



May 29, 2008

Ms. Susan Spain
National Mall & Memorial Parks
National Park Service
900 Ohio Drive SW
Washington, DC 20024

Re: The National Mall Plan

Dear Ms. Spain:

At the May 20, 2008 hearing on the future of the National Mall, before the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Natural Resources, Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands, National Park Service Superintendent Margaret O'Dell articulated the following immediate, short-term priorities for the National Mall plan:

- 1) to improve general appearance,
- 2) to improve signage,
- 3) to provide access to more and better restrooms, and
- 4) to provide access to more and better food.

As you know, some of the Section 106 consulting parties have requested additional information about the scope and priorities of the National Park Service for the National Mall plan. We are heartened by the list of priorities offered by Ms. O'Dell which we believe can be adequately addressed through this project, and request confirmation from the National Park Service that these are in fact the top priorities for the National Mall plan. To this list, we would add:

- 5) a revised circulation plan for the National Mall to better accommodate automobile, tour, pedestrian and bicycle traffic; and
- 6) a revised plan to address temporary and permanent security, flooding and maintenance changes that affect (and will affect in the future) the appearance of and visitor use on the National Mall.

To help us best evaluate these issues, we request the following in advance of the June 11, 2008 consulting party meeting:

- summaries of visitor studies, surveys and any other background information that explains the need for new food and restroom amenities and the preferred placement and scale of those amenities, based on projected visitation over at least 10 years;
- any existing guidelines for National Park Service wayfinding systems, or other information that would be relevant in understanding the agency's concept for a new National Mall system; and

- summaries of traffic and circulation studies for the National Mall, as well as cultural resource information about historic circulation patterns and paving materials.

While our organizations continue to support a long-term, “big-picture” vision and planning approach for the National Mall, we do not believe that it is possible to develop this vision solely within the National Park Service’s jurisdiction. Our concern is reinforced by the existence of multiple planning efforts (*e.g.*, the *National Capital Framework Plan*, the *Capitol Complex Master Plan*, and various Smithsonian undertakings) that will affect the National Mall, in the absence of this larger “vision.”

Therefore, in the National Park Service’s National Mall plan, potential project alternatives that would have a major impact on the Mall – which include, but are not limited to, eliminating the pool at Union Square, replacing Sylvan Theater, and building substantial restaurants – should not be considered until a multi-agency, multi-jurisdictional, comprehensive vision is established. In the meantime, the issues identified as the National Park Service’s immediate priorities are of the type that can be productively addressed through Section 106 consultation within the timeline and jurisdiction for the National Mall plan.

Thank you for your consideration of our views regarding the National Mall plan. We look forward to working with you as the project moves forward.

Sincerely,



Judy Scott Feldman
National Coalition to Save Our Mall

John Fondersmith

John Fondersmith, AICP
Committee of 100 on the Federal City



Catherine Nagel
National Association for Olmsted Parks



Karin Alexis, Latrobe Chapter
Society of Architectural Historians



Rebecca Miller
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Nell Ziehl, Southern Field Office
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