



# National Mall Coalition

[www.nationalmallcoalition.org](http://www.nationalmallcoalition.org)

## 2019 Annual Report

*“Advancing the legacy of the National Mall through public policy and innovative ideas”*

National Archives, from “Called to the Mall,” the Coalition’s collaboration with DC schools.

March 2020

## Dear Friends of the National Mall,

The National Mall Coalition in 2019 continued to put into action our mission to **preserve our cultural heritage** on the Mall and **advocate the need for long-term, visionary planning**, to ensure that the Mall continues to evolve as the **Stage for American Democracy** for future generations to enjoy.

We began to work on next steps for our innovative National Mall Underground floodwater reservoir and bus parking project: creating a financing plan. You can read more in this annual report.

We updated our very popular mini-maps, *The National Mall: Stage for Our Democracy*, and provided boxes of maps – as usual, free of charge – to Dulles and Washington Reagan National Airport, Union Station, and other venues serving local residents and visitors to the Mall. The airports go through about 1,000 maps per month, so we know we’re reaching our intended public.

We continue to comment on proposed new memorials, museums, and other projects for the Mall through the public consultation process, as you’ll read in these pages. Our website helps us keep you informed with updated information and news alerts about proposed projects and other matters.

We welcome your ideas and suggestions.



Judy Scott Feldman, Ph.D.

Founding Member and Chair

[jfeldman@nationalmallcoalition.org](mailto:jfeldman@nationalmallcoalition.org)

# Citizen Advocacy

## Coalition Fights Proposed National Mall Free Speech Regulations

The National Mall Coalition joined the American Civil Liberties Union and a broad coalition of stakeholders in sending a letter to Congress opposing proposals by the National Park Service to impose new regulations on public activity on the National Mall. The proposals included charging fees for large gatherings and First Amendment activities and closing 80 percent of the White House sidewalk to public demonstrations. **These restrictions, we told Congress, would limit spontaneous demonstrations and stifle protests and freedom of speech.** They would violate the civic role of the Mall as a stage for American Democracy.

The Park Service later withdrew the proposed regulations.

To read the complete letter, go to:

<http://www.nationalmallcoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/040119-ACLU-Coalition.pdf>



# Citizen Advocacy



The Coalition submitted public comments on the proposed circular **Wall of Remembrance to be added to the Korean War Veterans Memorial**, inscribed with the names of American men and women who died in that conflict. While not opposed to the addition, we noted the cumulative effect that the proliferation of war memorials on the Mall has on the American story we tell visitors in this iconic space. We are now considering memorials to our recent and ongoing military actions in Iraq, Afghanistan, and elsewhere. How do we acknowledge on the Mall the work and legacy of great American scientists, authors, poets, philosophers, artists, as is the case in other world capitals?

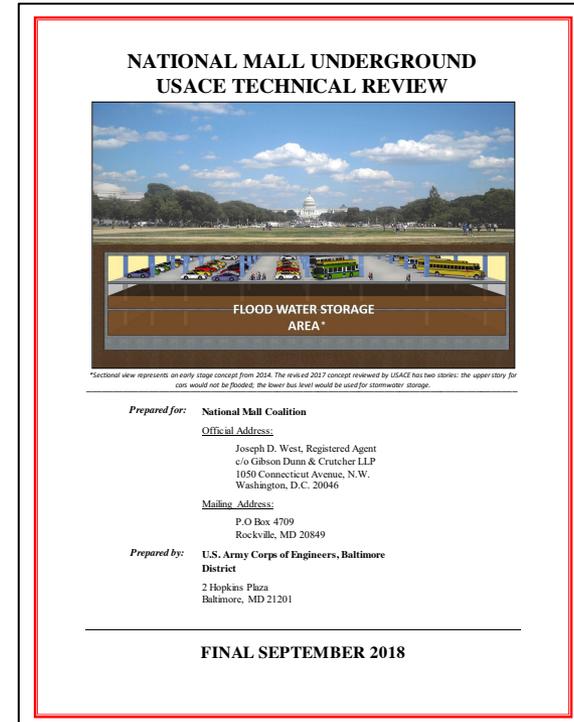


After a Washington Post columnist described the **DC World War I Memorial** near the Lincoln Memorial as a “a dinky little gazebo,” Coalition board member Ellen Goldstein came to the rescue. Her letter to the editor pointed out the special place of this beautiful Doric to DC residents: different from the Mall’s national monuments, “it is dedicated not to all of America’s lost sons and daughters from that conflict but only to those 499 fatalities from our village on the Potomac.”

# Innovative Projects: National Mall Underground

The National Mall Coalition continued to brief relevant DC and federal stakeholders about the National Mall Underground’s innovative approach to flood control and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers’ positive review that concluded that **“Flood risk from a storm of the intensity that flooded the Federal Triangle area in 2006 could be reduced significantly during a flood event by implementation of the Underground.”** Also, **“revenue potential from parking fees and water credits may offer self-financing opportunities that attracts a public-private partnership.”**

**Next step:** To move the project forward, we have commissioned a financial advisor with deep experience with government contracts to develop a private financing plan for the project. That report will create a plan that identifies funding sources based on the positive revenue-generating capacities of the Underground – including stormwater credits, clean energy credits, sale of irrigation water, and parking fees.



# Innovative Projects: National Mall Underground

## Call to Action

After heavy rains caused flash flooding on July 8th, inundating Mall museums and public buildings as well as streets and neighborhoods throughout the DC area, the Coalition published an op-ed in *The Washington Post* (August 25, 2019) reminding readers of the existential threat of flooding on the National Mall and pointing out that the National Mall Underground flood reservoir facility is the only viable solution to be proposed. Why are government agencies dragging their feet in their search for solutions that will protect our national heritage enshrined in the Mall museums and public buildings?

We conclude our call to action, **“If someone has a better solution, then speak up, the sooner the better. Let’s get on with it, lest we lose this iconic stage for American democracy, the National Mall.”**

Read the op-ed here: <https://26iulz1iqavr3vjs66t2x3aw-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/WashingtonPost-Coalition-op-ed-flooding-082519b.pdf>

The Washington Post

THE WASHINGTON POST · SUNDAY, AUGUST 25, 2019

## The Mall’s existential threat

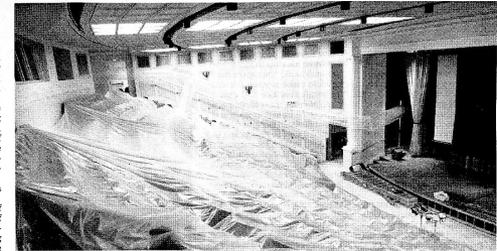
BY ALBERT H. SMALL,  
ARTHUR COTTON MOORE  
AND JUDY SCOTT FELDMAN

On July 8, the District experienced torrential rains and flash flooding that in a matter of minutes overflowed storm sewers, trapped people in cars and created havoc throughout the region. News photos flashed around the country, showing cars sloshing through floodwaters at Constitution Avenue at 15th Street, in full view of the Washington Monument and the White House, and revealed the shocking vulnerability of the nation’s capital and the Mall.

It was shocking, but it was not a surprise. Recent studies by the University of Maryland, the National Academy of Sciences and the National Park Service predict that urban flooding throughout the country will cause widespread inundation of heavily populated neighborhoods and our national parks. By 2050, the Mall museums and other vital parts of our American heritage could be underwater during a Category 3 hurricane from the combined impact of a rising Potomac River and runoff from heavy rains.

Although the deployment on July 8 of new floodgates at the National Archives successfully protected our nation’s treasures there, this is not a comprehensive solution. In fact, putting gates around all susceptible buildings along Constitution Avenue could force floodwaters north, toward Pennsylvania Avenue and downtown. That is not a desirable outcome, to say the least.

We’ve been here before. In June 2006, after three consecutive days of heavy rain, stormwater runoff from city streets at higher elevations flooded Smithsonian museums, the National Archives and other nearby buildings. An interagency, intergovernmental panel studied that disaster, predicted more frequent and more intense storms in coming years and considered several comprehensive solutions. Modest measures have been instituted, including the Archives floodgates. (The Park Service’s 17th Street levee is intended to prevent



Torrential rain caused flood damage to the National Archives in 2006.

Potomac River flooding, not stormwater flooding.)

We are a long way from safeguarding one of the nation’s most iconic places: the Mall and the thriving tourism industry that bolsters our city’s and the region’s economic vitality.

There is a solution: The nonprofit National Mall Coalition has proposed an underground structure beneath the vast open space of the Mall, between the Ninth and 12th street tunnels. The National Mall Underground would function as a storm-water reservoir, absorbing 50 million gallons of floodwater — basically a 200-year-flood event such as occurred in 2006.

This innovative proposal would be more than an empty box below ground, awaiting the next storm. The lower level of this multipurpose facility, when not in use as a reservoir, would provide parking for 150 tour buses, which have few places to go after discharging their passengers. The upper level, designed not to flood, would include car parking for tourists and a visitors’ center with amenities including restrooms and food service.

Our coalition has briefed the District government, federal agencies, civic groups and other interested parties.

Unsuspected fruit of that coordination was a design modification to include a clean-energy component: a field of geothermal wells beneath the slab floor that would help cool nearby public buildings.

We engaged the Army Corps of Engineers, supported by a unanimous resolution of the D.C. Council, to review the proposal. Though additional studies are warranted to turn the concept into a shovel-ready project, the Corps of Engineers’ report concluded that flood risk “could be reduced significantly during a flood event by implementation of the Underground.” It stated that “revenue potential from parking fees and water credits may offer self-financing opportunities that attract a public-private partnership.”

And here — the matter of funding — is where the National Mall Underground would provide additional benefits. Unlike other solutions that require public funding and political will that too often never materialize, the Underground could be built with private financing, the cost recovered over time from parking fees.

Not everyone is on board. Some oppose more parking under any circumstances, despite the fact that tou-

rist buses are ever-present. Others, including the Park Service, have different priorities or claim such a structure doesn’t fit with their plans for the Mall. Ultimately, Congress — key members have been briefed on this project — is crucial to final approval.

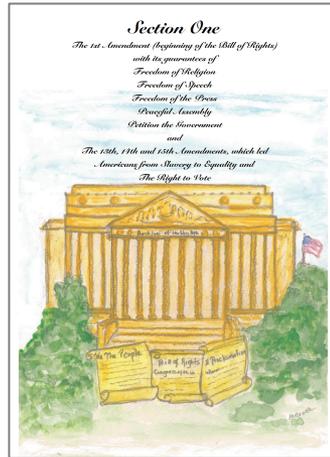
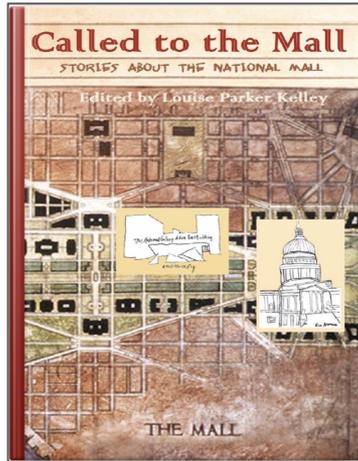
The challenge isn’t going away. The District’s emphasis on resiliency, especially green infrastructure that can absorb rain and ameliorate its impact, is a welcome priority. But we need more. Which is why the National Mall Underground deserves serious consideration by everyone who has the Mall’s and the city’s future well-being in mind.

If someone has a better solution, then speak up, the sooner, the better. Let’s get on with it, lest we lose this iconic stage for American democracy, the Mall.

Albert H. Small is the originator of the National Mall Underground idea and a member of the National Mall Coalition board. Arthur Cotton Moore is the architect of the National Mall Underground concept and vice chair of the National Mall Coalition board. Judy Scott Feldman is chair of the National Mall Coalition board.

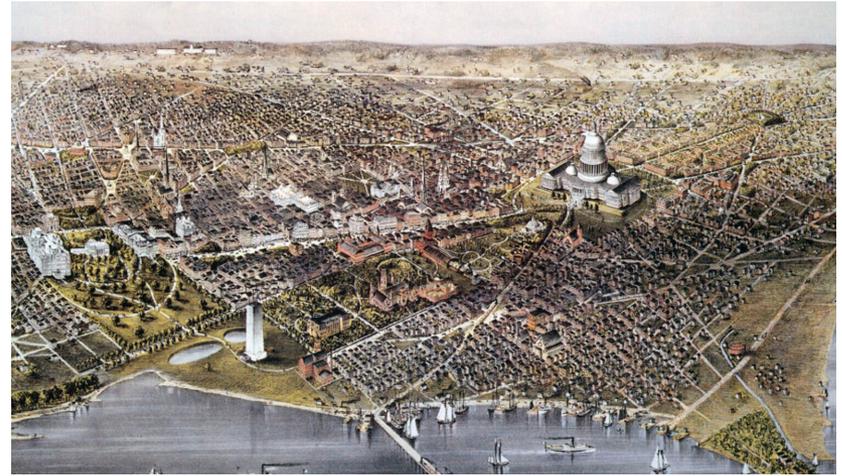
# Civics Education

## DC Schools



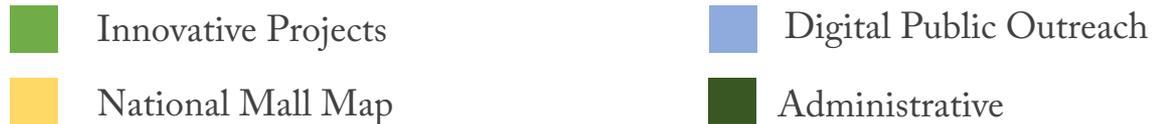
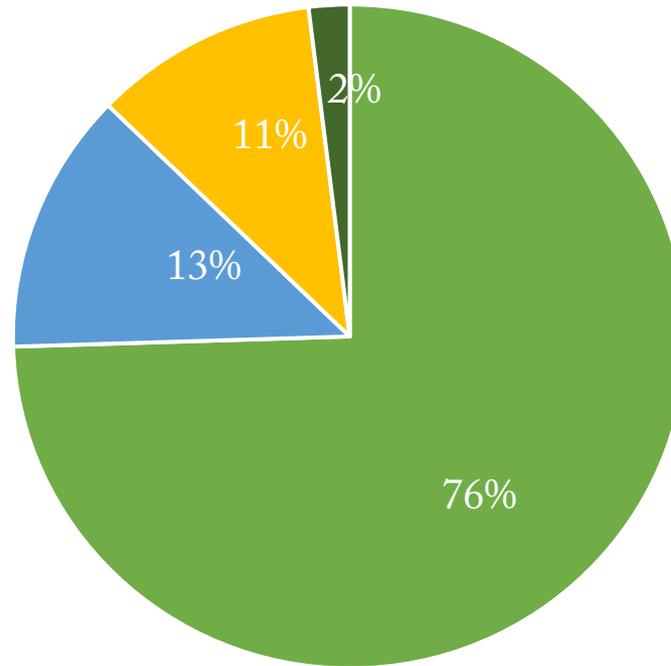
As of 2019, **“Called to the Mall”** is available **free on our website**, as a pdf and an Apple book. The Coalition sponsored and published this collection of essays and drawings by local schoolchildren that features the significance of this great public open space in American history and highlights important events and individuals that have shaped our national heritage.

## National Mall History Quiz



**Can you pass a National Mall history test?** The Coalition is periodically posting quizzes on our website to challenge Americans to learn more about the role of the Mall in American civic life. In 2019, we put online a 15-question, multiple-choice challenge and learn about the memorials, monuments, and history associated with this Stage for American Democracy. Visit our website and see also our **2018 quiz about the Cherry Blooms on the National Mall**.

# 2019 Expenses



In 2019, the Coalition retained the services of RAM Island Strategies LLC for the development of the National Mall Underground preliminary financial planning report. Our other major expenses went toward public outreach – the Coalition’s resource-rich website and the National Mall mini-map. And as always, our hardworking all-volunteer Board and Advisors also provided invaluable guidance and support to the Coalition.

# Board of Directors

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The National Mall Coalition, an all-volunteer citizens organization, is working to protect the integrity of our nation's premier civic space and stage for democracy and promote comprehensive, visionary planning for the Mall in its 3<sup>rd</sup> century.

The Coalition is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. All donations are tax deductible to the full extent of the law.

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