

The Committee of 100 on the Federal City



www.committeef100.net

Founded 1923

January 16, 2018

Chair

Stephen A. Hansen

Mr. Preston Bryant, Chairman

pbryant@mwcllc.com

Vice-Chair

Meg Maguire

Mr. Marcel C. Acosta, Executive Director

marcel.acosta@ncpc.gov

Secretary

Erik Hein

Commissioners, National Capital Planning Commission

marcella.brown@ncpc julia.koster@ncpc.gov

Treasurer

Carol F. Aten

National Capital Planning Commission

401 9th Street, NW, Suite 500N

Washington, DC 20004

Trustees

Charlie Bien

Re: Smithsonian South Mall Campus Master Plan [NCPC Action Item No. 7630]

Judy Chesser

George Clark

Dear Messrs. Bryant and Acosta:

Monte Edwards

Larry Hargrove

Kathy Henderson

Kate Montague Perry

Elizabeth Purcell

Laura M. Richards, Esq.

Marilyn Simon

Jim Smailes

Pat Tiller

Kirby Vining

Beverley Wheeler

Evelyn Wrin

Thank you for the recent opportunity to address the National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC) on the proposed Smithsonian South Mall Campus Master Plan. The hearing provided an important opportunity for NCPC to explore officially and publically this nationally-important undertaking. As I testified on January 4, there are aspects of the Master Plan which the **Committee of 100 on the Federal City** (C100) supports and others we find problematic - all of which are on the record.

As a follow-up to that Commission meeting, I write with concern given the number of Commissioner questions raised to which incomplete, incorrect, or no answers were provided by Smithsonian Institution representatives. Each issue, we believe, touches on vital base information needed by the Commission before executing its due diligence in approving/ disapproving the Master Plan. We have outlined these below as brief summaries with recommended "Actions". We trust this proves helpful in this important process.

945 G Street, N.W.

Washington, D.C. 20001

202.681.0225

info@committeef100.net

Issue 1: Understanding Better the Historic and Cultural Significance of the Haupt Garden Landscape: At the January 4 meeting, Commissioner Beth White suggested that Commissioners needed to understand better the cultural significance of the Haupt Garden before making any decisions affecting its

preservation/ destruction. Smithsonian staff did not respond. The Committee of 100 and the Garden Club of America agree with Commissioner Wright. **Response:** The Quadrangle Historic District and the Haupt Garden are widely regarded as: 1) a historically-significant and sophisticated, mid-20th century example of new design compatibility within a historic precinct; 2) the largest and most accomplished U.S. project to date to preserve historic character by adding new construction underground; 3) masterworks of nationally-significant architects, planners, and landscape architects; 4) the most personal and cherished physical vision on the National Mall of Smithsonian Secretary Dillon Ripley; and, 5) a gift to the nation of philanthropist and landscape enthusiast Enid A. Haupt. The Haupt Garden is publically popular as documented by the thousands of signatures to the online petition, "Save the Haupt Garden." **Action:** We attach documentation in support of these points excerpted from the successful District of Columbia, Historic Landmarks nomination for the Quadrangle Historic District submitted by the Committee of 100.

Issue 2: Haupt Garden Donor Intent. Is There a Fiduciary Responsibility to Preserve the Garden?: Attending the January 4 Commission hearing was Donna Ari, former Smithsonian Director of Individual Giving in the 1990's. Ms. Ari assisted Mrs. Haupt and Smithsonian Secretary Ripley to establish Mrs. Haupt's endowment for the garden. [Note: the design and construction of the garden was supported with an earlier and separate gift from Mrs. Haupt.] The first sentence of that endowment proposal reads, "The Smithsonian Institution requests a gift of three million dollars to endow, in perpetuity, the care and maintenance of the Enid A. Haupt Garden". Further, Mrs. Haupt wrote, "A private endowment ... is the way to assure the GARDEN's future quality, including the **original** philosophy, **design, planting [emphasis added]**, and maintenance ...". The Committee of 100, the Garden Club of America, and Mrs. Ari believe that the Smithsonian Institution does, indeed, have a clear fiduciary responsibility to preserve the Enid A. Haupt Garden and abide by the donor's intent based upon documents obtained through the Freedom of Information Act as well as Mrs. Ari's professional knowledge. **Recommended Action:** Contact and consult with Ms. Ari. The Committee of 100 would be pleased to facilitate this.

Issue 3: Restore or Replace the Haupt Garden: Commissioners asked whether or not the Smithsonian intended to "restore" any adversely affected elements of the Haupt Garden when the South Mall Campus Project construction was complete. Smithsonian Associate Director for Planning, Ann Trowbridge assured the Commissioners in the affirmative on multiple instances. However, each answer was qualified with words such as, "in the spirit of" or "very much like" or "similar to." The Committee of 100 and the Garden Club of America believe these answers were neither responsive nor accurate. **Recommended Action:** Master Plan approval (even at this stage) should be contingent on reinstallation or re-creation of any elements of the Haupt Garden regrettably disturbed during construction – ranging from original design to landscape details to plant material following Mrs. Haupt's dicta for the endowment.

Issue 4: Repair Leaking Quadrangle Roof: In response to questions on the feasibility of repairing the Quadrangle roof from below grade versus excavating from above, Smithsonian Under-Secretary for Finance and Administration and CEO Albert Horvath replied, "not possible." However,

there was neither further explanation nor documentation supporting his statement provided NCPC. On what basis does Mr. Horvath make his reply? The Committee of 100 believes this is not correct and that repairs can be made from below grade and done so less destructively to the Quadrangle Historic District and at a significant, comparative cost savings. **Recommended Action:** Request that the Smithsonian provide NCPC with the engineering assessment report(s) on which Mr. Horvath's statement was based, including: 1) extent of current conditions/damage; 2) their causes; and, 3) comparative engineering remediation recommendations and associated costs.

Issue 5: Better Using the Arts and Industries Building: Commissioners also questioned why the Arts and Industries Building is not part of the South Mall Campus Master Plan – instead of costly and destructive new construction. Given the 50+ million public dollars spent in its recent exterior restoration and the importance of providing a sustained use for the historic building, it seems reasonable to ask if many of the South Mall Campus Master Plan programming needs such as visitor services, gift shops, educational venues, meeting space, Smithsonian office and support facilities cannot be better (and more cost-effectively) housed in the Arts & Industries Building. **Recommended Action:** Request the Smithsonian to provide the cost-benefit analyses between the two options justifying/ explaining leaving this National Historic Landmark vacant for yet another decade.

Issue 6: Castle Seismic Upgrade: Greater clarity on the potential impact of various seismic retrofit options on the Smithsonian Castle was requested by Commissioners on January 4. Smithsonian representatives explained that the seismic engineering study currently underway would inform best the questions. **Recommended Action:** Even at the Master Plan stage, the impact of seismic retrofit to the Smithsonian Institution's flagship building (and National Historic Landmark) is of national, if not international, interest and concern. The Committee of 100 urges NCPC to defer Master Plan approval until potential seismic retrofit impacts of the Castle are made clearer and can be evaluated by the Commission and interested public. This is too important a historic building not to do it correctly.

Issue 7: Hirshhorn Plaza Walls: While some earlier design alternatives included options to demolish significant portions of the Hirshhorn Plaza Walls, the Smithsonian reported on January 4 that these have been rejected. That notwithstanding, the option remains "in play" in some of the design alternatives still under consideration by NCPC. **Recommended Action:** Contingent on NCPC Master Plan approval, the Committee of 100 recommends clearly prohibiting such action from further consideration in the South Mall Campus Master Plan.

I trust our thoughts and recommendations are helpful to you. As I stated in my January 4 remarks before the Commission, by the Smithsonian Institution's own reckoning the South Mall Campus Project is many years, if not decades, in the future. Funding has neither been appropriated nor raised. And despite pressure to get the Master Plan approved, the Committee of 100 believes it is worthwhile to place this nationally-important undertaking on the right track at its earliest stages and to ensure that NCPC's intentions and priorities are clearly understood. Simply put, these historic

January 16, 2018
National Capital Planning Commission
Page Two

properties are too important, there are too many variables in play, and too many questions must be answered before NCPC's imprimatur is granted the Smithsonian South Mall Campus Master Plan.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify before the Commission. If I may answer any questions in this letter or in the testimony, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,



Stephen A. Hansen, Chair
Committee of 100 on the Federal City

Attachment

cc's: National Capital Planning Commission Members: Thomas Gallas tmgallas@tortigallas.com
Arrington Dixon adainc@adainc.net Geoffrey Griffis ggriffis@citypartnersdc.com Phil
Mendelson pmendelson@dccouncil.us Peter May Peter_May@nps.gov Mina Wright
mina.wright@gsa.gov Scott MacRae Scott.macrea@gsa.gov Eric Shaw eric.shaw@dc.gov
planning@dc.gov Evan Cash ecash@dccouncil.us Beth White Rachael@houstonparksboard.org
Beth@houstonparksboard.org

David Maloney, DC SHPO, OP david.maloney@dc.gov
Robert Vogel, NPS Bob_Vogel@nps.gov
Thomas Luebke, Secretary, CFA tluebke@cfa.gov
Matthew Flis, Diane Sullivan, Lee Webb, NCPC matthew.flis@ncpc.gov,
lee.webb@ncpc.gov, diane.sullivan@ncpc.gov
Rob Nieweg, Betsy Merritt, Will Cook, NTHP rnieweg@savingplaces.org
emerritt@savingplaces.org wcook@savingplaces.org
Rebecca Miller, Peter Sefton, DCPL Rebecca@dcpresevation.org
psefton@comcast.net
Charlene Dwin-Vaughn, ACHP cvaughn@achp.gov
Peggy McGlone, Washington Post peggy.mcglone@washpost.com
David Maxfield dmaxfield10@gmail.com
Richard Longstreth, George Washington University rwl@gwu.edu
Alexandra Graubert/ Dede Petri petridede@gmail.com
Donna Ari dbari@me.com
Barbara Freeman bfreemanwdc@gmail.com
William Brown, AOI aoiofdc@gmail.com
Peter Sefton psefton@comcast.net
James Goode james-goode@comcast.net