

National Desert Storm and Desert Shield Memorial

Section 106 Consulting Parties Meeting

November 12, 2019

2:30 p.m.

AECOM Conference Room

Agencies: Sophie Kelly, Allison Young (National Park Service-National Capital Area); Catherine Dewey, Lindy Gulick (National Park Service-National Mall and Memorial Parks); Matt Flis, Lee Webb (National Capital Planning Commission); Dan Fox (U.S. Commission of Fine Arts); Andrew Lewis (DC State Historic Preservation Office)

Attendees: John Fondersmith via phone (Committee of 100 on the Federal City); Tom King (National Mall Coalition)

Project Team: Kari Williams (OLIN); Alan Harwood, Claire Sale, Rachel Lloyd, Lauren Tuttle, Maria Espinoza (AECOM)

Introduction

Everybody introduced themselves.

Presentation

Overview of Undertaking

Claire Sale (AECOM) reviewed the National Desert Storm and Desert Shield Memorial's (NDSDSM) purpose and need, authorizing legislation, and site context.

Review of Project to Date

Claire reviewed the Area of Potential Effect (APE), photographs of existing views to and from the site, and existing tree condition.

Kari Williams (OLIN) presented the memorial's design inspiration, the November 2018 concept as presented at the first Section 106 meeting, and the current concept. Overall site plans, a section, grading, commemorative themes and framework, wall heights, and perspective views of the memorial were presented. Claire also reviewed how the proposed tree planting plan for the memorial would restore the 1931 allée tree planting plan around Lincoln Memorial Circle.

Discussion

Adverse Effect

NPS has not made a determination of effect for this project, but is leaning towards a determination of no adverse effect.

Andrew Lewis (SHPO) stated that SHPO has also not taken a position on whether the project has no or an adverse effect, but is also leaning towards no adverse effect. The memorial concept is fairly minimal

on the landscape and does not include tall elements. The dunes are out-of-character with the surrounding landscape. However, the memorial is designed in a way that is respectful of its setting.

Tom King (National Mall Coalition) stated that the memorial would have an adverse effect. The Memorial introduces elements that are out-of-character of the landscape and detract from certain aspects of the National Mall in the vicinity. The memorial is also out-of-character with the site's existing use. Claire previously noted that the site is generally open space with parts of it used at times for recreation purposes.

Tom also expressed concern about the cumulative effect of military memorials on the National Mall. Andrew stated that the Reserve is supposed to address that concern to some degree. Other sites were considered in the memorial's site selection process. Catherine Dewey (NPS) stated that the Constitution Avenue NW and 23rd Street NW site was selected largely due to the site's proximity to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial (VVM) given the thematic connections between the two conflicts. Andrew also noted that the National Mall also has a commemorative role.

Andrew stated that it was determined that the VVM Education Center would have an adverse effect as a result of creating a hole in the ground for the below-grade museum. The Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial also had an adverse effect as a result of the memorial's height and significant change to the landscape character. The NDSDSM is low and discrete.

Views and Vistas

The design team is aware of the memorial's visual connections to the Lincoln Memorial and the visual axis between the VVM and the Washington Monument. The design team is working with the artists to symbolically connect to the VVM visual axis rather than building a direct line of sight into the landscape.

Andrew asked if the Lincoln Memorial and the NDSDSM would provide reciprocal views. The NDSDSM is not visible from the Lincoln Memorial forecourt plaza. NPS can provide a photo taken from the north side of the Lincoln Memorial to determine if there is a view of the NDSDSM site.

Materials

The memorial will include an expanse of sandy-colored stone hardscape, including walls and ground cover. The exact stone type is to be determined. The design team is looking at various finishes and texturing for the stone. The memorial will comply with the Architectural Barriers Act. The material of the memorial's corner at the Constitution Avenue NW and 23rd Street NW intersection will match the sidewalk material.

Andrew asked if there is any potential for hardscape reduction in the memorial. Kari stated that the amount of hardscape currently strikes a balance between potential impacts and accommodating anticipated visitation levels.

Attendees briefly discussed the color of materials for the memorial. The National Mall generally consists of white stone buildings and large memorials, including the Lincoln Memorial. Tan colored materials, including stone, are used throughout the National Mall for exposed aggregate pathways, sand volleyball

courts, and the National Museum of the American Indian. The National Museum of African American History and Culture also uses stone, although a darker stone. Exterior views of the memorial will appear primarily as green vegetation, including grass-covered berms, green ground cover, and native trees.

Andrew inquired if the use of gravel within the memorial could soften the landscape. NPS stated that gravel is not considered accessible. Andrew further clarified that gravel would not be used as pathways, but could be used in other areas of the memorial.

Vegetation

Plant species have not yet been selected for the memorial. The Memorial will adhere to NPS guidelines for native and noninvasive species. The design team will work with NPS arborists and the natural resources team to select species. No palm trees will be planted at the memorial.

Trees inside the memorial will create a comfortable space for visitors. The current concept's interior grove has been opened up and shifted further away from the Constitution Avenue NW and 23rd Street NW intersection compared to the November 2018 concept. A wider gap in the trees has not been created specifically to provide a view to the Lincoln Memorial, but the grove spacing happens to provide a view. The interior grove will consist of tree species with high limbs to allow views out to the Lincoln Memorial.

The memorial's design would impact two existing trees in the allée along Constitution Avenue NW. The design team will work with NPS to replace these existing trees with appropriately sized trees. The future levee improvements may further impact the tree allée along Constitution Avenue.

Although within the Reserve, NPS is ok with the project's proposed tree planting around the Lincoln Memorial because it is a restoration of a planting plan.

Circulation

The memorial's visitation level is not anticipated to create changes in pedestrian or traffic patterns that would result in an impact on existing circulation.

No physical changes to Constitution Avenue NW or 23rd Street NW are anticipated. The intersection's signalization may be changed to provide longer light cycles.

Lighting

The memorial's nighttime lighting will be controlled and low as possible. Commemorative elements will be highlighted. Matt Flis (NCPC) stated that NCPC is interested in lighting.

Andrew stated that other memorials could serve as a basis to determine the appropriate level of nighttime lighting for the NDSDSM.

Other

The central water feature will not contain a vertical water element. The sound of water flowing below will help mitigate noise from the intersection.

Rachel Lloyd (AECOM) stated that the memorial will be the first feature seen on the National Mall coming from the west on Constitution Avenue NW and north on 23rd Street NW. Dan Fox (CFA) stated that the memorial will be sort of a gateway feature, an important consideration for the memorial's design.

The memorial will contain artwork and text to convey the memorial's commemorative themes. Andrew noted that he would like to know more about the final design, including the commemorative and sculptural elements.

Andrew inquired if there were any archeological resources present at the site, such as from a 17th century wharf. Catherine stated that the area consists of fill from the 1880s and 1890s. She will consult further with NPS archeologists.

Next Steps

- Comments are due November 26, 2019.
- CFA will review the memorial concept on November 21, 2019.
- NCPC will review the memorial concept in January 2020.
- The memorial design will continue to be developed. NPS will continue to evaluate the potential adverse effect of the memorial on historic properties.
- NPS will continue Section 106 consultation.
- NPS will develop an Environmental Assessment.