

Benjamin Franklin Life and Legacy Project

Responses to Substantive Concerns

July 7, 2010

VU 4000 Visitor Use: Impact of Proposal and Alternatives

The visitor experience is of paramount importance. The new design will have visitor seating and protection from the sun.

CR2000 Cultural Resources: Methodology and Assumptions

The National Park Service did not prepare design guidelines or a cultural landscape report prior to the commencement of this project. However, NPS acknowledges the National Register eligibility of Franklin Court and has evaluated the project accordingly. We plan to document the Venturi landscape to Historic American Landscape Survey [HALS] standards and prepare a booklet on the history of Franklin Court that will be similar to the history section of a cultural landscape report. In the future, we hope to supplement that booklet with a review of existing landscape features that includes treatment recommendations for their continuance into the present century.

GC1000 Supports upgrading infrastructure

We believe updating the infrastructure to contemporary code and standards will improve visitor safety and experience. The new exhibit will reflect recent scholarship on Benjamin Franklin and engage the visitor with interactive technology.

AL4000 Venturi should participate in design revision.

The Pew Charitable Trusts hired Casson Mann to redesign the exhibition in the underground museum. NPS contracted with Quinn/Evans for architectural services using an existing indefinite quantity contract that was competitively awarded.

The National Park Service recognizes the international significance of Franklin Court. Federal contracting restrictions prevented us from offering a contract solely to Venturi Scott Brown for updating this award-winning design. We have consulted with VSB twice and we are grateful for their input. We will continue to include them during the refinement of the present design.

Analysis under the guidelines of the National Environmental Policy Act, did not indicate the need for an environmental assessment. We have identified and met with a group of formal consultants and have also pursued public comment for this project using press releases and a public website. We will seek ways to

incorporate the substantive concerns voiced by our formal consultants and during the public comment period into the design's development.

Under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation act, we believe this undertaking carries an adverse effect. We propose mitigating that effect through photographic documentation of Franklin court to the standards of the Historic American Landscape Survey; creation of a booklet about Franklin Court that includes its history and change over time; inclusion of an exhibit in the new pavilion lobby about the history of Franklin Court with discussion of the Venturi landscape and ghost structures; and archeological monitoring of the areas where utilities will be installed.

AL4510 Opposes design—material choices

The proposed renovations to the museum building consist of reconfiguring the interior of the existing entry while also enclosing a portion of the area covered by the existing canvas awning and wooden colonnade to create a larger lobby and circulation space. The architect deliberately chose materials that would be distinguishable from the Venturi palette. The new materials' transparency permits visitors to see Venturi's references to the eighteenth century vocabulary. It is not the architect's intention to align the new pavilion with the ghost structures or to dilute their impact on the landscape. We are continuing to refine the details of the design to ensure its success.

AL4500 Opposes design—alters Venturi's intent

After operating Franklin Court for 32 years and welcoming 250,000 plus visitors annually, we are convinced of the need to update the museum entrance and to relocate the gift shop. By placing the gift shop at ground level, we will gain space for exhibits and amenities in the underground museum. The new entry area at ground level will provide visitor orientation space, bring natural light to the arrival level below grade and access to the underground museum via stairway or a new, large elevator. By substituting stairs for the non-ADA-conforming ramp, we will also gain more exhibition space.

NPS respects and honors the highly nuanced, multi-layered character of the Venturi design. We believe the new pavilion, which will not extend beyond the footprint of the present wood colonnade and awning, will not obstruct circulation. We do not intend to alter the ghost structures which are characteristic features of the landscape. We believe any attempt by another architect to adopt Venturi's style would not succeed. Rather than create a feeble imitation, we hope to present a new entrance that clearly announces itself as a new layer on the existing landscape. Visitors will be able to look through the transparent pavilion to the elements of the original landscape. We continue to work with VSB in order to incorporate their recommendations into the development of this design.