



Defenders of Teddy Roosevelt Park Inc

130 West 79th Street, 9A, New York, NY 10024
savetedyrooseveltpark.org

6 May 2016

The American Museum of Natural History
Att.: Ellen Futter, President
Central Park West at W. 79th St.
New York, NY 10024

Dear President Futter:

The American Museum of Natural History has expressed a commendable willingness to listen to its neighbors as it pursues a proposed expansion into Theodore Roosevelt Park to erect the Gilder Center. And, in several ways, the museum has backed its words with deeds. However, we feel that our deep concerns about the sheer size of the center and its grand new entrance have not had a sufficient impact on museum decision-making. Thus far, we've heard nothing from the museum that indicates fresh architectural reconsideration.

So let us reiterate:

We understand the museum's need to configure the new structure so it will solve longstanding problems with internal flow and circulation. We do not understand why that requires a structure whose looming size, especially on the southern end, will harm the tone and texture of this small park, including its delicate pattern of shade and sunlight.

We also understand the need for an attractive entrance. We do not understand why it must be so large and exude a multi-purpose grandeur that increases consumption of parkland.

We ask:

Do the current plans, which show gathering spaces, lobbies and atriums attached to necessary hallways, represent the only way to meet the museum's needs? Has the museum seriously studied alternatives that rearrange the additional space so that less parkland is taken? Has the museum examined all reasonable alternatives to achieve its goals with less imposing construction? For example, why can't the building's bulk be reduced by:

- Moving back-office functions to an off-campus location?
- Reducing the size of other facilities, particularly the new entrance lobby?

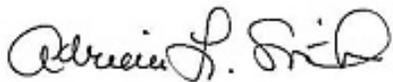
A smaller, less elaborate entrance would have the added advantage of being less of a magnet. Under the current conceptual design, the entrance is likely to draw a large number of added visitors – about 500,000 a year by museum estimates (but the actual total might be higher). This growth will intensify

vehicular traffic on busy Columbus Avenue and other streets, and increase foot traffic, especially in the park itself. We are concerned that lines of museum-goers will clog the park on peak days, which could turn the park into a waiting room, a la the Central Park West entry when a throng gathers. And, of course, with the crowds come the noxious fumes of food carts and other environmental problems.

In sum, our concern is disproportionate magnitude. The new building is simply too big for this patch of fragile parkland. With schematics still being drawn by talented architects and allied professionals, we presume that imaginative modification of the project's size and sweep is still possible. As we've said many times: We are not anti-museum. We are pro-park. We believe that with a blend of creativity and sensitivity the museum can achieve its ends without unduly harming the park's treasured role as an intimate community gathering place.

In the spirit of good communication, we request a chance to see and discuss the architectural plans as they have now evolved. We look forward to a response at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Adrian Smith". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Adrian" and the last name "Smith" clearly distinguishable.

Adrian Smith, ASLA, LEED AP
President
Defenders of Teddy Roosevelt Park Inc

Cc: Ann Siegel, AMNH, VP Operations and Capital Projects
Lisa Gugenheim, AMNH, Government and Community Relations
Dan Slippen, AMNH, Government and Community Relations
Andy Bast, Zubatkin Project Management, Owner's Representative
Sue Golden, Venable Land Use Attorneys
Wes Walker, Studio Gang Architects
Gale Brewer, Manhattan Borough President
Mitchell Silver, New York City Parks Commissioner
Melissa Mark-Viverito, City Council Speaker
Mark Levine, City Council Parks and Recreation Committee Chair
Helen Rosenthal, City Council Member - District 6
Scott Stringer, New York City Comptroller
Letitia James, New York City Public Advocate
Linda Rosenthal, New York State Assembly Member - District 67
Jose M. Serrano, New York State Senator - District 29
William Castro, Manhattan Borough Commissioner - City of NY Parks & Recreation