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Date: February 26, 2024

Project: Construct Integrated Bezos Learning Center

Purpose: Section 106 Consulting Parties Meeting #3

Panelists:

Name	Organization
Carly Bond	Smithsonian Institution (SI), Office of Planning
Mike Henry	SI, Office of Planning
Tina Mendez	Director, Bezos Learning Center
Zena Howard	Perkins & Will
Ralph Johnson	Perkins & Will
Bryan Schabel	Perkins & Will
Elizabeth Kennedy	Elizabeth Kennedy Landscape Architects

Attendees

Name	Organization	Name	Organization
Stephanie Free	National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC)	Mina Wright	General Services Administration (GSA)
Matthew Fliss	NCPC	Kristi Tunstall Williams	GSA
Lee Webb	NCPC	Frederica Framer	Advisory Neighborhood Commission 6D
Andrew Lewis	DC Historic Preservation Office	Jamie Kurry	National Gallery of Art
Thomas Luebke	US Commission of Fine Arts (CFA)	Susan Wertheim	National Gallery of Art
Sarah Batcheler	CFA	Hillary Lord	National Gallery of Art
Dan Fox	CFA	Chris Shaheen	DC Office of Planning
Carlton Hart	CFA	Chris Wilson	Advisory Council on Historic Preservation

Jason Theuer	National Park Service (NPS)	Leslie Frattaroli	NPS
Daniel Weldon	NPS	Ross Bater	NPS
Yue Li	NPS	Liz Waytkus	Docomomo
Jeff Winstel	WMATA	John Edwards	Citizen
Todd Grover	Citizen	Alan Woods	Whiting Turner
Ann Trowbridge	Smithsonian Institution (SI)	Judy Feldman	Citizen
Josh Shaw	SI	Jane Passman	SI
Kara Katsarelis	SI	Beth Crownover	SI
Alex Dencker	SI	Michael Ingram	SI
Deane Madsen	SI	Jim Evans	SI
Millie Latack	SI	Lucas Harmon	SI
Sarah Dickert	SI	Stephen Mann	SI
Duane Blue Spruce	SI	Jeff Schneider	SI
Marisa Scalera	SI	Yaqing Cai	Perkins & Will
Bridget Lesniak	Perkins & Will	Renato Tonelli	Perkins & Will
Kim Daileader	EHT Traceries	Laura Hughes	EHT Traceries

Presentation:

The third Consulting Party 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 and where the project is in the NEPA and Section 106 processes. C. Bond then reviewed the Area of Potential Effects (APE) and previously identified historic resources. She stated that as there were no previous comments on the APE, SI will move to finalize the APE and historic resources.

Z. Howard and R. Johnson walked through the updated design of the building.

The presentation then paused for the first round of questions.

First Question Break:

T. Luebke: I think a lot of good development has happened with a lot of consultation and its obviously getting more resolved. A lot of things we have talked about are working well, particularly where the building meets the existing, east end of the HOK building is working well; the landscape integration is much better; there are little comments I have. The one thing I would say is, the soul of this concept is the spiraling galaxy, swirling. It's very dynamic. But I feel like something has been lost as you have regularized the roof. Everything seems flat and less gestural. It looks like it is getting taller towards the north, but I don't know that it is. If it is, it's a good thing.

R. Johnson: Yes, it is going [up] towards the north.

B. *Schabel*: It is increasing towards the north.

T. Luebke: Ok, good that's important. I wouldn't lose that because it helps. On the other side, on the glass side, we talked about how it was sort of a reverse gesture, the wrong way. But now it feels like it's neither. Can you make the glass piece even higher on the north and lower on the left (west). I don't know what it would take, it's tricky with the detailing and the way it has to intersect with the wall adjacent, etc. It feels a little bit conventional. It's a funny thing to say about a place where all the structure is leaning, but a little gestural change in section could help. But these are minor comments. A lot of the development is good.

R. Johnson: We are still looking at the difference in height. Bryan will address this later.

C. *Bond*: We will look at the slope in the next section.

T. *Luebke*: It used to be high on the west side and low on the northeast and now it's better not to have the height on the west. It's moving in the right direction but is there a way to push it just slightly? There is a view from the northeast, I think it would be less static if that glass piece were poking up a little bit higher in front. This is really just a design observation.

J. *Edwards*: What was the motivation of making it more horizontal and flattening out how it meets the sky?

C. *Bond*: Design team, if you could also talk about the overall height change, from last meeting to this meeting, that goes hand in hand with John's question.

R. Johnson: There are parts of it being horizontal that reinforces the horizontal movement of the façade, but I also agree with Tom's comment. So maybe the spiral atrium piece could be higher, rather than raising the whole building. We looked at lowering and raising and we are showing a raised portion on the event terrace. I agree, we will look at more movement and differentiation in the skyline. We didn't feel it was necessary to add another ten feet. I think if we raised the glazed portion, that would solve a lot of the problems.

M. Henry: I think its also important to point out that there is a relationship to the third level of the main building, in regards to how that relates to the height of the addition. The updated height is more in line with

not obscuring the east end view from the third level in the main building. [*C. Bond*: views out from the third level] Out from the third level, correct.

S. Free: Thanks for the presentation so far. This is really great progression. We really like the new fenestration that has been added and how that calls back to the recess of the balconies on the Air and Space Museum. As well as the developed landscape and how that relates to the building, it is all coming together really well. And we appreciate the additional views. Thank you.

C. Bond: Can the design team talk a little bit more about how the connection on the east end has changed a little bit? This is an important topic from historic preservation, where the learning center addition is directly interacting with Air and Space.

R. Johnson: We integrated the lower element in with the main mass of the BLC to create a more linear connection. We looked at a number of different ways of how that lower element can connect and how we can engage in a minimal way. You can see the skylight. There are some options that Bryan will show later.

S. Wertheim: Is there an afterhours or daytime entrance closer to Fourth Street - maybe off the plaza? I see doors but I'm not sure if those are just exit doors.

R. Johnson: Fourth Street does not have an entry. Those are purely egress doors and we will try to minimize their presence, maybe with the coloration of the mullions. But there is only one door which is the main entry, here in the middle. [*B. Schabel*: And the south entry] Yes, and the south entry on the other side. But along this the Fourth Street elevation there are no doors.

C. Bond: Ralph or Zena can you talk about where the BLC entrance is and what the south entrance will be used for?

R. Johnson: The north entrance you come in to a low space, and you go through security and go to the main level of the BLC.

B. Schabel: But this entry is only for the BLC, though it accommodates events and the event terrace as well, even afterhours.

R. Johnson: And the south side is for school groups only.

A. Lewis: I agree with the comments thus far and think the design is progressing really well. But I did have a couple comments. Seeing the renderings, which are very helpful, made me recall how much of an issue solar gain was for the previous building and it suddenly dawned on me just how much glazing there is. I realize it's on the north side, but I want to make sure the Smithsonian is planning accordingly so you don't have the same issues with solar gain. My second comment is a question that I raised before. I understand the importance of differentiation and reinforcement of movement as a way of expressing the galaxy, but the rendering suggests that NASM has very pronounced joints between the cladding. But as we know it doesn't read that way at all. It reads as a very smooth building. And if you go to some of your earlier renderings, the previous scheme relates much better to the building in terms of it reading as one piece, one composition. The new updated version has very pronounced joints, for lack of a better term, which are not straight up and down, instead they are canted which is reinforcing that movement. But ultimately, is this building being too differentiated from NASM and is there a way to perhaps do something with cladding that relates a bit more to the smooth stone finish of the original building? Could it be something with the joints? What are the materials you are envisioning to clad the building? Is it something that is similar to stone, or is it going to be contrasting, some sort of metal panel? And what about color? I'm not trying to suggest the two should look exactly the same, but perhaps there is a point when it can become too differentiated. The fins are also a pretty

prominent difference between the two, and I think that's carrying the motion more than anything else. But would like to talk about the idea of relating it a little more to the building versus differentiating quite so much.

M. Henry: Concerning your first comment, we remind them of those concerns almost daily. We certainly don't want to replicate previous issues. Glazing is important because the concept is of transparency and to show what's going on in the facility, education and distribution of knowledge is what the education center is all about, and hits directly to the core of Smithsonian's mission. We continue to remind them about exposure to solar gain. As per your second comment, we appreciate your perspective. We have ongoing conversations about the materiality and your feedback is welcome.

R. Johnson: Next on our agenda, maybe a month from now, is a meeting to talk about materiality and color. We agree color is a primary consideration. Current thinking is it's a metal skin to reinforce the lightness of the building, helping it float on the site, but maybe the color of the panel could be some way of tying the two together. It's a delicate balance between differentiation and expressing the uniqueness of this building. We will continue to discuss that. Bryan will present some early thoughts on materiality.

T. Luebke: I was going to say the exact same thing. The trick here is actually about the balance of differentiation versus, well replication is probably not what you are talking about. I would tend to say that I'm seeing the concept of the building is so very different that I'm comfortable with more differentiation. The whole idea that you could want to register the exact same horizontality is not of value. But fundamentally there is no precisely right answer; it will be resolved through your design and these discussions. With these streaks of horizontal glass, what it does do is give some scale that the previous scheme did not. The panelized system has a chance to provide balance between differentiation and similarity.

Presentation Continued:

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. B. Schabel presented the connection to NASM and the options for the skin of the new addition. Aerial view and early concept renderings were shown. C. Bond closed with next steps and schedule.

Second Question Break:

J. Edwards: The renderings make NASM look like a stacked bond, which isn't what's actually there; when looking at the skin of the BLC, we should see it next to the NASM as it really is.

C. Bond: That is a really valid comment. Design team, can we address that in our next reviews?

B. Schabel: Yes, we can update the renderings.

C. Bond: Bryan can you go back and touch on the entrance points? Can we clarify that there is not going to be a public entrance to Air and Space through the BLC from the outside. [Comment in chat from *S. Wertheim*: So, there is a public entrance in these renderings being shown now, on the south side off of Independence Ave? I'm confused because the designers said the only entrance is the main entrance but that's the only North side entrance, I guess.]

B. Schabel: Correct. Only school groups will be coming from the south and the northeast is the main BLC entry or the afterhours event entry which is secured from the northeast, and then the dining is directly related to NASM experience. Those are the three entry points for the groups we are anticipating here.

C. Bond: So there won't be a way for the public to access Air and Space through the these limited access points. So either people are coming to the BLC through the entrance to the north, or the school groups coming to the south. You can't just use BLC to access Air and Space.

B. Schabel: Correct. That's why we have tried to tone down the entries as well.

D. Fox: Can you speak about what might be at the center of the landscape spiral? It will be the focus of so much movement—both visually and physically.

E. Kennedy: This is where the exhibit designs will be layered into the learning center space. This is the next phase of the courtyard's development. It is such a significant feature of the learning courtyard space; it would be the culmination or the start of the interpretive experience. We are treating this very much as a placeholder as we understand its further development. What I did not touch on was how to better capture the idea of the spiral in the landscape and not to make it generic. What we were looking at were the ways in ways in which we do interpret a galactic spiral as opposed to say a hurricane spiral, and we have not layered in the interpretation of light as an element that begins to suggest the cosmos. Internally we were looking at this as a design direction, but we are not at a point where we are ready to show that yet, particularly because the aspect of the interpretive design has not yet been layered in. We are considering the significance of these elements in this space.

D. Fox: The balance between art and interpretation in this space will be a meaningful discussion.

A. Lewis: I appreciate that you are going to revise the way that NASM is rendered. Based on the comments so far, everyone seems to be in favor of the tapered fins. They are very elemental and very dynamic especially at night. But I would be curious to see what they might look like on a more monolithic background. Just to see if that might get back to the issues of the delicate balance between differentiation from or relating to the existing building. At the connection, thanks for clarifying that there is no direct entry there, its school groups only, but the Programmatic Agreement does talk about the importance of allowing the east side of NASM to remain visible, but I don't think that it makes a lot of sense to create a dead alley (Option 2), just for the sake of keeping a very light touch. I am curious, the roof of this piece here [above the south entrance] seems to be causing more of a concern in terms of blocking the views to the original building elevation. Is it possible for that skylight to extend further over, so from the street you could actually see the full east side of NASM? I'm sure there is something that has to be done for shade, I'm not sure what exactly is inside there program wise, but the design just seems to stop there. Is there a way to bring in curvilinear elements here and extend that skylight over so the design continues but you have a better view to the east side of the original building? Perhaps bringing some of the landscape, with the curved lines. The spiral landscape design is superior to the orthogonal. The spiral so important to the entire building, failing to echo it in the landscape would be a disservice.

M. Henry: Thank you for your response. Very helpful feedback. As we mentioned before, this corner of the building, where it meets the main building, is still under conversation to try and make the relationship more cohesive. Your glazing suggestion to allow for more view of the original building is a profound suggestion. We have also talked about ways to increase canopy coverage of the very exposed southern elevation; it's a microclimate in the summer. This is a balance between materiality and what we are trying to achieve in terms of the various priorities, respecting existing architecture, introducing new architecture that serves the public and provides access for groups, as well as shelter for those enjoying programming on the south side.

R. Johnson: I like the idea of a bigger skylight, the idea of viewing back and seeing more of NASM. I think it's something worth looking at, budget dependent. It an interesting idea from both the inside and the outside. We will be doing more alternative studies at this end of the building.

C. Bond: What are Consulting Parties' thoughts on having integral façade lighting? Any feedback on that is welcome.

> *A. Lewis*: The integrated facade lighting is well designed and adds a great deal of interest to the addition, so we support it.

J. Edwards: The spiral landscape scheme seems to better and more naturally integrate into the overall NASM landscaping and circulation patterns. The orthogonal scheme looks forced and obtrusive - certainly to the BLC design - without any compelling reason given its minimal connection to the NASM landscaping. It makes the accessible features seem like a somewhat awkward add-on rather than a naturally integrated design, as in the spiral scheme.

T. Luebke: On that south entrance, I think it's perfectly fine to fill in that [alley]. Relative to Andrews comment, I don't think the station point of those two comparisons was the same. The second option is probably more open than it looks in the rendering. (*B. Schabel*: That's probably true.) 1A is in fact as open as 2, but it's a different station point in the renderings. There is a lightness to the canopy and entrance in 2 that is missing in 1A, even though 1A is a generally a better [idea]. You have this spiral skin as a main elevation, and then it goes orthogonal. Why don't you just let it be something else; is it curved, is it not curved? Unless it's a continuous curve that goes asymptotically towards zero degrees, you might as well just let it be its own lighter thing. There is no conceit here on the left about somehow pulling that system across; it's heavy; it looks like a flap of paper that got cut off from the main system. In general, the whole composition of letting that whole upper skin be gestural and not having those big slab walls [is better]. Don't worry about the 15 degrees, they don't have to match. It might actually be more dynamic and interesting if they didn't. Landscape: I agree with all these other comments that the spiral is preferred. As a general comment, if you are going to do this spiral scheme, just do it. It's a better use of the planting area not to have that big clunky ramp. The spiral is much more elegant and spatially efficient, shorter distance, more accessible. There are a lot of reasons why it works much better. One little point, you have to resolve how that observatory fits. There is an extra wall in there curling up from the base of the observatory down to the wall and it needs to be refined. It's very strange. In terms of the skin, I think the fins are a tremendous idea of articulating this idea of movement under various lighting conditions. It's very worth pursuing. It goes back to the question of differentiation or not. It is such a different idea from the HOK boxes that I would let it sing and be what it wants to be, a dynamic thing. Likewise, the tapering question on the inside, is better higher towards the mall. I think you can push it up even more and it would be better.

S. Free: We are in favor of the tapered fin; it is promoting the sense of movement and it's very dynamic. We agree that lighting would be complementary to the concept, just keep in mind that this is within the National Mall and any lighting should defer to the lighting of the US Capitol, the Washington Monument and Lincoln Memorial. Have it fit within that setting without competing with those national monuments. We are also in support of the spiral scheme, as it reinforces the concept and from the experience of some who is mobility impaired or uses a wheelchair as well would enjoy that experience more than the zigzag in the orthogonal scheme. When you are entering the site, a lot of what you are looking at [in the orthogonal scheme], at eye level, would be a wall. The south entrance, I agree with the light touch being more successful than the gap; the angled fin there complements the sense of movement; and Andy and Tom's comments as well about lightening it up would be worth of consideration as well. Can you go to the side by side of the glass volume sloping towards the mall? I know you are going to study this more, but I'm looking at the horizontal ribbons on the north elevation, it is more dense on the left side than on the right side of the images; I wonder if that should also be looked at as well? Can the ribbing be used as a way to reinforce movement? And maybe it is a rendering issue with the joints, how NASM is being rendered, I was wondering if the ribbing was competing too much with NASM, but I think that after the rendering is revised, maybe that issue will go away.

> *M. Henry*: Just to note, we have a natural motivation of constraint of the amount of light being introduced as a building element given that on the south side, we do have an astronomy park. It's important we not add

to light pollution, and we advocate for dark skies. We are trying to study what kind of elements would help activate this at nighttime; however, we do have an inherent motivation to limit lighting to a large degree.

S. Free: That's helpful thank you.

L. Webb: NCPC staff also supports the spiral approach to the landscape and providing more trees. We also support continuing to develop Study scheme 3 with the tapered fin for the exterior expression.

C Hart: It looked like from the landscape plan that there would be trees planted somewhere in around the area, is that actually going to happen? I remember seeing an image of using the wall of NASM for something, projections? Would those trees be in the way?

E. Kennedy: We are studying planting low trees in that area, so that the projection would be above the lower branching species, but it is still being studied.

B. Schabel: We did remove them in this image just to address the roof of the building.

C. Hart: Thank you. The atrium has structural members that are leaning at the same angle. Is there a particular design reason why they are all at the same angle? I don't want them to be different angles, but is there a reason for the lean?

B. Schabel: We did like the consistency, and we studied it going vertical and we felt it diminished the experience. There is a consistency with the angle, we checked different proportions, and this is where we settled. We are studying different options of what that wall is.

R. Johnson: One of them is making a series of overlapping planks of glass. The way it is drawn right now every panel of glass would be curved in a different way. It would give another texture to the wall, but it's in progress. That is one of our main areas to study.