



Smithsonian Institution

Notice of Availability of the Draft Environmental Assessment
National Air and Space Museum – Construct Integrated Bezos Learning Center

November 12, 2024

Dear Interested Party:

The National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC), as lead responsible federal agency for compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), and the Smithsonian Institution (SI), as project owner, have prepared a Draft Environmental Assessment (EA) for the construction of the Bezos Learning Center at the National Air and Space Museum National Mall building. Concurrently, SI and NCPC are conducting Section 106 consultation in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA 800.8). The project is subject to NCPC's review under the National Capital Planning Act (40 USC §8722 (b)(1) and (d)). The National Park Service (NPS) is participating with NEPA as a Cooperating Agency.

The EA was prepared in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), as amended (Title 42, US Code [USC], 4321-4347); the Council on Environmental Quality's Regulations for Implementing NEPA (40 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] 1500-1508); NCPC's implementing regulations (69 FR 41299) and the National Capital Planning Act. SI and NCPC have agreed that SI will be the lead federal agency in conducting consultation in accordance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA 36 CFR 800.2(a)(2)).

The purpose of this project is to advance the National Air and Space Museum's (NASM) mission through construction and operation of a new world class center for education connected to the NASM National Mall facility; facilitate teacher and student engagement in Science, Technology, Math, Engineering, and Art (STEAM) learning, particularly in under resourced communities; provide a positive visitor experience; permanently locate the Phoebe Waterman Haas Public Observatory; achieve site compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990; and respect the historic context and use of open space. The project is needed to house a new pan-Institutional resource overseen by the NASM; improve site accessibility; provide visitor access to a ground level restaurant space; and locate facility-related programs in on-site outdoor public amenity spaces.

The EA analyzes two alternatives: the Proposed Action Alternative and the No Action Alternative. Government agencies and the public are encouraged to review and comment on the contents of this EA. **Comments must be submitted by Friday, December 20, 2024.**

A digital copy of the Draft EA is available at the following websites:

<https://www.ncpc.gov/participate/notices/>

<https://s.si.edu/blc-environment>

As part of the EA public comment period and to provide a better understanding of the proposed project, the Smithsonian and NCPC will hold a virtual public NEPA meeting on Thursday, December 12, 2024, from 2:00-3:00 PM via Zoom webinar.

To Register in advance for this webinar follow this link:

https://smithsonian.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_rX6T7grDRwqDE_yhVU0P4g

Comments or questions about the EA should be sent to:

Smithsonian Institution

Attention: Jane Passman

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or via email to Preservation@SI.edu

Only written comments will be accepted. Please be aware that your entire comment will become part of the public record.

Mailed comments must be postmarked by Dec. 20, 2024 to receive consideration.