

The Committee of 100

on the Federal City



October 25, 2021

Melissa Chiu, Director
Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden
Independence Avenue & 7th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20560
chiu@si.edu

Founded 1923

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Kirby Vining

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RE: October 20, 2021, Smithsonian Request to Comment on Final Draft, Memorandum of Agreement, Hirshhorn Revitalization Project

Director Chiu:

The Committee of 100 on the Federal City responds to Smithsonian Preservation Specialist Carly Bond's October 20 request for comments on a draft Memorandum of Agreement on the proposed Hirshhorn Sculpture Garden project. Citing our recent October 4 letter on the proposal as well as similar over a two-plus year period, we reaffirm our opposition to this project given its destruction (in materiality and design) of a historically significant, mid-20th century urban landscape. We note with irony the Smithsonian's labeling the project a "revitalization" when, in fact, every significant element of the Garden is to be destroyed and little of the original Bunshaft/ Collins designs replicated.

With equal irony, we point out the conflict between the proposed project and the Hirshhorn Museum's avowed mandate as, "a National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Exploring the Art and Ideas of Our Time." As the Sculpture Garden is a major monument of late 20th century landscape design by the hands of nationally significant design masters - architect Gordon Bunshaft and landscape architect Lester Collins - its destruction contradicts your museum's very mission.

Given the five-day comment "turn around" requested by Ms. Bond, the Committee infers that the "final die" is cast, agreement already reached by Memorandum signatories, and that further discussion or comment futile. That notwithstanding, with this letter The Committee of 100 seeks to ensure the historic record was clear on our opposition to the loss of so significant a historic, modern American landscape.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kirby Vining".

Kirby Vining, Chair

The Committee of 100 on the Federal City

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- cc:
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 - Carly Bond, Historic Preservation Specialist, Smithsonian Facilities Office of Planning, Design, & Construction bondc@si.edu
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