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30 January 2011

**Email Only**

Chairman Preston Bryant  
The National Capital Planning Commission  
401 - 9<sup>th</sup> Street NW  
Washington DC 20004

Re: Comment on File 6694: The Eisenhower Memorial

Dear Chairman Bryant:

I am among the millions of Americans who heartily support a memorial to President Eisenhower, and I welcome it at its proposed location.

That being said, please know that my comments have only one goal: To make sure that the openness and integrity of Maryland Avenue -- and its 160 foot wide vista of the Capitol -- is not compromised in any way whatsoever. That integrity is important to the history of our nation's capital, it is worthy of staunch protection by all citizens -- and, *it is beyond any claim by any person or entity for any cause.*

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We have long advocated that Maryland Avenue not be closed to traffic between 6<sup>th</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Streets, and that its intersection with Independence Avenue be a mirror image of the one at Pennsylvania and Constitution Avenues, which works quite well as an intersection. Certainly, a truly inspirational and fitting memorial to President Eisenhower could be conceived using the two parcels of land facing each other across a working avenue. If the memorial closes Maryland Avenue to vehicular traffic from 6th to 4th Street, then the 160 foot wide scenic vista must still be maintained.

As all concerned well know, the L'Enfant and McMillan Commission Plans require that Maryland Avenue and its 160 foot wide scenic vista remain open; indeed, gratifyingly, the NCPC is on record as confirming same in its own Legacy and Framework Plans.

There are two issues which apply to each of the three current concepts, which cannot -- in anyone's good faith -- be supported:

First: there is the alleged, but not historically supported, 50 foot wide supposed "cartway," and the assertion that keeping the cartway somewhat open is all that is needed to maintain the vista of Maryland Avenue. Even allowing that someone may have found evidence that in the earliest of days, Maryland Avenue was a narrow cartway, it would be like saying Connecticut Avenue was once a 10 foot wide trail in the woods, and therefore it can be narrowed to 10 feet. Maryland Avenue -- as the twin of Pennsylvania Avenue -- is clearly defined to be 160 feet -- not reducible at all, much less by over two-thirds, to 50 feet (a dimension which is ten feet narrower than the tight Colonial streets of Georgetown).

Second: there is the superimposition of geometry (whether circular or orthogonal) which has no relationship to, but successfully obscures -- and therefore, denies -- the angularity of Maryland Avenue. The NCPC, and its professional staff, inescapably know that each of these transgressions is in direct conflict with L'Enfant's basic intent to confirm importance to major boulevards by cutting them across the grid of streets in an angular and superior way -- to join important points in the Federal city. The memorial's design must respect and embrace that fundamental design requirement.

More specifically, here is a list of current design elements which corrupt the 160 foot wide scenic vista of the Capitol, and therefore the integrity of the L'Enfant and McMillan Plans -- our visual platform of democratic permanence -- which has served our country so well in the international community of nations:

In Design Concept 1:

- \* Five of the eight -- 10 feet in diameter, 68 feet high -- monumental columns;
- \* Two-story 26 foot high inscribed stone lintels on top of the memorial blocks, and the central tree grove;
- \* The narrow one-way roadway (perhaps a straw man) and the intersection with Independence Avenue (a traffic engineer's nightmare);
- \* The circle is not centered on the avenue and clearly has no formal relationship to it; and
- \* The grid of trees is angled, but not in a way that relates to the avenue.

In Design Concept 2:

- \* Two one story buildings are sited inside the vista (one is for toilets, the other is for a ranger station and bookstore;
- \* Five of the eight columns are in the vista -- but have been reduced to be 50 feet high;
- \* Inscribed stone lintels and the central tree grove are the same as concept 1 -- except -- the grove is expanded to further block the vista;
- \* With the elimination of the roadway, the presence of Maryland Avenue is further obscured; and
- \* Emphasis on the east-west LBJ promenade and the rectangular grid of trees toward the orthogonal, consequently denies the angularity of the avenue.

In Design Concept 3:

- \* Four 79 foot (7 story) high columns and tapestries are in the vista;
- \* The two columns and tapestry panels do not -- as stated -- frame the Capitol nor even the museum and cafeteria across Independence Avenue; and
- \* The totally orthogonal rigidity of this concept further obscures the vista.

Four major Federal Government buildings have been constructed on the grid in this area -- each conforming to the L'Enfant and McMillan Plans. The Federal Government buildings just touch at their corners and do not intrude on the avenue; adjacent private buildings were also rightfully required to respect the vista: Boston Properties (between 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> Streets) reinforces the angle with its new addition; the Aerospace Building, adjacent to the L'Enfant promenade also conforms, as do each of the six buildings on the Portals site. In recent years, hundreds of millions of dollars have been invested in respecting the Maryland Avenue vista. The Eisenhower Memorial's design should continue to extend this pattern of respect.

The NCPC Executive Director's recommendations with regard to the memorial "Finds that the process by which the proposed concept designs have been developed is inconsistent with the Commission's 2006 site approval action which requires the applicant to use the section 106 process to design the Memorial to meet an established set of general design principles."...."And does not satisfy: Preserve reciprocal views to and from the U.S. Capitol along Maryland Avenue SW."

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The L'Enfant Plan is arguably the most brilliant town plan ever conceived. For the last 210 years, it has been protected and respected and upheld. The NCPC was established in part to continue that honorable tradition on behalf of our Nation's Capital -- this is its opportunity to be worthy of that responsibility and obligation.

I very much appreciate your consideration of these comments.

Arthur Cotton Moore FAIA