

# The Committee of 100

on the Federal City



**Founded 1923**

April 25, 2019

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

SUBJECT: Comments on the Design of the Peace Corps Commemorative

Dear Acting 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 Peace Corps Commemorative. These comments are based on the text and plans recently mounted on the NPS PEPC website and on the presentation and discussion at the Section 106 Consulting Parties Meeting on Monday, April 15, 2019, held at the office of the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts.

We know that the design of the Peace Corps Commemorative was reviewed by the Commission of Fine Arts on March 21, 2019 and will be reviewed by the National Capital Planning Commission at its May 2 meeting. We understand that the design will likely be reviewed again by the Commission of Fine Arts in June or July. Since the design is evolving, our comments are preliminary.

The Peace Corps Commemorative is located on a small triangular site bounded by Louisiana Avenue, C Street, and First Street, NW. 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. A metal pergola is proposed to border the plaza and park area on the west and north.

We understand that the design of the pergola is now evolving based on review comments at the March 21 Commission of Fine Arts meeting, so we are not commenting on that element of the design. It was also indicated that the world map projection may change. Whatever the projection, this interesting "map on stone" will be an addition to the collection of such art works in Washington.

Our major concern at this point is how visitors will understand the purpose and meaning of the Peace Corps Commemorative. The design drawings indicate some text carving on the low stone walls but we question if that will be sufficient to inform visitors about the formation and history of the Peace Corps and its continuing role. Assuming the Peace Corps Commemorative is completed by 2021, or at least is moving forward, that will mark the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the foundation of the Peace Corps. Some additional easily read information would be useful. We also feel that a clearer name than “Peace Corps Commemorative” may make it easier for the visitor to understand the significance of this place.

We are also concerned with the design of the stone benches and especially the stone hands at the ends of the benches. Though we realize this is not the intended meaning, this design can be read as the United States alone holding or guiding the world. That is not a meaning that should be implied.

Finally, this project provides the opportunity to think about the larger setting, especially the eastern sector of Downtown. The eastern portion of Downtown has long been cut off from the main section of Downtown by the Center Leg Freeway and the Department of Labor Building. Now some changes are happening, and we believe it is a good time for District and Federal agencies, the Downtown BID, the private sector, and community organizations to think more about the future development of this area. This effort would, of course, be separate from the review of the Peace Corps Commemorative.

In summary, we appreciate seeing the design of the Peace Corps Commemorative at this time and look forward to seeing this project in the future after it has passed through the concept review stage by the National Capital Planning Commission and the Commission of Fine Arts.

Respectfully submitted,



Stephen A. Hansen, Chair

cc: Marcel C. Acosta, Executive Director, National Capital Planning Commission  
Thomas Luebke, Secretary, U.S. Commission of Fine Arts  
Andrew Trueblood, Director, D.C. Office of Planning  
David Maloney, State Historic Preservation Office for the District of Columbia  
Roger Lewis, FAIA, President and Chairman, Peace Corps Commemorative Foundation  
Catherine Dewey, National Park Service, National Mall and Memorial Parks  
Claire Sale, AICP, AECOM