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Lisa MacSpadden
202-482-7263 or lisa@ncpc.gov
Stephen Staudigl
202-482-7279 or stephen@ncpc.gov

**NCPC Hears Information Presentation on the
National Museum of African American History and Culture**

VA Medical Center, NIST Master Plan, and Bureau of Engraving and Printing also Reviewed

Washington, DC – At its monthly meeting today the National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC) received an informational presentation from the team designing the National Museum of African American History and Culture. Representatives from the Freelon Adjaye Bond/SmithGroup presented their firm’s competition winning entry and discussed the museum’s design relative to its site on the National Mall. The museum will be located on five acres near the Washington Monument. The site is bounded by Constitution Avenue, Madison Drive, 14th and 15th streets, NW. Construction is expected to begin in 2012 and last for three years.

Several members of the Commission urged the designers to keep in mind the context of the National Mall, surrounding buildings, and adjacent Washington Monument as they move forward with the design process and. NCPC Chairman L. Preston Bryant, Jr. made note that the design portrayed in the informational presentation will inevitably evolve during the official review process in order to meet the design principles developed during the Section 106 process. Several Commission members commended the team for a design that is unique and original.

“The building is absolutely exquisite,” said Commissioner Stacie S. Turner. “The direction [designers] are going in will create something unique, yet complement the adjacent buildings already in place. I hope your task force is talking closely with NCPC staff so you can get real specific about what terms of form, style, etc. will be acceptable.”

“I wouldn’t want this to be another big white Beaux Arts box on the National Mall,” said Harriet Tregoning, director of the District’s Office of Planning. I’m expecting something different and exuberant that says what it is. I welcome the opportunity to look at subsequent proposals.”

Following the informational presentation, the Commission approved a master plan update for the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) campus located in Gaithersburg, Maryland. In its approval NCPC encouraged NIST to develop a more ambitious Transportation Management Plan and commended their water conservation efforts. The 581-acre suburban campus is located between Quince Orchard Road (MD Route 124) and Interstate 270. The existing campus has 3.44 million square feet of space in 55 buildings. The plan submitted by the Department of Commerce calls for 21 new projects including several new buildings, additions to existing buildings, and infrastructure upgrades that will primarily consolidate and replace obsolete facilities. No net gain of employees is anticipated.

In a second action item, the Commission commented favorably on concept designs submitted by the Department of the Treasury to rehabilitate the existing tour entrance bridge at the main Bureau of Engraving and Printing located at 310 14th Street, SW in Washington, DC. In preparation for its Sesquicentennial in 2012, the Bureau wants to expand and enhance its public tour experience. The proposed project would rehabilitate the current steel truss entrance bridge that is part of the historic building constructed in 1914.

The bridge's metal panel walls and single-pane windows would be replaced with metal-framed glass panels to highlight the historic bridge structure, increase natural light, and better accommodate future exhibits. The existing entrance area would be upgraded and a small theatre added.

The Commission recommended that the Treasury continue to work closely with NCPC to examine ways to improve pedestrian circulation and the streetscape along 14th and 15th streets and to work with NCPC, the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts, and the DC State Historic Preservation Office to determine whether the public plaza on 14th Street could be restored to its original curvilinear design.

In the final item on the agenda, NCPC provided comments on the draft master plan for the Veterans Affairs Medical Center (VA) campus located at the intersection of North Capitol Street and Michigan Avenue, NW in Washington, DC. Among eight different comments provided by the Commission to the Department of Veterans Affairs were several requirements to be addressed before the plan returns for preliminary and final approval. The Commission:

- Required the applicant to modify the master plan to reflect recent planning work for the Armed Forces Retirement Home Master Plan and the North Capitol Street Cloverleaf Feasibility Study for active ground floor uses and build-to lines along Irving Street, NW.
- Required the applicant to explore further the design of 1st Street, NW, as a pedestrian and bicycle connection for the VA Medical Center and between the Armed Forces Retirement Home site and the McMillan Sand Filtration site.
- Required the applicant to provide more detail in the final master plan concerning the parking phasing to demonstrate that the campus parking ratio meets the 1:4 ratio stipulated in the Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital: Federal Elements as the master plan is realized and to submit additional justification for a proposed increase in visitor parking.
- Required the applicant to explore alternatives in the final master plan to address potential visual impacts of the Domiciliary and the Community Living Center on the North Capitol Street corridor and the Armed Forces Retirement Home viewshed. Alternatives for minimizing the impact include shifting these components, reducing their scale, or adding landscape screening.
- Required the applicant to refine the perimeter security proposal in the final master plan to balance security needs and future planning objectives within an urban context.

The master plan provides a framework for the next 20 years for the 35-acre site. The development would add 818,000 gross square feet of additional space to the current 900,000 gross square-foot facility. The existing surface parking lots would be replaced with two parking garages, and new landscaping would be added. The Commission also approved preliminary and final site and building plans for the expansion of the Medical Center's 4C Wing; and of the operating room, emergency department, and decontamination center, as well as for preliminary and final site and building plans for the Fisher House.

This month's agenda included four consent calendar items (no presentations given):

- Comments on concept designs for the restoration and rehabilitation of the Peirce Mill Building located in Rock Creek Park in Washington, DC.
- Comments on the concept design for Tranquility Hall and Bachelor Enlisted Quarters at the National Naval Medical Center located in Bethesda, Maryland.
- Final site and building plans for a water tank and pump house at Fort Belvoir Engineering Proving Ground, North Post located in Fairfax County, Virginia.
- Approval of the revised master plan for the Food and Drug Administration White Oak facility located in Silver Spring, Maryland.

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