"I grew up in DC so I have memories of spending time in the District around the basin on weekends. Such a unique and special place. It must be saved."
—Survey Respondent
Public Feedback from the Tidal Basin Ideas Lab

Initiated by the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the Trust for the National Mall, and the National Park Service, the Tidal Basin Ideas Lab, presented by American Express, brought together five leading Landscape Architecture firms to address complex challenges facing this extraordinary cultural landscape and to envision a better future. This work has been curated into a virtual online exhibition (www.tidalbasinideaslab.org) that invites the public to share feedback on design ideas and personal experience at the Tidal Basin. Over four months, more than 1000 survey participants responded. Surveys remain open and will be continuously collected. Here is a sample of public feedback as of February 24, 2021.

**Participating Landscape Architecture Firms**
- DLANDstudio
- GGN
- Hood Design Studio
- James Corner Field Operations
- Reed Hilderbrand

**Number of Survey Questions**

- 9

**Total Number of Responses**

- 1600

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Your Thoughts: Visitor Experience

492 respondents to this survey

**Which of the following challenges most affected your experience?**

- Infrastructure in disrepair: 234
- Overcrowding: 171
- Struggling cherry trees: 106
- Flooding: 92
- Lack of diverse stories: 92
- Access to nearby sites and neighborhoods: 85
- Insufficient historical information: 65
- No problems arose: 59
- Other: 62

**How often do you visit the Tidal Basin?**

- I visit at least once a month: 21
- I visit once or twice a year: 110
- I have visited once in the last five years: 183
- I’ve never visited: 62
- Other: 54

**Which of the following improvements do you think are most important to the future of the Tidal Basin?**

Respondents gave a ranking of 1 to the following answers:

- Manage daily flooding: 252
- Repair sea walls and improve walkways: 210
- Reimagine cherry tree plantings: 103
- Expand public space and parkland: 84
- Expand opportunities to learn about the full history of the site: 80
- Improve connections to nearby sites and neighborhoods: 66
- Integrate storytelling and personal experiences: 59
Your Thoughts: Design Ideas

985 respondents to this survey

Which design strategies focusing on the natural landscape appeal to you most?

Respondents gave a ranking of 1 to the following answers:

- Create wetlands and marshes to restore the ecology of the landscape, creating flood protection: 455
- Move the cherry trees to higher ground: 248
- Embrace flooding as an inevitable feature of the site: 159
- Do not alter the existing natural landscape: 143
- Other design strategy focused on the national landscape: 124

Greatest number of responses ranking 1 (most important):

455

Create wetlands and marshes to restore the ecology of the landscape, creating flood protection.

“If we honor the past by stone structures only, we miss the bigger picture. We must honor the environment (water, native plantings, insects & pollinators) in order to have a complete picture of this area.”  
— Survey Respondent

Which design strategies focusing on the built environment appeal to you most?

Respondents gave a ranking of 1 to the following answers:

- Improve connectivity between the Tidal Basin and nearby sites and parkland via new boardwalks and pathways: 321
- Construct floodgates to protect the Tidal Basin from inundation: 235
- Create an elevated walkway along the edge of the Tidal Basin: 204
- Reshape and reimagine Potomac Park: 182
- Other design strategy focused on the built environment: 98

Which design strategies focusing on culture and history appeal to you most?

Respondents gave a ranking of 1 to the following answers:

- Better connect different cultural experiences to the landscape and monuments: 283
- Offer more complete and complex histories of those memorialized: 262
- Move memorials and monuments to higher ground to prevent flooding and improve dialogue among the sites: 162
- Allow new wetlands and flood waters to take over the monuments and memorials: 124
- Other design strategies focused on culture and history: 110
Your Thoughts: Culture and History

123 respondents to this survey

What aspects of the Tidal Basin’s history would you like to learn more about?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ecology and Natural Landscape</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Memorials and Monuments</td>
<td>31</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cherry Trees and Floral Library</td>
<td>27</td>
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<tr>
<td>Public Space and Recreation</td>
<td>19</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Role of Women</td>
<td>17</td>
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<tr>
<td>Contested Monuments</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

How could the Tidal Basin better reflect our shared American ideals and history?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proposal</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrate contemporary ecological practices of sustainability and resilience</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgment of the complicated histories of those memorialized</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More stories of diverse cultural histories and social justice</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think the Tidal Basin does a good job of this already</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

472 total number of comments

“If the tidal basin is to be a place that evidences the American experience, it needs to be much more diverse. A memorial to one person of color is not enough. Part of the problem in America today is the unwillingness to go beyond the founding fathers and point up the actions of all peoples that made and make up this country from the founding until now.”

“I’m down at the Tidal Basin frequently as I enjoy watching the seasons change and it provides a great vantage point for the city. It has been interesting to see how the Tidal Basin/West Potomac Park has changed over the recent decades: with the addition of FDR and MLK, Jr Memorials, the increase in traffic during peak bloom, and the solitude during the other 11 months of the year. Additionally, the area has some of the last sports fields on the Mall, which are frequently occupied for 8+ months of the year (pre-COVID). It’s how the locals use the park space, not just the tourists who come for a during the spring and summer.”

“The first experience I had was sitting in Jefferson’s temple at sunset contemplating his writings. The last time I was there, it was the FDR memorial which was just as moving but in a different way. America is an idea and the part the Tidal Basin can play is its ability to inspire through the monuments and the setting the importance of that idea and also the fragility of it.”

all images: Sam Kittner