

The Committee of 100

on the Federal City



September 9, 2022

Jeffrey P. Reinbold, Superintendent
National Mall and Memorial Parks
National Park Service
1100 Ohio Drive, SW
Washington, D.C. 20242

Founded 1923

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Subject: Comments on the Design of the Peace Corps Commemorative Park

Dear Superintendent Reinbold:

The Committee of 100 on the Federal City (Committee of 100), founded in 1923, is the District of Columbia's oldest citizen planning organization. We are pleased to present these comments on the latest design for the Peace Corps Commemorative Park, based on the information posted on the National Park Service National Capital Region website (Peace Corps Commemorative Park Environmental Assessment, July 2022), The Committee of 100 previously commented on the design of the Peace Corps Commemorative in a letter to you dated April 19, 2019. This is an important project.

The site of the Peace Corps Commemorative Park is the same as when the Committee of 100 commented in 2019. The Peace Corps Commemorative Park is located on a small triangular site bounded by Louisiana Avenue, C Street and First Street, NW. The project site, Reservation 727, is owned by the United States, administered by the National Park Service and managed by the National Mall and Memorial Parks. This site is one block north of Constitution Avenue and is just west across Louisiana Avenue, from the U.S. Capitol Grounds. The basic design consists of a circular plaza, surrounded by low stone benches, with a map of the world in the center of the plaza.

The previous design proposed a metal pergola to border the plaza and park area on the west and north. This pergola has been eliminated in the current design, thus simplifying the overall appearance of the site. We believe the elimination of the pergola is an improvement in the design. We would like to see more information about how the overall site will be lighted at night.

Our major concern at this time, as we indicated in our April 22, 2019 comment letter, is how visitors will understand the purpose and meaning of the Peace Corps Commemorative Park. Of course, many people will come to this site with some level of knowledge about the Peace Corps. Others may know little or nothing about the Peace Corps.

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Some easily read summary information about the background and present status of the Peace Corps should be available, probably on a metal plaque, outside the main plaza. The same type of information should be electronically available. It may also be possible to have a holder for a brief paper sheet about the Peace Corps. Some information on what the Peace Corps is doing would be useful.

As we said before, we are concerned with the design of the stone benches and especially the design of the stone hands at the ends of the benches. We are guessing the arms and hands that create the stone benches are supposed to suggest the Peace Corps embracing the world or giving a helping hand, but the meaning really is not clear and could suggest that the Peace Corps/United States is holding up, supporting, or guiding the rest of the world. That is not a meaning that should be implied. Some onsite information should help dispel that idea.

In addition, there are concerns with the design of the hands at the end of the benches. The hands are very literal and, in fact, a little creepy, while the arms are more abstract and there are no wrists. We note that this issue came up in the National Capital Planning Commission review of this project at their meeting on Thursday, September 1, 2022. The suggestion by NCPC of possibly making the benches more abstract seems a good one and could perhaps be more suggestive of joining hands or providing helping hands. Promoting peace and friendship around the world is a good theme. We hope this issue can be addressed. We like the map.

In summary, we appreciate seeing the revised design of the Peace Corps Commemorative Park. After the necessary reviews, we hope it can move forward into the implementation stage.

Respectfully submitted,



Kirby Vining, Chair
Committee of 100 on the Federal City

cc: Marcel C. Acosta, Executive Director, National Capital Planning Commission
Thomas Luebke, Secretary, U.S. Commission of Fine Arts
Anita Cozart, Interim Director, D.C. Office of Planning
David Maloney, State Historic Preservation Officer for the District of Columbia
Roger Lewis, FAIA, President and Chairman, Peace Corps Commemorative Foundation
Catherine Dewey, National Park Service, National Mall and Commemorative Parks
Peter May, Associate Regional Director for Lands & Planning, National Park Service
Tammy Stidham, Deputy Associate Regional Director, Lands & Planning, National Park Service
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