

June 5, 2009

Mr. Anthony Hood, Chairman
District of Columbia Zoning Commission
441 4th Street, NW
Room 210-S
Washington, DC 20001

RE: American Institute of Architects
1735 New York Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20006

Dear Mr. Chairman Hood and Members of the Zoning Commission,

The American Institute of Architects (AIA) is undertaking a renewal of their Headquarters building. The historic preservation goal of this renewal is:

To identify and preserve the character-defining features of the headquarters and site; and, to achieve historic designation for the entire campus based on its historic significance.

The HopkinsBurns Design Studio is a member of the design team that has been charged with the responsibility for ensuring AIA's goal for historic preservation is fulfilled. At the request of Commissioner Turnbull, we have undertaken further review of the treatment of the plaza between the Octagon House and AIA Headquarters building. As a result of this review, further refinements have been made to the plaza area.

This letter addresses how the proposed site design of the AIA plaza represents a respectful interpretation and blending of the character defining elements of the original historic gentleman's town home garden and the contemporary needs of an urban plaza. The design of the plaza and garden unifies the two spaces by breaking down the physical barriers that prevented the two spaces from physically working together through the use of materials, design features and landscaped areas. The design respects the original garden design and relationship to the Octagon House (axial walkways, building plantings, sitting areas and benches) while allowing the garden area to transition to the north by incorporating a creative use of grass, plantings and pavers to meet the more contemporary plaza design of the Headquarters building.

In particular, please note the following aspects of the revised treatment of the plaza:

Open space

The open space is being respected, unified and refined. The plaza and garden relationship will respect the current line of demarcation however; it will break down the "barrier" effect that currently exists. The design shall reinforce Norman Fletcher's original intent by allowing the plaza to flow into the garden area using the bioretention cell (a landscape oasis) to make the transition in grade between the two surfaces seamlessly. This effort will unify the two areas providing a stronger connection between the two currently perceived distinct spaces.

Plaza

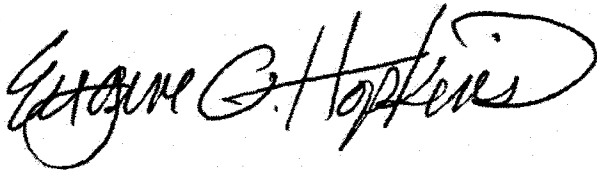
The plaza design maintains the material qualities of the existing plaza and connection to the Octagon House while reinforcing a pedestrian scale. A vegetated area is provided to accommodate the change in elevation at the plaza providing shading and environmentally friendly enhancements. The plaza will become a more usable programmatic extension of the Headquarters first floor spaces which will contribute to the liveliness of the urban space linking it to 18th Street and New York Avenue.

Garden

The proposed new garden provides for the current programmatic need of the AIA and respectfully balances providing a contemporary interpretation of the original gardens and retaining the relationship of the garden with the Octagon House. The early brick walkway leading axially from the back door of the Octagon House is being reconstructed in a wider format utilizing a concrete paver to accommodate an outdoor reception area. Progressing along the walkway toward the Headquarters will lead one to the landscape oasis (bioretention cell) with seating and paving alongside to allow strolling along the lavish landscape area. The areas along each side of the axial walkway will provide garden areas for strolling through or finding that "place of peace" to sit and enjoy the plantings. The design also calls for concrete pavers running parallel to the back face of the Octagon House along the back door stoop connecting to the original pedestrian door in the East garden brick wall and the War Memorial on the West. There will be landscape plantings placed between the concrete pavers and the walls of the Octagon House respectfully addressing the transition of the Octagon House to site.

Understanding and recognizing what contributes to lasting significance is of utmost importance. This historic structure and site has withstood the test of time and it is imperative that any renovation and new construction do the same. The renovations become part of the structure's history and must still make a justifiable contribution 50 years down the road. We feel the proposed design meets this stewardship obligation for contributing to the level of significance and will take its appropriate place in the ongoing evolution of the history of AIA's campus.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Eugene C. Hopkins". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, sweeping loop at the end.

Eugene C. Hopkins, FAIA
Principal



LANDSCAPE SITE PLAN

AIA 21st Century Workplace

A Demonstration of Integrated Project Delivery

Date: 06/08/09

Reference: ZONING SUBMISSION

Job No: 07230.00

Scale: SEE GRAPHIC SCALE

ZL1.0



PERSPECTIVE VIEW

AIA 21st Century Workplace

A Demonstration of Integrated Project Delivery

Date: 06/08/09

Reference: ZONING SUBMISSION

Job No: 07230.00

Scale:

ZL2.0