

**Testimony before the National Capital Memorials Advisory Commission
on Site Selection for Smithsonian Two Museums
by the National Mall Coalition
March 21, 2022**

Good afternoon, Chair May and Commissioners. I am Judy Scott Feldman, Chair of the nonprofit National Mall Coalition, founded in 2000 and dedicated to advancing comprehensive, visionary planning for the Mall to ensure the vitality of this historic national treasure for future generations.

Regarding the Smithsonian's search for 2 sites for two new museums – Latino American and Women's History – I'd like to submit into the record, on behalf of the National Mall Coalition, my March 6th op-ed in The Washington Post and the four illustrations showing a potential site for both museums. I submitted both via email. The site proposed by distinguished architect Arthur Cotton Moore is a plot of Mall south of the Washington Monument and west of the Holocaust Museum.

I would ask this Commission not to reject the site idea but to recommend to Congress that this site be added to those already under consideration.

The reasons are the following:

- This commission advises Congress on site conformance with the Commemorative Works Act. The original act, established in 1986 in the aftermath of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial and fear in Congress of overbuilding on the Mall, intended to protect the historic 1791 L'Enfant Plan and 1901-2 McMillan Plan from overbuilding. What followed, however, were exceptions: Korean Veterans, WWII Memorial, and the American Indian museum – **all located on the L'Enfant-McMillan Mall**.
- With the 2003 Clarification and Revision Act, Congress again tried again to create a moratorium on new construction, by defining a portion of the Mall as "The Reserve." Yet, since then, we've seen creation of the African American Museum, the Martin Luther King Memorial, and development of the Desert Storm Memorial – **all located within The Reserve**. More proposals are to come, and more exceptions will be made by Congress.
- Meanwhile, the Smithsonian seeks two sites – and Congressional members want it "on the Mall" – most of which is within The Reserve.
- Yes, some museums and memorials are now looking "off" the Mall. But the exceptions are becoming the new rule.

- This advisory commission would do Congress a favor – and the American public a great service – by acknowledging the inability of current policies to adequately protect the Mall. I conclude with three comments.
 - For many years, the Coalition has urged Congress, so far without success, to create a new, forward-looking McMillan-type plan for the Mall. A Congressionally created commission could identify future memorial and museum sites while also addressing Mall area flooding and needs for clean, renewable energy. The Smithsonian search for two sites is a timely opportunity to advise Congress to create such a commission.
 - The Reserve policy – which attempts to push any new museums and memorials off the National Mall – came about as Congress attempted to protect the Mall from overbuilding. But it also can be interpreted as a policy that fails to come to grips with the fact that the American story told on the Mall has been incomplete. Why shouldn't the Latino American and Women's stories be seen as filling huge gaps in the story told on the Mall? Why should these attempts to give voice to ignored chapters in our history be told they don't belong on the Mall? That American history told on the Mall ended in 2003? Surely, that's not the intent. But as someone who teaches Mall history regularly, I hear this question often.
 - Arthur Cotton Moore's proposed site for two museums south of the Washington is on land that never realized the McMillan plan concept and instead was given over to roads that create a dangerous environment for Mall visitors. That location west of 15th Street can be seen as comparable to location of the Treasury Building next to the White House on the north. Museums on Moore's site would frame the Mall's north-south axis and contribute to the ever-evolving American story told on our National Mall.

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