

The Committee of 100

on the Federal City



Building on 100 Years of Planning Advocacy

October 25, 2023

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RE: Anacostia Riverwalk Trail Expansion and National Arboretum Access Bridge (NCPC File 7937) **and** A Related Proposal for NCPC's Consideration

Dear Chair Goodman and Director Acosta:

Anacostia Riverwalk and Bridge: The Committee of 100 on the Federal City is pleased to note the tentative agenda for the upcoming November 2, 2023, meeting of the National Capital Planning Commission includes approval of the National Park Service's development plans for the Anacostia Riverwalk Trail Expansion and National Arboretum Access Bridge. Based on our review of the documentation, we are pleased to lend our support to this important project and the Commission's approval of it.

A Proposal to Consider in Observation of NCPC's 100th Anniversary in 2024:

Related to this, the Committee of 100 encourages the Commission to think more broadly by leading a city-wide effort to designate and support completion of a continuous waterfront trail along the Potomac and Anacostia Rivers from Georgetown to the Maryland line. This could be a signature achievement and a legacy project marking NCPC's centennial in 2024.

The National Capital Planning Commission in its 1997 report, *Extending the Legacy: Planning America's Capital for the 21st Century*, summarized such a vision.

"Extending the Legacy" aspires to recapture that earlier vision and to offer Washington residents the same intimate connection to their rivers as Londoners and Parisians enjoy. With this new plan, the city's waterfront – most of which is publicly owned – will become a continuous band of open space from Georgetown to the National Arboretum. Some stretches will be quiet and pastoral, perfect for walks or picnics, while others will support festivals, concerts, and other urban activities. [p. 14]

We can think of no better time to do this and no better organization than the National Capital Planning Commission to lead it.

About the Proposal: The Committee of 100 has consistently advocated for the creation of such a continuous trail that we have described as the "Washington Waterfront Walk". Many segments of such a trail already exist under individual names like the Anacostia Riverwalk Trail and the Rock Creek Trail adjacent to the

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Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway. However, given increased interest in recreation, cycling, alternative transportation, the health of the Potomac and Anacostia Rivers, and the environment, linking those that already exist and filling in missing gaps can create a whole much greater than the sum of its parts.

Over the last quarter century, there has been considerable progress in designating, constructing, and improving some sections of a continuous trail along our two rivers. Most of this work has been done by the National Park Service and much of the land on which this has happened is public. More recently, however, there has been major progress on new private urban development along some sections of the waterfront not fully envisioned in NCPC's 1997 report. This includes "The Wharf" in Southwest, which has recently been completed, and "The Yards" and "Capitol Riverfront" areas in Southeast, both with major development completed but with additional development sites remaining. Then there is the "Buzzard Point" area in Southwest, south of P Street, SW, where major development is underway.

It should now be possible to outline the Washington Waterfront Walk concept in more detail and to move ahead with planning for the missing links. The National Capital Planning Commission should take the lead in this effort, working closely with the National Park Service, Commission of Fine Arts, DC Office of Planning and other DC agencies, as well as BIDs, ANCs, community organizations and businesses along the rivers.

In 2024, as the National Capital Planning Commission marks its Centennial Year, it is a time to look back, but also a time to look forward. The Committee of 100 urges the National Capital Planning Commission to include this project as part of its Centennial by working with federal and city partners, the private sector, and the public to make this overall concept a reality for the people of the District of Columbia and visitors to our Nation's Capital. To that end, we are copying many of the "players" who will need to be involved to make this project happen.

The Committee of 100 on the Federal City appreciates your consideration of this exciting idea and looks forward to supporting NCPC in this and other special projects in celebrating the Commission's 100th anniversary next year. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Shelly Repp, Chair
Committee of 100 on the Federal City

cc:

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