

PROJECT	Smithsonian Institution- Revitalization of the Historic Core (RoHC)	MEETING DATE	3/22/2023
ORGANIZER	Smithsonian Institution, Carly Bond (moderator)	TIME	2:00-4:00pm
LOCATION	Virtual/Zoom		
PANELISTS	Carly Bond- Smithsonian Institution Christopher Lethbridge- Smithsonian Institution Brenda Sanchez- Smithsonian Institution Beth Ziebarth- Smithsonian Institution Lauren Brandes- Smithsonian Institution Matthew Chalifoux, EYP-Loring Anthony Bochicchio, EYP-Loring Faye Harwell, Rhodeside and Harwell		
SUBJECT	Consulting Parties Meeting #11		

MEETING MINUTES

Purpose – This was Consulting Parties Meeting 11 for the Revitalization of the Historic Core (RoHC) project of the Smithsonian Institution. The meeting was held in compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act.

The agenda for this meeting was focused on Phase 2 of the Section 106 consultation. The meeting agenda included the following design issues:

- **Landscape – South Entry Ramp, Railings, Paving**
- **South Tower Elevator Interior Effects**
- **Roof Mechanical Elements**
- **Lightning Protection**

Phase 2 of Section 106 consultation will continue through 2023.

The meeting was assembled virtually and included a slide presentation, which has been posted on the RoHC project website. Attendees were asked to post questions or comments in the chat during the presentation. The following is a list of the questions and comments with a summary of the responses. Information regarding the project, including the slide presentation, is available through the project webpage: <https://www.sifacilities.si.edu/historic-core>

Questions and Comments

Written

LANDSCAPE

1. **Q:** What is the proposed ramp surface material up to the existing steps at the South Entry in all options?

R: Brick. This is the composition of the sidewalks in the Haupt Garden, which will be retained.

2. **Q:** What is the material for the landings?

R: Our current thinking is to use the same granite as we are planning to use elsewhere, but the design team is still going through the evaluation process. The landings at the existing entries on the north side of the building are granite, primarily a pinkish-brown color.

3. **Q:** Have you considered how to embed ferrous railing materials in stone or concrete? I'm not familiar with any method that works over the long term that doesn't involve molten lead to mediate between expansion of the metal, which will inevitably happen when it rusts, and the rigid masonry.

R: We are coordinating with the structural engineers and architectural design team. In recent projects we have utilized details with an epoxy to anchor ferrous materials. We may have to galvanize the posts, but we are still researching this detail.

4. **Q:** Have you considered using Longmeadow sandstone for Seneca sandstone. I believe there are still producing firms. East Longmeadow was the name used for the stone from the same geological formation as Seneca which was at the southern end. So, the brownstone and the silica grey of the Seneca were geologically the same. Why not consult the Smithsonian curator in Natural History?

R: That is not a name the design team has come across in our research. Our building envelope consultant, SGH has been sourcing replacements for the Seneca Sandstone. In addition to matching the existing color for visible compatibility, we are also testing the existing and proposed materials to identify a compatible match based on material properties. We are not aware of any active sandstone quarries in the United States (the Portland Sandstone Quarry in Connecticut was closed in 2012) but we will continue to look for potential sources.

5. **Q:** I would prefer not to extend the Seneca sandstone out to create the stairs in Option 4 because it feels like you're creating something that competes with the historic. Will the original stairs still peak out or be discernible?

R: Yes, the existing treads would still be visible on the ends, on either side of the sloped walkway leading to the south door.

6. **Q:** Thank you Faye for the information and walking us through the current 4 options for the south entrance alterations. NCP staff feels Options 3 should be dismissed, as it feels cluttered, and the re-orientation of the benches to face one another seems odd. We were leaning towards Options 1 and 2 as you retain a single form of entry, rather than separating them out to new ramps and steps, even with the issues of slope. Thank you!

R: Thank you, the design team has also considered the impact on Universally Accessible Design with option 4.

7. **Q:** In Option 4 can you describe what happens between the existing stair and the new ramps? Could become a left-over space.

R: There will be a lower surface that is paved, similar to what exists today on either side of the entry ramp. This will be open to grade to the east and west allowing staff to access for maintenance.

SOUTH TOWER ELEVATOR

8. **Q:** Why are the doors in the elevator cabs not aligned to each other? It would situate them better at the south lobby if they were closer to the outside walls and be more centered on the openings.

R: The layout we presented utilized elevators with a single sliding door, which drove the door layout. We will work with our elevator consultant to investigate options that will provide better alignment between the new openings in the north wall of the Children's Room and the elevator doors.

9. **Q:** NCPC also supports the lower arched openings and simple framed openings for the elevators.

R: Thank you.

ROOF ELEMENTS

10. **Q:** When will new basement windows and basement window alterations be presented?

R: April or May, but probably May.

11. **Q:** We appreciate the efforts that were made to minimize the visibility of the [louvered penthouses at the] north towers but these will definitely cause adverse effects and the DC SHPO believe additional efforts are needed to make them less visible.

R: We will continue to push the designs to minimize the visual impact, but the options are limited.

12. **Q:** Are the elevator extensions on the roof really going to be green, or is that just a color to help us see the size & shape of what's being proposed? If not green, what color would they be? Brown would minimize visibility.

R: We are proposing that all new rooftop elements (elevator penthouses, louvered penthouses) will be clad in copper, similar to the existing elevator machine room penthouse and louvered penthouses on the Main Building. When installed they would be "bright" copper, which in a few months will turn to a darker brown (similar to statuary bronze.) Over time the copper will patinate to the cuprous oxide "green".

13. **Q:** Do they have to be green (patinated copper)? The color seems to really make them stick out in the renderings.

R: The color rendition of patinated copper in renderings is not highly accurate. We would recommend looking at the photographs of the existing copper clad elements on the roof to judge the visual impact of the color. The design intent is for all the roof elements to receive a similar finish treatment to read as a family. Copper on roofs is a traditional material which we believe will look appropriate on the roof of the Castle.

14. **Q:** Also, the hipped roof on the structures—does this help or hurt visibility?

R: When viewed from the ground, as shown in the renderings, the hipped roofs are not visible.

Verbal

LANDSCAPE

15. **Q:** What period [of design] are we perpetuating at the South Tower entry? There is a lot to be said of the 4th option, by wrapping the ramp around the planter.

R: The design is intended to be sympathetic to the design for the Haupt Garden by Sasaki and Lester Collins from 1987.

16. **Q:** Granite at landings makes sense; is it rendered in pink?

R: No, what is shown at the stair is supposed to be sandstone

17. **Q:** Isn't sandstone soft for a stair? Is it historic? As the materials for the landscape have been developed, I have been an advocate of neutral grays.

R: There are existing sandstone historic stair treads at the south entry. In the photos you can see that they show signs of weathering and wear.

18. **Q:** All of the designs for the south entrance are really interesting; option 4 tends to solve a lot of problems but more complicated than the others. Although it's not universal design tends to preserve the steps. Concerning the railings, are the circles part of an existing motif? Tends to call a lot of attention to the railings. Using two different railings seems complicated. Has design team considered using one, simple railing?

R: The circle motif does exist in the Haupt Garden. The proposed design is an effort to simplify the portion of the railing around the circles to open it up visually. The plan illustrates the proposed locations of the different railing designs. We believe that there is enough distance between the different railings to avoid visual competition.

SOUTH TOWER ELEVATOR

19. **Q:** For the mosaic tile floor, is the infill a recent change?

R: When we reduce the width of the existing pattern by 13", we will end up with a slight gap between the edge of the existing mosaic and the new wall. This space would need to be infilled,

which could be infilled with salvaged, existing materials. An alternative option would be to use new material to differentiate it from the historic mosaic tile.

20. **Q:** What would the implication be to remove the mosaic on each side and not create a condition that never existed. It creates a false sense of history to alter it as one alternative. Weighing the options and what to do here.

R: If we just remove the area of mosaic lost due to the narrowing of the corridor from 8'- 8" to 7'- 3" we would lose approximately 1'- 5" (17") or 8 ½" at each side. On slide 49 there is a photograph with a measuring tape illustrating that if 8 ½" is removed this will cut through inside the black border tile. We will evaluate alternative options and present them at a future meeting.

22. **Q:** Agrees that a simple arched opening and simple frame around the elevator is appropriate for the historic context.

R: Thank you.

23. **Q:** Returning to alignment of elevator opening, can elevators #4 and #5 be switched? This would result in better alignment of the elevator doors with the arched openings in the north wall of the Children's Room.

R: The elevator door openings in the Great Hall cannot shift towards the center of the space. Doors in that location would be very close to the existing door opening leading to the South Entry. The remnant of masonry wall between the openings would not be structurally sufficient to support the building loads.

24. **Q:** Why is this location the best for an elevator? Removing/altering a lot of structure and finishes

R: Locating the elevators on the centerline of the building places them close to the entries to the building where the greatest traffic flow will occur. In section this location is also the interface at the changes in floor levels between the Main Building and the South Tower. We acknowledge that to insert two code compliant elevators we are narrowing the center corridor, which requires the removal of historic walls and floors, but to the east and west of the corridor the historic fabric was removed previously for the existing stair (east) and elevator (west).

25. **Q:** Could we [simplify] to one opening per vestibule?

R: We have recently found some material in the archives that indicates that when the existing platform, stairs, and chair lift were inserted in the Children's Room that existing stairs at the center arch may have been left in place. If we confirm that the historic stairs exist, the access to the elevator vestibule from the corridor will likely go away. The new punched openings in the north wall of the Children's Room will be the sole point of access into the elevator vestibules.

26. **Q:** The historic stairs will be retained?

R: Once we confirm the stairs exist, yes. We believe that they may have been modified as some point, we have to determine their condition and if they are code compliant. We are working now on creating exploratory probes to verify.

27. **Q:** Okay with arched opening (lower arch rather than higher arch). If arch can be lowered it

would be more apparent as a later alteration. Agrees on simple frame for elevators.

R: Thank you.

ROOF ELEMENTS

28. **Q:** Appreciate the study on louvered vents. They're big; I'm of the mind that using the back of that tower for venting is a good thing so that large louvered structures aren't on both sides. The existing elevator overrun – that's just for overrun, no louvers, just blind arches?

R: Correct, the existing elevator penthouse contains the elevator machine room. There are no louvers in that structure.

29. **Q:** Is there any way to detail the louvers so that they're recessed or a little more architectural?

R: We can look at that, but every square inch of louver that is lost or effected by decorative treatment has to be gained elsewhere. When a detail obstructs [the louver] additional free area is required.

30. **Q:** Appreciates that the [design team] went through all this, helps to see the [versions]. Will there be a finish slide with all the ground level views?

R: Yes

31. **Q:** Three different slides? 5 alternatives (east), 5 (west), and axons. Perhaps a matrix that compares the options?

R: Yes, agreed.

32. **Q:** Appreciate effort to try new options. Most successful by using North Tower and reducing overall size adjacent to North Tower. You mentioned pushing them further up the roof would help with the visibility issue. Worth a second round?

R: Yes, we will continue to study the options and look to minimize visibility as much as possible.

END OF MEETING