

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

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NCPC File No. 6690/5413



RE-OPENING OF 10TH AND I STREETS, NW (OLD CONVENTION CENTER SITE)

Portions of 10th and I Streets, NW
Washington, D.C.

Submitted by the District of Columbia, Office of the Deputy Mayor
for Planning and Economic Development

March 27, 2008

Abstract

The Office of the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development for the District of Columbia has submitted preliminary and final site plans for reopening the portions of 10th and I Streets in northwest Washington, D.C. that were closed at the time of construction of the Old Convention Center site. Memorandums of Agreement for both the DC Arena (currently the Verizon Center) and the new Convention Center require the District to restore these L'Enfant street rights-of-way to the configuration that existed prior to the construction of the old Convention Center; a land covenant has been recorded by the District to require the streets' re-opening.

The streets will be designed and constructed by the developer working on the southern portion of the Old Convention Center Site, and maintained under the jurisdiction of the District Department of Transportation.

Commission Action Requested by Applicant

Approval of preliminary and final site plans pursuant to 40 U.S.C. § 8722(b)(1) and (e).

Executive Director's Recommendation

The Commission:

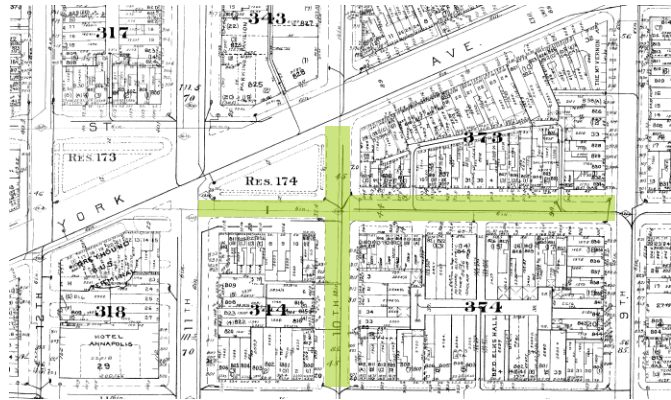
Approves the preliminary and final site plans for the re-opening of 10th and I Streets, NW as shown on NCPC Map File No. 21.00(40.00)42497.

Commends the applicant and their development team on a high-quality, durable, and sustainable design that respects the historic L'Enfant streets and reservations of the District of Columbia.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Background

Redevelopment plans for a large-scale, mixed-use development on the old Convention Center site include re-opening the portions of 10th and I Streets that were closed at the time the old Convention Center was constructed. Memorandums of Agreement for both the DC Arena (currently the Verizon Center) and the new Convention Center require the District to restore these rights-of-way to the configuration that existed prior to the construction of the old Convention Center; a land covenant has been recorded by the District to require the streets' re-opening.

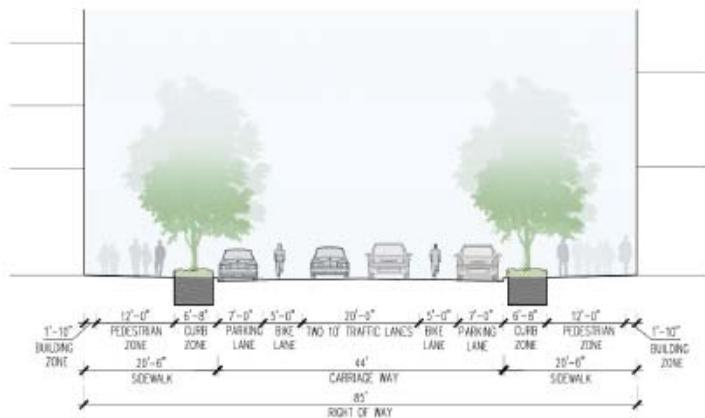


BAIST MAP (1965)

Proposal

The development team has proposed the re-opening of 10th and I Streets within the site of the Old Convention Center, restoring the prior configuration to that shown on the 1965 Baist Map. The design approach of the overall development, which also applies to the streetscape designs, includes three guiding principles: connecting to the city, integrating into the neighborhood, and creating a unique and inviting destination.

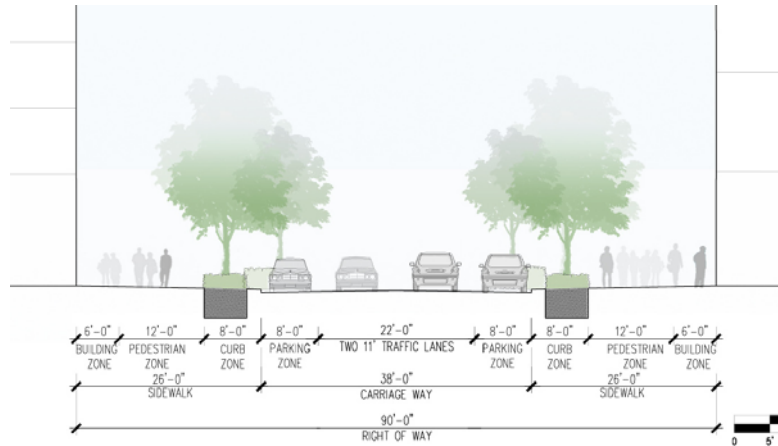
10th Street NW will be reopened as a two way street between H Street, NW and New York Avenue. As recommended by DDOT, 10th Street is designed with one 10' traffic lane in each



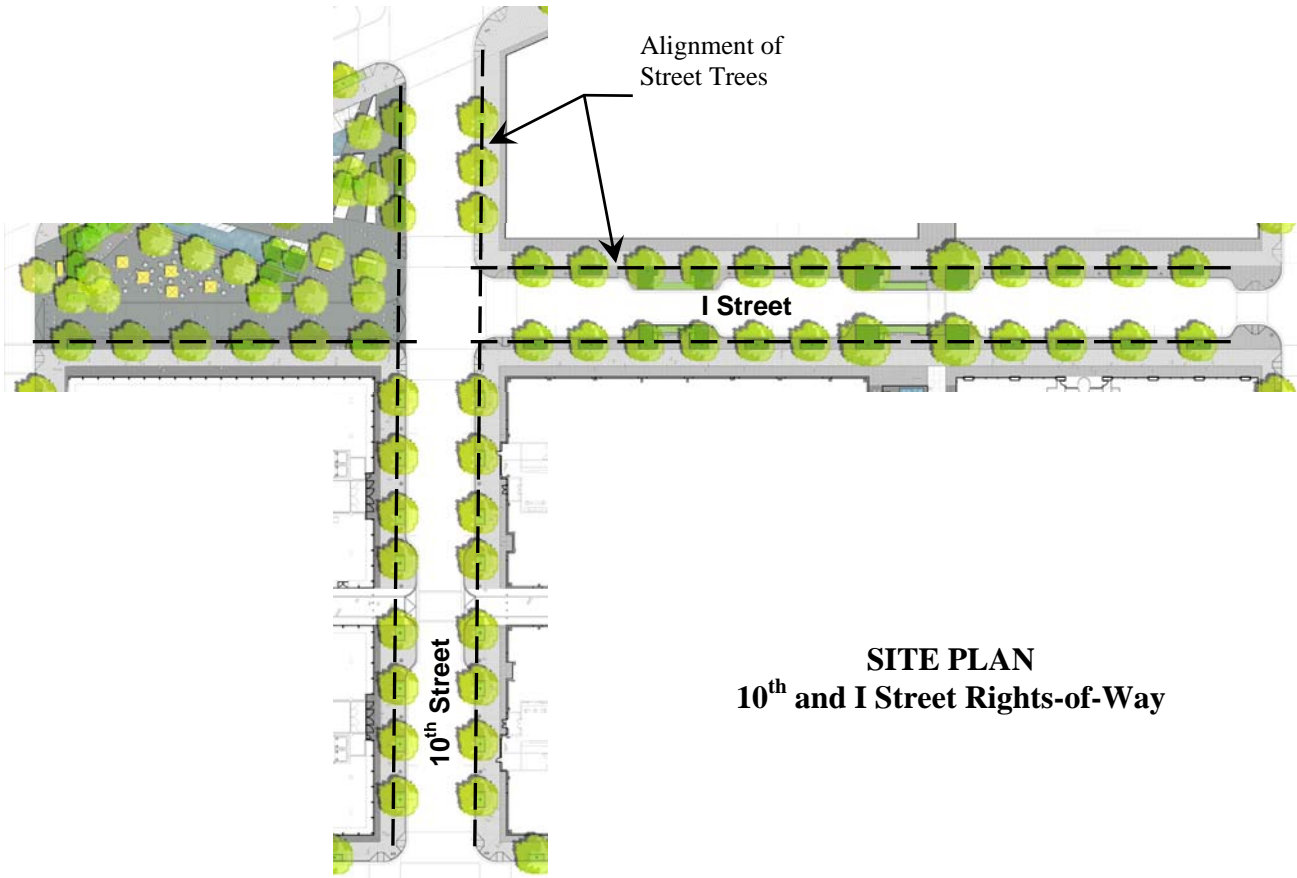
10th STREET – CROSS SECTION

direction, one 5' bicycle lane in each direction and a 7' parking lane on each side. The adjacent sidewalks will consist of a DC standard granite curb and gutter, concrete pavers and a band of stone at the base of the buildings. In addition, there will be a pedestrian bulb-out and midblock crossing at the intersection with the pedestrian alley system. Street trees will maintain a consistent axis north/south, framing views along that historic L'Enfant corridor.

Eye Street, NW will be reopened as a two way street between 9th and 10th Streets, NW and as a pedestrian only street (with provision for emergency vehicles) between 10th and 11th Streets, NW. Traffic analysis showed that opening I Street NW all the way to 11th Street, NW created a difficult and undesirable intersection at 11th Street. As recommended by DDOT, I Street NW between 9th and 10th Streets NW is designed with one 11' traffic lane in each direction and an 8' parking lane on each side. The adjacent sidewalks will consist of a DC standard granite curb and gutter, concrete pavers, and a band of stone at the base of the buildings and in the tree zone. In addition, there will be three pedestrian bulb-outs and a mid-block crossing at the entrance to Central Plaza. The street trees will maintain a consistent axis east/west, framing views along that historic L'Enfant street.



I STREET – CROSS SECTION



**SITE PLAN
10th and I Street Rights-of-Way**

Although I Street between 10th and 11th Streets will be re-established to the configuration shown in the 1965 Baist map, this portion will be closed to regular vehicular traffic, with the right-of-way being maintained to allow for use by emergency vehicles. The granite curb line will be established, but paving along I Street, will be raised flush to the curb level, allowing this section of the street to be temporarily closed for special events and seasonal venues. In accordance with DDOT's recommendations, the street will be 22' wide. This width will accommodate two 11' lanes if DDOT wishes to open the street to regular traffic in the future. (For related project information, refer to NCPC File Number 6690, Reservation 174: Northwest Park - April 3, 2008.)

PROJECT ANALYSIS

Staff supports the overall site development plan and commends the development team on a high-quality, durable, and sustainable design that respects the historic L'Enfant streets of the District of Columbia. The proposed designs reflect the rights-of-way shown on the 1965 Baist map.

Staff notes that design refinements by the design team have been made in response to consultation with NCPC staff. Street edges and visual corridors have been reinforced through the use of granite curbing, plantings, lighting, and other elements conforming to the Downtown Streetscape Regulations (DDOT August 2000). Additionally, all street trees are to be aligned, restoring the view sheds that are significant contributing elements to the L'Enfant Plan National Register Historic District.

CONFORMANCE

Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital

The overall design concept for the park is consistent with the *Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital*. The Preservation and Historic Features Element includes several policies related to the preservation and enhancement of the historic street rights-of-way that form the District's urban design framework.

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)

NCPC reviews this action by the District of Columbia in the Central Area for approval. Since NCPC has approval authority over this project, the National Environmental Policy Act applies. This project reestablishes the historic streets and rights of way of two historic L'Enfant streets; it is returning the streets to the status quo prior to construction of the Old Convention Center. Therefore, under the "status quo" doctrine set forth in the case of *Sierra Club v. Hassell*, 636 F. 2d 1095 (5th Cir. 1981), no further environmental review is required. Application of the "status quo" doctrine to this project is further supported by the Memorandums of Agreement associated with the sports arena (now Verizon Center) MOA and the new Convention Center MOA.

National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA)

NCPC is the federal agency responsible for Section 106 review of the project. The streets at this significant location in the L'Enfant Plan are still in federal ownership but will soon be transferred to the District of Columbia government. The project site is in the Central Area, within which the Commission has approval authority for the District's public projects.

In accordance with the Memorandums of Agreement associated with the sports arena (now Verizon Center) MOA of 1995 and the new Convention Center MOA of 1997, the streets within the Old Convention Center site have been designed to their previous configuration. The 1965 Baist Map was used for verification. The State Historic Preservation Officer for the District of Columbia (DCSHPO) has reviewed and commented on the proposed plans and specifications for their compatibility with the stipulated MOA terms. He has concurred with the Acting Executive Director that the District of Columbia has fulfilled its 1995 agreement to "reopen the underlying blocks of 10th and I Streets, NW to vehicular traffic and restore those streets to the configuration that existed immediately prior to the construction of the [Old] Convention Center."

COORDINATION

Coordinating Committee

The Coordinating Committee reviewed the proposal at its March 12, 2008 meeting and forwarded it to the Commission with the statement that the project has been coordinated with all agencies represented. The participating agencies were NCPC; the District of Columbia Office of Planning; the District Department of Transportation; the Department of Housing and Community Development; the General Services Administration and the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority.

Commission of Fine Arts

This final development plans for the Old Convention Center site were presented to the Commission at an information presentation on March 20, 2008; the Commission commented favorably.