

# The Committee of 100 on the Federal City



www.committeeof100.net

**Founded 1923**

January 20, 2015

**Chair**

Nancy J. MacWood

**Vice-Chair**

Monte Edwards

**Secretary**

Meg Maguire

**Treasurer**

Carol F. Aten

**Trustees**

Judy Chesser

George Clark

Dorothy Douglas

Bobbie Faul-Zeitler

Alma Gates

Stephen Hansen

Erik Hein

Kathy Henderson

George Idelson

Jim Nathanson

Elizabeth Purcell

Laura M. Richards, Esq.

Marilyn J. Simon

Frank Vespe

Bill Wright

945 G Street, N.W.

Washington, D.C. 20001

202.681.0225

[info@committeeof100.net](mailto:info@committeeof100.net)

The Honorable Eleanor Holmes Norton  
Congresswoman, District of Columbia  
United States House of Representatives  
2136 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congresswoman Norton:

The Committee of 100 on the Federal City (C100) is pleased to submit comments (and recommendations) regarding the proposal of the Children's National Medical Center (CNMC) to acquire 13.2 acres [Buildings 54, 53, 52 and 3], which are currently within the boundaries of the land designated for the Department of State (DOS) on the former Walter Reed Army Medical Center Campus (Walter Reed) in northwest Washington DC. CNMC proposes to move its research operations to the laboratories of the former Armed Forces Institute of Pathology (AFIP), which was an international resource for pathology and the study of disease.

On December 19, 2014 President Obama signed the National Defense Authorization Act for FY 2015. This law included language for an "Alternative Conveyance Authority" that may take effect "[i]f the transfer of administrative jurisdiction" of the 43.53 acres of land designated for the Department of State (DOS) does not occur. While the law does not name CNMC, those familiar with the case know that CNMC wants to move its research operations to Building No. 54 (the former AFIP building) on the Walter Reed campus.

For more than eight decades, the Committee of 100 has advocated for responsible planning and land use in Washington, DC. Our work is guided by the values inherited from the L'Enfant Plan (1791-92) and the McMillan Commission (1901-02) while responding to the challenges, needs and opportunities of the 21st century city for decades to come.

For several years, the Committee of 100 has sustained a focused interest in the redevelopment of the Walter Reed campus, a significant piece of real estate in Washington DC. Committee members have attended meetings, participated in

proceedings, and met with staff of the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development (DMPED) on the re-use of that portion of the Walter Reed campus designated to be conveyed to the District of Columbia. In determining the best use of the land and resources at Walter Reed, C100 urges the federal and local governments to use governing principles that are based on applying historic preservation guidelines and land use best practices to development and use plans for this large and already developed sensitive site.

The Committee of 100 supports and encourages the reuse of historic buildings. Not only does this help preserve the legacy of the District of Columbia, it also strengthens a sense of place while putting into practice sustainability strategies. Accordingly, we support the request of the Children's National Medical Center to re-use the laboratories of AFIP and adjacent buildings for CNMC's research operations and related activities. However, we reject the Department of State proposal that the District of Columbia give up some of the land designated for conveyance to DC.

The Department of State has no use for a laboratory at its Foreign Missions Center at Walter Reed and DOS would likely demolish Building 54, as well as the nearby buildings 52, 53 and 3. Except for Building 3, all are identified as contributing resources in the application for the entire Walter Reed campus to be listed on the National Register of Historic Places. In particular, Building 54, built in 1951-1954, is significant as the first permanent structure built by the recently unified armed services to house the AFIP and, we note also, that it was the first and only structure in the United States designed to survive a hydrogen bomb.

Indeed, it is disturbing that the Department of State has committed to preserve only the Chapel from among the several historic contributing buildings on its portion of the Walter Reed campus. The lack of interest by DOS in incorporating historic preservation strategies into its decision-making is uninformed and in conflict with national policy to preserve our history, especially in the nation's capital.

One of the basic precepts of sustainability is to reuse materials. This opportunity to reuse the former AFIP research laboratories for CNMC pediatric research is a classic example of best practices of sustainability as well as historic preservation.

Furthermore, the cost of demolition is estimated to be approximately \$20 million. Add to that the cost of constructing similarly sophisticated laboratories elsewhere for CNMC and the good sense to reuse the former AFIP laboratories becomes even more apparent.

Rejection of the DOS proposal for the District of Columbia to give up some DC-designated property is consistent with and supportive of the land uses formally agreed upon while developing the Reuse Plan for Walter Reed. The seven Notice of Interest (NOI) users that entered into agreements with DC were paired with buildings and locations on the campus in such a way as to coordinate with a well-conceived distribution of uses on the 67.5 acres of land. This design was later reinforced by both the Small Area

Plan and the Master Developer's Plan – taking into consideration the interwoven opportunities and limits of historic preservation, community context, topography, sustainability, interaction of functions, accessibility, and sense of place. The boundaries of the DC-designated acreage were carefully drawn to include specific features, a significant feature being connectivity. The DOS proposal would interrupt that connectivity and isolate two of the Public Benefit Conveyance entities -- the Latin American Montessori Bilingual (LAMB) and Washington Yu-Ying public charter schools -- from much of the rest of the DC-designated property. It would also violate the NOI agreements with two of the Homeless Assistance Providers: HELP, which would provide permanent supportive housing for veterans and veterans' families, and THC (formerly Transitional Housing Corporation), an organization that addresses family homelessness in the District of Columbia.

It is worth noting that since 2005, when the BRAC closure of the Walter Reed Army Medical Center was announced, DOS has twice changed the size of the parcel that it requested for a Foreign Missions Center from an initial 80.5 acres in 2005, down to 18.0 acres in 2009; then DOS requested an additional 27.5 acres from the 32.5-acre parcel that GSA rescinded in 2010. The Walter Reed campus was resurveyed (resulting in a total 110.1 acres instead of the 113 acres as originally thought); boundaries were redrawn in 2011. The modified boundaries resulted in 43.53 acres for DOS and 66.57 acres for the District.

The Committee of 100 acknowledges the diplomatic need to establish attractive quarters for chanceries of foreign missions. Should CNMC acquire the 13.25 acres that they have requested, the 30.28 acres remaining of the DOS-designated property on the Walter Reed campus might, in fact, be sufficient for the 10 to 15 chanceries that DOS estimated would establish new quarters on the campus.

To summarize, conveying Building 54 and its three neighboring buildings (Nos. 53, 52, and 3) to the Children's National Medical Center would:

- preserve a richer legacy of the nationally significant Walter Reed campus by reusing the historic resources on the 13.2-acre parcel requested by CNMC;
- add a compatible use to the mix of community assets, bringing more day-time foot traffic to the future Town Center area of the campus and to Upper Georgia Avenue businesses, as well as the possibility of attracting new residents from among the CNMC staff;
- meet an important and pressing need of a prestigious and important medical institution;
- relocate to the Walter Reed campus approximately 445 jobs from CNMC's current site on Michigan Avenue NW plus another 110 jobs from Children's Tech Hill location in Silver Spring, MD within the first few years of operation;
- generate new jobs in the District at the vacated Michigan Ave location.
- employ approximately 150 students to work in the laboratories during the summer.

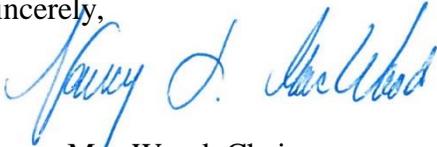
Taking these many factors into consideration, the Committee of 100 believes that no trade-off of DC-designated property should be done as it would compromise the integrity of the DC plan for

The Honorable Eleanor Holmes Norton  
January 20, 2015  
Page Four

redevelopment. If this should cause problems for the Department of State, then consideration should be given to transferring to the District of Columbia the portion of the campus currently allotted to DOS.

Thank you for your attention to our concerns.

Sincerely,



Nancy Mac Wood, Chair  
Committee of 100

cc: President Barack Obama  
Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell  
Speaker of the House John Boehner  
Secretary of the Army John McHugh  
Secretary of State John Kerry  
Mayor Muriel Bowser  
Council Chair Phil Mendelson  
Councilmember Yvette Alexander  
Councilmember Charles Allen  
Councilmember Anita Bonds  
Councilmember Mary M. Cheh  
Councilmember Jack Evans  
Councilmember David Grosso  
Councilmember Kenyan McDuffie  
Councilmember Brianne Nadeau  
Councilmember Vincent Orange  
Councilmember Elissa Silverman  
Interim Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development Susan Longstreet  
Washington Post reporter Jonathan O'Connell.