

THE
FUTURE
OF
AMERICA'S
NATIONAL
PARKS

First Annual
Centennial Strategy for

National Mall & Memorial Parks

August 2007

CENTENNIAL INITIATIVE



Site: NAMA

Year: 2007

Vision Statement

The National Mall remains the American pilgrimage -where we celebrate our heritage and rights. "Washington, D.C. is more than the seat of government and residence ... It is a second home to every American, and the symbol of this nation to the world." (House Congressional Record, October 14, 1972). "More than any other city . . . more than any other region, the Nation's Capital should represent the finest in living environment which Americans can plan and build." (JFK 1961) Today, we realize that having the "finest in living environments" includes making sure they are sustainable and incorporate green technologies. The National Mall & Memorial Parks Centennial Initiative vision is to increase visible stewardship; improve the condition of resources and visitor experiences in order to meet the high standards and quality expected by the American public. The National Mall and Memorial Parks goal is to model excellence in urban park design, events management, waste management, visitor orientation and wayfinding, as well as in visitor education and experiences. Our objective is to restore the level of care and beauty fostered by Lady Bird Johnson, who was actively involved in the city's improvements more than 40 years ago. A recent tribute in the Washington Post (Sunday, July 15, 2007; C01) pointed out that much "of her beautification remains so much a part of the city's visual landscape that it's hard to imagine it hasn't always existed." Annually over 25 million visit and the resulting impacts on the National Mall dismays the American public. Planning studies have presented promising solutions that we look forward to implementing as the National Mall & Memorial Parks kicks off a massive 8-10 year revitalization effort. Our partner, the Trust for the National Mall stands ready to help implement this Centennial stewardship reinvestment as the National Mall and Memorial Parks continues to manage conflicting uses, First Amendment Demonstrations; preservation of our oldest federal lands; while providing recreation and welcoming our national and international guests.

Park/ Superintendent/ Program Manager

Stephen Lorenzetti

Site: NAMA

STEWARDSHIP

Provide inspiring, safe, and accessible places for people to enjoy - the standard to which all other park systems aspire.

Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

Improve NPS messaging. Public enjoyment, health and safety in the National Mall & Memorial Parks would be greatly enhanced with improved orientation and wayfinding. Urban parks need easy to understand, state-of-the-art sign and information systems using advanced technology. The coordinated system will elevate National Park Service identity and mission and include interactive on-site orientation map/kiosks; wayfinding signs; multi-lingual welcome; website improvements to aid trip planning, event permitting and virtual tours; and park waysides. Electronic message signs will inform visitors about activities and improve emergency communication. Benefiting all visitors the system will also simplify park operations and provide up-to-date information about destinations, activities and services. The sign system is part of updating the park furnishings to unify National Park Service areas in a manner that supports the National Park Service purpose and mission. Additionally, cell phone tours, pod casts, and wi-fi would improve enjoyment.

The work described currently is supported by OFS and/ or PMIS

Site: NAMA

STEWARDSHIP

Improve the condition of park resources and assets.

Rehabilitate high-priority historic buildings to good condition, and help communities to preserve their history through programs like Preserve America.

Mall revitalization. The incomparable Mall is a source of national pride and the primary civic space in our nation. Public concerns include landscape health and appearance, health of venerable American elms and obstruction of designed views. The project improves health, condition and durability of park resources, reduces compacted soil and builds a more sustainable civic space. Soils would be replaced and durable turf installed. A rugged irrigation system would support post event turf recovery and mitigate drought. Events utilities (water, electric, and communication) would reduce damage from temporary events and aid cost recovery. Gravel walks would be paved with enduring, high quality materials to improve accessibility, lower life cycle costs, and reduce operations. Seventy year old elms, at half their 150 year life span, would be protected. Seasonal flowers or displays would restore Lady Bird Johnson's legacy. Small interactive water features and cooling stations would improve public health, provide relief from sweltering conditions. Planning studies revealed landscape quality investments produce improved behavior, reducing park maintenance operations.

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Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

Continue to work with National Capital Region on refining all aspects of the existing inventories. Improve cultural landscape including Tidal Basin, Mall , Union Square and Constitution Gardens. Protect Cherry and Elm trees.

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Site: NAMA

STEWARDSHIP

Set the standard of excellence in urban park landscape design and maintenance.

Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

Events Venue. Take the pressure off the Mall by redesigning areas as sustainable, paved civic space and speaker's corners to better meet needs for First Amendment demonstrations and special events. The project would improve pedestrian circulation, eliminate large scale social trails, and protect listed historic trees. Provide utility infrastructure to facilitate events, provide public address, reduce impact on the experience of others and make possible efficient installation and take down of stages, large screens or related events construction. Construct permanent restroom facilities combined with backstage and utility infrastructure access and media stand. Design locations for events stages in a manner that retains the primary east west view during events. Provide shade and explore interactive water features or cooling stations. Install related educational waysides to tell the history of development, the role of civic space in a democracy, the right to peacefully petition government, and branches of government.

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Site: NAMA

STEWARDSHIP

Encourage children to be future conservationists.

Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

Cherry Walk at the Tidal Basin. Increase education for children about the mission of the NPS to protect park resources and facilitate and reinforce a conservation ethic. Children and adults will better understand the need to protect root zones of cherry trees and will comprehend the damage from tree climbing, limb breaking and flower picking. Children will understand the role of trees in improving air quality and making more livable cities. Children will understand the role of native and introduced vegetation in the urban and natural environment.

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Site: NAMA

ENVIRONMENT

Inspire an environmental conscience in Americans.

Establish programs to showcase exemplary environmental practices and increase visitor awareness of how the practices apply to their daily lives, as measured by surveys.

Mall revitalization. The incomparable Mall is a landscape environmentally stressed by human use while it is also a source of national pride and the primary civic space in our nation. The project will raise environmental conscience by providing a pervasive educational approach stressing the importance of sustainable urban landscapes to the health of cities and their residents. Surveys will provide feedback about understanding human impacts on the environment at large. Education will include "what you can do to improve our environment" messages in waysides, resource protection signs, trash and recycling containers. Education will use comparisons and questions to help the public of all ages understand on what it takes for any living thing to thrive. The focus will be on the character defining seventy year old elms which are at half their 150 year life span. Education will provide information about successful NPS programs to combat Dutch elm disease. Concession facilities and planned restrooms will be seen as learning opportunities and venues to instill a stewardship ethic.

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Site: NAMA

ENVIRONMENT

Engage partners, communities, and visitors in shared environmental stewardship.

Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

Our public, including the city and planning commissions, strongly supports environmental stewardship and would like the National Mall areas to model the best in green design and practices for the nation. All projects provide opportunities for partnerships and increased volunteerism to achieve this. Partners support reducing environmental impacts and helping the public understand the importance of stewardship and public actions needed to protect and nurture the environment. Education about environmental issues, goals and results would be widely shared through waysides and programs. Supported by partners such as the Trust for the National Mall, elm tree education will be increase; impacts of events will be understood and event spaces will be redesigned to be sustainable; and the Tidal Basin water quality and flushing improved; aging, failing Tidal Basin walls will be replaced and some wall sections raised so they are not regularly inundated by tides. Thousands of cherry trees would be protected from trampling and compaction with wider walkways or institution of measures to control pedestrian circulation. Increased tree planting and improved canopies would improve air quality.

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Site: NAMA

RECREATION

Encourage collaboration among and assist park and recreation systems at every level—federal, regional, state, local—to help build an outdoor recreation network accessible to all Americans.

Rehabilitate over 2,000 miles of trails within or connected to national parks, including trails accessible to those with disabilities.

Rehabilitate a highly used 2.1 mile urban trail loop passing the Jefferson, FDR Memorials and the future Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial. Facilitate a superlative pedestrian experience; improve accessibility for people with disabilities; encourage walking as part of a healthy life style; and afford visitors the year-round opportunity to appreciate the Tidal Basin. The walk winds by cherry trees, a lantern and pagoda donated to the United States by Japan nearly one hundred years ago. The walk is the highlight of the National Cherry Blossom Festival, which attended by 2-4 million people annually is the largest event held in the NPS. An extensive network of social trails results from the very narrow width of the walk and portions inundated daily by tidal water. The cherry walk is used by walkers, bicycle riders as well as people with disabilities and baby strollers. Paving surfaces in some areas do not meet ADA standards. It is not possible for people to pass in other sections. Pedestrian seating and lighting is needed. The walk needs to include photo points to reduce conflicts between users. Interpretive wayside exhibits would enhance the trail experience.

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Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

Recreation will be improved by providing facilities geared to changing urban recreational patterns and introducing users to the range of opportunities offered. Connections to neighboring recreation areas such as East Potomac Park, the Waterfronts, George Washington Memorial Parkway and Rock Creek Park will be improved and made safer with improved recreational circulation. From bicycling to segways, boating to in-line skating - the project will meet the needs of individuals as well as organizations for safe, fun or exciting recreational pursuits. Groups such as the Washington Area Bicyclist Association, sports leagues, in-line skate groups will better co-exist with informal recreational users. Opportunities for people with disabilities to participate in activities such as wheelchair soccer will improve. Quiet recreation will be facilitated with portable lawn chairs. Improvements in the condition of lawns will increase informal recreational enjoyment and pick-up games. NPS will continue to partner with the city to meet urban recreational needs through the CapitalSpace program. Recreational permitting, monitoring and recovery processes will be improved.

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Site: NAMA

RECREATION

- Establish "volun-tourism" excursions to national parks for volunteers to help achieve natural and cultural resource protection goals.
- Increase annual volunteer hours by 100 percent, from 5.2 million hours to 10.4 million hours.

The Centennial vision includes many opportunities for volunteers. This fall, the Trust for the National Mall will sponsor a bulb planting by volunteers and leaders. They will work to encourage other volunteer efforts. EPA will continue to supply volunteers to support recycling at major events.

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Site: NAMA

EDUCATION

- Introduce young people and their families to national parks by using exciting media and technology.
- Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

Improve National Park Service messaging. Urban parks especially need to use advanced technology and media that is engaging to youth and their families. Recognizable and easy to use interactive media and kiosks, touchable, tactile models of the National Mall, state-of-the-art on-site orientation map/kiosks; multi-lingual welcome; and inviting websites will reach out with virtual experiences to entice youth into authentic experiences within the parks. Additionally, cell phone tours and pod casts can be geared to specific audiences and augment educational experiences.

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Site: NAMA

EDUCATION

- Promote life-long learning to connect generations through park experiences.
- Enroll an additional two million children in the Junior Ranger program.

National Mall & Memorial Parks staff plans to increase participation in the Junior Ranger program by improving current program and publishing new print and on-line materials. New Junior Ranger programs will be developed that deepen awareness of young visitors attending large scale special celebrations during Veterans Day, Memorial Day, the Martin Luther King Jr. birthday celebration, The National Cherry Blossom Festival, and Independence Day. The Education Coordinator will reach out to more school groups, many of which use Junior Ranger materials to organize park visits.

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Site: NAMA

EDUCATION

Impart to every American a sense of their citizen ownership of their national parks.

Increase visitors' satisfaction, understanding, and appreciation of the parks they visit.

Improve NPS messaging. Coordinated with the city and other destinations, the system will elevate the NPS identity, purpose and mission and focus on America's greatest idea - public ownership and stewardship of our shared treasures. Public feedback states that pride in public spaces is pride in nation and what it stands for. Public responsibility attending citizen ownership will be imparted through stewardship messaging, educational waysides and materials. Trash and recycling containers will include conservation and ownership messages.

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Site: NAMA

PROFESSIONALISM

Promote a safety and health culture for all employees and visitors.

Reduce the number of employee lost-time incidents and serious visitor injuries by 20 percent.

National Mall and Memorial Parks is host to approximately 25 million visitors annually. The projects associated with this initiative will include safety components for employees and visitors through messaging, orientation and area improvements such as improved lighting.

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