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January 22, 2015

CIVITAS Statement on the Proposed Frick Expansion

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On September 4, 2014, CIVITAS Board Members met with representatives of the Frick Collection to discuss the proposal to construct a new building that will replace the 1977 pavilion and garden.

After careful consideration, CIVITAS supports the Frick's intent to expand; however, we do not support the current design proposal. We strongly recommend the Frick revisits the proposed design and presents alternative expansion plans to the community including plans that would incorporate and/or preserve the garden. The structural massing of the proposed addition overpowers the surrounding low scale neighborhood including the historic Frick house. Furthermore, its overwhelming height and reintegration of the street wall will destroy the rare intimate atmosphere of the museum and of East 70th Street.

Expanding the museum would allow the Frick to exhibit more of its collection, obtain new acquisitions and provide public access to the museum's second floor, an important part of the historic house that currently remains closed to visitors. Allowing access to this area is supported by and would further enrich the Frick Collection's mission statement "...to offer a singular and memorable experience for the visiting public, providing an engaging view of life in the Gilded Age..." Additionally, an expansion would remedy the museum's current inadequate lobby, entryway and ADA accessibility. The expansion will also permit a new education center to be constructed and provide additional seating in a new auditorium for concerts and lectures.

In summary, the Frick Collection is a remarkable asset for our community, New York City and the world. It gained this reputation from its collection and it should be given the opportunity to expand that collection in addition to providing invaluable educational and cultural benefits for the greater community. While we do not support the current design proposal, CIVITAS supports the Frick Collection's need to expand and we encourage them to take our statement into consideration and present alternative plans to the community.