



United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
C&O Canal National Historical Park
1850 Dual Highway, Suite 100
Hagerstown, Maryland 21740

October 13, 2017

The National Park Service (NPS), in partnership with Georgetown Heritage, Georgetown Business Improvement District (BID), and the District of Columbia Office of Planning, is preparing plans and a corresponding Environmental Assessment (Plan/EA) to revitalize portions of the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historical Park (C&O Canal NHP) and Rock Creek Park within the Georgetown neighborhood of the District of Columbia. The Plan/EA proposes enhancements to a mile-long segment of the Canal that passes between Lock One (approximately 28th Street, N.W.) and the Aqueduct Bridge abutment and pier ruins (approximately 36th Street, N.W.), as well as the one-third-mile-long segment of Rock Creek Park between the Canal and Potomac River, known as the Tide Lock (see enclosed project area map). The purpose of this letter is to inform the public of the Canal Plan's expanded project area boundaries to include portions of Rock Creek Park and to invite public participation in a second public meeting for the Canal Plan.

The plan will focus on addressing deferred maintenance issues and related safety and accessibility concerns associated with the towpath; improving connections between Georgetown and the C&O Canal towpath; enhancing visitor experience through increased signage and optimizing underutilized areas. The plan will be developed in a manner that addresses the identified needs, while also preserving the historic character and cultural significance of the C&O Canal NHP and the Georgetown Historic District (DC Landmark, National Register of Historic Places, National Historic Landmark).

The Georgetown Canal Plan is needed to provide a coordinated approach to address the following concerns:

- Portions of the towpath are uneven, narrow, and poorly lit, creating potential safety hazards;
- Visitors with limited mobility can only access the towpath from Grace Street, NW (south of the canal). All other access points are not compliant with the Architectural Barriers Act Accessibility Standards (ABAAS);
- Many access points to the towpath are not readily visible or unknown due to lack of signage;
- The park desires to expand opportunities for interpretation, education, and cultural programming;
- The park has limited amenities and facilities for visitor comfort such as seating, drinking fountains, and rest rooms; and
- Several plazas along the canal are underutilized and could be developed to provide additional recreational activities.

In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), NPS in cooperation with the District of Columbia Office of Planning, Georgetown BID, and Georgetown Heritage, is preparing an Environmental Assessment (EA) to identify alternatives and assess the potential impacts of the plan. Concurrent to the NEPA process, NPS will work with DC State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), the Virginia Department of Historic Resources (VDHR), the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP), and other consulting parties to finalize a formal determination of effect through the Section 106

of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 as amended (NHPA) consultation process. The purpose of the Section 106 consultation process is to identify historic properties that could be affected by the Plan/EA; assess adverse effects on those properties; and develop ways to resolve those effects through appropriate avoidance, minimization, and/or mitigation measures.

I encourage you to participate in the planning process. A public meeting will be held on November 2, 2017 from 6:00-8:00pm at Canal Overlook at Georgetown Park (next to Dean & Deluca, 3276 M Street, NW). Please visit <https://goo.gl/maps/mXpczN5FgRn> for the exact location of the meeting. The purpose of this meeting will be to inform the public of the expanded project area boundaries, present initial plan alternatives, and invite comment on the potential impacts on cultural and environmental resources. During the meeting, project team members will present initial design alternatives. Park staff will be present to answer your questions, provide comments, and identify concerns they feel should be addressed in the EA. If you plan to attend this meeting, please RSVP at <https://georgetowncanal.eventbrite.com>.

Participation is vital to the planning process. The NPS is inviting public comment regarding potential impacts on cultural and environmental resources that should be considered during the planning processes. Comments will be accepted from November 2 through December 11, 2017 and can be submitted electronically at the National Park Service's Planning, Environmental and Public Comments (PEPC) website at <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/Georgetowncanalplan>. Written comments may be mailed to:

C&O Canal National Historical Park Headquarters Office
1850 Dual Highway
Suite 100
Hagerstown, MD 21740

NPS requests that mailed comments be postmarked by December 11, 2017 to receive consideration. Data obtained during the comment period will be integrated into the plan/EA. Should you have any questions regarding the meeting please contact Brendan Wilson at 240-291-8466.