APPENDIX G

CONSULTATION WITH THE COMMISSION ON FINE ARTS

U.S. COMMISSION OF FINE ARTS

ESTABLISHED BY CONGRESS 17 MAY 1910

401 F STREET NW SUITE 312 WASHINGTON DC 20001-2728 202-504-2200 FAX 202-504-2195 WWW.CFA.GOV

23 April 2026

Dear Secretary Burgum:

In its meeting of 16 April, the Commission of Fine Arts reviewed a concept design submission for a new monumental arch to be constructed within Memorial Circle on the George Washington Memorial Parkway, on the axis of Arlington Memorial Bridge. The Commission expressed appreciation for your comments in introducing the proposal at the meeting and approved the submission with the following comments.

The Commission members commented that a proposed monumental arch—a feature characteristic of many national capital cities—would contribute positively to the honorific landscape of Washington, D.C., for many generations. Citing the history of monumental planning for the city to include a large marker in Memorial Circle, they expressed support for the location on this important axis between the Lincoln Memorial and Arlington National Cemetery, and they endorsed the 166-foot height of the arch itself as appropriate for this setting. However, they noted that the great scale and solidity of the proposed structure, while framing axial views between the memorials, may block oblique views within this monumental setting. They therefore recommended creating secondary open archways within the legs of the central arch in order to make it more open; they also suggested creating a more appropriately grand entry sequence into the interior public spaces of the arch.

For the 84-foot-high monumental grouping of a gilded, winged allegorical figure and flanking eagles on a stepped base proposed for the top of the arch, the Commission members suggested removing these from the design, observing that the project would appear more compatible with Washington's monumental context without these elements. Regarding the proposed program of sculpture generally, the Commission members requested more information on the various artworks intended for the project, including those for the arched niches, panels, friezes, keystones, and other areas of the arch. They discouraged the inclusion of lions at the base of the arch, which they noted are not native to the United States, but they encouraged substituting native North American examples of heroic, mighty creatures such animals as bison, horses, or grizzly bears. They also suggested removing the wingless bust of an eagle at the keystone of the central arch.

Regarding the treatment of the site, the Commission members acknowledged the difficulty of providing pedestrian access to the arch, which is proposed to be located within a traffic circle. Rather than constructing a tunnel hundreds of feet long to provide this pedestrian access, they recommended adding a surface crosswalk on the western side of the traffic circle, which would allow a symmetrical composition for the ramps that lead from the street level to the elevated plinth at the base of the arch. They also recommended refining the relationship of the site to the traffic circle itself,

extending the landscape design outward to the greatest extent possible, as well as limiting the use of asphalt pavement to the minimum required for traffic and using a different material, such as stone cobbles, for the restricted areas of the circle instead of applied graphic striping as presented.

In its action of concept approval, the Commission requested that the project be reviewed next as a revised concept submission that responds to these comments. The submission should include: more detailed information should be provided about the intended program of sculptures; an extension of the site model to illustrate the axis of the National Mall eastward from the Lincoln Memorial; the illustration of views to the arch from Arlington House, the Hemicycle, and the Lincoln Memorial; and documentation of the absolute heights of the major monuments within this symbolic landscape as measured from sea level.

The Commission of Fine Arts looks forward to the continued review of this substantial addition to the monumental composition of the national capital. Please coordinate the next submission with the staff which, as always, is available to assist you.

Sincerely,

Thomas E. Luebke, FAIA
Secretary

The Honorable Doug Burgum
Secretary of the Interior
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20240

cc: Nicolas Leo Charbonneau, Harrison Design
Robin Rode, Les Métalliers Champenois
Josh Fisher, Executive Office of the President
Marcel Acosta, National Capital Planning Commission

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28 May 2026

Dear Secretary Burgum:

In its meeting of 21 May, the Commission of Fine Arts reviewed a revised concept design proposal for a new monumental arch to be constructed within Memorial Circle on the George Washington Memorial Parkway, on the axis of Arlington Memorial Bridge. The Commission approved the submission as a final proposal for the architectural design with the following comments, requesting further information about the arch's program of sculpture.

The Commission members expressed appreciation for the presentation, which included additional information about the structure's interior, a more extensive site model, rendered views of the proposed arch within the larger monumental context, and the simplification of various decorative features. They cited the history of heroic architecture proposed for this site in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, including several arches and a pair of 166-foot-tall columns; they commented that this proposal builds on the legacy of the McMillan Plan for Washington, D.C., and would extend the symbolic landscape beyond the National Mall. They noted that the city and its narrative of monuments is not static, and this project provides an opportunity for new national stories. In their discussion, the Commission members noted the numerous objections to the project and advised that many of these issues are not part of the Commission's purview. Instead, they characterized the project as beautiful, and they found that the presentation shows the arch would be visually open and would not block views toward the significant landmarks in this context. They concluded that the arch is appropriately scaled to frame and enhance Arlington House as the landmark that terminates the long ceremonial axis from the Lincoln Memorial, and that it would give the historic home of General Robert E. Lee the visual prominence it deserves as the endpoint of the monumental McMillan Plan sequence extending from the Capitol to Arlington National Cemetery.

In their support for the architectural design of the arch as presented, the Commission members resolved to approve this revised concept submission as a final design, with the exception of the sculpture, bas-relief panels, and statuary in the arched niches, which should be submitted when these elements have been designed. Noting the spare character of arch's inner surfaces, they also suggested adding articulation, such as panels, surface relief, or inscriptions to complete the development of the design.

With this action of final approval, the Commission has concluded its review of the architectural components of this project and looks forward to the review of the comprehensive sculptural program.

Sincerely,



Thomas E. Luebke, FAIA
Secretary

The Honorable Doug Burgum
Secretary of the Interior
U.S. Department of the Interior
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Washington, DC 20240

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