



United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

National Capital Region
1100 Ohio Drive, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20242

IN REPLY REFER TO:

D20 (NCR-NAMA)

APR 16 2009

Dear representatives of the National Coalition to Save Our Mall,
National Parks Conservation Association,
National Association for Olmsted Parks,
D.C. Preservation League and the Committee of 100 on the Federal City:

Thank you for your letter of December 19, 2008, expressing your concern about the planning process for the National Mall Plan. Since that date, we have published a fourth newsletter outlining our proposed preferred alternative, hosted several public meetings, posted additional information on our website, re-convened consultations with cooperating and consulting parties, and had conversations with many of you. While we believe these efforts addressed concerns you expressed in your letter, this letter provides our official response to the questions and issues you raised.

In 2005 Congress requested the National Park Service (NPS) to prepare a plan for the National Mall. Planning began in 2006; we plan to issue a draft plan later this summer. The National Mall Plan will set a broad, long-term, conceptual vision for the National Mall and areas within it. The plan will propose actions in specific areas but will not provide actual design solutions for those areas - that will be the next stage of planning. Broad-scale planning issues include topics such as the civic stage, sustainability, circulation and resource protection. Our goals are to refurbish and protect the historic landscape; to accommodate high levels of use as America's civic stage; and to provide visitor education and enjoyment in the most sustainable manner possible.

In your letter, you specifically cited your concern that NPS "largely dismisses and/or muddies consulting parties' concerns and recommendations." This is not the intent of the NPS. We believe this concern arises from the differences between the two types of public meetings that are held on the National Mall Plan. The public comment meetings have been held to identify the needs of the National Mall, and discuss alternatives to meet those needs. On the other hand, the Section 106 Consulting Party meetings examine these alternatives to determine the best way to remove or mitigate any adverse effects that may be caused by a specific alternative. We have received more than 27,000 public comments on the draft planning alternatives and have worked very hard to take those comments into account in formulating the proposed preferred alternative. As noted above, for the proposed preferred alternative, we are currently engaged in consultation with cooperating agencies and consulting parties under both Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act and the National Environmental Policy Act. All comments received under both processes will be recorded and taken into consideration in the formulation of the draft National Mall Plan and Environmental Impact Statement.

Your letter states the concern that a long-term plan cannot be created by NPS alone. While NPS has the legislated authority and direction from Congress to prepare the plan, we are committed to the intensive collaboration and public engagement process described above. The NPS-led plan is being prepared by a multi-disciplinary planning team that involves numerous cooperating agency representatives, including those organizations responsible for federal city planning - the National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC) and the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts. These two commissions are the successor agencies of the

1901-1902 McMillan Commission. Other cooperating agencies include the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority, National Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Architect of the Capitol, and the District of Columbia. In addition, consultants have been engaged to look at best practices, park operations, public comment analysis, and the socio-economic environment.

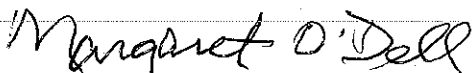
You also raised the possibility of placing this plan "in the hands of Congressional managers." The establishment of a new federal commission, patterned after the McMillan Commission of 1901-1902, was among the topics raised during the April 12, 2005, congressional hearing held by the *Subcommittee on National Parks of the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources*. Senator Craig Thomas did not concur with the need for a new commission, and as a result of this directed NPS to commence planning for the National Mall. On May 20, 2008, the *Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands, of the House Committee on Natural Resources* reviewed progress on National Mall planning and coordination with other vision plans. At that hearing the District of Columbia Government, NCPC and NPS were able to detail how these agencies have been able to plan collaboratively within a multi-disciplinary environment in a way that was not possible in 1901.

Finally, you requested a copy of the last Mall management plan. We have posted the following studies on-line at www.nationalmall.org: "Park Facilities; A Public Comment Summary Report for National Mall Plan," *Newsletter 3*, and The Washington Mall, a 1976 master plan.

In summary, NPS believes that the input we have received from our consulting parties, our cooperating agencies, outside consultants, and the public have helped make the draft National Mall Plan visionary. The suggestion that the National Mall Plan should limit itself to short-term goals runs counter to NPS planning practices and the need to establish a comprehensive and complete vision for the entire National Mall.

Thank you again for expressing your concerns regarding planning for the National Mall. The NPS understands the important and positive contribution of the public in developing the conceptual vision for this important and significant place. We look forward to your continued involvement in the next phases of our planning effort.

Sincerely,



Regional Director, National Capital Region

cc:

Dan Wenk, Acting Director, National Park Service

Honorable Daniel Akaka, Senate Energy & Natural Resources, National Parks Subcommittee

Honorable Raul Grijalva, Chair, House Natural Resources, National Parks Subcommittee

Honorable Eleanor Holmes Norton, House of Representatives