

GWU presents designs for intended museum building

By **BRADY HOLT**
Current Staff Writer

The museum George Washington University hopes to construct on its campus will be three stories of limestone topped with a level of glass-facaded office space, according to design renderings officials presented last week.

As part of its campus plan, the university received preliminary zoning approval to construct a 65-foot-high museum on the site of an existing rose garden in the 700 block of 21st Street. The museum will house a donated collection of Washingtoniana artifacts and materials the university already owns. Additionally, the Textile Museum will relocate from Sheridan-Kalorama to space in the new facility.

As planned, the museum will attach to the historic Woodhull House, and part of that building will also become exhibit space. Street-level access to the block's central plaza space would remain. The museum's primary visitor entrance and internal loading dock would be accessed from 21st Street.

Both the District's Zoning



Courtesy of George Washington University
The museum will include textile and Washingtoniana collections.

Commission and Historic Preservation Review Board must sign off on design details before the university can get building permits to start construction. The school hopes to open the museum in mid-2014.

Officials presented the plans for the building at last Wednesday's meeting of the Foggy Bottom/West End advisory neighborhood commission, saying they expect to go before the preservation board Nov. 17. The Zoning Commission will review the impact of the building plans at a later date, but the historic review aims to ensure the plans

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On D.C. border, history hides along wayside

By **CARL STRAUMSHEIM**
Current Correspondent

In 2005, Stephen Powers took his daughter to visit some of the 40 boundary stones marking the original border of the District. The occasion: a second-grade homework assignment about Arlington County.

Surprised by the lack of upkeep, Powers went on to survey every stone, compiling notes about locations and conditions. More than 3,500 photos and several months later, he reached an overwhelming conclusion: The historic sites were falling into disre-

pair.

Powers' findings inspired volunteers across the region, and since the spring of 2010, a group of civil engineers, land surveyors and concerned neighbors has been working to renovate the sites on a regular basis. Their work is part of a greater push by the National Capital Boundary Stones Committee to raise public awareness about some of the nation's oldest monuments.

"Stone fever" is what I like to call it," said Powers, who serves as a director for the National Capital Section of the American Society of Civil

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Mayor talks budget, schools in Chevy Chase

Current Staff Report

Mayor Vincent Gray told the Chevy Chase Citizens Association Thursday evening that the District expects to record a surplus of between \$100 million and \$125 million for the just-completed 2011 fiscal year.

He also discussed issues in education, public safety and job creation, as well as health care for the city's less fortunate.

Establishing a stable fiscal environment, Gray told the group, is one of his four top priorities, especially as the city has not had a truly bal-

anced budget for several years.

The city's fund balance, he said, fell from \$1.6 billion to \$800 million during the Fenty administration. Most of the remainder cannot be touched, he added, as it is required either for protecting outstanding bonds or by order of Congress.

Thanks to the city's strong credit rating and favorable market conditions, Gray said, the District was able to sell \$800 million worth of short-term bonds at an interest rate of 0.27 percent to finance its expenses until tax revenues are received.

But Gray stressed that those revenues must be collected fairly: To applause, the mayor said he disapproved of the idea of taxing out-of-state municipal bonds that had been purchased prior to the legislation taking effect, as it is inappropriate to have a retroactive tax.

Gray also touted his bona fides in promoting education reform, particularly early-childhood schooling. "People doubted my commitment to education reform" during the mayoral campaign, Gray said, in spite of "shepherding education reform

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MARKERS

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Engineers — one of the organizations featured on the committee.

The stones were placed in 1791 and 1792 after a heated debate about where the new federal district should be located. Following astronomer and mathematician Benjamin Banneker's calculations, Andrew Ellicott led a team of surveyors that placed a stone for every mile they traveled.

Back then, the stones rested in fields and forests. As the city grew, some of the stones became part of more modern landscapes: people's front yards or, in the case of the northernmost boundary stone, an area between town houses and the stretch of East-West Highway that runs through Silver Spring.

On Saturday, volunteers — armed with paint scrapers, primer

and stories about the stones' history — were working to restore six stones along the District's northern border.

Like many Washingtonians, neighbor Allen Browne stumbled across the northernmost stone by accident.

"I got stuck in traffic right here one day about 15 years ago, and I looked over to my right and saw this and thought, 'That has to be the smallest cemetery I've ever seen!'" Browne said.

On Saturday morning, the stone was covered by a thick layer of fallen leaves — invisible but for the wrought-iron fence surrounding it.

The Daughters of the American Revolution added fencing around this and other stones in 1915 as part of a pledge to maintain the sites. But after nearly a century, some are showing signs of serious neglect.

Powers' group therefore faced little opposition when it set out to



Bill Petros/The Current

Volunteers help restore the fence surrounding the northernmost boundary stone.

restore the fences in 2007. So far, 13 of the original 40 sites — 36 of which now remain — have been renovated, their fences scraped and repainted.

Other sites were not as lucky. One mile southeast of the northernmost boundary stone, a marker was accidentally bulldozed in 1952. Today, its absence is commemorated by a plaque.

Although the remaining stones

were added to the National Register of Historic Places by 1996, the Nation's Capital Boundary Stones Committee is pushing for the sites to be designated as National Historic Landmarks.

"With that designation, the National Park Service would have to take care of them. They'd have to be funded, maintained — and they'd get awareness through that," Powers said.

Now one stone — SW No. 9 — is recognized as a National Historic Landmark. It sits in Benjamin Banneker Park in Falls Church, Va., in memory of the original planner. Further attempts to grant individual stones that status have been turned down.

With the fences celebrating their centennial in 2015, Powers and the rest of the volunteers appear to be on track with their plan to renovate every site. "It's either all or nothing now," Powers said.

GRAY

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through the city council."

The mayor pointed out he had pushed legislation through the council for all District 3- and 4-year-olds to have access to preschool, noting that key brain development takes place before age 5.

Answering a question about ensuring the quality of the programs, he said the programs would increasingly fall under the auspices of public or charter schools rather than nonprofits, which have offered inconsistent results. "There was a group of very nice people who were not prepared," Gray recalled.

The mayor said he plans to expand the city's offerings to include a program for children as young as six months. The children will be read to and enjoy what children from better educated families receive, said Gray, adding that nonprofits could be very helpful in this area.

"If you reach the kids earlier, you're going to do better. ... Hearing words is how you build vocabulary."

The city, he said, will reap the benefits 10 to 15 years down the road."

Gray also announced progress in special-education spending. By next September, he said, the city will reduce expenses by \$25 million to \$30 million; it now spends \$160 million on private schools plus \$90 million on transportation. The savings, he said, will be reinvested in education.

Gray also boasted of an area in which he has increased spending — reopening the city's police academy, which was temporarily shut down due to budget cuts when Gray entered office.

Now, the academy will train 300 new officers to more than make up for the 120 who leave the system each year. By year's end there will be 3,200 officers; the goal, he said, is to have 3,800.

Despite those hires, the key to ending the city's 11 percent unemployment rate lies in the private sector, said Gray, who added that he is personally calling on firms to come here and to stay here.

And one project — stalled in that pipeline for years — is already doing so, he noted. After a massive infusion of capital from the government of Qatar, construction is finally under way at the site of the old convention center. According to projections, CityCenterDC will lead to 3,000 construction jobs and 3,000 new permanent jobs.

And there's more good news in Shaw, Gray noted: The O Street Market development will break ground in mid-November.

Gray also reported progress in keeping residents healthy. Asked about health care in wards 7 and 8, he said there soon will be three new clinics east of the Anacostia River. With only 3.2 percent of the District's children not covered by some kind of insurance, "the problem is access, not coverage."

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