

# The Committee of 100 on the Federal City



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**Founded 1923**

March 21, 2016

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**SUBJECT: Comments on Potomac Hill Development Alternatives Matrix of Effects and Modified Alternative B**

Dear Mss. Leedom and Witherell:

The Committee of 100 on the Federal City (the Committee of 100) offers the following comments in two parts in the ongoing Section 106 review for the development of a Potomac Hill Campus Master Plan:

**1. Potomac Hill Development Alternatives Matrix of Effects, presented at Meeting No. 5, February 22, 2016**

The handout is an important step in identifying adverse effects. Because proposed demolition and future new construction are the two greatest threats to the Potomac Hill site everything in your matrix requires critical assessment when considering alternatives A, B, and C and the new alternative B sent to Consulting Parties on March 7, 2016. At this time the Committee of 100 has the following comments.

- **NATURAL SYSTEMS AND TOPOGRAPHY:** We support the notion of a land bridge connecting the Navy Annex portion of the campus (south of Building 1) to the lower Potomac Hill portion (via the east end of South Building) with the proposed perimeter road passing beneath. Special attention must be given to this area so that the creation of the land bridge and the proposed future entrance to underground parking do not diminish

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the existence of the present hill terrain, a defining feature of the campus. Indeed, in all situations in these alternatives where grading is envisioned, every effort must be made to retain the “hilliness” of the topography.

- **SPATIAL ORGANIZATION:** We support the idea of greening existing parking in order to reestablish Maury Circle in front of the Old Naval Observatory Building (Building No. 2), but want to know specifically where parking for the Department of the Navy personnel in this area will be located. The last thing that needs to happen is replacing one ugly parking situation with vehicles parked around the recreated grassy oval or in front of Building No. 2.
- **CIRCULATION NETWORKS/BOUNDARY DEMARCATIONS:** Enough of the present Navy Hill Retaining Wall must be kept to reinforce a visual sense from the west of the “hill” as a defining site feature and of the notion of two separate original campuses. Almost all of the 23<sup>rd</sup> Street retaining wall must be retained to reinforce the visual sense from the east of the “hill” as a defining site feature.
- **BUILDINGS AND STRUCTURES (DIRECT EFFECTS):** We request that all situations where demolition is proposed be reviewed to verify absolute necessity and if demolition is justified, specific mitigation measures be developed that address the demolition.
- **BUILDINGS AND STRUCTURES (INDIRECT EFFECTS):** As stated at the outset, we believe that the indirect effects of demolition, new construction, and regrading pose the greatest threats to the existing campus. We urge that discussions begin soon on the measures that must be developed to mitigate such large scale adverse impacts.
- **ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES:** We concur that all construction disturbances must be monitored for archaeological value and all appropriate steps taken when and if such discoveries occur to ensure the security of any found artifacts or conditions.
- **PRIMARY AREA OF POTENTIAL EFFECT:** The Committee of 100’s position is that this applies to the entire proposed Observatory Hill Historic District  
As specific mitigation measures are developed, the Committee recommends that the following be considered:
  - The highest design standards for all new on site construction must be part of mitigation. We believe that the new Coast Guard Building on the St. Elizabeths West Campus could be a standard of excellence in design against which the eventual construction for this site could be measured;
  - Solar and/or green roofs for all new construction;
  - Placement of information and photo panels on 23<sup>rd</sup> Street, NW during construction phases.
  - Protection of tree root systems from any nearby construction.
  - Creation of and funding for journeyman craftsman positions for District of Columbia youth for all building rehabilitation work on site as a means of training for future jobs; and
  - Capture with digital or other video the rehabilitation of the Old Naval Observatory (Building No. 2), rehabilitation of other contributing buildings, and significant new construction with the ultimate aim of placing this project among those already on the GSA website featuring major restoration and rehabilitation projects. The Alexander Hamilton Court House in Lower Manhattan might be an example to follow, even though it was a single building restoration and renovation project.

We also refer you to our letter to Nancy Witherell, Regional Historic Preservation Officer, dated November 26, 2014, outlining other possible mitigation measures.

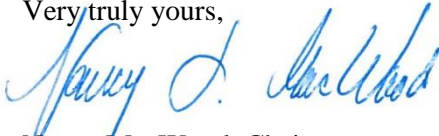
**2. Comments on revised alternative B, based on Consulting Parties input on July 27, 2015 and submitted to Consulting Parties on March 7, 2016**

The Committee of 100 appreciates the development of this revision to the initial alternative B with its inclusion of the following as stated in Ms. Leedom's letter to Consulting Parties dated March 3, 2016:

- Reduction or elimination of additions to the South Building;
- Reexamining the size, placement, and connections of the Pavilion Building at the southeast corner of the site;
- Narrowing the South Road entrance from 23<sup>rd</sup> Street, NW; and
- Shifting required square-footage removed from the above locations to the northwest corner of the site; and
- Refining the relationship among the buildings and the quadrangle on Navy Hill.

The Committee of 100 believes this revised alternative marks significant progress toward an eventual Potomac Hill Campus Master Plan, and we look forward to working with you and with the other Consulting Parties in developing further refinements as the Section 106 review continues.

Very truly yours,



Nancy MacWood, Chair

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