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CITY MANAGERS OFFICE
LAWRENCE, KS

Freedom's
Frontier
NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA



Reply to: 643 Massachusetts Street, Suite 301
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October 27, 2009

Dave Corliss, City Manager
City of Lawrence
4th Floor, City Hall
6 E. 6th Street
Lawrence, KS 66044

RE: Carnegie Library and Freedom's Frontier National Heritage Area

Dear Manager Corliss and Members of the Lawrence City Commission:

It is my understanding that the Lawrence City Commission will be taking up the question of renovation of the Carnegie Library at an upcoming meeting. I appreciate so much the attention and support that the City has given to Freedom's Frontier National Heritage Area. As I indicated in my letter of February 20, 2009, Freedom's Frontier National Heritage Area was founded in Lawrence and Douglas County. This community will be one of the gateways to this important cultural, historic, economic, and educational resource. The historic Carnegie Library Building in Lawrence would be the ideal location to draw people in to begin their journey along "Freedom's Frontier."

The forty-one counties along the Kansas-Missouri border are poised to become a significant asset for this region. The Freedom's Frontier National Heritage Area was established by the United States Congress in October of 2006. The management plan has been completed and is awaiting approval by the National Park Service and Secretary of the Interior within the next few weeks. This heritage area will tell the powerful stories of the nation-changing events that occurred in this region immediately before the beginning of the Civil War. The sesquicentennial of the beginning of the Civil war is approaching. Lawrence will no doubt be the epicenter of the telling of those stories related to the questions of slavery, ownership of land, the right to vote, and myriad other issues that played out along "Freedom's Frontier." These stories are important and instructive as this nation and others consider the meaning of freedom in a modern context.

Many studies suggest that in difficult economic times, and in the uncertainty of international affairs, visitors are attracted to regional sites that offer educational and experiential opportunities to explore historic, intellectual, and cultural narratives. All indications are that the residents of this region and those interested in culture from around the country will be drawn to this heritage area in part to understand their own histories and

in part to explore the many perspectives on the definition of freedom in that turbulent time before the Civil War and continuing into the world that we now know.

The trails and rivers that converged in this region were the early transportation routes. Freedom's Frontier National Heritage Area will provide an opportunity to experience those old transportation routes using our contemporary transportation routes to come to the places where these stories resulted in the war that could have spelled the demise of this nation. Instead, from the cauldron of the battles and skirmishes in this region arose a very diverse, independent, and adventurous people who then went on to settle the west according to many of the principles that were established during that pre-Civil War and Civil War period. Lawrence was, in many ways, the epicenter of those turbulent times.

It is only fitting that Lawrence should house one of the most important centers from which visitors will experience Freedom's Frontier. The old Carnegie Library, with its important downtown location at the intersection of two main streets, provides an ideal opportunity for Lawrence to quickly propel the development of Freedom's Frontier National Heritage Area. A renovated Carnegie Library could provide a focal point that would make an enormous difference in establishing the importance of this new heritage area. How appropriate it would be that the building that once nurtured the young Langston Hughes in his love of literature would become the gathering place for Freedom's Frontier-nurturing future generations in their quest for understanding the many dimensions of freedom. The building would be an incubator for an ongoing dialogue on freedom – past, present and future. Visitors would come to learn, to experience, to engage, and to go out to explore on contemporary trails, highways, bicycle paths, and virtual tours the sites in Kansas and Missouri that led to the nation that we now know.

In this demanding financial time, it would be a resounding statement to the people of this nation that we will invest in looking back and learning from our past to build a more enlightened future. We can begin by establishing the Carnegie Library as the "take off" point for an adventure on Freedom's Frontier. I am so hopeful that those who are involved in maximizing the use of valuable stimulus funds might see that this is an opportunity to make an enormous difference in understanding our future by relating to the stories of our past. I would be glad to provide any further information if that would be helpful.

Yours very truly,



Deanell Reece Tacha
Chair, Board of Trustees
Freedom's Frontier National Heritage Area

cc: Judy Billings