

DRAFT

National Capital Planning Commission  
Public Comment on South Capital Street – Grand Urban Boulevard and Waterfront  
Gateway  
Kevin J. Traver, Executive Director, National Maritime Heritage Foundation  
March 30, 2005

I am Kevin Traver, Executive Director of the National Maritime Heritage Foundation.

I would like to thank the Commissioners for this opportunity to make public comment on the plans. On behalf of our Board of Director, staff and over 2500 volunteers and members I would like congratulate the National Capital Planning Commission for its visionary work for the South Capital Street corridor. We support the Commission's objective "to transform the avenue into a boulevard with magnificent spaces for public plazas, parkland, national monuments, and commercial and residential uses."

The National Maritime Heritage Foundation's mission is to inspire youth through maritime adventures. We also believe an important part of our mission is to reconnect the children, community and families to the rivers that flow through the Nation's capital. Our programs, which are currently actively working on the Anacostia River, work with kids from 11 -18, adults, in the classrooms of the city and on the rivers. NMHF's programs are the only on the water sailing and maritime programs in the District of Columbia, but we work with all the residents of the national capital region actively. We are growing, expanding our programs and making them more sustainable and committed to creating more opportunities for on the water activities for the community.

How do sailing and maritime heritage programs connect to redevelopment, job creation and sustainability? Two programs of the National Maritime Heritage Foundation fit into the long term vision of the Commission and we would like to recommend them to you.

First, is construction of the national capital tall ship, *Spirit of Enterprize*. The original *Enterprize* has many historical and cultural connections to the District of Columbia. She was originally commissioned by President George Washington in 1796. One of her first and most successfully captains was Washington native and icon, Stephen Decatur. She was homeported at the Washington Navy Yard and rebuilt at the yard for service in the War of 1812. Without question she is a symbol for our nations capital.

More importantly to our current discussion is a study done by National Maritime Heritage Foundation in partnership with the Howard University Center for Urban Progress. The question the study asked was if a tall ship was built in Washington, D.C. what would be the economic and culturally impact and benefits to the community at large. The study determined that total incremental incomes to the D.C. economy arising out of this project both construction and operation phases are estimated to be \$96.70 million. The *Spirit of Enterprize* would also generate 125 full and part time employment opportunities during her construction and eventual operation on our waterfront.

DRAFT

Culturally, the *Spirit of Enterprize* will fulfill many roles for the city District of Columbia. It will be an important educational opportunity for the children of D.C. during the construction and operational stage. It will be a sailing ambassador for the city of Washington and promote tourism and growth along the Anacostia. It will be a learning lab on the water focusing on the maritime heritage of Washington. The *Spirit of Enterprize* will also be the center piece attraction for the other project that National Maritime Heritage Foundation would like to recommend to the Commission: The Washington Maritime Center.

Washington, D.C. needs a maritime heritage center. Up and down the east coast of the United States cities have and are capitalizing on their waterfronts and maritime heritage. In Boston, the USS Constitution anchors a mixed use and tourism center; in New York the South Street Seaport Museum with a collection of tall ships, features the Clipper Ship Peking; the Philadelphia Waterfront Renaissance project has been built around the Independence Seaport Museum, the ship USS OLYMPIA and the submarine BECUNA. In our own back yard we see the success story of Baltimore's Inner Harbor with the USS Constellation as its center piece. In Norfolk, VA new river walk is built around the inner harbor and is anchored by Nauticus, The National Maritime Center. It is also the home of the Battleship Wisconsin, and the newly completed tall ship USS Virginia.

What do all these urban waterfronts have in common? Two things: first, a Maritime Center as an anchor and second, ships of many descriptions that bring the community, tourist, and students to the waterfront. The formula works and is successful. The National Maritime Heritage Foundation purposes that the Washington follow this successful model for waterfront development. The Washington Maritime Center would be a home for a National Capital Sailing Center, a maritime culture interpretative center focused on D.C., a tall ship visitation center, and a digital maritime library. Additionally, this space will bring people to the waterfront, reconnecting the citizens of the national capital area to their rivers, bring business and economic development to the waterfront and help rebuild Anacostia. The National Maritime Heritage Foundation hopes that the Commission will consider including the Washington Maritime Center in the plans for the lower Anacostia.

I hope you will consider these projects as constructive additions to the plans of the Commission. The National Maritime Heritage Foundation is ready to work with the Commission on these programs.

Thank you.