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May 15, 2009

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**Re: Comments of the Committee of 100 on the Federal City on the National Mall Plan-Preliminary Preferred Alternative (March 2009)**

The Committee of 100 on the Federal City is pleased to provide comments on the "Preliminary Preferred Alternative" for the National Mall Plan, provided in summary form in the *National Mall Plan Newsletter-Winter 2009* (released in early March 2009). The Committee of 100 on the Federal City has long been concerned with protecting and enhancing, in our time, the various elements of the L'Enfant Plan (1791-92) and the planning work of the McMillan Commission (1901-02). The National Mall Plan that is now being formulated is a key element for the future of the Monumental Core of Washington, D.C., our nation's capital and the home town of Washingtonians. The Committee of 100 has been participating in the public process of preparing the National Mall Plan in recent years and submitted initial comments last year (dated May 19, 2008). The Committee of 100 is one of the consulting parties in the Section 106 process related to the National Mall Plan. For simplicity, we refer to the Committee of 100 on the Federal City as the "Committee of 100" or simply as the "Committee" in these comments.

The comments of the Committee are presented below in three parts. **Part 1** outlines key overview points and big ideas. **Part 2** follows the format of 24 points for parkwide and specific areas that the National Park Service has listed on their web site to obtain comments. **Part 3** indicates the Committee's concerns with the next steps in preparing The National Mall Plan.

**CHAIR EMERITUS**

DON ALEXANDER HAWKINS

## **PART 1: OVERVIEW AND BIG IDEAS**

### **The Opportunity**

The work of the McMillan Commission (1901-02) provided a framework for the development of the National Mall in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. That framework evolved over the 20<sup>th</sup> century and was last updated by the planning work of Skidmore Owings and Merrill for the National Park Service in 1966 and 1973. The National Park Service has previously indicated that the National Mall Plan now being prepared (to be completed in 2010) is a fifty-year plan, so in theory this plan will extend to 2060. It will therefore set the framework for the National Mall in the remainder of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and should be visionary and comprehensive. The Committee realizes that any plan for the National Mall will evolve over a period of 50-90 years. However, that evolution should be guided by a comprehensive framework established now.

The current planning program by the National Park Service comes at a time of increased public attention to the National Mall, in part because of well-publicized stories about the poor condition of the National Mall and because of publicity about various new projects. Photographs of an estimated 1.8 million people on the National Mall and adjacent areas for President Obama's inauguration on January 20th of this year bought additional attention. In his inaugural address, President Obama referred to the landscape stretching before him as "this magnificent Mall". Recently, in announcing the use of stimulus funds for several projects on the National Mall, Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar noted that "this is the Mall that belongs to the people of the United States of America".

The National Mall will clearly continue to be in the public eye over the next five to ten years. In addition to numerous projects that the National Park Service will undertake on the National Mall, it is likely that the Martin Luther King, Jr. National Memorial, the National Museum of African American History and Culture, and the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Education Center will be completed in that period. A number of important projects adjacent to the National Mall are expected to be completed or underway during that period. On the north side of the National Mall (at the northwest corner of Constitution Avenue and 23<sup>rd</sup> Street, NW), the United States Institute of Peace Building is under construction and is expected to open in 2010. Just south of the National Mall, both the Dwight D. Eisenhower Memorial and the Veterans Disabled for Life Memorial are in the design stage and both these new memorials will likely be completed in the next five to 10 years. A site for a National Women's History Museum is being proposed at Independence Avenue and 12<sup>th</sup> Street, SW, adjacent to the National Mall.

### **The Long-Range Challenge**

The long-range challenge is to outline a plan for the National Mall that allows for future changes (that cannot be specifically anticipated) without imposing rigid constraints that deaden the Mall's spirit nor destroy its capacity to inspire and surprise. The image and experience of the National Mall embraces several different elements. The overall landscape of formal and natural grounds provides the setting. A second element is the memorials and monuments, especially the three

iconic memorials to George Washington, Thomas Jefferson and Abraham Lincoln. Views of these memorials, and views of the United States Capitol and the White House, are parts of the National Mall. The museums, galleries and sculpture gardens of the Smithsonian Institution and the National Gallery of Art are key parts of the National Mall experience. The monuments, memorials, museums and galleries are major Mall destinations--what people come to see.

At the east end of the National Mall are lands under the jurisdiction of the Congress (Architect of the Capitol), including the U.S. Botanic Garden and the National Garden. Buildings bordering the National Mall provide a frame and some, such as the National Archives, are often perceived to be part of the Mall experience.

Finally, multitudes of varying outdoor events are an important part of the National Mall experience. These include demonstrations, the Smithsonian Folk Festival, Kite Day, the Boy Scout Jamboree, the African American Family Reunion and numerous other events. Especially for Washingtonians, the National Mall is a wonderful space that may be crossed on foot or in a car several times a day, and in different seasons. The challenge for the National Mall is to be able to accommodate a range of activities by different groups and individuals, with multiple activities taking place at the same time. One of the challenges to Mall planners is to shift some of these activities to areas adjacent to the Mall without injuring or threatening the reality and perception of the Mall as accessible public space.

### **Planning Area and Approach for the National Mall**

In preparing the National Mall Plan, the National Park Service has outlined a planning area based on internal Park Service administrative boundaries. This area has a number of limitations. While the Committee understands that there is background coordination within the Park Service and with other government agencies, this coordination is not always apparent from the material that has been provided to the public. Several organizations have suggested that the National Mall be expanded to include at least part of the White House and President's Park area, now a separate area also administered by and planned by the National Park Service. It would seem appropriate for the Ellipse to be included in the definition of the National Mall. At the least, this area should be shown on the National Mall planning maps and documents, and the plans for that area summarized.

The problem of seemingly uncoordinated planning for the area of the National Mall between Third Street and Fifteenth Street and Constitution and Independence Avenues is even more striking. Here the central open space of the National Mall is lined on both sides by the museums, art galleries and sculpture gardens of the Smithsonian Institution and the National Gallery Art. These facilities are an integral part of the National Mall landscape and visitor experience. It appears that these lands offer opportunities for joint use of facilities in some cases. The future use of the now closed Arts and Industries Building of the Smithsonian Institution will be a key decision. The National Gallery of Art is looking for expansion space adjacent to its present sites. Yet the future development and use of these museum and gallery sites is not reflected in the National Mall Plan, at least in the materials that have been provided thus far. The Whitten

Building of the U.S. Department of Agriculture is also part of the area of the National Mall between 12<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> Streets, SW. This building plays a relatively minor role in the visitor experience at present but has been mentioned as a possible museum site in the future.

Finally, at the east end of the National Mall between First and Third Streets, Union Square is included in the proposed National Mall Plan. However, the adjacent areas to the north and the south under the jurisdiction of the Architect of the Capitol are not included. This is a key area of the National Mall and a comprehensive vision should be presented, not divided by jurisdictional boundaries.

This type of fragmented planning for the National Mall is not acceptable when, in theory, the framework is being outlined for the next 50 years or more. The American people deserve an overall comprehensive planning approach for the future of the National Mall.

The Committee of 100 urges the National Park Service to prepare such a comprehensive plan for the National Mall, by working with the other government agencies and institutions that have a role in the development of the area. These include the National Capital Planning Commission, the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts, the Architect of the Capitol, the District of Columbia government, the Smithsonian Institution, the National Gallery of Art, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA), etc. The Committee understands that much background coordination has been undertaken behind the scenes, but the results are not apparent in the draft materials provided thus far.

If there are internal National Park Services administrative procedures that prevent such a comprehensive approach, the National Capital Planning Commission should step forward and undertake a coordinating planning role with the National Park Service and other agencies and institutions involved, in order to present a truly comprehensive planning approach for the National Mall.

### **National Mall Relationships with Surrounding Areas**

Planning for the future development and use of the National Mall should be closely integrated with adjacent areas, including areas under the jurisdiction of the National Park Service but with different boundaries. Fortunately, the National Capital Planning Commission and the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts have just completed a three year planning program for four key areas adjacent to the National Mall, and both agencies have approved the *Monumental Core Framework Plan: Connecting New Destinations with the National Mall*. Future studies are proposed to test and refine key proposals and move forward with implementation. The final National Mall Plan should reference and relate to this plan, with special emphasis on those proposed developments that border or are within one or two blocks of the National Mall on the north and south. The relationships and connections with areas east of the Tidal Basin, including East Potomac Park, are also especially important.

One of the most important features of the National Mall in future decades of the 21<sup>st</sup> century will

be its increased centrality with other areas of Central Washington, a condition stressed in the *Center City Action Agenda* prepared by the D.C. Office of Planning and others. This will be increasingly important as new development occurs south of the National Mall, especially on the Southwest Waterfront and to the southeast along the Anacostia River. Transportation and symbolic links with these areas will be important to how the National Mall operates.

The original planning program for the National Mall also included the Pennsylvania Avenue Historic Park, a corridor extending from the Capitol to the White House area. This is an important area, long seen as the “bridge” between the National Mall and Downtown Washington. Planning for the Pennsylvania Avenue Historic Park has been dropped from the present National Mall planning program, but will be addressed at a future time.

### **Integration with District of Columbia Objectives**

The District of Columbia government and the citizens of Washington, D.C. have a major stake in the future development of the National Mall. This involves both the potential personal use of the National Mall by local residents as well as the major impact on the economy of the city. Although there are many other attractions in Washington, many visitors come to visit the National Mall and adjacent areas. As noted above, as major development expands south and southeast of the National Mall, it becomes even more central to the life of the city.

The District Government has a relatively limited direct role in the operation of the National Mall area, primarily related to maintaining streets that cross the Mall and providing certain services. However, many of the visitor services that necessarily support and benefit from the National Mall are now and will be located in adjacent areas (restaurants, shops, hotels, tour bus parking, etc.). It is essential that National Mall planning consider the District role and needs, and that the District government, civic organizations and the private sector be involved in the process.

### **Need for Additional Information**

There is still considerable background information that has not been provided to the public at this stage of the planning process. The following are some key issues and needs.

Future Visitation Numbers: Planning for the future of the National Mall, especially in terms of transportation and service facilities, requires some understanding of the numbers and timing of visitors. Over the next 40 years, the population of the United States is projected to increase from an estimated 306 million at present (2009) to an estimated 439 million in 2050. This is almost certain to increase attendance to the National Mall. It seems likely that visitation from foreign countries will also increase. Locally, the combination of increasing population in Washington, D.C. and the Washington region will also increase visitation. It seems certain that the number of future visitors to the National Mall will considerably increase and they will use the National Mall more at night (especially if adequate transportation and security is provided and if museum hours are extended). The National Park Service has indicated that conservative future visitation numbers are being used but the future projection numbers have not been provided to the public.

Transportation System: Improvements in transportation systems will be critical to the use of the National Mall in the future. Yet very little specific information about transportation systems, volumes and capacities has been provided. The Committee of 100 believes that the overall transportation approach for the National Mall needs to be outlined more clearly, especially with reference to changes in roadways and pathways. One need is to have a clear approach to separating pedestrian and bicycle travel paths from automobile and bus routes when possible. The continuing issue of tour buses needs attention. While specialized transit services for visitors are needed (Tourmobile, etc.) it is critical that providing such services not prevent the provision of new transportation services to allow residents and visitors to easily move around the National Mall and connect with adjacent areas.

Impact of Global Warming: The issue of potential future flooding of some National Mall areas has been raised by a number of groups. This problem could become more serious if sea level changes related to global warming become more pronounced over the next 50-90 years and affect the water levels of the tidewater Potomac River (and the Anacostia River). If this is to be a problem, it could have major impacts on the long-range plan for the National Mall. Despite requests, the National Park Service has not provided information on this possibility. This issue needs to be addressed before a final draft plan is outlined.

## **Big Ideas**

Although all elements of the National Mall Plan are important, the Committee believes that it is important to place special emphasis on certain big ideas, as noted below.

Restoring the National Mall: The overall quality of the National Mall experience has greatly deteriorated over the past several decades due to deferred maintenance, now estimated to be over \$400 million. This issue is to be addressed through increased federal funding (including stimulus funds in the near term) and new private sector and foundation contributions through fund raising by the Trust for the National Mall and other organizations. Catching up with past neglect will take many years. However, in time these improvements can bring the National Mall to the quality that it should have. The Committee of 100 commends the National Park Service for this overall effort to make up for past neglect and for stressing sustainable design and development in repairing and restructuring the National Mall.

Union Square: The major new initiative for the National Mall in the “Preliminary Preferred Alternative” in Newsletter 4 is the total redesign of Union Square and adjacent areas between 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Streets. The major proposed change is the replacement of the large reflecting pool, a product of the 1970s, with a new civic square west of the Grant Memorial. This new civic square will accommodate many different activities, including demonstrations. However, the Committee strongly opposes any suggestion that demonstrations be restricted only to this area.

The Grant Memorial is proposed to be restored and the adjacent landscape incorporated into the new design. The Committee of 100 is supportive of this new design approach but also has some concerns. It will be very important to have a coordinated design for the entire area between

Constitution and Independence Avenues, including the two triangular areas under the jurisdiction of the Architect of the Capitol.

The area of the civic square must be large enough to accommodate major events but not so large that it would become almost empty space when not being used. Design must consider the environment of Washington summers and not create a space that is barren and uncomfortable. This space should have the feeling of an American space, reflecting the sense of the adjacent Capitol grounds. Though built to accommodate demonstrations, the space should not be a space that projects a sense of perpetual conflict. In view of experience elsewhere, care is needed not to create a design that encourages skateboarding in this space. A relatively small building north of Union Square, in the scale of the National Botanic Garden to the south, would seem appropriate and could house a variety of visitor services as well as some special uses of its own. Properly designed, this new space and adjacent building could help bring a new festive feeling and sense of activity to this east end of the National Mall. If not well done, a new problem area might be created here. Careful design and programming will be important in creating a new vibrant civic space with national meaning.

Tidal Basin Area: The Tidal Basin area, including the Jefferson Memorial and the flowering cherry trees, is already a special place in the city and it will gain new meaning and increased visitation levels when the Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial is completed in the next several years. The “Preliminary Preferred Alternative” calls for a variety of improvements, including enhanced walkways and bicycle trails, lighting and interpretation. The Tidal Basin seawalls would be rebuilt above the water levels. The new seawalls would be built in the present Tidal Basin, slightly decreasing the size of the Tidal Basin.

The Committee is concerned that long-range opportunities may be missed at the Tidal Basin, especially in terms of connections to the Washington Monument grounds and in connections to the east to the Southwest Waterfront. The earlier National Mall Plan Newsletter 3 (Fall/Winter 2007) included an Alternative C that filled in part of the Tidal Basin on the north side and seemed to have the possibility of improving connections from the Tidal Basin to the Washington Monument grounds. This would be especially true if a new north-south elevated walkway along the White House-Jefferson Memorial vista axis could be provided to pass over Independence Avenue and extend to the north side of the Tidal Basin. Additional study is needed.

To the east, improved connections between the Tidal Basin/Jefferson Memorial area and the Southwest Waterfront are needed. This might include connections between a future cultural building on the Liberty Loan Building site, and perhaps a pedestrian platform extension of Maryland Avenue to connect with the Tidal Basin area. The recently adopted *Monumental Core Framework Plan* begins to address these issues, but is only a start.

The Committee of 100 would like to see additional study of better connecting the Tidal Basin area to the north and the east. This might be a case where significant improvements could be made in the relatively short-term, with more significant improvements and connections being made later, perhaps in 10-20 years or more.

Washington Waterfront Walk: The Washington Waterfront Walk (WWW) is the proposed 11-mile connected waterfront walk (pedestrians, bicycles) from the Georgetown Waterfront to the National Arboretum. It is one of the key new elements that came out of the 1997 *Legacy Plan* prepared by the National Capital Planning Commission. The “Preliminary Preferred Alternative” for the National Mall mentions new bicycle lanes and trails along the West Potomac Park Waterfront but the Washington Waterfront Walk does not receive the attention it deserves. This waterfront walk should have greater emphasis. The Committee believes this is one of the important elements of the new Central Washington that is being created in the 21st century. It is especially important that adequate connections for the Washington Waterfront Walk be provided from West Potomac Park to the Southwest Waterfront.

### **Urban Design Initiatives**

In addition to the major ideas and possibilities mentioned above and elsewhere, there are a number of smaller urban design initiatives that seem to hold the potential for improving linkages between parts of the city and locations on the National Mall. Several are mentioned below and there are undoubtedly others that could be noted for further study. Several other such urban design enhancements are noted in the *Monumental Core Framework Plan* recently adopted by the National Capital Planning Commission and the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts. These ideas below need further study to see if they are desirable and feasible. Opening such vistas generally involve some tradeoffs, primarily in altering some existing and perhaps sacrosanct landscape feature (primarily by removing or trimming trees and shrubs) to add a new enhancement by opening reciprocal vistas to and from sites within the National Mall. The Committee requests that the National Park Service consider these concepts in preparing the final National Mall Plan.

Maryland Avenue Vista to Tidal Basin and Beyond: The vista along Maryland Avenue from the Capitol to the southwest extends across the Tidal Basin and intersects the west edge of the Tidal Basin walk south of the FDR Memorial. It appears that a small plaza could be developed at this location to provide a reciprocal vista back northeast to the Capitol. On a larger scale, the Maryland Avenue vista extends on across the Potomac River to the memorial stone in the Lyndon Baines Johnson Memorial Grove, a part of the Lady Bird Johnson Park.

Nineteenth Street Vista to D.C. World War Memorial: The D.C. War Memorial is located on the axis of 19<sup>th</sup> Street, NW, the street that leads south from Dupont Circle to Constitution Avenue. The D.C. World War Memorial is scheduled to be restored in the near future. The Committee suggests that studies be made to see if a vista could be opened along the line of 19<sup>th</sup> Street to the Memorial, thus visually connecting this little known memorial to the area of the city north of the National Mall. It should be noted that the 1902 McMillan Commission Plan included a similar vista between 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> Streets, NW to connect with a northern extension of the Reflecting Pool (that extension was never built and the vista was not opened).

Virginia Avenue Vista East Toward the Washington Monument: Earlier this year, in discussions of the Potomac Park Levee Project, Lindsley Williams suggested that the vista of Virginia

Avenue (which terminates at Constitution Avenue) be opened on to the southeast toward the Washington Monument. The Committee recommends that this proposal receive further study.

North-South Vista from Washington Monument Grounds to Jefferson Memorial: The north-south vista from the White House to the Jefferson Memorial already exists, one of the strong legacies of the McMillan Commission Plan. As indicated previously, the Committee suggests that consideration be given to extending a pedestrian structure from the Washington Monument Grounds to the Tidal Basin, with steps descending to the north side of the Tidal Basin. If this concept proves to be feasible it could strengthen the north-south vista and provide a grade-separated pedestrian route passing over Independence Avenue between the Washington Monument grounds and the north side of the Tidal Basin.

### **The “View to the West”**

One of the key issues involving the National Mall is the “view to the west” from the U.S. Capitol and other points along the main east-west axis looking west to the Lincoln Memorial and beyond. The original design for the National Mall envisioned an uncluttered view to the west, symbolizing the future growth of the country. Unfortunately, a number of buildings in Arlington County, Virginia are visible beyond the Lincoln Memorial and mar the view west from the Capitol along the Mall. Past efforts by the National Capital Planning Commission to protect this viewshed were not fully successful.

Protection of the view to the west should be part of the National Mall Plan, though the National Park Service cannot do this. The National Capital Planning Commission should again address this issue. Hopefully, at some future time, it will be possible to remove some of the most offensive buildings (as they wear out) and restore a more appropriate background for the National Mall. No plan for the future of the National Mall should ignore the threat to the historic and special character of this sacred space. At a time when hundreds of millions of dollars will be spent to enhance the National Mall, protection of the “view to the west” should not be neglected.

## **PART II: PARKWIDE AND AREA COMMENTS**

Comments are provided below on “parkwide” (National Mall) actions and actions for different areas of the National Mall. However, we note that many description of actions are so limited and general in Newsletter No. 4 that it is often difficult to provide specific comments.

- 1. Parkwide Actions-Cultural Resources:** The Committee supports the statements in Newsletter No. 4 regarding the preservation of memorials, related statuary and places of commemoration on the National Mall, and the need for some evolution of the historic landscape to reflect significant national events. We also support improving planned views and vistas, including large areas of open space that are defining features of the historic National Mall landscape. As noted in Urban Design Initiatives in Part I, the Committee recommends further study of opening some new vistas.

We understand that many trees and other landscape elements will die or need to be replaced over a 50-year or more plan period. The National Park Service should provide general information about how the landscape elements will be preserved and replanted over time.

2. **Parkwide Actions-Natural Resources:** The Committee generally agrees with the statements in Newsletter No. 4 about improving conditions for tree and turf areas. However, we question prohibiting events under Mall trees. We believe there may be alternative methods that would allow such areas to be used, as they are in some other parks in this country and in Europe.
3. **Parkwide Actions-Demonstrations and Special Events:** The Committee strongly supports unfettered use of the National Mall as a venue for political speech and demonstrations. However, the National Mall is used in so many different ways that some caution should be exercised in not overly promoting non-political events. As noted elsewhere, we believe that development of facilities in adjacent areas could allow some non-political events to be moved off the National Mall.
4. **Parkwide Actions-Public Access and Wayfinding:** This involves the design and operation of the transportation system for the National Mall, including connections for different transportation modes to surrounding areas. Unfortunately, as noted previously, the limited transportation system information that has been provided makes comment difficult. The Committee recommends that additional transportation information be provided in the next draft stage of the National Mall Plan. Providing access for tour buses, including parking off the National Mall, is especially important. Note that wayfinding is addressed in Item 5.
5. **Parkwide Actions-Visitor Information, Education and Enjoyment:** The National Park Service is proceeding ahead on a separate National Mall Wayfinding Program, now going through the approval process. The coordinated system is an improvement over the present system of wayfinding signs, which has evolved over many years. Visitor information is to be provided at various locations throughout the National Mall. An earlier concept called for a central visitor center with information on the history of the National Mall. That concept is now proposed to be dropped in favor of a decentralized approach to visitor information. The Committee of 100 understands the logic of this decentralized approach but believes a central National Mall history exhibit is also desirable.

Passive and active recreational activities are proposed to continue at various locations on the National Mall. The Committee believes that formal and informal recreational activity is an important part of the National Mall.

6. **Parkwide Actions-Visitor Amenities:** A range of visitor services (restrooms, seating, food service, etc.) is indicated throughout the National Mall, with multipurpose facilities at several locations. The human necessity for such services is evident. The Committee reserves judgement on these proposals pending specific plans. The Committee notes the need for such facilities while stressing that they should be designed in such a way as to not intrude on the special landscape quality of the National Mall.

7. **Parkwide Actions-Health, Public Safety and Security:** The Committee agrees that public safety on the National Mall must be ensured. This is especially important because increased visitation, and the increased adjacent development near the National Mall, will likely result in greater use during early morning and evening hours. Proposals for new interactive water features are also welcome.
8. **Parkwide Actions-Park Operations:** This category deals with addressing the deteriorated condition of many areas of the National Mall, and maintaining the landscape and facilities in the future in an environmentally sustainable manner. The Committee strongly supports these actions (see previous comments in the “Big Ideas” section).
9. **Union Square (1<sup>st</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> Streets):** The proposal for an almost complete redesign of the Union Square area is one of the big ideas of the National Mall Plan (see comments in the “Big Ideas” section of these comments).
10. **Mall (3<sup>rd</sup> to 14 Streets):** A variety of improvements are proposed for this key section of the National Mall. While many of these seem desirable, additional information is needed about proposals to revise the walkway materials and to restrict activities in the tree space. If parking is removed from Madison and Jefferson Drives, additional attention will be needed on parking in adjacent areas with shuttle service to and from the Mall.

The Committee supports adding “National Mall” to the name of the Smithsonian Metrorail Station and to providing orientation information adjacent to the station entrance on the Mall. However, this does not negate the need for a more sizeable visitor center in this central area. Space in a renovated Arts and Industries Building might be an appropriate location.

A key feature of this part of the National Mall is that it is lined with the various museums, art galleries and sculpture gardens of the Smithsonian Institution and the National Gallery of Art. The National Mall Plan should be comprehensive and note the interaction between the museum activities and the central landscape under the jurisdiction of the National Park Service. Cooperative provision of visitor services should be explored, such as additional restrooms and food service on Smithsonian museum property (outside the buildings). In terms of major development, the future use of the now closed Arts and Industries Building should be addressed in a comprehensive National Mall Plan. A variety of museum and visitor service uses could be located in this building when renovated. However, the Committee does not believe that this is an appropriate building location for the proposed Hispanic Museum.

11. **Washington Monument Grounds:** The Washington Monument grounds have a central location in the entire National Mall area. The Committee supports the concept for a new visitor facility, offering a range of services, on the Sylvan Theater site. As indicated previously, the Committee recommends consideration of a grade separated pedestrian structure from the Washington Monument grounds to the north side of the Tidal Basin. This would better connect these two areas along a symbolic spine, providing more convenient and safer pedestrian movement.

On a smaller scale, interpretive information at ground level (perhaps with special paving) should be installed to mark the location of the historic Jefferson Pier northwest of the Washington Monument

**12. World War II Memorial:** The Committee generally supports the program of no major actions for this memorial at this time.

**13. Constitution Gardens:** In Section 106 meetings the National Park Service staff has indicated that Constitution Gardens is somewhat unknown and underused. The Committee supports the proposal for a high-quality multipurpose visitor facility at the east end of Constitution Gardens. Careful design to achieve a festive yet dignified setting is necessary. The Committee also supports proposals for improving the lake and increasing its use. In view of the name of the area (Constitution Gardens) it may be useful to provide additional interpretive information in the area about the Constitution.

The Potomac Park Levee will be constructed near 17<sup>th</sup> Street and Constitution Avenue, extending both north and south of 17<sup>th</sup> Street. The Committee supports the proposal for interpretive information near the old lockhouse, providing information on the evolution of this part of the city. While we understand that the lockhouse was previously moved from its original nearby location, we do not understand the rationale for the proposal to move it again.

**14. Vietnam Veterans Memorial Grounds:** The Committee supports providing for seating and contemplation near the memorial. However, care is needed not to keep adding additional features that would detract from the special character of the memorial.

**15. Lincoln Memorial Grounds:** The Committee generally supports the proposals for the Lincoln Memorial grounds. Additional information is needed about future use of the “Northwest Area” and future links to the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. In comments on the Monumental Core Framework Plan, the Committee has raised the issue of more public access and use of Old Naval Observatory Hill as a key area adjacent to the National Mall. Additional consideration is needed of access to the north to the U.S. Institute of Peace Building (scheduled to open in 2010).

**16. Korean War Veterans Memorial:** The Committee supports the proposed minor improvements to walks and interpretive materials.

**17. D.C. War Memorial:** The Committee is very pleased to see that special attention is finally being given to the District of Columbia War Memorial which honors those District of Columbia residents who served in World War I. The recent announcement of stimulus funds for renovation of this memorial is especially welcome. This improvement project is especially timely since our country will soon be observing the centennial of the World War I period. Since there is no “national” World War I Memorial on the National Mall, this local D.C. memorial can symbolize that period. Interpretation could note that hundreds of such memorials were built across the United States after World War I, some much more elaborate

and some more simple. New interpretation should also include recognition that residents of the District of Columbia have served their country in all its conflicts since the establishment of the District in 1791, despite being denied the benefits of full citizenship. Use of the memorial (a bandstand design) and adjacent areas for performance use can add additional activity to this area.

18. **Ash Woods:** The Committee generally supports the proposals for the Ash Woods area but notes that an overall plan is needed for this area. After the opening of the nearby Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial, this area is likely to have a significant increase in visitor traffic. The Committee suggests that consideration be given to a full-service visitor facility (not just restrooms) in this area. The location, shielded from nearby memorials, would permit an appropriate facility. The rebuilt U.S. Park Police stables, designed so that the paddocks would be a visitor attraction, is an interesting proposal.
19. **Tidal Basin Area:** See comments under “Big Ideas”.
20. **Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial:** The Committee supports the recommendations for the FDR Memorial and related areas.
21. **West Potomac Park Riverfront:** The Committee’s major concern in this area is the appropriate design of this section of the “Washington Waterfront Walk” (see discussion in the “Big Ideas” section). The Washington Waterfront Walk needs more attention in planning for all appropriate sections of the National Mall.
22. **George Mason Memorial:** The Committee supports proposed rehabilitation of the historic fountain. The George Mason Memorial, interesting in itself, is a memorial that gets relatively little attention because of its isolated location.
23. **Thomas Jefferson Memorial and Grounds:** The Committee generally supports improvements proposed for the Jefferson Memorial and grounds. We note that these are closely related to proposals for improvement of walkways around the Tidal Basin. Coordination is needed with the proposals for the Washington Channel outlined in the *Monumental Core Framework Plan*. The Committee is especially concerned with achieving an appropriate route for the Washington Waterfront Walk south of the Jefferson Memorial and on east to the Southwest Waterfront.
24. **General Comments: Do you have any general comments about the preliminary preferred alternative?** The Committee of 100’s general comments, and some specific comments, have been outlined above. The Preliminary Preferred Alternative outlined in Newsletter 4 is written in a conditional tense that is somewhat discouraging. The final National Mall Plan should be more positive in tone and should include appropriate maps and graphics to explain the concepts. We note again that many of the National Mall proposals in Newsletter No. 4 are so general that it is difficult to make specific comments.

### **PART III: NEXT STEPS**

In conclusion, the Committee of 100 on the Federal City appreciates the opportunity to comment on the “Preliminary Preferred Alternative” for the National Mall Plan. We applaud the National Park Service for the work that has been done in bringing the plan for the future of the National Mall to the present stage but we have serious concerns and reservations about some aspects of the National Mall Plan that we have seen to date. As the work moves forward to the next stage of preparing and releasing the draft plan for the National Mall, we hope that a more comprehensive approach can be outlined. Suggestions from the Committee of 100 on the Federal City, and many other individuals and organizations across the country, should be considered. Background information on which planning decisions have been made should be made available to the public. The Committee reserves the right to provide future comments when the draft National Mall Plan is presented.

The Committee of 100 understands the need to move forward to obtain an approved plan so that funding can be obtained. At the same time, it is important that ample time be provided for review and comment of the final draft National Mall Plan. It will be appropriate to obtain advice from individual experts and organizations in a structured process before the final draft plan is revised and adopted. In addition to the ongoing Section 106 process with a variety of organizations, it would be appropriate for the National Park Service to convene groups of experts to provide comments on specific elements of the National Mall Plan.

We hope the National Park Service will be able to incorporate the comprehensive steps recommended in our comments to prepare a long-range plan that incorporates the needs of all the agencies and institutions that have a role in the future development of the National Mall. If the National Park Service cannot do this, we suggest that the National Capital Planning Commission should step forward and assist with preparing a comprehensive plan for the National Mall.

We look forward to continuing to work with the National Park Service in the overall approach to planning the future of the National Mall. This is truly a work that is important to all Americans, including those of us who live and work in the Washington region.

Sincerely,

*John Fondersmith*

John Fondersmith, AICP  
Representing the Committee of 100 on the Federal City  
in the National Mall Plan Process

*Laura M. Richards*

Laura M. Richards, Chair  
Committee of 100 on the Federal City