

PROJECT	Smithsonian Institution- Revitalization of the Historic Core (RoHC)	MEETING DATE	10/25/2023
ORGANIZER	Smithsonian Institution, Carly Bond (moderator)	TIME	2:00-4:00pm
LOCATION	Virtual/Zoom		
PANELISTS	Carly Bond- Smithsonian Institution Brenda Sanchez, Smithsonian Institution Christopher Lethbridge- Smithsonian Institution Matthew Chalifoux, EYP-Loring Anthony Bochicchio, EYP-Loring Faye Harwell, Rhodeside and Harwell		
SUBJECT	Consulting Parties Meeting #17		

MEETING MINUTES

Purpose – This was Consulting Parties Meeting 17 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 was:

- **Review of the Phase 2 adverse effects**
- **Review of avoidance, minimization, and mitigation measures for adverse effects**
- **Schedule and next steps**

The final draft Assessment of Effects report was released for Consulting Parties review in August 2023. The objective of this meeting was to finalize the Assessment of Effects report and begin consultation on minimization and mitigation measures. It was determined in this meeting that the appropriate format of the Section 106 resolution document should be an amendment to the Programmatic Agreement for the RoHC project.

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://ahhp.si.edu/historic-core>

Questions and Comments

The meeting was organized with two Question and Answer periods. The following minutes follow that format and combine verbal and written questions/ comments on related topics for clarity.

Question and Answer Break #1

Areaways

1. **Q:** The colors in the renderings of the areaways, particularly the color of the sandstone, are not accurate. While I am leaning towards the gray stucco options it isn't possible to make a final decision based on these renderings. I appreciate Option 2, with the reddish stucco under the Castle sandstone and the darker gray for the retaining wall. This creates some continuity at the Castle but differentiates the new walls.

R: We agree that the colors in the renderings are not accurate. Ultimately making a color choice utilizing mock-ups during the construction period may be the best approach.

2. **Q:** Option 3 (smooth, lighter gray) may be the most successful at achieving what you described as clear, simple, and utilitarian. I am not certain about the color of the gray, the samples on the right of the slide don't seem to match the rendering.

R: We agree that the colors in the renderings are not accurate. Ultimately making a color choice utilizing mock-ups during the construction period may be the best approach.

3. **Q:** As the excavation work is performed it is likely that unforeseen conditions that impact the detailing for the foundation walls under the Castle will be revealed. There will likely need to be ongoing consultation to address these conditions. Language regarding this should be included in the resolution document.

R: Thank you. We can discuss this as we review the draft resolution document in the near future.

4. **Q:** Thank you for providing additional options for the areaway finishes. Option 3, without the combed finish on the stucco, is probably the simplest and most utilitarian appearance. This provides a contemporary appearance but is still compatible with the historic fabric. We agree that on-site mock-ups will likely be the best way to select the final color.

R: Thank you.

5. **Q:** The Seneca sandstone really defines the Castle and the contrast with the light gray stucco seems too stark. I prefer a color that is closer to the Seneca sandstone, but perhaps a darker gray will be visually acceptable. Maintaining a single color of stucco on all surfaces simplifies the space and minimizes the visual impact. I am interested in a conservation assessment on the rubble stone foundations and agree that mock-ups will be an important part of the final selections.

R: What we seem to be hearing is a preference for one material and one color. We agree that incorporating mock-ups during construction will be an important tool for making final selections. This can be clearly spelled out in the agreement document.

6. **Q:** I'm finding it very difficult to know what I prefer on the areaway. I worry that the stucco on the foundation wall will look like it's trying to cover up something. I feel it should be well integrated into the existing wall in both color and detailing. I think a darker outboard areaway wall is better--probably in gray rather than orange/red tones.

R: Thank you.

7. **Q:** The combed finish on the stucco seems too contemporary and not compatible with the rest of the building.

Q: I agree that the combed finish on the base of the building is a different character and not compatible. The other options with a smoother finish and reveals seem more appropriate. A single color seems to reduce the visual impact of the areaways. Are the renderings showing a different material at the base of the areaway walls?

R: At the base of the areaway walls there is a detail that has been developed to provide waterproofing to protect the occupied spaces below. The wall treatment will terminate above the pavers creating a slight recess.

8. **Q:** I am not wedded to the gray stucco; red tinted may work, but I want to avoid the impression that historically the sandstone continued down this deep. I also think the scoring to mimic ashlar shown in 4b is making it seem like the building was built atop a high stone foundation.

R: Thank you. In summary there seems to be consensus to use a single treatment and color for the stucco on both sides of the areaway. Also, the resolution document should include language to incorporate mock-ups during construction to further evaluate and select the color.

Changes to Site on North Side of Castle

9. **Q:** Reviewing the Assessment of Effects report on the north side of the building the planting plan, access ramps, and perimeter security all seem very symmetrical. Individually there may not be an adverse effect but taken collectively the assessment may be different. In past documents such as the NHL nomination there has never been a clear evaluation of the relationship of the building to the site. Perhaps this can be addressed in the update to the NHL documentation?

R: We didn't perform a cumulative effect assessment on discrete areas of the site/project. Perhaps this would be a worthwhile exercise on an area such as the north side of the site.

Fall Protection

10. **Q:** We understand the need for these systems, but is there a way that they can be designed to be “temporary” and deployed only when they are needed?

R: The fall protection systems must be in place the moment a person goes out on the roof. We appreciate that they are a visual change to the roof, but the design is what is necessary and appropriate to provide protection to the staff that must access the roof to maintain the building.

South Tower Elevators

11. **Q:** The adverse effects from the insertion of the new elevators in the South Tower are extensive. Keep in mind that there are cascading effects, particularly on the interior. We need to think about the cumulative impact when discussing mitigation.

R: We understand that the impacts of inserting the elevators are significant. Please keep in mind that these elevators are critical to providing universal access to all levels of the building and that this is the only location in plan that solves this issue. That does not mitigate the effect, but it should be kept in mind.

Perimeter Security

12. **Q:** I still believe that a granite similar to the Prairie Brown is the correct choice. Olympic Black is heavy and ponderous at the bench and will make the incised building sign difficult to read. We will still need to see samples of the proposed alternates.

R: We are in the process of sourcing alternate granites for the Prairie Brown. We will share the best options with the Consulting Parties at a future date.

Seismic Joint Cover and Interpretive Sign

13. **Q:** After consideration I agree that the best option of the metal of the seismic joint cover is the clear anodized.

I understand the concept of placing the interpretive sign about the seismic joint near the porte cochere where the joint is highly visible. I'm concerned about the clutter in this location. The topic of the joint is a secondary topic of historic interest. This may depend on the type of sign, but another location may be better.

R: What do you think about the location to the west, but the apse of the West Wing?

Q: This seems like a more appropriate location.

Resolution Agreement

14. **Q:** I would prefer an amendment to the existing Programmatic Agreement as opposed to a new agreement. Managing and tracking the existing agreements is already complicated. I would prefer amending the existing to simplify tracking and enforcement.

R: Thank you.

Question and Answer Break #2

Mitigation Ideas

15. **Q:** Thank you for the list of potential mitigation measures. You've provided lots of ideas; we would request time to consider them and come back with more detailed responses.

I haven't visited the Castle in a long time, is there a single, permanent exhibit inside the Castle focused on the building's history?

The Downing Urn is an important artifact, perhaps interpretive signage about the urn should be included.

I prefer more "hands-on" exhibits, an opportunity to get closer to actual materials and objects.

R: Before the Castle was closed there were exhibits on the history of the Castle, including a model, in Schermer Hall. Something like that may be coming back, but it may be updated to include information about the current renovation.

16. **Q:** Thanks for the robust list of potential mitigation measures. You may want to consider programming options on some of these topics. The history of the use of the basement should also be included as part of the interpretation.

R: That's a great suggestion about the basement. With the renovation the basement will see high public use, there is a great opportunity to include interpretive materials on that level.

17. **Q:** Are there plans for docent led tours? If there are they could include information about the current project.

R: There were docent led tours in the past. We will research what was done in the past to inform possible future tours.

NOTE: The regular date for the Consulting Party Meeting in November (the 4th Thursday) falls on Thanksgiving Day. An alternate meeting date will be scheduled, most likely in early December. Notification of the new date for Consulting Party Meeting #18 will be issued via e-mail and will be posted on the project webpage- <https://ahhp.si.edu/historic-core>

END OF MEETING