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National Mall Underground Proposes Pedestrian-Friendly Mall

Exhibit opens later this week

November 18, 2013 — Washington, DC —On Friday, November 22, local philanthropist Albert H. Small, architect Arthur Cotton Moore, and the National Coalition to Save our Mall will open to the public an educational multi-media exhibit in Washington's downtown area featuring plans to construct the National Mall Underground, a self-funding, multi-purpose, parking garage and flood water protection facility, underneath the city's National Mall.

The dual-purpose parking garage and water resource facility, which would be located under a portion of the Mall's grass panels (between the Smithsonian Castle and the National Museum of Natural History), would accommodate up to 1,000 tour buses and cars and house a welcome center with food options and restrooms for Mall visitors. Large cisterns in the facility would collect rainwater for Mall irrigation and, during periods of heavy flooding, act as a floodwater retention basin. The self-funding project, which could be built with private money and amortized through parking fees at no cost to the public, would alleviate pollution and tour bus congestion while helping to protect the Mall's turf grass.

The underground project, proposed by Mr. Small and the nonprofit National Coalition to Save Our Mall, has garnered interest and support from federal agencies and the tourism industry. The exhibition, which will be housed at 1000 Connecticut Avenue, Northwest, will highlight the need for the dual purpose facility and provide visitors with two design options created by Mr. Moore, as well as similar precedents in other cities in the United States and Europe. It will include large scale models of the garage with buses, cars and stormwater; a 3-D video; and a history of flooding in and around the Mall area, including the heavy flooding that inundated the Mall and Federal Triangle area in 2006, forcing the closure of many public buildings.

In March, *The Washington Post* editorialized in favor of further study, calling the project "a pretty sensible idea."

"Whether they're driving from Silver Spring or Seattle, families visiting the Mall need a place to easily park their cars so they can enjoy the Mall and the American heritage held in its museums," said Mr. Small. "Rome and Amsterdam have underground parking, so does downtown Chicago. Why not our Mall?"

Mr. Moore, who designed both National Mall Underground proposals, has experience with dual-purpose facilities. His Washington Harbour parking garage in Georgetown was intended to do double duty for floodwater retention.

"Essentially," said Mr. Moore, "We've married the public need for better access to our museums to the federal and District needs for congestion, pollution, and flood control."

National Coalition to Save Our Mall President Judy Scott Feldman sees important benefits for the District and local residents.

“With a 24-hour facility, the Mall will become a livelier place and a pedestrian-friendly centerpiece for the community,” she stated.

The exhibit will be open to the public Monday through Friday from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. For more information, visit www.savethemall.org or contact the Coalition at jfeldman@savethemall.org.