

# U.S. COMMISSION OF FINE ARTS

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27 October 2016

Dear Mr. Vogel:

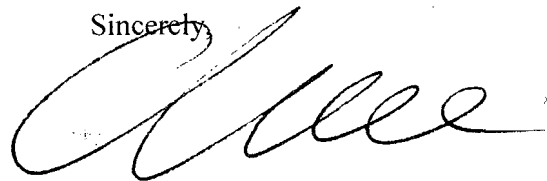
In its meeting of 20 October, the Commission of Fine Arts reviewed a concept submission for the new National World War I Memorial proposed for Pershing Park, a nationally significant landscape located on Pennsylvania Avenue between 14th and 15th Streets, NW. The Commission did not take an action and provided the following comments.

Expressing support for the program to create this national memorial within Pershing Park, the Commission members identified a central ambiguity in the proposal: whether the project is an enhancement of the historic park design by M. Paul Friedberg, or a more drastic proposal that would demolish the existing landscape and rebuild it entirely in a manner reminiscent of the original design. They emphasized that this ambiguity may point to a fundamental dilemma between the values of preservation and of reconceptualization, and that the apparent contradiction of goals articulated in the presentation made it difficult to understand the extent of the proposed changes.

While they found many of the plan's axial adjustments to be generally reasonable, they expressed concern that the entire landscape is proposed to be topographically flattened in service of improved accessibility and security, which may already be adequate. They noted that the sectional shaping of the site is the essential concept of Friedberg's design, whereas the proposed park could compromise this design and the visitor experience with lowered berms and less spatial definition. They asked for clarification of the design, requesting side-by-side comparisons of existing and proposed conditions—particularly in section and perspective views—of the elements of the park, including the berms, the diagonal approach walks, the central water element, and the treatment of the north side of the site along Pennsylvania Avenue.

The Commission looks forward to further review of this important civic and commemorative work in a revised concept submission that includes the conceptual and documentary clarification necessary to evaluate its design. As always, the staff is available to assist you.

Sincerely,



Thomas E. Luebke, FAIA  
Secretary

Robert Vogel, Regional Director  
National Park Service, National Capital Region  
1100 Ohio Drive, SW  
Washington, DC 20242

cc: Edwin L. Fountain, U.S. World War I Centennial Commission  
Joseph Weishaar  
Phoebe Lickwar, FORGE Landscape Architecture