

# 1.0 PURPOSE AND NEED



Figure 1-1: Proposed location for the American Veterans Disabled for Life Memorial.

## 1.0 PURPOSE AND NEED

### 1.1 Introduction

The National Park Service (NPS) and the Disabled Veterans' LIFE Memorial Foundation, Inc. (the Foundation) have proposed to establish a national memorial for disabled veterans on an approved site in Washington, DC. The Foundation is a non-profit organization dedicated to designing and constructing a memorial that will honor millions of disabled veterans. Legislation authorizing the American Veterans Disabled for Life Memorial (Memorial) was signed into law in October 2000. The site, located at Washington Avenue and 2nd Street, SW near the National Mall, was approved by the National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC) in August 2001, and is shown in Figure 1-1 and Figure 1-2. The establishment of the Memorial is the subject of this Environmental Assessment (EA).

#### National Environmental Policy Act

The NPS and the Foundation have prepared this EA in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended (NEPA), the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations implementing NEPA [40 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 1500-1508], and the NPS Director's Order-12 (as reflected in the DO-12 Handbook). The EA is also consistent with the requirements of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended (NHPA).

This EA seeks to document and describe the proposed use of the site for the Memorial, determine the potential impacts and recommend mitigation measures related to its implementation. The EA also evaluates a No Action Alternative, as required by CEQ. The EA addresses: 1) short-term construction-related impacts, 2) long-term operations-related impacts, and 3) cumulative impacts that would result from this and other projects that have been completed recently, are currently under development, or are proposed within the study area.



Figure 1-2: The approved site for the American Veterans Disabled for Life Memorial has direct views of the U.S. Capitol.

## 1.2 Study Area

The study area for identifying potential environmental impacts that can be attributed to the proposed Memorial generally focuses on the southeast section of the National Mall, the southwestern area of the Capitol Grounds, and the Southwest Federal Center (Figure 1-3). Specific boundaries include the two-block square area surrounding the site, from Jefferson Drive and 4th Street, NW to the south side of the U.S. Capitol, to South Capitol and E Streets, SE, to E and 4th Streets SW. This study area is intended to serve as a guide within which short-term, long-term, and cumulative impacts of the proposed Memorial are analyzed. The study area may expand or contract for each resource discipline, depending upon the potential for a specific impact to affect a given geographical area.

Planned projects in the study area that will be considered in the evaluation of cumulative impacts include the expansion of the National Garden, the renovation of Federal Building 8 into federal office space, and the construction of a hotel and new office building at 4th and E Streets, SW. At one time, the National Museum of Health and Medicine (NMHM) had planned to occupy Federal Building 8, near the proposed Memorial, however, that project has been cancelled. Therefore, NMHM has been excluded from this analysis.





Figure 1-3: Project Site and Study Area



### 1.3 Purpose and Need for the Proposed Action

The purpose of this Memorial is to honor disabled veterans throughout America's history, from all branches of the armed forces, transcending conflicts, service branches, and generations. It will honor the soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines who have been wounded in battle or seriously injured in the performance of their duties. It will remind both lawmakers and ordinary citizens that the cost of freedom is high and that disabled veterans deserve America's unwavering support. The Memorial will express out Nation's gratitude for their selfless service, sacrifice and courage that is emblematic of America's finest ideals. An honor for the living as much as a monument for the dead, the Memorial is intended to evoke a sense of patriotic pride in the personal sacrifices that disabled veterans have and continue to make in defense of America's freedom.

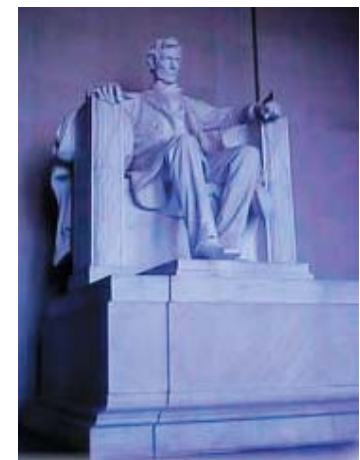


Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall

Throughout history, Americans have honored our presidents and war heroes by constructing memorials. Our greatest leaders are paid homage with the construction of monumental structures that serve as living reminders of America's freedoms. In Washington DC, examples of presidential commemoration include the Washington Monument, and the Lincoln, Jefferson and Roosevelt Memorials. Others are honored with statuary art which is often located in park settings. There are memorials for particular wars or conflicts where large numbers of Americans died serving the Nation. The Vietnam Veterans Memorial, the Korean War Veterans Memorial, and the National World War II Memorial honor the Americans who served in those wars. While each of these war memorials is a significant reminder of the sacrifices our servicemen and women make and the devastating effects of war, they are conflict-specific and do not specifically recognize soldiers who survive but are disabled for life. There is no memorial that honors those Americans who go to war in defense of our country's freedom and return bearing permanent scars on their spirits, minds, and bodies.



Jefferson Memorial



Lincoln Memorial

Dedicated to both the living and the dead, a setting for reflection and reaching out, the American Veterans Disabled for Life Memorial will hold a special place in the hearts of all Americans and serve as an eternal reminder of the human cost of conflict. This Memorial will represent the values of liberty, service, dedication, and selfless sacrifice on behalf of freedom that Americans hold dear. While we cannot turn back time for the over 3 million living disabled Americans, this Memorial will say that their dedication, service and courage makes a lasting difference to us all. We can give them a place to point to with pride and say, “This is how my country recognizes my sacrifice.”

By virtue of its location near the U.S. Capitol Building, the American Veterans Disabled for Life Memorial will serve as a reminder to those who must consider significant military actions that there is a tangible cost associated with such decisions. In former Veteran Affairs Secretary Jesse Brown’s words: “This shrine will provide a reminder of war’s true human cost.”



The Disabled Veterans’ LIFE Memorial Foundation was created through the combined efforts of the late Honorable Jesse Brown, former Secretary of Veteran Affairs (left), Lois Pope, an internationally known philanthropist (center), and Arthur Wilson, National Adjutant of the Disabled American Veterans (right). The Foundation’s chairman is Mrs. Pope and Mr. Wilson serves as president.

## **1.4 Planning Process**

Planning for the Memorial has included successful efforts to secure authorizing legislation, a study of alternative sites, site approval from federal review agencies, a design competition, and design concept development and approval. It has also entailed in-depth discussions between the Foundation, NPS and other affected agencies during the process of site selection and approval, the preparation of design parameters for the site, and the development of a design concept.

### **1.4.1 Legislative Framework**

Legislation authorizing the American Veterans Disabled for Life Memorial (Public Law 106-348) was signed into law by President William Jefferson Clinton on October 24, 2000. (See Appendix 5.1) It had broad support from both Democrats and Republicans in both chambers of Congress. The Act authorizes the Foundation to “establish a memorial on federal land in the District of Columbia or its environs to honor veterans who became disabled while serving in the Armed Forces of the United States.” The legislation further establishes: that the Memorial shall be in accordance with the Commemorative Works Act (40 U.S.C. 1001 et seq.), that no federal funds may be used to pay any expenses for establishing the Memorial; and that if the Foundation has a balance of funds after establishing the Memorial, then the Foundation will transmit that balance to the Secretary of the Treasury.

The Foundation investigated six (6) different sites, all from the Memorials and Museums Master Plan. Site 26 was chosen for its proximity to other museums on and near the National

Mall and nearby Metrorail stations. It was approved by the Commission of Fine Arts and the National Capital Planning Commission.

The site is prominently located in view of the U.S. Capitol and proximate to the National Mall’s many historical and cultural landmarks. It’s situated between two Metro subway stops on the orange and blue lines, Federal Center Southwest and Capitol South, affording easy access to public transportation. The proposed memorial site comprises a triangular assembly of three small Federal land parcels under the jurisdiction of and maintained by NPS. The site is located southwest of the U.S. Capitol Building and Independence Avenue at Washington and 2nd Streets, SW.

### **1.4.2 Selected Site**

The approved site for the Memorial is prominently located near the U.S. Capitol Building, one block from the National Mall (see Figure 1-4). Situated between two Metrorail stations on the Orange and Blue lines (Federal Center Southwest and Capitol South) and adjacent to Interstate 395 (I-395), its location affords convenient transportation access.

The primary parcel is a 1.16-acre triangular piece of land bounded by Washington Avenue, 2nd Street, and the historic alignment of C Street. Approximately 0.91 acres of additional land south of C Street and along 2nd Street are available for supporting uses such as a bus lay-by area, vehicle drop-off area, parking, pedestrian circulation, and vegetative screening. Several historic and cultural landmarks are visible from the



property, including the dome of the U.S. Capitol which is located to the northeast of the site, Bartholdi Park, and the U.S. Botanic Garden.

As part of the Memorial's program, C Street would be restored to its historic alignment. C Street currently bisects the primary site at a diagonal, a configuration that bears no relationship to the historic L'Enfant Plan. The current alignment is the result of changes that probably occurred during the construction of the tunnel and ramp system for I-395 in the late 1960s.



Figure 1-4: The Memorial site consists of three parcels of land, reconfigured to accommodate the restoration of C Street.

### 1.4.3 Design Competition

On Veterans' Day 2002, the Foundation kicked off a design competition for the new American Veterans Disabled for Life Memorial. The Foundation invited over 20 architecture and landscape architecture firms to participate in the competition. A *Call for Entries*, which provided background on the Memorial and outlined competition requirements and design goals, was distributed to all invitees in November 2002. Six firms responded with letters of interest.

A nine-person selection committee, consisting of Foundation members and design experts, was established to evaluate the designs, and in late February 2003, the selection panel was convened for a "blind review" of the proposed submissions. Of the six applicants, two firms were invited back for further discussion.

The two firms selected for further consideration, Michael Vergason Landscape Architects and Nelson-Byrd and Associates, were asked to prepare a model, develop general cost estimates, provide a project schedule, and present their qualifications at a later meeting. In early April 2003, the two short-listed firms submitted their materials and presented their qualifications to the selection committee. The Foundation requested each firm to respond to certain questions regarding their designs and present alternative solutions that addressed those concerns. At the end of July, upon its review of the presentations of these two firms, the Foundation selected Michael Vergason Landscape Architects to proceed with a design for the new Memorial. The original submission boards are presented in Figure 1-5.



Figure 1-5: Original submission boards chosen by design competition selection committee.

Source: Michael Vergason Landscape Architects



[illegible]



### Design Narrative

The following text was prepared for the original design submission as shown on the image boards (Figure 1-5):

Permanently disabled veterans have made an invaluable contribution to America in the currency of physical sacrifice and enduring heroism. A bright fire burning deep within a flooded grove at the foot of Capitol Hill, the American Veterans Disabled for Life Memorial celebrates their lives, remembers their sacrifices, honors their strengths, and renews their timeless message for each new generation of Americans.

#### **1.4.4 Concept Approval**

The Memorial concept was approved by NCPC on April 1, 2004 pursuant to the Commemorative Works Act (40 U.S.C. 1001 8905). As illustrated in Figure 1-6, the primary elements of the Memorial include a central fire, a grove of trees fronted by a reflecting pool, and a frame of marble and glass walls. The Commission described the Memorial as “dignified” and found that it would strengthen the desired visual linkage” with the Capitol. NCPC also recommended further study of vehicular and pedestrian movement, as well as refinement of the wall openings.

The CFA reviewed and approved the Memorial design concept on March 18, 2004. The Commission recommended simplification of the overall design and requested additional study for pedestrian circulation.

The design that is being submitted for preliminary NCPC approval and Revised Concept approval by CFA is described and addressed in this EA.



Figure 1-6: Illustration of the concept design for the proposed Memorial that was approved in April 2004.

### 1.4.5 Agency Coordination

As part of the overall planning process for the Memorial, numerous agencies have been consulted for input, feedback and informal scoping. Coordination has included meetings and/or correspondence with:

- NPS,
- NCPC,
- Commission of Fine Arts,
- Advisory Council on Historic Preservation,
- Architect of the Capitol,
- DC Department of Transportation,
- DC Historic Preservation Division of the Office of Planning,
- Federal Highways Administration, and
- U.S. Department of Transportation.

The Federal Highways Administration of the U.S. Department of Transportation has chosen to defer to the DC Department of Transportation as the local agency responsible for the operations and maintenance of the Interstate 395 tunnels located beneath the site.

### 1.4.6 Environmental Issues Assessed

This EA has been prepared to examine the potential impacts the proposed Memorial may have on the socio-economic, natural and cultural environments. Since each resource discipline has its own unique characteristics, the EA varies in the amount of detail necessary to convey significant issues.

Due to the location of the subject site for the proposed Memorial and the specific landscape design intended for it, several environmental issues were not considered in this analysis.

These include:

- Demographic and Economic Resources, and Environmental Justice,
- Water Resources (Groundwater and Surface Water),
- Hazardous Materials, and
- Climate and Air.

Key issues requiring special emphasis include:

- Visual and Cultural Resources,
- Visitation,
- Transportation and Parking, and
- Maintenance Issues.