

World War I Memorial Section 106 Consulting Parties Meeting

September 21, 2016

2:30 p.m.

D.C. Office of Planning

Agencies: Peter May, Glenn DeMarr, Maureen Joseph (National Park Service-National Capital Region); Catherine Dewey, Mike Commisso, Melissa Mertz, (National Park Service-National Mall and Memorial Parks); Peter Lonsway (National Park Service- President's Park); Diane Sullivan, Matt Flis (National Capital Planning Commission); Thomas Luebke, Sarah Batcheler, Daniel Fox (U.S. Commission of Fine Arts); David Maloney, Andrew Lewis, Gabriella Gutowski (District of Columbia Historic Preservation Office)

Attendees: John Fondersmith, Carol F. Aten, Beth Purcell, Darwina Neal, Don Hawkins (Committee of 100 on the Federal City); Rebecca Miller (DC Preservation League); Bill Brown (AOI DC); Jo-Ann Neuhaus (By phone, Penn Quarter Neighborhood Association); Betsy Merritt (By Phone, National Trust for Historic Preservation); Alex Block (Downtown BID); Charles Birnbaum, Nord Wennerstrom, Scott Craver (The Cultural Landscape Foundation)

Project Team: Edwin Fountain, Libby O'Connell, Roger Lewis, Dale Archer (WWI Centennial Commission); Joe Weishaar (U Studio); Phoebe Lickwar (Forge Landscape Architecture); John Gregg (GWFO); Alan Harwood, Claire Sale, Daniel Mckenna-Foster (AECOM)

Introduction

Everybody introduced themselves.

Presentation

Alan Harwood (AECOM) provided a review of the undertaking, and the site context.

Claire Sale (AECOM) addressed possible changes to the Area of Potential Effect and the recently completed Determination of Eligibility.

Phoebe Lickwar (Forge Landscape Architecture) discussed changes and updates to the previous design concept and presented the current design concept. The following represents elements of the current design concept:

- The spatial organization of the park would be retained.
- The berms would be lowered to improve visibility into the park.
- The barriers to accessibility would be removed.
- The concession feature (kiosk) and water feature (fountain) would be removed.
- A horizontal water feature functioning as a scrim of water would replace the pool.

Discussion Summary

The following is intended to be a summary of key discussion points. It is not intended to serve as a transcript or legal record.

Relationship between Memorial and Park Features

- Memorial and park uses will overlap on the site. The central lawn in the design concept is a flexible space that can be used for general activities or commemorative events.
- Areas further removed from the memorial are more suited for recreational activities.
- The design concept eliminates barriers to accessibility to the extent practicable.

Changes to the Park

- Consulting parties stated that the physical fabric of the park would be lost and identified reduction of the berms, the installation of a smaller water feature, the removal of crape myrtle trees, and removal of the “Mayan ruin” aspects of the site (block structures and cascading water) as changes to the landscape.
- Trees would be preserved whenever possible and advisable, and in case of replacement new trees will be native or adapted species.
- Berms would be lowered with the aim of improving visibility into the park. Reduced traffic conditions now require less buffering to avoid unwanted noise within the park.
- Design concept would retain the existing Pershing Memorial elements; the statue and walls would remain at the existing location, but lowered.

Water Feature

- The water feature would no longer serve as the primary, dynamic focus of the park; berms, cascading water, and existing paving would be removed.
- The design alters the previous pool into a scrim, or a shallow pool that can be interactive and used as a dry surface in the winter. This would be a flexible area intended as an urban space.
- Although a water feature may be a major feature of the original design, the NPS often cannot adequately maintain water features.
- The costs of rehabilitating the pool are unclear to consulting parties; potentially, outside funding sources could aid the rehabilitation of the pool.

Interpretive Features

- The Memorial wall and Pershing Memorial would have accompanying interpretive features. Experts in the NPS are currently coordinating with the World War I Centennial Commission to develop appropriate interpretation.
- The sculptor has ensured the base relief would be legible although the wall would face east.

Treatment of North Side of the Park

- Several benches would be placed between the curb and the line of the water feature on the north side of the park, some in the place of existing benches and some new benches.
- Existing trees would be retained if possible and advisable; the goal is to retain as many trees as possible, ensuring their long-term health, although some may be removed during construction.
- A new line of trees would be added along the curb along the north side of Pennsylvania Avenue, while the traditional line of trees will stay in place.
- The new trees could affect views between Pennsylvania Avenue and the U.S. Capitol (L’Enfant Plan) and the Pennsylvania Avenue NHS, and requires further study.
- The plan does not alter taxi/limousine area to the north of the park.

Determination of Adverse Effects

- Consulting parties agreed that a clearer identification of changes to the park and their potential for adverse effects on historic properties is needed.

Next Steps

The presentation will be posted to the NPS PEPC system online to receive additional comments. The World War I Memorial will be reviewed at the next CFA meeting on October 20, 2016 and the next NCPC meeting on November 3, 2016. NPS closed the meeting by thanking the participants and stating that feedback is welcome.