



THE GARDEN CONSERVANCY

20 NAZARETH WAY | PO BOX 608, GARRISON, NY 10524 | 845.424.6500/6501FAX | GARDENCONSERVANCY.ORG

James Brayton Hall
President and CEO

March 10, 2020

Ms. Leah Michalak, Historic Preservation
Metropolitan Planning Commission
110 East State Street
Savannah, Georgia 31412

Dear Ms. Michalak,

In July 2018, the Garden Conservancy, the nation's leading nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving, sharing, and celebrating America's gardens and diverse gardening traditions for the education and inspiration of the public, joined a growing number of organizations and individuals expressing serious concern about the proposed renovation of the Clermont Lee designed garden at the Juliette Gordon Low House, which is owned by the Girl Scouts of the United States of America (GSUSA), in Savannah, Georgia.

We appreciated that the plans that were included in the GSUSA's press release in November 2019 reflected renderings created by Tunnell and Tunnell, which made important reference to the original Clermont Lee designs. Since then, however, new plans that were recently presented at a groundbreaking ceremony at the Gordon Low House on February 21, 2020, abandon the rehabilitation of the garden altogether, replacing it with a hardscape. Claremont Lee's parterre design is gone, completely razed and replaced with hard surfaces.

Clermont Lee, the first female registered landscape architect in Georgia, is an important American landscape architect with connections to the historic landscapes of Georgia, and of Savannah in particular. Her life and work are a worthy example for young women, consistent with the mission of the Girl Scouts USA. The garden is an example of the increasingly rare colonial revival style and is appropriate to the Gordon Low House.

The Garden Conservancy recognizes gardens as fragile cultural resources. The works of landscape architects are living works of art, worthy of celebration and preservation. From a preservation perspective, it is important to keep house museums and their gardens intact to preserve an accurate historical context and a complete educational experience. While the Garden Conservancy also recognizes the necessity of dynamic organizations to adapt to changing needs, we strongly urge that the GSUSA return to the proposed alternative solutions, solutions that would preserve Clermont Lee's legacy. It is important

Page 2
Metropolitan Planning Commission

for all of us to steward carefully our shared cultural legacy, especially in a prominent location where it can continue to inspire so many young people.

On behalf of the Garden Conservancy and its Preservation Committee of the Board of Directors, we hope that, in reviewing the new plans, you will take into consideration the importance of preserving the cultural legacy of Clermont Lee.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "James Brayton Hall". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial "J".

James Brayton Hall
President and CEO