



EASTERN MARKET METRO PARK & PLAZA (7TH TO 9TH STREETS) URBAN DESIGN STUDY

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

October 1, 2008

Q. Why is a new design being considered for Eastern Market Metro Park & Plaza?

- A. Several years ago, a panel of experts in landscape architecture and urban design were asked to assess the area in and around the Eastern Market Metro Station. The panel summed up the state of the park and plaza area between 7th and 9th Streets, S.E. as follows: “the space is currently barren and uninviting -- a thoroughfare with no place to sit, little shade, and poor lighting.”

Today, a number of important changes in the area around the Metro Plaza are underway. With the imminent transfer of land from the National Park Service to the DC government, the closing of Hine Junior High School and the proposed redevelopment of that city-owned site, the rebuilding and restoration of the Eastern Market, and the recent revitalization of 8th Street/ Barracks Row, it seems timely, in light of these changes, to seek the advice of experts in land use, transportation, and urban design and ask them to advise the community on whether certain changes to the Plaza might be appropriate to better serve the Capitol Hill community.

Q. Who is paying for the design study?

- A. The design study is being carried out under the auspices of Barracks Row Main Street (BRMS), the nonprofit organization that has spearheaded the revitalization of Barracks Row/8th Street, S.E. BRMS has received funds from both the Federal government and the District of Columbia government to undertake the study.

Q. Who is carrying out the design study?

- A. Barracks Row Main Street has retained the services of land use planner and architect Amy Weinstein, who has served as the design architect for a number of award-winning Capitol Hill projects. Ms. Weinstein, in turn, has assembled a team of experts in landscape architecture, traffic and transportation, cost estimating, and urban forestry. The first phase of the design study, which consists of information gathering and an assessment of existing conditions, began this past Summer.

Q. When will the design study be completed?

A. The second phase of the design study will begin in October. The schedule calls for completing the entire design study by the Summer of 2009.

Q. Is this a D.C. Government initiative?

A. No, this is a community initiative. The design study has been organized by Barracks Row Main Street but it is being guided by a Task Force made up of representatives from a number of Capitol Hill community organizations, as well as residents who live nearby or adjacent to the park and plaza. As one would expect, D.C. Government officials have been briefed on the study and their input and suggestions have been and will be sought.

Q. Can Barracks Row Main Street make unilateral decisions concerning the design study?

A. No. From the beginning BRMS recognized that the study needed to be a community endeavor. Although BRMS is paying for the study, it included a provision in the agreement with the Weinstein Studio calling for the creation of a “Task Force to act as the primary client” to guide the work of the design team.

Q. Who decided who should be on the Task Force?

A. The agreement with Amy Weinstein and the Weinstein Studio states that the Task Force is to include representatives from relevant Capitol Hill community groups including, but not limited to: Barracks Row Main Street, the area’s two Advisory Neighborhood Commissioners, the Capitol Hill Restoration Society, the Eastern Market Community Advisory Community, the Capitol Hill Association of Merchants and Professionals, the Market Row Street Merchants Association, and the Capitol Hill Business Improvement District. Each organization suggested a member to serve on the Task Force. The Task Force also includes four residents who live in the immediate vicinity of the Plaza.

A current list of the members of the Task Force is posted at the website:
www.capitolhilltownsquare.org

Q. What are the responsibilities of the Task Force?

A. The primary responsibility of the Task Force is to act as the client group to interact with the design team during the study, and to communicate pertinent information from the community to the design team and vice versa.

Q. Will the Task Force have a say as to what specific design concepts are studied?

A. Yes. The design team is now finishing up Phase I of the study, which consists of information gathering and an assessment of existing conditions. On October 1st, the team will report what it has already learned at a community meeting at Tyler School. Subsequent to that meeting, the team will begin Phase II, which will entail developing a series of alternative design concepts for the Plaza area. During this phase of the study, the design team will interact on a regular basis with the Task Force and seek its input.

Q. When will there be another opportunity for community input and comments?

A. The gathering of community input and comments will be an ongoing process through the Task Force. The members of the Task Force are responsible for communicating the interests and views of their respective constituents and communities to the design team, and the design team is responsible for communicating on a regular basis with the Task Force.

There also will be additional community meetings as the design team moves through the different phases of the project.

Q. What will be the process following the October 1, 2008 community meeting?

A. After the October 1st community meeting, the design team will begin to define more specifically three alternative design concepts for the Plaza area. Each alternative will be studied in depth and presented to the Task Force for its review and comment. Subsequently, the Task Force's input will be incorporated into the three design concepts.

The design team then will conceptually budget and cost out each of the alternatives. The three concepts and their estimated costs will be presented to the Task Force along with the design team's analysis of the options.

The Task Force then will seek to reach consensus on a preferred alternative, which may include elements from several of the design concepts. The design team will prepare presentation materials for each of the three alternatives with the preferred alternative presented in greater detail. The presentation will explain how the study process led to the selection of a preferred alternative.

Presentations will be made to the Task Force, to the relevant DC and Federal Government agencies, and to the broader Capitol Hill community at one or more open forums. The design team's presentation also will be posted on the website.

The community's views and input will be sought. The design team then will incorporate the input it receives from the Task Force, government agencies, and the broader community and will further refine the preferred alternative and a conceptual construction budget. The study team will issue a final report outlining the preferred alternative in drawing and written form.

Q. What happens after the design study's final report is released?

A. Delivery of the final report will complete the contract with the Weinstein Studio. It then will be up to the community and the DC Government to decide what action to take. Any changes to the Plaza will require, in addition to the support of the DC and Federal governments, the approval of the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA), the National Capital Planning Commission, and the Commission on Fine Arts.

Q. Should consideration of changes to the Eastern Market Metro Plaza proceed or occur simultaneously with redevelopment of the Hine Junior High School site?

A. The design study of the Plaza and the proposed redevelopment of the Hine Junior High School site are two very different and distinct projects. The Hine site is owned by the District of Columbia. In all likelihood, it will be redeveloped by private parties selected by the City through a competitive, Request for Proposal process. The time frame for redevelopment of the Hine site is unclear.

The Eastern Market Metro Plaza area, however, is and will remain public space. Because the Hine site and the Metro Plaza area are adjacent to one another, there would need to be careful coordination between these two projects with respect to both planning and construction.