

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

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NCPC File No. MP03/6805



THE YARDS AT THE SOUTHEAST FEDERAL CENTER
WATERFRONT PARK, PHASE II
M Street and New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, D.C.

Submitted by the General Services Administration

January 29, 2008

Abstract

The General Services Administration (GSA) has submitted preliminary (35%) plans for Phase II of the Waterfront Park to be created on the north bank of the Anacostia River in the former Southeast Federal Center. Now named The Yards, the site is being developed by Forest City SEFC, LLC. The park is part of a mixed-use development that will include new buildings, parks and rebuilt public streets, as well as the rehabilitation of former naval industrial buildings. The Southeast Federal Center (formerly the annex to the Washington Navy Yard) is situated between the Navy Yard and the District of Columbia Water and Sewer Authority's pumping facilities.

The Commission's design review procedures for each development parcel were agreed upon in a 2003 Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between GSA and NCPC. The MOU provides for the Commission's one-time advisory review at the 35% design stage of each project. The Commission reviewed Phase I of the Waterfront Park in February 2008. The current submission, Phase II of the Waterfront Park, includes three retail buildings within the park, and the proposed design of a tower to serve as a visual marker at the river's edge. Phase III of the park will include structures in the water, including piers; these elements are shown in current plans for illustrative purposes only. Staff finds that the current submission for the Waterfront Park is consistent with the goals of the revised Southeast Federal Center Master Plan and with the Commission's previous guidance.

Commission Action Requested by Applicant

Approval of the 35% design submission pursuant to the Memorandum of Understanding between the General Services Administration and the National Capital Planning Commission regarding the fee simple transfer of land within the Southeast Federal Center by GSA to Forest City Washington, and the mixed-use development of the Southeast Federal Center.

Executive Director's Recommendation

The Commission:

Approves the 35% design submission for the Waterfront Park, Phase II, as shown on NCPC Map File No. 41.11(38.00)42678, and finds the 35% design plans to be consistent with the approved revised Master Plan.

Commends GSA and Forest City Washington and the team's designers for the quality of the site design to date, especially the variety of public amenities and range of activities that will be accommodated.

Notes that:

- The park elements will be reviewed by the Zoning Commission and referred to the Commission, that the retail buildings are generally consistent with the site's SEFC/W-O zoning designation, and that the visual marker requires relief from the Zoning Regulations because it exceeds the 40-foot height limit in the W-O Zone.
- The Lumber Shed, a structure listed in the National Register of Historic Places, will be rehabilitated to meet the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties.
- The applicant will shortly submit to the Commission an amendment to the Southeast Federal Center Master Plan proposing the relocation of Site 37 in the Memorials and Museums Master Plan from the area of the Great Lawn to Tingey Square.

* * *

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Site

The Southeast Federal Center (SEFC) was formerly a 55-acre annex to the Washington Navy Yard. Excluding the site of the U.S. Department of Transportation buildings, the remaining 42 acres are now known as The Yards and have been zoned for development according to an approved Master Plan.

The Waterfront Park, which will have 1,100 linear feet of river frontage, will be created between the north bank of the Anacostia River and Water Street, SE, which is envisioned as a "festival street" with retail uses. Pedestrians will be able to enter the park from many points, including

from Water Street (which runs east-west), the north-south streets, the river trail, and by boat from the river. The Master Plan calls for 5.5 acres of open park space; the current plan proposes slightly more open acreage (5.87 net open space). The park will also incorporate the rehabilitated historic Lumber Shed, two new retail structures built to the requirements of the W-O zone, public piers and a marina.

The Master Plan envisions a mixed-use neighborhood where the higher density and intensity of use is concentrated along M Street, SE, with lower-height buildings toward the Waterfront Park. The extant historic buildings will be adapted for residential, retail or cultural purposes. New buildings will be constructed to bring the total number of residents at The Yards to 5,000. Within the immediate vicinity, 10,000 residents and 10 million square feet of office space are planned.

Street trees and public art will be placed throughout the site. Streets will be paved with asphalt and a wide range of trees will be planted, all with current low-impact methods for protecting and irrigating tree roots. Site circulation includes a bicycle network and the Anacostia Riverwalk and Trail, planned to extend from the National Arboretum to the Southwest Waterfront.

Guidelines for development of the site include the preservation of views and vistas to and from the waterfront, as well as to federal monumental buildings. High-density residential and mixed uses are encouraged and plazas and open space destinations are an integral part of the site. The guidelines recommend an appropriate mix of neighborhood and waterfront-oriented retail, and service and cultural uses located at ground level along major streets and buildings that face the Waterfront Park.

Background and Previous Commission Actions

The Southeast Federal Center Public-Private Development Act of 2000 (Public Law 106-407, the Act) authorized GSA to enter into agreements with a private entity for the redevelopment of the SEFC, in consultation with the National Capital Planning Commission. In implementing the Act, GSA selected Forest City Washington to develop the site.

In January, 2004, the Commission approved comments to GSA on the redevelopment plan, pursuant to Section 3(f) of the Act. The Commission also submitted its comments to the Zoning Commission in response to a referral of text and map amendments to add the Southeast Federal Center Overlay to the District of Columbia Zoning Regulations.

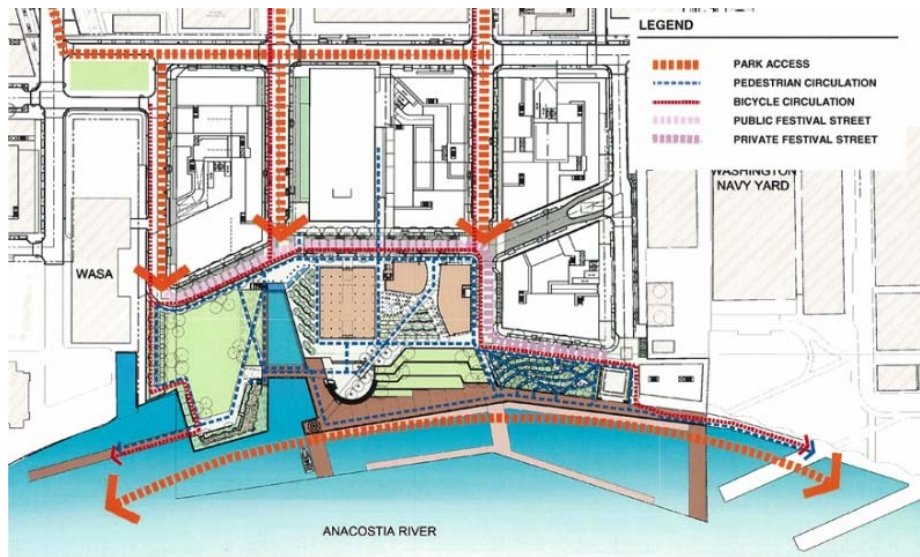
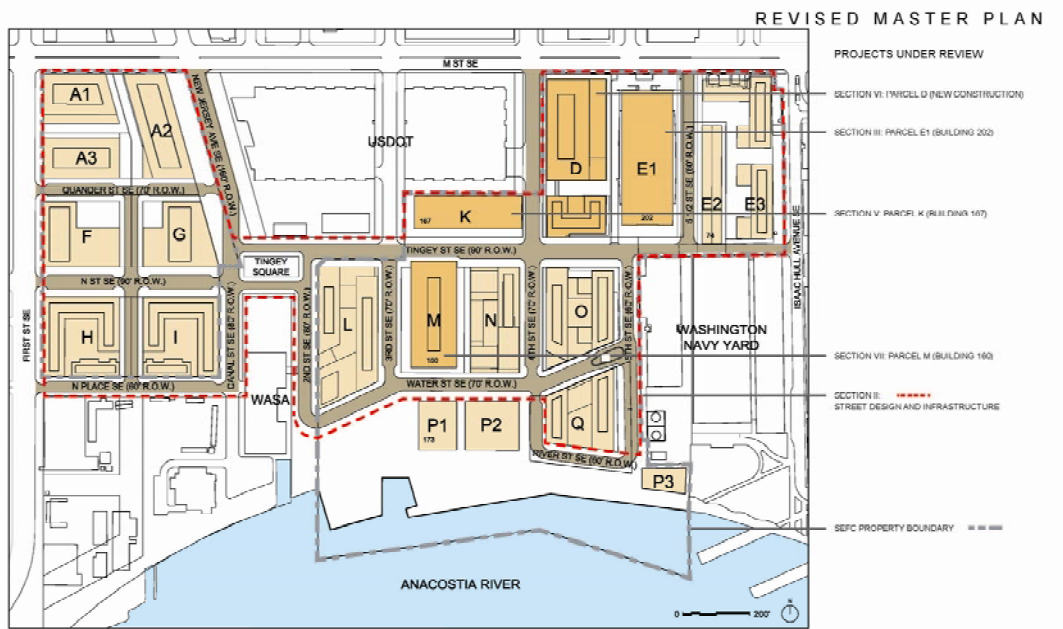
In May, 2004, the Commission approved the Southeast Federal Center Master Plan, recommending (among other elements) that GSA include or maintain a commemorative work site, in a location consistent with the Memorials and Museums Master Plan, and that the Plan draw pedestrians through the site to the Anacostia River waterfront. The Master Plan will require amendment if the memorial site is removed or relocated.

In July, 2007, the Commission commented on Phase I of the development, which included streetscape plans and site amenities, as well as four of the development parcels.

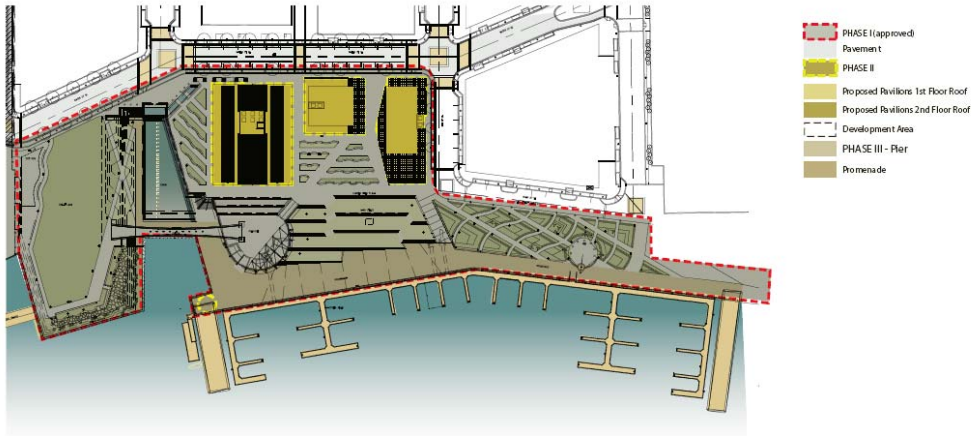
At the September, 2007, meeting, the Commission approved street closings and openings associated with the security perimeter of the WASA pumping station. The possibility of using or

reusing cobblestone paving was discussed. The park site plan indicates that cobblestones will be used to pave the southernmost portion of 2nd Street, which will be a pedestrian street to the waterfront.

At its February 2008 meeting, the Commission commented favorably with some recommendations for design development of Phase I of the Waterfront Park, including the plaza, landscape and park features, and the pedestrian bridge. The Commission noted that GSA would return to the Commission with a proposed amendment to the Southeast Federal Center Master Plan if the waterfront Site 37 in the Memorials and Museums Master Plan was proposed for relocation. GSA is preparing an amendment proposing relocating the potential memorial site from the proposed Great Lawn to Tingey Square on the New Jersey Avenue axis.

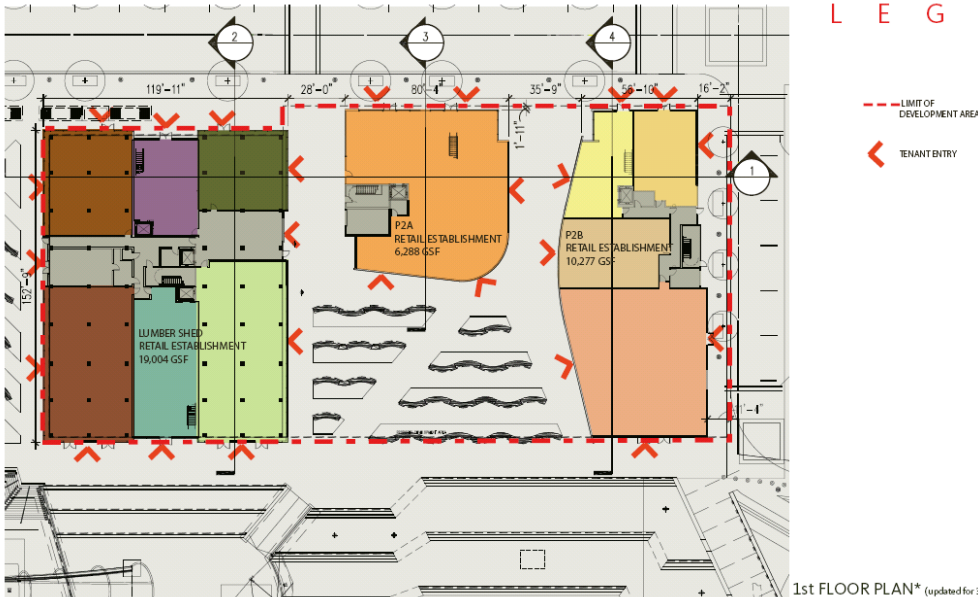


L E G E N D



Above, Waterfront Park with P parcels – retail buildings within the park – highlighted. The visual marker on the boardwalk south of the pedestrian bridge across the canal is also indicated.
Below, first floor plans and the retail program of the three buildings within the park. The Lumber Shed is to the left. The arrows indicate the entrances to the buildings.

L E G E N D



Proposal

The parcels under consideration in the current submission are P1 and P2, as well as the visual marker on the waterfront boardwalk. The retail parcels include the rehabilitation for retail purposes of the historic Lumber Shed (P1; 19,004 gross square feet) and two new retail buildings (P2A and P2B; 6,288 and 10,277 gross square feet, respectively). The applicants plan a combination of restaurant, shopping, and neighborhood retail uses, with an emphasis on programming the space so that the businesses will be visible and easily accessible from Water Street and the plaza. The Lumber Shed is a concrete structure from the post-World War I era that will be substantially rehabilitated for its new use with walls of glass so that the concrete structure is retained and revealed. Forest City Washington is seeking a federal historic preservation tax credit for the project and has been consulting with the District of Columbia State Historic Preservation Officer and the National Park Service toward that end in the development of its architectural plans. Taking design cues from the Lumber Shed, the two proposed retail buildings will feature primarily concrete and glass walls, with some expanses of wood and metal on the facades, befitting the maritime environment of the Park and adjacent Navy Yard. Both new buildings will feature open roof terraces on the second story for outdoor dining. The new buildings are less than 40 feet in height and are consistent with the SEFC/W-O Zone.



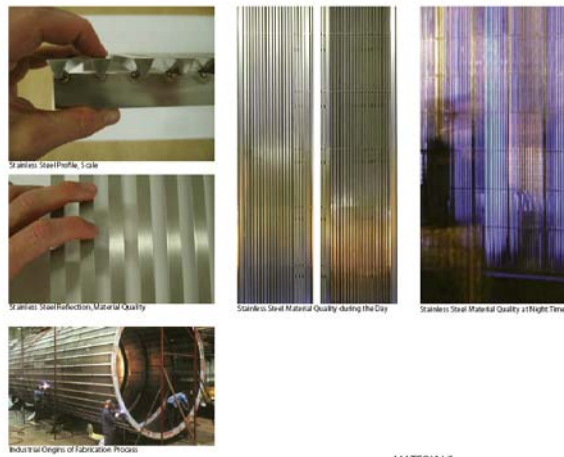
Above, 1983 photograph of the historic Lumber Shed, which will be rehabilitated for retail use.



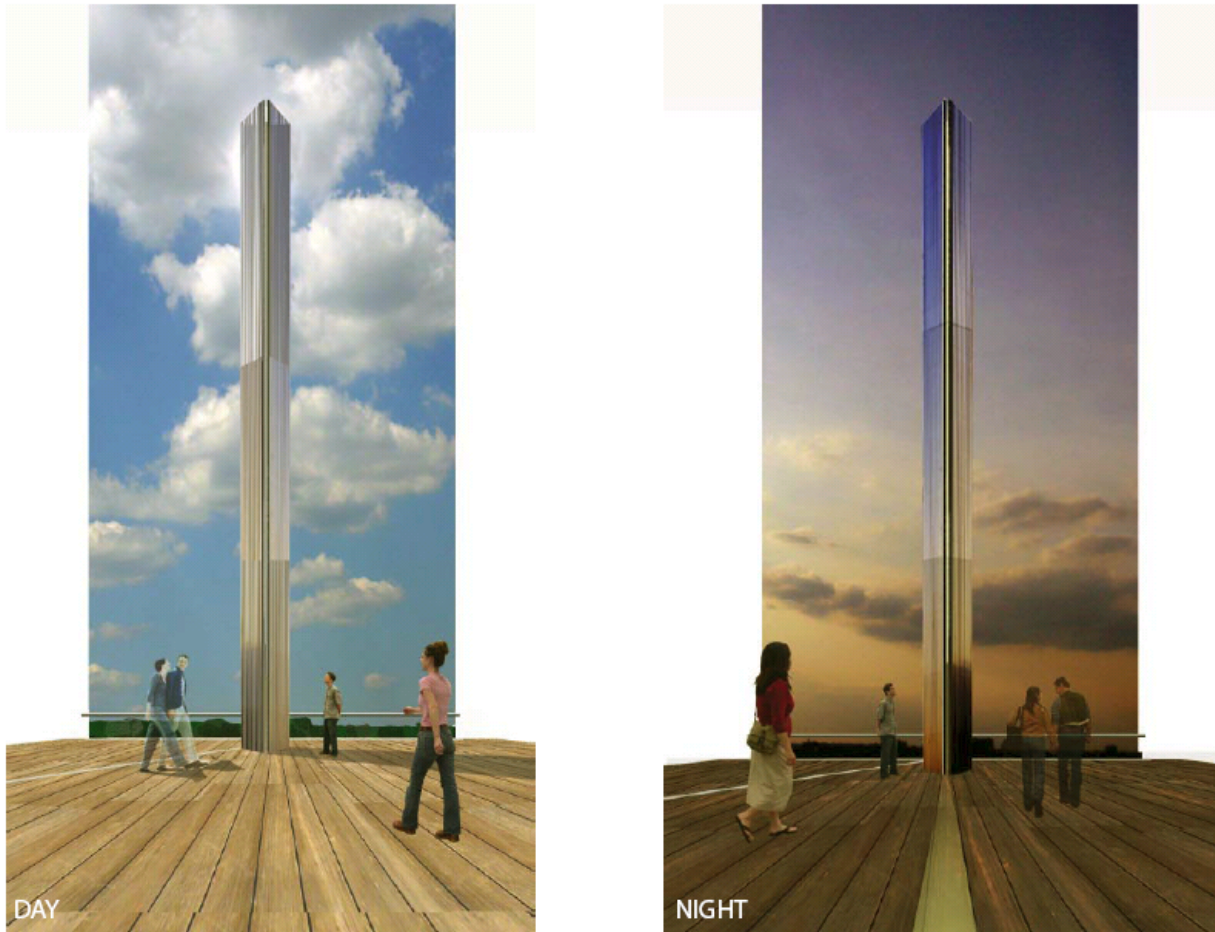
Above, elevations of the three retail buildings from the park. Below, elevations from Water Street, SE.



A visual marker on the boardwalk, a 70-foot polished stainless steel structure, will be a dramatic visual beacon on the waterfront and an iconic statement about the rebirth of the Navy Yard Annex and Southeast Federal Center as The Yards, and the rebirth of the Anacostia Riverfront itself. Designed by James Carpenter, the structure's polished steel prisms will reflect the sky and water during the day and will be softly lit internally at night. In concert with the pedestrian bridge, the marker will assume the role of an identifying feature of the Waterfront Park and an amenity in its own right, drawing people to observe and touch its surface. The visual marker is by definition a structure; in order to be constructed, it will require relief from the Zoning Regulations because it exceeds the 40-foot limit in the SEFC/W-O Zone. It complies with the Height of Buildings Act.



Above, photographs showing details of the highly polished stainless steel prisms that form the visual marker.



COLLAGE IMAGES OF VISUAL MARKER ON BOARDWALK

Renderings of the visual marker in day and night conditions.

PROJECT ANALYSIS

The staff recommends approval of the preliminary plans for Phase II of the Waterfront Park, which includes three retail buildings within the park and a visual mark on the boardwalk.

The Waterfront Park will be a signature element of The Yards and indeed of the entire Anacostia waterfront. The park is designed to invigorate this portion of the Anacostia riverfront, as envisioned in the Master Plan, and will create open space and recreational venues that will enhance the city and the quality of life of its residents. The park plan, in size and in its planning and design goals, is consistent with the Commission's 2004 reviews of the site, including the Master Plan and the purposes and standards of the SEFC Overlay.

The proposed visual marker and the pedestrian bridge (which was reviewed by the Commission in February 2008) are artistically strong features that have the potential to become widely recognized riverfront landmarks of the District of Columbia.

The proposed new retail buildings reflect both the materials and character of the Lumber Shed but also their own era of design, as required in the Master Plan and design guidelines for The Yards. Of industrial and marine materials, the new buildings are well-scaled for the park and relatively open and glassy, appropriately signaling their role as pavilions within the park. They will draw the public to the park and contribute to activities within the park. Under 40 feet in height, they will be distinct from the taller office and residential buildings to the north of Water Street, SE. They intentionally form an urban edge at the intersection of 4th and Water Streets but are more organically shaped on their other facades, as befit pavilions on a public plaza within a park. The dynamic forms will draw the public into the park from Water Street and open dramatically to fuller views of the plaza, the landscaped park elements, the visual marker, and the river.

The proposed visual marker on the boardwalk will be visible from the edge of the park to the north as well as from the water and south bank of the Anacostia River. It is an elegant design that is austere in form, material, and construction, conveying the contemporary character of new construction at The Yards and also the industrial history of the site.

The staff supports the visual marker's design and the proposed height of 70 feet, acknowledging that the height exceeds that allowed for structures in the waterfront zone designation and will require approval by the Zoning Commission. The marker is an unoccupied tower and therefore complies with the Height of Buildings Act.

The Master Plan for the Southeast Federal Center reflects the designation in the Memorials and Museums Master Plan for a commemorative work (Site 37) aligned with the New Jersey axis and the waterfront within the Southeast Federal Center, in the area now designated for the Great Lawn, which is intended to be an informal and open grassy area of several acres. The Commission noted in its February 2008 action that GSA must return to the Commission requesting an amendment to the Southeast Federal Center Master Plan if the Waterfront Site 37 is proposed for relocation. GSA is preparing the amendment for submission to the Commission.

Forest City Washington has committed to completing Phase I of the Waterfront Park in 2010. The staff looks forward to reviewing Phase III of the Waterfront Park and future construction phases at The Yards leading to the development of a vibrant, mixed-use waterfront community that will enhance and benefit the entire city.



Above, looking north, view of the three retail buildings from the Anacostia River.
Below, looking west, view of proposed retail building on Water Street from 4th Street, SE.





Above, looking east, view of rehabilitated Lumber Shed from Water Street, SE.
Below, looking west, nighttime illumination of park, retail buildings, visual marker, and pedestrian bridge.



CONFORMANCE

Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital

The following policies in the *Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital: Federal Elements* apply, in particular the following policies in the Preservation and Historic Features Element:

Express the dignity befitting the image of the federal government in the national capital. Federal development should adhere to the high aesthetic standards already established by the planning and design legacy of the nation's capital. This legacy encompasses both the old and the new—the capital's rich architectural heritage, continually augmented by the design contributions of each generation. (National Capital Image: #1)

Plan carefully for appropriate uses and compatible design in and near the monumental core to reinforce and enhance its special role in the image of the nation's capital. (National Capital Image: #2)

Protect the settings of historic properties, including views to and from the sites where significant, and integral parts of the historic character of the property. (Stewardship of Historic Properties: #6)

Ensure the continued preservation of federal historic properties through ongoing maintenance and transfer to an appropriate new steward when disposal of historic properties is appropriate. (Stewardship of Historic Properties: #10)

Plan, where feasible, for federal historic properties to serve as catalysts for local economic development and tourism. (Stewardship of Historic Properties: #15)

and the following policies in the Parks and Open Space Element:

Maintain and conserve federal open space as a means of shaping and enhancing urban areas. (Preservation and Maintenance: #2)

Promote public access along the region's waterfronts (Connectivity and Access: #1)

Plan, complete, and maintain connection between public parks and open space (Connectivity and Access: #2)

Provide facilities and areas for events such as concerts, fairs, and displays throughout the National Capital Region (Parks and Landscapes: #3)

Link open space along the waterfront to provide a continuous public open space system (Parks and Landscapes, Waterfront Parks: #1)

Develop the banks of the Anacostia River as a high-quality urban park with a mix of active and passive recreational opportunities. (Parks and Landscapes, Waterfront Parks: #2)

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)

Pursuant to Section 3(f) of the Southeast Federal Center Public-Private Development Act of 2000 (Public Law 106-407), the Commission is acting in its capacity to comment on a proposal involving the Southeast Federal Center. Since NCPC advises GSA on Southeast Federal Center proposals, the Commission has no independent NEPA obligation regarding this review.

The applicant is the General Services Administration (GSA), a federal agency that has its own NEPA obligations and has completed an Environmental Impact Statement, finalized in June 2004, on the planned development of the Southeast Federal Center. GSA's Record of Decision (ROD), concluding the Environmental Impact Statement process, identifies the actions that are now submitted to NCPC in agreement with the stipulations of the public law. Staff reviewed the EIS and took it into account in the current review. The current submission conforms to GSA's ROD.

National Historic Preservation Act

GSA executed a Programmatic Agreement (PA) with the D.C. State Historic Preservation Office (DC SHPO) and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation for the treatment of the Navy Yard Annex Historic District and the remaining historic buildings. Design and treatment guidelines were developed in consultation with the other signatories and with consulting parties (including NCPC). In addition, GSA undertook archaeological investigations at the site.

The PA guides further and future review of proposals for the historic buildings on the site and for treatment of archaeological features and other site conditions and characteristics of the setting, which is a historic district eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

The PA's guidelines call for new design to be contemporary and to complement the historic industrial character of the site. At the same time, that character should serve as a departure point for inviting architecture that represents current practice and that will serve as a catalyst for development and public activity.

The current submission is consistent with the PA, which also includes provisions for review by the consulting parties. The submission before the Commission has also been provided to other agencies and parties for their review and comment. The DC State Historic Preservation Office is also reviewing the rehabilitation plans for the Lumber Shed (which will be developed fully, beyond the 35% plans in the current submission) for conformance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Treatment of Historic Properties.

GSA's Section 106 consultation included a wide range of parties, including the D.C. SHPO, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, NCPC, and the Commission of Fine Arts, adjacent and nearby federal and District agency representatives, community representatives, and interested planning and historic preservation organizations.

The Washington Navy Yard Annex was determined eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places by the Register's Keeper on December 7, 1977. The annex (subsequently the SEFC, now The Yards) includes six historic structures, one of which—the Lumber Shed—is within the boundaries of the Waterfront Park. In addition, the historic district includes street rights-of-way that will serve as public spaces providing access, long axial views, and the opportunity for vistas to the waterfront.

CONSULTATION

Coordinating Committee

The Coordinating Committee reviewed the Waterfront Park proposal on January 14, 2009, and forwarded the proposal to the Commission with the statement that the project had been coordinated with all agencies represented. The participating agencies were: NCPC, the District of Columbia Office of Planning, the National Park Service, and the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority.