the second or third floor and this is sort-of an anomalous feature in the Jefferson Drive landscape and I would just be careful about something like this. We generally feel that the *Mall* is the space, the *Mall* is the thing, and the buildings define it. This is sort-of breaking through that barrier in a way. And it merits further discussion about whether there should be something occupiable that is projecting like that. The other question that I had is: you're asking for comments from this meeting by November 16th, could you please go back to that, process slide? You have listed final design submissions in Spring 2024-2025 to the Commissions but I'm not seeing where you would be coming for any previous submissions to the Commission and one thing about the way the Commission of Fine Arts works is that we'd like to have a presentation to the Commission at the time that you're taking public comments because their comments would then fold in to the public comment period. Can you talk a little bit about how that would be coordinated in your schedule?
 - i. *C. Bond*: Our next round of public comment period now is for Section 106 consultation and then for NEPA, so we're taking input on the scope for our environmental impact that we're planning to study and for our purpose and need. Our next round, for historic preservation review would be in February 2024. After which would be our initial reviews by NCPC and CFA.
 - ii. *J. Passman*: Yes, the comments that are requested now are for scoping of the NEPA document, the environmental assessment topics and the scope of it. But we will *certainly* recognize comments that come late. The time to comment on the design is not *limited* to the 16th.
 - b. *S. Batcheler*: Well, right, and if I remember from the beginning of your presentation, you're also not talking about impacts on historic properties yet, is that correct? We're just doing the identification of the historic properties in the scoping?
 - i. *C. Bond*: That's right, so today's the first day where we have a concept design to share, and we have not done an assessment of effects on historic resources yet in consultation.
 - c. *S. Batcheler*: And where does that fit in to this schedule?
 - i. *C. Bond*: Right, so that would occur sometime after Consulting Parties Meeting #3; we might *begin* doing that before Consulting Parties Meeting #3 depending on concept design development and other feedback that we receive from the public. So Spring of 2024, is what we're projecting for CFA and NCPC submissions.
 - d. *S. Batcheler*: Okay, thanks, so it would somehow be tied into a comment period, you think?
 - i. *C. Bond*: Yes, that's right.
2. *C. Bond*: John Edwards has a comment through the chat: John's expressing support for the concept design appearance of the addition and sends support for the spiral site development preference over the orthogonal alternative.