



## **National World War I Memorial**

U.S. World War I Centennial Commission  
UU+ Studio | Forge Landscape Architecture  
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**National Capital Planning Commission**  
**Submission September 30, 2016**

## Introduction

Of the four major wars of the 20th century, World War I alone has no national memorial in the nation's capital. More American servicemen were lost in WWI than in the Korean and Vietnam wars combined, with 116,516 lost and 200,000 more wounded. In December 2014, President Obama signed legislation authorizing the U.S. World War I Centennial Commission to establish a new memorial. Section 3091 of the National Defense Authorization Act of 2015 (Pub. L. 113-291) designates Pershing Park in the District of Columbia, an existing memorial to General John J. Pershing, commander of American forces in World War I, as a national World War I memorial, and authorizes the Centennial Commission to further honor American servicemen and women in World War I by redeveloping Pershing Park “with appropriate sculptural and other commemorative elements, including landscaping.”

The national World War I Memorial will serve a dual function, as a space of commemoration and as an urban park situated within the Pennsylvania Avenue National Historic Site. The memorial design must balance these two functions with great sensitivity, providing an expanded commemorative identity worthy of a National WWI Memorial while at the same time honoring the historic significance of the park and its greater context. The design must provide an inclusive and sustainable vision that improves the existing park while preserving its key design features.

Pershing Park is a 1.8 acre parcel bounded by Pennsylvania Avenue on the north and south, 15th Street NW on the west and 14th Street NW on the east. The park was designed by M. Paul Friedberg and Partners in 1979-80 and constructed by the Pennsylvania Avenue Development Corporation as part of a congressionally authorized effort to rehabilitate the Avenue. In the southeast corner of the site sits a memorial to General John J. Pershing, designed by architect Wallace K. Harrison. Landscape architects Oehme van Sweden redesigned the park planting shortly after the park was constructed in 1981, supplementing and changing portions of the original Friedberg design.

While Pershing Park was a successful urban park in its early days, its central water feature is no longer used or maintained as it was originally intended. The concession gazebo has been abandoned. The high berms surrounding the park on 14th, 15th, and Pennsylvania Avenue south present a safety concern, magnifying the feeling of isolation in the sunken concrete center. Although creating a feeling of oasis, as was intended, the berms also make the park largely invisible to passersby. On the interior of the park, a stepped condition results in circuitous or inaccessible routes; the only accessible points of entry are on the northwest corner and mid-block along Pennsylvania Avenue north.

Since the park opened in 1981, its context has changed significantly. Increasingly, more people are living in the district, and attitudes towards the park's purpose and need have shifted accordingly. More than a place for office workers during business hours, Pershing Park must accommodate a varied constituency day and night. Visibility and accessibility concerns must be met to make the space safe and inclusive. The design must support a vibrant street life in accordance with ongoing efforts to strengthen the identity and pedestrian use of Pennsylvania Avenue. And lastly, the expanded commemorative function of the park necessitates an integration of memorial and park in a design that is enduring and timeless.

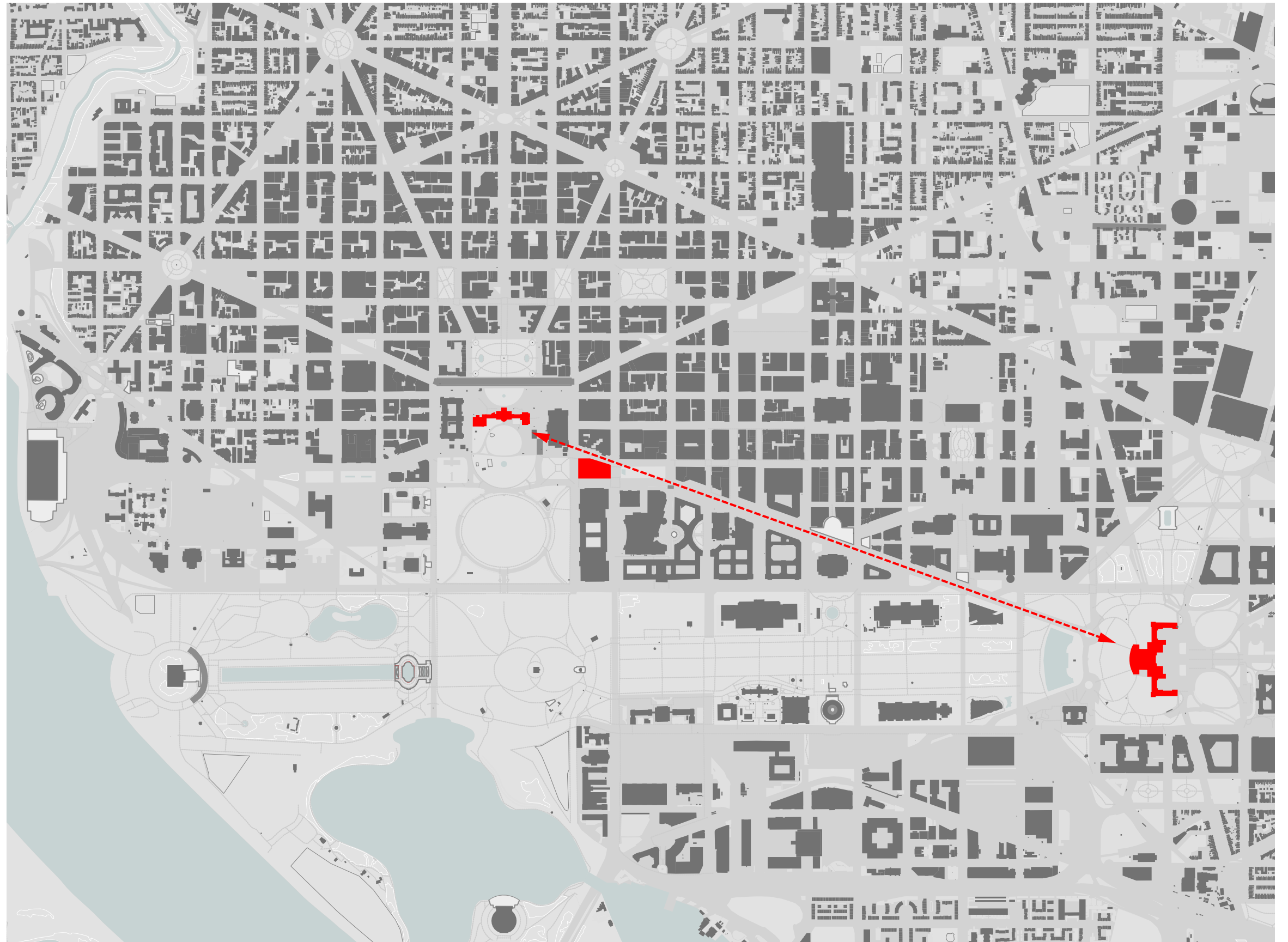
## Site Context

Pershing Park is the western most public space along Pennsylvania Avenue between the White House and the Capitol, and as such, it plays a significant role in the symbolic and physical connection between the executive and legislative branches of government originally conceived by Pierre L'Enfant in 1791.

At the junction between the monumental core to the south and west and the residential and commercial life of Washington D.C. to the north and east, Pershing Park needs to function as both a memorial and a park, contributing to the family of commemorative elements and spaces of Pennsylvania Avenue, while supporting a vibrant economy and culture.

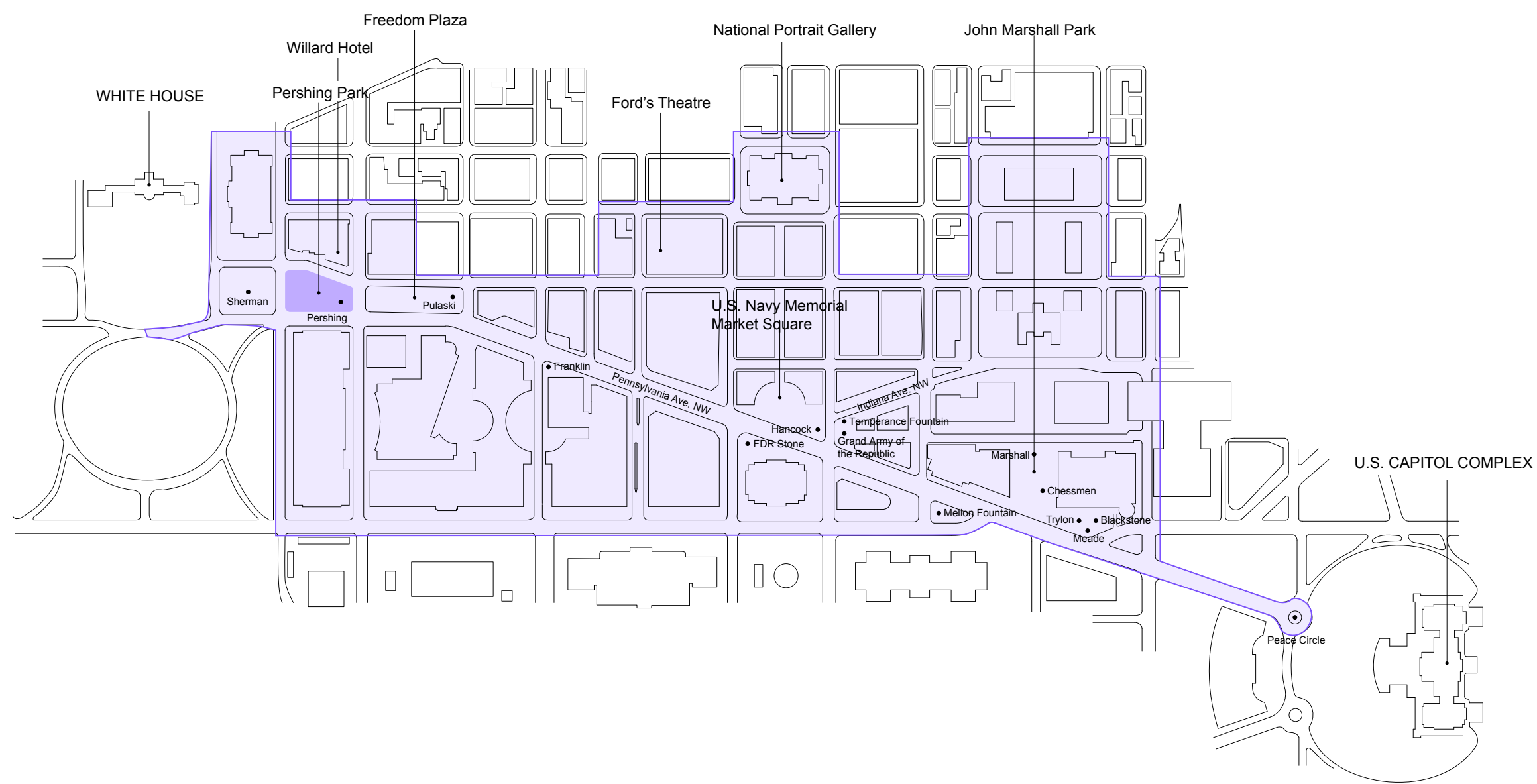
Achieving continuity along the Avenue, maintaining vistas and consistent quality design has been an ongoing endeavor. In 1966, Congress recognized the need to coordinate the design of Pershing Park with efforts to rehabilitate Pennsylvania Avenue, amending the authorization of the Pershing Memorial. The Pennsylvania Avenue Development Corporation (PADC), released *The Pennsylvania Avenue Plan* in 1974, providing a framework that ultimately led to the design of a streetscape plan by Sasaki Associates and the redesign of Pershing Park.

The design of the WWI Memorial honors the need for continuity along the Avenue and accentuates vistas of the Capitol through its streetscape strategy, while expanding the pedestrian and park experience along the northern edge. As an important public urban space within the Pennsylvania Avenue National Historic Site, the Memorial supports ongoing efforts to revitalize the public realm.



# Pennsylvania Avenue NHS

The Pershing Memorial is one of many contributing memorials, monuments, and commemorative sculptures within the Pennsylvania Avenue National Historic Site. Pershing Park, a non-contributing element, is one of many public spaces that must be considered in the context of the Avenue's historically significant buildings, commemorative elements, and commercial and residential uses.

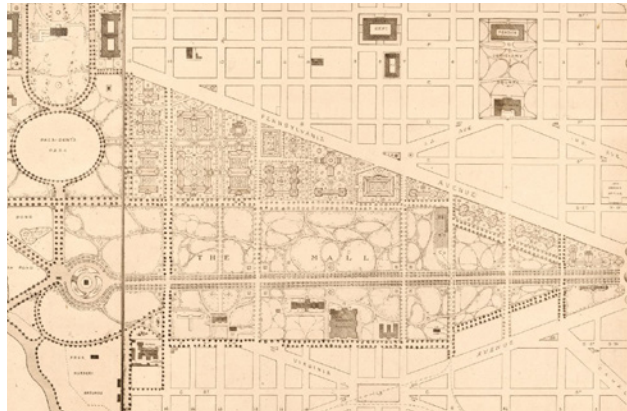


# Pennsylvania Avenue Viewshed

The existing Pershing Park street trees along Pennsylvania Avenue North are aligned with trees along the south side of the Avenue east of Freedom Plaza, thereby maintaining the Pennsylvania Avenue viewshed and Capitol vista. At their current location, the line of willow oak street trees are positioned 22' from the curb. The future design should seek to maintain the viewshed and address the need for continuity along the Avenue, while providing a safe and pleasant pedestrian experience.



# Pershing Park Through Time



Pershing Park has changed radically through time, from the 1791 L'Enfant Plan to the present day.

Designated as Square 226 in Andrew Ellicott's 1792 plan, the site was developed and fully built out during the years following the Civil War. Cleared by the federal government as a setting for the Commerce Department building, the site was acquired by the National Park Service in 1938. In 1942 a temporary building was erected, only to be demolished in 1955.

In 1957, Square 226 was approved by the NCPD as the site for a memorial to General John J. Pershing. The ABMC, authorized by Public Law 84-461, chose architect Wallace K. Harrison as the memorial designer. The CFA approved Harrison's design in 1959, but it was delayed when President John F. Kennedy focused on the rehabilitation of Pennsylvania Avenue. In the late 1960's, Square 226 was planted with annuals and bulbs as part of the beautification movement led by First Lady Lady Bird Johnson.

In 1974 the PADC proposed a redesigned Pershing Park as part of planned improvements to Pennsylvania Avenue, recognizing the critical relationship of public urban space to the vitality of the Avenue.



1865 Lincoln Funeral



1902



1910



1913



1917 Wilson Inauguration



1920



1925



1953 Eisenhower Inauguration



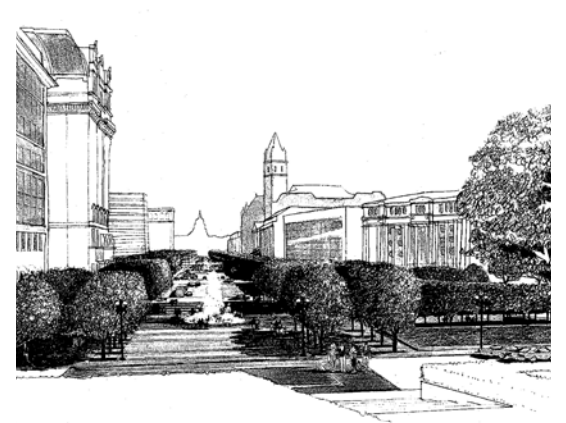
1958



1963 Kennedy Funeral



1966



1974 PADC Rendering

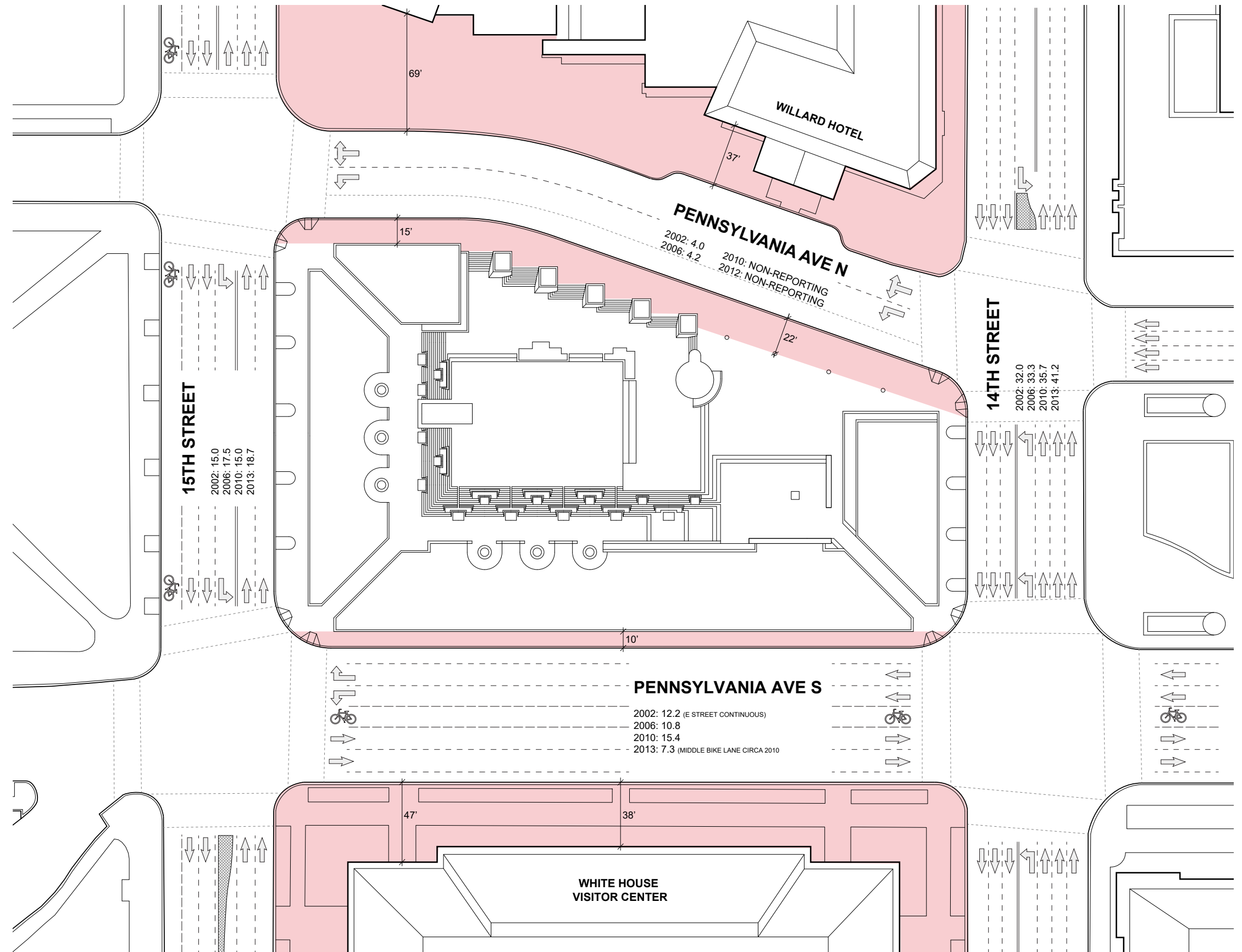
## Streets and Sidewalks

The sidewalk areas of the existing Pershing Park are significantly narrower than the sidewalks of adjacent parcels to the north and south, limiting the potential for activating the life of the street.

The sidewalk width in front of the Willard Hotel to the north ranges from 37' to 69'. The sidewalk width in front of the White House Visitor's Center is 38' to 47'. Compared to these generous pedestrian spaces, the existing Pershing Park sidewalk is 15'-22' on the north and only 10' on the south.

Traffic on Pennsylvania Avenue North and South is considerably less than traffic on 14th Street and 15th Street, making the north and south edges of Pershing Park potentially the most inviting to pedestrians.

Enhancement of the Pershing Park sidewalks north and south will aid in connecting the park to its urban context, engaging the vitality of the city in a way that complements Paul Friedberg's original intent.



## Existing Site Conditions

Pershing Park, designed by landscape architect M. Paul Friedberg, was opened to the public in 1981.

Today Pershing Park is in need of rehabilitation. Failed materials and systems, changes in the surrounding context, and maintenance difficulties have resulted in closure of the park's major operable features.

The sense of enclosure provided by the earthen berms, valued at the time of construction, has created safety and access concerns. The existing topography of the park, meant to shield people from the noise and energy of the surrounding urban environment, is neither inclusive, nor inviting to approaching pedestrians.

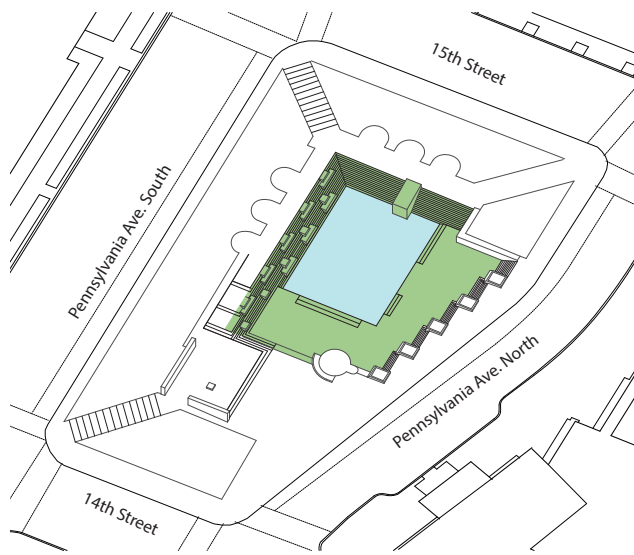
The challenges faced by the existing park will need to be surpassed for the site to function suitably as a National WWI Memorial. The following pages describe these issues in greater detail:

- Central Oasis Water Feature
- Accessibility
- Visibility
- Pershing Memorial



Pershing Park 2015

## Central Oasis



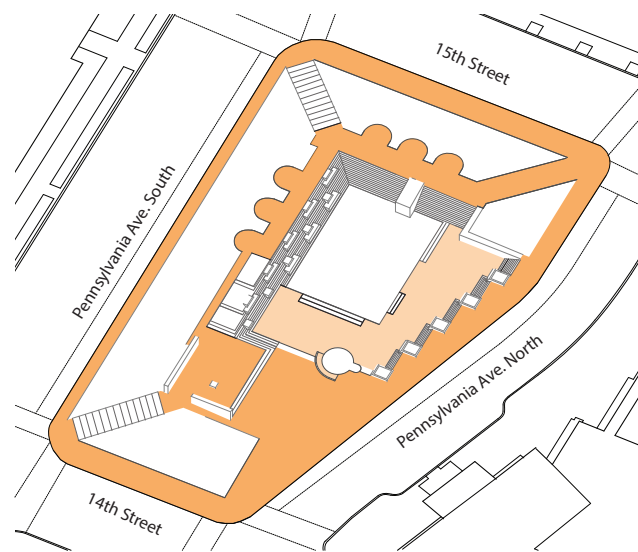
Pershing Park is organized around a large 7,575SF central water feature that served as an urban oasis, sheltered from the noise and traffic of the surrounding streets. Due to structural issues and failure of plumbing and electrical systems, the water feature has been drained since 2006-2007. As designed, the park no longer functions with the basin empty.

The concessions kiosk, underground restrooms, fountain, and ice rink are no longer in use because of failed HVAC and other systems. An alternative location for ice skating has since opened at the nearby NGA Outdoor Sculpture Garden, and another is planned for Constitution Gardens.

In considering the future design of the Memorial, there is an opportunity to retain the idea of the oasis and reintroduce the water feature in a sustainable form, maintaining a sense of enclosure with a softened topography, opening up the park to make it safer and more accessible.



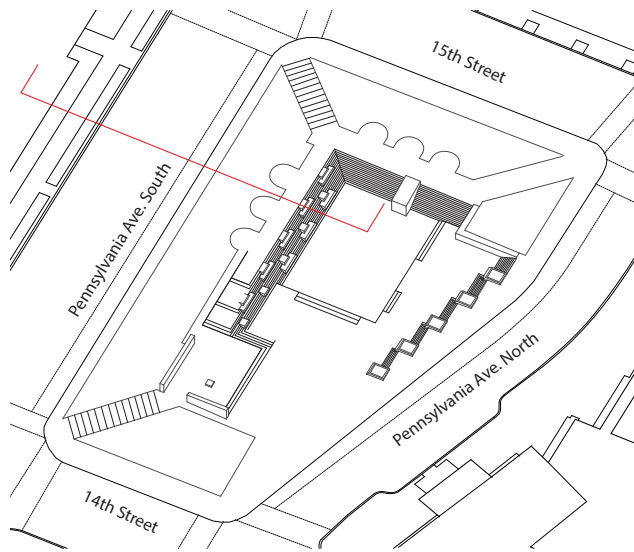
## Accessibility



Accessibility is constrained in Pershing Park by stairs and stepped platforms. Where ramps are provided they require a circuitous route or passage along the margins. Accessible entry into the park can be gained only in two places, at the northwest corner and along Pennsylvania Avenue north of the Pershing statue.



## Visibility



Earthen berms planted with honeylocust groves surround the park on the south, east, and west sides. These berms provide a sense of enclosure inside the park, sheltering people from the noise of city streets, but their excessive height makes the park invisible from the street and creates safety concerns. By lowering the berms, we can enhance visibility into the park while maintaining a sense of enclosure.

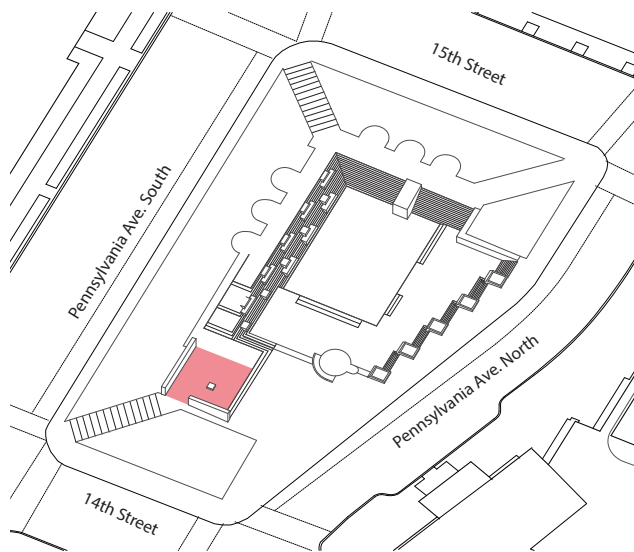


N/S Section: Limited Visibility into the Park



View from Pennsylvania Avenue South, looking northeast

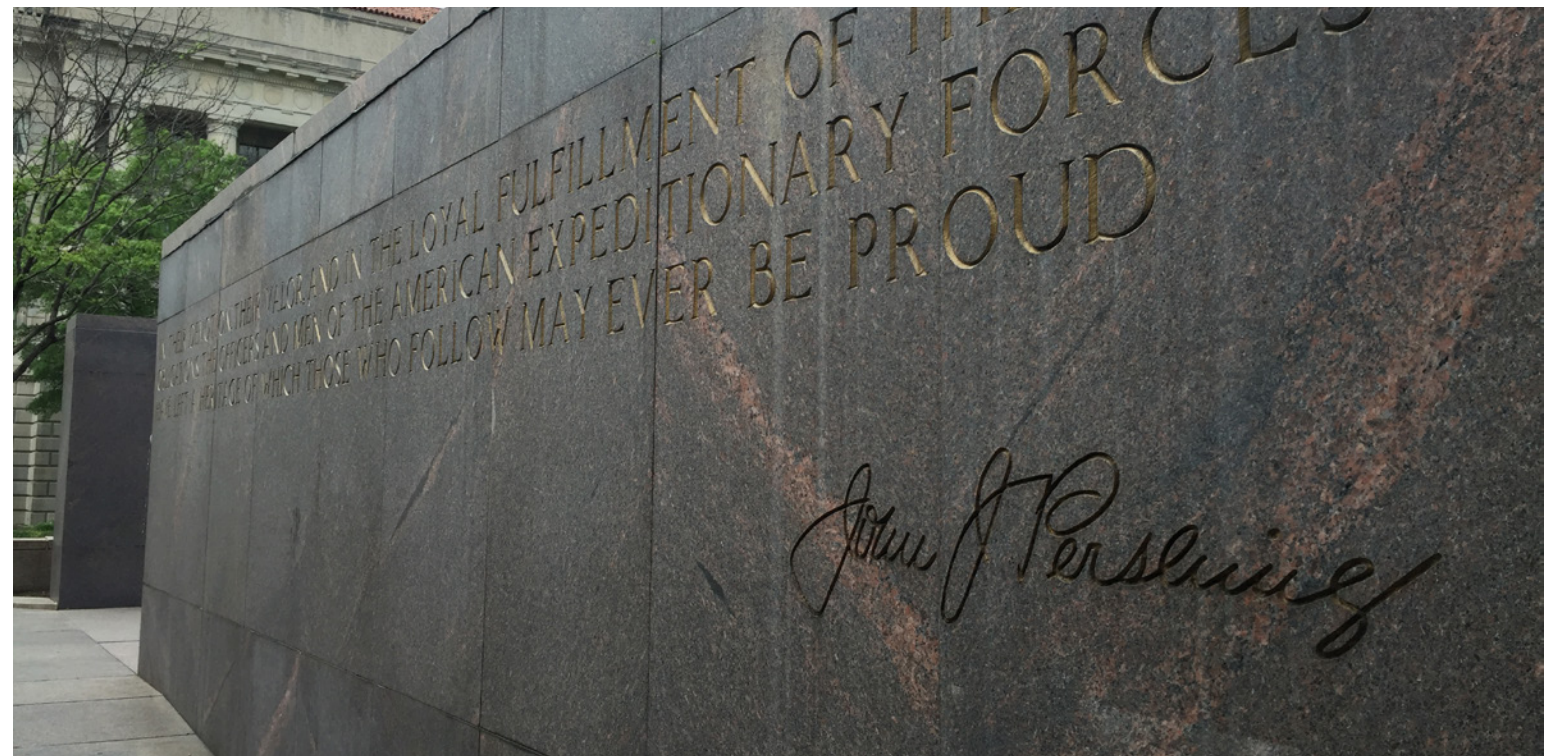
## Pershing Memorial



In the southwest corner of the park, occupying an area of approximately 3,400SF, sits the Memorial to General John J. Pershing and officers and men in the American Expeditionary Forces. The Memorial was designed by architect Wallace K. Harrison.

A statue of General Pershing is framed by two granite walls inscribed with text and maps describing his actions in World War I. The walls and statue form a memorial precinct, provide an important commemorative function, and are a contributing element within the Pennsylvania Avenue National Historic Site.

The Pershing Memorial does not commemorate the greater sacrifice of all servicemen and women in the war, by the standards of the national war memorials subsequently built in Washington D.C. Furthermore, the memorial is not well integrated into the site, and the inscriptions on the walls lack legibility. The future design should seek to relate the Pershing Memorial to additional commemorative elements and to the park as a whole.



## WWI Memorial Competition

The primary objective of the WWI Memorial Competition was to generate designs that would honor the service of American forces in World War I through the transformation of a site that is primarily a park with a small memorial situated within it, to a site that serves primarily as a national WWI Memorial within a well-functioning urban park. Designers were asked to create a distinct sense of place that would revitalize the park and connect to the larger network of memorials and monuments of the National Mall, while strengthening the park's relationship to the urban context. The competition also asked designers to consider the integration of the existing Pershing Memorial and physical park elements with new commemorative features, to balance a sense of enclosure with openness and visibility, and to develop a design that is timeless and meaningful for future generations.

The World War I Centennial Commission sponsored an open, two stage international design competition. Of the more than 350 entries received, five were chosen to participate in the second stage by an independent jury of experts in landscape architecture, planning, architecture, and history fields. The Design Oversight Committee, consisting of representatives from the World War I Centennial Commission, the National Parks Service, National Capital Planning Commission, Commission of Fine Arts, General Services Administration, D.C. Historic Preservation Office, and other stakeholders, met with each of the five finalists on two separate occasions. On January 6th, 2016, the finalists presented their designs to the Competition Jury.

The Competition Jury unanimously chose the design concept submittal *The Weight of Sacrifice*, recommending to the WWI Centennial Commission that the design team be selected to continue work to make the Memorial a reality:

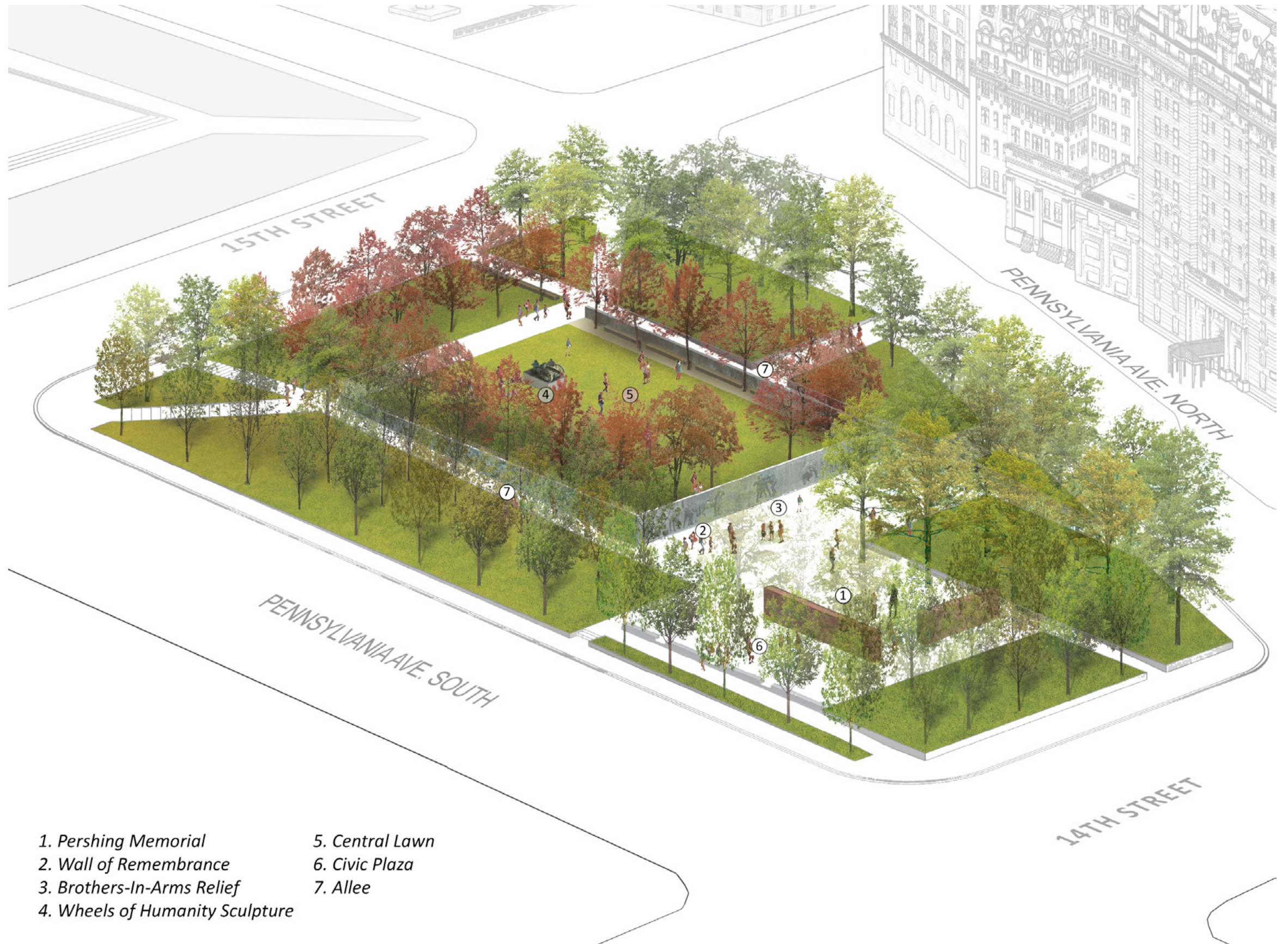
"The Weight of Sacrifice comes closest to meeting all National World War I Memorial goals. Properly executed, this design concept promises to remind and inspire visitors for generations to come about American involvement and sacrifice in World War I. And it promises as well to become a popular, well-functioning, animated urban park in the heart of the nation's capital."

## The Weight of Sacrifice

The winning competition entry, *The Weight of Sacrifice*, proposed the allegorical idea that public space and public freedom are hard won through the great sacrifices of countless individuals in the pursuit of liberty. The raised figurative walls visually expressed a narrative of the sacrificial cost of war, while also supporting a literal manifestation of freedoms enjoyed in this country: the open park space above. The urban design intent was to create a new formal link along Pennsylvania Avenue which ties together the memorial to General Sherman on the West and Freedom Plaza on the East. This was achieved by lowering the visual barriers surrounding the existing Pershing Park and reinforcing dominant axes that come from the adjacent context.

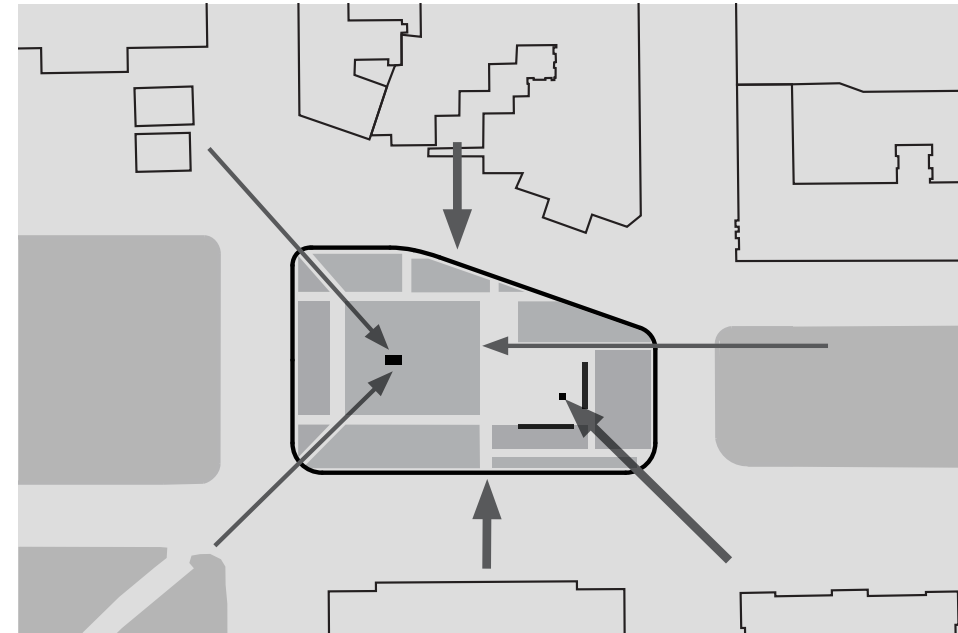
The raised form in the center of the site honored the veterans of the First World War by combining figurative sculpture and personal narratives of servicemen and women in a single formal expression. The integration of a park around and atop the memorial alluded to the idea that public space and personal freedom are only available through the sacrifice of our soldiers. Above all, the memorial sculptures and park design stressed the glorification of humanity and enduring spirit over the glorification of war.

These themes were expressed through three sources: relief sculpture, quotations of soldiers, and a freestanding sculpture. The 81' long figurative relief sculpture, entitled "The Wall of Remembrance," was a solemn tribute to the resilience of human bonds against the inexorable tide of war. The bronze medium used throughout represented the timeless endeavor we face in the universal pursuit and right of freedom.

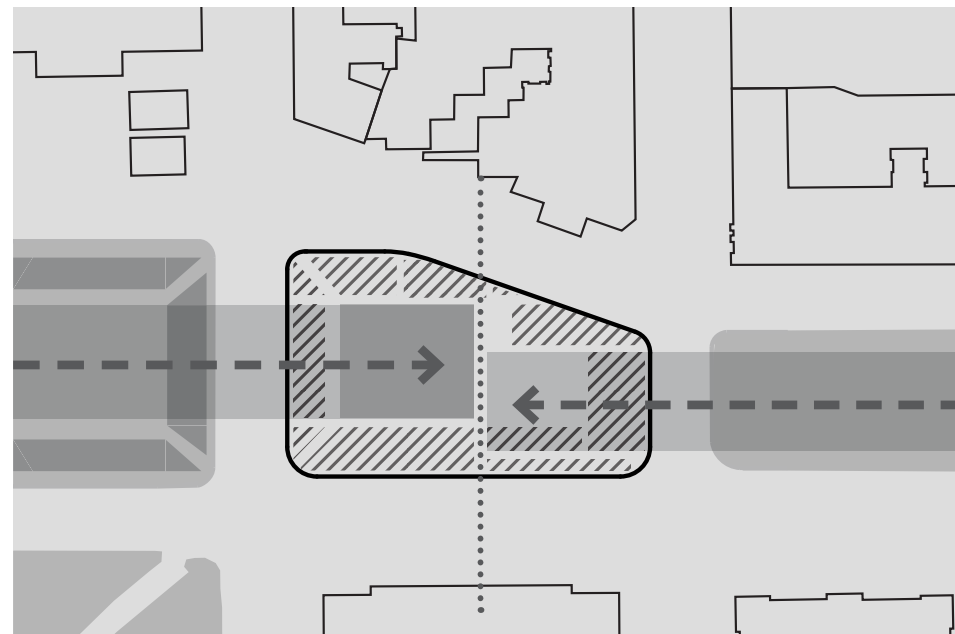




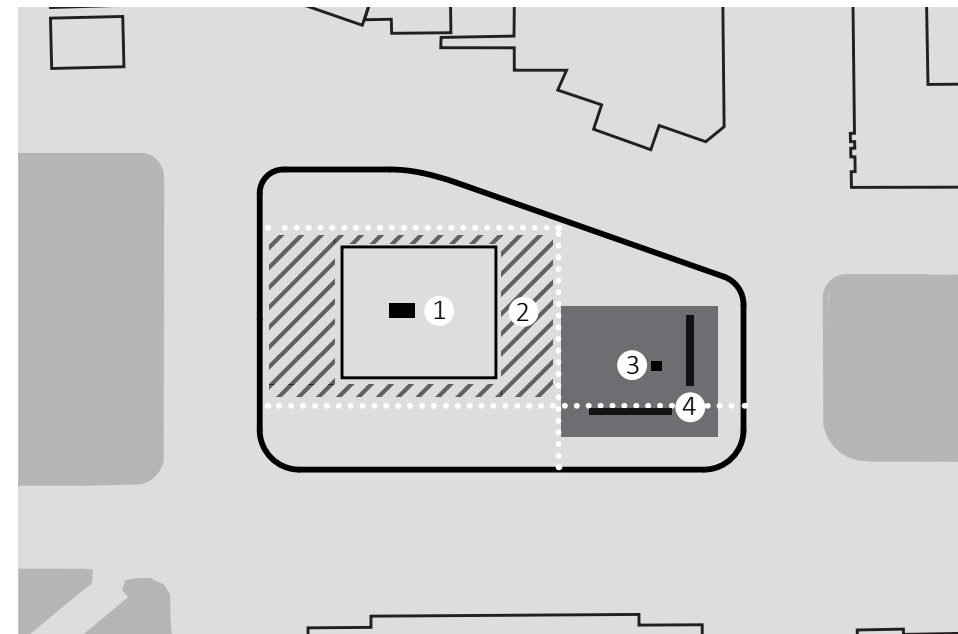
*Pedestrian access to the site is primarily from the South-West in the direction of the mall, from the South-East via Freedom Plaza and the Freedom Triangle metro stop, and from the White House*



*Key views into the site are from the four corners, Pennsylvania Ave., and from the Willard Hotel*



*Connection to the surrounding park and plaza spaces*



*Procession of monuments: 1) Wheels of Humanity 2) Wall of Remembrance 3) Pershing Statue 4) Pershing Walls*

Competition Proposal: Context Analysis



Competition Proposal: E/W section looking north



Competition Proposal: Wall of Remembrance



Competition Proposal: Raised central Memorial space

## WWI Memorial Design Process

Following the selection of the winning competition scheme, the design team met twice with staff for the CFA, NCPC, NPS, and D.C. Historic Preservation Office, to solicit feedback on the design concept. After meeting with these stakeholders on May 26, 2016, the design team proceeded with a more preservation oriented approach, balancing the need for expanded commemorative function with the need to retain significant valuable features of the existing park. In developing a new design, two main ideas from the competition concept were retained: 1) the integration of a new Memorial Wall, situated in a dialogue with the existing Pershing Memorial, and 2) the reduction of visual barriers along the perimeter of the site.

On July 22nd, the design team presented a new design that retained character defining spatial features of the park, significant existing elements, and the shape and form of Friedberg's protected urban oasis, while simultaneously addressing the challenges facing the existing park: improving accessibility, safety, and the park's relationship with Pennsylvania Avenue. Stakeholders and agencies staff welcomed the demonstrated sensitivity to the existing park, acknowledging the success of the design in its own right, as a compelling vision for a new national World War I Memorial.

### NEPA

The Environmental Assessment (EA) scoping process regarding the establishment and design of the World War I Memorial at Pershing Park was completed in May 2015. At that time, multiple comments were received reflecting concern regarding historic and cultural resources, the visitor experience, transportation systems, plans and policies, and environment and sustainability. Particular interest was paid to the role of the Pennsylvania Avenue Development Corporation Plan and the Pennsylvania Avenue Initiative and its role in creating the current Pershing Park.

The Commission is in the process of finalizing action alternatives and a no-action alternative. The action alternatives currently under consideration include the initial design for the World War I Memorial that was submitted as part of the design competition and the current design as it has evolved to respond to comments. The EA will be made available for review prior to the approval of the preliminary plan.

### Section 106

The Commission, in association with the National Park Service (NPS), conducted a joint Section 106 consulting parties and NEPA scoping meeting on May 20, 2015. At that time, the historic resources in the vicinity of Pershing Park were identified. On December 16, 2015, the Commission and NPS conducted a consulting parties meeting to review the area of potential effects (APE) and to review the design competition finalists. A third consultation occurred on September 21, 2016, at which time the revised designs and APE were reviewed by consulting parties. Additionally, the group evaluated the potential for adverse effects on historic properties from the current designs.

## Proposed Design

The WWI Memorial design proposal represents a sensitive approach that integrates new commemorative elements while maintaining character defining features of the existing park.

The design enhances Pershing Park to serve as a national World War I Memorial, making modifications to improve accessibility and safety, to create a stronger relationship with the urban context, particularly along Pennsylvania Avenue, and to ensure that the Memorial's features and materials will endure.

The central Memorial space, with defined zones of proximity to Memorial elements, is bounded by the Memorial Wall on the west and the Pershing walls on the east. A scrim of water defines a sacred zone nearest to the bas relief wall, symbolizing renewal and reflection, and cooling the Memorial space in the heat of summer. In winter, when the water is turned off, the area becomes a plaza. An area of lawn, bordered by two rows of red maple trees, connects the western memorial precinct to the eastern Pershing memorial and provides a flexible area for a variety of park uses and commemorative events.

The Pershing memorial to the east stands in dialogue with the Memorial Wall to the west. The central space's southern tree-lined pathway, links the two memorial elements, framing a view of the General Pershing statue. The existing walls and statue of General Pershing are retained in their current locations.



## Proposed Design

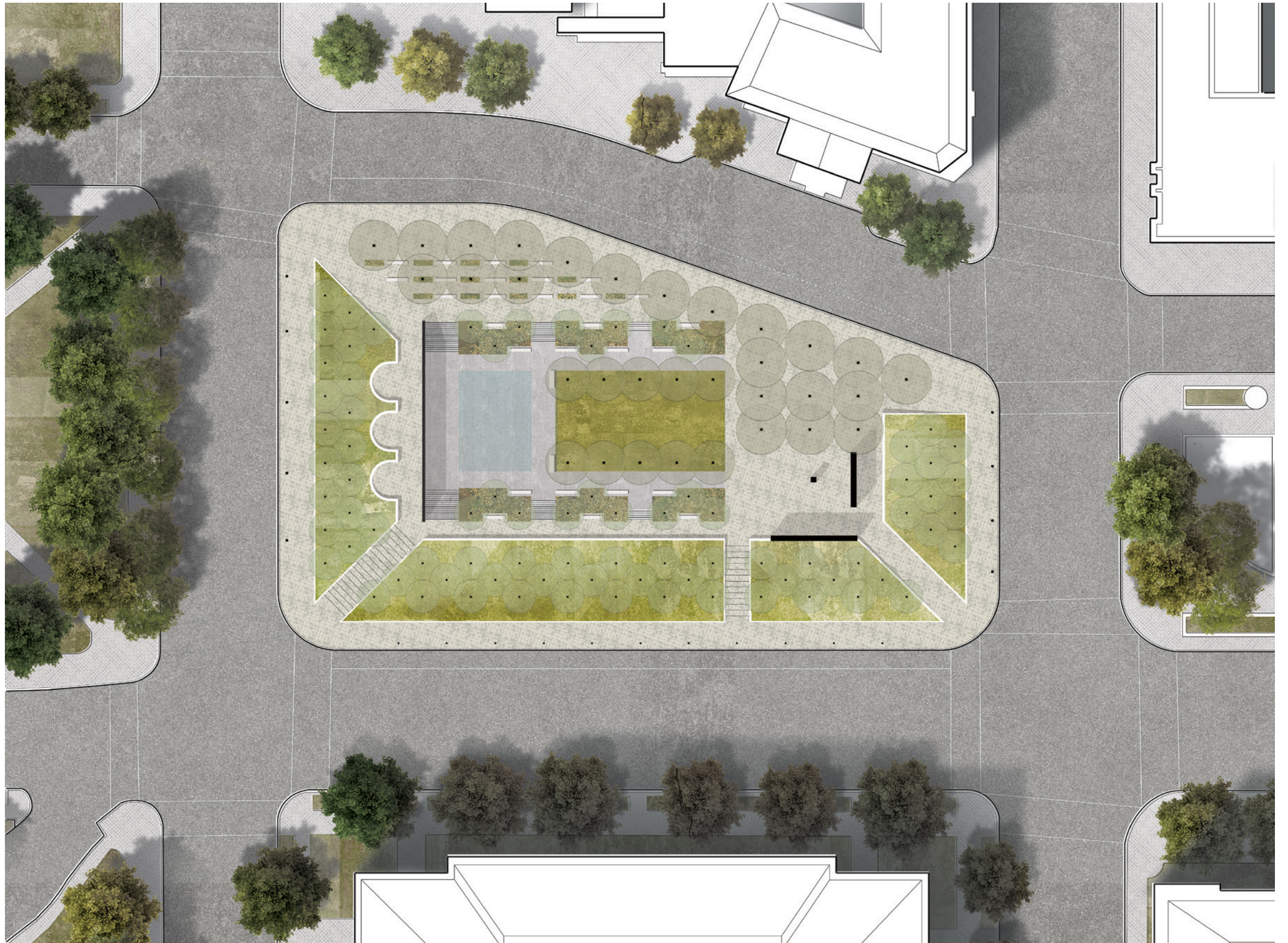
The proposed Memorial design retains the spatial organization and sense of enclosed oasis of the existing park. The central sunken space is bounded on the north and south, as in the Friedberg design, by a stepped area made lush with planting. The berms on the east, west, and south sides of the park are retained to provide enclosure. The height of the berms has been lowered slightly, and changes in elevation across the park have been softened to make the park more accessible and visible to passersby.

A new terrace along Pennsylvania Avenue with planting and seating enhances the Memorial's connection to the urban context. From this vantage point, visitors can gain a view into the Memorial space while participating in the urban life of the street.

The existing willow oak tree planting has been retained along Pennsylvania Avenue North, maintaining vistas of the Capitol and providing continuity along the length of the Avenue.

In keeping with the National Parks Service Pennsylvania Avenue National Historic Site Management Plan, the proposed design:

- 1) supports congressional legislation to redesignate Pershing Park as a National World War I Memorial.
- 2) rehabilitates the park to reestablish it as an oasis in the city
- 3) improves visual access
- 4) strengthens the park's identity as a National World War I Memorial
- 5) develops stronger physical connections between commercial uses and across Pennsylvania Avenue North



## Features Retained / Enhanced

The Memorial design retains the spatial organization of the existing park, the central idea of an urban oasis, and specific elements.

The Pershing Memorial is retained in its current location.

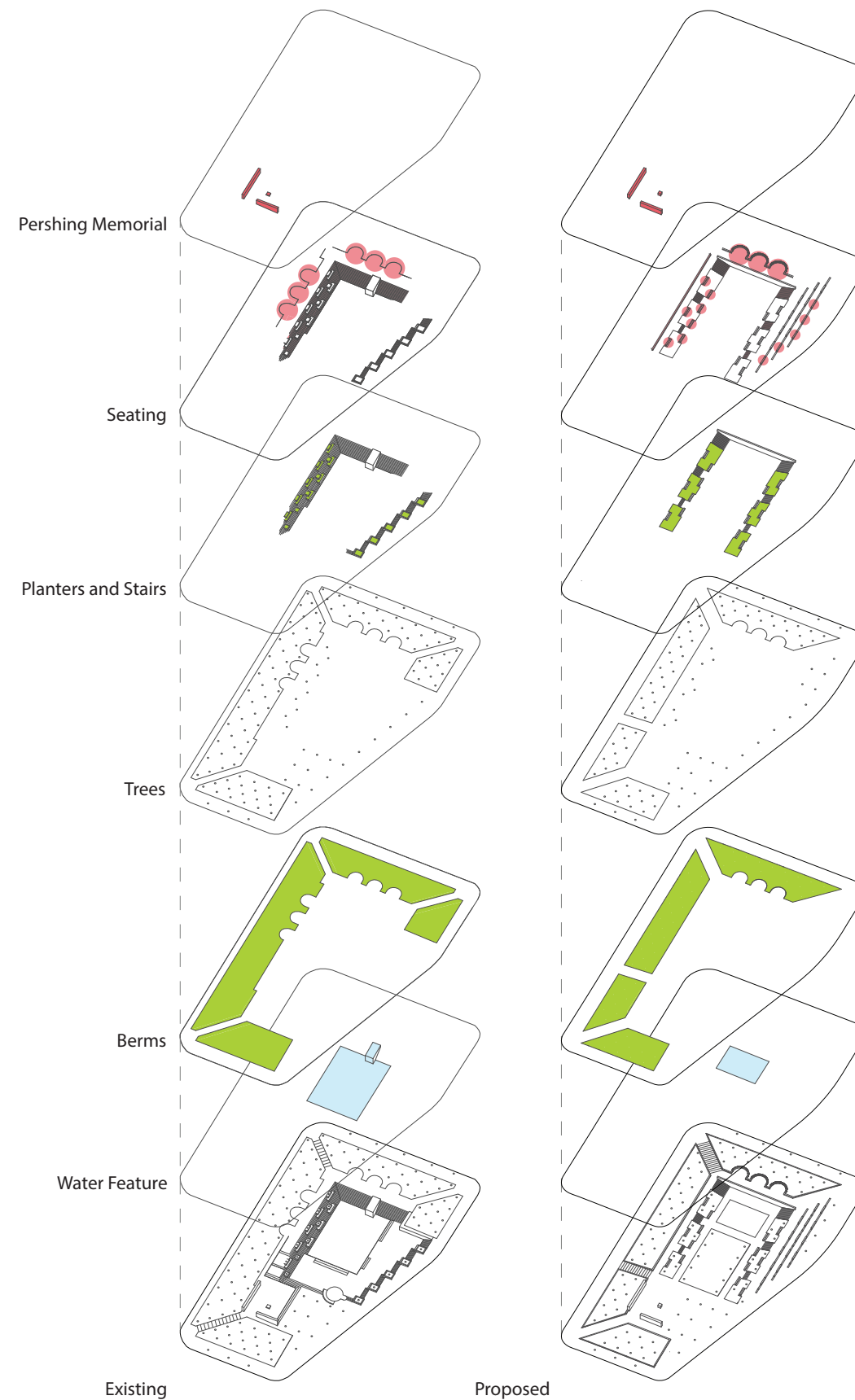
The semi-circular seating located on the west side of the central space is retained. Additional seating is provided in its existing location on the south stair and along Pennsylvania Avenue North.

The design retains the stair on the south side of the central space, expanding the size of the planters and reducing the number of steps. On the north side of the central space, the planters and stairs have been shifted to the south, to accommodate the expanded area for pedestrians along Pennsylvania Avenue North and to frame the Memorial Wall.

Trees have been retained across the site, reduced in numbers within the berms to ensure adequate soil volume for health and longevity.

The earthen berms are retained in existing location and orientation, with an additional access point into the Memorial through the southern berm and more generous corner entries for pedestrian flow. The sidewalk on Pennsylvania Avenue South has been widened to encourage pedestrian movement along the south side.

The water feature is rehabilitated as a sustainable element, reduced in size, and accommodating seasonal use.



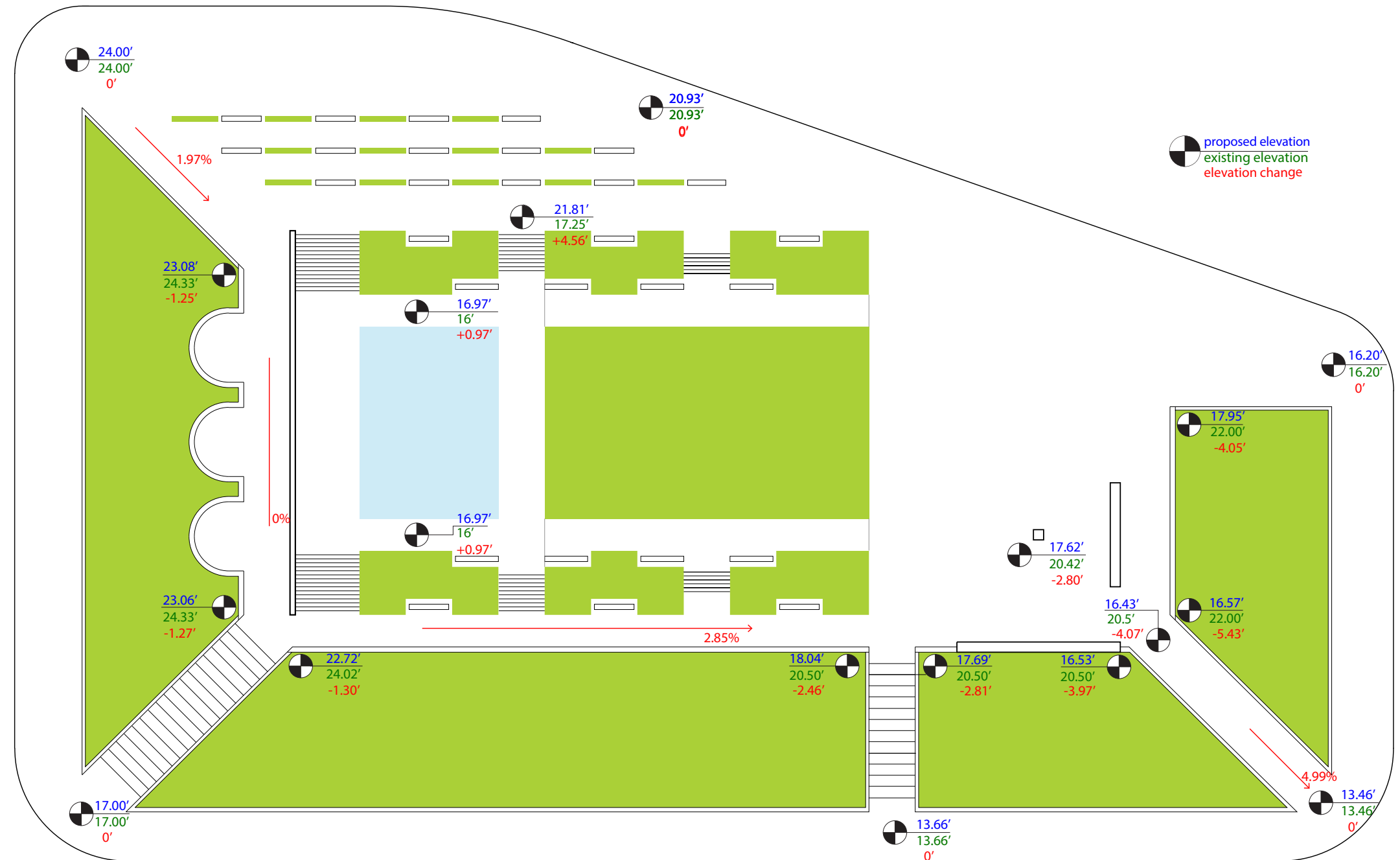
## Topographic Enhancement

The topography of the WWI Memorial is in keeping with the overall relationships of the existing park. However, differences in elevation have been softened to increase visual and physical access and to better connect the site to the urban context.

Barriers to accessibility have been removed where possible, improving circulation and making the site more inclusive, maximizing the free flow of movement and experience.

Visibility is improved across the central Memorial space. The perceptually flat topography of the center reinforces the direct relationship created between the Memorial Wall and the Pershing Memorial.

The earthen berms surrounding the Memorial have been lowered slightly to increase visibility into the park on the south, west, and east sides.



## Topographic Enhancement

From east to west, the site retains the overall spatial organization of the existing park, softening the topography to increase visibility and accessibility. The enhancement of the site topography also serves to maximize the free flow of space while creating a direct relationship between the Pershing Wall on the east and the Memorial Wall on the west.



E/W Section Looking North

## Memorial Wall

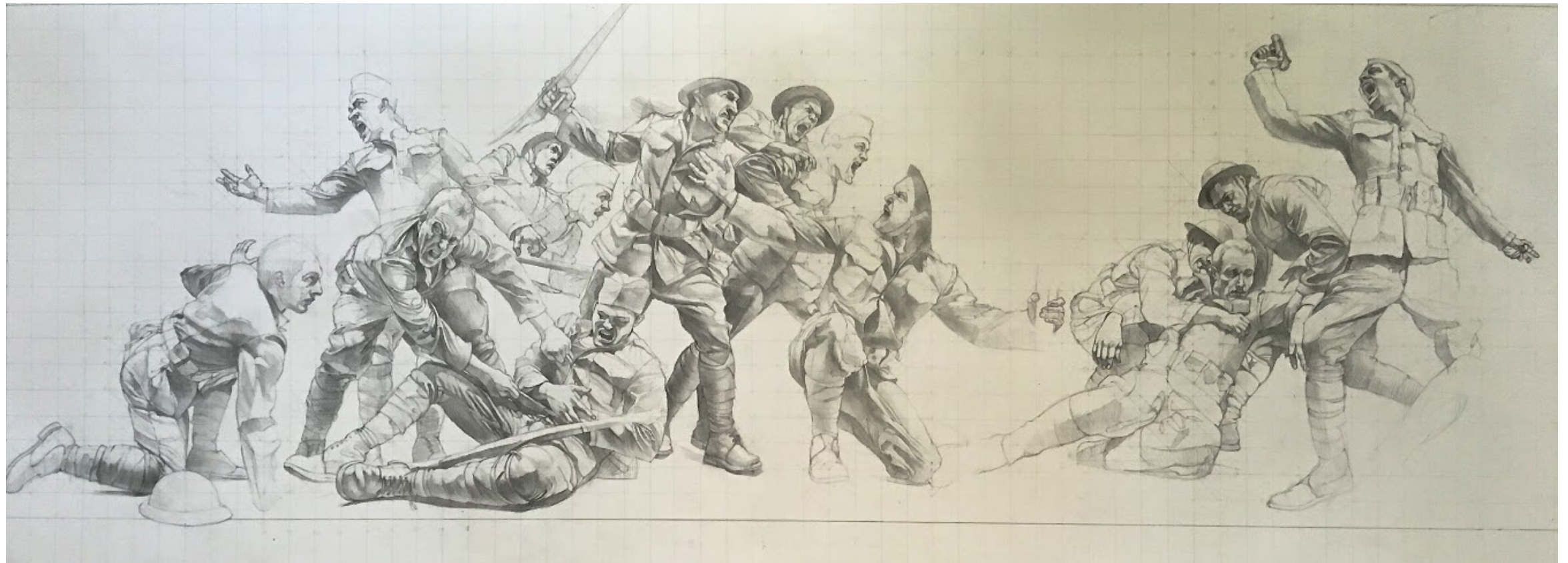
Placed at the western end of the central memorial space is the Memorial Wall, the primary new commemorative element of the Memorial. Framed by the planted north and south stair, and the trees that populate the edges of the site, the bas relief sculpture wall is a visual and tactile experience honoring the sacrifice of all World War I servicemen and women. The walkway on the south and the terrace area on the north provide views of the wall and visual connection across the site. Pedestrians walking along Pennsylvania Avenue South are able to see into the park and gain access mid-block.



N/S Section Looking West

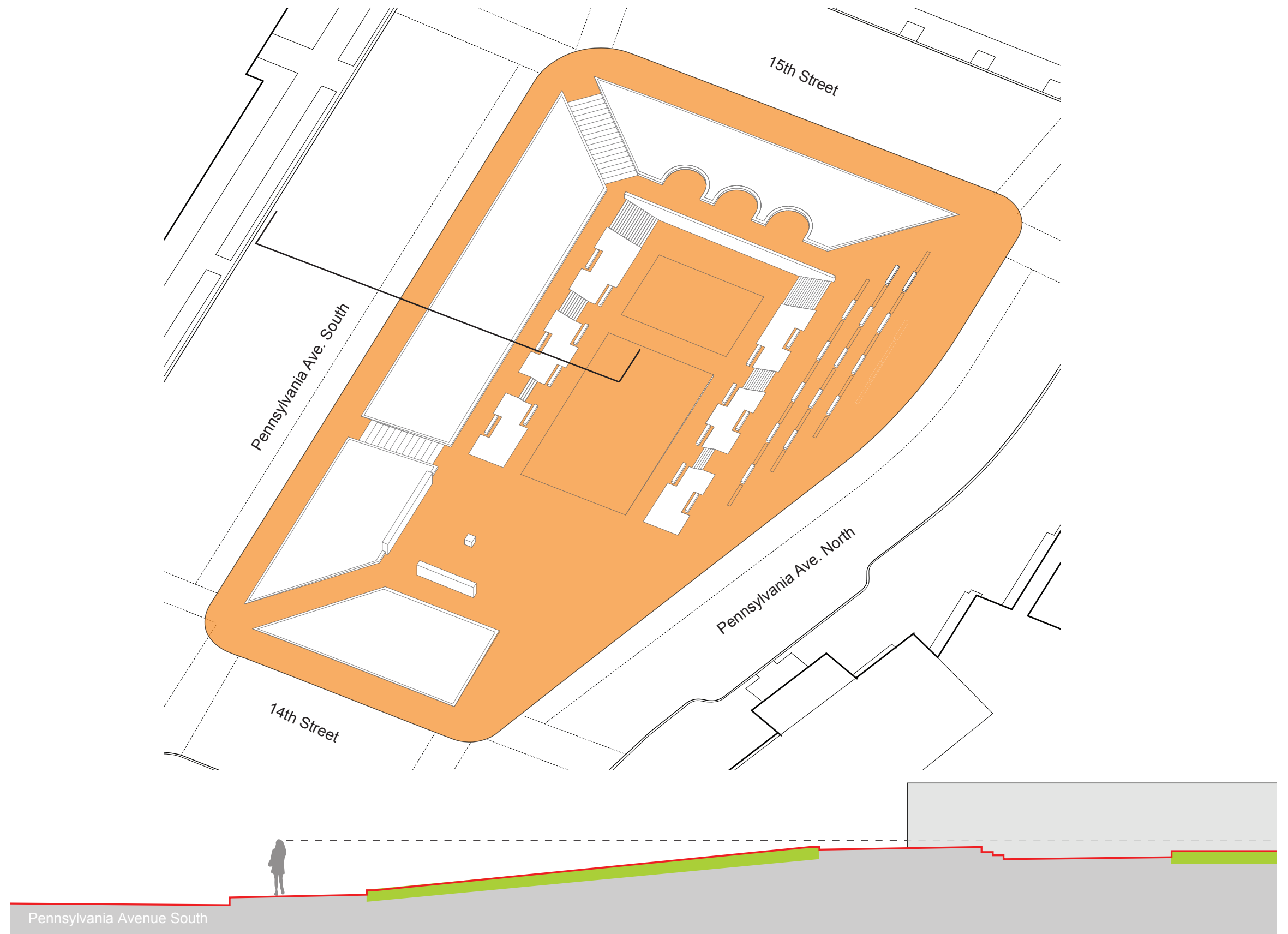
## Sculptural Artwork

The sculptural artwork for the Memorial Wall is meant to convey feelings of pride, honor, and loss. The sculpture, consisting of a 75 foot-long bronze relief, is conceived of as a visual and emotional narrative. The narrative consists of a series of scenes depicting the war experience of one soldier, who appears throughout as a recurring figure. On another level, the narrative shows the courage and heroism of American servicemen and women in World War I, which was as profound as that demonstrated in better-remembered wars, and conveys the scale of American sacrifice, which exceeded all our nation's wars other than the Civil War and World War II. The visual narrative is structured with a beginning, middle, and end - from the call to arms and departure, through the battle, culminating in the aftermath and return - with each section carrying different emotions and kinetic energy.



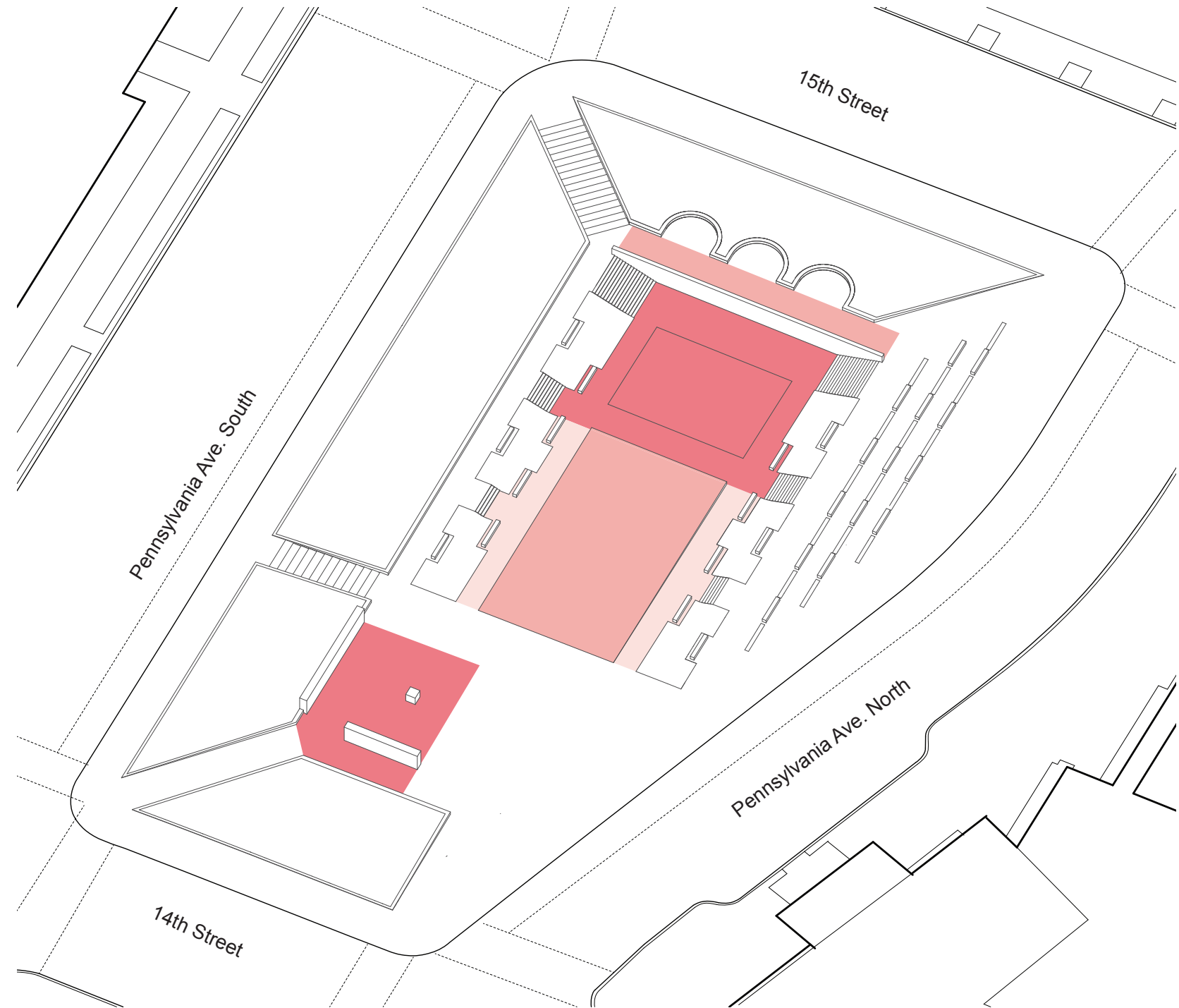
## Accessability and Visibility

The Memorial design increases accessibility and visibility across the site. The open, unified spaces are more inclusive and connected to the urban context. A moderate reduction in the heights of the berms supports views into the park on east, west, and south sides, making the park safer and more attractive to people as they approach. A direct physical and visual connection between the Pershing Memorial and the Memorial Wall is made through the perceptually flat topography of the central space and the alignment of the Pershing Statue with the southern walkway.



## Memorial Precincts

The central Memorial space is designed with zones of proximity to Memorial elements, to create sacred spaces of commemoration while integrating more flexible space that accommodates the needs of an urban park. The area closest to the Memorial Wall, defined by the water plaza, and the area defined by the Pershing Walls are sacred spaces of reflection, commemoration, and education. The central lawn, flanked by the Memorial trees, provides a transition between Memorial elements, defining a flexible space that integrates appropriate commemorative or urban park needs. The planted stairs to the north and south similarly constitute zones of overlapping use, where people can view the Memorial elements and participate in commemorative events, or alternatively, find a place to meet friends for lunch or unwind at the end of the day.

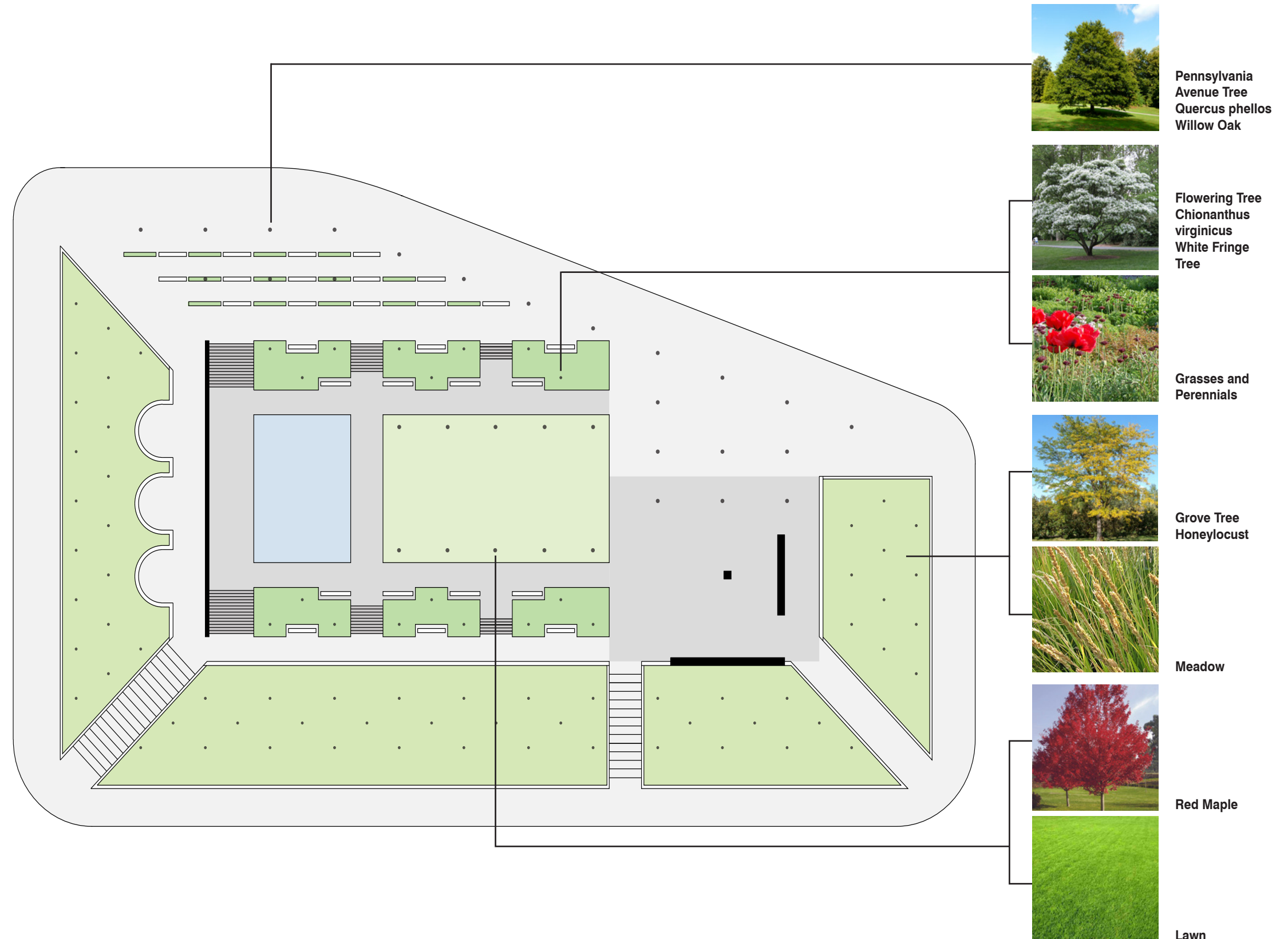


## Planting Design

The planting strategy extends the legacy of Oehme Van Sweden's planting design, utilizing a palette of appropriate native and adapted trees, grasses, and perennials. Species are chosen for low maintenance and year round color, structure, and shape. Drawing upon Oehme van Sweden's New American Garden approach, the design relies upon a matrix of grasses and ecologically related forbs to create a rich and dynamic understory that reduces maintenance while increasing ecological value. The overall diversity of species has been increased, with the substitution of grasses and perennials for turf within the berms and with the addition of tree species that are indigenous and of high ecological value.

The Memorial trees bordering the lawn are red maples, chosen for their bright red fall foliage and suitability to urban Washington D.C. Trees along Pennsylvania Avenue are in keeping with the existing willow oaks, in order to integrate the Memorial into the broader context of the Avenue and provide continuity at its most western end. The trees planted in the berms are honeylocusts or a species of deciduous tree with similar transparency and form. And the trees planted amongst the north and south stairs will be smaller scale deciduous trees such as the flowering White Fringe Tree.

While the existing park layout of the honeylocust grove has been maintained, the total number of trees has been reduced to ensure a minimum of 1000 cubic feet of soil per tree. The design team will work with horticulturists and soils experts to design below grade conditions for maximum benefit to the health and longevity of the planting.





View looking east



View looking west

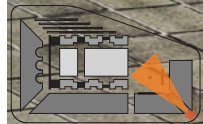


View looking west



View from northwest corner looking east





View from southeast corner