



DC STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE DETERMINATION OF ELIGIBILITY FORM

PROPERTY INFORMATION

Property Name: Pershing Park

Street Address: City block bordered by Pennsylvania Avenue and 14th and 15th Streets, NW.

Square and Lot: City Square 226, Lot 802; U.S. Reservation 617

Property Owner: U.S. Government

The property is being evaluated for potential historical significance as:

- ☐ An individual building or structure.
- ☐ A contributing element of a historic district:
- ☐ A possible expansion of a historic district:
- ☐ A previously unevaluated historic district to be known as:
- ☐ An archaeological resource with site number(s):
- ☐ An object (e.g. statue, stone marker etc.):
- ☐ A new multiple property/thematic study regarding:
- ☐ Association with a multiple property/thematic study:
- ☒ Other: An individual site

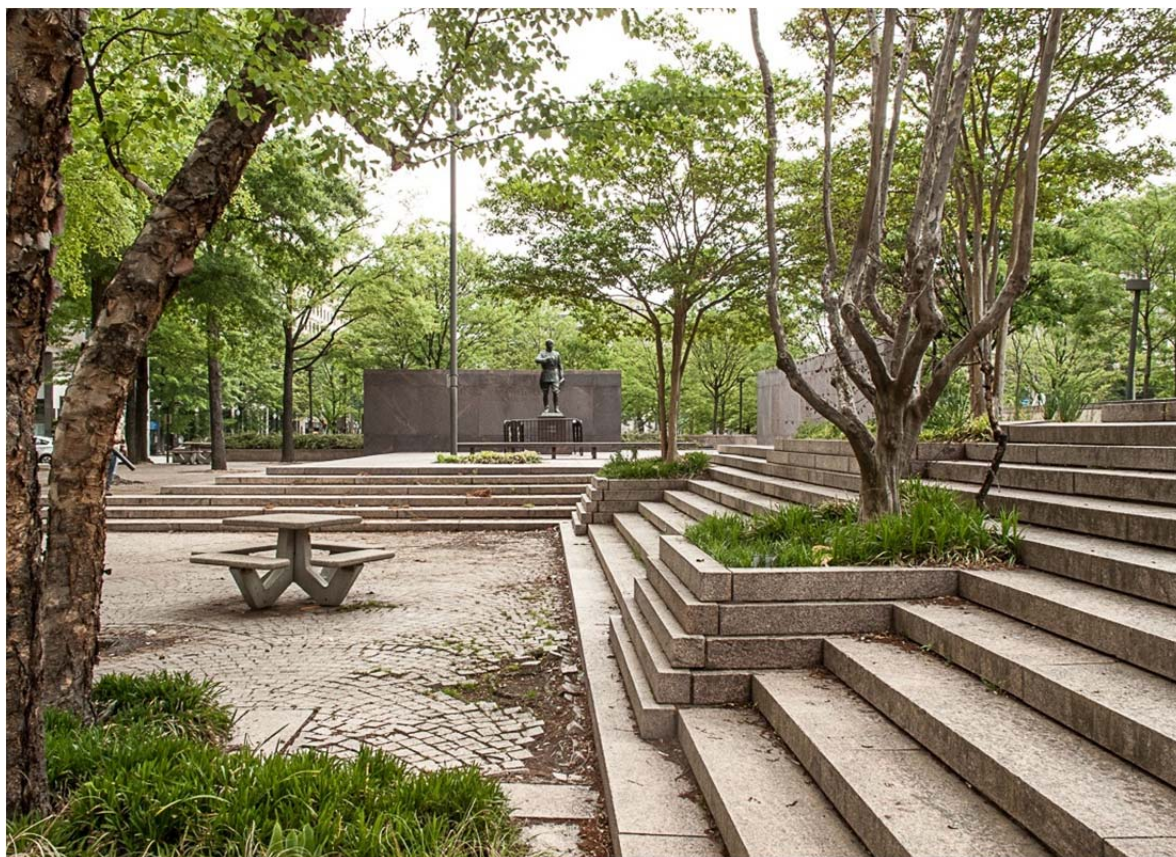


Figure 1. Pershing Park, looking eastward to statue of John J. Pershing. *Source: Brian Grogan, 2014.*

DC State Historic Preservation Office
Pershing Park Determination of Eligibility Form

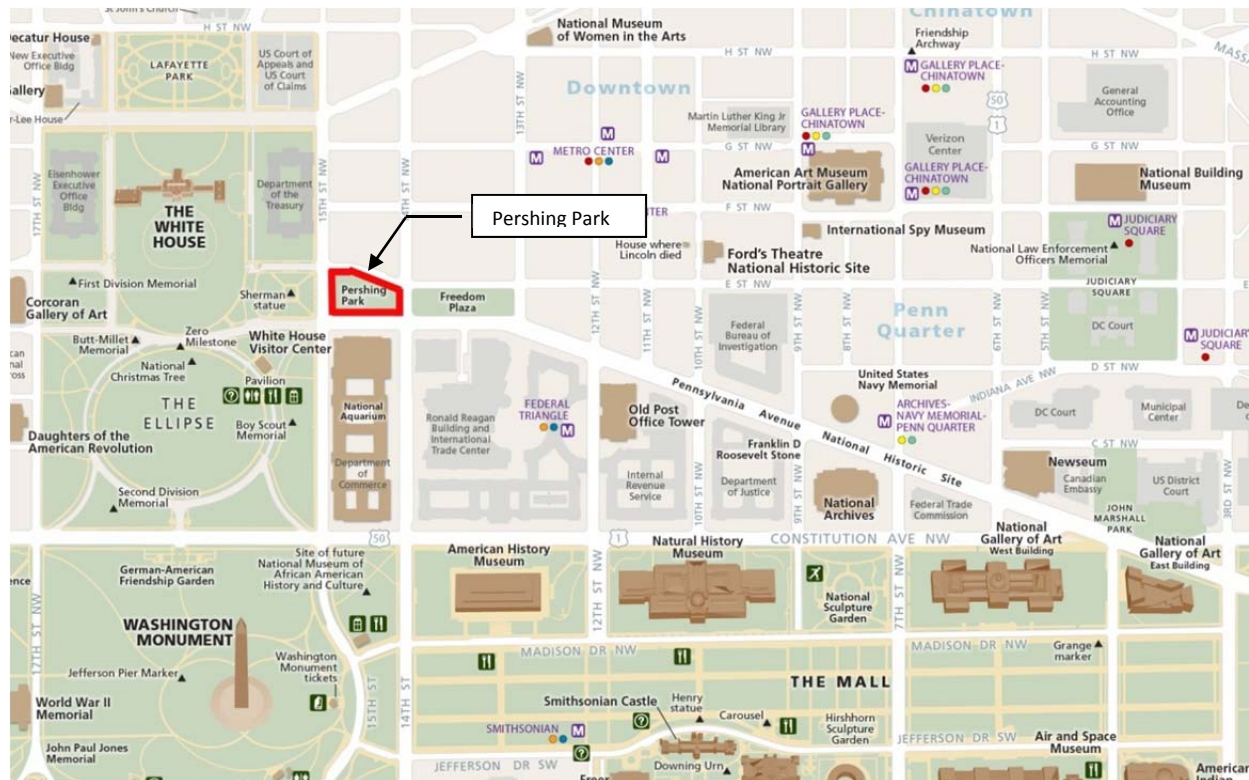


Figure 2. Location map showing Pershing Park outlined in red. *Source: National Park Service.*

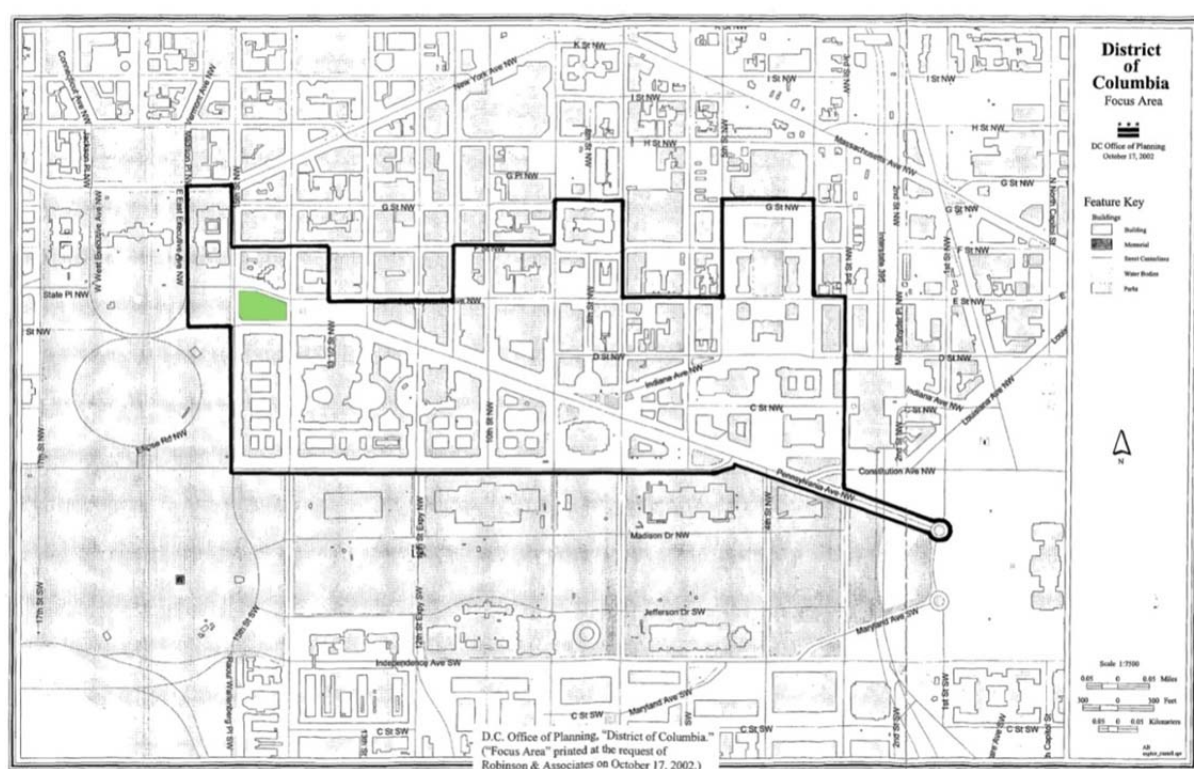


Figure 3. Pershing Park (green) within the Pennsylvania Avenue National Historic Site. *Source: National Register of Historic Places.*

Introduction

Pershing Park (U.S. Reservation 617) is a 1.75-acre site located along Pennsylvania Avenue in the northwest quadrant of Washington, D.C. It is bounded on the north and south by Pennsylvania Avenue NW, on the east by 14th Street NW, and on the west by 15th Street NW (Figure 2). The park constitutes one element in a redesign of Pennsylvania Avenue between 15th Street and 3rd Street undertaken in the late 1970s and early 1980s by the Pennsylvania Avenue Development Corporation (PADC), a congressionally authorized public-private partnership implemented to rehabilitate the avenue and the buildings adjacent to it after years of decline. In 1979-80, landscape architects M. Paul Friedberg and Partners designed the park in association with architects Jerome Lindsey Associates. Friedberg's design for the park incorporated a memorial to General John J. Pershing, designed by architect Wallace K. Harrison of Harrison & Abramovitz. Landscape architects Oehme, van Sweden & Associates redesigned the planting scheme for the park in 1981, and Robert W. White was the sculptor of the Pershing statue, which was erected in 1983.

Pershing Park is located within the Pennsylvania Avenue National Historic Site (NHS), so designated by the Department of the Interior on September 30, 1965, with concurrence by President Lyndon B. Johnson. Congress ratified the NHS, which encompassed the segment of Pennsylvania Avenue between 1st and 15th streets, NW, and its historically related environs, on June 9, 1966 (Figure 3). The environs included in the NHS are bounded by 3rd Street on the east, Constitution Avenue on the south, and 15th Street on the west, and the northern boundary varies between E and G streets. The site was administratively listed in the National Register of Historic Places on October 15, 1966, and became part of the DC Inventory of Historic Sites on June 19, 1973. The National Register accepted additional documentation for the NR designation on October 12, 2007. The additional documentation defined the NHS as a historic district and identified its contributing and noncontributing features. It concluded that the Pershing Memorial contributed to the historic site's significance under Criterion C in the area of art. The design of Pershing Park itself fell outside the period of significance (1791-1962) and was therefore determined noncontributing to the district.¹

The National Park Service (NPS) completed the "Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Cultural Landscape Inventory (CLI) – White House to the Capitol" in 2016 for the portions of the Pennsylvania Avenue NHS National Register district over which NPS has jurisdiction.² The CLI addressed the potential significance of the landscape features on the NPS properties within the larger National Register district, focusing specifically on the work of the PADC. The CLI concluded that the Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, cultural landscape, including Pershing Park, was significant under National Register Criterion A in the areas of community planning and development and politics/government, and under Criterion C in the areas of art and landscape architecture. The CLI also determined that the cultural landscape met the standard for exceptional importance necessary to satisfy National Register Criterion Consideration G for properties less than fifty years old. The District of Columbia State Historic Preservation Office (DCSHPO) accepted these findings, with comments, on February 11, 2016.³

¹ For more information, see below under the heading "Previous National Register Evaluations."

² The National Park Service became responsible for the streetscape under PADC's jurisdiction when that entity was dissolved in 1996. At that time, the legislation called for the formation of Pennsylvania Avenue National Historic Park, which was placed under the jurisdiction of the National Park Service. In order to make the name consistent with the National Park Service naming conventions, it was renamed Pennsylvania Avenue National Historic Site in 2008. The Pennsylvania Avenue National Historic Site National Register historic district covers a much larger area than the NPS-managed Pennsylvania Avenue National Historic Site. The Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, cultural landscape shares the same boundary as the NPS-managed Pennsylvania Avenue National Historic Site. The CLI therefore covered only the parks and public spaces along the street, including Pershing Park.

³ The SHPO's comments are discussed in detail below, under the heading "Previous National Register Eligibility Evaluations."

Purpose

The purpose of the current study is to consider the eligibility of Pershing Park for the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria A and C as an individual site. The “Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Cultural Landscape Inventory – White House to the Capitol” determined that several aspects of Pershing Park (spatial organization, views and vistas, Pershing Memorial, Bex Eagle sculpture, and PADC street furnishings and vegetation) contribute to the significance of the cultural landscape.

Description

Pershing Park is a trapezoidal space created by the diagonal of Pennsylvania Avenue crossing the orthogonal grid of Washington’s north-south and east-west streets (Figure 4). Originally designated Square 226 in the Washington city plan, privately owned buildings and lots filled the space until the late 1920s, when it was appropriated by the federal government as part of the development of the Federal Triangle. Now designated U.S. Reservation No. 617, it is the westernmost of the public spaces designed to provide an appropriately dignified setting for the segment of Pennsylvania Avenue between the White House and the Capitol – the location of the inaugural parade for presidents of the United States and other nationally important ceremonies and a symbolic vista linking the homes of the executive and legislative branches of American government. The importance of this segment of the avenue has been fundamental to the plan of Washington since the original design of the city by Peter (Pierre) L’Enfant in 1791.

The park is separated from traffic on 14th, 15th, and Pennsylvania Avenue (south) through the use of raised earthen berms at its outer edges (Figure 5). Turf grass planted with straight rows of honey locust trees covers the berms. Steps composed of granite stringers and diagonally set, brown terra-cotta pavers at the southeast and southwest corners of the site, and a ramp of similar materials at the northwest corner rise, to the crest of the berms, providing views into and pedestrian access to the park’s interior. The terra-cotta pavers are the same as those used in the PADC design of the streets’ sidewalks, helping to integrate the park into the larger streetscape. Rows of short, painted, metal cylinders atop thin, painted, metal poles hold lamps that illuminate these steps.

Within the space framed by the berms, landscape architect M. Paul Friedberg established four zones of activity: the General John J. Pershing Memorial on the southeast, the kiosk and seating area on the north and east, elevated walks on the south and west that include seating in alcoves around trees, and the pool and fountain with stepped seating at the center. These zones are clearly differentiated by elevation, materials, plantings, and function, but the space flows between them uninterrupted by physical or visual barriers.

Wallace K. Harrison’s built design for the John J. Pershing Memorial creates its own linked space within the park through the use of two 10-foot-high, honed, Dakota mahogany granite walls on the east and south.⁴ The south wall is incised with maps that portray the battlefields of the Western Front during World War I and the decisive Meuse-Argonne campaign, as well as text describing Pershing’s participation in the war, his command of the United States 1st Army, and the signing of the armistice. The east wall is incised with Pershing’s name and rank of General of the Armies, a promotion granted him after the war. Robert White’s larger-than-life size bronze sculpture of Pershing shows the general in uniform, his hat in his left hand, his right hand beginning to raise his field glasses as he looks to the west. The statue stands on a rectangular base of polished Dakota mahogany granite etched with Pershing’s birth and death dates (1860-1948). The statue is visible from the street along a vista created by the steps into the park from the corner of 14th and Pennsylvania Avenue (south). It is also visible throughout the interior of the park. A low polished granite bench stands to the west of the statue, and the plaza floor is composed of squares of unpolished granite. Originally, a single copper beech tree stood in a small planting bed just to the northwest of the bench. The tree no longer exists, but the planting bed remains.

⁴ Harrison was involved in the Pershing Memorial since the late 1950s and revised his design several times. His involvement in the project is detailed below, under the heading “The John J. Pershing Memorial.”

The memorial space opens to the north, which is paved in diagonally set, brown terra-cotta squares and planted with willow oaks, and to a seating area on the west, which is set five granite steps lower than the Pershing statue plaza. The black, probably metal, benches around the willow oaks that appear in early photographs no longer exist. The terra-cotta pavers continued through this area to the street further weave the park into the larger streetscape.

A circular, domed, concessions kiosk acts as a hinge between the east seating area and another on the north (Figure 6). Originally, during nice weather, visitors to the park could purchase refreshments from the kiosk and dine at picnic tables or movable tables and chairs. Belgian blocks arranged in a fish-scale pattern paved the area around these seating accommodations (Figure 7). The picnic tables and movable tables and chairs have been replaced by concrete table-bench units. In the winter, when the pool had been converted to an ice rink, skates could be rented from the kiosk, and locker space was located in its basement. The ice rink has not been operational since the winter of 2006-2007, and the concessions/food facility is no longer in operation.

Age and weather have damaged the clarity of the plastic glazing of the kiosk. The glazing represents the kiosk's original construction, but is a change from Friedberg's design, which called for glass. Historic photographs show, at different times, blue or red awnings over the arched windows of the kiosk. Currently, two green awnings, one on the east and one on the west, cover two of these windows. An original granite drinking fountain remains on the south side of the eastern seating area (Figure 8).

The walks on the south and west, elevated above the pool and seating areas, are composed of diagonally set, brown terra-cotta squares with granite borders (Figure 9). The south walk is connected to the Pershing Memorial by a set of low granite steps and by a granite and terra-cotta ramp, both original features. The south and west walks (toward E and 15th streets) are punctuated by seating alcoves on their street sides. Each alcove consists of a semicircle of backed, steel benches set on a brown brick base. The alcoves are paved in brown terra-cotta pavers, which are bordered with a granite band around a central planting bed that is set with a single crape myrtle and liriope as ground cover (Figure 10). Based on early photographs, it appears that the current seating represents replacement of the original, although in the same size, configuration, materials, and spirit. Original lighting fixtures (stacks of four globes on four sides of a cylindrical pole) flank the seating alcoves. The square planters on the interior sides of the walks (adjacent to the pool) contain crape myrtle trees rising above grasses, yucca, and perennials. The grasses and yucca represent the work of the landscape architecture firm Oehme, van Sweden & Associates, which was hired by the PADC to redesign the planting scheme of Pennsylvania Avenue between 3rd and 15th streets and its associated parks in 1981. The crape myrtles replaced Friedberg's planned Japanese white birches either in the implementation of the design or early in the park's history.

The north side of Pershing Park stands at street level and is integrated into the PADC design for the Pennsylvania Avenue – diagonally set, brown terra-cotta pavers punctuated by willow oaks and standard lighting (Figure 11). The willow oaks are set in the Friedberg-designed, square, granite planters, which are planted in English ivy.

Friedberg's planters along the south, west, and north sides of the park stand at the junction between the sidewalks at the upper level of the park and the lower pool area, marking the transition from perimeter circulation to the role of the park as gathering place for social interactions (Figure 12). Granite steps march down from the transition area to the water, with the greenery in additional angular planters in the stepped areas contrasting with the orthogonal geometry of the hardscape. As with the planters at the top of the steps, crape myrtle, grasses, and perennials fill the planters, the crape myrtles having replaced Friedberg's planned Japanese white birch trees.

The pool basin was originally filled and activated by a rectangular cascade fountain on the west. The granite-clad cascade structure also provided storage for the Zamboni machine used on the ice rink in the winter. The fountain and the pool have been shut down by mechanical and electrical problems.

Historical Context

Square 226 in the L'Enfant and McMillan Plans

In his 1791 plan for Washington, L'Enfant designated the area that is now Pershing Park as property to be divided into lots and privately developed. Andrew Ellicott's 1792 plan of the city labeled the site, which was part of the land that had been owned by David Byrnes prior to the establishment of the national capital, as Square 226 (Figure 13). Pennsylvania Avenue between the White House and the Capitol was an important location in early nineteenth-century Washington, and several Federal-style townhouses were constructed on Square 226, but full development of the site did not take place until after the Civil War. In addition to housing, Square 226 became the location of a large building at the corner of 15th and E streets (now referred to as Pennsylvania Avenue, NW)⁵, built around 1884, that housed an armory and drill space for the Washington Light Infantry, as well as the Albaugh Opera House on the second floor. At the time, the square stood on the edge of an area of the city with a reputation for unsavory characters and businesses, a reputation that had taken hold during the Civil War. Bordellos, gambling establishments, and poorly built housing accompanied the wartime influx of soldiers and transients to the area, which became known as Murder Bay. Although the departure of the military and temporary populations after the war led to a decline in illegal activity, lumber yards, foundries, and mills filled the neighborhood between the White House and the Capitol in the late nineteenth century.⁶

Plans to alter this circumstance began to take shape at the end of the century, when prominent Washington businessmen sought to improve the city's appearance in anticipation of the hundredth anniversary of the permanent move of the federal government to the city in 1800. Concerned citizens, federal and local politicians, and amateur and professional planners and designers became involved in the effort, which culminated in the appointment of the Senate Park Commission, also known as the McMillan Commission (named for its chairman, Michigan Senator James McMillan). The commission consisted of architects Daniel Burnham and Charles Follen McKim, landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., and sculptor Augustus Saint-Gaudens. As its name implies, the commission's charge was to study the District's park system, including the public lands of the Mall, the Washington Monument Grounds, and East and West Potomac Parks, but it expanded its vision to include the then-private land bordering Washington's monumental core, including the triangle of land in the northwest quadrant bounded by Pennsylvania Avenue, 15th Street, and what was then B Street North (now Constitution Avenue). Drawing on the tenets of Beaux-Arts architecture and City Beautiful planning principles, the commissioners envisioned a kite-shaped central public space in their 1902 report to Congress, with triangular enclaves of government buildings on either side of the green rectangle stretching west from the Capitol to the Potomac River. This greensward encompassed what are now the Mall, the Washington Monument and Grounds, and the Lincoln Memorial and Grounds. The area north of the greensward and south of Pennsylvania Avenue was planned as the future home of municipal buildings, including a city hall, an armory, an auditorium, and a public market.⁷

Only one municipal building was ultimately constructed in this triangle (the John A. Wilson Building housing city government offices at 1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, completed in 1908). Development along the avenue in the first decade of the twentieth century also included the expansion of the Willard Hotel, north of Square 226. In 1910, the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts (CFA) recommended that Square 226 and the other private land south of the Willard, bounded by Pennsylvania Avenue, B Street North, and 14th and 15th Streets, be acquired for the construction of office buildings to house the departments of State, Justice, Commerce, and Labor. Acquisition of the parcels took place the same year. Although

⁵ The portion of E Street, NW, and Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, between 13th Street, NW, and 15th Street, NW, was renamed "Pennsylvania Avenue, NW" in 1984. DC Register. "DC Act 5-213, Dec. 21, 1984," Recorded in Book 117, Page 189.

⁶ Historic American Buildings Survey, "Pershing Park (Reservation No. 617, City Square no. 226)," HABS no. DC-695, n.d., 2-3; Robinson & Associates, Inc., "Pennsylvania Avenue National Historic Site," National Register of Historic Places Nomination, prepared for the National Park Service, National Capital Region, October 12, 2007, 8:127-128.

⁷ Robinson & Associates, Inc., "Pennsylvania Avenue National Historic Site," 144-148.

construction of executive branch office buildings did not take place as CFA planned, the idea of the area south of Pennsylvania Avenue between 15th and 3rd streets as a federal enclave gained strength, especially as government space needs increased during and after World War I. The Public Buildings Act of 1926 gave responsibility for planning the “Federal Triangle,” as it came to be known, to the office of the Supervising Architect of the Treasury. The Supervising Architect, in turn, established a board of consulting architects, headed by Beaux-Arts-trained Edward Bennett, to develop detailed designs. The first plan for the Federal Triangle was produced in 1926, and Congress funded acquisition of the remaining private property in the area in 1928.⁸

The first building constructed in the new enclave was the Commerce Department Building, which occupied the site identified by CFA for the State, Justice, Commerce, and Labor departments in 1910. Designed by architect Louis Ayres (1874-1947) in a monumental Classical Revival style, the building was completed in 1932 and set the standard for style, proportions, materials, and details for the rest of the triangle. The federal government had acquired Square 226 with the idea that construction of the Commerce building would result in the closure of E Street (now referred to as Pennsylvania Avenue, NW). As built, however, E Street remained open. Rather than building additional government offices on the small square, however, the Office of the Supervising Architect of the Treasury and the Board of Architectural Consultants decided to raze the buildings on the site and allow the space to remain open as a suitable setting for both the Commerce building and for Pennsylvania Avenue. The National Park Service (NPS) acquired jurisdiction over the park on December 16, 1938. The trapezoidal park was planted with grass and bordered by trees by the end of the 1930s (Figure 14). A temporary building was constructed on the site in 1942. It was demolished in 1955.⁹

The John J. Pershing Memorial

Public Law 84-461, approved April 2, 1956, authorized the preparation of plans and estimates of the cost for erecting a memorial to General John J. Pershing, commander of the American Expeditionary Force during World War I. After the war, Pershing was promoted to General of the Armies of the United States, the highest possible rank for any member of the American armed forces. The law assigned responsibility for the memorial to the American Battle Monuments Commission (ABMC), which had been established in 1923 to honor members of the U.S. military at home and in the locations where they served. Pershing was chairman of the commission from 1923 until his death in 1948. PL 84-461 authorized the ABMC to procure plans, prepare cost estimates, and make recommendations on the site, design, and materials of the memorial, with CFA approval required prior to submission to Congress. The National Capital Planning Commission approved Square 226 as the site for the memorial on March 8, 1957, and the ABMC chose modern architect Wallace K. Harrison as the memorial designer.¹⁰

Harrison (1895-1981) worked for the architecture firms McKim, Mead, and White and Cram, Goodhue, and Ferguson, before studying at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts after World War I. He was one of several architects involved in the design of the Rockefeller Center in New York (1929-1940) and designed the Trylon and Perisphere theme center at the 1939 New York World’s Fair. The partnership he formed in 1935 with J. André Foulihoux evolved into Harrison, Foulihoux and Abramovitz when Max Abramovitz

⁸ Robinson & Associates, Inc., “Pennsylvania Avenue National Historic Site,” 161-162.

⁹ Robinson & Associates, Inc., “Pennsylvania Avenue National Historic Site,” 157-160; Historic American Buildings Survey, “Pershing Park (Reservation No. 617, City Square no. 226),” 1-3; National Park Service, National Mall and Memorial Parks, “Cultural Landscape Inventory: Pennsylvania Avenue, NW – White House to the Capitol,” May 10, 2016, 48; “Crossroads of America: Hotels at 15th Street and Pennsylvania Avenue, NW,” Streets of Washington website, <http://www.streetsofwashington.com/2009/12/crossroads-of-america-hotels-at-15th.html?view=sidebar>, accessed June 7, 2016; Maureen Joseph, National Park Service, comment on “Pershing Park Determination of Eligibility – 95% draft,” April 13, 2016. Sources disagree on the agency responsible for the temporary building. The HABS documentation credits the National Park Service; the Streets of Washington website assigns responsibility to the Office of War Information.

¹⁰ “Cultural Landscape Inventory: Pennsylvania Avenue, NW – White House to the Capitol,” 48; *Statues at Large*, 70 Stat. 84; *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, s. v. “John J. Pershing,” accessed June 07, 2016, <http://www.britannica.com/biography/John-J-Pershing>.

joined in 1941. Harrison & Abramovitz, formed in 1945, became one of the largest architectural firms in the United States, with office buildings the focus of its expertise. The firm is perhaps best known for the complexes of civic buildings that Harrison played a part in coordinating and designing. They included the United Nations complex (1948-1952) and the Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts in New York (1962), for which he also designed the Metropolitan Opera House (1965).¹¹

Harrison served in World War I as an ensign in the U.S. Navy aboard a submarine-chasing vessel and was involved with the design of the Pershing Memorial for more than twenty years. His first scheme – “a monumental marble portal” (in the words of biographer Victoria Newhouse) framing a statue of the general on the long 15th Street side of the park – was revised in consultation with the Washington review commissions to a smaller memorial on the 14th Street side of the park with 20-foot high walls on the south and east and Pershing’s statue facing a circular pool to the west. The design continued to undergo revision influenced by the review commissions through the end of the 1950s, with the Commission of Fine Arts approving a scheme on November 18, 1959, that consisted of a central fountain, three surrounding pools, and gardens on the north, south, and east. A statue of Pershing was planned to stand in front of a wall along 15th Street that held quotations about the general and maps of the fighting.¹²

Square 226 was dedicated as Pershing Square on September 13, 1960, but the plans developed by Harrison and approved by CFA lay dormant for a decade and a half as the fate of Pennsylvania Avenue itself became the focus of local and national debate.

During his inaugural parade on January 20, 1961, President John F. Kennedy noticed the deteriorated state of the avenue, with the small-scale commercial buildings to the north in disrepair or abandoned opposite the aging monumentalism of the Federal Triangle on the south. The president combined his interest in Pennsylvania Avenue with a concern over the inefficiency of federal office buildings to create the Ad Hoc Committee on Federal Office Space in the summer of 1961. The committee’s report, published on June 1, 1962, proclaimed “Guiding Principles for Federal Architecture” that helped usher in a wave of government buildings of modern design across the country and also addressed means of improving the appearance and utility of Pennsylvania Avenue and the buildings lining it. In addition to encouraging buildings of modern design north of the avenue, the report also recommended the improvement of the streetscape for pedestrians with benches, arcades, sculpture, planting, and fountains.

Kennedy appointed the President’s Council on Pennsylvania Avenue the same month that the Ad Hoc Committee issued its report. Chaired by architect Nathaniel A. Owings of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, the committee also included modernists such as Chloethiel Woodard Smith, Daniel Urban Kiley, Paul Thiry, and Ralph Walker, as well presidential assistant Daniel Patrick Moynihan. After Kennedy’s assassination on November 22, 1963, the council carried the president’s vision forward, releasing *Pennsylvania Avenue: Report of the President’s Council on Pennsylvania Avenue* in April 1964 (and therefore called the 1964 Plan). The plan envisioned a uniform building setback and building height for new construction on the north side of the avenue, as well as consistent paving, street furniture, lighting, and street trees. At the west end of the avenue, adjacent to President’s Park, the plan proposed a new “National Square” that encompassed four city blocks (including Square 226). Existing buildings on these squares would have been demolished in favor of a paved plaza that opened western views along the avenue to the Treasury Department Building. National Square would have included a memorial to

¹¹ Paul Goldberger, “Wallace Harrison Dead at 86: Rockefeller Center Architect,” *New York Times*, December 3, 1981, New York Times website, <http://www.nytimes.com/1981/12/03/obituaries/wallace-harrison-dead-at-86-rockefeller-center-architect.html?pagewanted=all>, accessed March 6, 2016; “Wallace K. Harrison,” *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, <http://www.britannica.com/biography/Wallace-K-Harrison>, accessed June 10, 2016; “Wallace K. Harrison Architectural Drawings and Papers, 1913-1986,” “Biographical Note,” Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library website, Columbia University, http://www.columbia.edu/cu/lweb/archival/collections/ldpd_3460617/, accessed June 10, 2016.

¹² Victoria Newhouse, *Wallace K. Harrison, Architect* (New York: Rizzoli, 1989), 275-277; U.S. Commission of Fine Arts, Meeting Minutes (notes), 1956-1959, compiled by the National Park Service.

Pershing, although Owings noted that Harrison's approved 1959 design would require revision and additional review by the Commission of Fine Arts.¹³

Congress authorized the Pershing Memorial on November 7, 1966. The legislation provided for the erection of the memorial "in accordance with a design to be submitted by the American Battle Monuments Commission and approved by the President's Temporary Commission on Pennsylvania Avenue or its successor." The act provided for commemoration of the soldiers who fought under Pershing's command in addition to the general himself.¹⁴

The National Square concept was ultimately shelved due to the large amount of unshaded paving that would have been virtually unusable during Washington's summers and because it would have meant the loss of numerous historic buildings. The historic significance of avenue and the buildings that lined it had been the subject of study by the National Park Service and resulted in the designation of the Pennsylvania Avenue National Historic Site by Secretary of the Interior Stewart L. Udall on September 30, 1965, and its addition to the National Register of Historic Places on October 15, 1966.¹⁵

Although numerous obstacles delayed implementation of the 1964 Plan for the avenue, Square 226 received attention in the mid-1960s from the Committee for a More Beautiful Capital, a volunteer organization established by First Lady Lady Bird Johnson. The committee's first meeting took place on February 11, 1965, and its purpose was to improve the city's appearance and make it a model for other American cities to follow. The National Capital Region of the National Park Service established a Beautification Task Force to implement the ideas of the committee, and planting of Square 226 took place in 1966 and through the end of the decade. Plant lists from 1965 and 1967 indicate that thousands of tulips, along with pansies, daffodils, and grape hyacinths, were planted in the park.¹⁶

The Pennsylvania Avenue Development Corporation

The riots that followed the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., on April 4, 1968, resulted in looting, vandalism, and property destruction in several neighborhoods in Washington, including the downtown business district that included Pennsylvania Avenue and surrounding streets. The damage done during the riots furthered the decline of the avenue, with some businesses, including the Willard Hotel, closing as a result. This continual decline remained a concern for the residents of the nearby White House. President Lyndon B. Johnson had issued an executive order creating the President's Temporary Commission on Pennsylvania Avenue to continue the work that Kennedy had begun, and when that commission's funding ended in 1969, President Richard M. Nixon's administration proposed legislation that would create a public-private corporation to facilitate redevelopment of the avenue.

Passed by Congress on October 27, 1972, the legislation established the Pennsylvania Avenue Development Corporation (PADC), a cooperative venture between the federal government and private interests. A fifteen-member board of directors, composed of design and real estate professionals and including the Secretary of the Interior and the mayor of Washington, governed the corporation, which had the power of eminent domain and the authority to impose architectural guidelines on private development. Certain federal agencies with interest in the area (CFA, NCPC, the Archivist of the United States, the Architect of the Capitol, the Director of the National Gallery of Art, and the Secretary of the Smithsonian

¹³ Robinson & Associates, Inc., "Pennsylvania Avenue National Historic Site," 171-178; Luebke, ed., 240-244.

¹⁴ Robinson & Associates, Inc., "Pennsylvania Avenue National Historic Site," 192; 80 Stat. 1377.

¹⁵ Robinson & Associates, Inc., "Pennsylvania Avenue National Historic Site," 179-180; "Block 226 (Federal Reservation 617) – Pershing Square," National Park Service, National Capital Region, PADC Memorials files, undated.

¹⁶ Robinson & Associates, Inc., "National Park Service National Capital Region Administrative History, 1952-2005," prepared for the National Capital Region, National Park Service, June 6, 2008, 99-100; "Bulbs and Pansies, Fall 1965" and [Plant List], Reservation 617 – Pershing Square," Spring 1967, Pershing Park Files, National Mall and Memorial Parks, National Capital Region, National Park Service.

Institution) sent nonvoting representatives to the board meetings. The act provided up to \$1 million to revise previous plans for the avenue.¹⁷

The PADC unveiled *The Pennsylvania Avenue Plan* in 1974 (and so called the 1974 Plan). The plan laid out the principles upon which PADC rehabilitation of the avenue was based, adopted elements of earlier plans, and included new solutions to certain problems, such as traffic flow. Among the added guidance was a preservation plan for historic buildings, including the Willard Hotel. Federal funding helped implement some of these proposals, including the use of consistent streetscape elements along the avenue. A team headed by landscape architects Sasaki Associates developed the streetscape plan and its individual elements, which included willow oaks, tree grates, benches, trash receptacles, water fountains, lighting, and paving. In addition to improvements to the avenue's streetscape, PADC also planned the improvement of existing parks and creation of new public spaces. Five new public properties were to be developed from existing reservations or the reorganization of traffic islands and rights-of-way. Two other existing parks were to be altered, and one – Pershing Park – was to be completely redesigned.¹⁸

The 1974 plan underwent revision over the next few years, with PADC, the Commission of Fine Arts, and the National Capital Planning Commission addressing numerous issues, including traffic flow and the disposition of public space. These discussions ultimately affected the design of Pershing Park, as E Street south of Square 226 became a primary east-west transportation route, with Pennsylvania Avenue in front of the Willard Hotel targeted for reduced traffic flow. The mid-1970s revisions to the plan also led to the creation of the public space immediately east of Pershing Park (now known as Freedom Plaza) from the combination of two existing public spaces (Reservation Nos. 32 and 33) and the closure of Pennsylvania Avenue between 13th and 14th streets. In essence, the change recreated the public square east of Square 226 seen in Andrew Ellicott's 1792 plan of the city. (Figure 13)¹⁹

PADC began implementing the revised 1974 plan in 1976, beginning at the western end of the area under its jurisdiction. The early efforts included redevelopment of private properties north of Pennsylvania Avenue, including the Willard Hotel. Reconfiguration of the roadways in the western sector of the avenue and the construction of new terra-cotta-paved sidewalks and street furnishings was underway by 1981. The public space of the south side of the avenue between 13th and 15th streets had been improved following the 1974 plan in time for the inauguration of President Ronald Reagan in January 1981, and the work moved steadily to the east. By 1984, all the sidewalk improvements to the avenue had been completed and 700 willow oaks had been planted.

Development of the parks along the avenue paralleled, or lagged slightly behind, the street improvements, with Freedom Plaza (then known as Western Plaza) opening in 1980, Pershing Park in 1981, John Marshall Park in 1983, Meade Plaza in 1984, Market Square Park in 1987, and Indiana Plaza in 1988. For the development of these parks and plazas, PADC employed highly regarded contemporary designers such as architect Robert Venturi of Venturi & Rauch and landscape architects such as George Patton, Carol R. Johnson, and M. Paul Friedberg. PADC also hired the noted Washington, D.C., landscape architecture firm Oehme, van Sweden & Associates in 1981 to redesign the planting scheme for the entire public space, including the avenue's parks.

The PADC received the Urban Land Institute Award for Excellence in 1994, as the corporation's implementation of the 1974 plan was reaching completion. Congress also considered the work of the PADC essentially complete and passed Public Law 104-134, which provided for the dissolution of the corporation on April 1, 1996. The U.S. General Services Administration, the National Park Service, and

¹⁷ National Park Service, National Mall and Memorial Parks, "Cultural Landscape Inventory: Pennsylvania Avenue, NW – White House to the Capitol," 54.

¹⁸ National Park Service, National Mall and Memorial Parks, "Cultural Landscape Inventory: Pennsylvania Avenue, NW – White House to the Capitol," 55-58; Robinson & Associates, Inc., "Pennsylvania Avenue National Historic Site," 188-190.

¹⁹ Thomas E. Luebke, editor, *Civic Art: A Centennial History of the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Commission of Fine Arts, 2013), 308-310.

the National Capital Planning Commission became responsible for remaining obligations. The legislation stipulated that the National Park Service would continue to administer, maintain, preserve, and interpret the public spaces formerly under PADC jurisdiction, including its parks, plazas, monuments, and sidewalks. This area, designated Pennsylvania Avenue National Historic Park, was depicted on a map developed by TAMS Consultants dated June 1, 1995 (NPS Map No. 840/82441). The new NPS park encompassed Pershing Park within its boundaries.²⁰

Design Context

Modern Landscape Architecture

Modernism's influence on landscape architecture lagged behind that of other disciplines, including architecture, painting, and sculpture. A scholarly consensus exists that modernist tendencies did not truly take hold throughout professional landscape practice in the United States until the 1960s. The reasons for the delay can be found in economic, educational, and other circumstances. Prior to the Great Depression of the 1930s, the country estates of the wealthy provided the most prestigious commissions for landscape architects, the kind that would be written up and pictured in popular journals and lead to other commissions – hence the designation of the period as “The Country Estate Era.” Further, Beaux-Arts principles held sway in schools of landscape architecture longer than they did in schools of architecture, making it more difficult for contemporary design ideas to be promulgated. At Harvard, for instance, landscape architects such as Garrett Eckbo, James Rose, and Dan Kiley first engaged seriously with modernism through the presence of Walter Gropius (1883-1969) at Harvard. The Bauhaus architect had immigrated from Germany to England, and then moved to the United States in 1937. Eckbo, Rose, and Kiley authored a series of articles in *Architectural Record* between 1939 and 1941 that sought to bring the conceptual framework of modern architecture to the design of landscapes.²¹

Landscape architect and University of California professor Marc Treib has identified the principles of modern landscape architecture – derived mainly from architectural modernism – as follows:

- landscape expression derived from rational approach to conditions created by industrial society, site, and program;
- concern for space and volume, rather than pattern and plane;
- abolition of a dominant axis in exchange for omnidirectional space;
- plants chosen and used for their botanical qualities (appropriateness to specific conditions) and as sculpture;
- integration of indoor and outdoor spaces; and
- design of landscapes for human use, rather than for their picturesque qualities.²²

Opportunities to express these principles in built designs remained few until after World War II, by which time economic conditions had improved sufficiently to allow for spending on landscape development. Many of the early modern landscape designs remained residential commissions.²³

Two significant designs from this period represent the formal poles of modernist residential landscapes. The 1948 Donnell Garden in Sonoma, California, by Thomas Church (1902-1978), employed irregular

²⁰ Robinson & Associates, Inc., “Pennsylvania Avenue National Historic Site,” 188-206. NPS had undertaken maintenance responsibilities for the new parks created by the PADC in December 1982.

²¹ David P. Fogle, Catherine Mahan, and Christopher Weeks, *Clues to American Gardens* (Washington, D.C.: Starrhill Press, 1987), 58; Peter Walker and Melanie Simo, *Invisible Gardens: The Search for Modernism in the American Landscape* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2002), 116-118; Marc Treib, “Axioms for a Modern Landscape Architecture,” *Modern Landscape Architecture: A Critical Review*, Marc Treib, editor (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1993), 36-40.

²² Treib, “Axioms for a Modern Landscape Architecture,” 53-55.

²³ Marc Treib, “Church, Eckbo, Halprin, and the Modern Urban Landscape,” *Preserving Modern Landscape Architecture II: Making Postwar Landscapes Visible*, Charles A. Birnbaum, Jane Brown Gillette, and Nancy Slade, editors (Washington, D.C.: Spacemaker Press, 2004), 56

curving forms for the lawn, patio, and pool, repeating the lines of the distant landscape that could be viewed from the pool area. Trees, rock formations, and a pool island were isolated in a non-axial spatial arrangement to enhance their sculptural qualities. The Miller Garden in Columbus, Indiana (1955), by Dan Kiley (1912-2004), created a rigorously linear composition of trees planted in planes of crushed gravel or lawn that extended the plan of Eero Saarinen's modernist house into the landscape. The precision of the planting and the use of allées and bosques recalled the Baroque designs of André Le Nôtre in France, but the conception of space freely flowing between the garden and the house and through the garden witnessed a modernist sensibility.²⁴

Additional opportunities for modernist practitioners arrived during this time with the development of the new built forms associated with the rise of the automobile – suburbs, shopping centers, and corporate campuses. Modern design principles applied equally well to both the new buildings and their landscape settings, and suburban growth continued well into the 1960s and 1970s. The popularity of suburban development, however, had the natural consequence of draining people and resources from established cities. The construction of interstate highways through some cities resulted in both demolition of existing building stock to make way for the new roads and separation of remaining neighborhoods by the transportation corridors. Inevitably, urban centers declined under these conditions, followed by efforts at urban renewal that also sometimes demolished existing buildings in favor of apartment towers.

An early response to the loss of commercial activity in urban areas was to recreate downtowns in the image of suburban shopping centers – pedestrian malls such as the (1965) Fulton Street Mall in Fresno, California, by Garrett Eckbo (1910-2000) of Eckbo, Dean & Williams. Paved surfaces accounted for much of the built mall, with plantings as buffers and water features and abstract sculpture designed to animate the space. The built features of these pedestrian malls could take curving or rectilinear form. Lawrence Halprin (1916-2009), who had worked in Thomas Church's office and followed a path similar to Eckbo's from west coast residential designs to suburban and then urban commissions, designed Nicollet Mall in Minneapolis, Minnesota, which was completed in 1967. While not entirely pedestrianized (a bus lane wound through the former street), Nicollet Mall, like Fulton Street, employed planting, paving, seating, sculpture, fountains, and lighting designed to invite residents back to the downtown shops and businesses along its ten-block length. A related, early effort to revitalize a downtown area was Ghirardelli Square in San Francisco (1965), also by Halprin, in association with architects Wurster, Bernardi, & Emmons. The project involved the adaptive reuse of a former chocolate factory, converting it into tiers of individual shops, with an adjacent plaza over three levels of parking. This urban shopping center, along with the plaza's paving, pool and fountain, benches, and trees, began a national trend toward "festive" retail in old industrial buildings.²⁵

Treib cites Paley Park in New York City (1964) by Robert Zion of Zion and Breen as an iconic urban landscape ranking alongside Donnell Garden in its significance in the history of modern landscape architecture. Measuring only 50 by 100 feet, the pocket park is described as "a haven of serenity." A concrete water wall, surrounding buildings, and a bosque of honey locusts separate the paved space from the surrounding city.²⁶

Halprin's later career became much involved in the design of urban landscapes. In the mid-1960s, Halprin's firm received a grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to study the environmental impact and value of six urban renewal projects in New York City. With input from consultants ranging from psychologists, an anthropologist, the former director of the American Museum of Natural History, and urbanist Jane Jacobs, as well as professionals in the design field,

²⁴ Fogle, et al., 58; Gregg Bleam, "Dan Kiley: Planting on the Grid," *Preserving Modern Landscape Architecture II: Making Postwar Landscapes Visible*, Charles A. Birnbaum, Jane Brown Gillette, and Nancy Slade, editors (Washington, D.C.: Spacemaker Press, 2004), 70-73.

²⁵ Treib, "Church, Eckbo, Halprin, and the Modern Urban Landscape," 59-60.

²⁶ Ibid., 63; Peter Walker, and Melanie Simo, *Invisible Gardens: The Search for Modernism in the American Landscape* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2002), 165-166.

Halprin's firm published its findings in *New York, New York* in 1968. Several of the urban renewal projects had consisted of office towers in open space; Halprin found that these spaces were empty of usable features and of human activity. Highways or broad streets separated other formerly connected neighborhoods, expanding the feeling of "placelessness" felt by urban residents.²⁷

The study informed Halprin's later works built in urban areas. He designed four such landscapes in Portland, Oregon's downtown area, the most successful of which, the Ira Keller Fountain (1970), consists of a broad area of concrete cascades that recall, in abstract form, the falls of a river. Terraces before the cascades – looking in plan like lines on a topographic map – invite visitors to experience the water's sound and reflectivity, and to interact with the water itself. Attendees at its dedication interrupted the ceremonies by wading into pools at the base of the falls. Known originally as the Auditorium Forecourt Fountain, the terraces before the cascade function as an outdoor stage that mirrors the adjacent Civic Auditorium. The powerful and open forms satisfied Halprin's desire to create a sense of place that fostered human interaction, which he conceived of as public theater.²⁸

M. Paul Friedberg

In *New York, New York*, Halprin praised the work of a young landscape architect practicing in New York City, M. Paul Friedberg (1931-). Halprin called his work at the Jacob Riis Houses "a successful attempt at reclaiming the ground plane for maximized social engagement." Now considered among the most devoted and talented urban designers of the last half of the twentieth century, Friedberg is one of three landscape architects (along with Halprin and Karl Linn, 1923-2005) who "uniquely dedicated themselves to the country's densely populated metropolitan areas" in the last half of the twentieth century, according to Alison B. Hirsch, assistant professor of landscape architecture at the University of Southern California.²⁹

Trained in horticulture at Cornell University (Bachelor of Science, 1954), Friedberg earned his initial design credentials through work on New York City public parks and playgrounds, first in the office of landscape architect Joseph Gangemi and then with his own firm, formed in 1958. Friedberg responded to the decline of the urban infrastructure and concern about the future of cities with designs of buoyant optimism, disdaining conservative approaches and instead proposing parks that challenged their users. His first successes resulted from commissions for playgrounds associated with public housing projects. His breakthrough design, the landscape for the Jacob Riis Houses on the Lower East Side of Manhattan in 1965, created a series of spaces with different purposes from the existing grass "mall" between the apartment towers – an enclosed garden, an amphitheater with spray pool, a plaza for checkers or other quiet socializing, and a playground. For the playground, Friedberg implemented a "total play environment." Rather than single pieces of playground equipment isolated from each other by fences or vegetation, Friedberg linked a tree house, mounds, a tunnel, and sand areas with paths, slides, and climbing bars so that children could play through the park, which provided a series of experiences that would exercise creativity, cooperation, discovery, and experimentation as well as their muscles. Rather than theater, which informed Halprin's conception of public space, Friedberg's model for social interaction in the public realm was play, and this conception influenced the landscape architect's work throughout his career.

Friedberg constructed his playground features from durable materials – granite blocks, steel piping, wood beams – to withstand hard use and the likely absence of regular maintenance. That he would build such a playground in one of the city's more economically challenged neighborhoods, and to have his optimism

²⁷ Hirsch, Alison B. "From 'Open Space' to 'Public Space': Activist Landscape Architects of the 1960s." *Landscape Journal* 33:2, 2014, 177-181.

²⁸ Carl Abbott, "Two Portland Fountains Come of Age," *Landscape Architecture* 83:3, March 1993, 47-48; Elizabeth K. Meyer, "Halprin, Lawrence," *Shaping the American Landscape*, Charles Birnbaum and Stephanie Foell, editors (Charlottesville, Virginia: University of Virginia Press, 2009), 124-127.

²⁹ Alison B. Hirsch, "From 'Open Space' to 'Public Space': Activist Landscape Architects of the 1960s," *Landscape Journal* 33:2, 2014, 173, 184.

rewarded with the development of a sense of community responsibility for the park, was quickly noticed. Architecture and landscape journals and the popular press covered the Riis Houses design, which won awards from the American Society of Landscape Architects and the American Institute of Architects and became an influential model.³⁰

By the end of the 1960s, Friedberg had proven himself adept at developing playgrounds and had published two books on playground design. He had also expanded his practice to include corporate headquarters and other urban public spaces, including what are often referred to as “park plazas.” Friedberg defined the park plaza as “a mixture of the American green square and the European hardscape.” Further, the park plaza combined the functions of the courthouse square and the market place. It was therefore conceived as full of activity in the commercial sphere, as well as part of the public realm. While he designed a number of such urban spaces in the early 1970s, Peavey Plaza in Minneapolis, Minnesota, completed in 1975, was quickly recognized as an important new approach to the park plaza. Whereas earlier park designs in cities had tended to create oases of green space as escapes from the urban hardscape, Friedberg sought to use principles of modernism, as well as the materials and forms of the modern city – concrete, stone, metal, plants in rectilinear arrangements – to bring the vitality of the city into the park. At Peavey Plaza, which acted as the forecourt to the city’s new Orchestra Hall, Friedberg used concrete, brick, and tile in an angular, geometric composition to create interpenetrating spaces allowing for a variety of uses – amphitheater, seating areas, and terraces. Fountains, pools, planting beds, and tree canopies added another dimension of texture and scale to the hard edges of the design. There is no dominant axis to the plaza, as there would be in a Beaux-Arts handling of such a forecourt. Instead, following the model set by the Jacob Riis playground, visitors choose the path they wish to take to their destination. Along with other investment in the city center, Peavey Plaza is considered to have helped save downtown Minneapolis from the kind of decline that other downtowns suffered in the 1970s.³¹

Alison Hirsch has pointed out that in his work Friedberg “attempted to develop intergenerational play spaces that would serve as a collective focus for renewed public life.” Using the materials and principles of modern architecture, especially the conception of space as free flowing and omnidirectional, Friedberg designed public parks and plazas “to reconnect the city through play (and interplay).” Throughout his career, Friedberg focused on using “leftover spaces,” such as the space between the residential buildings at the Jacob Riis housing project, to create these opportunities for residents. Hirsch identifies “a uniquely forceful tone of subversive occupation” in the Friedberg’s appropriation of interstitial spaces for public parks and plazas that is absent from the work of other prominent landscape architects of the time.³²

Friedberg differs from other highly regarded landscape architects from the second half of the twentieth century primarily in his devotion to and innovation in these urban landscape designs. Church and Eckbo conducted their practices when commissioned work encompassed residential, suburban, campus, and shopping center designs. They are thus not primarily remembered for their contributions to urban landscapes. Dan Kiley’s engagement in cities increased in the latter half of the twentieth century. His designs, however, more often concerned themselves with integrating buildings in their city settings than with urban public space. Perhaps only Halprin equals or exceeds Friedberg in the dedication, innovative spirit, and sheer quantity of the urban spaces he designed. Friedberg’s forms, especially in his work of the 1960s and 1970s, when Pershing Park was built, are more rigorously rectilinear and geometric than Halprin’s work, which leans toward abstract expression of natural forms. Further, there are more instances of Halprin landscapes that separate themselves and their users from the city (such as the

³⁰ Randl, 103-105; Paul Bennett, “Social Force: The Urban Optimism of M. Paul Friedberg,” *Preserving Modern Landscape Architecture II: Making Postwar Landscapes Visible*, Charles A. Birnbaum, Jane Brown Gillette, and Nancy Slade, editors (Washington, D.C.: Spacemaker Press, 2004), 34-35.

³¹ Charlene K. Roise, and Elizabeth A. Gates, National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form: Peavey Plaza, Hess, Roise and Company, August 2012, 3-6, 10-12.

³² Hirsch, “From ‘Open Space’ to ‘Public Space’: Activist Landscape Architects of the 1960s,” 186.

pedestrian mall), while Friedberg makes a more concerted effort to bring the vitality of the city into the park, expanding the modernistic notion of continuous flow of space beyond the park's borders.

Modern Landscape Architecture on Federal Land in Washington, D.C.

The redevelopment of Pennsylvania Avenue grew out of President Kennedy's concern for the deteriorated state of the avenue, as well as an interest in federal office space focused on efficiency as well as an appropriately dignified and modern image for the government. The report of the president's Ad Hoc Committee on Federal Office Space in 1962 recommended, among other things, that emphasis should be placed on designs for federal buildings "that embody the finest contemporary American architectural thought" and that an official government style should be avoided. Further, building locations should be chosen "so as to permit a general development of landscape." This and subsequent reports spurred a wave of modernist designs for federal buildings and landscapes in Washington and across the country.³³

As is obvious from the design members of the President's Council on Pennsylvania Avenue (Nathaniel Owings, Dan Kiley, Chloethiel Woodard Smith, Ralph Walker, and William Walton), Kennedy considered modernism appropriate to the development of the avenue as well. The PADC followed this directive, hiring some of the most highly regarded contemporary architects and landscape architects to carry out its proposed improvements, including Friedberg, Robert Venturi, George Patton, Wallace K. Harrison, and Carol R. Johnson. By hiring such a diverse group of professionals, the PADC ensured that an "official style" did not develop and relied on the equally well-regarded Sasaki and Associates, and later Oehme, van Sweden & Associates, to provide a consistent streetscape frame for the individual park designs.³⁴

An in-depth survey of modern landscape architecture in Washington has not been undertaken. A recent study of modern buildings in the city, however, identifies landscapes designed by Friedberg, Kiley, Sasaki, Church, Zion, and others in the city. These designs were mostly landscaped settings associated with private or public office buildings or residences. In the public realm, Friedberg designed a playground (Capper Plaza) as part of Lady Bird Johnson's beautification program of the late 1960s, as well as Fort Lincoln Park in southeast Washington, and Kiley's 10th Street Overlook (now Benjamin Banneker Park) was completed in 1969 as part of an urban renewal program in southwest Washington. Halprin began the design of the Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial in the mid-1970s, although the project was not completed until 1997. On the National Mall, landscape designs by modern architects Gordon Bunshaft (at the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden) and Skidmore, Owings & Merrill (Constitution Gardens, with landscape architects Arnold Associates) were undertaken. As far as can be determined from available documentation, however, the streetscapes and parks of the PADC represent the first time that a complete redesign of a significant element of the L'Enfant and McMillan plans for Washington (Pennsylvania Avenue between President's Park and the Capitol Grounds) in the modern and postmodern manners had been implemented.³⁵

³³ Robinson & Associates, Inc., "Pennsylvania Avenue National Historic Site," 173-175; Robinson & Associates, Inc., *Growth, Efficiency and Modernism: GSA Buildings of the 1950s, '60s, and '70s*, U.S. General Services Administration, Office of the Chief Architect, Center for Historic Buildings, September 2003, 42-45.

³⁴ Robinson & Associates, Inc., "Pennsylvania Avenue National Historic Site," 190.

³⁵ Robinson & Associates, Inc., "DC Modern: A Context for Modernism in the District of Columbia, 1945-1976," 30-31, and "DC Modern: A Context for Modernism in the District of Columbia, 1945-1976 – List of Representative Examples of Modern Resources," prepared for the District of Columbia Historic Preservation Office, January 23, 2009; Carole Ottesen, *A Guide to Smithsonian Gardens* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Books, 2011), 80; National Mall and Memorial Parks, "Cultural Landscapes Inventory – Benjamin Banneker Park (10th Street Overlook)," National Park Service, 2013, 52. Although Skidmore, Owings & Merrill were known for their modern buildings and landscapes, the design of Constitution Gardens harkened back to older precedents.

Pershing Park: Chronology of Development and Use

Design Process and Implementation of Friedberg's Original Design

PADC's selection of M. Paul Friedberg and Partners as landscape architects for Pershing Park followed a somewhat unusual course. In 1978, Friedberg was chosen to design what was then called Western Plaza (now Freedom Plaza) bound by 13th, 14th, E and F streets. Architect Robert Venturi of Venturi & Rauch, and landscape architects George Patton, Inc., received the commission for Pershing Park. Accounts of the events that followed these initial selections vary slightly. Some reports suggest that Venturi felt that the Western Plaza site – athwart Pennsylvania Avenue – was more prestigious and therefore lobbied to be its designer. Others indicate that PADC had second thoughts on the appropriateness of their original choices and suggested an internal competition, subsequently switching the designers' roles. In any event, in March 1978, the Commission of Fine Arts determined that Venturi and Patton would design Western Plaza, while Friedberg would remake Pershing Park.³⁶

Square 226 provided Friedberg with another opportunity to implement a park plaza concept in an interstitial space – this time federal parkland left from the development of the Federal Triangle along one of the most important symbolic avenues in the nation. The park had been improved by ornamental plantings installed by Lady Bird Johnson's Committee for a More Beautiful Capital, but the planned transformation of the site into the Pershing Memorial had not taken place, as presidential commissions and then the PADC pondered ways of renewing the decaying urban fabric of Pennsylvania Avenue. Moreover, Pershing Park represented a unique opportunity for Friedberg to apply his concepts of "play (and interplay)," following modern precepts and using modern materials and forms, in Washington's predominant form of federal public space – the memorial park. Friedberg "wanted to investigate another form of urban park, different from the traditional lawns and paths radiating out from a piece of statuary that predominated throughout Washington," according to an article published in 1993.³⁷

Friedberg's own creativity was challenged by the program prescribed for the park by PADC. He later recalled that he thought the 1.75-acre site was relatively small for the number of uses planned for it – concessions kiosk, seating area, and ice-skating rink in addition to the Pershing Memorial, central pool and fountain, stepped seating, and vegetation. He also recalled that Nathaniel Owings suggested the ice-skating rink relatively late in the design process.³⁸

The park's program also challenged Harrison, the designer of the Pershing Memorial. In anticipation of PADC improvements to Pershing Park, the architect redesigned his 1959 concept for the memorial in 1973. The redesign placed the figure of Pershing on the 15th Street side of the square, with walls and rigidly rectangular plantings to the west and south. A small square pool was planned near 14th Street. The American Battle Monuments Commission supported this design, but it was clearly not compatible with the multiple uses PADC planned for the site. Harrison complied with requests to reduce the size of the memorial and limit its features as the design of the park progressed. By 1979, the size of the memorial's plaza had been reduced from 400 by 240 feet to 47 by 49 feet and moved to the 14th Street side of the square. The statue of Pershing and the framing walls carved with information about the general and the war remained from the 1973 design, but little else.³⁹

³⁶ Luebke, editor, 310-311; The Cultural Landscape Foundation, "M. Paul Friedberg Oral History – Interview Transcript," interviews conducted October 5-6, 2006, and May 22, 2008, by Charles Birnbaum, Cultural Landscape Foundation website, <http://tclf.org/pioneer/oral-history/m-paul-friedberg>, accessed February 25, 2016, 40-41.

³⁷ Leonard Sherp, "Pershing Park." *Landscape Architecture* 83:3, March 1993, 53.

³⁸ Historic American Buildings Survey, "Pershing Park (Reservation No. 617, City Square no. 226)," HABS no. DC-695, n.d., 4; The Cultural Landscape Foundation. "M. Paul Friedberg Oral History – Interview Transcript." Interviews conducted October 5-6, 2006 and May 22, 2008, by Charles Birnbaum. Cultural Landscape Foundation website, <http://tclf.org/pioneer/oral-history/m-paul-friedberg>, 41.

³⁹ Newhouse, 278; J. Carter Brown, Chairman, Commission of Fine Arts, to W. Anderson Barnes, Pennsylvania Avenue Development Corporation, May 3, 1979, U.S. Commission of Fine Arts Records, Washington, D.C.; Harrison & Abramovitz, Architects, "Pershing Memorial – Plan, December 1973; William P. Jones, Jr., American Battle Monuments Commission, to John

For the most part, Harrison and Friedberg worked on their respective portions of the park separately, and even presented their designs separately to the review commissions. However, they coordinated with each other as the project progressed. Friedberg's sketches for Pershing Park witness his attempts to integrate the memorial visually and physically into his design (Figure 16). Drawings from Harrison's architectural papers at Columbia University indicate that the architect and landscape architect met on April 20, 1979, agreeing on a scheme for the memorial very close to the design as built.⁴⁰

Harrison suggested Robert White as sculptor for the Pershing statue, a recommendation approved by CFA. White (1921-2002), the grandson of architect Stanford White, traveled and studied in Germany and at the Rhode Island School of Design. Influenced by the classical techniques of Renaissance artists, he worked in bronze, stone, terra-cotta, and wood, concentrating on portrait, figure, and life studies. He was a fellow of the American Academy in Rome from 1952 to 1955 and designed and executed several works for the American Battle Monuments Commission.⁴¹

Friedberg presented his concept design to the Commission of Fine Arts on March 27, 1979. It included several elements seen in the constructed park, such as the rows of trees on the perimeter, the pool with cascades at the center, and a concessions kiosk. The design included a colonnade and arbor associated with the cascade, which CFA commissioner and landscape architect Edward Durell Stone, Jr., thought should be simplified. Revisions to the design proceeded through the rest of the year. Among the alterations were the elimination of the arbor and colonnade, a redesign of the kiosk into a circular feature (from an oval form) and its relocation so that it did not break the tree line surrounding the park, and the introduction of stepped terracing around the pool that created amphitheater-style seating. The commission endorsed the design at its October 23, 1979, meeting, asking only for minor revisions. The final design, prepared by M. Paul Friedberg & Partners and Jerome Lindsey Associates was approved by CFA on December 11 (Figure 15).⁴²

The Friedberg/Lindsey construction drawings were dated December 27, 1979, and were revised throughout the first three-quarters of 1980. Construction continued throughout 1980 and early 1981. The park and the Pershing Memorial were dedicated on May 14, 1981, although White's statue of the general was not installed until 1983. Not part of the original design, a bronze statue known as the Bex Eagle was installed along the ramp at the northwest corner of the park and dedicated on May 3, 1982. The sculpture was one of two eagle statues designed by Portland, Oregon-based artist Lorenzo E. Ghiglieri, who had been commissioned by Brian Bex, president of the American Communications Network. In 1981, Bex had successfully lobbied Congress to pass Senate Joint Resolution 121, which recognized 1982 as the two-hundredth anniversary of the selection of the American bald eagle as the country's national symbol. Bex kept one of Ghiglieri's eagles for himself and donated the other to the National Wildlife Federation. The NWF donated it, in turn, to the National Park Service, and it was installed in the park under the authority of the PADC.⁴³

Woodbridge, Pennsylvania Avenue Development Corporation, December 17, 1973, Record Group 220, Records of the Pennsylvania Avenue Development Commission, Alphabetical File, Pershing Memorial Folder, Cartographic Records Division, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland.

⁴⁰ Wallace K. Harrison, Architect, "Plan – Pershing Memorial Alternate," April 20, 1979, Wallace K. Harrison Papers, Avery Library, Columbia University, New York, New York, photographic reproduction provided by Edwin Fountain, World War I Memorial Commission. An annotation in red ink describes the drawing as "scheme based on meeting, WKH and P. Friedberg 4/20/79."

⁴¹ "Biographical Information," Robert W. White Papers, 1889-2003, Archives of American Art, Research Collections, Smithsonian Institution website, <http://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/robert-w-white-papers-11144/more>; "Robert Winthrop White, Sculptor, Dies at 81," *New York Times*, October 21, 2002, New York Times website, <http://www.nytimes.com/2002/10/21/obituaries/21WHIT.html>.

⁴² Commission of Fine Arts, Meeting Minutes, March 27, July 18, October 23, and December 11, 1979.

⁴³ Robinson & Associates, Inc., "Pennsylvania Avenue National Historic Site," National Register of Historic Places Nomination, 194.

As-built drawings, prepared in September 1984, and photographs indicate that Friedberg's design was constructed closely following the approved design. Berms on the east, south, and west – planted with straight rows of honey locust trees above lawn – shielded the park from traffic noise. Serpentine beds of daffodils were installed on either side of the walks that rose from the street sidewalks to the top of the berms (Figure 17). The granite plaza of the Pershing Memorial marked the southeast corner of the park, with its lone copper beech tree in a square planted bed next to the granite bench (Figure 18). The concessions kiosk occupied a transitional point between the Pershing Memorial, a group of willow oaks with circular seating at their bases, and the seating area around the pool (Figure 19). The materials of the kiosk were changed from Friedberg's approved design, with plastic substituted for glass to reduce costs.⁴⁴ The willow oaks also lined Pennsylvania Avenue, rising from Friedberg-designed planters at the transition point between the diagonally laid brown terra-cotta pavers and steps to the seating area. The rectangular pool occupied the center of the site, with its cascade fountain of brown granite on the west side. Granite steps led down from the surrounding walks to the pool. Planters broke up the length of this amphitheater-style seating on all four sides of the pool.

Photographs suggest that certain changes may have taken place in the implementation of Friedberg's planting scheme around the pool, or that changes took place early in the park's history. Planting plans indicate that Friedberg planned two kinds of birch trees (cutleaf weeping and Japanese white) to surround the pool, with ivy and daffodils in beds at their bases. While birch trees appear in photographs on the east and north sides of the pool, the trees on the south appear to be crape myrtles (Figures 17 and 19). The reason for the change is not known. Friedberg planned crape myrtles for the alcoves on the south side of the walk on that side of the pool.

Planting Overlay by Oehme, van Sweden

Additional changes to the plantings in Pershing Park soon followed. In 1981, PADC hired landscape architects Oehme, van Sweden & Associates as planting consultants to supplement the Sasaki streetscape of willow oaks and consistent street furniture along Pennsylvania Avenue with additional plantings to create a unified garden character. The firm employed a palette of annuals, perennials, bulbs, and grasses to create this consistent character. In addition, Oehme, van Sweden was charged with revisiting the planting schemes of all the parks along the avenue, including Pershing Park.⁴⁵

Wolfgang Oehme (1930-2011), born in Chemnitz, Germany, received a degree in landscape architecture from the University of Berlin in 1954. He moved to the United States in 1957 to work for Baltimore landscape architect Bruce Baetjer. By 1964, he had become a landscape designer for the Baltimore County Department of Recreation and Parks and designed private gardens in his spare time. He met James van Sweden that same year. Van Sweden had just joined the Washington, D.C., urban planning and landscape architecture firm Marcou, O'Leary and Associates after studying landscape architecture at the University of Delft in the Netherlands. With an undergraduate degree in architecture degree from the University of Michigan – he grew up in Grand Rapids – van Sweden generally practiced urban planning until he collaborated with Oehme on the garden of his Georgetown home in 1971. The garden's popularity led to his adoption of landscape architecture as his primary career and the formation of Oehme van Sweden in 1975.⁴⁶

Oehme, van Sweden developed an approach to garden design that emphasized massed plantings of indigenous species and appropriate introduction of non-indigenous varieties, overlaid on a strong architectural framework. Their designs were influenced by their experiences in Europe as well as by European paintings, especially those of the Dutch masters. Contemporary designers, such as the Brazilian

⁴⁴ "M. Paul Friedberg Oral History – Interview Transcript," 41.

⁴⁵ National Park Service, National Mall and Memorial Parks. "Cultural Landscape Inventory: Pennsylvania Avenue, NW – White House to the Capitol," 21; Robin Beasley Herbst, "Partnership," *Process Architecture* 130, 1996, 25.

⁴⁶ Herbst, 9; The Cultural Landscape Foundation, "James van Sweden Oral History – Interview Transcript," interviews conducted August 2009 by Charles Birnbaum, Cultural Landscape Foundation website, <http://tclf.org/pioneer/oral-history/james-van-sweden>, accessed February 25, 2016, 10-17.

landscape architect Robert Burle Marx, also influenced aspects of their work. Designing for the busy modern world, they emphasized hardy species that required little maintenance and sought plantings that provided year-round color, structure, and shape for their gardens. They popularized the use of ornamental grasses to help satisfy this last requirement. Their innovative approach to landscape has been called the “New American Garden” and “New World Landscapes,” and has been adopted by and adapted to many areas of the United States.⁴⁷

Their work came to the attention of the PADC after their success with plantings for the William McChesney Martin Building of the Federal Reserve Board in Washington in 1977. The Federal Reserve garden was the first expression of the principles that formed the foundation of their later work. PADC Executive Director Tom Regan saw the garden and moved to hire the firm to improve the appearance of Pennsylvania Avenue. The consulting arrangement between the landscape architects and the corporation continued until the dissolution of the PADC in 1996.⁴⁸

Oehme, van Sweden’s work at Pershing Park made no structural changes to Friedberg’s design but consisted of supplementing and, in some cases, changing his plantings. The firm’s planting plan for the park, dated October 15, 1981 – just five months after the park was dedicated – preserved the honey locusts over lawn that Friedberg planned, as well as the birch trees and crape myrtles, but added grasses, flowering herbaceous ground cover, taller flowers, and water plants (Figure 20). Liriope, cotoneaster, rudbeckia, miscanthus, yucca, black-eyed Susans, sedum, and pennisetum appear on the plans around Friedberg’s trees, and hostas, nandina, begonias, hypericum, ceratostigma, epimedium, and other flowering plants fill the expanded beds along the steps. Water Canna lilies and other water plants extended the plantings into the pool. It is difficult to tell precisely to what extent the planting plans were fulfilled. No evidence has been discovered, for instances, of sedum or liriope around the willow oaks in the northeast corner of the park, as they proposed, nor for the expanded planting beds along the steps. It is clear from photographs, however, that the Oehme, van Sweden plantings helped create lush, more intimate spaces within Friedberg’s park plaza (Figures 21 and 22).⁴⁹

Friedberg recalled resenting the overlay plantings in Pershing Park when he first saw them. After studying Oehme, van Sweden’s work, however, he felt that the vegetation provided additional layers of complexity to his original design. In the first place, the variety of plantings, especially the grasses that changed but did not completely die back during the winter, added a temporal dimension to his permanent hardscape. Secondly, the use of the massed plantings and variety of colors contrasted with his rectilinear organization of the park, even his own plantings. Friedberg said he understood a flaw in his own approach to planting by comparing his original design with the Oehme, van Sweden alterations. He admitted that he had utilized vegetation as another “staid, structural element.” The temporal dimension and painterly effects of Oehme, van Sweden’s use of plants suggested additional ways of thinking about vegetation and altered the way he used plantings in later projects. Friedberg also came to think of the Oehme, van Sweden overlay as part of a tradition in which artists and architects intervene in public spaces, such as the addition of sculpture or fountains to Italian piazzas. Examples of such interventions contemporary with Pershing Park can be found elsewhere in Washington, such as the placement of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial to Constitution Gardens, and then the subsequent addition of a sculptural group titled *Three Servicemen*, the

⁴⁷ Wolfgang Oehme, and James van Sweden, with Susan Rademacher Frey, *Bold Romantic Gardens: The New World Landscapes of Oehme and van Sweden* (Reston, Virginia: Acropolis Books, 1990), 39-51; Phillip Kennicott, “Wild Gardens that Grew Out from Washington,” *Washington Post*, October 19, 2015; “The New American Garden: The Landscape Architecture of Oehme, van Sweden” (exhibit), National Building Museum and the Cultural Landscape Foundation, <http://www.nbm.org/exhibitions-collections/exhibitions/new-american-garden.html>, accessed June 10, 2016.

⁴⁸ Kennicott; National Park Service, National Mall and Memorial Parks, “Cultural Landscape Inventory: Pennsylvania Avenue, NW – White House to the Capitol,” 57.

⁴⁹ National Park Service, National Mall and Memorial Parks, “Cultural Landscape Inventory: Pennsylvania Avenue, NW – White House to the Capitol,” 59; Laura Knott, Cultural Heritage Group, to authors, March 1, 2016 (electronic mail).

Vietnam Women's Memorial, a memorial plaque, and a flagpole to the setting of Maya Lin's black granite wall.⁵⁰

Oehme, van Sweden's association with PADC continued until 1996. Employees of the company periodically walked the avenue during that time with National Park Service and PADC representatives to check on the health of the plantings and to advise on care and possible alterations. It appears that some changes may have been made during this period (or perhaps in the years after PADC's dissolution) since existing plants continue the general palette established by the Friedberg and Oehme, van Sweden planting plans, but not always in the same locations. Sedum, panicum, miscanthus, liriope, yucca, and pennisetum, which are named on the Oehme, van Sweden plans remain, but not always in the locations specified. The honey locusts, Japanese birch trees, crape myrtle, and willow oak trees of Friedberg's design remain, as do some ivy and daffodils.

Changes to the Park since 1996

Despite the popularity of Pershing Park, it eventually fell into disrepair due to deferred maintenance, failure of critical systems, and the lack of a financially feasible market for the concessioner that operated the kiosk and ice rink. The ice rink closed for the 2006-2007 winter season due to mechanical problems and has since remained out of service. The kiosk, pool, and fountain were shut down shortly thereafter due to major electrical and HVAC issues in the mechanical room under the kiosk and in the space where the Zamboni machine was stored inside the granite fountain structure. Other problems included difficulties with the food preparation equipment and overall sanitation. Although the National Park Service continues to perform daily trash removal and maintenance of the landscaping and exterior lighting, the park's major operable features (the pool/ice rink, the cascade fountain, and the concessions kiosk – continue to be in poor condition.⁵¹

The original design and hardscape features of the park, as well as the Pershing Memorial itself, have remained largely intact, however, and there have been no major, permanent alterations. Unlike some of Friedberg's urban parks, Pershing Park has not witnessed damaging increases in crime and vandalism, according to National Park Service officials.⁵² With the exception of the circular benches around the willow oaks, few details of the original hardscape design have been lost. Skateboard damage is evident on the granite edging of the steps ascending the berms, and loose and broken paving and insensitive patching of joints in the paving attest to the lack of attention to the park's physical structure. In general, however, the original elements of Friedberg's design remain in place, and few elements have been added.

As mentioned previously, some of the plantings at Pershing Park have been altered since their original implementation, perhaps due to the ongoing work of Oehme, van Sweden until 1996, perhaps due to natural forces. The types and varieties specified in Oehme, van Sweden's overlay, however, remain in evidence, and Friedberg's structural plantings – the willow oaks emerging from the planters, the straight rows of honey locusts on the lawns covering the berms, the multi-trunked crape myrtles and birches surrounding the pool – continue to grow in their original locations. Missing plant materials from

⁵⁰ The Cultural Landscape Foundation, "M. Paul Friedberg Oral History – Interview Transcript," 41-42. Leonard Sherp's article in *Landscape Architecture* states that work of Oehme and van Sweden at Pershing Park led to subsequent collaborations with Friedberg, although no specific projects are mentioned. Cultural Landscape Foundation President Charles Birnbaum, however, stated in an interview that Pershing Park represented the only landscape that reflected the design ideas of all three practitioners. See Chelsea Blahut, "Q+A: Charles Birnbaum, President and CEO of The Cultural Landscape Foundation," *Architect, the Journal of the American Institute of Architects*. *Architect* website, <http://www.architectmagazine.com/design/q-a-charles-birnbaum-president-and-ceo-of-the-cultural-landscape-foundation>, accessed September 30, 2015.

⁵¹ Michael Commisso, Cultural Resources Program Manager, National Mall and Memorial Parks, to authors, February 4 and July 8, 2016; Sean Kennealy, Chief of Professional Services, National Mall and Memorial Parks to authors, February 29 and July 6, 2016 (electronic mail); Glenn DeMarr, National Capital Region, National Park Service, comment on "Pershing Park Determination of Eligibility – 95% draft," April 13, 2016, and comment on "Pershing Park Determination of Eligibility – 100% draft," June 13, 2016; Steve Lebel to authors, July 3, 2016 (electronic mail).

⁵² Commisso to authors, February 4, 2016 (electronic mail); Joseph Salvatore, Chief of Facility Management, National Mall and Memorial Parks, to authors, February 29, 2016 (electronic mail); Kennealy to authors, February 29, 2016 (electronic mail).

Friedberg's plantings include the copper beech near the Pershing statue and the planting beds near the steps/ramp from the street at the southeast, southwest, and northwest corners of the park.

In December 2014, one hundred years after the beginning of World War I, Congress passed Public Law 113-291, designating Pershing Park as the site of the National World War I Memorial. The law gave authority to the World War I Centennial Commission to "enhance the General Pershing Commemorative Work by constructing on the land designated . . . as a World War I Memorial appropriate sculptural and other commemorative elements, including landscaping."⁵³

Previous National Register Eligibility Evaluations

Pershing Park has been evaluated for National Register significance on three previous occasions. Below is a summary of these findings:

- 1) The L'Enfant Plan of the City of Washington, D.C., National Register documentation (accepted by the NR on April 24, 1997) designated Pennsylvania Avenue and its associated parks and reservations, including Pershing Park, as contributing features of the nationally significant city plan. The nomination found that the plan satisfied National Register Criteria A, B, and C in the areas of community planning and development, landscape architecture, politics and government, and transportation. Pershing Park's significance rested with its origin as a public space in the McMillan Plan. The current design of the park itself fell outside the period of significance (1790-1942).
- 2) The Pennsylvania Avenue National Historic Site National Register expanded documentation (accepted by NR on October 12, 2007) determined that the Pershing Memorial contributed to the national significance of the historic district under Criterion C in the area of art as one of the avenue's memorials representing the artistic style of the period in which it was created. The other features of the park and its design by M. Paul Friedberg and Partners were deemed noncontributing because their construction took place outside the period of significance (1791-1962). The nomination determined that the work undertaken by the PADC was too recent to be evaluated for significance.
- 3) The Pennsylvania Avenue, NW – White House to the Capitol Cultural Landscape Inventory (DCSHPO concurrence on February 11, 2016) determined that Pershing Park contributes to the national significance of the avenue under National Register Criteria A (historical events) in the areas of community development/planning and government/politics and C (design) in the areas of art, architecture, and landscape architecture. The park satisfies these criteria as part of the work of the PADC and as part of a collection of landscape designs by significant architects and landscape architects of the late twentieth century. The CLI also determined that Pershing Park, again as part of a collection of works, meets Criterion Consideration G as an exceptionally important work of the last fifty years. The CLI recommended that the period of significance for the NPS-managed NHS be extended to 1996 to encompass the work of the PADC.

On February 11, 2016, the DCSHPO concurred with the following findings of the CLI:

- The Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Cultural Landscape retains integrity to its period of significance, 1791-1996.
- The cultural landscape is significant under Criteria A and C and Criterion Consideration G.

⁵³ 128 Stat. 3292.

- The areas of significance are community planning and development and landscape architecture.
- The current landscape reflects the redevelopment of Pennsylvania Avenue within the last fifty years under the PADC and its predecessors as a showcase of modern and post-modern design.
- The resources identified in the CLI retain integrity and contribute to the landscape's historic character. These resources included several individual features of Pershing Park: its spatial organization, the General John J. Pershing Memorial (including statue, walls, and bench), the Bex Eagle sculpture, features associated with Pennsylvania Avenue (including street trees, sidewalks, and views between the White House and the Capitol).⁵⁴

The DCSHPO also recommended that the relevance of the work of the PADC to the growing preservation movement in the United States be acknowledged in the site's significance in the area of planning and community development. The DCSHPO did not, however, encourage further evaluation or amendment of the 2007 National Register documentation as a result of the CLI findings because it did not believe that "sufficient perspective of time yet exists for addressing the eligibility of PADC's building program or of properties developed under its auspices."⁵⁵

Statement of Significance

The present document evaluates Pershing Park for National Register eligibility under Criteria A and C as an individual designed landscape. Because the DCSHPO, in its comments on the Pennsylvania Avenue CLI, discouraged further evaluation of the work of the PADC as part of the larger Pennsylvania Avenue Historic Site National Register documentation, the current DOE will not attempt to evaluate Pershing Park as an element of the historic district. The DOE also evaluates Pershing Park against National Register Criteria Considerations F and G, for works that are commemorative in intent and those that are less than fifty years old.

National Register Criteria

Criterion A

This determination of eligibility has concluded that Pershing Park is individually significant at a national level under Criterion A in the area of community planning and development as the site of the General John J. Pershing Memorial. Authorized by Congress in 1956, the memorial represents the nation's tribute to the commanding general of the American Expeditionary Force during World War I and the soldiers under his command. Congress authorized the memorial in 1966, the legislation calling for the commemorative purpose of the park to be maintained as the federal government considered how to redevelop Pennsylvania Avenue between the White House and the Capitol. The Pennsylvania Avenue Development Corporation retained this purpose as it moved forward from the conception of Pershing Park as a single-purpose space to the site of multiple activities. Like the memorials to military conflicts, presidents, and other leaders on the National Mall, Pershing Park is part of a pattern of federal legislation designating commemoration of nationally important events and individuals in the federal park land of Washington, D.C.

The memorial thereby also satisfies Criteria Consideration F for commemorative properties for its part in this tradition. (See below, under "Criteria Considerations.")

⁵⁴ David Maloney, District of Columbia Historic Preservation Officer, to Perry Wheelock, Associate Regional Director, National Park Service – National Capital Region, February 11, 2016, 1-3.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 2.

Criterion C

The DOE has also determined that Pershing Park is significant at the national and state levels under Criterion C in the area of landscape architecture as a signature designed landscape by M. Paul Friedberg, one of modern American landscape architecture's most accomplished urban designers. The park is an exceptional example of a landscape design of the modern period and of an approach to the design of public space as an integral part of the revitalization of an urban neighborhood in decline.

Friedberg's importance to new approaches to urban design was recognized in the 1960s. Lawrence Halprin, with Friedberg the modernist landscape architect perhaps most closely associated with developing innovative urban landscape forms, touted the success of Friedberg's design at the Jacob Riis Houses in New York City in 1968. The design and scholarly communities consistently recognize Friedberg's contribution to urban landscape architecture in their publications, emphasizing his creation of intergenerational public spaces that provide for the choice of individual play or interplay among citizens.

Friedberg, now retired and his body of work completed, was made a fellow of the American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA) in 1979 and was awarded a medal from the American Institute of Architects the following year. He received the ASLA Design Medal in 2004 and the ASLA Medal – the society's highest honor – in 2015. The Design Medal is awarded to an individual landscape architect for a body of exceptional design work over a period of at least ten years. The ASLA Medal is bestowed upon a landscape architect "whose lifetime achievements and contributions to the profession have had a unique and lasting impact on the welfare of the public and the environment." ASLA's public announcement of Friedberg's selection for the ASLA Medal cited three of his works: Peavey Plaza, Pershing Park, and the 67th Street Playground in New York City.⁵⁶ The National Register of Historic Places has already recognized Friedberg's importance in the field of landscape architecture by accepting the nomination for Peavey Plaza (1975), which identifies the national significance of this work.

Pershing Park is an outstanding example of Friedberg's approach to small city parks (referred to as park plazas), a type to which he is recognized to have made a significant contribution. Unlike other significant small urban parks of the period, such as Paley Park in New York, designed by Zion and Breen to be isolated from the surrounding city streets, Friedberg sought to bring the vitality of the city into his urban spaces. At Pershing Park, Friedberg directed residents and tourists into the park through the use of diagonal walks from three corners of the site that included views of important features such as the Pershing statue or the cascade fountain. Inside the park, he eschewed a dominant axis, creating a continuous flow of space that gives visitors a choice of activity, destination, and route, illustrating Friedberg's reliance on the principle of play as the foundation of social interaction in the public realm.⁵⁷

Urban critic and journalist William H. Whyte called Pershing Park "a virtual compendium" of Friedberg's ideas for the urban plaza, including changes in elevation within the park, continuous flow of space within areas that accommodate different functions, water as a unifying feature, modern rectilinear arrangement of features, and various modes of seating to facilitate a variety of interactions.⁵⁸ The park received awards from the American Society of Landscape Architects, the American Society of Nurserymen, and the Building Stone Institute.

Pershing Park is also significant at the national and state levels under Criterion C as the first modernist commemorative park on one of the important elements of the nationally significant Washington city plan. The park is located on Square 226 of the eighteenth-century, Baroque-inspired plan of Peter (Pierre)

⁵⁶ American Society of Landscape Architects, "Awards and Honors" and "News: American Society of Landscape Architects Announces 2015 Honors," ASLA website, <https://www.asla.org/default.aspx>, accessed July 7, 2016.

⁵⁷ "Timeline," MPFP website, <http://mpfp.com/timeline/index>, accessed March 7, 2016.

⁵⁸ William H. Whyte, "Paul Friedberg's Landscape Design," *Process Architecture* 82, 1989, 18. The Peavey Plaza National Register nomination notes that concrete retaining walls have replaced a sloped lawn and planting area, and poured concrete walks have been substituted in some locations for the original concrete pavers. See Charlene K. Roise and Elizabeth A. Gates, National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form: Peavey Plaza, Hess, Roise and Company, August 2012, 4.

Charles L'Enfant. Intended as a privately developed city block along Pennsylvania Avenue between the White House and the Capitol, the square became public space through the implementation of the Senate Park (McMillan) Plan of 1901-02, the work of a group of influential, Beaux-Arts-trained designers that included architects Daniel Burnham and Charles Follen McKim. Designated Reservation No. 617, the new public space increased the number of small parks along Pennsylvania Avenue in which important American leaders and events were commemorated. Friedberg was the first designer to successfully fuse modernist principles with the commemorative purpose of the avenue's park spaces, incorporating Wallace K. Harrison's Pershing Memorial into his design. Friedberg made the memorial one of the multiple nodes of activity within the public space, visible and accessible from anywhere in the park.⁵⁹

Included as character-defining features of Pershing Park are the contributions of other artists and designers, most importantly the Pershing Memorial by Harrison, with a statue of the general by Robert White. While not individually significant in themselves as designs, the memorial and statue contribute to the park's significance as elements of the program that Friedberg skillfully integrated into his concept of an omnidirectional space with nodes of distinct activities. Friedberg's designs for the park show that he considered carefully the relation of the memorial to the rest of his multi-level spatial organization, used the Pershing statue as a landmark to draw visitors into the space from the street, and integrated the memorial into the park's free flow of space.

Although not originally part of the park's plans, plantings designed by the Washington landscape architecture firm Oehme, van Sweden were added to Pershing Park in the same year that the park opened as part of a redesign of the overall planting scheme of the public spaces along Pennsylvania Avenue sponsored by PADC. Oehme, van Sweden's bold masses of colorful perennials, annuals, and grasses laid over Friedberg's functional hardscape design became an important part of the park's identity and popularity early in its history. Like the contributions of Harrison and White, the elements of the planting overlay (mainly ground covers, grasses, and perennials in Friedberg's planting boxes) are considered character-defining features of the park as part of the initial build-out of the park under the guidance of the PADC, although they are not individually significant in themselves.

Lorenzo E. Ghiglieri's eagle statue, purchased and donated by Brian Bex and known as the "Bex Eagle," was erected in the park during the period of significance (1982). The Pennsylvania Avenue, NW – White House to the Capitol CLI considers it a contributing structure. The eagle and its pedestal were not, however, designed for Pershing Park, have no commemorative association with Pershing, nor were they commissioned by PADC. Placed alongside the walk into the park from the corner of 15th Street and Pennsylvania Avenue, the Bex Eagle was not integrated into the omnidirectional spatial organization of Friedberg's design. The DOE therefore judges that the Bex Eagle is not a character-defining feature of the park under Criterion C.

Period of Significance

The period of significance for Pershing Park has been determined to cover the years between 1981 and 1983. This period encompasses the primary period of the park's build-out. It includes the completion of the park to Friedberg's design, including Wallace K. Harrison's design for the Pershing Memorial (1981), the overlay of the Oehme, van Sweden plantings onto that design (1981), and the 1983 installation of Robert White's statue to complete the Pershing Memorial. No significant additions or changes to the original design occurred after 1983. As consultants to the Pennsylvania Avenue Development Corporation, Oehme, van Sweden continued to be involved in the maintenance of the plantings in Pershing Park until PADC's dissolution. While some changes to these plantings likely took place, the overall design of the park did not change and its major vegetation continued to follow the 1981 plan.

⁵⁹ The design of what is now Freedom Plaza by Robert Venturi and George Patton was completed the year before Pershing Park opened, but Venturi and Patton followed postmodern design principles.

National Register Criterion Considerations

Criterion Consideration F

Pershing Park satisfies Criteria Consideration F for commemorative properties as part of the tradition of honoring significant individuals and events in the federal parkland of Washington, D.C. Like the memorials to Washington, Lincoln, Jefferson, Roosevelt, King, and others on the National Mall, the Pershing Memorial serves as the nation's primary monument to the general and to the individuals who served under his command. Designed by architect Wallace K. Harrison, with a statue of Pershing by Robert White, the Congressionally authorized memorial symbolizes the value placed upon the General Pershing by his country. The memorial is a reminder of Pershing's enduring contributions to American history. It derives its significance from its function as a national symbol, rather than from the individual it commemorates, and as part of a tradition of honoring important figures in American history with memorials in Washington, D.C.

Criterion Consideration G

Pershing Park satisfies Criterion Consideration G for properties less than fifty years old as an exceptional and highly intact example of M. Paul Friedberg's concept of the urban park plaza. Friedberg conceived of his park plazas as locations for multiple activities and playful freedom of choice on the part of the plazas' users through the use of modern materials and modern precepts of asymmetry, rectilinear geometrical forms, and continuously flowing space. Commentators have identified his approach to playgrounds and park plazas as unique among modernist designers. Substantial scholarship and professional and academic consensus has firmly established Friedberg's importance to the landscape architecture of the modern period, especially urban parks since the 1960s, providing sufficient perspective by which to judge his work. A review of writings on Pershing Park identifies it as a significant design in Friedberg's body of work. The park also retains a greater degree of integrity to its period of significance than Friedberg's Peavey Plaza, which has been listed on the National Register of Historic Places. As such, Pershing Park is an exceptionally important example of this urban form of public space and of Friedberg's work.

Integrity

Pershing Park demonstrates a high degree of integrity in location, design, and setting. The park remains in its original location and setting, the trapezoidal space bounded by Pennsylvania Avenue, 14th Street, and 15th Street in the northwest quadrant of Washington, D.C. Pennsylvania Avenue remains an important circulation route in downtown Washington, lined on the south by the Classical Revival office buildings of the Federal Triangle and on the north by a combination of historic and more recent commercial buildings. As was true when Pershing Park opened, the Willard Hotel stands opposite the park on the north, Freedom Plaza is across 14th Street on the east, the Commerce Building stands to the south, and Sherman Plaza is located across 15th Street in President's Park to the west. Paul Friedberg's design of the park's hardscape and his structural plantings and English ivy remain in place, with very little loss of original elements. Wallace K. Harrison's design for the Pershing Memorial, with Robert White's statue of the general, also remains in its original location, with only the loss of a copper beech tree from the original plan.

Slightly greater alterations have taken place in the flowers and ground covers planned by Friedberg and the grasses and perennial plantings of the Oehme, van Sweden design. However, the most stable elements of the planting design – the straight rows of honey locusts over lawn and willow oaks in square planters (with English ivy) and rising from paving, the multi-trunked crape myrtles and birches surrounded by grasses and flowers – continue to convey the original design intent and therefore possess high integrity.

The materials and workmanship possess a moderate to high degree of integrity. As has been mentioned, the majority of the original built elements of the designs of Friedberg and Harrison's design remain in place. The polished, honed, or rough-cut granite, Belgian block pavers, and diagonally set brick tiles still express their original workmanship. Original plant materials, including trees, lawn, grasses, and flowers,

are also present. The lack of maintenance, however, has eroded the materials and workmanship to a slightly greater degree than the park's design, location, and setting. Water, one of the most important aspects of Friedberg's design, is currently absent from the park, and the planting beds along the steps from the street are also gone. Other details of the park's built form, including metal benches around the willow oaks, the movable furniture, and picnic tables have also been removed, affecting the integrity of the park's original materials and the expression of the workmanship in those features.

The park's feeling and association are affected by the absence of water flowing from the cascade fountain into the pool basin, the closure of the concessions kiosk and ice rink, and deferred maintenance. In nice weather, when the remaining trees, flowers, and grasses are in bloom, Pershing Park continues to be a pleasant location for office workers from nearby buildings or tourists strolling the avenue. The absence of water flowing from the cascade fountain into the pool basin, the closure of the concessions kiosk, the loose or insensitively patched paving, and the less well-maintained plantings all affect the feeling and association of the park as a vibrant, colorful, attractive place to visit, its perception during in the first twenty-five years of its existence. Pershing Park therefore demonstrates a low to moderate degree of integrity in these areas.

Existing Character-Defining Features

Spatial Organization

- Design with the sunken pool at the center of the park, with earthen berms on three sides, elevated walks on the south and west, Pershing Memorial at the southeast corner
- Entrance to the park from the four corners of the site and from the length of Pennsylvania Avenue
- Separation of the Pershing Memorial from the remainder of the park through the use of walls on the south and east and steps on the north and west
- Free flow of space between the activity zones

Views and Vistas

- Omnidirectional views among the different levels of the park and among the character-defining features (including pool, cascade fountain, Pershing Memorial, kiosk, seating areas, dining area, etc.)

Built Features

- Diagonally laid, brown terra-cotta pavers along Pennsylvania Avenue and around the northeast bosque of trees
- Square granite flooring of memorial plaza
- Etched granite walls of the Pershing Memorial
- Belgian block paving in fish-scale pattern at seating area around pool
- Diagonally laid, brown terra-cotta pavers with granite edging creating steps, ramp, and elevated walks
- Alcoves along elevated walks, including paving, central brick planter, semicircular steel seating on brick bases
- Granite planters in seating areas and along pool
- Granite steps creating amphitheater seating around pool
- Granite cascade pool structure
- Circular metal and plastic kiosk on granite base

Water Features

- Cascade fountain
- Pool basin

Vegetation

- Rows of honey locust trees over lawn on east, south, and west berms
- Willow oaks above paving at northeast corner
- Willow oaks in planters with English ivy ground cover on north side of pool
- Multi-trunked crape myrtle trees in alcoves along elevated walks with ground cover at bases and grasses surrounding alcoves
- Multi-trunked crape myrtle and birch trees with ground cover at bases
- Native and naturalized grasses and perennial flowering plants.

Small-Scale Features

- Robert W. White statue of Pershing
- Friedberg-designed light fixtures along steps into park from street, along elevated walks inside the park, and at Pershing Memorial
- PADC lighting on Pennsylvania Avenue
- Drinking fountain
- Granite trash can enclosures

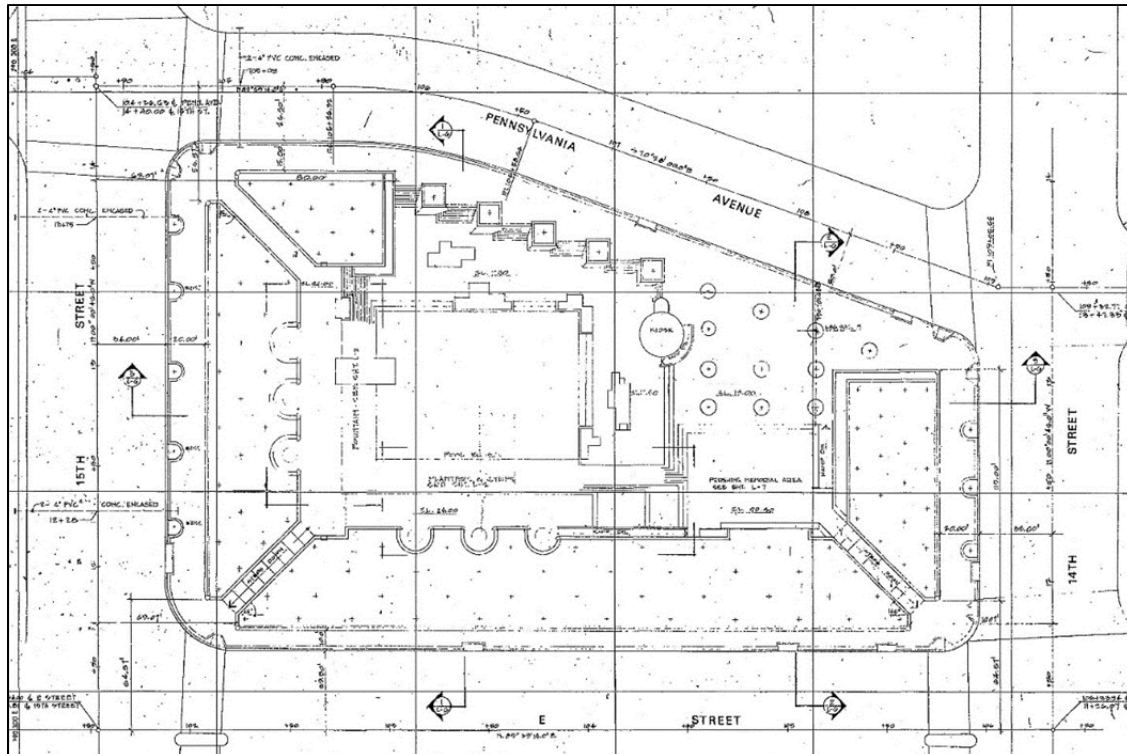


Figure 4. The trapezoidal shape of Pershing Park was created by the diagonal of Pennsylvania Avenue crossing through the city street grid. (Pennsylvania Avenue Development Corporation, “West Project of the Western Sector: Pershing Park,” drawing L-1, As Built, original drawing revised January 14, 1980, as-built drawing prepared September 1984)



Figure 5. Earthen berms, planted with honey locust trees and turf, buffer Pershing Park from surrounding streets. Steps at the corners, lit by brown-painted metal fixtures, provide access. (Robinson & Associates, 2016)



Figure 6. The circular, domed concessions kiosk is set five steps lower than the Pershing Memorial. (Robinson & Associates, 2016)



Figure 7. Adjacent to the kiosk, concrete table-bench units are located on the seating area, paved in Belgian blocks in a fish-scale pattern. (Robinson & Associates, 2016)



Figure 8. The original granite water fountain designed by Friedberg is located on the south side of the seating area east of the pool. (Robinson & Associates, 2016)



Figure 9. The walk at the top of the berm on the south (Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, South), with planters on the north and seating alcoves on the south. (Robinson & Associates, 2016)



Figure 10. The seating alcoves along the elevated walks consist of semicircles of metal seating around a planter of crepe myrtle and grass. (Robinson & Associates, 2016)



Figure 11. The street-level walk along Pennsylvania Avenue includes standard PADC paving, lighting, and willow oak trees. (Robinson & Associates, 2016)

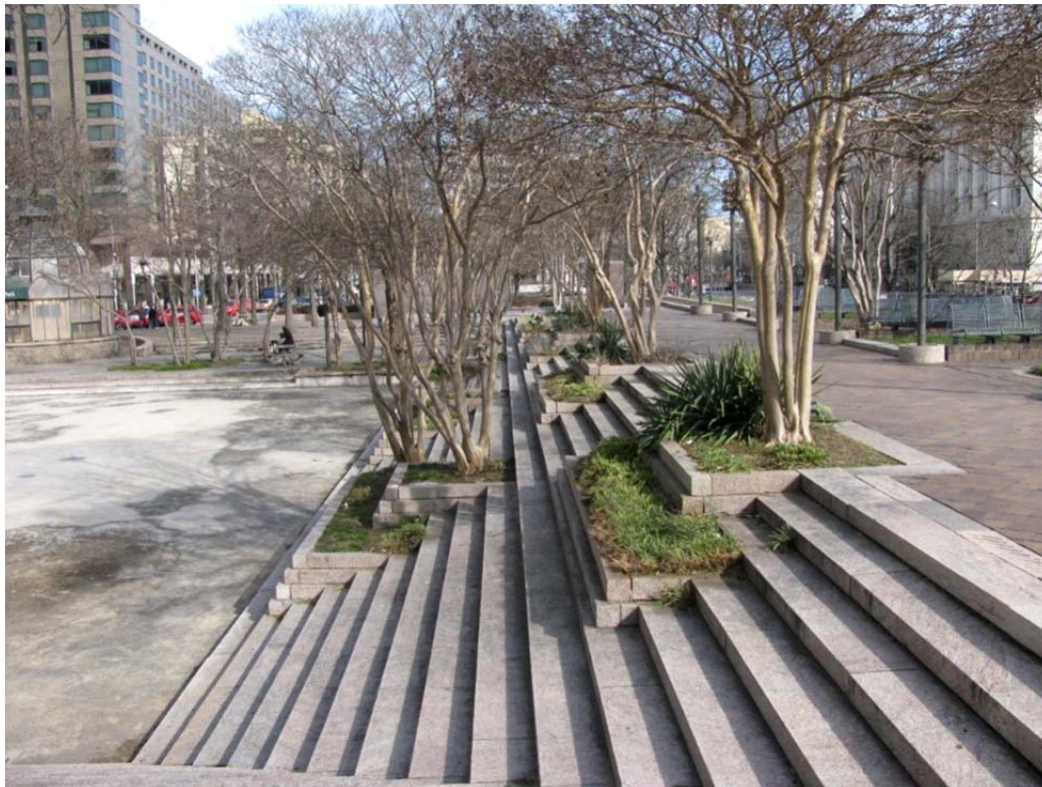


Figure 12. Planters in the stepped areas between the elevated walks and the pool contain crape myrtle, grasses, and perennials. (Robinson & Associates, 2016)

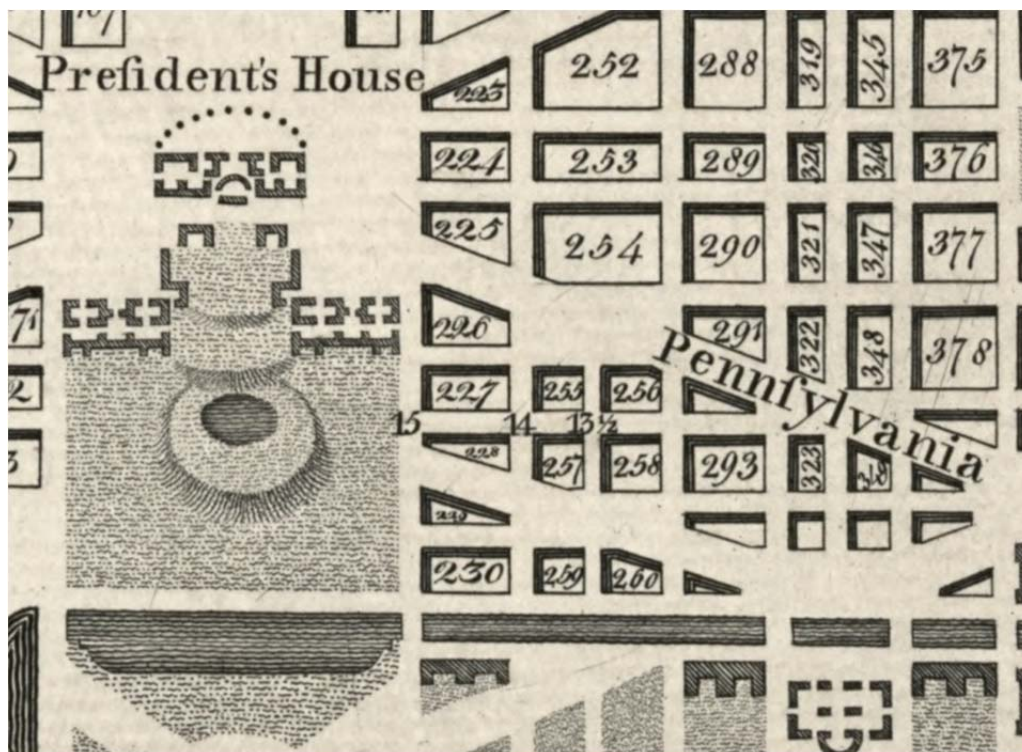


Figure 13. Andrew Ellicott's 1792 plan of Washington identified the site of Pershing Park as Square 226, to be divided into lots and sold for private development. (Library of Congress)

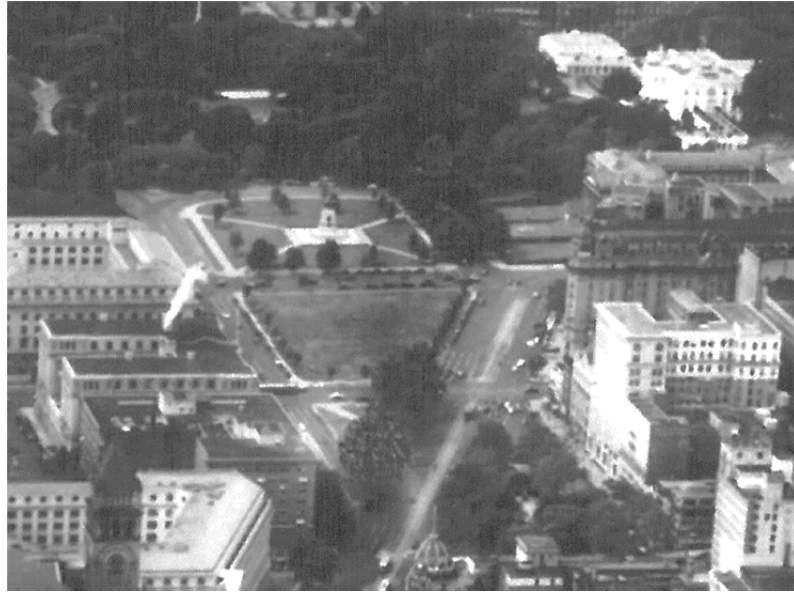


Figure 14. By 1939, the remainder of Square 226 (center) was converted into a small park, planted with grass and bordered by trees. (Thomas E. Luebke, editor, *Civic Art: A Centennial History of the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts*, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Commission of Fine Arts, 2013, 129)

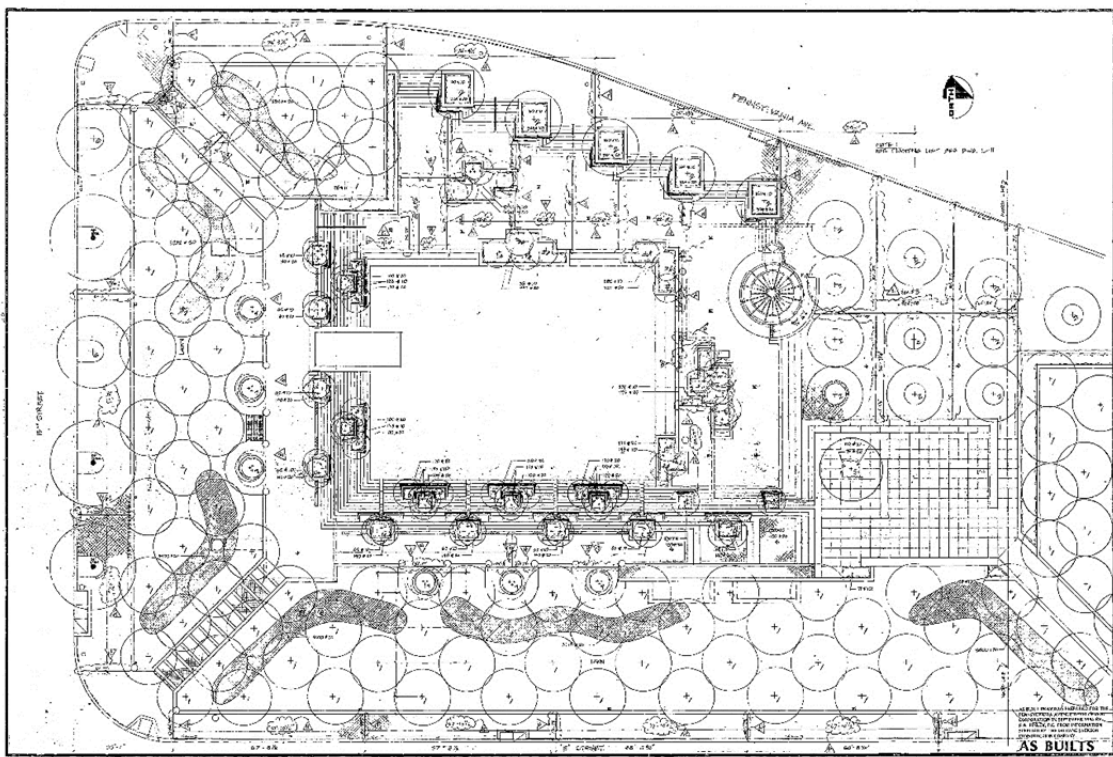


Figure 15. Paul Friedberg's design for Pershing Park was approved on December 11, 1979. This drawing shows the park as completed in 1981. (Pennsylvania Avenue Development Corporation, "West Project of the Western Sector: Pershing Park," drawing L-10, As Built, original drawing revised September 29, 1980; as-built drawing prepared September 1984)

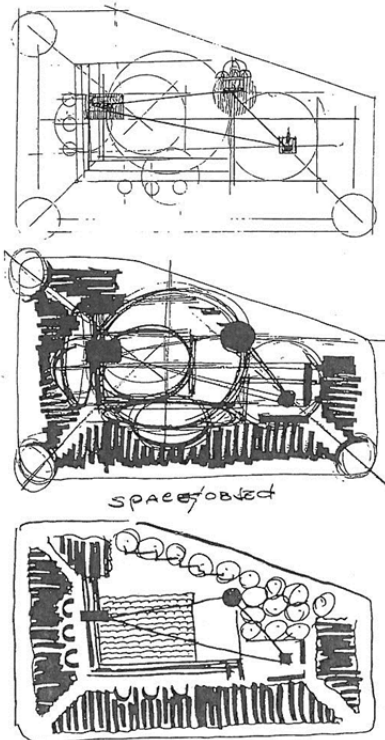


Figure 16. Friedberg sketched the relationships among the principal vertical features of Pershing Park (the Pershing statue, the kiosk, and the fountain) in order to integrate them into his design. ("Pershing Park," *Process Architecture* 82, 1989, 77)



Figure 17. This early photograph shows Pershing Park as built, including Friedberg's original planting scheme. (MPFP: Landscape Architecture and Urban Design website, http://mpfp.com/projects/urban_spaces/pershing_plaza/index.shtml)



Figure 18. A copper beech tree stood north of the statue of General Pershing in the Pershing Memorial when the park opened. (Library of Congress, Historic American Buildings Survey, "Pershing Park (Reservation No. 617, City Square no. 226)," HABS no. DC-695, n.d.)



Figure 19. The concessions kiosk occupied a transitional point between the Pershing Memorial, a group of willow oak trees, and seating around the pool. (MPFP: Landscape Architecture and Urban Design website, http://mpfp.com/projects/urban_spaces/pershing_plaza/index.shtml)

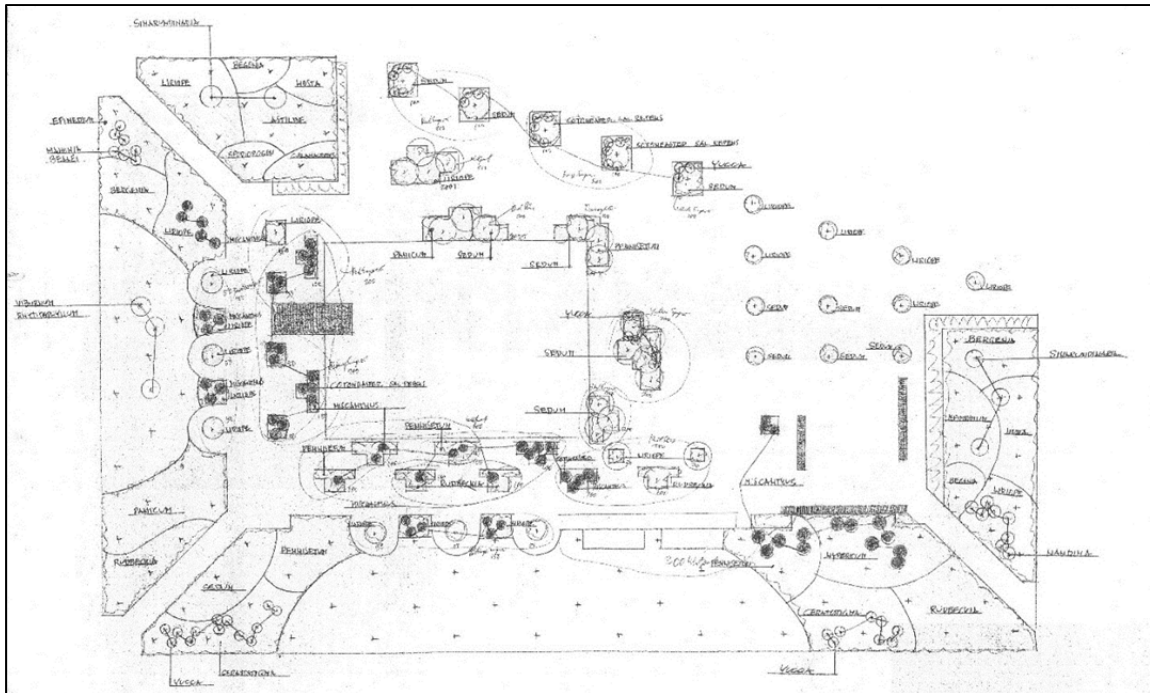


Figure 20. Oehme van Sweden's planting plan for Pershing Park added grasses and perennials near the pool and expanded planting beds along the steps to the park. (Oehme van Sweden, "Pershing Square," drawing no. 1, October 15, 1981, Oehme van Sweden and Associates, Washington, D.C.)



Figure 21. Water plants, ornamental grasses, and perennials created lush spaces within the rectilinear framework of Friedberg's design. (Volkmar K. Wentzel, courtesy of Oehme van Sweden and Associates, Washington, D.C., n.d.)



Figure 22. Oehme van Sweden's plantings helped shape the park's interior spaces. (Volkmar K. Wentzel, courtesy of Oehme van Sweden and Associates, Washington, D.C., n.d.)



Figure 23 – The painterly effects of the Oehme van Sweden plantings caused Friedberg to reconsider his formerly “structural” use of vegetation. (Volkmar K. Wentzel, courtesy of Oehme van Sweden and Associates, Washington, D.C., n.d.)

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PREPARER'S DETERMINATION

Eligibility Recommended ☒

Eligibility Not Recommended ☐

Applicable National Register Criteria:

Applicable Considerations:

A ☒ B ☐ C ☒ D ☐

A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☒ G ☒

Prepared By: Tim Kerr, Senior Architectural Historian
Robins & Associates, Inc.; and
Laura Knott, Historical Landscape Architect
Commonwealth Heritage Group, Inc.

Date: July 14, 2016

DC SHPO REVIEW AND COMMENTS

Concurs with Recommendation ☒

Does Not Concur with Recommendation ☐

The DC SHPO concurs that Pershing Park is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places as described above.



David Maloney
District of Columbia State Historic Preservation Officer

Date: July 25, 2016

DC Government Project/Permit Project Log Number: 16-0524