



United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
INDEPENDENCE NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK
143 S. 3rd Street
Philadelphia, PA 19106



IN REPLY REFER TO:

MAR 16 2010

H30 (INDE)

RE: Invitation to Formal Consultation on the Rehabilitation of Franklin Court

Dear Friend:

The National Park Service (NPS), in partnership with the Independence Visitors Center Corporation, Pew Charitable Trusts, and others is planning for an ambitious and exciting rehabilitation of the underground museum at Franklin Court in Independence National Historical Park. Franklin Court is a unique place. It is the only NPS-managed site to honor Benjamin Franklin and this project represents the first rehabilitation of the underground museum since its opening in 1976.

Once completed, the underground museum will be equipped to serve park visitors in the twenty-first century, offering improved facilities and a new appreciation of the life and accomplishments of Benjamin Franklin. The NPS will also be instituting a modest entrance fee of five dollars per adult and three dollars per child. We will continue to admit school groups making prearranged visits without charge. The new fee structure will provide a dedicated source of revenue which will help defray the cost of maintaining the new museum.

Recognizing your potential interest in this project, the NPS has identified your organization as a possible consulting party whose views and expertise would be valuable in assisting us in discharging our stewardship responsibilities for this important historic site. Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 provides for the participation of citizen or groups who have a legal or economic relationship to the affected property or who have concerns about the undertaking's effects on historic properties. These interested parties play an important role by providing advice and comment on project plans, their potential effect on historic properties, and on the resolution of any adverse effects.

We cordially invite your attendance at a presentation concerning this project to be held on March 23, 2010, in the auditorium at the Franklin Court museum. The presentation will begin at 1 PM and will be followed by discussion. We expect the meeting to conclude at 3 PM.

This project will modify part of the landscape and architecture of the Venturi and Rauch design of the courtyard. While not yet fifty years old, the landscape is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion (c) as a site that "...represents the work of a master, or that possesses high artistic values, or that represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction...." [36 CFR § 60.4] While the focus of our present project is the rehabilitation of the underground museum, part of the undertaking

entails modifications to the west wall of the museum's entry pavilion. The project will enlarge the pavilion and modify its above-ground appearance. The present awning along the east pavilion wall and its supporting row of turned posts will be eliminated. In its place, we propose to install a glass vestibule that will enclose an entry area to the underground museum, a new elevator, and a ground-level museum store.

In developing a design for rehabilitating and updating the exhibits and facilities at Franklin Court the NPS and the entire design team has attempted to balance a desire to preserve the unique historic character of this property with the need to address the findings of recent Franklin scholarship and to incorporate the dictates of modern exhibit design and universal accessibility. We believe that the proposed changes to the Court level pavilion, while altering the original design, will improve visitor recognition of the museum entrance. The proposed new entrance design will also allow installation of an ADA compliant elevator.

On March 23, 2010 we will be honored to hear your organization's views on the project. Any insights you may wish to share on the proposed design and on how we might resolve any potential adverse effects of the planned construction will greatly assist the NPS in caring for this important site.

Please notify Paula Etkin, Administrative Assistant, Division of Cultural Resource Management, Independence National Historical Park, on your attendance at the meeting and whether you wish to be included as a consulting party for this project at (215) 597-7131 or paula_etkin@nps.gov.

Thank you for your continuing interest in Independence National Historical Park and I look forward to see you next Tuesday.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Cynthia MacLeod".

Cynthia MacLeod
Superintendent