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Lawrence M. Small
Secretary, Smithsonian Institution
Castle Bldg., Room 205
1000 Jefferson Drive, SW
Washington, DC 20560

Dear Secretary Small:

Sigrid and I still talk about the lovely dinner you hosted some time ago at your offices – it was a most stimulating evening.

I learned recently that the Smithsonian is actively considering a request by The Open Park Project to install WiFi antennas on the roofs of several museums, in order to create a large, free Internet park on the National Mall. This seems to be an eminently worthwhile project, entirely in keeping with the Smithsonian's educational mission, and I hope you will be able to act favorably on Open Park's proposal.

As someone who has more than a passing interest in the future of the Internet, and as a long-time supporter of the Smithsonian, I believe that Open Park's efforts to provide museum visitors and others with free Internet access would represent a valuable community service. In particular, such access will allow museum goers to delve more deeply into the Smithsonian's resources just when their curiosity and passion are running high. I know that the Smithsonian has actively sought to make its presence felt online, and its websites now host a remarkable range of exhibitions and information. As technology evolves, more and more visitors will carry Internet-enabled mobiles and personal digital assistants that will give them online access to these educational materials at a place and time when they may be of most interest, if the WiFi capability is in place.

A WiFi park on the Mall would also provide a valuable test bed for trials of innovative broadband wireless devices and applications, including multimedia city guides, public safety services, information kiosks, mobile ticketing devices, and the like. In fact, once broadband Internet connectivity is made freely available on the Mall, this grand public space could provide an ever-changing contemporary exhibition of America's technological ingenuity -- an exhibition that would nicely complement the Smithsonian's historic presentations of science and technology. At the very least, I think Open Park's plan is worth a serious trial, which certainly would be in keeping with the long tradition of inquiry and education that the Smithsonian has sought to foster since the days of the Institution's first Secretary, Joseph Henry.

Thank you very much for your time and attention.

Sincerely,



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