

Dear Georgetown Heritage supporters and friends,

I am writing to inform you that on February 28, 2024, the Superintendent of the C&O Canal Historic Park terminated Georgetown Heritage's philanthropic partnership agreement with the National Park Service with a 60-day notice. We are shocked and disheartened that they never discussed this possibility with us before making their decision. Nor did they consult with the District of Columbia Government which has invested nearly \$7 million in this project.

The termination letter cites irreconcilable differences between NPS and Georgetown Heritage as the primary reason for their action. We respectfully disagree. Georgetown Heritage and NPS jointly developed a conceptual revitalization plan with an agreed-upon vision and goals informed by extensive city and community input and approved by the Old Georgetown Board/Commission on Fine Arts and National Capital Planning Commission.

It is clear, however, that the current park Superintendent and regional leadership no longer share the vision or commitment to revitalizing the Georgetown section of the C&O Canal that were developed with their immediate predecessors. We believe this sets a terrible precedent for the way a federal agency deals with the citizens and government of the District of Columbia. We remain committed to the vision and goals in the NPS-approved Environmental Assessment, and to seeing them implemented for the benefit of the citizens of Georgetown, the District, and the Nation. With their limited resources, it appears that NPS plans to continue to manage the Canal by doing deferred maintenance rather than embracing the possibility of an active urban park that honors history while also creating an accessible and welcoming environment for recreation and respite as envisioned in the plan.

Since its founding in 2014, Georgetown Heritage's board and staff have worked tirelessly to achieve a shared community vision of a well-managed, active, beautiful park that is accessible and safe. We are proud of our many accomplishments, including:

- Raising more than \$10 million from District government, grants, private philanthropy, and the Georgetown BID, including \$2.8 million in hand to fund long-awaited towpath revitalization and accessibility improvements,
- Designing, building, launching, and operating a replica canal boat that welcomed more than 35,000 visitors over two seasons.
- Developing, funding, and completing:
  - a comprehensive boundary survey at the request of NPS
  - an interpretive and education plan in conjunction with NPS
  - a comprehensive structural engineering study of canal infrastructure that allowed the NPS to successfully apply for and receive millions of dollars in federal funds to address deferred maintenance.
  - a canal plan and approved Environmental Assessment and Section 106 review

The Georgetown Heritage Board of Directors will be meeting with city leaders, community supporters and our member of Congress to discuss this NPS action in the coming weeks as we decide how to best respond. We will be back in touch to inform you of our plans once we know more. If you have any questions about this, please don't hesitate to contact me or the Georgetown Heritage staff. We welcome your thoughts and ideas.

My best regards,

Jennifer Romm  
Chair and President  
Georgetown Heritage