

## APPENDIX I: GEORGETOWN WATERFRONT PARK PLAN

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Georgetown University Boathouse  
Environmental Assessment

April 2006



FIRST CLASS



## THE GEORGETOWN WATERFRONT PARK & THE C & O CANAL NHP

### INTRODUCTION

The Congress of the United States, through the Copper-Cramton Act of 1930 (46 Stat. 482), established the Federal goal to acquire and protect both shorelines of the Potomac River from Fort Washington, Maryland and Mount Vernon, Virginia to Great Falls. Over the past 50 years, the National Capital Planning Commission, the Commission of Fine Arts, as well as Secretaries of the Interior and the Mayor of the District of Columbia, have supported this goal and have identified the Georgetown Waterfront as a potential park under Federal jurisdiction. This plan represents another step towards implementing a part of the long-standing goal of having all waterfronts in the District of Columbia as part of the Federal open space/parkland system in the Nation's Capital so that these national resources can be enjoyed by all visitors and residents of Washington.

The National Park Service, as a public land managing agency, is responsible for the system of publicly-owned shoreline parks which maximize public access along the waterfronts of the Potomac and Anacostia Rivers within the District of Columbia. With the exception of the Georgetown Waterfront, the entire Potomac River shoreline in the District of Columbia from Hains Point upriver is federally owned and managed by the National Park Service. In addition, virtually all of the nearly 200-mile Potomac River shoreline on the eastern side of the river between the District of Columbia and Cumberland, Maryland is publicly owned.

Under the terms of the Agreement between the District Government and the National Park Service which was signed October 17, 1984, the Mayor of the District of Columbia proposes to transfer to the National Park Service approximately 10 acres for park purposes. These lands, located between 31st Street and approximately 150 feet west of Key Bridge, and K Street and the Potomac River, were originally acquired for highway purposes, but are no longer needed.

The C&O Canal is a major historic feature of the Georgetown Historic District. Specific policies and proposals for its preservation and enhancement, which are also contained in this plan, have been developed with the guidance of the C&O Canal National Historical Park Advisory Commission. The plan recognizes the historic interrelationship of the canal to the Potomac River and implements and defines the policies contained in the adopted Master Plan for the Canal.



### History

Georgetown's founding and evolution are historically oriented to the Potomac River at its head of navigation. The area was settled in 1703, platted in 1751, and incorporated in 1789. The town flourished as a tobacco port until silting of the Potomac River early in the 19th Century caused a decline in port activity. Construction of the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal (C&O Canal), commenced in 1825. The C&O Canal maintained an association with the river through barge traffic up until the end of the 19th Century when railroads began their eventual takeover of all canal shipping.

In 1760 a public wharf was built extending out into the river to the 10-foot depth. Later, maps show these wharves filled in, creating the fast land which is the subject of this plan.



### Planning Process to Date

The Georgetown Waterfront park boundary was formally established on August 2, 1984, by the National Capital Planning Commission. The National Park Service, in cooperation with the District of Columbia, entered into a public planning process to decide future uses and park-related development.

Because of the physical and historical relationship of the Georgetown section of the C&O Canal National Historical Park to the Georgetown Waterfront, the canal from Foundry Branch to Rock Creek was included in the planning process.

The draft plan was reviewed and supported by the following official agencies: the National Capital Planning Commission, the District of Columbia Office of Planning, the Commission of Fine Arts, the District of Columbia Historic Preservation Review Board, and the C&O Canal National Historic Advisory Commission. In addition, citizen involvement opportunities occurred when the draft plan was put before the Advisory Neighborhood Commission 2E, the Citizens' Association of Georgetown, and the Foggy Bottom Citizens' Association.

Park construction will depend on both private and public funds. Public funding will, of course, depend on Congressional appropriations. Full park development is expected to occur in phases extending over many years.

### The Plan

The following proposed plan actions have evolved out of the public planning process. In keeping with the designated historic district within which this area lies, the thrust of the plan emphasizes preservation, restoration, and enhancement of the historic resources of the area. The plan also maximizes the unique physical geography of the waterfront.

Each of those actions is numbered and corresponds to the numbers on the illustrated plan.

#### (1) CREATE PASSIVE PUBLIC PARK

The park's character will be passive in nature and be landscaped similar to Constitution Gardens and to floodplain parks. Features such as promenades, plazas, walkways, open lawn spaces, plantings, benches, lighting, and fountains will constitute the development within the park. No active recreation facilities will be provided except water-dependent boating facilities. No surface parking will be provided within the park.

#### (2) CREATE SHORELINE PROMENADE WITH SEPARATE BIKE PATH

A shoreline promenade will be created for the entire length of the park between Rock Creek and Key Bridge. Bike and pedestrian usage will be separated by landscape architectural treatment, such as paving patterns and street furniture. Surface treatment will vary depending upon the location within the park.

#### (3) CREATE VARIETY OF BULKHEAD TREATMENTS INCLUDING FISHING PLACES

The entire shoreline will feature a variety of treatments to achieve interest and use at the water's edge. Steps, esplanades, walls, docks, piers, and natural vegetated slopes could all be employed. Much of the existing bulkheading will be retained and improved through modification and surface treatment.

#### (4) CREATE SPECIAL PLACE/WISCONSIN AVENUE FOCAL POINT

The termination of Wisconsin Avenue will be treated as a focal point and special place for the park. This space will be articulated with elements such as a plaza, fountains, lighting, plantings, etc. Steps will allow the public to be close to the water.

#### (5) MAINTAIN RIVER VIEWS

The park will be designed to preserve and respect existing river views from north/south streets. It is important that such views be preserved so that the historic visual relationship of Georgetown to its waterfront can be maintained.

#### (6) SCREEN WHITEHURST FREEWAY WITH TREES

Shade trees will be planted throughout the park to screen as much of the Whitehurst Freeway as possible. Exact tree locations will depend upon the limitations imposed by the need to maintain access to underground utilities, to maintain the freeway itself, the need to preserve river views from north/south streets, and to preserve archeological resources.

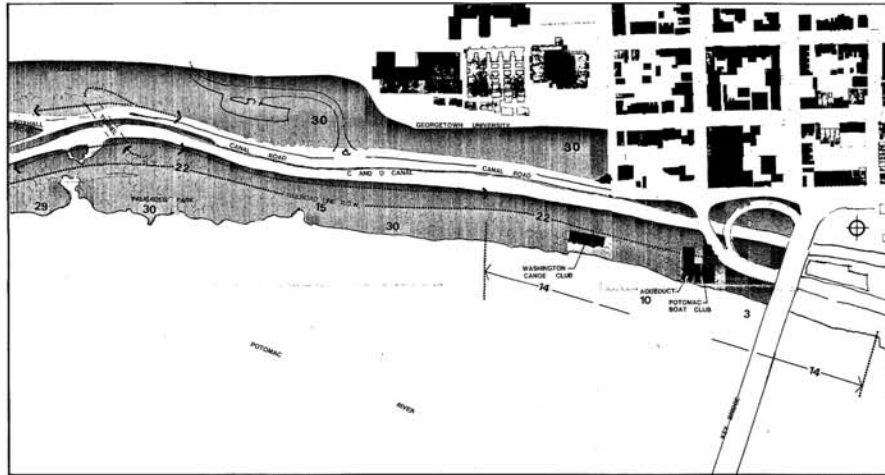
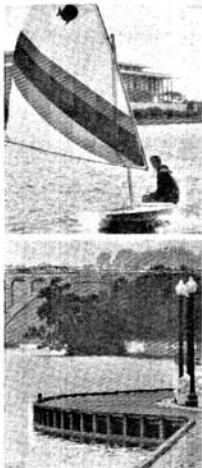
#### (7) PROVIDE LIMITED DOCKING FOR TRANSIENT BOATS

Limited public docking space will be provided east of the Wisconsin Avenue axis. This will offer an opportunity for all types of boaters to visit the park by water. Only a limited number of craft will have the opportunity to tie up, due to the potential for conflict with non-motorized boat traffic along this section of the waterfront.



# THE GEORGETOWN WATERFRONT PARK & THE C & O CANAL NHP

Prepared by the National Park Service, National Capital Region, Wash. D.C.



## (8) PROVIDE LIGHTING IN THE PARK

Lighting between Rock Creek and the Washington Canoe Club will provide safe night-time use of the park by the public. Lighting of the C&O Canal park segment is mentioned in Item 28.

## (9) ESTABLISH MAINTENANCE AREA

Since the waterfront will be a landscaped urban park area, it will require a high level of maintenance. To achieve the required level of maintenance facilities, equipment, and additional personnel will be required. A park maintenance area will be established on the north side of K Street immediately west of Key Bridge. This facility will house equipment and materials needed in the day-to-day operation and maintenance of the park.

## (10) STABILIZE AND INTERPRET HISTORIC AQUEDUCT

Improvements will be undertaken to the remains of the C&O Canal aqueduct, including stabilization, interpretive exhibits explaining the historic origins of the structure, removal of the existing fencing, enhancing landscaping, and providing an appropriate safety fence around the edge.

## (11) TRANSFER GSA COAL HOUSE AND WEST HEATING PLANT AND CREATE PARKS

If it proves feasible to remove or relocate the GSA Coal and Ash House, the land should be transferred to the National Park Service and the area converted to parkland. The industrial characteristics of the facility make it inappropriate in its present location. The area is important in providing pedestrian linkage from the waterfront and the west side of Rock Creek to K Street and eventual access to the C&O Canal to the north. West Heating Plant - While this facility is currently fully operational, the plan reflects the desirability and long term goal of discontinuing this plant at its present location. While the heating plant was appropriate in what was once an industrial area, the changing character of the Georgetown Waterfront makes its retention highly inappropriate. The plan illustrates the plant's removal on a long term basis and the site shown as returned to parkland, part of the C&O Canal National Historical Park.

## (12) RETAIN THOMPSON'S BOAT CENTER AND ENHANCE APPEARANCE

The Thompson's Boat Center will remain as a canoeing and rowing facility with bike rentals. No expansion of this facility is envisioned, nor are more non-boating uses to be introduced into this building. A study to evaluate the feasibility of improving the architectural appearance of the building will be undertaken.

## (13) REDESIGN THOMPSON'S BOAT CENTER PARKING

While the existing lot is presently not being used at full capacity most of the time, on special occasions during boating events considerably more space is needed. The reconstruction would reduce the core parking space, but provide for extensive overflow onto specially designed grassed areas which would withstand occasional use. It is proposed that the parking lot be redesigned so as to also create both more usable parkland and an improved park terminus for Virginia Avenue.

## (14) ESTABLISH BOATHOUSE AREA (NON-MOTORIZED)

A recent special National Park Service study indicated that there is considerable unmet demand for non-motorized boating facilities along the Georgetown Waterfront.

The plan designates a general area of land and water within which new boathouses are appropriate. The area assigned to boathouses does not extend further west of Key Bridge than about 1,100 feet because of the policy aimed at preservation of the natural appearance of the Palisades.

To the east of Key Bridge, the boundary embraces the site of the proposed floating restaurant. Should the restaurant not be installed, the area is appropriate for boating facilities. In this area boating facilities could be provided, either privately or National Park Service concession operated. Floating boathouses or boathouses on land would be appropriate provided public boating use of the facilities is always available.

## (15) ACQUIRE RAILROAD RIGHT-OF-WAY (GEORGETOWN SPUR)

The Georgetown Spur rail line is no longer used to deliver coal to and ash from the GSA Coal House, and is in the process of being abandoned by the Chessie Corporation. The right-of-way in the District of Columbia will be acquired by the National Park Service for use as a hiker/biker trail. This will require the removal of the rails and ties. The Montgomery County Government is considering acquisition of the remaining portion of the right-of-way to Silver Spring for trail and transportation purposes.



## (16) RELOCATE BIKE ROUTE FROM NORTH SIDE TO SOUTH SIDE OF CANAL EAST OF 34TH STREET

In consideration of safety and congestion factors, bike riding on the towpath in Georgetown is discouraged. An alternative route for bikers will be provided east of 34th Street and will follow along the south side of the canal to Fishmarket Square, thence along Grace Street to Wisconsin Avenue, providing a connection to the waterfront bike trail and the Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway bike trails. This will lessen the hazards which occur at peak use periods due to conflicts on the towpath east of 34th Street between pedestrians and bikers.

## (17) PROVIDE FOR FLOATING RESTAURANT

Under the terms of a 35-year lease signed by the District Government a private firm has docking and parking rights for a 200-seat capacity floating restaurant with space for 86 cars. The floating restaurant will be moored between 34th Street and Key Bridge and will be approximately 200-feet long by 50-feet wide. Once the park is developed, parking for the restaurant will be provided under the freeway (See Item 18). Parking will be located between K Street and the Potomac bulkhead on a short-term basis, but the area will become a landscaped park on completion of Item 18 below. The area designated for boathouse facilities (See Item 14), encompasses the restaurant on the basis that should the lessee not proceed with the restaurant plan, or the restaurant be discontinued, the area would then become available for boating facilities.

## (18) PROVIDE PUBLIC AND RESTAURANT PARKING UNDER FREEWAY

Upon completion of the National Park Service acquisitions described under Item 24, it is proposed to legally close K Street west of 34th Street. This will enable the former street right-of-way under the Whitehurst Freeway to be improved and reconstructed by the National Park Service and the restaurant owner as a controlled parking area for public and restaurant use. Vehicular access to the west to the boathouses will be retained.

## (19) CREATE FOOTPATH ON WEST SIDE OF ROCK CREEK

Historically, the towpath was on the west bank of Rock Creek, which formed the turning or retention basin. Although the historic towpath cannot, at present, be restored due to modern intrusions, the concept of a footpath along both sides of Rock Creek should be implemented when the present structures are removed.

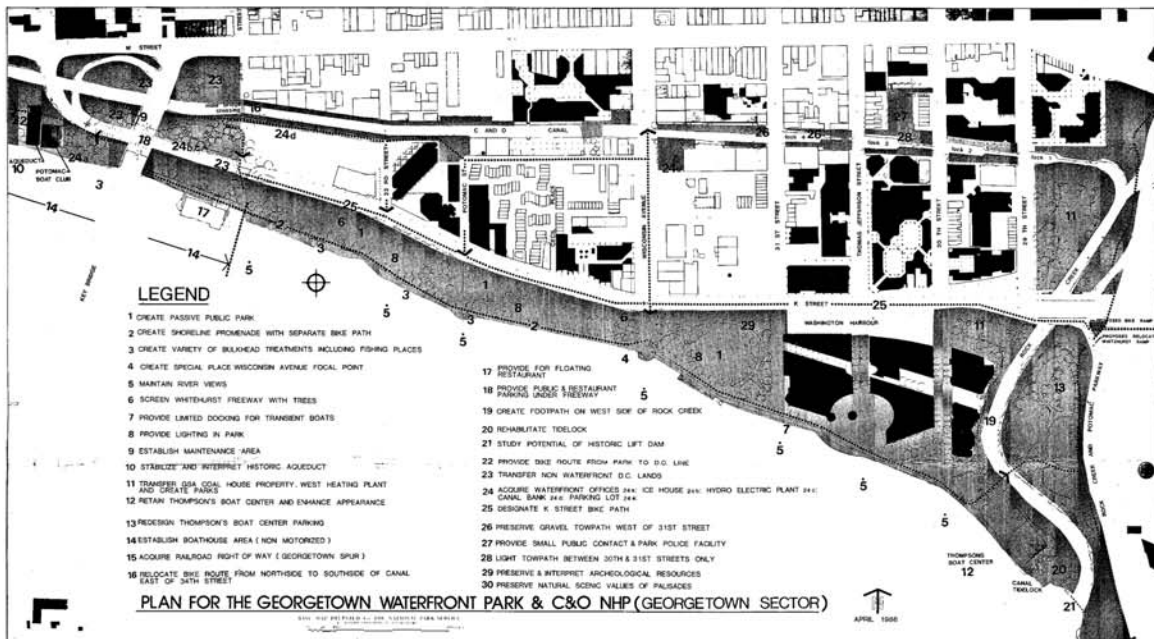
## (20) REHABILITATE TIDELOCK

The tidelock, at the confluence of Rock Creek and the Potomac River, is the historic terminus of the C&O Canal. The tidelock and 4-foot high lift dam allowed barges to travel from the large, man-made retention basin to the Potomac River. Under legal commitments made by Washington Harbour Associates, this company is to reimburse the National Park Service for the cost of rehabilitation of the tidelock.

## (21) STUDY POTENTIAL OF HISTORIC LIFT DAM

The lift or tumbling dam was placed across the mouth of Rock Creek in 1831 to form the Rock Creek basin. A heavy timber bridge-type structure was built on this dam and briefly connected Georgetown with the early Federal City.

In order to better interpret the C&O Canal at its terminus and restore the pedestrian linkage, it is proposed that an engineering, ecological, and historical study be undertaken by the National Park Service in order to establish whether partial or complete restoration is feasible or desirable.



**(22) PROVIDE BIKE ROUTE FROM PARK TO DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA LINE**

It is proposed that a bikeway and pedestrian linkage be established extending from the Rock Creek path system all the way to the District of Columbia line and beyond. This route consists of a network of paths, allowing the visitor to proceed west from the waterfront, by either the C&O Canal towpath or the Georgetown Railroad spur right-of-way. The C&O Canal towpath will be accessible from the waterfront by way of Potomac Street, 33rd Street, or 34th Street, thus avoiding the congested portion of the canal towpath.

**(23) TRANSFER NON-WATERFRONT DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA LANDS**

In addition to the transfer of the 10-acre waterfront lands, further transfers of jurisdiction to the National Park Service are proposed. The largest of these would involve the tract bounded by 34th Street, the canal, Key Bridge and M Street. Because this important space offers remarkable views of the Potomac River, and contributes to a major gateway to the city, it must be appropriately landscaped so as to integrate the space into its surroundings and respect its historic setting. A memorial to Francis Scott Key is proposed for this site and is now awaiting Congressional authorization. Transfers are also proposed involving two areas west of Key Bridge, and the right-of-way of K Street to be closed west of 34th Street beneath the Whitehurst Freeway.

**(24) ACQUIRE WATERFRONT OFFICES (24A): ICE HOUSE (24B): HYDRO ELECTRIC PLANT (24C): CANAL BANK (24D); AND PARKING LOT (24E)**

**A. Waterfront Offices** - This proposal would involve the fee acquisition and demolition by the National Park Service of a structure originally built as three 3-story townhouses. These properties represent an inappropriate use in the park which is not water-related or water-dependent. **B. The Ice House** - This commercial structure, between the canal and K Street, is occupied by numerous short-term lessees. The building is of recent origin and was built in 1937. The present use generates a fair amount of commercial traffic, and several doorways have direct access to the C&O Canal towpath. Acquisition of the building and its demolition is proposed. Any significant archeological resources will be preserved. This acquisition will complete the network of parkland surrounding Key Bridge forming the gateway. The acquisition will also prevent possible future adverse redevelopment. **C. The Hydro-Electric Plant** - This former hydroelectric plant is a small, now derelict structure adjacent to Key Bridge which is attached to and integral with the Ice House. It will be acquired and demolished. Recent National Park Service engineering studies have established that reactivation of the plant would cause damage to the canal from increased water flows. The generating equipment was removed several years ago, and only the civil works remain. **D. Canal Bank Site** Acquisition of an access easement east of 34th Street on the south side of the canal consisting of a 15-foot wide strip is proposed in order to partially restore the canal prism to its historic condition and still provide public access along the south side of the canal. A 15-foot access easement is already in place on both the Pepco and Flour Mill properties to the east, which, together with this proposed easement, would provide a supplementary alternative to the towpath on the north side of the canal. **E. Parking Lot** - This rectangular space at Wisconsin Avenue is presently undeveloped. Because the space is lower than the surrounding terrain, it relates to the canal, and acquisition is sought in order to prevent adverse development. Acquisition in fee will enable improvements as a landscaped, open pedestrian plaza; preservation of views from the towpath towards the Grace Street Church; enhancement of the setting for the historic Wisconsin Avenue Bridge; and gaining additional interesting views of the canal.

**(25) DESIGNATE K STREET BIKEPATH**

It is proposed that provisions be made by the District Government for a bike route along K Street. This would provide an additional alternative to the canal towpath and would supplement the route along the riverside edge of the park. At the east end of K Street, it would cross the Rock Creek Bridge and connect with a spiral ramp proposed by the District Government as part of the Whitehurst Freeway rehabilitation.

**(26) PRESERVE GRAVEL TOWPATH WEST OF 31ST STREET**

This plan proposes no change from the existing paving materials now used on the C&O towpath within the Georgetown sector of the C&O Canal. Brick would be retained on the more heavily-used towpath east of 31st Street and traditional gravel would continue in use west of 31st Street.

**(27) PROVIDE PUBLIC CONTACT AND PARK POLICE FACILITY**

The plan proposes the construction of a National Park Service administrative facility on the recently-acquired lot adjacent to the C&O Canal barge landing, to function as a Canal contact facility and for barge operation and administrative functions, replacing the temporary contact facility now within the Foundry building. This building will also serve the Park Police. It will be in a park-like plaza setting and be in keeping with Georgetown's scale and character.

**(28) LIGHT TOWPATH BETWEEN 30TH AND 31ST STREETS ONLY**

It is proposed that additional, low-key lighting of the C&O Canal be confined to areas where residences are adjacent to the towpath between 31st and Thomas Jefferson Streets for safety reasons. The Canal Barge landing and Fish Market Square are already adequately lighted.

**(29) PRESERVE AND INTERPRET ARCHEOLOGICAL RESOURCES**

In 1985, a National Park Service sponsored archeological overview and assessment of the proposed Georgetown Waterfront Park was completed for the area from 31st Street to Wisconsin Avenue. Subsequently, an archeological testing program was undertaken in the same area. Twelve trenches were excavated by backhoe, with hand excavation of in-situ remains and troweling were discovered, as well as late 18th Century building walls and brick flooring from earlier historic periods, and a small prehistoric component. The landscape plan for the park has been modified to avoid excavation in those areas where intact archeological remains were discovered. A 3-panel interpretive wayside exhibit is being developed which describes the area of late 18th and early 19th Century warehouses and cobblestone paving found near K Street. A final study entitled "Georgetown Waterfront Park Archeological Assessment and Overview" will cover the area from 31st to 36th Streets. This document is expected to be completed in June 1986, and will provide the necessary historical background data and archeological interpretation to assist in future park planning and development, while protecting potentially significant archeological remains.

**(30) PRESERVE NATURAL SCENIC VALUES OF PALISADES**

Above Key Bridge, west of the boundary of the designated boathouse area, the natural conditions of the palisades will be preserved. The Potomac River above Key Bridge is one of the main scenic treasures of the Nation's Capital, and no new development will be permitted in this area. In areas not now adequately protected, particularly the south edge of the Georgetown University campus, attempts will be made to acquire scenic easements and other devices to prevent intrusive developments.



Approved:

*Manus J. Felt* 1/6/87  
Regional Director, National Capital Region

Associate Regional Director, Land Use  
Coordination, John G. Parsons

Superintendent, C&O Canal National  
Historical Park, Richard Stanton

Planning Team:

Albert J. Benjamin - Project Manager  
John W. Jessup - Urban Planner  
Paul E. Lederer - Landscape Architect/Planner  
Nancy R. Young - Administrative Assistant

