

PROJECT	<b>Smithsonian Institution- Revitalization of the Historic Core (RoHC)</b>	MEETING DATE	11/16/2021
ORGANIZER	<b>Smithsonian Institution, Carly Bond (moderator)</b>	TIME	3:00pm-5:15pm
LOCATION	Virtual/Zoom		
PANELISTS	Carly Bond- Smithsonian Institution Sharon Park- Smithsonian Institution Marisa Scalera- Smithsonian Institution Brenda Sanchez, Smithsonian Institution Christopher Lethbridge, Smithsonian Institution Matthew Chalifoux, EYP-Loring Faye Harwell, RHI (Rhodeside and Harwell) Kirk Mettam, Silman Hallah Abodaff, EYP-Loring Michael Galway, EYP-Loring		
SUBJECT	<b>Consulting Parties Meeting #3</b>		

## MEETING MINUTES

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**Purpose – This was the third Consulting Parties meeting for the Revitalization of the Historic Core (RoHC) project of the Smithsonian Institution. The Historic Core includes the Smithsonian Institution Building (SIB, also known as “The Castle”) and the Arts and Industries Building (AIB). The meeting was held in compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act.**

**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 majority of questions and comments were reviewed and responded to verbally during breaks in the presentation. The following is a list of the questions and comments with a summary of the responses.**

### Questions and Comments

1. Q: Do you have a similar section through the AIB/central utility plant addition?

R: A section is included in the discussion of the creation of the AIB basement. (slide 88) The section illustrates that the AIB basement floor will be aligned with the B1 level, which includes the existing/expanded loading dock. This will provide access to the AIB below ground for service and operations.

2. Q: Will this presentation be provided for future reference?

R: Yes. The presentation will be posted on the project website.  
([www.sifacilities.si.edu/historic-core](http://www.sifacilities.si.edu/historic-core))

3. Q: Can Faye explain a little about how the decision was made to have stone and steel bollards?

R: Stone and steel bollards were based on inspiration from other security projects in the National Mall area. One example is the Lincoln Memorial, where bollards of metal create the secure area, including retractable bollards; along drive areas the security is provided by a stone wall, which provides a welcome relief.

4. Q: Could you please explain the ideas behind the multiple bollard types?

R: We studied multiple bollard profiles. We are recommending the tapered version of both the stone and metal bollard as their proportions are more graceful in the landscape. The details continue to be refined.

5. Q: Please explain preservation of the basement level of the SIB?

R: The basement of the SIB (Castle) will be utilized for public functions possibly including a café, convening space, and rest rooms. Materials that have been inserted over the years will be removed to allow the original structure, including the brick groin vaults to be visible.

6. Q: And how the pattern of placement was decided upon? (referring to bollards)

R: For the RoHC project, stone is used as a more warm, tactile material in areas where pedestrians are likely to gather, such as street crossings and building entrances. Stone walls are also used where setbacks allow, to provide relieve from bollards. The exact hierarchy and rhythm of stone and metal bollards and stone walls is still being refined.

7. Q: Have you discussed the alternatives for the AIB accessible entrances with DDOT/OP? If so, what were their comments?

R: The design team has not yet discussed the Independence Avenue design with DDOT/OP but will be doing so as a normal part of next steps. DDOT is also participating in the Section 106 consultation as a consulting party.

8. Q: You are also showing two different profiles of bollards for each material - why?

R: See number 4

9. Q: The new planning finally knits together the landscape to the south garden in an appropriately 19th century setting.

R: Thank you, that is the intent.

10. Q: Will the cooling tower produce a steam plume? I recall that this was an issue during the exterior renovation of AIB years ago.

R: The new cooling towers will create a plume at certain times of the year. The existing cooling tower at the southeast corner of the site does produce a plume but it is far enough away from the main entrance that it does not have a visual impact on the building. The preferred layout (Option 1) for the new cooling tower system is as far as possible to the west on the site, utilizing a similar strategy to the existing to avoid visual impact of the plume on the main entry to NMNH.

11. Q: We usually consider visibility excluding vegetation. Can the cooling tower enclosure be lowered?

R: The cooling tower construction has been partially set below grade to minimize the overall height. Along Madison Drive the enclosure wall will be approximately 9'-8" above the sidewalk. This minimizes the visibility while preventing a view into the enclosure to see the actual cooling towers.

12. Q: Would the proposed cross-Mall bore conflict with the proposed underground parking/flood control/visitor center structure?

R: The cross-Mall bore would likely be in conflict with the proposed structure. The Smithsonian Institution does not support the proposed construction under the Mall.

13. Q: How will the newly raised walls and new plantings around the cooling towers be integrated with the landscape design around the full perimeter of the museum? What will the transition zones look like? Or will you need to extend the raised wall and intensified plantings further around the museum?

R: The new landscape will respect the visual layering of the plantings, use native species, and continue to foster the interpretive program now in place by SI Gardens as an Urban Bird Habitat. In addition to the south planting, the existing Urban Bird Habitat gardens continue around the west and north edges of the museum grounds. Plantings of the cooling tower installation will replace the south edge with native species in accordance with the current, layered approach. Similarly, plantings will blend with existing vegetation at the northwest corner of the project. The existing trees along the south edge of Madison Drive will be protected. This line of trees also already continues to the east of the Museum entrance, creating a continuous visual edge along the entire museum property along Madison Drive.

14. Q: What is the seismic condition of the AIB?

R: The AIB is different than the SIB (Castle) and does not require base isolation. The unreinforced masonry and tall proportions of the Castle will utilize base isolation to safeguard the building in the event of a seismic event. The lower massing of the AIB mitigates the risk of damage in a seismic event. Work performed in the 2010 exterior renovation of the AIB included a seismic assessment and retrofit to address seismic deficiencies. As part of the current project, we are checking to see if code changes since that time would require any further structural work.

15. Q: Do the louvers replace or cover the existing windows?

R: The proposed louvers in the clerestories of the AIB courts will replace the windows. The existing windows were all installed as part of the 2014 exterior renovation of the AIB.

16. Q: Is the cooling tower footprint show in the plans the absolute minimum required?

R: Yes, the footprint above grade is the minimum required. Below ground the footprint is slightly larger than above ground to accommodate the mechanical and electrical equipment for the cooling towers system.

17. Q: Can you rescue and retain original brick in the way of the new exit doors of AIB?

R: In any locations where historic building fabric will be removed as part of a new opening the design team will coordinate with the Smithsonian to salvage material as appropriate for reuse.

18. Q: Can you explain how elevators will be integrated into AIB. Are you still proposing to create fully conditioned museum spaces? What alterations will happen to make that happen?

R: The plans for the AIB include three passenger elevators that will be inserted in three of the towers (East, West, and South). The existing layout of the towers includes a space that can be converted to an elevator shaft. Two service elevators will be inserted in Ranges (Northwest and Southeast).

Creating interior environmental conditions throughout the building that meet Smithsonian museum standards would be very difficult and would require significant changes to the building interiors, negatively impacting character-defining features of the AIB. Most of the interior spaces will provide environmental conditions that provide human comfort and can accommodate display of materials that have a greater tolerance to ranges of temperature and relative humidity. One space, in a Court, will be developed that will provide tighter climate control for special exhibits.

19. Q: The plumes are appropriate to the period of significance of AIB and Natural History at the end of the days of the Industrial Age of American history.

R: Noted, thank you.

20. Q: \* including the towers

R: This is related to #11 above.

The cooling towers themselves cannot be placed below grade. They must be open to the air to allow the heat transfer to take place that creates chilled water for the building systems.

21. Q: At the cooling tower location you are showing truck movement. What happens to the existing loading ramp to NMNH?

R: The existing ramp mentioned goes down from the parking level to the lower level of the building. The function of the lower level has been changed which has eliminated the need for the ramp. The proposed design will remove the ramp and provide more space for truck movement.

22. Q: What will the blast windows appear like on the interior - both new units and interior blast window additions?

R: The interior blast windows will include clear glazing to allow the historic window to remain visible from the interior. The replacement windows will retain the exterior appearance, including any muntin patterns. The window assembly will be deeper, so the interiors will be impacted, but the muntin patterns will carry through to the interior.

23. Q: SIB windows at second level or the top of the first flight of stairway were found to be original at time of replacement. The glass shows the bubbles inherent in really old glass. Unless changes have been made since my time, of course.

R: The Smithsonian has completed a detailed survey of all of the windows in the building and has identified historic windows and glazing that will either be retained in place or salvaged.

24. Q: How are new entrance ramps/stairs integrated with the seismic expansion plates?

R: The new seismic joint is still being developed. We will be working closely with structural and architectural teams to evolve the surface finish detailing as the details of the seismic joint and the moat beneath it evolve. Currently our drawings and sketches imply a joint, but the details are yet to be developed.

25. Q: Is it necessary to have the south areaways so regular? The building itself is not regular so even if this is planted up it is still incongruous when seen from the inside or if the planting doesn't last as long as the building (likely).

R: The footprints of the south areaways have been developed in coordination with the adjacent ranges and main building walls.

26. Q: I'd like to see more details on the rehab of the interior spaces of the SIB. Will the assessment of effects address all these?

R: Yes, these will be noted in the Assessment of Effects.

27. Q: I am curious what the scheme is for the palette of materials used for the Castle entrances, landscape, accessibility, & security elements. I think you mentioned salvaged Aquia sandstone, but I'm not sure where that is currently used (historic), or whether this should be a darker or more neutral stone. Also, is bronze the best material for such items as handrails, low kick guards, etc.-- not sure what's there now, but it makes sense to create an overall design schema for these elements in consideration of the historic materials and their relationship to each other.

R: Many of the materials, stone, metal were described earlier in the presentation. We are considering re-use of salvaged stone from SI stockpiles for immediate areas at the entrances, or replacement of historic materials in kind where they are currently in good condition, such as at AIB. Many of the details in the building are bronze in tone, such as window mullions, so we are considering those. Bronze is one alternative in selected areas only, or bronze tone finish. We are also considering the black painted ornamental metal as currently exists along the streetscapes of Independence Avenue and Jefferson Drive. The black painted finish also can be found in varied designs throughout the site: the Hugh Newell Jacobsen Ripley Garden fencing with its pickets and delicate ball finials, the arrow-head metal fencing at the Castle, as well as

the Haupt Garden fencing with its circle motif. We need to look at all of these and develop an appropriate palette, which we are just beginning to study.

28. Q: The answer given certainly makes sense. Perhaps the old windows not retained in situ will be nice decorative elements for future exhibitions. (See Question 23)

R: The design team is coordinating with the Smithsonian to identify samples of windows that are removed as part of this project to be salvaged and placed in storage as a record of what was installed over the life of the building.

29. Q: Regarding the Castle's rooftop mechanical and egress structures/installations (enlarged louvers, handrails, elevator overrun, etc.): Can we see more developed documentation of what is proposed? In addition to showing the proposed size & configuration of these elements, this should address material treatment, views from grade at some distance. By the way, I think the handrail is probably the least impactful treatment for the egress walk (I never suggested keeping the existing louver as part of the egress path), although the recessed walk would be the least visible. Again, the design, material & color here is critical.

R: Additional detail of the rooftop elements will be developed as the project progresses. For the proposed louvered penthouses, the intent is to utilize copper cladding as has been utilized in the past. The handrails at the egress walkway will be a darker metal, potentially a statuary finish bronze, to not draw attention and minimize maintenance.

30. Q: To clarify my areaway question (Question 25), the areaways strike a straight line as the building elevation bumps out to the towers. If they were straight only at the ranges, that would make more sense to me than devouring the tower bases.

R: The south areaways have been designed to include both egress pathways, stairs, and functional program. Further development of the design will evaluate how the areaways and towers intersect.

31. Q: Thank you for evaluating additional alternatives for the 4th floor egress path. The depressed walkway option appears to create significant issues. Regarding the option that sits above the roof, it would be helpful to better understand what the visual impacts of a long run of railings through additional views, renderings and/or partial mockups.

R: The presentation includes renderings showing the visual impact from directly adjacent to the building along Jefferson Drive and from approximately halfway across the Mall.

## **END OF MEETING**

The draft Assessment of Effects on Historic Resources is available on the project webpage. The second half of Consulting Parties Meeting 3 will convene on December 14, 2021, for a presentation on the Assessment of Effects. Written comments are welcome through January 7, 2022, to [BondC@si.edu](mailto:BondC@si.edu).