



THE GARDEN CONSERVANCY

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Benjamin F. Lenhardt, Jr.
Chairman

October 24, 2016

Dr. David J. Skorton
Secretary, Smithsonian Institution
1000 Jefferson Drive SW
Washington, DC 20560-0016

Dear Dr. Skorton:

The Garden Conservancy, the nation's leading nonprofit organization dedicated to saving and sharing outstanding American gardens for the education and inspiration of the public, joins a growing number of organizations in supporting the preservation of the Enid A. Haupt Garden at the Smithsonian Institution in the heart of the nation's capital.

The proposed redesign of the Smithsonian's south campus area would destroy the Enid A. Haupt Garden and necessitate the removal of historic features of the quadrangle complex, including gates designed by architect James Renwick in 1849. The Enid A. Haupt Garden has national significance and is an outstanding example of a collaboration between two visionary designers of the modern era: architect Jean Paul Carlhian and landscape architect Lester Collins. It is the gateway to the Smithsonian grounds on the National Mall, and a peaceful, green oasis for thousands of local residents as well as visitors.

The Enid A. Haupt Garden protects the integrity of the overall design of the Mall by providing appropriate context for the Smithsonian Institution Building ("the Castle"). The Haupt Garden, together with the iconic Renwick Gates, the Moongate Garden to the west, and the Fountain Garden to the east, forms a unique garden environment on the Mall.

When the garden was completed in 1987, the American Institute of Architects praised its interpretation of Victorian garden design and its masterful blending of old and new. The garden was included in the Smithsonian Castle's designation as a National Historic Landmark in 2009 and is being proposed as a landmark in its own right.

While the Garden Conservancy sympathizes with the need to address structural and accessibility issues plaguing the Smithsonian campus, we feel that alternatives should be explored that do not involve the destruction of this important modern representation of American Victorian gardens. We concur with the Committee of 100 on the Federal City, that plans and studies of exactly what is required to repair the roofs of underground galleries should be provided to the public by the Smithsonian Institution. In addition, more information should be made public regarding which parts of the garden would be directly affected by any necessary excavation, and why the garden elements cannot be replaced or replicated.

We join the Committee of 100, Garden Club of America, National Trust for Historic Preservation, President's Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, and many other concerned organizations and individuals in recommending that alternatives that do not require destroying the Haupt Garden be seriously considered.

By endowing the garden with money for its creation as well its ongoing maintenance, Enid Annenburg Haupt recognized that gardens are an important part of our nation's cultural heritage. The Garden Conservancy believes that these cultural resources should be assiduously protected, and as a nonprofit organization reliant on the generosity of philanthropists, we also believe in the importance of honoring the intent of donors.

The Enid A. Haupt Garden is a living work of art and a part of our national cultural heritage, and as such is as worthy of preservation as the works of art and historic artifacts on display in the museums of the Smithsonian Institution.

On behalf of the Garden Conservancy and its Preservation Committee of the Board of Directors,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "B. F. Lenhardt, Jr." with a stylized flourish at the end.

Benjamin F. Lenhardt, Jr.
Chairman of the Board