

**National Coalition to  
Save Our Mall**   
*an organized voice for the public on Mall matters*

December 5, 2014

Comments on the John F. Kennedy Center Expansion  
to the National Capital Planning Commission

by the  
National Coalition to Save Our Mall

The National Coalition to Save Our Mall appreciates this opportunity to comment on the Kennedy Center Expansion plan. Founded in 2000, the nonprofit Coalition provides an organized voice for the public on National Mall matters in the face of fragmented government management to advocate comprehensive, visionary planning for the National Mall in its 3rd century – building on the legacy of the 1791 L’Enfant Plan and 1902 McMillan Plan -- and to collaborate with the public, government, and business to implement forward-looking improvements that support the National Mall’s continuing role in American democracy.

The Kennedy Center, a memorial to President Kennedy as well as a national cultural institution, should be treated as an integral design and symbolic element of the visionary planning that underpins the nation’s capital and the National Mall. Given the significance of the Kennedy Center, the Coalition has advocated future expansion of the Mall boundaries to include the Kennedy Center and other federal lands to provide space for new museums, monuments, and public activities in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Although we have no objections to the two buildings south of the Center or even the concept with three buildings for rehearsal, classrooms, lecture halls, offices and so on, we do have strong objections to the location and configuration of the two story floating pavilion. The Coalition’s objections are the following:

1. The Corps of Engineers has a long-standing policy that any floating objects are to be removed from the river during the winter due to ice flows. Taking this support away from the bridge would be a problem. What would hold up that end of the bridge?
2. The open bridge connection would be unpleasant to use in bad weather. Rain wind, ice, and snow would make crossing this bridge objectionable and dangerous. Any bridge should have some weather protection.
3. Such a bridge crossing would deliver people arriving by water some distance south of the Center instead of directly to the Center and the Grand Foyer which has direct access to

the major performance halls. This new approach diminishes both the architectural integrity of the formal entrance to the Center and the visitor's experience of the building.

4. Although the idea of outdoor performances is a good one in concept, in reality we don't think it will work. Performances or anything involving sound in this floating pavilion would be inaudible due to the aircraft coming in for a landing at Reagan National Airport. This is why the Watergate performances on the floating barge at the waterside steps of the Lincoln Memorial were discontinued.
5. Appropriateness. The Center is a memorial to President John F. Kennedy and this floating appendage does nothing to recognize this, and indeed detracts from the Center's architectural dignity and its intended relationship to the Potomac River.

The Coalition continues to believe, as we've stated in the past, that the National Park Service and Center officials should look into a grand set of steps over Rock Creek Parkway connecting the Center to the waterside walks and the Georgetown waterfront buttressed by flanking elevators, an idea proposed since the 1980s by architect Arthur Cotton Moore FAIA. Located at the center of the classically composed Center this would be similar to the grand set of steps which give access to the Lincoln and Jefferson memorials. Such a grand staircase could visually ground the Center, provide a pedestrian entrance that would deliver people directly to the Grand Foyer, and could be connected to a fixed dock similar to the one at Washington Harbour which would allow patrons to come by water rather than drive and fight the traffic on the congested bridges and roadways. It would also provide a continuous connection for Foggy Bottom over the traffic choked Parkway to the riverfront. A residual benefit would be these steps would function as a grandstand for watching the now frequent boat races on the river. In any case the grand staircase would be a fitting memorial-like addition to the Center reinforcing its role as a Memorial to President Kennedy.

We also urge the Kennedy Center to think of this project in the larger urban context, as an opportunity to strengthen the site's physical connection to E Street and its symbolic connection to the national narrative of American presidential monuments told on the nearby National Mall.

Submitted December 2, 2014 by:

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