

**SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION  
NATIONAL POSTAL MUSEUM  
EXTERIOR SIGN PROGRAM  
2 Massachusetts Avenue, NE  
Washington, D.C.**

**Delegated Action of the Executive Director**

April 28, 2005

Pursuant to delegations of authority adopted by the Commission on October 3, 1996, I approve the preliminary and final site development plans for the installation of two signs at the National Postal Museum, located in the City Post Office at 2 Massachusetts Avenue, NE, as shown on NCPC Map File No. 1.11.(05.17)41586.

\* \* \*

The Smithsonian Institution has submitted plans for the installation of two signs at the National Postal Museum, which is located in the City Post Office at 2 Massachusetts Avenue, NE, next to Union Station. The General Services Administration manages the City Post Office, and it has concurred with the Smithsonian's request and plan for the installation. The signs are part of the suite of signs developed by the Smithsonian for use at and near their museums on the National Mall. The Smithsonian has also proposed installing them at their museums off the Mall—the Renwick and the National Postal Museum.

The proposal includes two program signs, which are vertical signs placed near the edges of the hemicycle plaza at the southeast corner entrance of the building at Massachusetts Avenue, NW. The program signs are approximately 7½ feet in height and have a bronze face panel with the Smithsonian name and logo at the top and changing images of objects from both temporary and permanent exhibits behind laminated glass.

The staff acknowledges the Smithsonian's desire to have the National Postal Museum be more visible and recognizable to the public. The use of the program signs, with their photographs of exhibit objects, is a suitable way to attract public attention to the museum and its exhibits. The bronze signs themselves are of an appropriate design and scale for the City Post Office and its

entrance plaza. The vertical signs will be placed approximately six feet inside, and about mid-point along, the curve of the hemicycle plaza's stone curb. The design, scale, and location of the signs are compatible with the City Post Office, a monumental Beaux Arts-style building designed by Daniel Burnham and completed in 1914 after his death.

The Smithsonian previously submitted additional signs (two building identification signs and an information sign) that it has now withdrawn from the submission. It has also withdrawn from this submission a second information sign that was proposed for future installation across 1<sup>st</sup> Street, NE. SI would like to revisit the opportunity for installing this sign in the future when Union Station Plaza is redesigned by the Union Station Development Corporation. The corporation has agreed with SI's proposal to consider this sign in the future.

The current submission is a notably more modest proposal than the one first submitted and I am pleased that this more compatible design solution was negotiated among the staffs of the SI, the Commission, and the Commission of Fine Arts. The original submission was coordinated by all agencies attending the April 13, 2005 Coordinating Committee meeting. SI has also concluded its Section 106 consultation with the D.C. State Historic Preservation Office with a concurrence to its determination of no adverse effect. NCPC is responsible for the environmental review and determined that the project meets our criteria for qualifying as a Categorical Exclusion.

---

Patricia E. Gallagher, AICP  
Executive Director