

NCPC File #7682

## National World War I Memorial

Pershing Park  
14<sup>th</sup> Street and Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC

---

National Park Service

Revised Concept Review

**Commission meeting date:** July 13, 2017

**NCPC review authority:** Commemorative Works Act (40 U.S.C. 8905) & Public Law 113-291

**Applicant request:** Concept Review

**Delegated / consent / open / executive session:** Open Session

**NCPC Review Officer:** M. Flis

**NCPC File number:** 7682

**Project summary:**

The National Park Service (NPS), in collaboration with the World War I Centennial Commission (WWICC), has submitted concept plans for the National World War I Memorial, to be located at Pershing Park in northwest Washington, DC. The WWICC is project sponsor of the Memorial and was established by the World War I Centennial Commission Act, in accordance with Public Law 112-272. WWICC is responsible for planning, developing, and executing programs, projects, and activities to commemorate the centennial of World War I.

Title 30, Section 3091 of the National Defense Authorization Act of 2015 (Pub. Law 113-291) designates Pershing Park in the District of Columbia, along with the Liberty Memorial in Kansas City, as national World War I memorials. The Act further authorizes the WWICC to honor the service of members of the United States armed forces in World War I by enhancing Pershing Park with new sculptural and other commemorative elements, including landscaping. The project site is bounded by Pennsylvania Avenues North and South, and 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> Streets, NW. The Commerce Building is located to the south, the Sherman Memorial to the west, the Willard Hotel to the north, and Freedom Plaza to the east. The existing park was designed by M. Paul Friedberg, and includes a central, sunken plaza with water feature, raised berms and landscaping designed by Oehme Van Sweden. A gazebo, granite steps and seating can also be found on the site. A memorial to General Pershing, including a statue and walls, is located on the east side of the site. The fountain and water feature currently do not operate.

A open design competition resulted in five finalists, from which the winner – “The Weight of Sacrifice” - was selected in January 2016. Since that time, the sponsor has continued to develop the proposal. In addition, a Determination of Eligibility was completed for Pershing Park which found the site individually eligible for the National Register. The project design seeks to combine commemorative elements with an urban park, while considering the existing and contributing elements of Pershing Park. NCPC reviewed and commented on concept plans at the November 2016 meeting. The concept has since been revised.



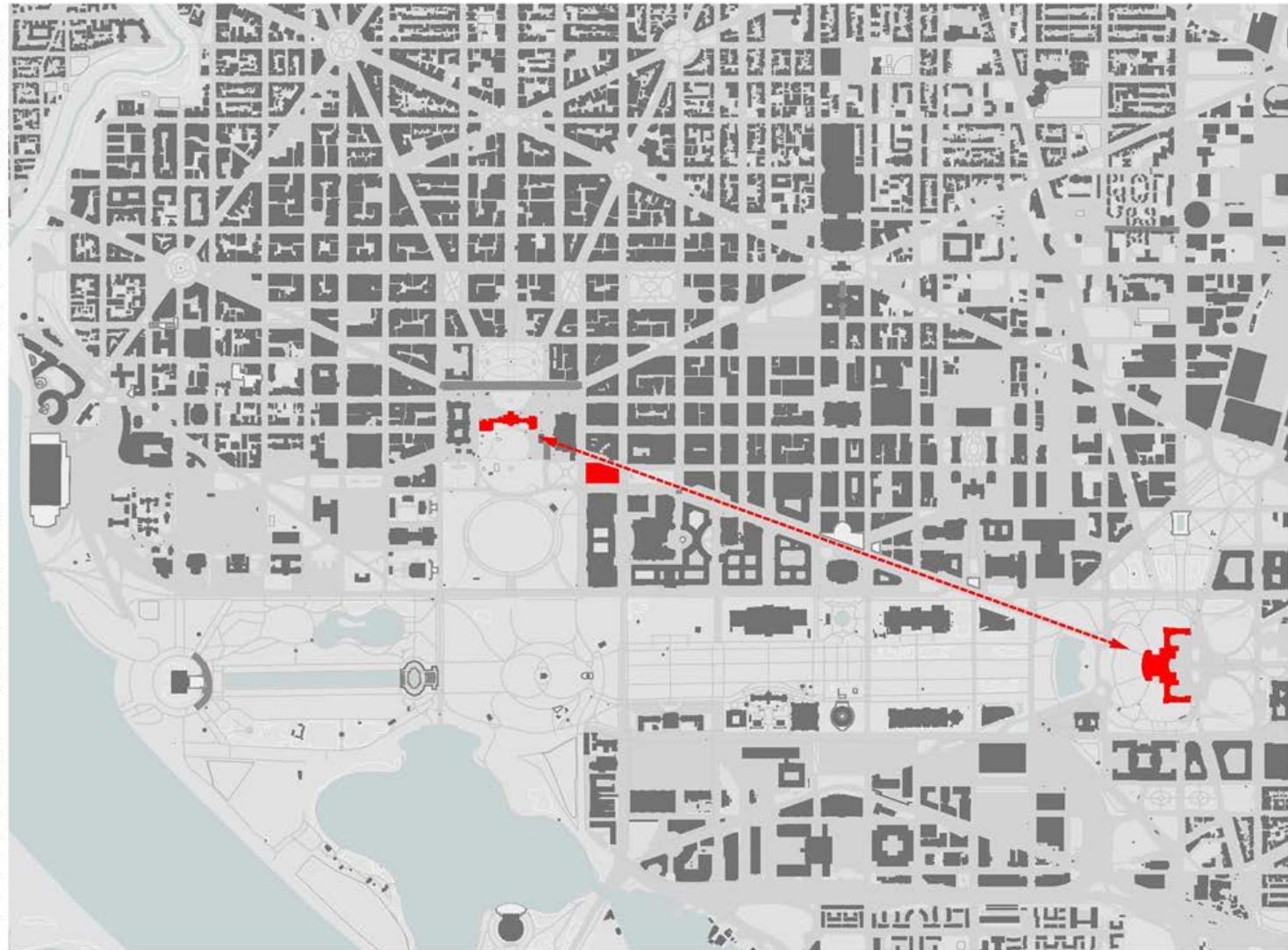
## Site Context

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.

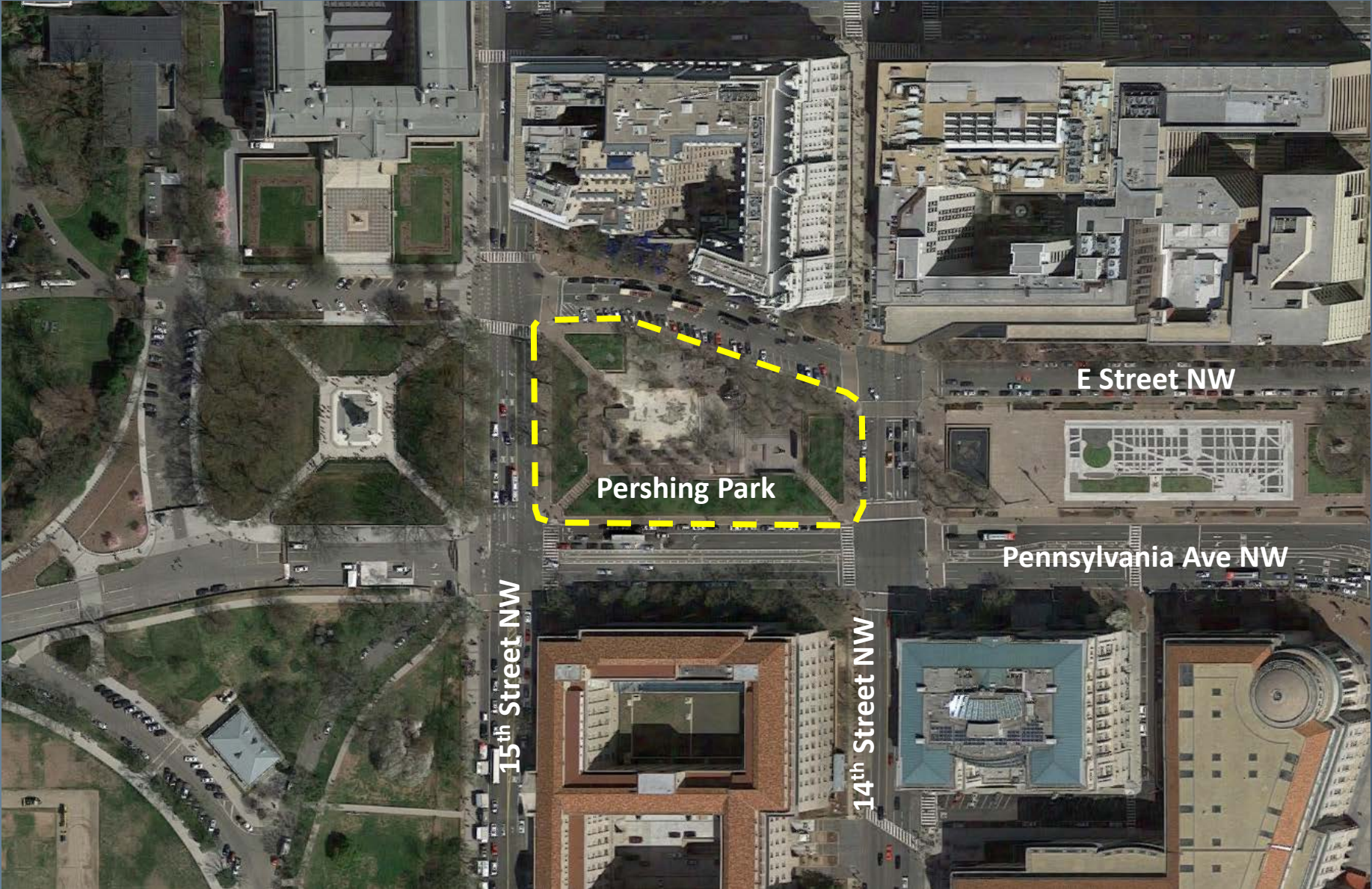
At the junction between the monumental core to the south and west and the residential and commercial life of Washington D.C. to the north and east, Pershing Park needs to function as both a memorial and a park, contributing to the family of commemorative elements and spaces of Pennsylvania Avenue, while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



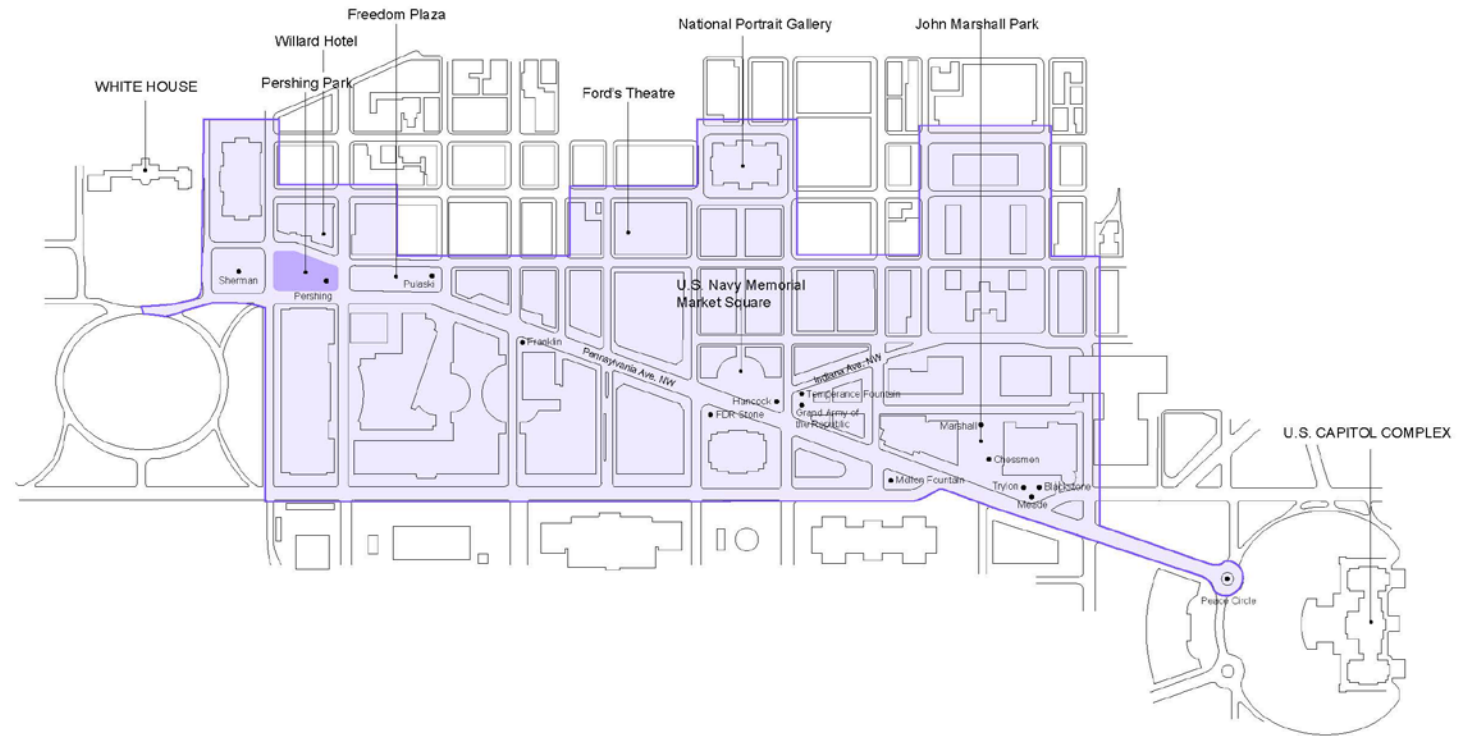






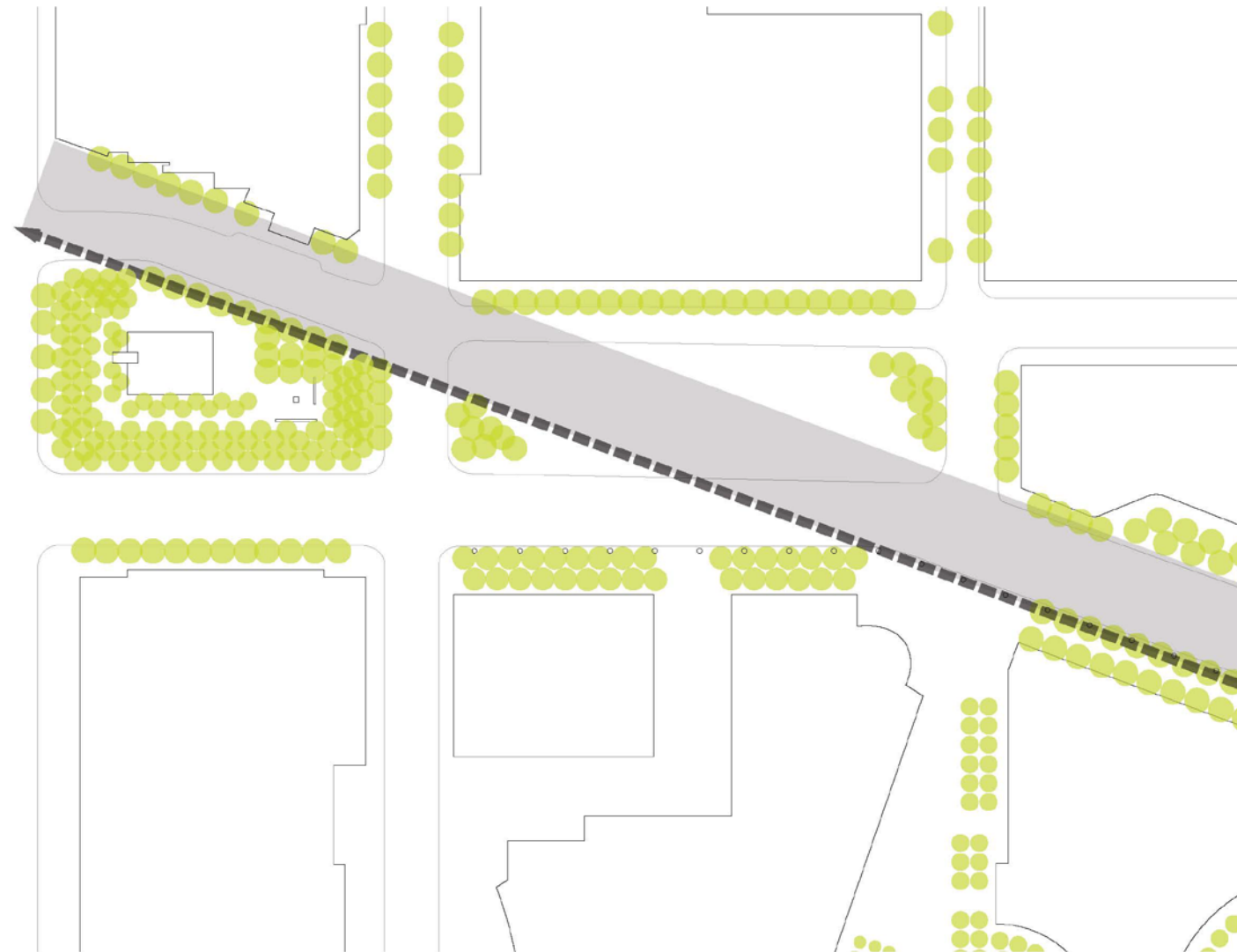
## Pennsylvania Avenue NHS

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.























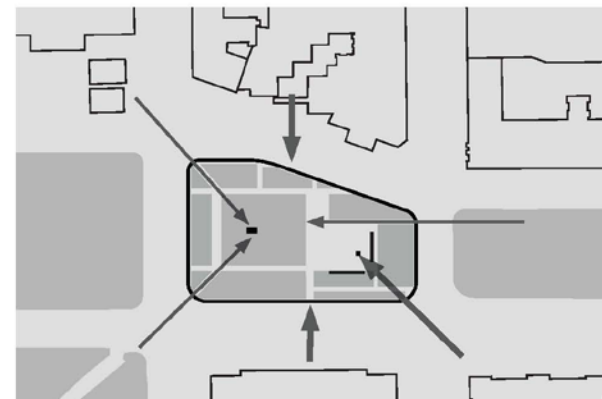




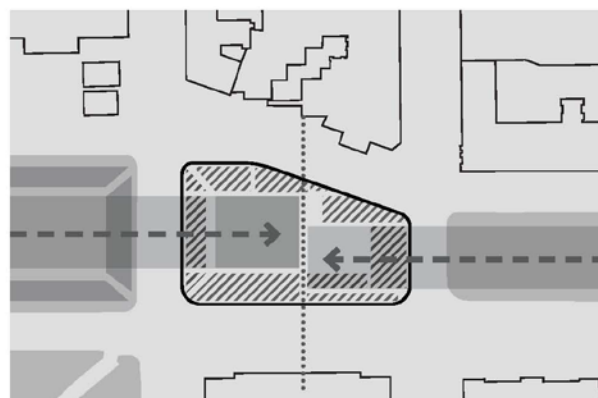




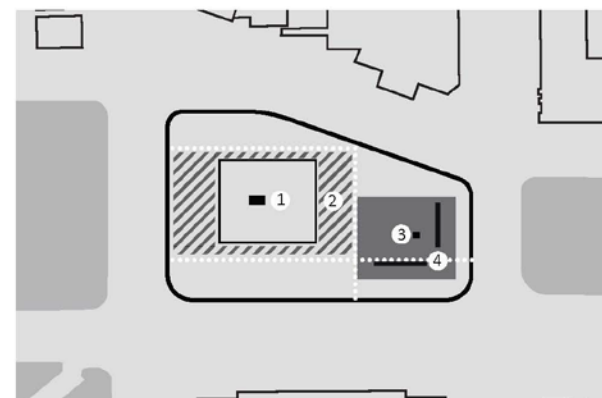
*Pedestrian access to the site is primarily from the South-West in the direction of the mall, from the South-East via Freedom Plaza and the Freedom Triangle metro stop, and from the White House*



*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*

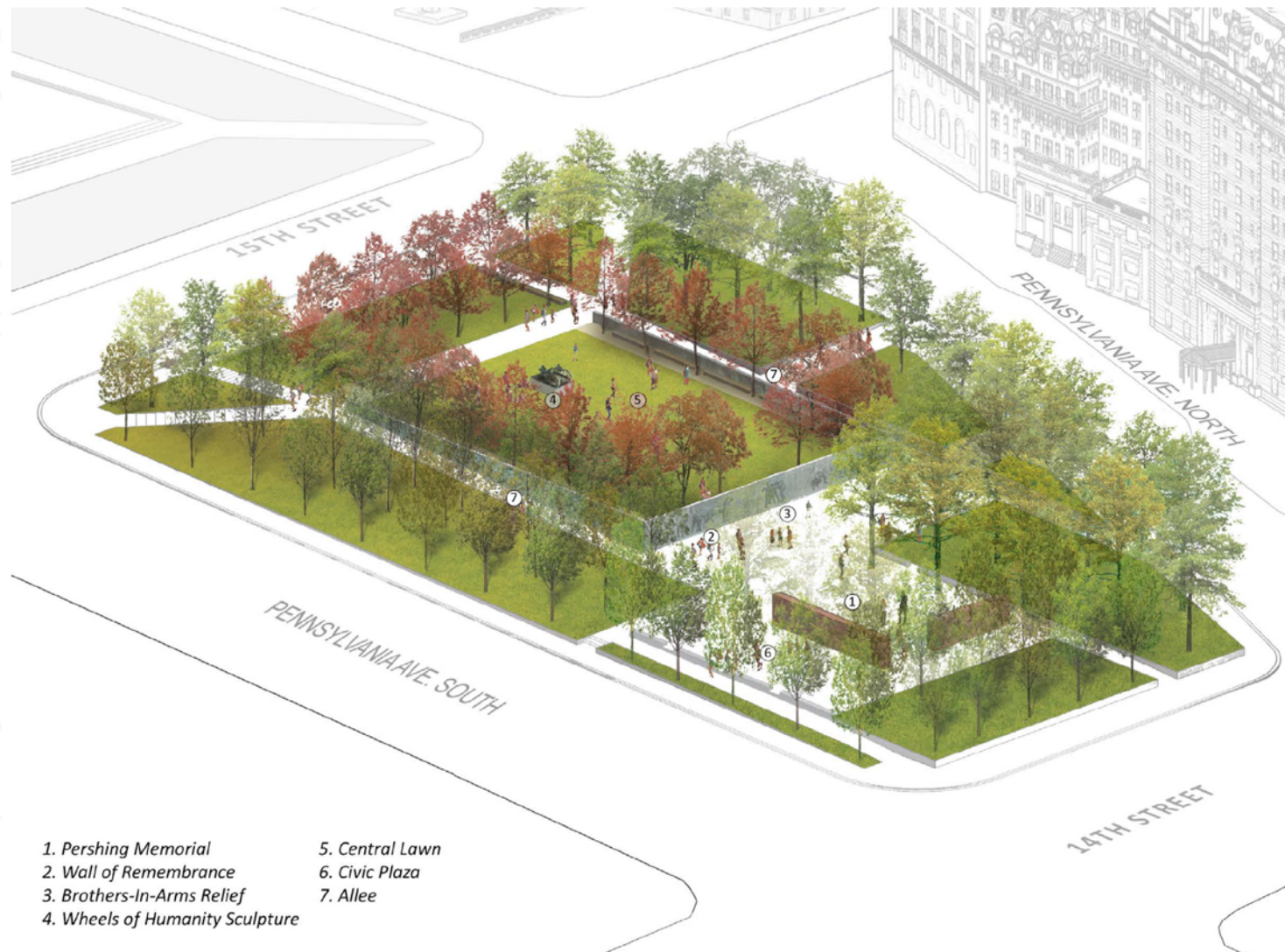
Competition Proposal: Context Analysis

## 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.



- |                                 |                 |
|---------------------------------|-----------------|
| 1. Pershing Memorial            | 5. Central Lawn |
| 2. Wall of Remembrance          | 6. Civic Plaza  |
| 3. Brothers-In-Arms Relief      | 7. Allee        |
| 4. Wheels of Humanity Sculpture |                 |



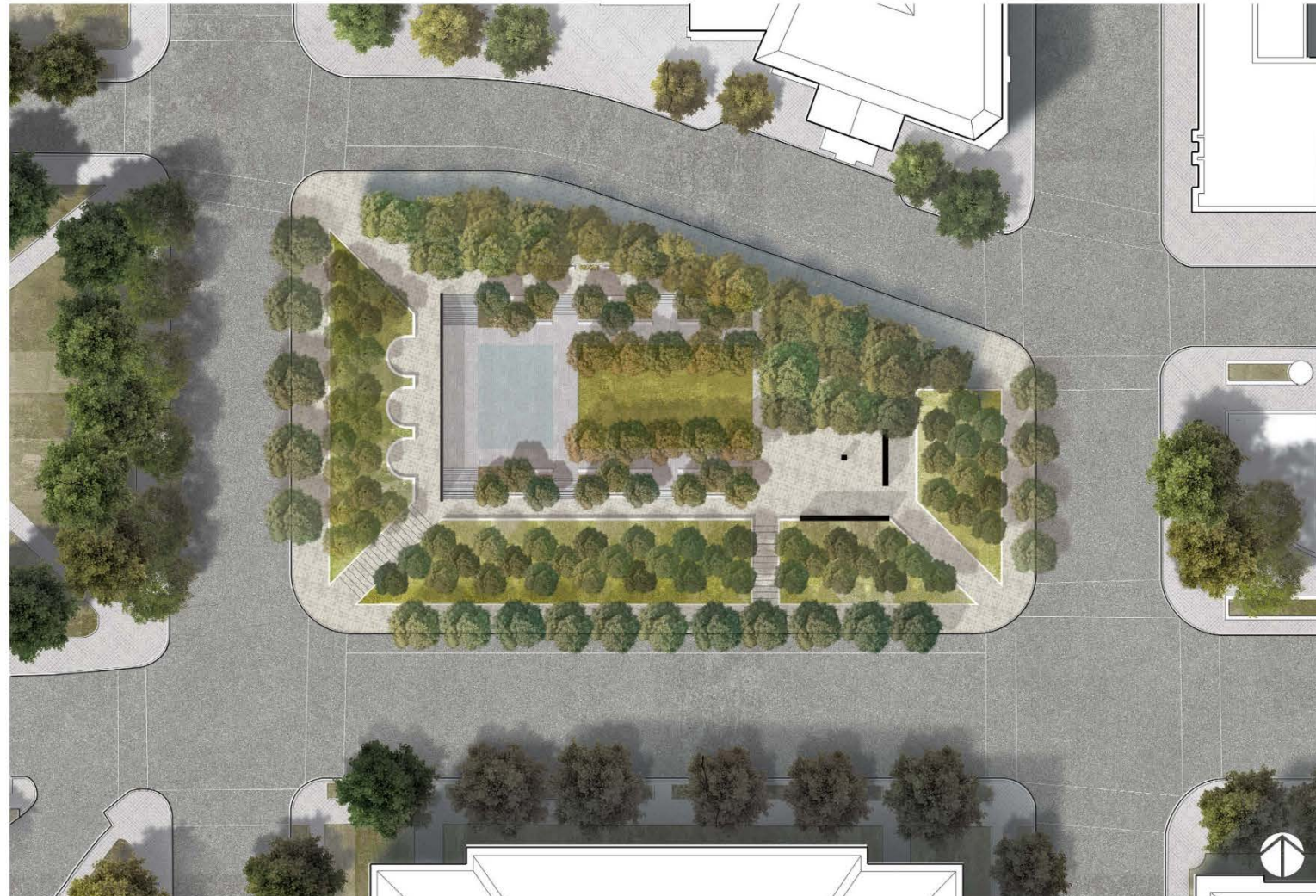
## October 2016 Concept Design

### Key adaptations:

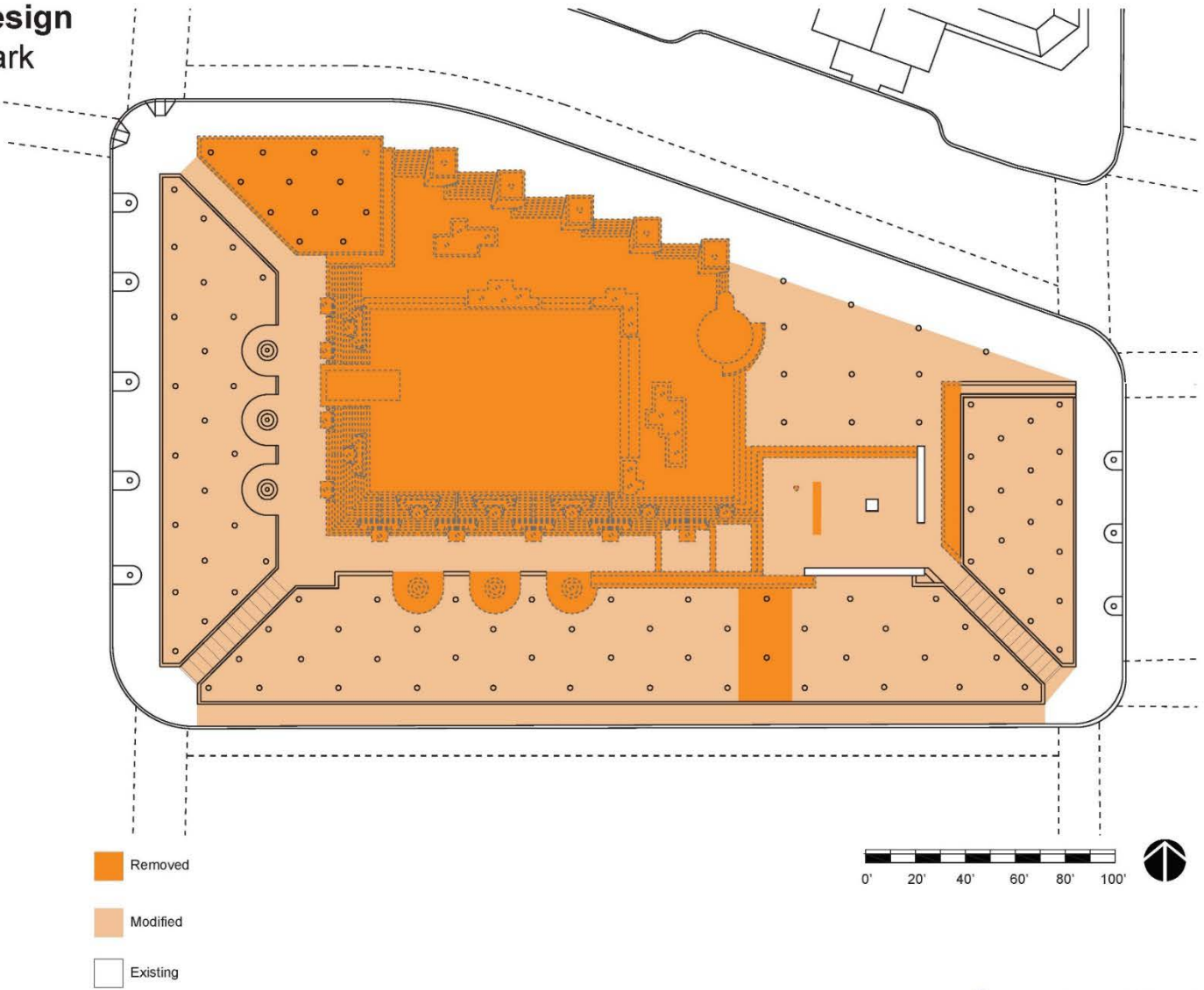
- Shifts the bas-relief wall west into a sunken central room within the park
- Improves universal accessibility throughout the park
- Increases visual access into and out of the park
- Creates stronger connections with the urban context
- Proposes enduring and maintainable features and materials

### Key features preserved:

- Central, lowered precinct
- Basic berm architecture with its attendant benefits (seclusion, enclosure, buffering, etc.)
- Openness and flow within the site and between the site and its surroundings



## October 2016 Concept Design Modifications to Existing Park





## NCPC Comments

NCPC Executive Director's Recommendation comments received November 3, 2016 in response to October Concept Design:

- Provide National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) alternative with a rehabilitation approach with minimal changes to existing park features
- Denote existing park elements to be retained, reused, or rehabilitated for the memorial
- Provide plan and renderings that denote the limits of the PADC streetscape and how the street-scape transitions into memorial space
- Further develop northern portion of the site to better define the sidewalk zone, increase green space, and create a clear transition between the public street and the memorial area
- Further explore possibilities to reuse or rehabilitate more of the existing features, including steps, planters, and waterfall.



Existing Park - View Looking Northeast



Existing Park - View Looking West



Existing Park - View of Pershing Statue



Existing Park - View Looking East

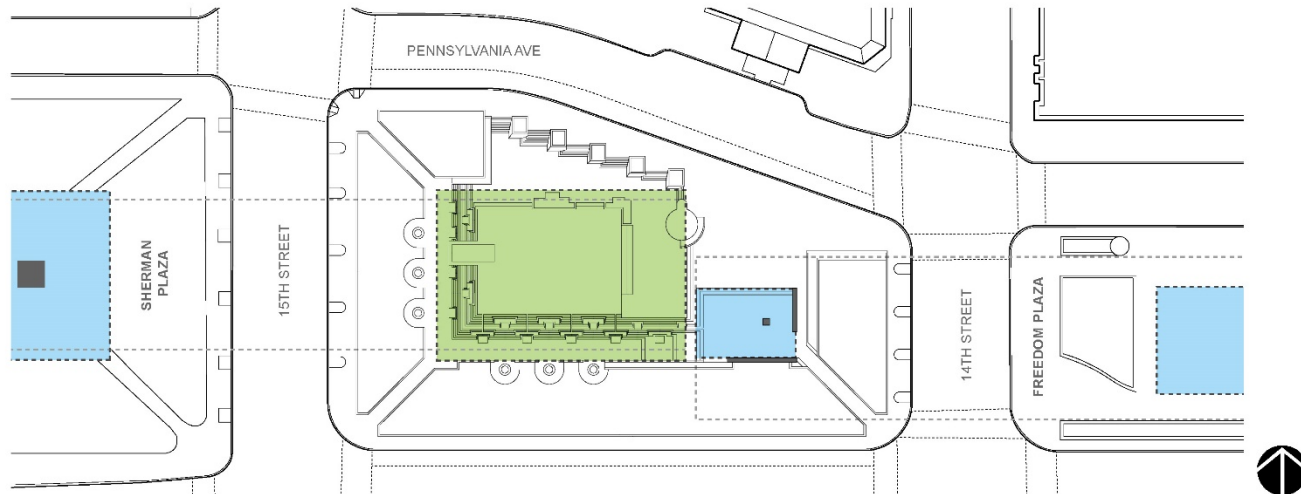


Existing Park - View of Kiosk



## Site Context Transitional Landscape

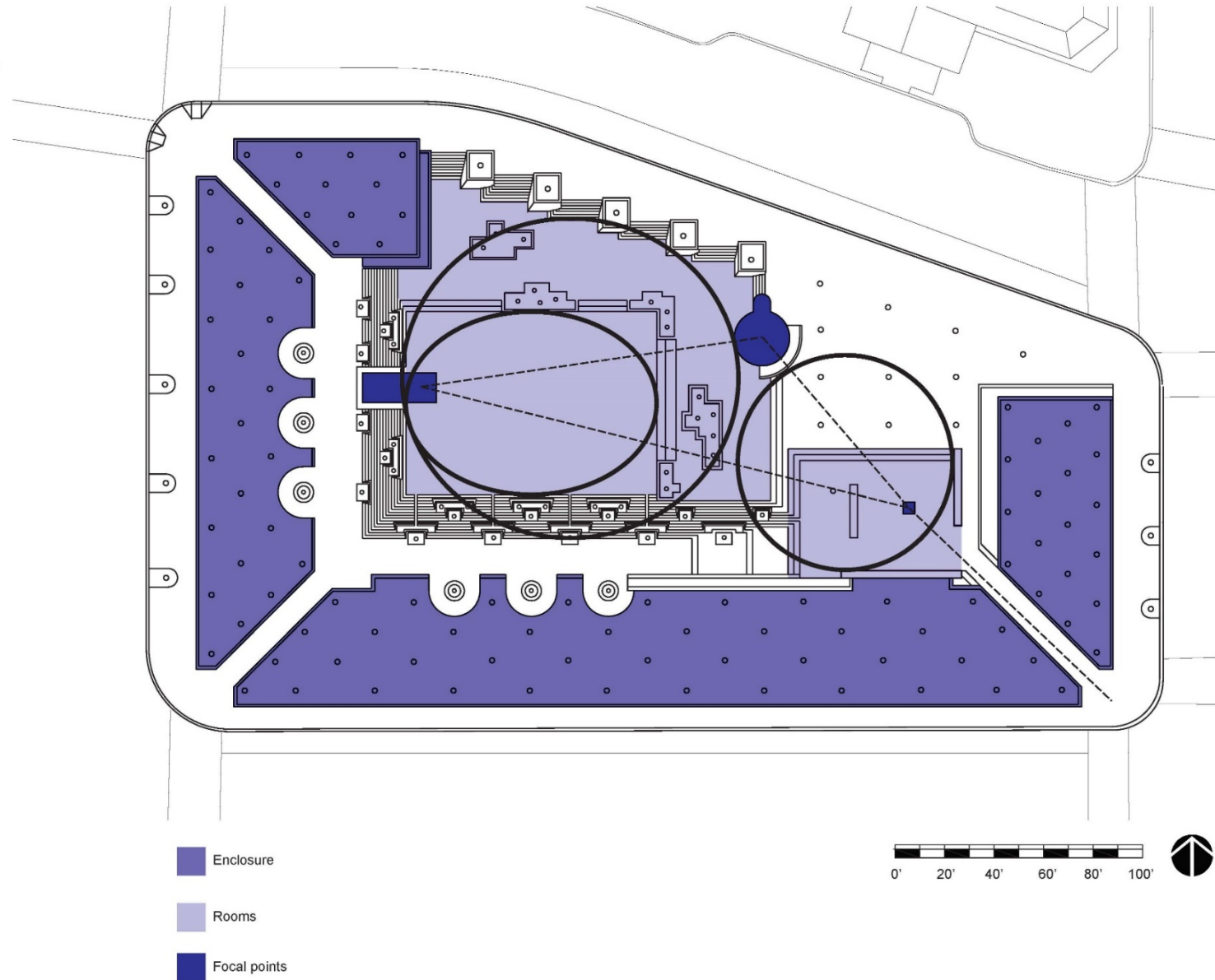
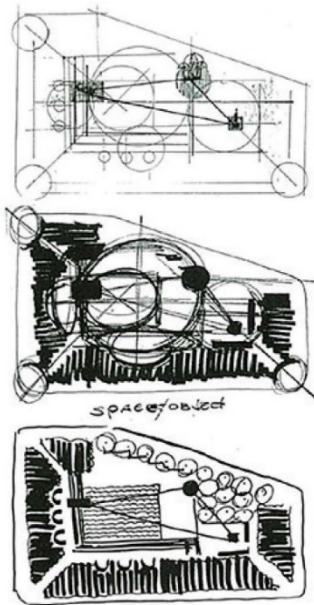
- Site transitions between the primarily planted President's Park to the west and the paved Freedom Plaza across to the east
- Site's trapezoidal plan transitions from the wider square block at General Sherman's Monument to the more narrow rectangle of Freedom Plaza
- Park's central space aligns with the Sherman Memorial and mirrors corner entries to the west
- Pershing Memorial responds to Freedom Plaza to the east with a heavily planted edge
- Both the park and Memorial are buffered from street traffic on 14th St., 15th St. and Pennsylvania Avenue south
- Both the park and Memorial are open to Pennsylvania Avenue north





## Existing Park Analysis Rooms and Focal Points

In response to NCPC comments, the design team revisited analysis of the M. Paul Friedberg and Partners, Wallace K. Harrison, and Oehme van Sweden designs for the existing Pershing Park.

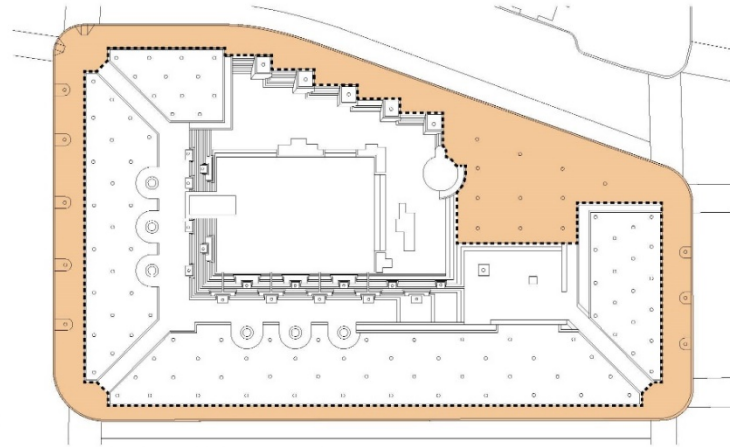




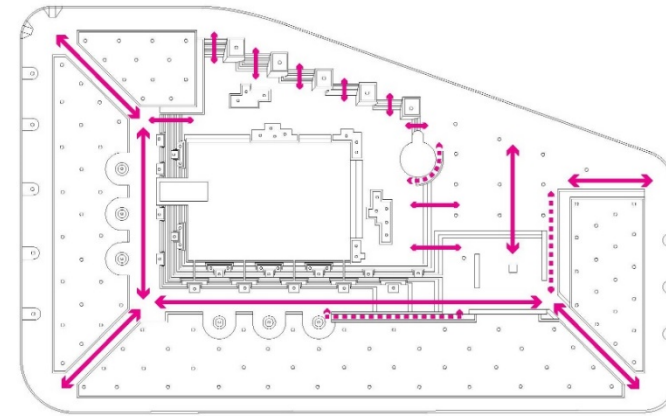
## Existing Park Analysis Spatial Investigations

Key observations:

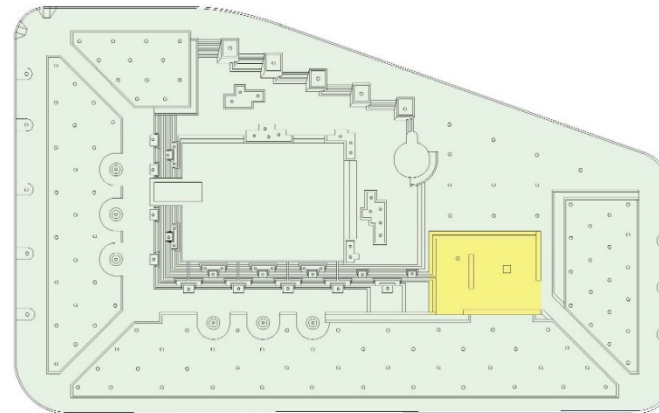
- PADC Streetscape limits can be accommodated within an authentic rehabilitation scheme
- Circulation is omnidirectional and unhierarchical
- The General Pershing Memorial is a relatively small and distinct secondary space within Pershing Park
- Pershing Park includes distinct rooms on clearly articulated levels
- The sunken pool is the dominant space within the park, and the focal point around which the park is organized in plan and section



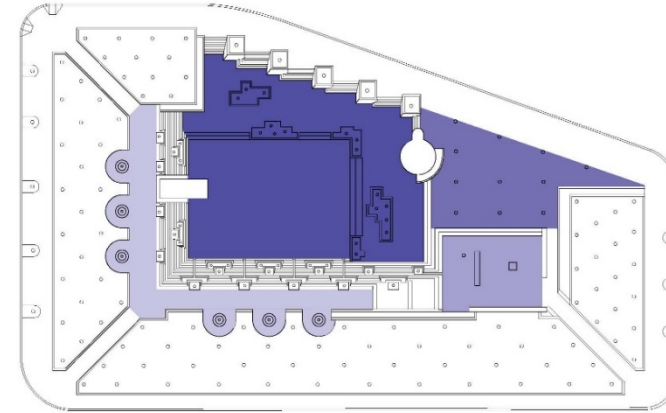
PADC STREETScape LIMITS



CIRCULATION



MEMORIAL

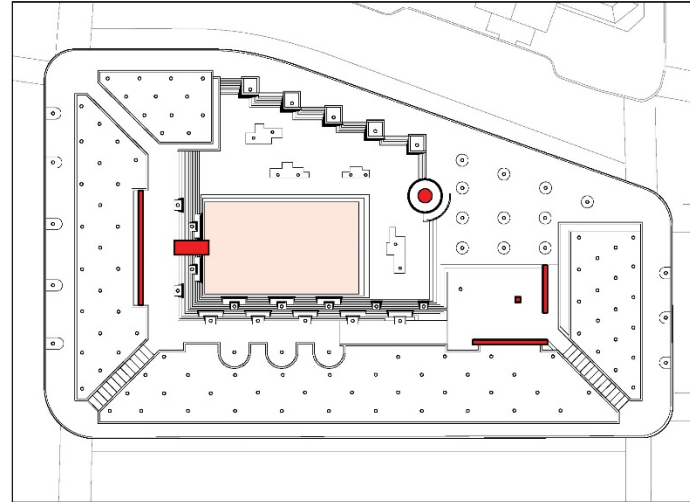


DISTINCT LEVELS

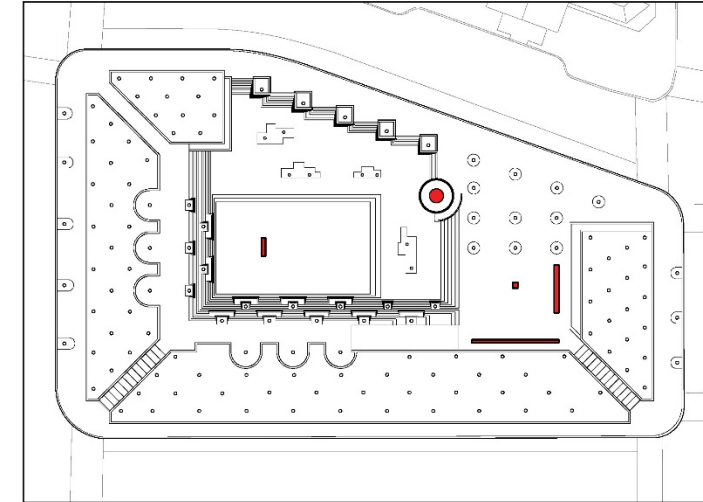


## Design Evolution

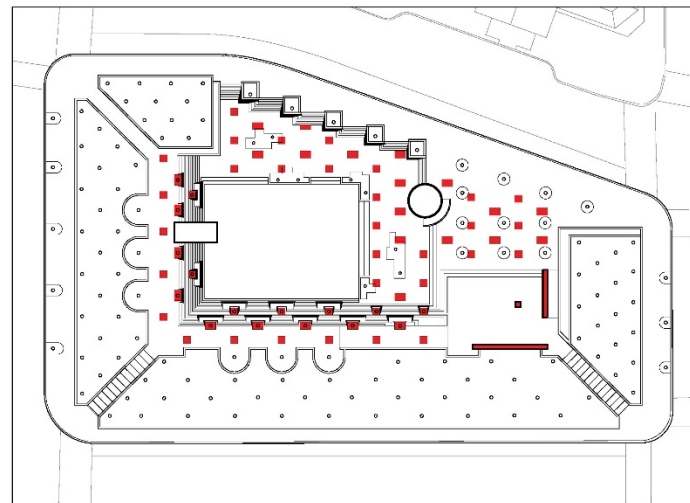
Through the pursuit of multiple design iterations and revisions the design team concluded that the most appropriate location and expression for a memorial which meets the initially stated goals of the WWICC and best mitigates the adverse effects to the existing park is a solution which modifies the existing fountain element located within the western terrace. The select solutions shown here were attempts to create a design which met the aforementioned goals and each scheme represents a larger course of study. Each of the solutions was evaluated and ultimately dismissed because it either failed to meet the commemorative goals of the WWICC, caused significant change to the existing park features, or resulted in a design which had overall negative consequences on the experience and function of the park.



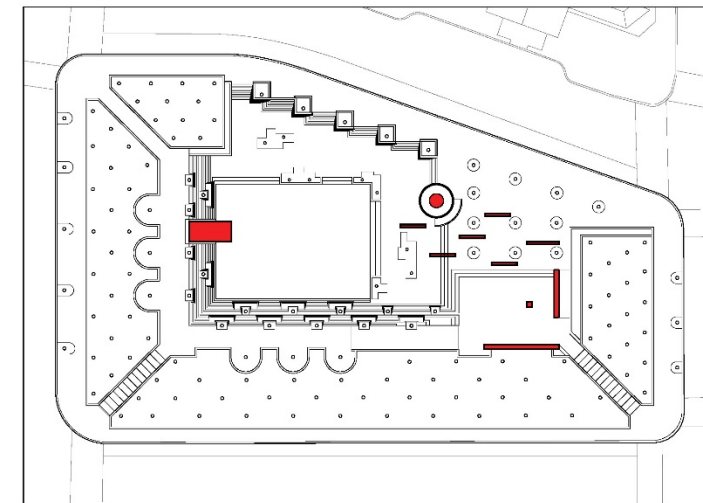
UPPER WALL DESIGN



TRIUMPHAL COLUMN DESIGN



DISTRIBUTED MEMORIAL PAVING



DISTRIBUTED MEMORIAL WALLS



## June 2017 Restored Pool Concept

The intent of this design is to create a memorial which shares a symbiotic relationship with the existing park. The fountain provides the water, sound, and ambiance to the park while the water in the pool reflects the fountain, trees, and the sky. By joining these two features together the memorial becomes as much about the narrative of life and war depicted above the water as it becomes about the loss reflected below.

In order to accomplish this, the existing fountain element is expanded equally north and south to become a larger 65' wide art object nestled in the western terrace stair. Similar to the functionality of the existing fountain, a pool of water wells up from the fountain and cascades over the sides and back into troughs which bring it down to the pool. The side of the fountain facing the pool includes the bronze bas relief and only has water running down the left and right edges of the sculpture. A pathway has been created within the pool to allow for visitors to access the artwork.

### ASSESSMENT

- Redefines the existing fountain and pool as the primary commemorative expression
- Redefines circulation of the lower pool area while maintaining pool integrity
- Requires a change to the western terrace seating





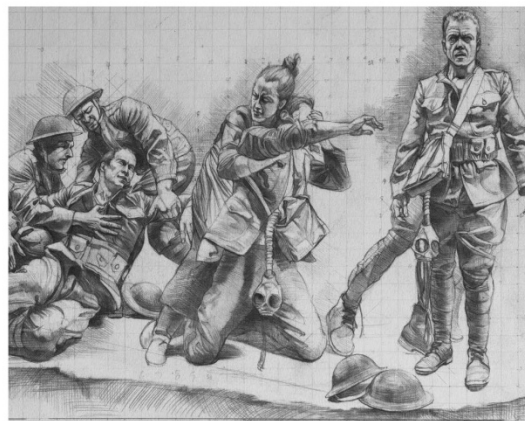
## Sculptural Artwork

The central memorial feature is a monumental work of sculpture in bronze bas-relief, conceived of as a visual and emotional narrative. The work is meant to convey feelings of honor, pride, and loss.

"The soldier will journey from the arms of his family, through the brutality of battle, past figures representing death and madness, into the care of a nurse, and finally return home forever changed." -The Wall Street Journal

The narrative consists of a series of scenes depicting five "acts" of the war: the call to arms, the departure, the battle, the aftermath, and the return. A recurring figure appears throughout, as the man takes leave of his family, joins the march to war and then the battle, suffers the shock of casualty, and then returns home. In the first scene the man takes his helmet from his young daughter; in the last, he returns his helmet to his older, wiser child, a symbol of American coming-of-age in World War I and a harbinger of the war that the next generation would fight twenty years later.

On another level, the central battle scene conveys the courage and heroism of American forces in the war, which was as profound as that in better-remembered wars. The scene of aftermath depicts the physical and mental toll of the war, followed by a scene of proud return recognizing the accomplishments of American troops, with a parade of soldiers marching into "the American century."





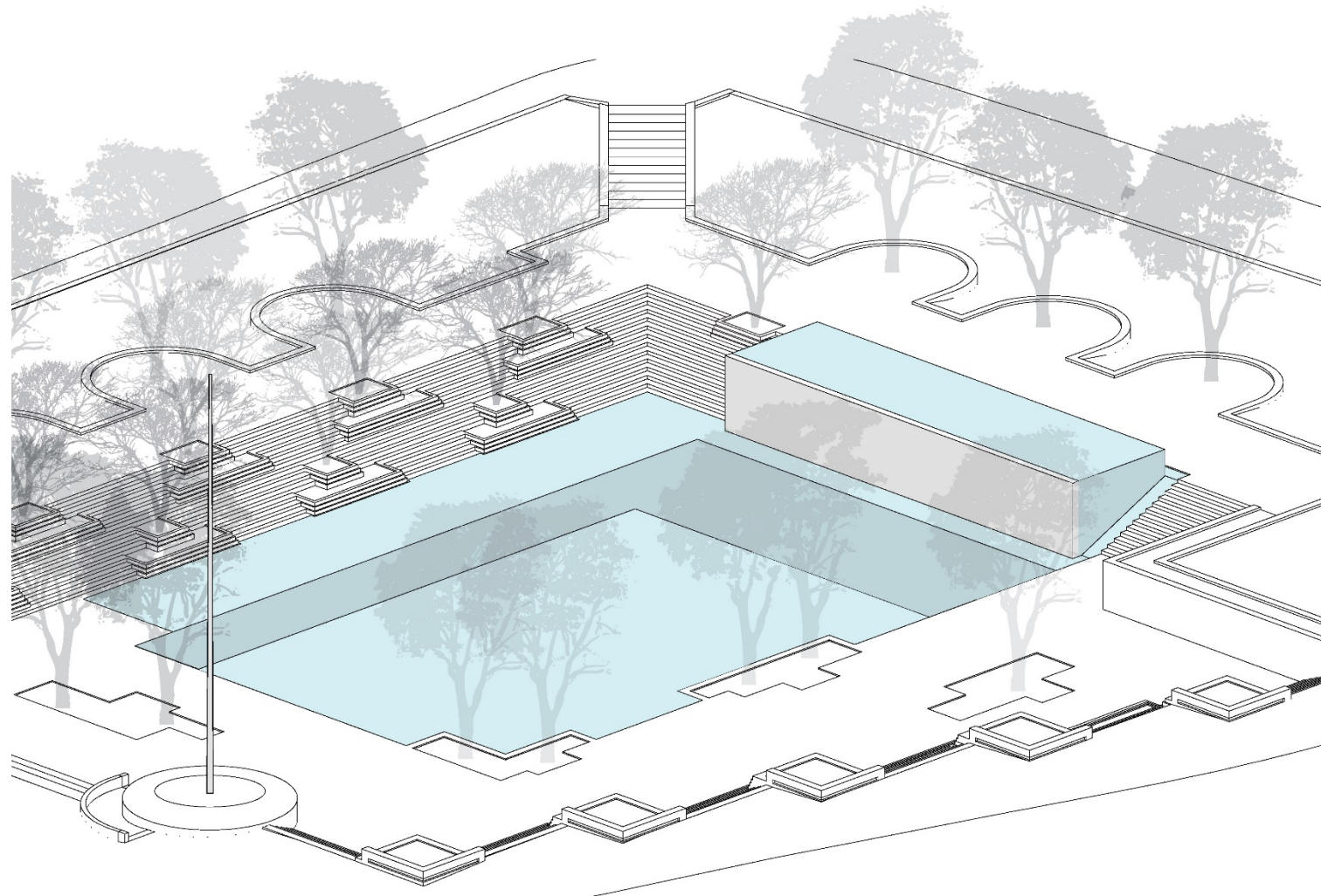
## June 2017 Restored Pool Concept





## June 2017 Restored Pool Concept

The "Restored Pool Concept" requires that some means of pathway be created in order to facilitate visitors with an accessible route from the lower terrace region to the sculptural bas relief wall. By merging the materiality of this route with an appropriate pool bottom covering the design team intends that the entire pool region will read as a single continuous surface. The pathway through the water is only revealed by the presence of water within the pool basin. Examples of similar design strategies can be found on page 25.





## June 2017 Restored Pool Concept



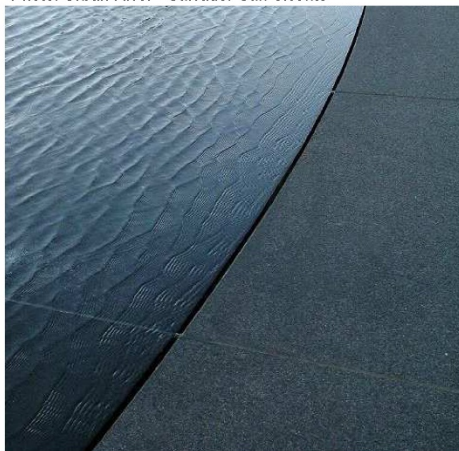
**PROJECT UNKNOWN**  
-Photo: Urban River - Salvador San Vicente



**INNICHEN**  
-Alleswirdgut architektur



**ESPACES PUBLICS DE CASTELSARRASIN**  
-Kaplan Projects



**PROJECT UNKNOWN**



**NASHER SCULPTURE CENTER**  
-PWP



**NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY, KOGOD COURTYARD**  
-Foster+Partners and GGN



## June 2017 Restored Pool Concept



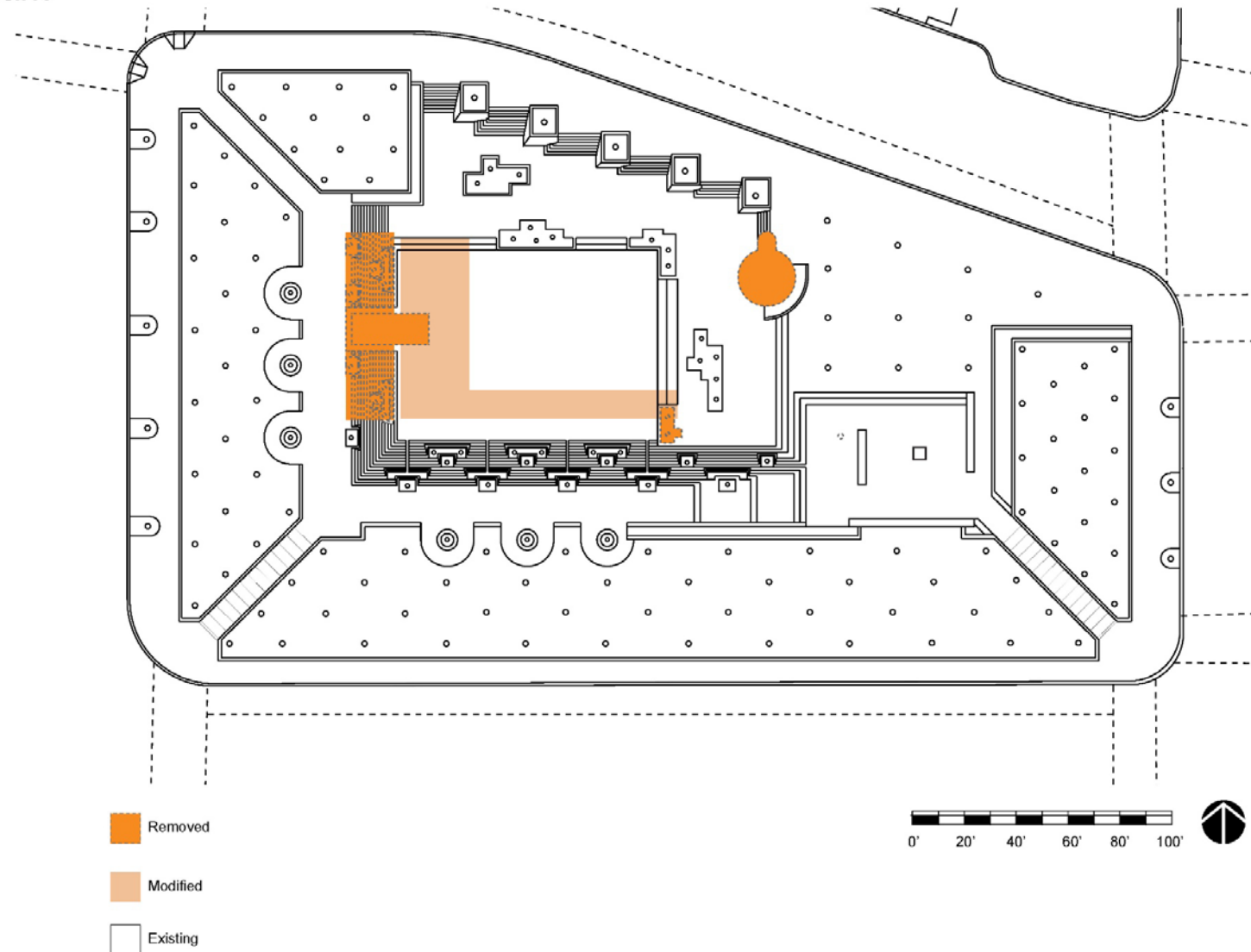
View Looking West



## June 2017 Restored Pool Concept Modifications to Existing Park

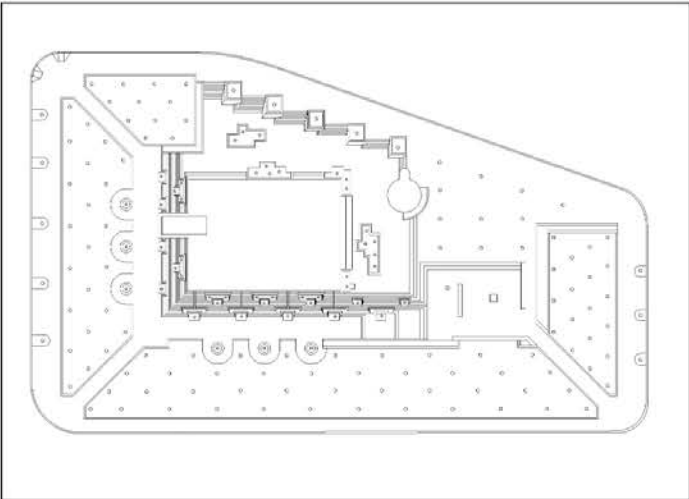
Critical character-defining features:

- Views and vistas retained
- Spatial organization retained with minor modifications to circulation
- Pershing Memorial retained
- PADC streetscape retained
- Terraced seating and planters mostly retained
- Granite materials retained
- Distinct rooms bounded by steps primarily retained except where replaced by fountain and universally accessible walkway
- Three focal point organization maintained:
  - Fountain replaced with bas-relief wall
  - Kiosk replaced with Flagpole on plinth
  - Pershing statue repositioned
- Water feature retained and modified to accommodate commemorative circulation
- Cascading water retained on sides and back of fountain





## Concept Comparisons Plans



EXISTING PARK DESIGN



OCTOBER 2016 CONCEPT



FEBRUARY 2017 POOL AND PLAZA CONCEPT

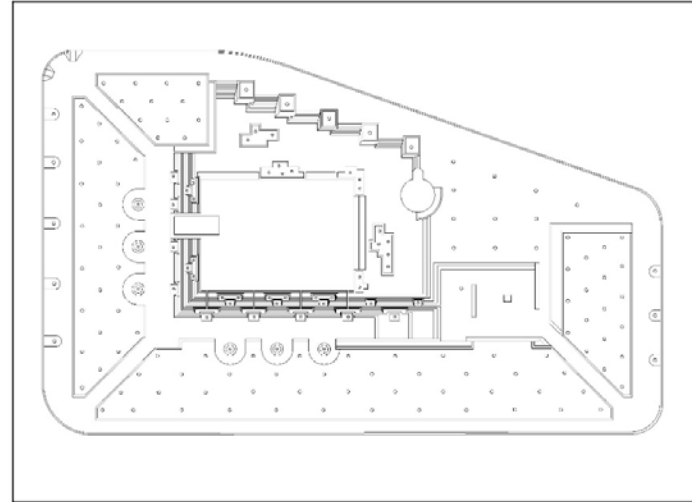


JUNE 2017 RESTORED POOL CONCEPT

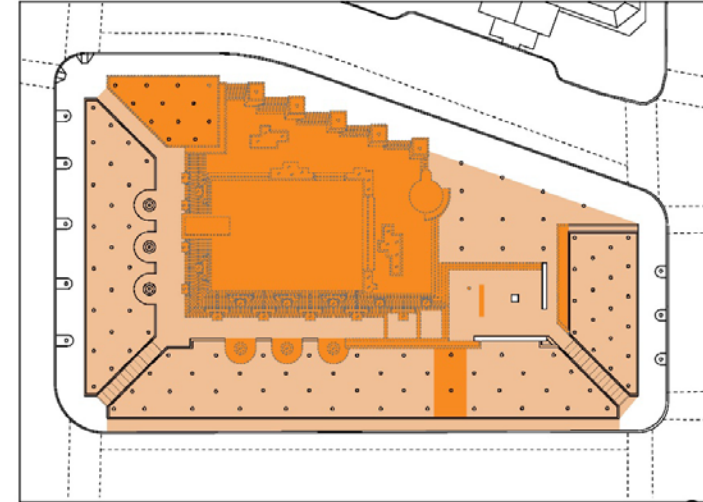


## Balancing Preservation and Commemoration Design Iterations

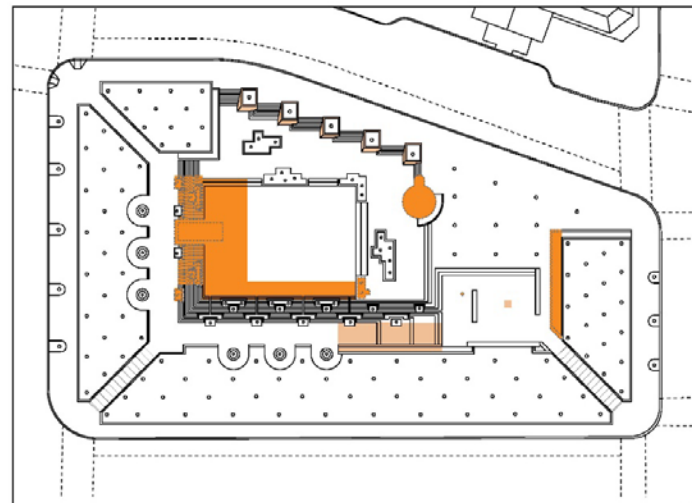
- Incremental explorations of commemoration starting with minimal changes to existing park
- Iterative process facilitates evaluation of level of modification required to achieve commemorative purpose
- Effort to protect and maintain critical character defining features, according to Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for Treatment of Cultural Landscapes:
  - Views and vistas
  - Spatial organization
  - Pershing Memorial
  - PADC streetscape
  - Terraced seating and planters
  - Granite materials
  - Distinct rooms bounded by steps
  - Three focal points
  - Water cascade, including sound



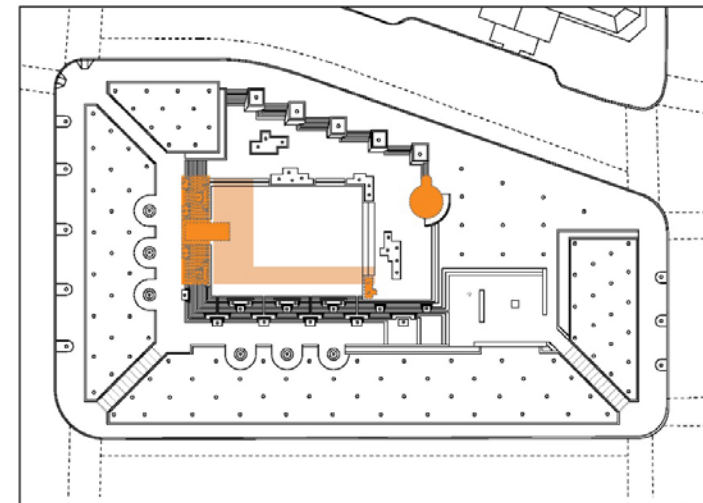
EXISTING PARK DESIGN



OCTOBER 2016 CONCEPT



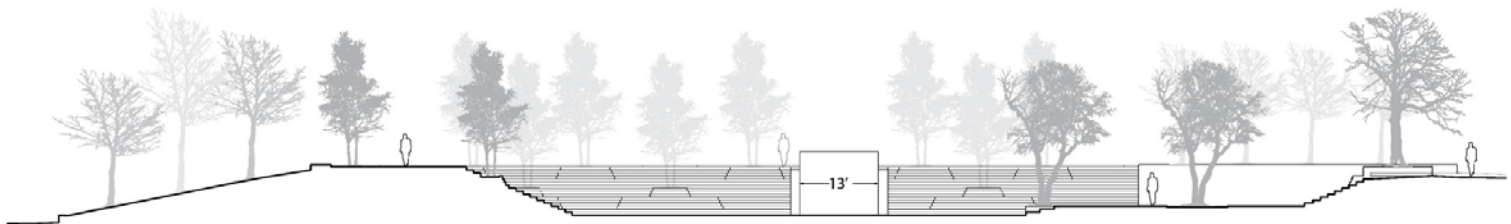
POOL AND PLAZA CONCEPT - FEBRUARY 2017



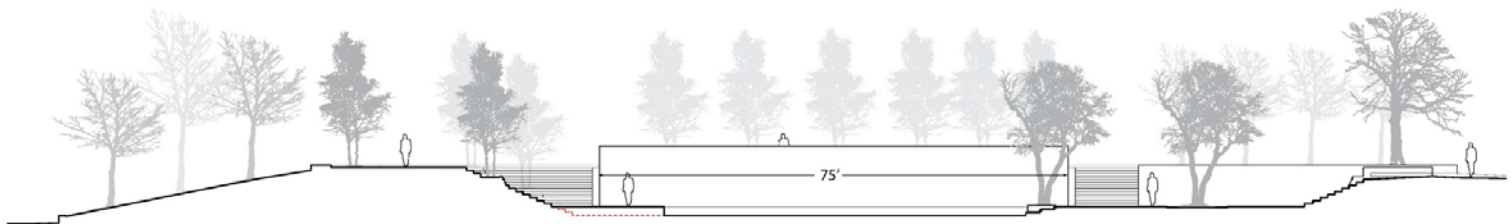
RESTORED POOL CONCEPT



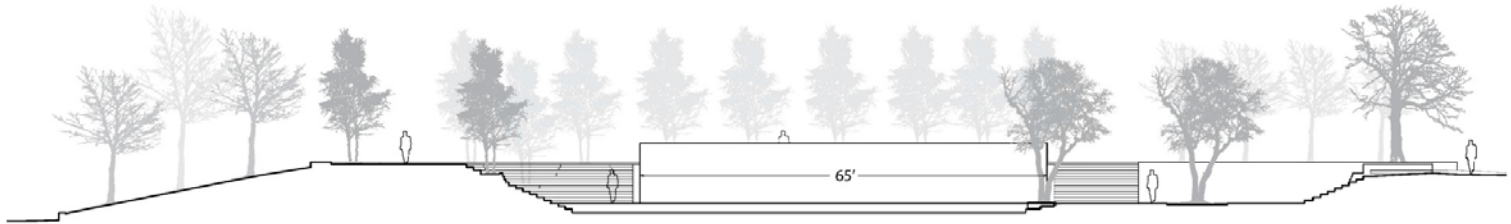
## Concept Comparisons Sections



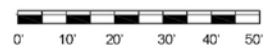
Existing section facing West



Pool and Plaza Concept section facing West



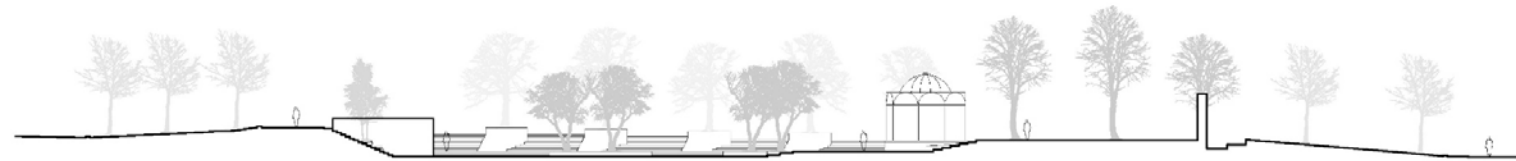
Restored Pool Concept section facing West





## Concept Comparisons Sections

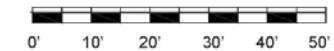
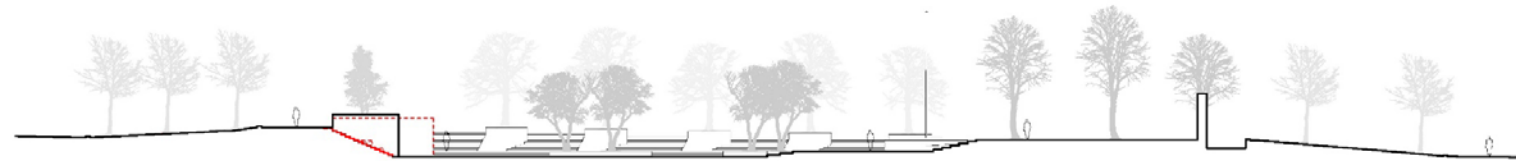
Existing section facing North



Pool and Plaza Concept section facing North



Restored Pool Concept section facing North





## Restored Pool Concept



View Looking East from Upper Terrace