

## 3.0 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

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#### 3.1 Socio-Economic Environment

##### 3.1.1 Land Use

The approved Memorial site, Reservation 77B, is located in the Northwest quadrant of the District of Columbia, identified as Site 98 in NCPC's 2001 Museums and Memorials Master Plan. The site is situated within a triangular parcel, bordered by Massachusetts Avenue, New Jersey Avenue and G Street, NW. The western boundary of the site, New Jersey Avenue, NW, is a "special street" along the monumental corridor, providing a connection between the proposed Memorial and the U.S. Capitol Grounds.

The proposed Memorial site consists of 3,500 square feet of grassed area, defined by its surrounding rolled curb. The site is located across the street from the Georgetown University Law Center, and approximately five blocks from the United States Capitol grounds. Figure 3-1 provides an illustration of the site with its proximity to prominent features in Washington, DC.

The current state of the project site is such that it is an undeveloped, open, landscaped parcel, with flat terrain. The triangular parcel is defined by the bordering streets. The surrounding neighborhood consists primarily of government buildings and other office buildings. The neighborhood is a growing commercial area, with office buildings being the primary land use within the surrounding area. Specific buildings in vicinity of the project site include the Georgetown University Law Center, the

Department of Homeland Security and the National Association of Realtors building.

The areas in the vicinity of the project are currently undergoing major revitalization. Two major initiatives for the area include the North of Massachusetts (NoMa) revitalization plans and, further to the east, the H Street Corridor revitalization study. Included in the NoMa plans are additional office buildings for the immediate area as part of the effort to renew the vibrancy of downtown Washington, DC.



Figure 3-1: View across proposed Memorial site, towards Massachusetts Avenue

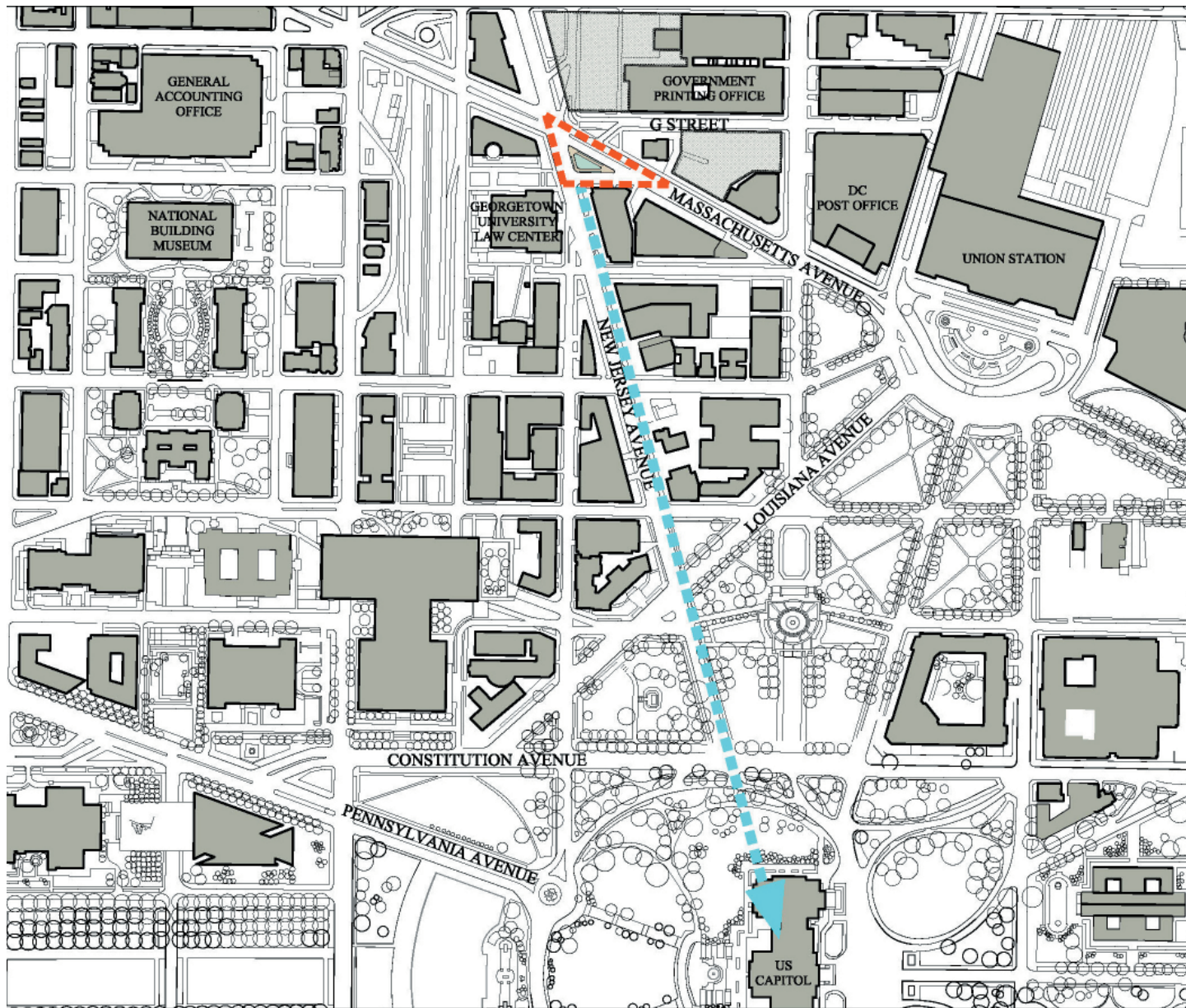


Figure 3-2: Memorial Vicinity Plan used in site selection study

### 3.1.2 Planning Controls and Policies

Because the project site is under federal ownership, it is not subject to local zoning regulations. Development of federal property is under the purview of the National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC) pursuant to the District of Columbia Zoning Enabling Act (1938). For federal projects, NCPC has approval authority for use, open space, height, and bulk.

#### Commemorative Zone Policy

NCPC, CFA and the National Capital Memorial Commission adopted the Commemorative Zone Policy in 2000 as an effort to guide placement of new memorials to strategic locations throughout the District of Columbia. The Policy is intended to provide a framework for locating new memorials beyond the central core of the District, in order to preserve the symbolic landscape of Washington, DC and to encourage the placement of memorials throughout all quadrants of the District.

The Commemorative Works Act of 1986 serves as the basis for which memorials are placed on federal lands and their sites chosen within the District of Columbia. Three memorial zones are delineated in accordance with the policy. The three Areas, the Reserve, Area I and Area II, were established to preserve the symbolic urban design integrity of the Nation's Capital (see Figure 3-2).

The Reserve is designated as an area where no new memorials or museums are to be permitted. The area is defined by the major cross axial area extending from the U.S. Capitol to the Lincoln Memorial and Lafayette Park to the Jefferson

Memorial. Area I is a sensitive area designated for commemorative works of pre-eminent historic and national significance. Area II includes the rest of the city with emphasis on the North, South and East Capitol Street axes. Area II is the primary area designated for development of new commemorative works within the District.

Expanding on the framework established by the Commemorative Zone Policy, the Memorials and Museums Master Plan identified potential sites for locating new memorials along the Potomac and Anacostia Rivers, the circles and squares of major avenues, urban gateways, and scenic overlooks. The Plan evaluated the 100 candidate sites for their suitability and appropriateness for a commemorative feature. The approved site for the Victims of Communism Memorial is located within Area II, identified in the Master Plan as Site 98.



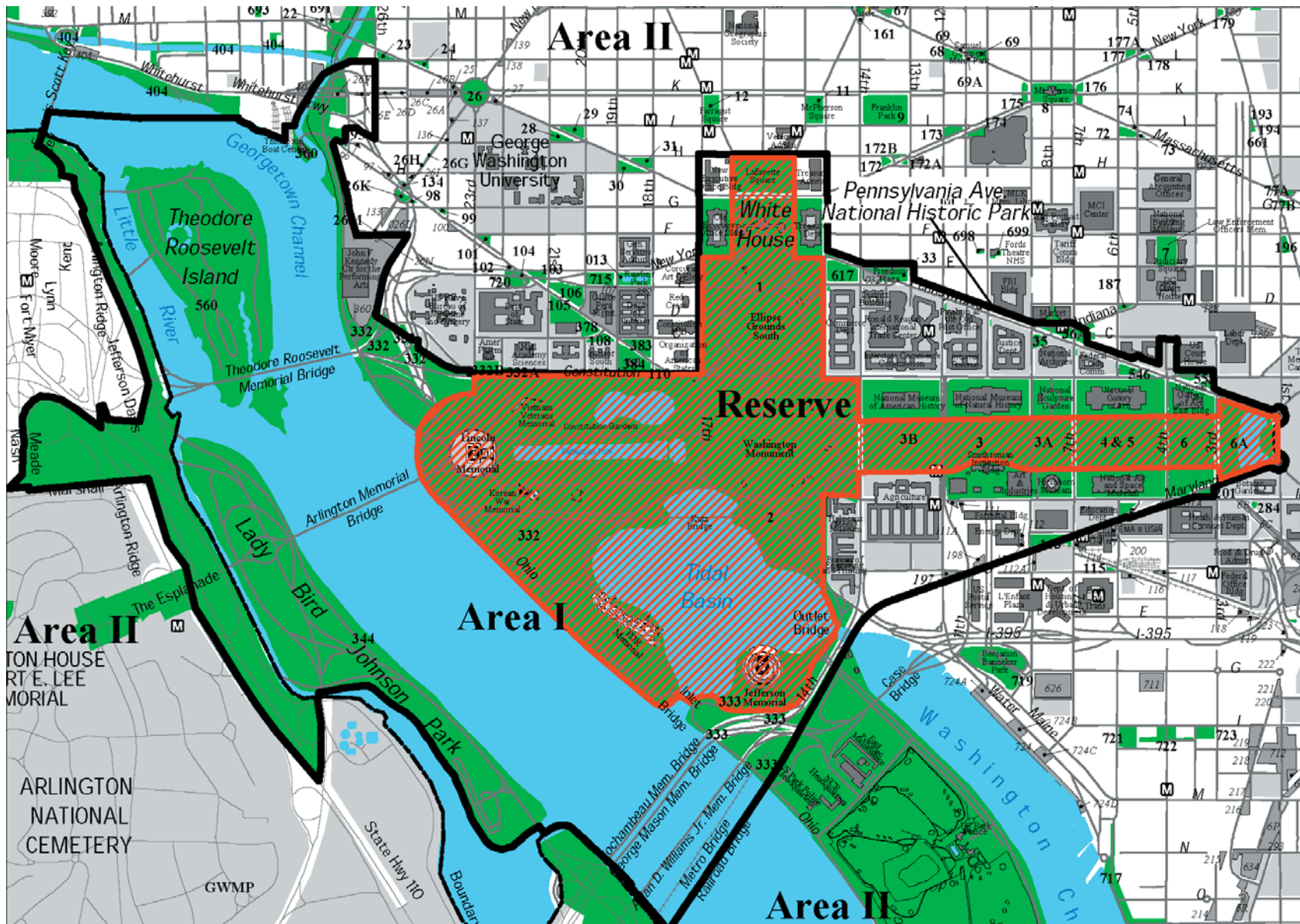


Figure 3-3: Commemorative Zone Policy of 2002

### Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital

The Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital, Federal Elements (1977-1984, updated 2004) is the principal planning document adopted by the NCPC for the planning of federal facilities. The following Federal Elements include goals, objectives, and policies relevant to the proposed project:

The Park and Open Space Element states that “it is a goal of the federal government to conserve and enhance the park and open space system of the National Capital Region, ensure that adequate resources are available for future generations, and promote an appropriate balance between open space resources and the built environment.” Relevant policies in support of these goals include maintaining and conserving federal open space as a means to shape and enhance urban areas; and siting memorials in monumentally designed parks in compliance with the Memorials and Museums Master Plan.

The Preservation and Historic Features Element states that “it is a goal of the federal government to preserve and enhance the image and identity of the Nation’s Capital and region through design and development respectful of the guiding principles of the L’Enfant and McMillan Plans, the enduring value of historic buildings and places, and the symbolic character of the capital’s setting.” Relevant policies in support of this goal include adhering to the high aesthetic standards already established by the planning and design legacy of the nation’s capital; protecting and enhancing the vistas and views, both natural and designed, that are an integral part of the national capital’s image; and providing and maintaining street trees to help frame

axial views and reinforce the historic green character of the nation’s capital.

The Visitors Element states that “it is a goal of the federal government to accommodate visitors in a way that ensures an enjoyable and educational experience, showcases the institutions of American culture and democracy, and supports federal and regional planning goals.” Relevant policies in support of this goal include protecting the Monumental Core by locating and designing new memorials and museums in accordance with NCPC’s Memorials and Museums Master Plan; and providing visitor attractions within walking distance of public transportation stations and routes.

### 3.1.3 Visitation

Visitation in and around the study area is primarily a result of pedestrians travelling between Union Station and the surrounding office buildings. Union Station is the most visited site in all of Washington, DC. The volume of visitors that passes the proposed Memorial site is just a small fraction of the 25 million people that pass through Union Station per year.

### 3.1.4 Community Facilities and Services

There are no community facilities located on the project site. Community facilities in the vicinity of the site can be found in both nearby museums and Union Station. Nearby restrooms are located at the National Postal Museum, the National Guard Museum and Union Station. Union Station also offers retail, restaurants, entertainment and access to public transportation.

### 3.1.5 Public Safety

Public areas near the project site are patrolled by both local and federal police who have jurisdiction over different parts of the area. Security services are provided for local parklands by the U.S. Park Police. NPS provides security service in accordance with federal regulations and requirements.

The District of Columbia provides fire protection and emergency medical protection for the site and the study area. The site is located within the First District of the Metropolitan Police Department. The closest police stations are the station headquarters at 300 Indiana Avenue, NW and the First District Ministration at 611 H Street, NW. Engine 2 and Engine 3 Fire

Stations are located at 500 F Street, NW and 439 New Jersey Avenue, NW respectively.

## 3.2 Cultural Resources

This section documents the historic, archaeological, and visual resources that are present on the site and within the nearby area. For the purposes of this section, the area of potential effects (APE) for historic resources includes the area from which the project site is visible. As a result, the APE for historic resources extends approximately two blocks in each direction. In defining the APE for archaeological resources, it was determined that the only effects on archaeological resources would occur as a result of ground disturbing activities (such as structural footings) on the site. The APE for archaeological resources is limited to the grassed area of the proposed site. The study area for visual resources is the same area as that defined by the APE.

### Historic Context

Washington, DC is home to hundreds of museums and memorials, honoring and commemorating significant people, actions and events throughout history. Memorials are built as a living reminder of America's freedoms. Monumental structures, such as the Lincoln and Jefferson Memorials, pay homage to the nation's greatest leaders, while smaller scale memorials in the form of statuary art can be found throughout the District, honoring both national and international events. Visitors often come to Washington, DC to learn about the nation's history and enjoy the opportunities to appreciate both the past and present events of the world



### Site History

Before the small strip of G Street, NW that currently borders the site existed, this triangular traffic parcel was a part of the land parcel located across from the site, along G Street. Prior to its transformation as an institutional area, the area was once a residential area. The Gales Public School was once the largest structure on the Massachusetts Avenue street front, amidst residential row houses. The area is now distinguished by government buildings and a strong civic presence. The evolution from a residential area changed largely due to the removal of residential dwellings for the purpose of constructing the freeway that passes through the area. Prominent buildings currently located in the vicinity of the site include the Union Labor Life Building, Georgetown University Law Center, Government Printing Office, and the National Guard Memorial Museum.

### Nearby Historic Resources

#### *Gales School*

The Gales School, located at 65 Massachusetts Avenue, is a former DC public school. The school, named for the eighth mayor of Washington, Joseph Gales, Jr., served lower North Capitol Street residents until 1994. Most recently used as a hypothermic homeless shelter, renovations of the building are currently underway with plans to return to service in late 2005. The building was constructed in 1881 and added to the DC Inventory of Historic Sites in 2002.

#### *Government Printing Office*

Located between G and H Streets, NW, the Government Printing Office (GPO) was constructed between 1899 and 1904. The facility was constructed as the headquarters for the U.S. government printer, who had been located at this site since 1861. The GPO was added to the DC Inventory of Historic Sites in 1964.

#### *City Post Office*

The City Post Office Building, located at the northwest corner of Massachusetts Avenue and North Capitol Street, NW was constructed between 1911 and 1914, with a major addition during 1923-1935. The building formerly served as the Washington, DC post office from 1914 to 1986 and currently contains the National Postal Museum. The City Post Office is a major element in the three-part building composition planned for Columbus Plaza and was listed on the DC Inventory of Historic Sites in 1964.

#### *Union Station and Plaza*

Union Station, located at Massachusetts, Louisiana and Delaware Avenues, NW was constructed between 1903 and 1908. Union Station is listed in the DC Inventory of Historic Sites and the National Register of Historic Places, and according to the National Register nomination, “this imperial station with its vast interior spaces was literally the cornerstone of the McMillan Commission’s efforts to revive L’Enfant’s original plan of the city, creating a monumental gateway to the nation’s capital.” Union Station was designated as an historic



landmark by the District of Columbia Joint Committee on Landmarks in 1964. The Union Station and plaza complex are designated as a Special Place in the Comprehensive Plan.

#### *Columbus Fountain*

Columbus Fountain is located on the central axis of the plaza in front of Union Station, at Massachusetts Avenue and Delaware Avenues, NW. This landmark site sits at the focal point of vehicular and pedestrian traffic exiting Union Station or approaching the terminal from First Street, Massachusetts, Delaware and Louisiana Avenues. The Fountain was designed to symbolize the Old and New Worlds while Union Station represents the “mastery of the North American continent”. Columbus Fountain is sited within the elements of the L’Enfant Plan and was added to the DC Inventory of Historic Sites in 1964 and listed on the National Register in 1980.

#### *Engine Company No. 3*

Engine Company No. 3, located at 439 New Jersey Avenue, NW, was the longtime home of the city’s most prestigious firefighting units, charged with protection of the Capitol. The structure was built in 1916 to house the Columbia Volunteer Fire Company, organized in 1806. Engine Company No. 3 was designated on the DC Inventory of Historic sites in 1994.

### **3.2.1 Archaeological Resources**

Soils at the project site consist entirely of fill. According to the District of Columbia General Soil Map, the project site is located on the conjunction of two soil categories, which are characterized as urban land, and soils of udorthent association; “well drained soils that consist of cuts, fills, or otherwise disturbed land (all on landscaped positions).”

### **3.2.2 Historic Resources**

There are no known historic or cultural resources located on the project site. The urban context of the project site, however, includes numerous historic and cultural resources. These vary from the city’s historic plan of streets and squares to the many historic structures and places of cultural activity that surround the site.

#### L’Enfant Plan of Washington

Recognized as the country’s most notable achievement in urban planning, the L’Enfant Plan designed the District of Columbia through a street grid system, intersected by diagonal avenues. The 1791 Plan includes a coordinated system of radiating avenues, vistas, and parks overlaid upon an orthogonal grid of streets. The diagonal avenues provide connections between prominent features throughout the District. The project site is a result of the intersection of two major avenues, Massachusetts and New Jersey, with G Street connecting them to south, converging into a triangle.



Figure 3-4: L'Enfant Plan of Washington, DC, 1791

Major elements of the L'Enfant Plan within the study area include Massachusetts and New Jersey Avenues and the historic east-west alignment of G Street, NW. The L'Enfant Plan is listed in the National Register.

### The McMillan Plan of 1901

The Senate Park Commission of 1901, known as the McMillan Commission, expanded on the L'Enfant Plan in a manner consistent with the City Beautiful movement. The McMillan Plan is significant because it represents the first effort to conduct systematic, comprehensive urban planning for a major city. The Commission successfully removed railroad tracks from the Mall and extended the Mall and other monuments one mile to the west to create a site for the Lincoln Memorial.

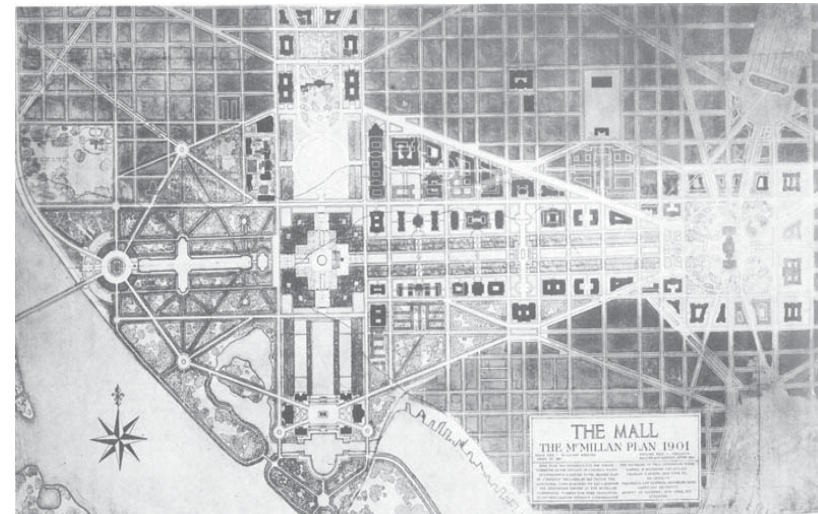


Figure 3-5: Detail of the McMillan Plan of 1901

### U.S. Capitol Building and Grounds

The project site is located approximately one half mile north of the U.S. Capitol Building. The Capitol is significantly higher than any other occupied building in the Nation's Capital and its dome is one of the most prominent features visible from the Memorial site. The building was designed in the Neo-classical Style in 1793 and constructed in 1827. The Statue of Freedom sits atop the dome, crowning the U.S. Capitol. The bronze statue is of a female figure standing 19 feet, 6 inches tall. Her dress is of flowing draperies, secured by a brooch inscribed with "U.S.". In her left hand, she holds a laurel wreath of victory and the shield of the United States, while her right hand rests on a sword. The cast iron globe on which she stands is inscribed with the national motto *E Pluribus Unum*.



Figure 3-6: U.S. Capitol Building and Grounds



### 3.2.3 Visual Resources

Visual resources include the proposed Memorial site, important street corridors, vistas, and views of historic and cultural resources surrounding the site. Their quality is defined by the massing, setback and architectural detail of surrounding buildings, as well as the trees, paved and unpaved surfaces, signage and street furniture that characterize the surrounding open space.

The proposed Memorial site is relatively flat and open, vacant of permanent structures or facilities. Several small DC street trees border the project site. The surrounding area is characterized by paved roads bordering the site.

The pattern of streets and associated visual corridors in the original portion of Washington, DC are significant to the city's



Figure 3-7: Proposed Memorial site, looking north along Massachusetts Avenue

early development. These corridors were established in the earliest plans for Washington by Pierre L'Enfant and have been maintained in subsequent plans and development. Of equal importance are views to and from key cultural resources, such as the U.S. Capitol.

The principal streets of the L'Enfant Plan influencing development of the Memorial site are the visual corridors formed by the strong diagonal street terminating at the U.S. Capitol Grounds (New Jersey Avenue), and the east-west grid streets defining city blocks (G Street). According to the L'Enfant Plan, east-west streets are designated with alphabetic names, north-south streets are numbered, and diagonal avenues are named for states.

The most powerful asset of the Memorial site is its view of the U.S. Capitol dome. Looking south from the site, the Capitol dome is the dominant visual resource in the landscape.



Figure 3-8: Proposed Memorial site, looking down New Jersey Avenue with the Capitol in the background



### **3.3 Natural Resources**

#### **3.3.1 Vegetation and Land Cover**

The proposed Memorial site measures a total of 3,500 square feet under NPS jurisdiction and management. The project site is an open, flat grassed area defined by the bordering rolled curb. The adjoining District property covers an area of approximately 6,000 square feet, including both landscaped area and paved surfaces. The area beyond the rolled curb, including the bordering landscape and street trees, and surrounding paved areas are under District control. The District street trees include a total of six trees: two mature trees, one 7-inch caliper, and three less than 2-inch caliper.

#### **3.3.2 Wildlife**

The proposed Memorial site is located in an urban setting, surrounded by office buildings. No wildlife was observed during visits to the site; however, it may be assumed that typical urban wildlife may visit this area. Common urban species include grey squirrels, pigeons and sparrows.

#### **3.3.3 Noise Levels**

Noise is generally defined as unwanted or objectionable sound. The effects of noise on people can include general annoyance, interference with speech communication, sleep disturbance, and in the extreme, hearing impairment. Community noise levels vary continuously. Most environmental noise includes a mix of frequencies from distant sources, which create a relatively steady background noise in which no

particular source is identifiable. Noise sensitive receptors are generally considered to be human activities or land uses that may be subject to the stress of significant interference from noise. Land uses associated with sensitive receptors include residential dwellings, hospitals, education facilities, and commemorative resources, such as a memorial.

### 3.4 Transportation

This section presents an overview of the existing transportation system and parking facilities serving the project site and the surrounding area. This assessment is based on field observation of existing vehicle and pedestrian travel patterns and traffic flow.

#### 3.4.1 Roadways and Traffic

The Memorial site is a traffic triangle bordered by Massachusetts Avenue, New Jersey Avenue, and G Street, NW. The site is easily accessible by I-395 and the nearby major arterials such as Massachusetts Avenue and New Jersey Avenue, NW. Other major arterials in the vicinity of the site include North Capitol Street, New York Avenue and Constitution Avenue. These roadways serve as key commuter routes into and out of the city's central employment area.

Immediate access to the project site is provided via Massachusetts Avenue and New Jersey Avenue, NW. In order to facilitate the following analysis and discussion, the key features of these local access roadways are presented below:

- Massachusetts Avenue, NW: This is a six-lane major arterial running north-south-west through the study area north of the site. This roadway provides direct access to the proposed Memorial site and a number of major facilities nearby including Union Station. This roadway serves heavy traffic and provides direct access to I-395.

New Jersey Avenue, NW: This is a four-lane, southbound street adjacent to the project site. New Jersey Avenue runs south, perpendicular to Louisiana Avenue, toward the Capitol Grounds.

G Street, NW: This is a short two-lane, east-west roadway connecting New Jersey and Massachusetts Avenues, NW. Access to G Street, NW would be from either of these main roads. Metered parking spots are provided along G Street, which provides direct access to the site.

In determining the study area road network to be evaluated, the following assumptions were made regarding vehicle trip generation:

Visitor traffic would consist mainly of pedestrians originating from nearby office buildings and cultural attractions.

Visitor trips to the Memorial site would occur largely during the off-peak periods; and because most visitors would be coming from other cultural attractions such as the National Mall, or from Union Station, Memorial visitors would include a large percentage of public transit, pedestrian, and other non-private vehicle trips (i.e., tour buses).

Trips by private vehicles and taxis would provide access for several occupants at a time.

### **3.4.2 Vehicular Parking**

The parking supply within the immediate area of the project site is limited to on-street parking. Immediately surrounding the site are 14 metered spots. Additional metered spots are located along nearby roads. There are no designated on-street handicapped parking spaces in the immediate site area; however, handicapped persons may park free in DC metered spaces for up to two hours.

The District enforces its parking policy regarding time restrictions and violations of metered parking. Nearby Union Station offers a public parking garage. Additional commercial/public parking facilities can be found throughout the area with the nearest public parking garage located across from the site, accessible via G Street, NW.

### **3.4.3 Public Transportation**

The closest Metrorail station to the Memorial site is nearby Union Station, located within two blocks from the site. Union Station is the region's most significant intermodal transportation terminal, providing access to local Metro rail and bus service as well as the Virginia Railway Express, MARC Train, and Amtrak rail services. Taxi service and car rentals can also be obtained at Union Station.

Several bus lines pass the site and have stops nearby. The three main bus service lines nearby include the North Capitol Street line, East Capitol Street line and the Benning Road- Potomac Park line.

In addition to rail and bus service, the planned DC Circulator, "the one-dollar cross town get-around", will have a stop at the proposed Memorial site. This new bus service is planned to operate between Union Station, the southwest waterfront and Georgetown waterfront.

### **3.4.4 Pedestrian and Bicycle Circulation**

Visitor pedestrian activity in the Memorial site vicinity is low relative to other more centrally located areas of the Monumental Core. The majority of pedestrian traffic may be a result of the local office buildings and Georgetown University Law Center. Within the immediate area of the site, sidewalks are provided along key roadways; and cross-walks, pedestrian signals and curb-cuts are provided at key intersections.

### **3.5 Utilities and Infrastructure**

#### **3.5.1 Stormwater Management**

Stormwater drainage patterns are such that the stormwater dissipates across the grass surface of the park parcel. Stormwater from the surrounding paved surface runs off the site, and is directed into the storm sewer system. Significant components of the sewer system pass in the vicinity of the site, however the environmental analysis for the site selection study determined that the construction, operation and maintenance of the proposed Memorial will not cause disruption.

The site is not located within the Potomac River 100-year flood plain, therefore flooding of the site is not of concern.

#### **3.5.2 Site Utilities**

An existing hose bib provides a water connection to the site. The site is not currently served by gas, electricity, or telecommunications. District lightposts border the proposed Memorial site, within the DC planting strips. No other public utilities have been located at the site.