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Office of Planning, Design & Construction
Architectural History and Historic Preservation
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Capital Gallery MRC 511
Washington, DC 20013



Ms. Bond,

Docomomo, an international organization with thousands of members in 70 countries that advocates for the documentation and conservation of buildings of the Modern Movement, is writing to respond to the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden proposed changes. Docomomo commends the Smithsonian for its thoughtful stewardship of Gordon Bunshaft's masterwork and appreciates having the opportunity to participate in the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden Section 106 process. Representatives from Docomomo US and Docomomo DC attended the April 10 consulting party meeting and based on the information presented we would like to share with you our observations and concerns regarding replacement of the museum concrete aggregate facade panels and the use of stacked stone walls in the garden.

The proposal to replace all the original precast concrete facade panels would result in the permanent loss of two character defining features of the building: the precast Swenson pink granite concrete aggregate panels and the relationship of the elevated drum to the concrete piers below, upsetting the building's overall proportions. We find the proposed alteration is not in keeping with *The Secretary of the Interior Standards for Rehabilitation* that state, "The removal of distinctive materials or alteration of features, spaces and spatial relationships that characterize a property will be avoided" and "Distinctive materials that characterize a property will be preserved".

It is understood the proposed panel replacement and enlargement of the building is being undertaken due to attachment clip deterioration and to increase energy efficiency. As the panels themselves are structurally sound and only the attachment clips require replacement, such a drastic alteration should not be undertaken without a thorough review of energy saving approaches to all areas of the building and exploring all other options. For example, what is the energy savings of only insulating the roof and has the design team been able to quantify how much heat loss and gain occurs through the glass versus the concrete portions of the facade? If there are future plans to replace the glazing for security purposes, should that energy savings be weighed now as part of the overall strategy to increase energy performance of the building? We also recommend the Smithsonian reconsider the option of adding 1.5" thick mineral wool insulation to the existing cavity. It was dismissed in the proposal because it does not meet prescriptive energy requirements. Historic buildings are exempt from complying with the perspective energy code where doing so would affect the character defining features of the building. This exemption exists specifically for projects such as this and is preferable considering alternate energy saving measures have not been exhausted.

Beyond the loss of the original fabric is the visual effect that enlarging the original radius of the building by 3" will have on the façade. We are concerned this dimensionally small change will have a major effect on such a simple, unornamented building. We recommend a detailed study of the effect of this

change on the shadow line at the bottom concrete ring and the third-floor exterior balcony be undertaken.

Docomomo applauds the Smithsonian for undertaking efforts to make the sculpture garden more accessible and improving the connection to the museum by reopening the original tunnel. We understand the original concrete walls are damaged beyond repair and require replacement. However, we question the introduction of stacked stone walls to the Modern composition. This choice of material is foreign to Bunshaft's and Collins' designs and has no precedent at the museum or on the Mall. We respectfully question the Smithsonian's suggestion that the stacked stone walls are needed to provide "a pre-modern material to highlight the modernity of the Modern art" on display in the garden. The Hirshhorn has successfully exhibited modern art and sculpture in the garden for 45 years without employing false historical backdrops. We believe the clarity of Bunshaft's design as a diagram would be significantly diminished with these new seemingly randomly placed stacked stone walls. Docomomo encourages the Smithsonian to further explore the materiality and placement of all the proposed new garden walls.

Thank you for considering our observations and concerns. We look forward to learning more about the project as the Section 106 process continues.

Sincerely,
Docomomo DC