



## Executive Director's Recommendation

Commission Meeting: March 1, 2018

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<b>PROJECT</b> <b>Thomas Jefferson Memorial - Targeted Accessibility Improvements</b> 16 East Basin Drive, SW Washington, DC	<b>NCPC FILE NUMBER</b> 7937
	<b>NCPC MAP FILE NUMBER</b> 1.51(73.10)44660
<b>SUBMITTED BY</b> United States Department of the Interior National Park Service	<b>APPLICANT'S REQUEST</b> Approval of comments on concept design
<b>REVIEW AUTHORITY</b> Federal Projects in the District per 40 U.S.C. § 8722(b)(1) and (d)	<b>PROPOSED ACTION</b> Approve with comments on concept design
	<b>ACTION ITEM TYPE</b> Consent Calendar

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### PROJECT SUMMARY

The National Park Service (NPS) is seeking comments on concept design plans for targeted accessibility improvements at the Thomas Jefferson Memorial, consisting of two new accessibility ramps, on the north side of the memorial, adjacent to the Tidal Basin. The Thomas Jefferson Memorial is located at 16 East Basin Drive, southwest of the National Mall. The purpose of the project is to make the experience and facilities of the Thomas Jefferson Memorial accessible to all visitors by removing or reducing barriers.

Currently, the Thomas Jefferson Memorial has only one accessible route to the statuary chamber level, which requires visitors to use a ramp on the south side of the memorial to a sidewalk leading to the lower level entrances from the lower terrace level. If coming from the Tidal Basin side on the north, visitors must travel all the way around the memorial to the south side ramp and back towards the Tidal Basin to the lower entrances (this current accessible route is over 1,000 feet long). NPS has submitted three design options for Commission comment regarding the proposed new ramps, but has indicated one option as their preferred design. All three options are located on the north side of the Thomas Jefferson Memorial, on the Tidal Basin Plaza and lower terrace levels, impacting existing planters. The proposed ramps would be on both the east and wide sides of the plaza and terrace levels

### KEY INFORMATION

- The Thomas Jefferson Memorial was commissioned by an Act of Congress in 1934, and designed by John Russell Pope with Frederick Law Olmstead appointed as the memorial's landscape architect.
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- The dedication of the memorial was in 1943. It is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1966, as well as declared a National Historic Landmark.
  - In 1975, to initially address issues of accessibility at the memorial, original planters on the south side of the memorial were modified to create two accessible sloped walkways. NPS added restroom facilities on the lower level and a new elevator, providing visitor accessibility to the portico and statuary chamber levels of the memorial.
  - In 1998, the memorial underwent another rehabilitation to expand the lower level of the memorial to allow for an exhibit space, a bookstore, and a gift shop. NPS relocated and enlarged the existing restroom facilities to be accessible for all visitors. They also added a new family restroom and upgraded the elevator in its same location.
  - The landscaping around the memorial has been altered several times from the original Olmsted design, with the first alteration occurring in 1972, with a new planting design deferring from Olmsted's original scheme, but still respecting the original narrow vistas to the east and west. In 1986, original hedge material and white pines were replaced in-kind.
  - NPS has submitted three design options for consideration by the Commission for the two new ramps to improve accessibility to the statuary chamber and has indicated their preference for Option 3. The first option would construct a new sloped walkway ramp within existing planters. Option 2 would construct a new sloped walkway ramp partially within existing planters. The third, and NPS's preferred option, would construct the sloped walkway ramp outside the existing planter. All three options would bring visitors to entrance doors to the lower level of the memorial at the lower terrace level from the Tidal Basin Plaza level.
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## RECOMMENDATION

The Commission:

**Supports** the applicant's proposed targeted accessibility improvements at the Thomas Jefferson Memorial, consisting of two new ramps on the north side of the memorial, to improve accessibility for all visitors.

**Notes** that the Thomas Jefferson Memorial currently has only one accessible route to the statuary chamber level, which requires visitors arriving from the north to use a ramp on the south side of the memorial and traverse back to access the lower level entrances.

**Recommends** the applicant continue to explore their preferred design of new accessible ramps on the north side of the memorial outside the existing historic planters on the Tidal Basin Plaza level.

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## PROJECT REVIEW TIMELINE

Previous actions	NA
Remaining actions (anticipated)	Review of preliminary and final site development plans for the new ramps.

## PROJECT ANALYSIS

### Executive Summary

Staff has evaluated the concept proposals for the two new ramps at the Thomas Jefferson Memorial by determining its consistency with the relevant policies within the *Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital* and the *National Mall Plan*. Staff has found the proposed improvements are consistent with the Plans and the Act and will improve the visitor experience at the memorial. Therefore, staff recommends the **Commission supports the applicant's proposed targeted accessibility improvements at the Thomas Jefferson Memorial, consisting of two new ramps on the north side of the memorial, to improve accessibility for all visitors.** Further staff suggests the **Commission recommend the applicant continue to explore their preferred design of new accessible ramps on the north side of the memorial outside the existing historic planters on the Tidal Basin Plaza level.**

### Analysis

As indicated previously, NPS seeks targeted accessibility improvements at the Thomas Jefferson Memorial, consisting of two new accessibility ramps, on the north side of the memorial, adjacent to the Tidal Basin, in order to make the experience and facilities of the Thomas Jefferson Memorial accessible to all visitors by removing or reducing barriers. As such, staff recommends the Commission note that the Thomas Jefferson Memorial currently has only one accessible route to the statuary chamber level, which requires visitors to use a ramp on the south side of the memorial and traverse to the north side to access the lower level entrances. If coming from the Tidal Basin side on the north, visitors must travel all the way around the memorial to the south side ramp and back towards the Tidal Basin to the lower entrances (this current accessible route is over 1,000 feet long).

To address initial issues of accessibility at the Thomas Jefferson Memorial, the current accessible ramps were added in 1975 with original planters on the south side of the memorial modified to create two sloped walkways which brought visitors to the lower terrace level where doors on the east and west sides of the approach stairs provide access to the memorial's lower level. Restroom facilities were added on the lower level and a new elevator provided accessibility to visitors to the portico and statuary chamber levels of the memorial. In 1998, the memorial underwent another

rehabilitation to expand the lower level of the memorial to allow for an exhibit space, a bookstore, and a gift shop. NPS relocated and enlarged the existing restroom facilities to be accessible for all visitors. They also added a new family restroom and upgraded the elevator in its same location.

NPS has submitted three design options that explore ways to add the new ramps on the north side of the memorial. All three options would bring visitors to existing entrance doors located on the lower terrace level from the Tidal Basin Plaza level. The entrance doors provide access to the memorial's lower level where the elevator is located. The first option constructs a sloped walkway with a width of five feet within an existing historic planter, entirely. The maximum slope is five percent. The existing landscaped hedge would be reduced at the opening. In this option, the width is too narrow to provide a handrail. The second option constructs a sloped walkway with a width of five feet partially within the same existing historic planter. The front of the planter is unaltered as the walkway cuts into the planter from the side. The maximum walkway slope is five percent, and the landscape hedge is reduced. A third option, and NPS's preferred option, constructs the sloped walkway completely outside the existing historic planter. The walkway would have a width of eight feet and a maximum slope of four to four and a half percent. Exposed aggregate concrete paving to match the existing color and finish on the terraces will be used for the walkway. The landscape hedge would remain intact, and the capstone would be removed at the existing terrace wall. Stainless steels handrails will be located on both sides of the walkway, with the exterior rail freestanding on a granite clad concrete curb wall and the interior rail installed along the inside of the existing historic terrace planter. At Section 106 Consultation meeting to discuss the project and the options, participants also voiced support for Option 3, as it appears to result in no adverse impacts to historic fabric or character defining features at the memorial.

Staff would also add that at the agency and Section 106 consultation meetings, NPS is exploring other components of the targeted accessibility improvements program at the Thomas Jefferson Memorial, including relocating designated handicapped parking spots, but those projects are not part of this concept review, but could be included in future reviews by the Commission.

Based upon staff's analysis, the applicant's proposal of adding two new ramps on the north side of the memorial addresses the desire for accessibility improvements at the Thomas Jefferson Memorial. Therefore, staff recommends the **Commission supports the applicant's proposed targeted accessibility improvements at the Thomas Jefferson Memorial, consisting of two new ramps on the north side of the memorial, to improve accessibility for all visitors.** Further staff suggests the **Commission recommend the applicant continue to explore their preferred design of new accessible ramps on the north side of the memorial outside the existing historic planters on the Tidal Basin Plaza level.**

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## CONFORMANCE TO EXISTING PLANS, POLICIES AND RELATED GUIDANCE

### Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital

Staff finds that the proposed preferred concept design is consistent with policies in the Federal Elements of the Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital (2016) and in particular, those policies contained in the Historic Preservation and the Visitors and Commemoration Element. These policies encourage the federal government to preserve and protect historic properties while also accommodating visitors and balancing the needs of security and accessibility.

Among the policies in the Historic Preservation and Visitors and Commemoration Elements that the proposed concept is consistent include the following:

- Sustain exemplary standards of historic property stewardship.
- Ensure the continued preservation of federal historic properties through ongoing maintenance.
- Ensure that sites and settings for federally owned historic assets in the region are preserved and maintained as integral parts of the National Capital Region's historic character.
- Develop and maintain a safe, comfortable and pleasant environment that offers a range and distribution of amenities, services, and access throughout the area (e.g. lighting, accessible restrooms, concessions, and information).
- Ensure that any supporting facilities such as restrooms or concession stands do not detract from the aesthetics or accessibility of the commemorative element and its grounds.

### National Mall Plan

The National Mall Plan seeks to rehabilitate and refurbish the National Mall so that very high levels of use can be accommodated and the needs of all visitors and users can be met in an attractive, high-quality, energy-efficient, and sustainable manner. The National Mall Plan establishes a framework to protect memorials and landscapes while maintaining large areas of unprogrammed open space. The plan seeks to balance contemporary uses while respecting the planned historic landscapes of the L'Enfant and McMillan plans. The proposed concept design appears to be in keeping with the National Mall Plan.

### National Historic Preservation Act

Both NPS and NCPC have responsibilities for compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, as NCPC has approval authority for this project under the Planning Act. As such, NCPC has designated NPS as the lead federal agency for purposes of Section 106. NPS has initiated Section 106 consultation and hosted a Section 106 Consultation meeting. The

Commission does not require the conclusion of the Section 106 process at the concept review phase.

### **National Environmental Policy Act**

Both NPS and NCPC have responsibilities for compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), as NCPC has approval authority for this project under the Planning Act. NPS has initiated NEPA and hosted scoping meetings. For NCPC's NEPA responsibilities, a categorical exclusion may be used based on the scope of the project and the outcome of the Section 106 consultation. The Commission does not require the conclusion of the Section 106 process at the concept review phase.

## **CONSULTATION**

### **Coordinating Committee**

Without objection, the Committee forwarded the proposed comments on the concept design to the Commission with the statement that the proposal has been coordinated with all participating agencies. The SHPO is coordinating subject to completion of the Section 106 review process. The Coordinating Committee agencies included NCPC, the U.S. General Services Administration; the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority; the NPS; the District of Columbia Office of Planning; the District Department of Transportation; the DC SHPO; and the District Department of Energy and Environment.

### **U.S. Commission of Fine Arts**

The U.S. Commission of Fine Arts reviewed the concept proposal at their February 15, 2018 meeting, supporting NPS's preferred option of the new accessibility ramps to be constructed outside the existing historic planters, but encouraged NPS to explore removing the external handrail by leveling the adjacent ground with the ramp and by relocating the internal handrail to the top of the historic terrace planter.

## **ONLINE REFERENCE**

The following supporting documents for this project are available online:

- Submission Package

Prepared by Lee Webb  
02/05/2018

## **POWERPOINT (ATTACHED)**

NCPC File #: 7937

# Thomas Jefferson Memorial Targeted Accessibility Improvements

16 East Basin Drive, SW  
Washington, D.C.

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National Park Service

Concept

**Commission meeting date:** March 1, 2018

**NCPC review authority:** 40 U.S.C. §8722(b)(1) and (d)

**Applicant request:** Approval of comments on concept design

**Delegated / consent / open / executive session:** Consent

**NCPC Review Officer:** Webb

**NCPC File number:** 7937

**Project summary:** The National Park Service has submitted for review and comment a concept design for two new accessibility ramps at the Thomas Jefferson Memorial. The ramps are one component of NPS's Targeted Accessibility Improvement Program (TAIP) at the Thomas Jefferson Memorial. The purpose of the project is to make the experience and facilities of the Thomas Jefferson Memorial accessible to all visitors by removing or reducing barriers. Currently, the Jefferson Memorial has only one accessible route to the statuary chamber level, which requires visitors to use a ramp on the south side of the Memorial to a sidewalk leading to the lower level entrances. If coming from the Tidal basin, visitors must travel all the way around the Memorial, to the south side ramp and back towards the Tidal Basin to the lower level entrances (this current accessible route is over 1,000 feet long).

NPS has developed three options that have been shared and vetted during the NEPA and Section 106 consultation processes:

- Option 1: Sloped walkway within existing planter
- Option 2: Sloped walkway partially within existing planter
- Option 3: Sloped walkway outside existing planter

NPS's preferred and proposed design is Option 3: Sloped walkway outside existing planter. The consulting parties supported this option as it appears to not adversely impact any historic features of the Thomas Jefferson Memorial







**1** Tidal Basin Plaza Level



**2** Littleleaf Japanese Hollies along Lower Terrace Level



**3** Steps to Lower Terrace Level



**4** Yew plantings at Tidal Basin



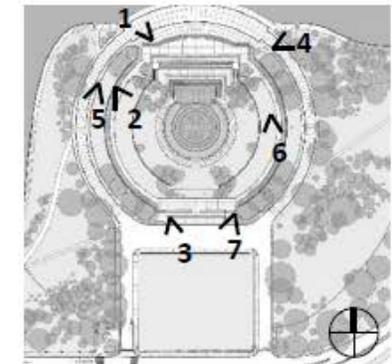
**5** Yew Plantings with Zelkova in foreground

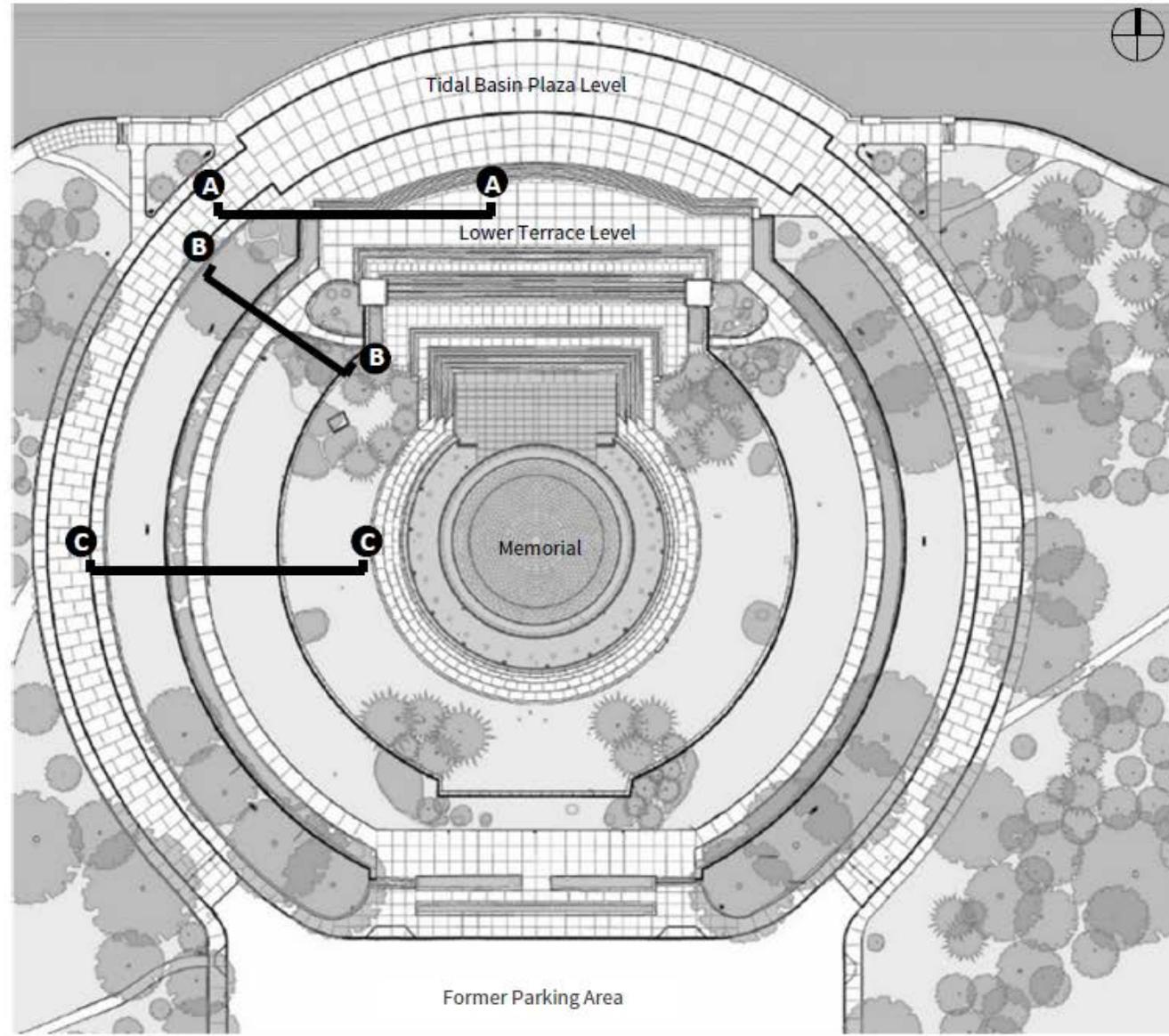


**6** Littleleaf Japanese Hollies

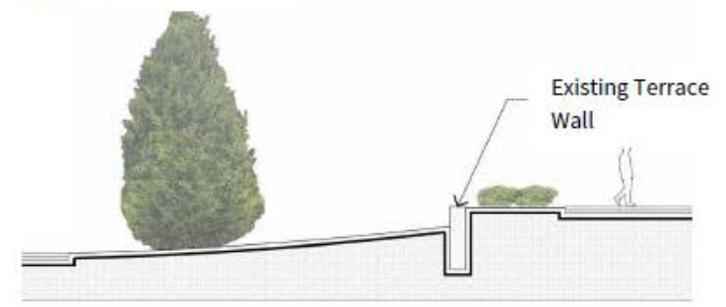


**7** Zelkovas on southeast side of Memorial

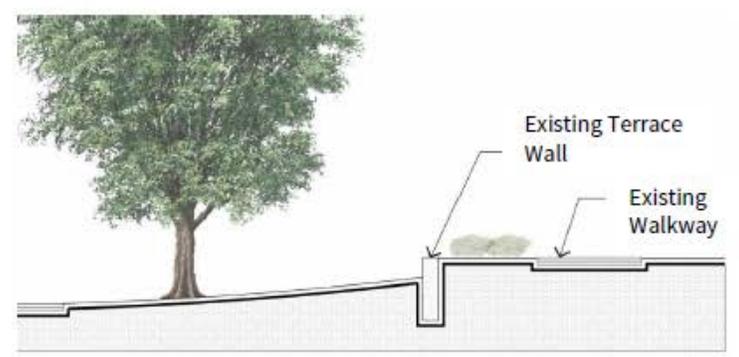




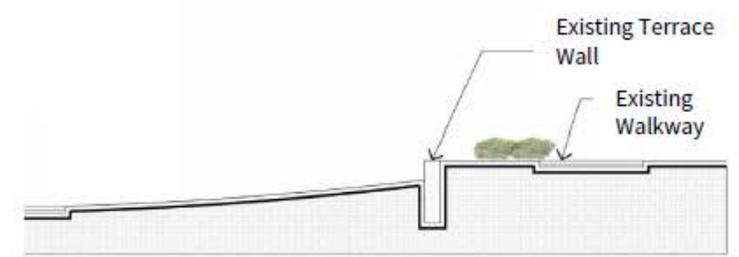
Section A-A



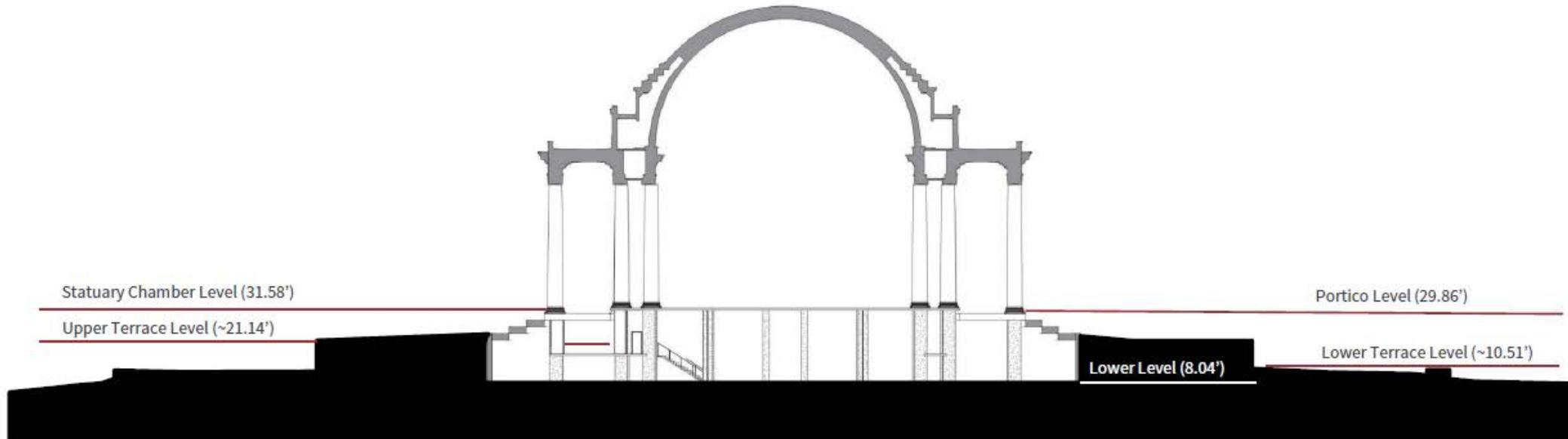
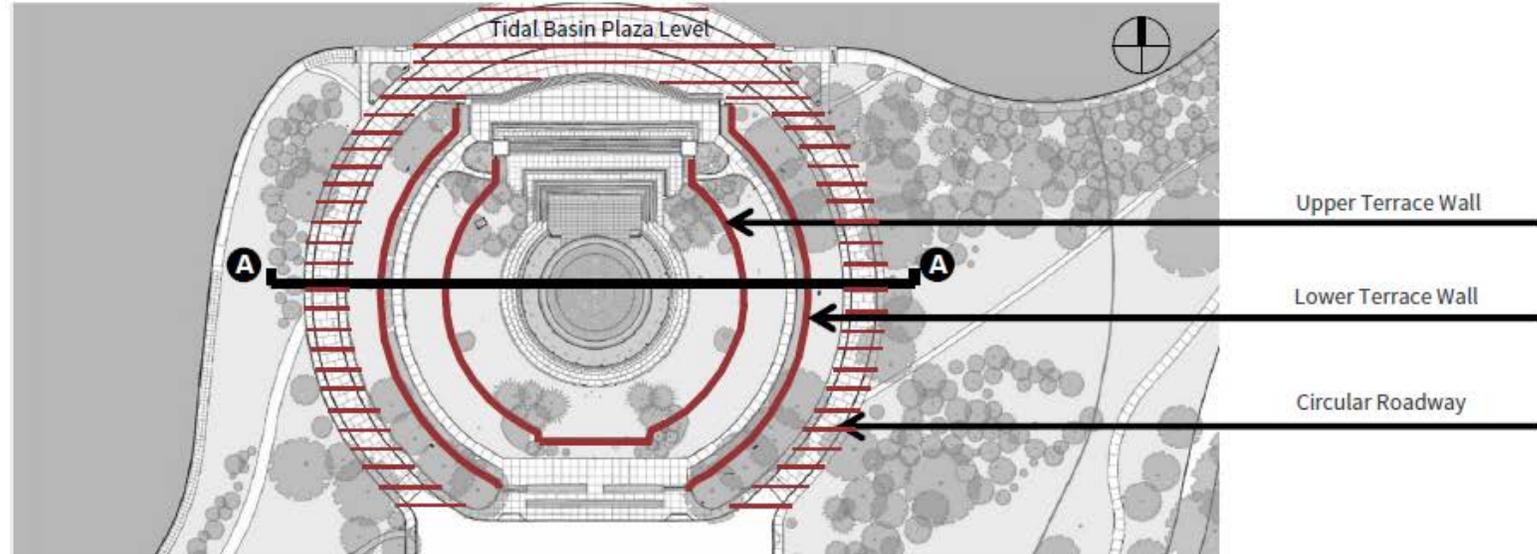
Section B-B

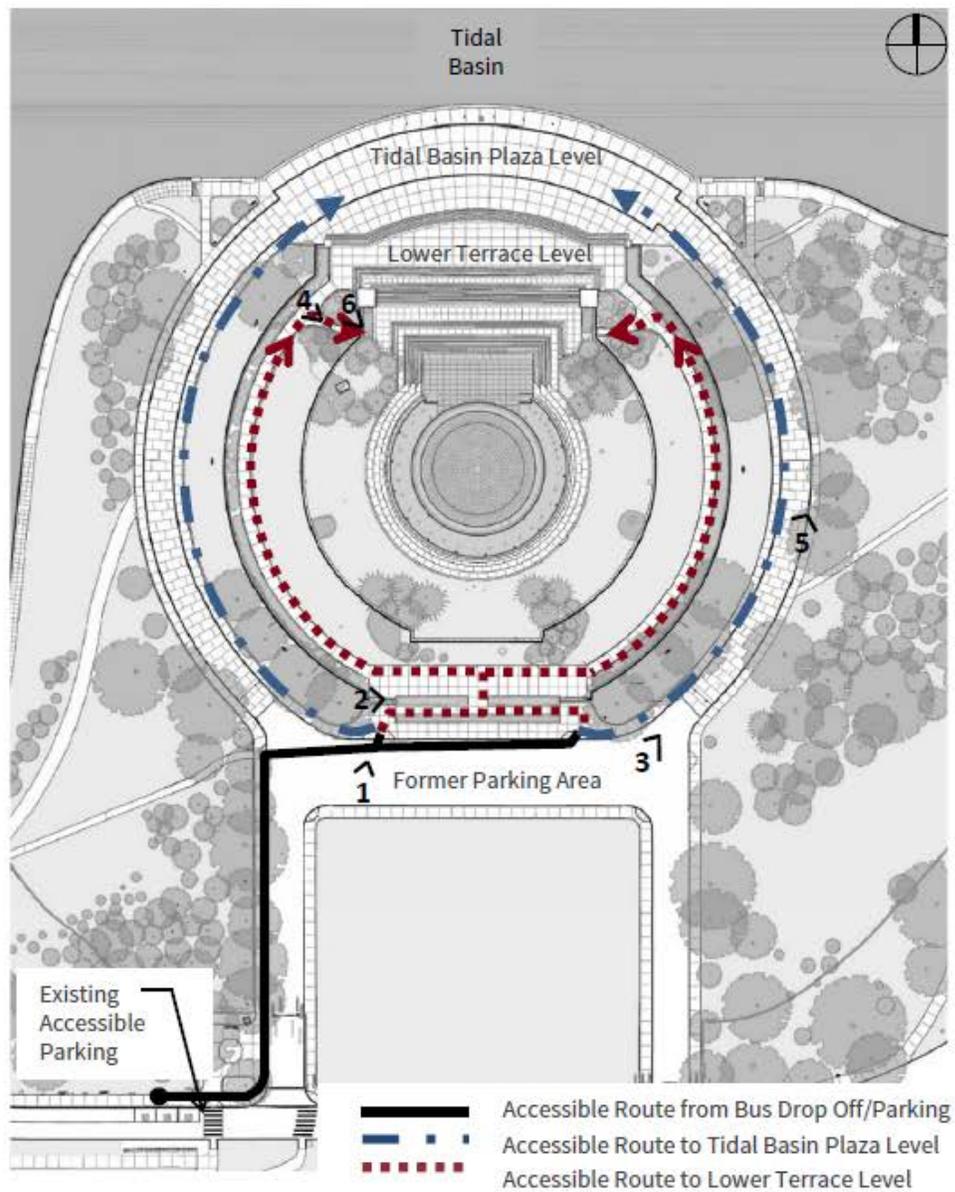


Section C-C



## Existing Conditions





**1** Path to sloped walkways



**2** Sloped walkway to Lower Terrace Level



**3** Entrance to east side Circular Roadway



**4** West entrance to Lower Level



**5** East side Circular Roadway



**6** West side entrance at Lower Terrace Level



## Option 1: Sloped Walkway within Existing Planter

- Walkway entirely within planter
- Landscape hedge reduced
- Walkway width of 5'-0"
- Maximum walkway slope is 5.00%
- Too narrow to provide handrail



## Option 2: Sloped Walkway Partially within Existing Planter

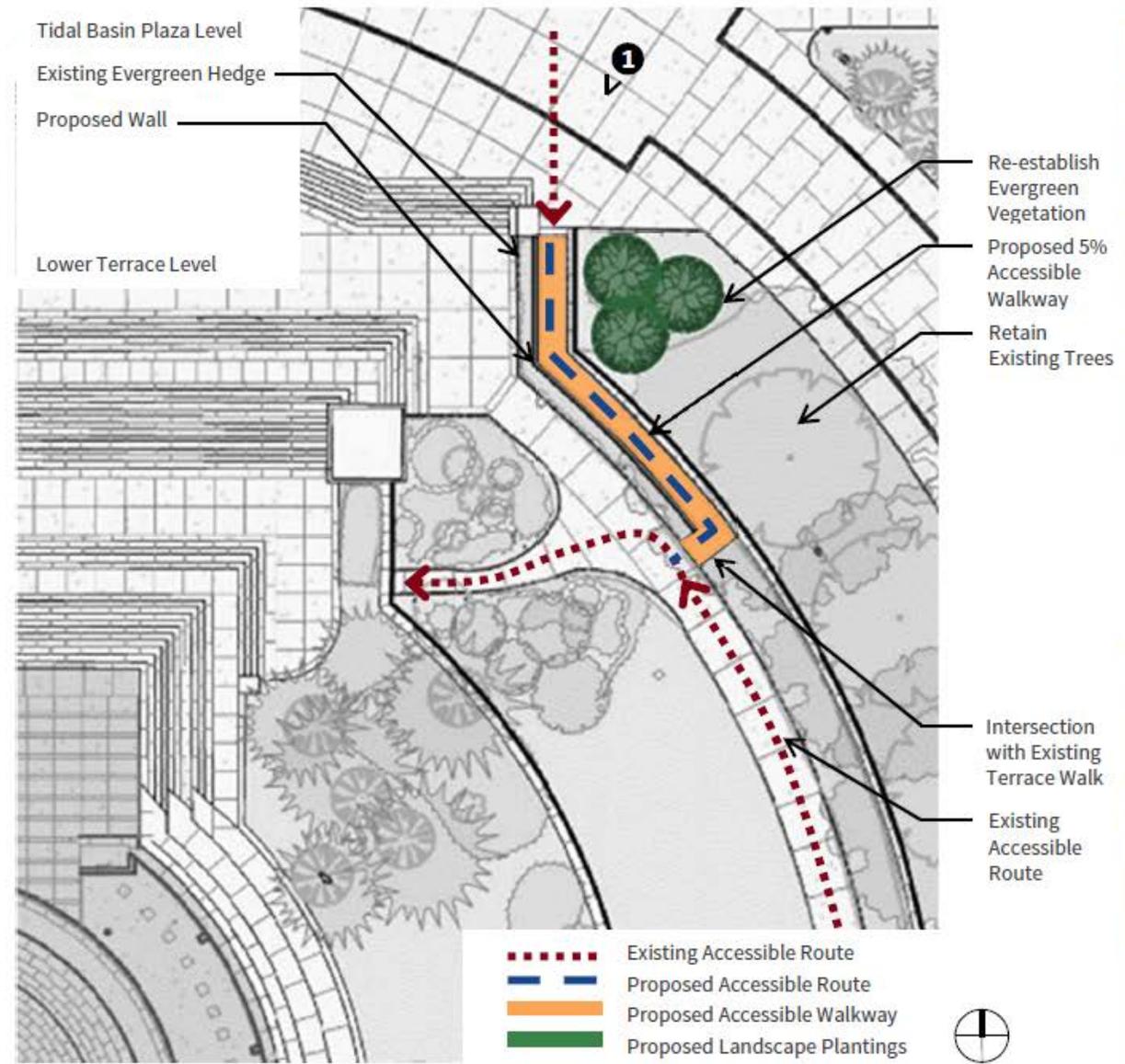
- Front façade of planter is unaltered; walkway cuts into planter from side
- Landscape hedge reduced
- Walkway width of 5'-0"
- Maximum walkway slope is 5.00%
- Handrail located at outside edge of walkway



## Option 3: Sloped Walkway outside Existing Planter

- Walkway completely outside planter
- Landscape hedge remains intact
- Capstone removed at existing terrace wall (reversible)
- Walkway width of 8'-0"
- Maximum walkway slope is 4.00-4.50%
- Handrail located at outside edge of walkway

### Option 1: Sloped Walkway within Existing Planter



Plan of Option 1

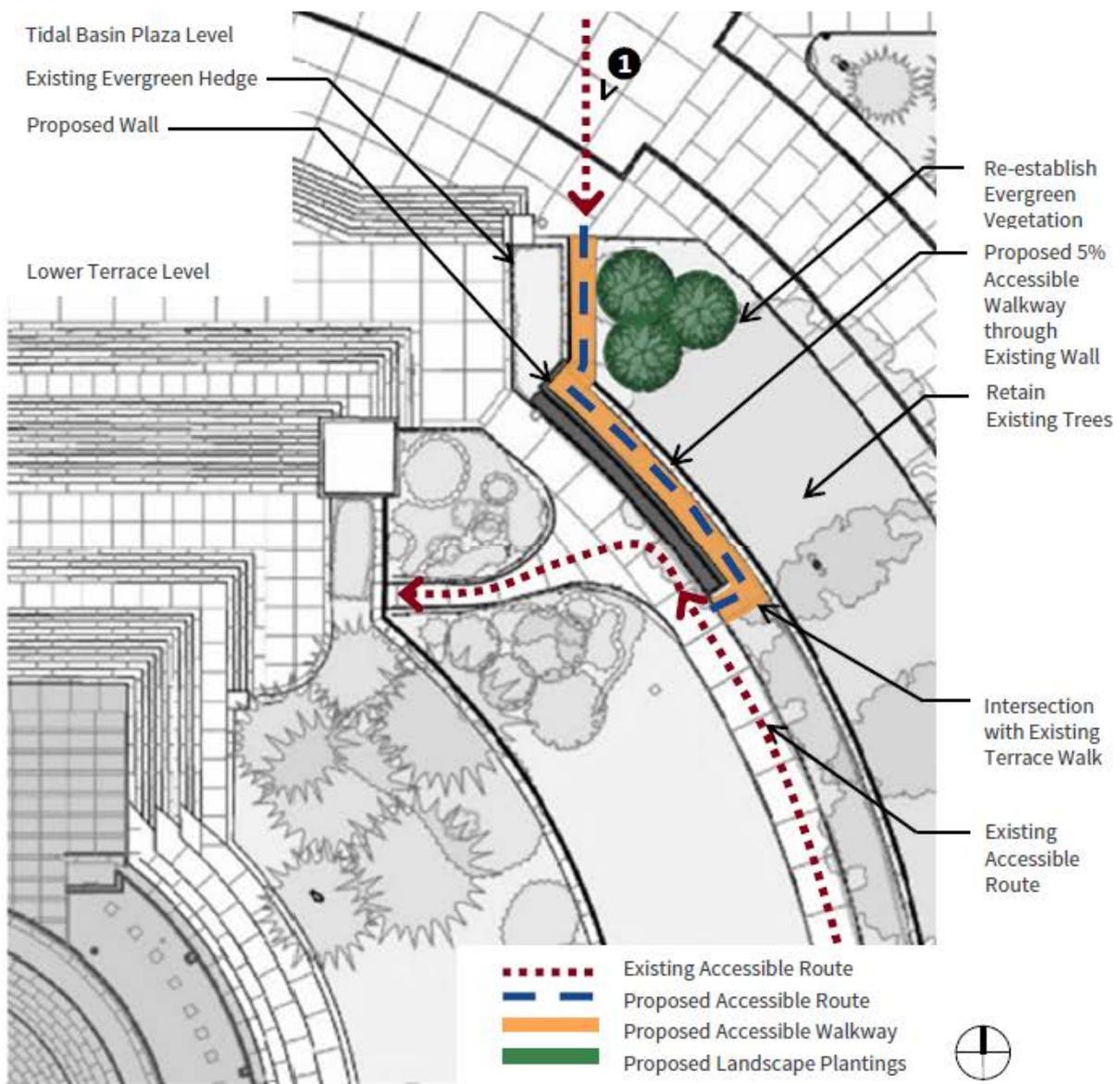


1 Rendering of proposed east sloped walkway at terrace wall and planter



Aerial rendering of east sloped walkway

# Option 2: Sloped Walkway partially within Existing Planter



Plan of Option 2

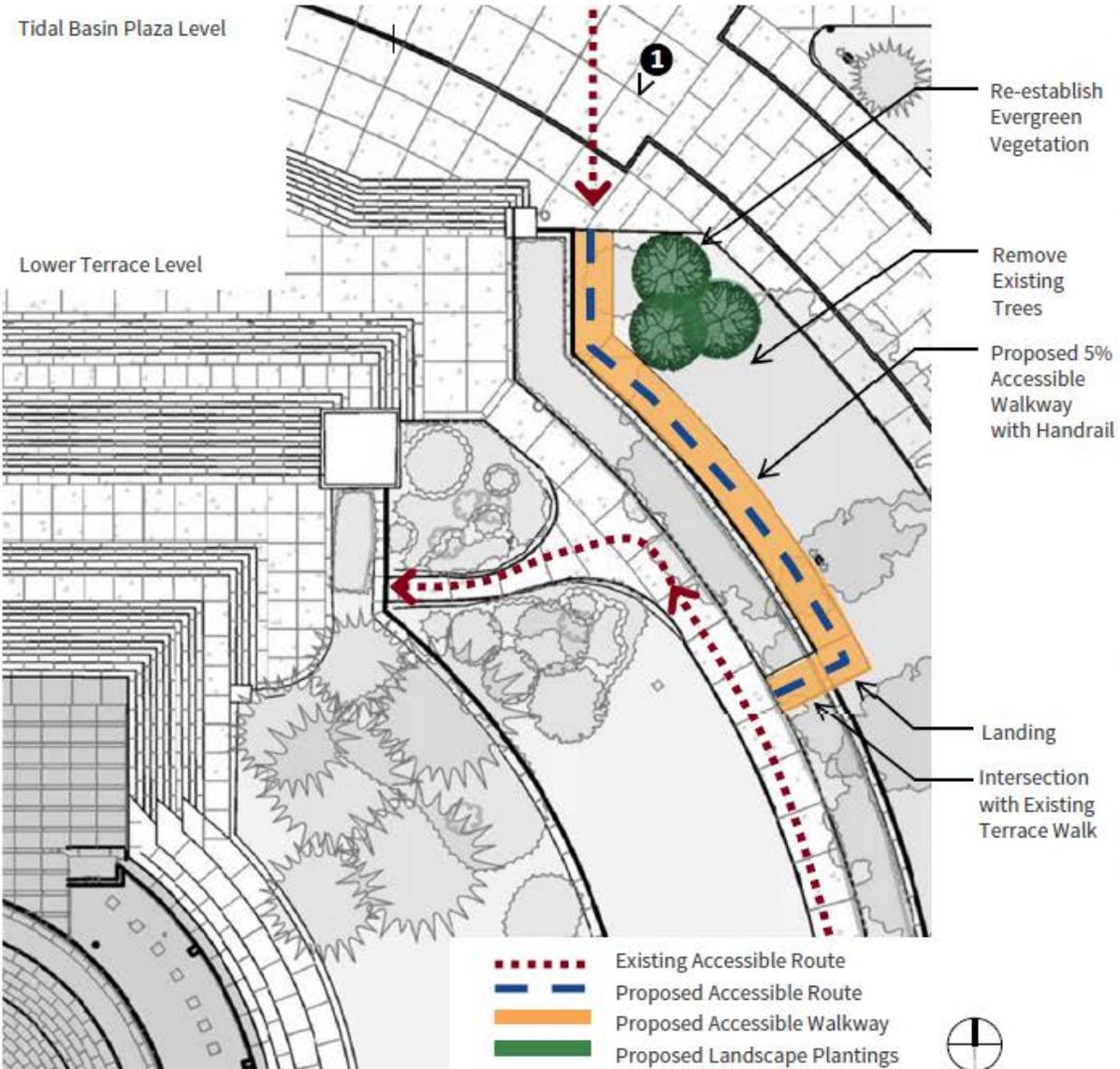


1 Rendering of proposed east sloped walkway at terrace wall and planter



Aerial rendering of east sloped walkway

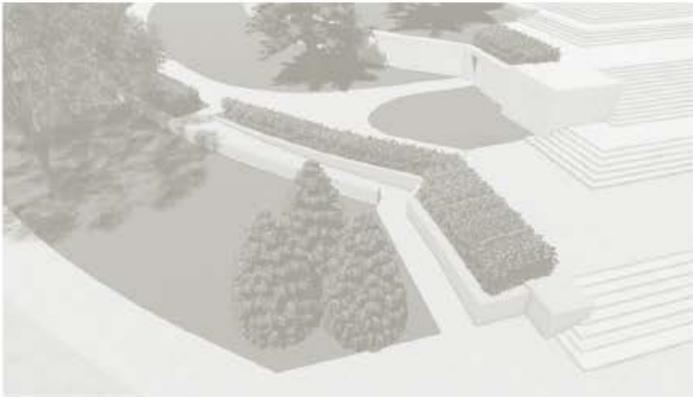
### Option 3: Sloped Walkway outside Existing Planter



1 Rendering of proposed east sloped walkway at terrace wall and planter



Aerial rendering of east sloped walkway

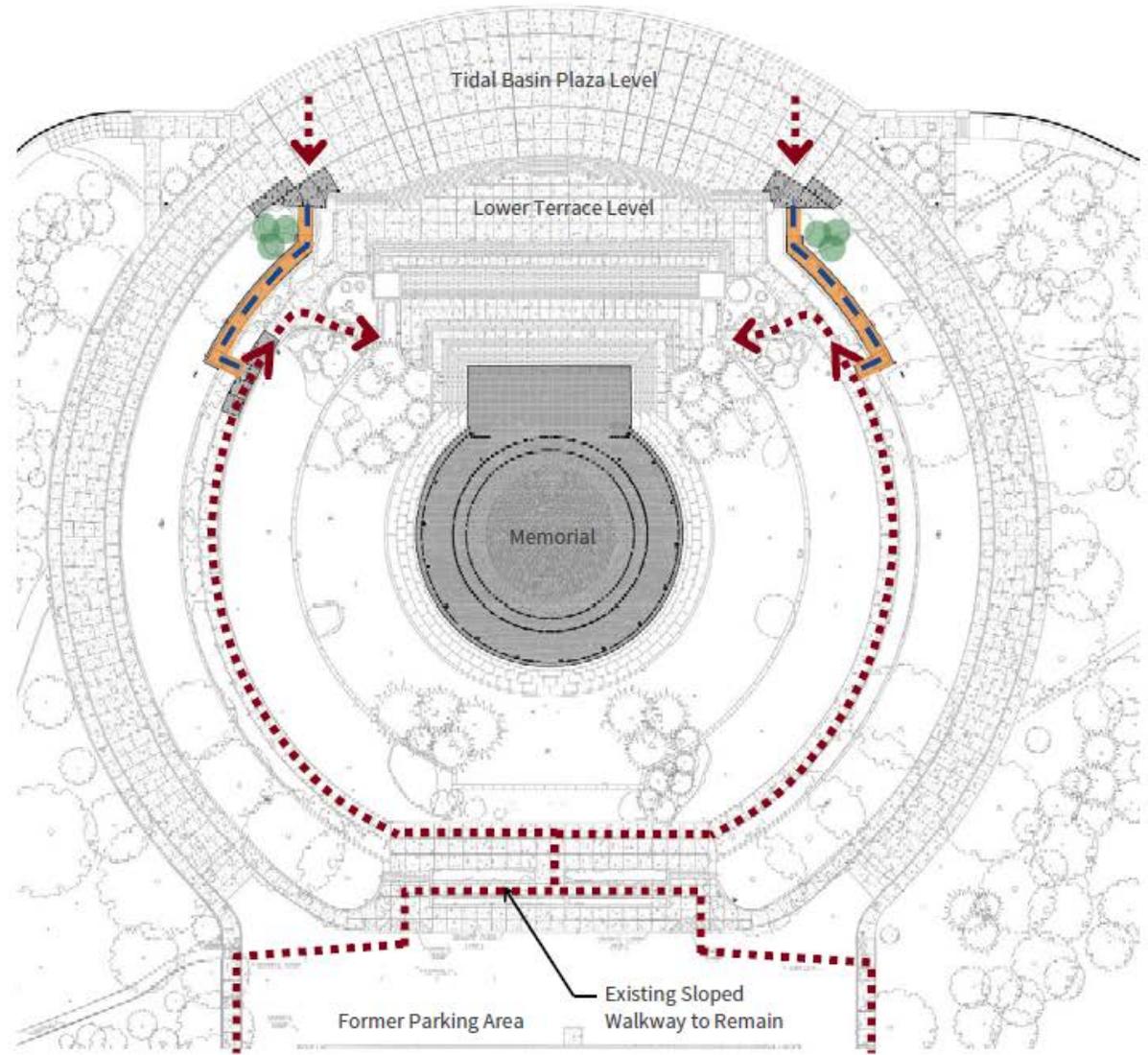


## Preferred Alternative: Option 3: Sloped Walkway outside Existing Planter

This option was selected for further development due to the following advantages:

- Walkway width of 8'-0" - enough for two wheelchairs to pass
- Minimal visual impact to cultural landscape
- Minimal physical impact to historic fabric
- Walkway slope is reduced (maximum of 4.00-4.50%)
- Allows for two-way wheelchair traffic on sloped walkway

## Proposed Design: Sloped Walkway outside Existing Planter



The proposed design allows for universal access from the Tidal Basin plaza level and significantly reduces the accessible route distance from the Tidal Basin plaza level to the entrances at the lower level.

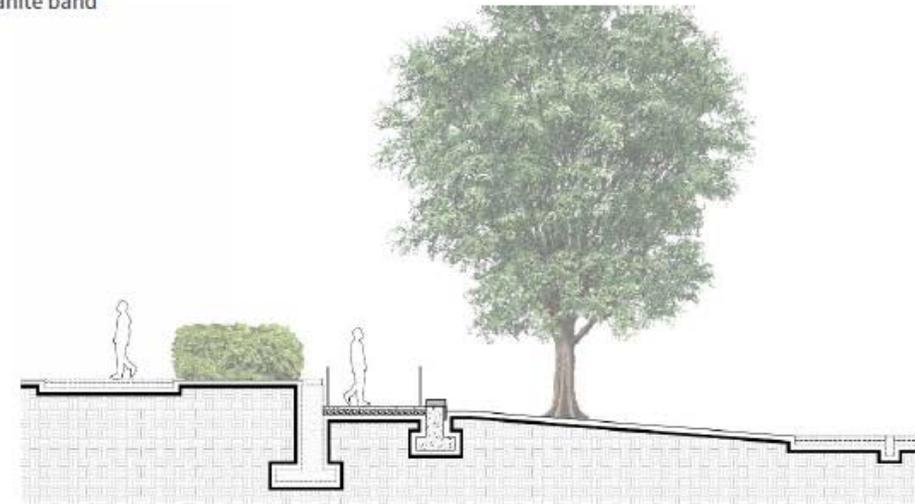
- Walkway located outside of historic terrace planter
- Walkway width of 8'-0"
- Handrails at both sides of walkway
- Walkway slope 4.00%-4.50%
- Significantly reduces distance from Tidal Basin plaza level to lower level

- Existing Accessible Route
- Proposed Accessible Route
- Proposed Accessible Walkway
- Proposed Landscape Plantings

## Proposed Design: Sloped Walkway outside Existing Planter



1 Existing east sloped walkway at terrace wall and planter



Section through proposed sloped walkway

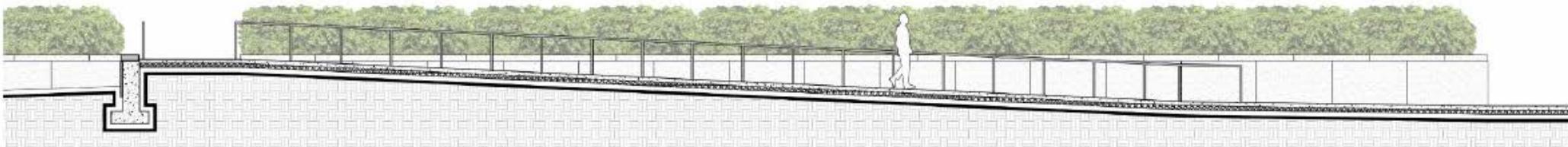
### Proposed Design: Sloped Walkway outside Existing Planter



Existing east terrace wall and planter



Rendering of proposed east sloped walkway at terrace wall and planter



Section through proposed sloped walkway

### Proposed Design: Sloped Walkway outside Existing Planter



Aerial rendering of proposed sloped walkway