

# U.S. COMMISSION OF FINE ARTS

ESTABLISHED BY CONGRESS 17 MAY 1910

NATIONAL BUILDING MUSEUM  
401 F STREET, N.W., SUITE 312  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20001-2728

202-504-2200  
202-504-2195 FAX

29 June 2007

Dear Mr. McGill:

The Commission of Fine Arts appreciated the opportunity at its meeting of 21 June to hear the information presentation on the draft master plan for the development of the west campus of St. Elizabeths Hospital as a consolidated headquarters facility for the Department of Homeland Security. The Commission members expressed concern at the quality and scope of the presentation, which they said lacked the necessary documentation to allow proper understanding, and commented that such a momentous project deserves more thorough investigation.

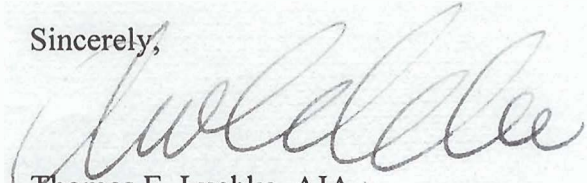
The Commission members expressed concern about many aspects of the proposal, particularly about the overwhelming scale of development proposed for this National Historic Landmark campus, and questioned whether the location is an appropriate one for a consolidated high-security agency. Given the enormous scale of the proposed development, they emphasized the need to minimize harm to the historic property, its landscape, and the spectacular views both to and from the site. They also suggested that a greater sense of hierarchy be used in the planning of new structures on the site.

The Commission noted that the St. Elizabeths redevelopment project, as the largest single development in Washington since the construction of the Pentagon in the 1940s, is a critically important part of planning for the future of the city; its impact on the national capital will have ramifications for many decades. The members cautioned that concerns of national security cannot exempt the development from a thorough planning process, including complete analysis of the site conditions.

In summary, the Commission encouraged a deeper analysis of the site and its potential to accommodate such an enormous amount of additional development, more than five times the built area that is currently on the campus. The Commission staff has also noted the potential impact of new development on the topographic setting of the capital city which frames Washington's monumental vistas and the site's sensitive reciprocal relationship to the city's monumental core.

The Commission looks forward to seeing a more well-developed presentation that could inform its decision-making about what constitutes appropriate redevelopment for the landmark St. Elizabeths west campus. As always, the staff is available to assist you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "T. Luebke".

Thomas E. Luebke, AIA  
Secretary

Michael McGill  
Special Assistant for Regional Coordination  
U.S. General Services Administration  
301 7th Street, S.W.  
Washington, DC 20407-0001