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May 19, 2008

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

Re: Draft Alternatives Matrix – The National Mall

Dear Ms. Spain:

The National Association for Olmsted Parks (NAOP) greatly appreciates the opportunity to participate as a consulting party in the National Mall plan, pursuant to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, and to comment on the planning alternatives.

After careful review of the Draft Alternatives Matrix, NAOP perceives the need for discussion and formulation of an **overarching vision** for the National Mall as the nation's symbol of democracy and one of the country's greatest works of civic art. This vision should evolve from the principles embedded in the L'Enfant and McMillan Plans and include the areas that, historically, were designed to complete the experience and purpose of the Mall – the Capitol Grounds, the grounds of the White House, the key memorials and museums, as well as the city of Washington surrounding the Mall and integrated with it through roads, natural systems, viewsheds and vistas.

A vision statement – along with a set of **guiding principles** – would help direct the planning process, clarify the goals and scope of the undertaking and assist with prioritizing decision making and resource allocation. We hope the enclosed "Design Principles of Frederick Law Olmsted" might serve as a model for developing principles specific to the Mall planning process. Guiding principles should address circulation, natural and cultural resources, the visitor experience, symbolic relationships within and outside the Mall, and other factors laid out in the Matrix.

NAOP recommends a **more focused planning process**, resolving large-scale, long-term issues which subsequently can provide the framework for addressing specific details. To facilitate decision-making, NAOP requests that a discussion about maintenance be addressed alongside the proposed changes. We would also like to review any

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studies and projections that drive proposed changes, i.e., long-term traffic studies that inform the proposed rerouting of traffic patterns; projected government building and workplace needs; and long-term Mall use and visitation projections guiding the design and scale of future food service, restroom and entertainment facilities.

NAOP also recommends developing guidelines and strategies for recreational and entertainment use of Mall spaces that consider alternative or existing resources in the District, projected user groups and volume, and the concept of informal, multi-purpose spaces vs. those designed for single use. These considerations should be evaluated against the historic purpose and intended use of the National Mall.

We are particularly concerned about design and placement of food service and restroom facilities and believe more information is needed with regard to the intended scale and capacity of a central facility in the western portion of the Mall. We also believe a decision regarding the central water feature at Union Square should be deferred until a comprehensive vision for the area has been developed.

We strongly support the concept of sustainable design for all future features and facilities on the Mall and recommend incorporating sustainable practices in the operations of all NPS facilities to the fullest extent possible.

Lastly, NAOP proposes including the concept of open, un-programmed space as a defining feature of this landscape and protection of it made a priority in the Mall planning process.

Thank you for your consideration of our suggestions. NAOP looks forward to continuing involvement in the consulting process.

Sincerely,



Catherine Nagel
Executive Director

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Catherine Nagel
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Prepared by National Association for Olmsted Parks
2007

The Design Principles of Frederick Law Olmsted

Throughout his career, Frederick Law Olmsted created hundreds of works of landscape architecture. But, his legacy goes far beyond these built masterworks. His work and writings also bequeath a set of design principles that have served as a blueprint for the creation of beautiful and enduring works of landscape architecture ever since.

A Genius of Place

The design should take advantage of unique characteristics of the site, even its disadvantages. The design should be developed and refined with intimate knowledge of the site.

Unified Composition

All elements of the landscape design should be made subordinate to an overarching design purpose. The design should avoid decorative treatment of plantings and structures so that the landscape experience will ring organic and true.

Orchestration of Movement

The composition should subtly direct movement through the landscape. There should be separation of ways, as in parks and parkways, for efficiency and amenity of movement, and to avoid collision or the apprehension of collision, between different kinds of traffic.

Orchestration of Use

The composition should artfully insert a variety of uses into logical precincts, ensuring the best possible site for each use and preventing competition between uses.

Sustainable Design and Environmental Conservation

The design should allow for long-term maintenance and ensure the realization and perpetuation of the design intent. Plant materials should thrive, be non invasive, and require little maintenance. The design should conserve the natural features of the site to the greatest extent possible and provide for the continued ecological health of the area.

A Comprehensive Approach

The composition should be comprehensive and seek to have a healthful influence beyond its boundaries. In the same way, the design must acknowledge and take into consideration what surrounds it. It should create complimentary effects. When possible, public grounds should be connected by greenways and boulevards so as to extend and maximize park spaces.