

# WORLD WAR II MEMORIAL: FDR D-DAY PRAYER DESIGN DEVELOPMENT



Prepared for:

FRIENDS OF THE NATIONAL  
WORLD WAR II MEMORIAL, INC

APRIL 15, 2021

PRESENTATION TO THE  
COMMISSION OF FINE ARTS

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- On June 30, 2014, President Obama signed into law the World War II Memorial Prayer Act of 2013 (Public Law 113-123) directing the Secretary of the Interior to “install in the area of the World War II Memorial in the District of Columbia a suitable plaque or an inscription with the words that President Franklin D. Roosevelt prayed with the United States on D-Day, June 6, 1944.”
- In-depth site analysis, evaluative design parameters, and numerous studies determined current Prayer placement
- The 2015 Commission selected the Circle of Remembrance but noted existing materials were not appropriate for the Prayer nor cohesive with the WWII Memorial
- Based on this recommendation, NPS and Friends directed OvS to update the design and materials of the Circle in addition to designing the Prayer Plaque
- NPS and Friends have directed OvS to retain the existing Circle footprint and exclude any work outside this boundary
- This includes preserving existing elements such as trees, light poles, and site wall foundations where possible



## History and Overview | 2015 Site Analysis and Selection

- Ten design criteria were established to guide the selection of the appropriate site for the Prayer Plaque within the WWII Memorial grounds

### Criteria for Site Selection

- 1) Filtered viewsheds from the national mall's monumental core and national World War II Memorial's precinct
- 2) Compatibility with existing circulation and visitation patterns
- 3) Compatibility with existing elements of the Memorial
- 4) Compatibility with Architectural Barriers Act Accessibility Standard (ABAAS)
- 5) Suitability to accommodate entire D-Day prayer
- 6) Proximity to the Atlantic Arch and Eisenhower's D-Day inscription
- 7) Minimize disturbance to roots of existing mature trees
- 8) Vegetative screening
- 9) Ease of long-term maintenance
- 10) Contemplative character

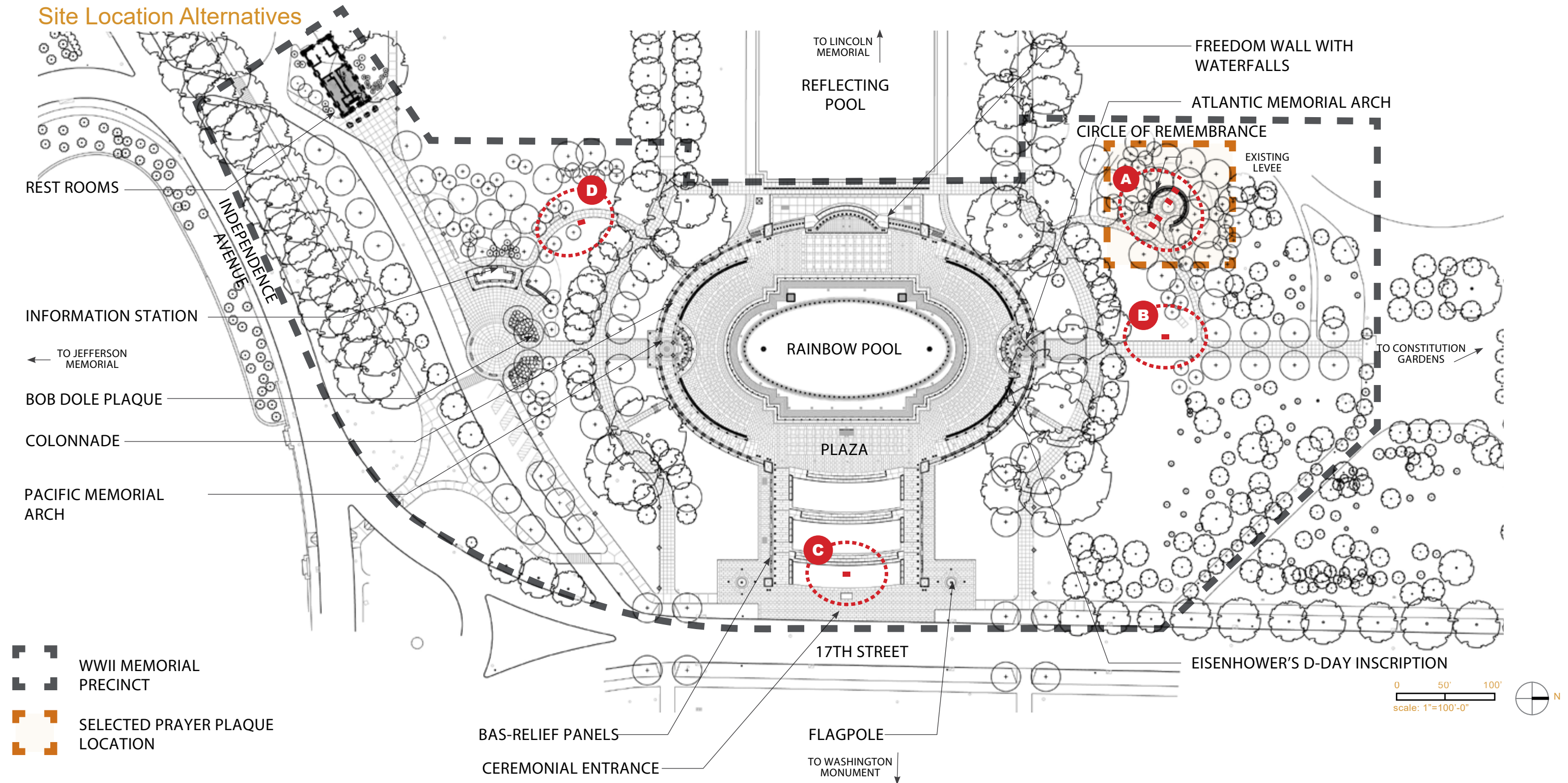




History and Overview | 2015 Site Analysis and Selection

- After review of site alternatives and consideration of site selection and design criteria, Site A Circle of Remembrance was approved by the 2015 Commission as the location for the FDR D-Day Prayer
- Commission approved the Circle of Remembrance with condition that bench and wall materials be made cohesive with WWII Memorial and fitting for the Prayer
- Gray dashed line indicates 7.4 acres of WWII Memorial Grounds

Site Location Alternatives

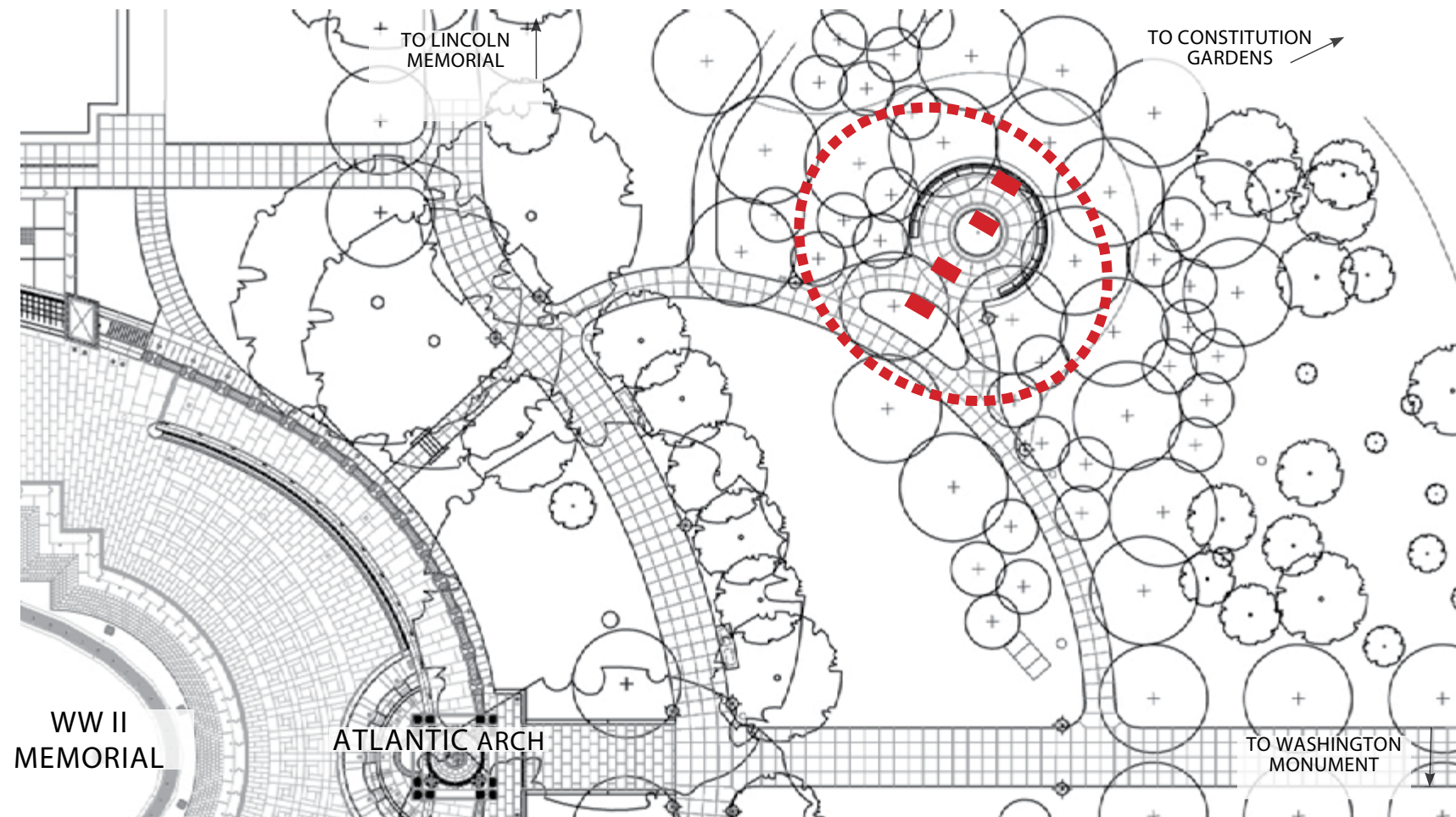




## History and Overview | 2016 Placement within the Circle of Remembrance: Selection Criteria

- Eight design criteria were established to locate the Prayer within the Circle of Remembrance
- Four locations within the Circle were evaluated

### Prayer Location Alternatives



### Criteria for siting the D-Day Prayer Plaque within the Circle of Remembrance

- 1) Compatible with existing circulation and visitation patterns
- 2) Vegetative screening
- 3) Ease of long-term maintenance
- 4) Contemplative character

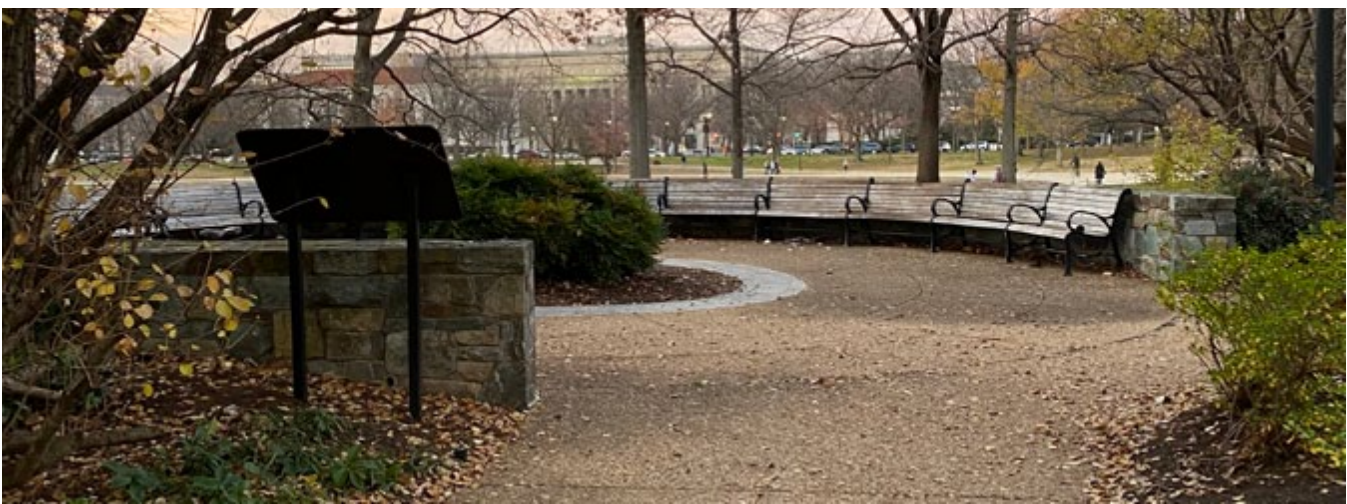
### Criteria for the design of the D-Day Prayer Plaque

- 5) Visual connection with the WWII Memorial
- 6) Sympathetic with original WWII Memorial
- 7) Compatible with accessibility and legibility standards
- 8) Adherence to original Prayer intent

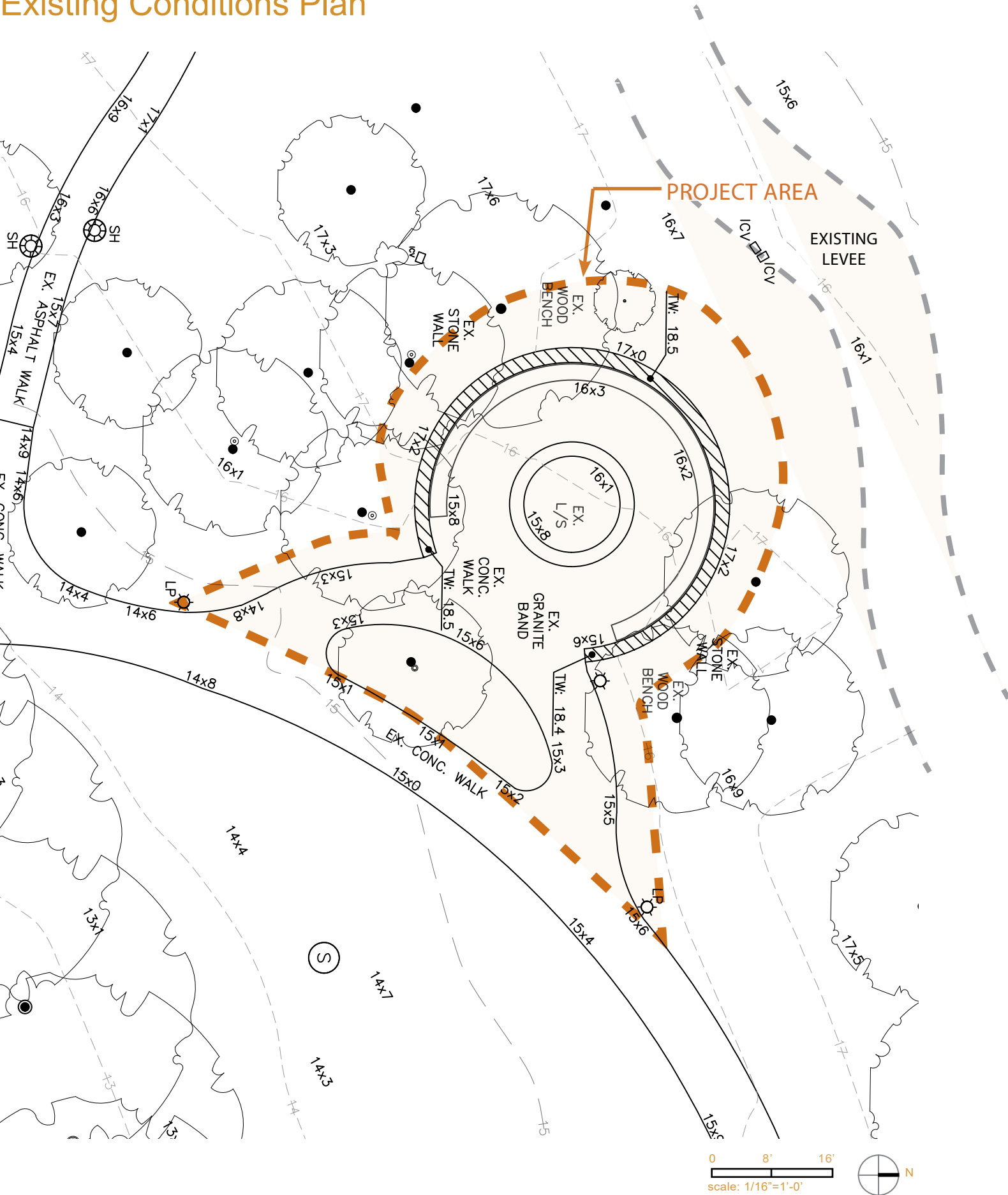


# Existing Conditions and project scope

- Original design was for a quiet, reflective space
- Current materials are not cohesive with the WWII Memorial
- The project is limited to the t of the existing Circle, as shown
- Link to video of existing conditions: <https://vimeo.com/491439353>



# Existing Conditions Plan





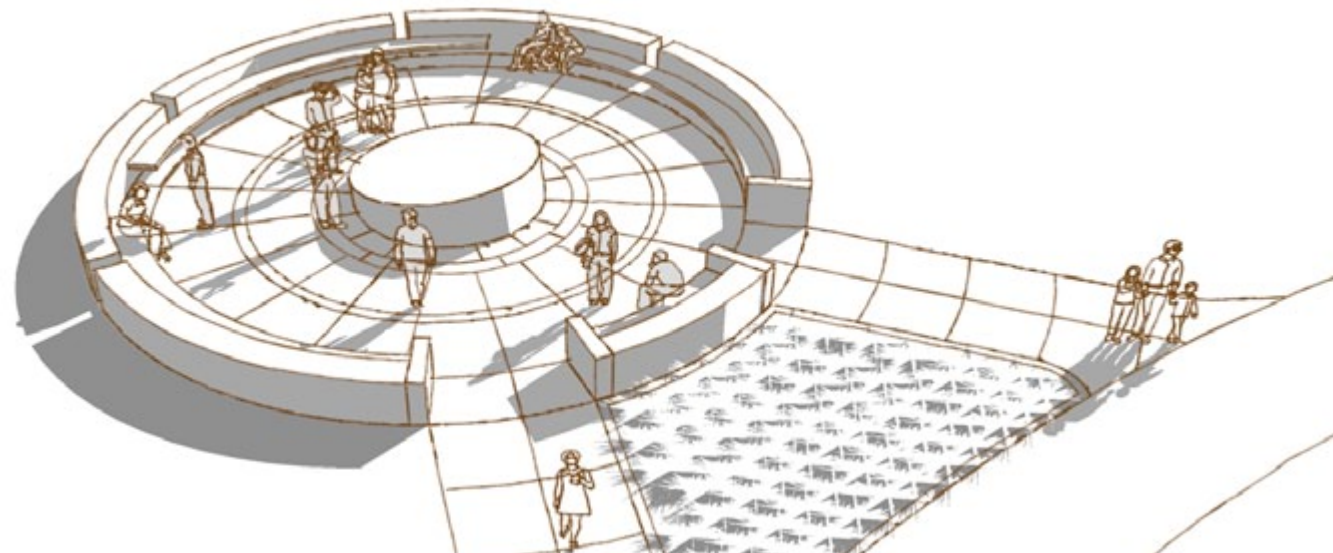
## History and Overview | 2016 Placement within the Circle of Remembrance - Center Prayer Plaque Studies

In previous review, Commission noted: *“The second alternative should explore a different location for the prayer text, away from the entrance, possibly in the geometric center, which is otherwise vacant.”*

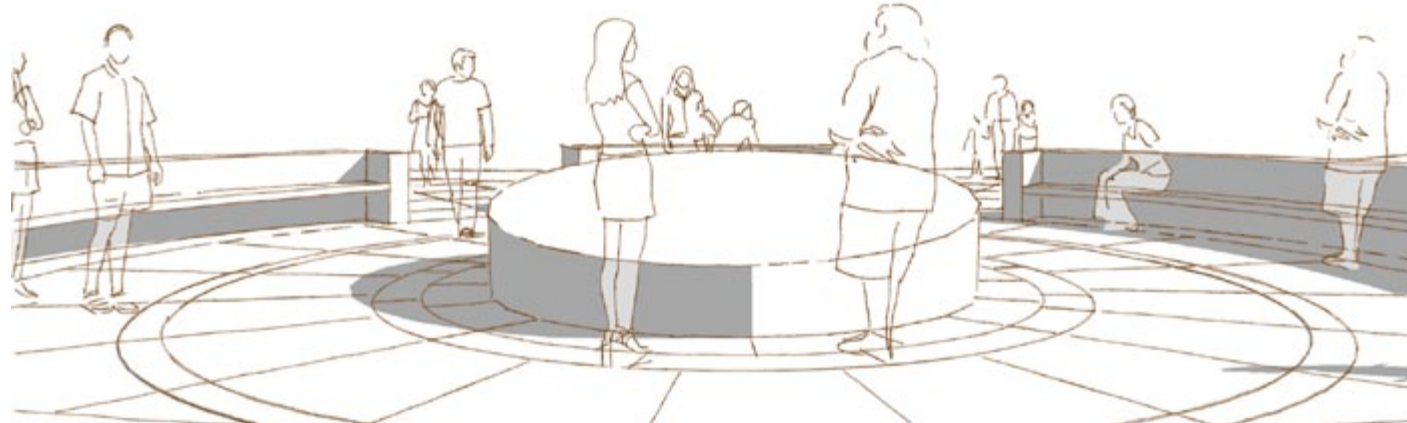
- Center was studied during the siting process and was removed from consideration due to inability to meet design criteria
- Poor visual connection with WWII Memorial
- Incompatible with circulation and visitation patterns (annual D-Day gathering )
- Commission noted Plaque would be too large in the center of the Circle and advised studying other locations

While a central vertical element did not fit the design program, the revised submission includes a proposal for activating the center with a medallion

OPTION 1 | TABLE HEIGHT PLAQUE

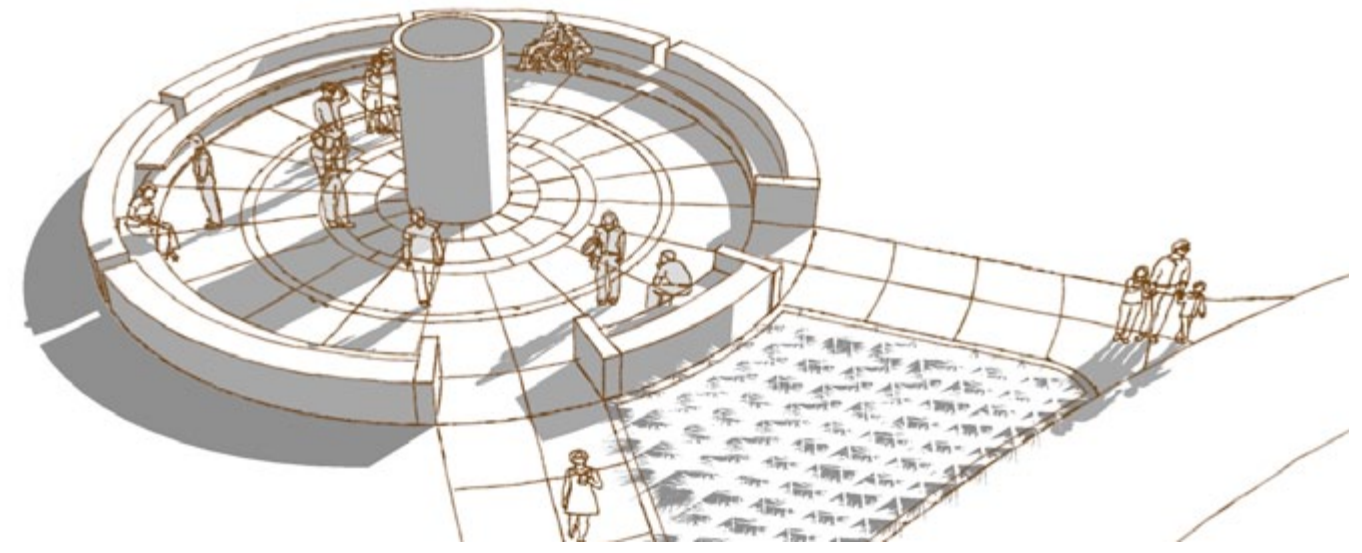


Aerial view

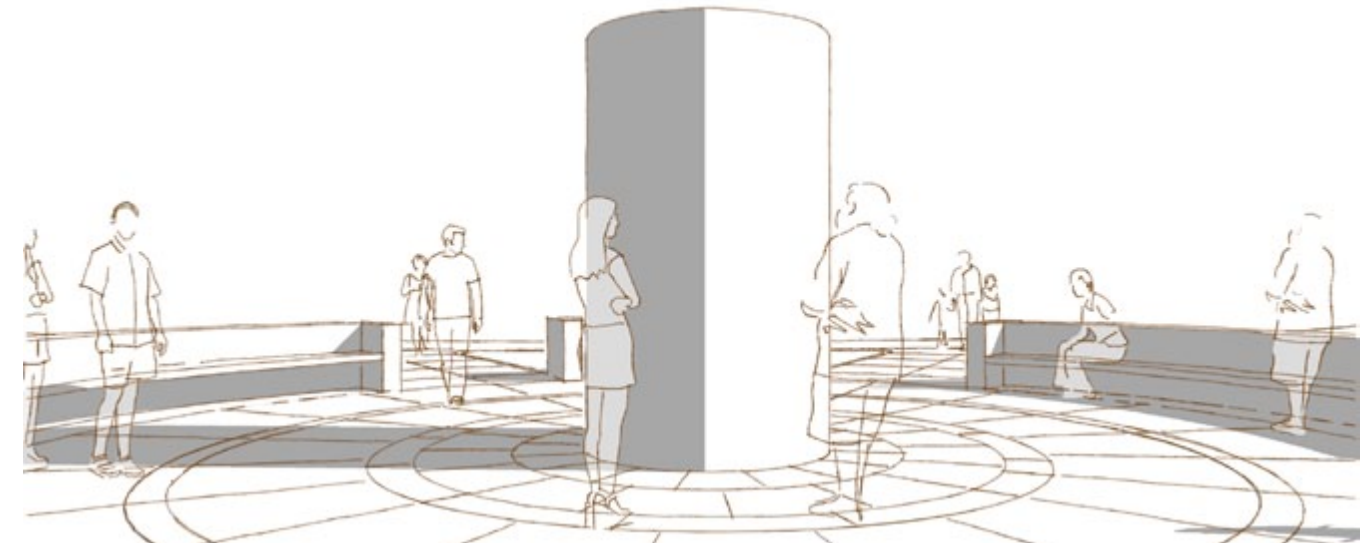


View to WWII Memorial

OPTION 2 | CENTRAL PILLAR



Aerial view



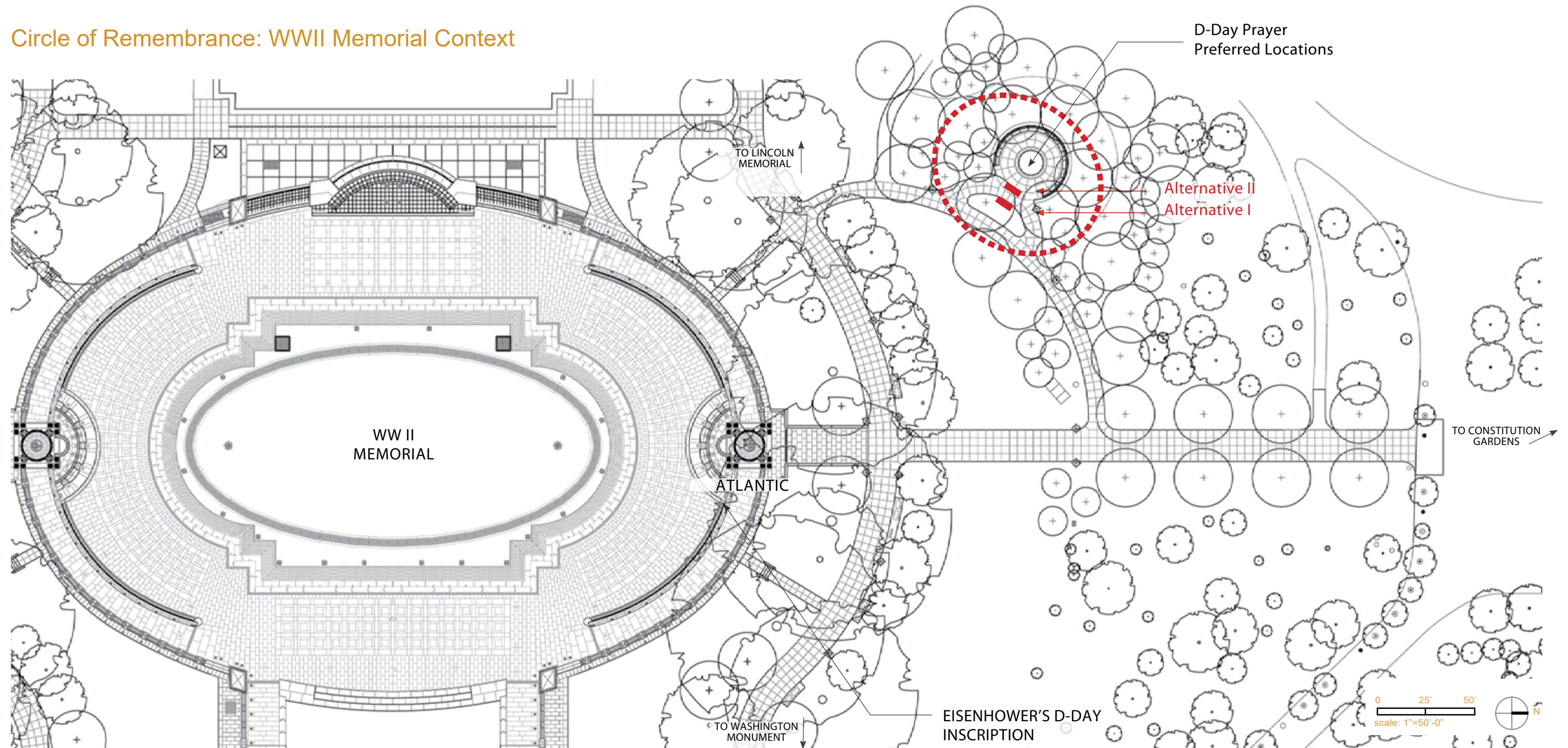
View to WWII Memorial



## History and Overview | 2016 Options for Placement within the Circle of Remembrance Studied

- Two locations near or within the Circle were presented to the Commission
- The Commission approved Alternative II
- This option incorporates the Prayer into the geometry of the Circle while providing views to the WWII Memorial

### Circle of Remembrance: WWII Memorial Context





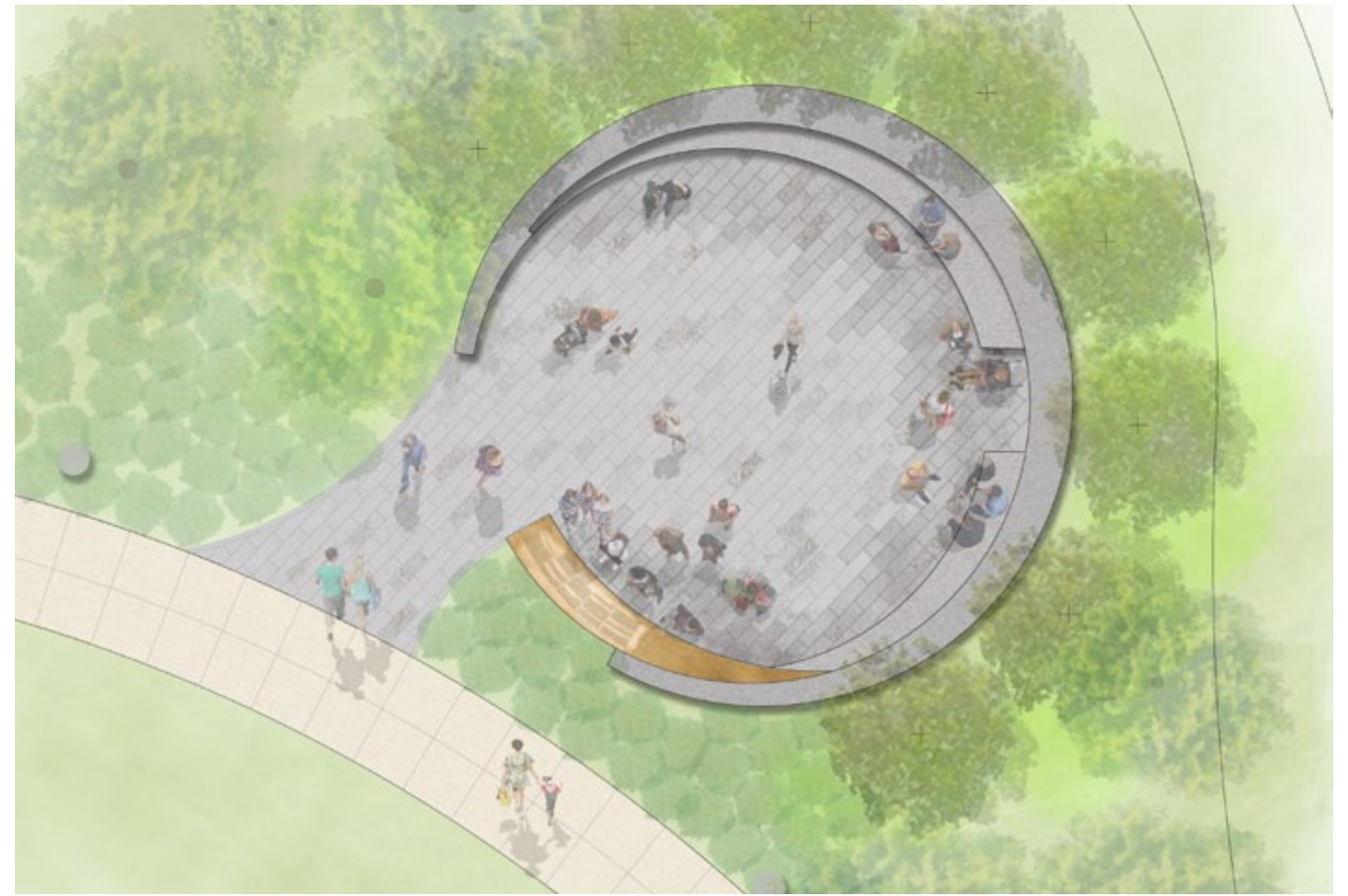
## History and Overview | 2017 Conceptual Alternatives approved with conditions

- The Commission approved Alternative B, but noted either concept was appropriate to move forward
- NPS and Friends selected Alternative A as preferred and directed final design to remain within the existing Circle footprint

### Alternative II A



### Alternative II B





# Commission of Fine Arts

## Letter Re: FDR Prayer Concept

CFA 21/JAN/21-1

LOCATION: West Potomac Park, 17th Street and Independence Avenue, SW Washington, DC

OWNER: National Park Service (NPS)

PROPERTY: World War II Memorial

DESCRIPTION: Install plaque with President Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s D-Day Prayer

REVIEW TYPE: Revised Concept

PREVIOUS REVIEW: CFA 15/JUN/17-1

28 January 2021  
Dear Ms. Mendelson-Ielmini:

In its public meeting of 21 January conducted by video conference, the Commission of Fine Arts reviewed a revised concept design for alterations to the existing Circle of Remembrance at the World War II Memorial to include a new plaque inscribed with the prayer delivered by President Franklin D. Roosevelt by radio on D-Day. Expressing concern about deficiencies in the design regarding the appropriate presentation of the prayer, the Commission did not take an action on the submission and instead provided the following comments to guide the development of the concept design.

In general, the Commission members emphasized that President Roosevelt’s prayer, delivered to the nation on a momentous day in American history, requires a setting and presentation that is as solemn and dignified as possible, with a clear relationship to the larger composition of the World War II Memorial. They expressed concern that the plaque—narrower than what had been shown previously, and seemingly constrained between two pathways—is not large enough to convey the importance of the text, and that viewing it may be disrupted by visitors entering and leaving the Circle of Remembrance. They advised that the setting of the plaque should allow for the calm, contemplative experience of reading the prayer, and that the plaque should be larger in scale to reinforce its significance.

To address these issues, the Commission members recommended the development of two concept alternatives. One alternative should address the issues they identified in the presented design: specifically, they recommended a substantial increase in the size of the plaque and its lettering as the circle’s primary element, with enough space around it to allow for a more dignified engagement with the text by visitors. They recommended that the architectural enframing and support of the plaque be made more solid and substantial, and less subordinate to the piers flanking the entrance paths, and that these paths be moved farther apart. For the plaque itself, they recommended laying out the text in a pattern that reflects the gently curving geometry of the circle, and using a larger size of letters, possibly in a mix of incised and raised lettering; they also recommended further study of the typeface. The second alternative should explore a different location for the prayer text, away from the entrance, possibly in the geometric center of the Circle of Remembrance, which is otherwise vacant. For the development of either alternative, they suggested that the perimeter—currently proposed to be defined by high stone benches—could be less architecturally articulated, relying instead on the nearby presence of canopy tree trunks to create a more contemplative space. Finally, they recommended studying how to emphasize the relationship of the plaque and circle to the central area of the World War II Memorial, whether by a more direct and understandable visual connection or by a physical one, such as a path.

The Commission appreciates the effort to provide a suitable setting for the D-Day Prayer plaque at this national war memorial and looks forward to reviewing the development of revised concept design alternatives that respond to these comments. As always, the staff is available to assist you.

Sincerely,  
/s/ Thomas E. Luebke, FAIA  
Secretary

In their previous review, CFA suggested the following:

- “a clear relationship to the larger composition of the World War II Memorial”
- “the plaque should be larger in scale to reinforce its significance”
- “enframing and support of the plaque be made more solid and substantial”
- “text in a pattern that reflects the gently curving geometry of the circle, and using a larger size of letters”
- “further study of the typeface”
- “explore a different location for the prayer... possibly in the geometric center...which is otherwise vacant”
- “the perimeter...could be less architecturally articulated”



WWII Memorial Context

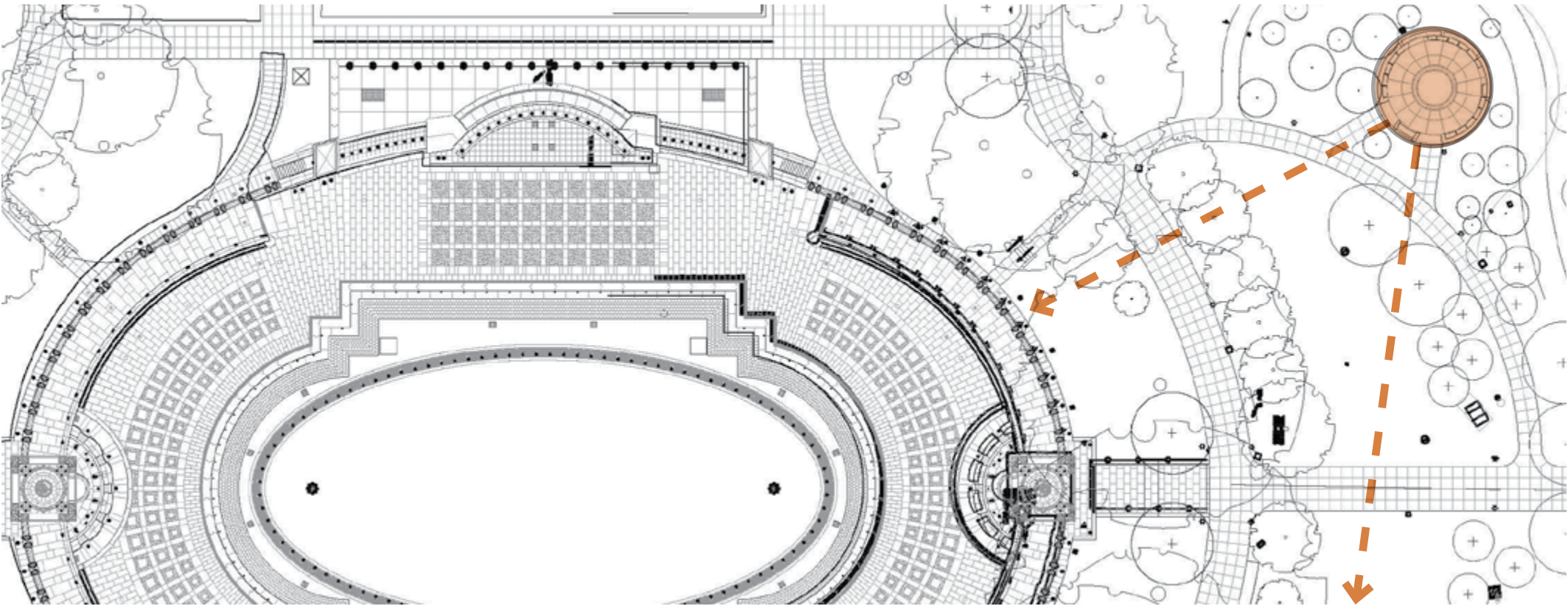
- The FDR Prayer plaque will be placed within the Circle of Remembrance, a contemplative space within the memorial grounds



“Set among the trees on small knoll in the northwest corner of the site, away from the memorial plaza, is the contemplative area. Designed by landscape architect James van Sweden, **the garden is a tranquil setting for reflection and meditation removed from the activity and emotional power of the memorial.** The setting takes advantage of a 5-foot rise in an otherwise flat site to provide a clear view of the lake in Constitution Gardens on the north and back to the memorial...on the south.”

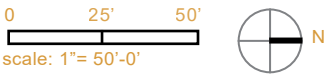
*Description of the Circle of Remembrance from “World War II Memorial Washington, DC” by Thomas B. Grooms, U.S.General Administration Services Design Excellence Program*

WWII CONTEXT AND VIEWSHED DIAGRAM



● WWII Memorial Circle of Remembrance

← — D-Day Prayer Plaque viewshed





## Revised Circle and Prayer Plaque Design | View to Constitution Gardens

- Plaque has been enlarged from +/- 7' to 10'
- Granite base provides more substantial foundation for plaque
- Granite base incorporates text identifying the Circle of Remembrance
- Enlarged plaque is elevated to highlight its unique materiality and create a sensation of 'floating' above stone base
- Height of site walls and pillars reduced to enhance views in and out of Circle





## Revised Circle and Prayer Plaque Design | View to WWII Memorial

- Clear view of WWII Memorial while reading Prayer
- Lower site walls and plaque enframement create stronger visual connection to the WWII Memorial
- Granite base provides strong foundation for Prayer Plaque while allowing wheelchair access
- Angle of Prayer Plaque reduced to minimize Plaque enframement height
- Medal of Freedom incorporated into center of the Circle

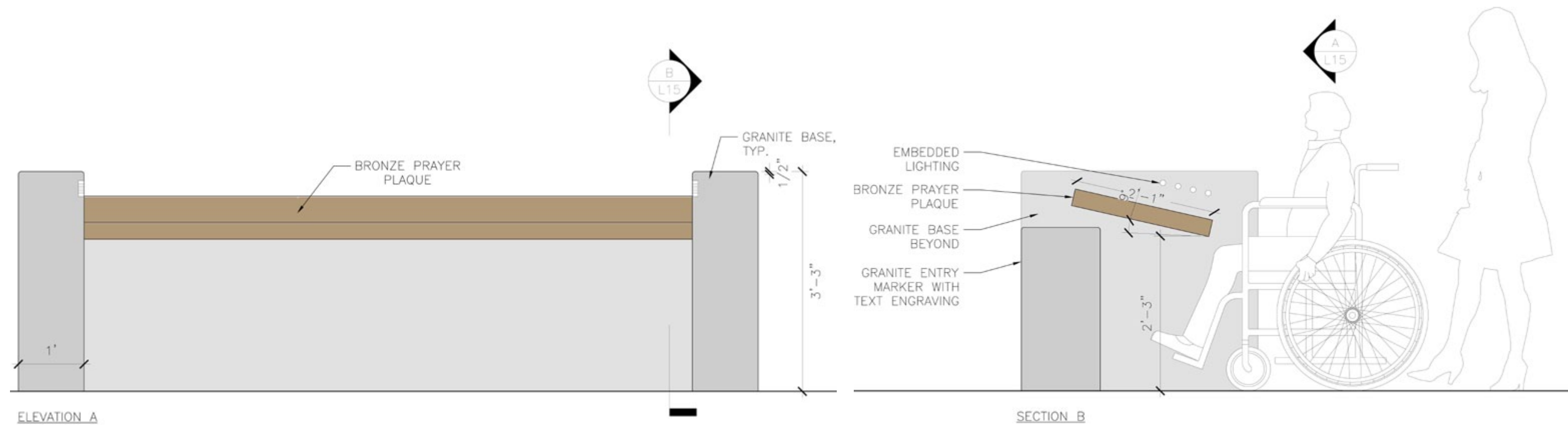




# Prayer Plaque Preliminary Details

## Option 1 | 'Floating' Plaque over granite base

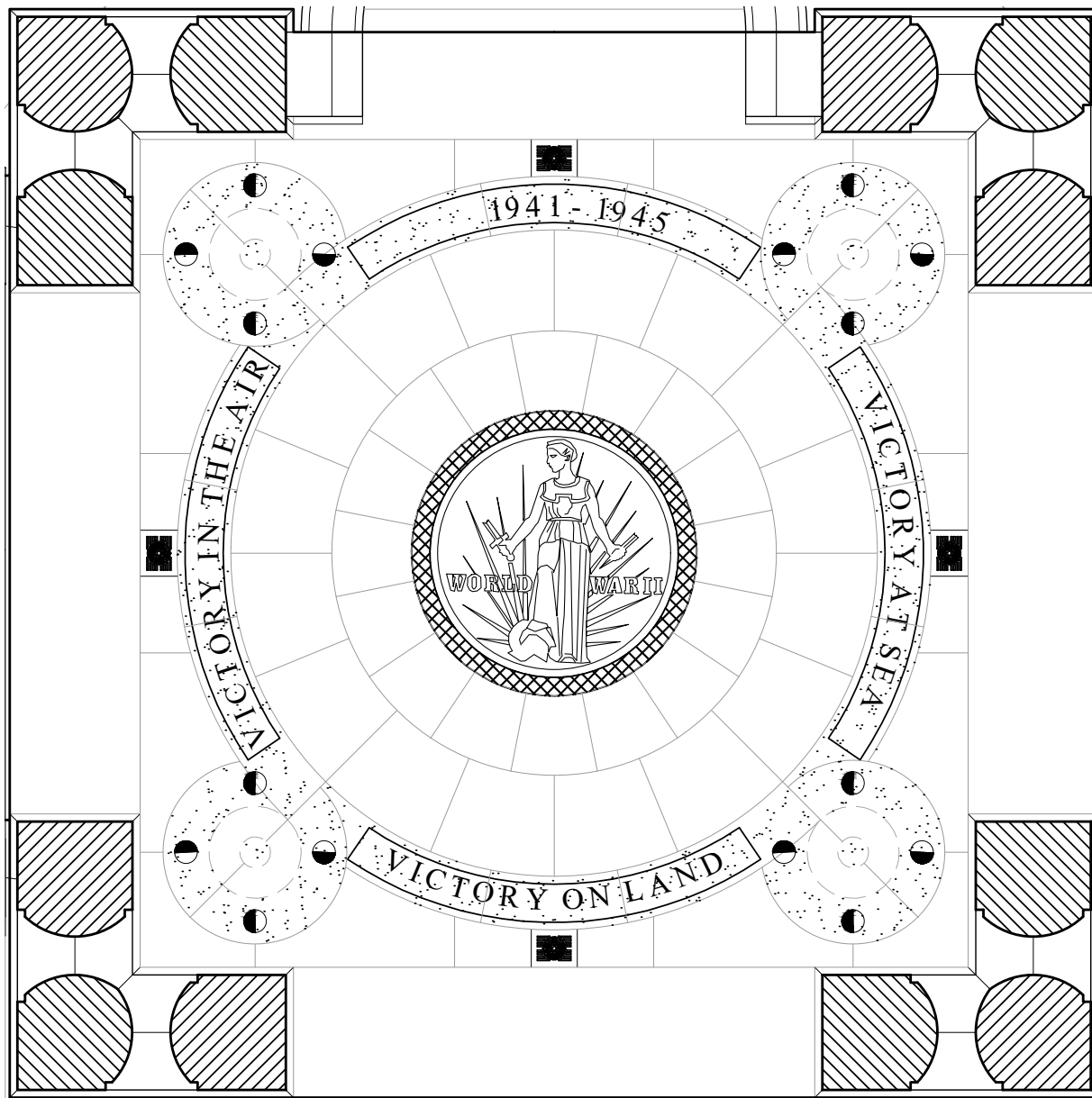
- Angle of plaque and height of granite base reduced to allow greater visibility into Circle
- Prayer Plaque 'floats' over granite base, repeating precedent set by granite benches
- Prayer Plaque lit from the sides





## Precedent | Treatment of the Center

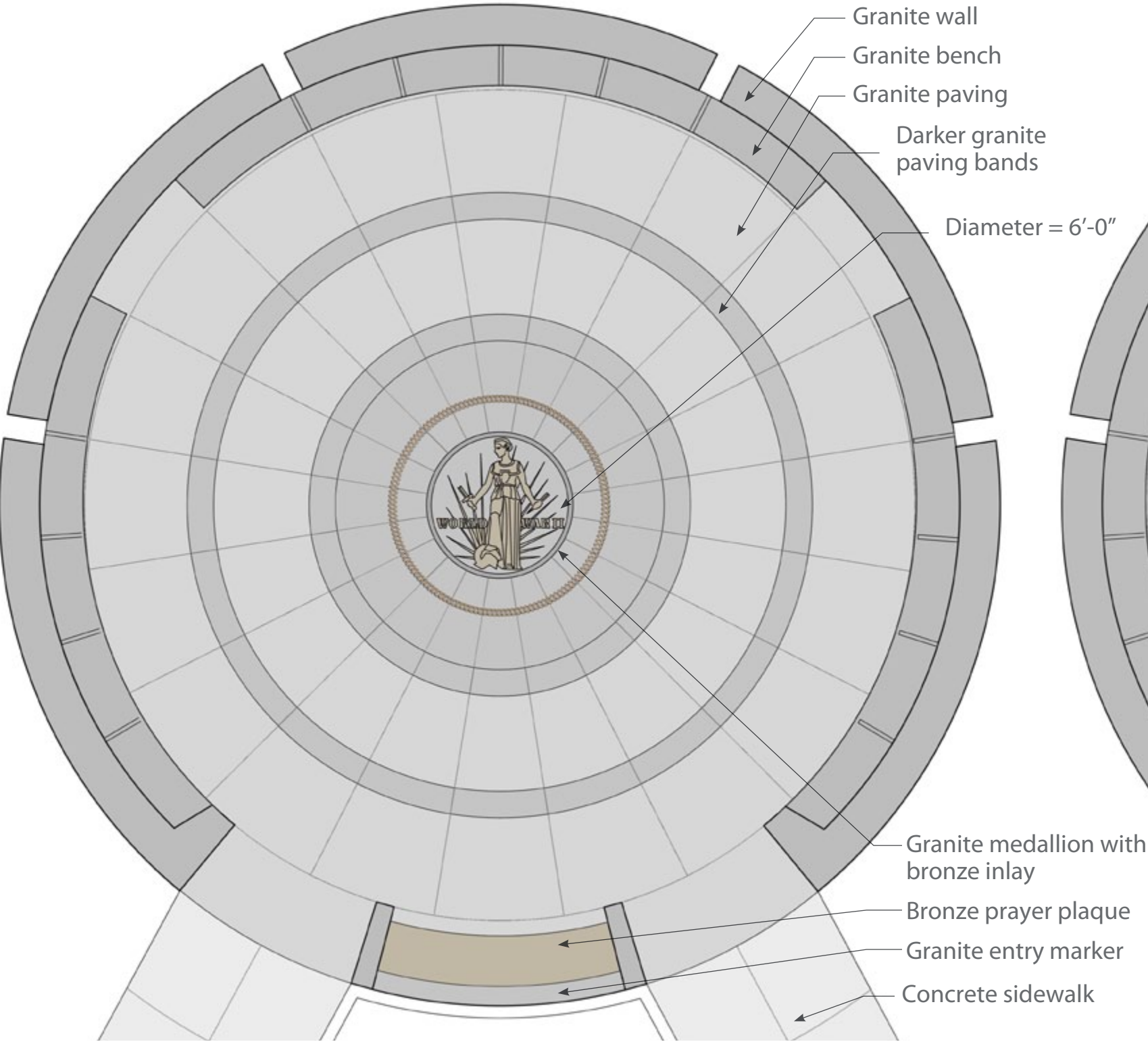
- In response to the Commission's comment regarding the Circle's 'vacant' center, a paving emblem is proposed
- WWII Atlantic and Pacific Arches provide inspiration for development of Circle's center paving design
- Bronze WWII Medal of Freedom, awarded to any veteran or civilian who performed a notable service
- Dark grey ring of 'Moss Green' granite with bronze inlay



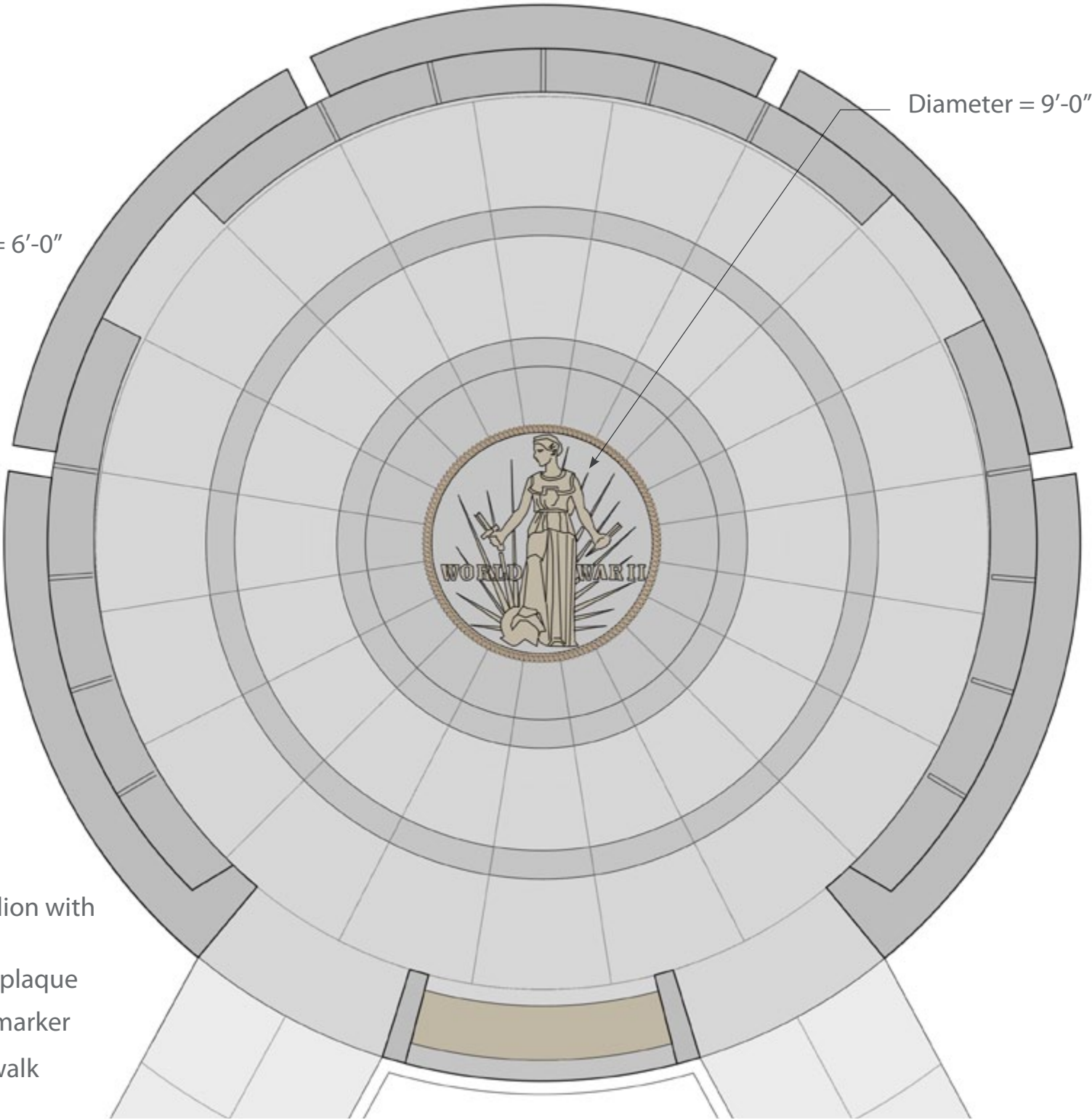


Revised Plan Options | Treatment of the Center

Option 1: Granite Medal of Freedom with bronze inlay  
(matching the size of WWII medallion)



Option 2: Granite Medal of Freedom with bronze inlay  
(scaled to correspond to size of Circle and Prayer Plaque)





# D-Day Prayer Plan

## Design Refinements

- Prayer Plaque expanded to +/- 10 feet
- Prayer Plaque ‘floats’ over stone base, which aligns with site walls
- Benches and plaque have been lowered to increase visibility
- Paving developed to incorporate Medal of Freedom with radial bands of paving
- Medal of Freedom inlaid into granite

Materials Key

1

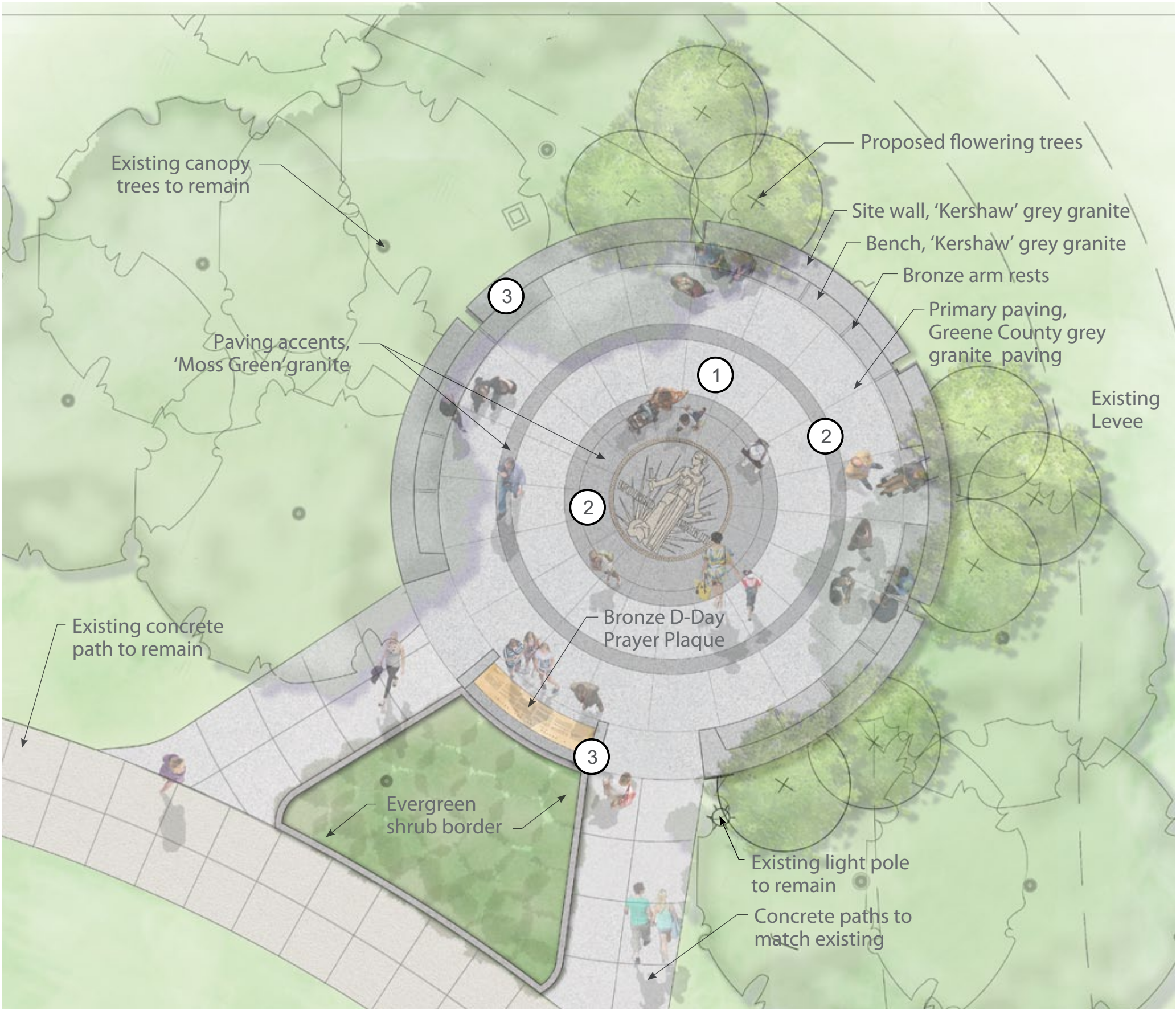
‘Greene County’ granite (primary paving material)

2

‘Moss Green’ granite (paving accent)

3

‘Kershaw’ granite (vertical elements)





## Font Selection | Memorial Precedents

- Other memorials use standard and custom fonts
- Custom fonts are typically designed for hand carving in stone for titles or short phrases, or to match existing engravings
- Standard fonts which meet legibility standards are used for name walls and longer passages of text

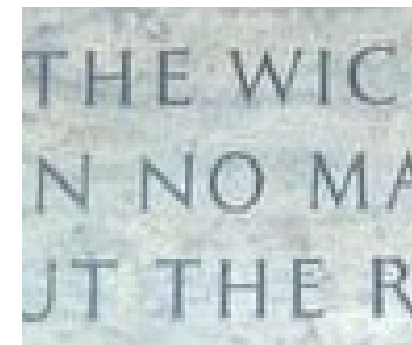
### World War I Memorial

- Inscriptions are carved in stone and cast in bronze
- Perpetua is used in two forms:
  - Pin-mounted
  - Engraved



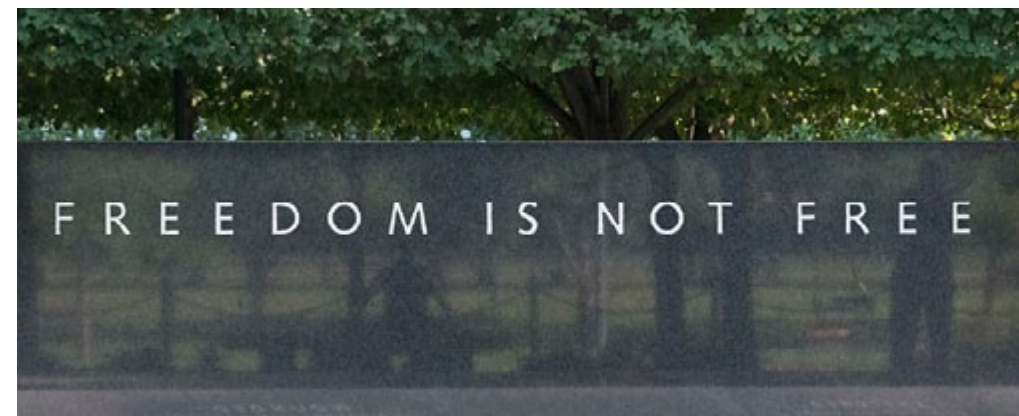
### National Law Enforcement Officers' Memorial

- Inscriptions are carved in stone
- Two custom fonts developed to work with limestone and marble



### Korean War Veterans Memorial

- Uses Syntax, a standard sans-serif font for its stone inscriptions





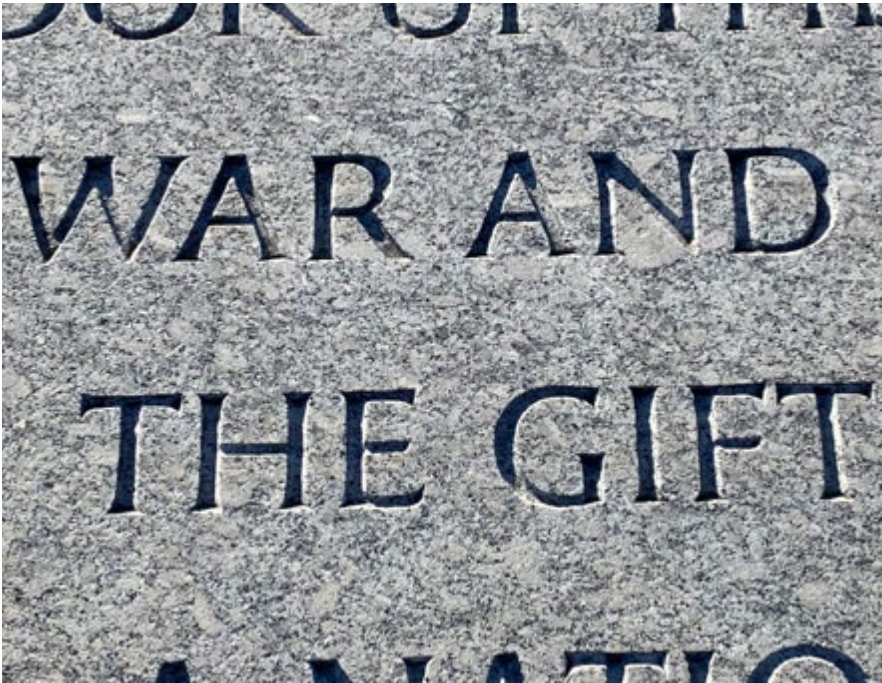
# World War II FDR Prayer Font Concept

## Font A Stone | Roman Claudian Variant

- Custom font used for WWII Memorial
- Designed by Nicholas Benson specifically for hand carving in stone

## Font A Stone | Reference photos

Roman Claudian Variant *(photos of WWII Memorial)*



## Font B Bronze | Parameters

- Complementary to Roman Claudian Variant
- Meets ADA Accessibility Guidelines (ADAAG)
- Meets parameters for casting:
  - 3/8 inch is minimum text height visible from three feet
  - 25 point kerning (space between letters)
  - 2 pts thick min stroke

## Font B Bronze | Options

Perpetua

A PRAYER

Caslon

A PRAYER

Garamond

A PRAYER



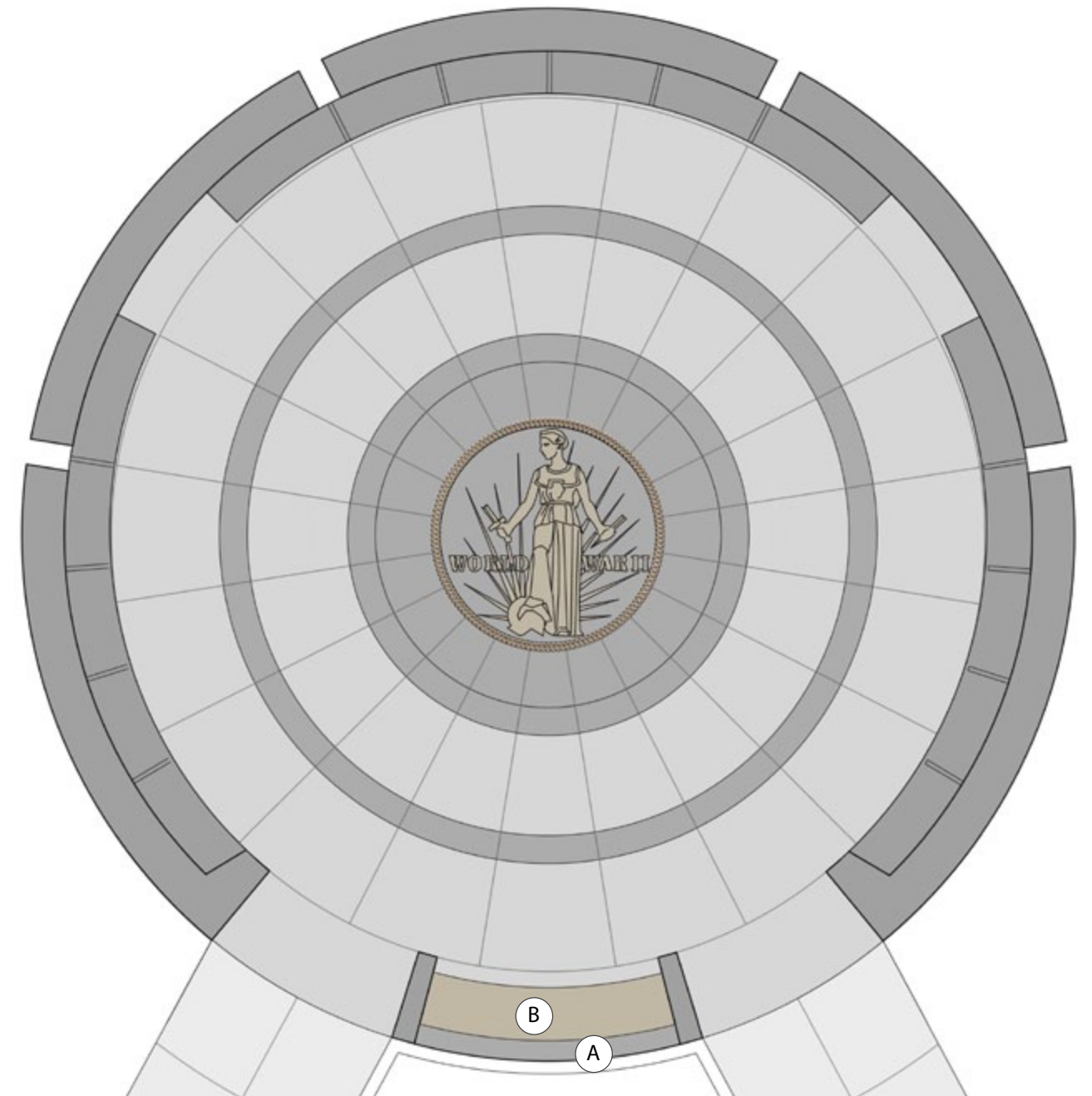
## WWII FDR Prayer Font Concept

Two elements of the revised design include inscriptions:

Font A | Stone base for the Plaque: hand carved to match Roman Claudian Variant at WWII Memorial

Font B | Bronze Prayer Plaque:

- Font complementary to Roman Claudian Variant
- Font which meets established design goals and standards





# A PRAYER FOR D-DAY | JUNE 6 1944

MY FELLOW AMERICANS: Last night, when I spoke with you about the fall of Rome, I knew at that moment that troops of the United States and our Allies were crossing the Channel in another and greater operation. It has come to pass with success thus far.



# A PRAYER FOR D-DAY | JUNE 6 1944

MY FELLOW AMERICANS: Last night, when I spoke with you about the fall of Rome, I knew at that moment that troops of the United States and our Allies were crossing the Channel in another and greater operation. It has come to pass with success thus far.



A PRAYER FOR

D-DAY | JUNE 6 1944

MY FELLOW AMERICANS: Last night, when I spoke with you about the fall of Rome, I knew at that moment that troops of the United States and our Allies were crossing the Channel in another and greater operation. It has come to pass with success



Full Size - Perpetua

A PRA  
D-DAY

MY FELLOW  
AMERICANS:  
Last night, when  
I spoke with you  
about the fall of

Full Size - Caslon

A PRA  
D-DAY

MY FELLOW  
AMERICANS:  
Last night, when  
I spoke with you  
about the fall of

Full Size - Garamond

A PRA  
D-DAY

MY FELLOW  
AMERICANS:  
Last night, when  
I spoke with you  
about the fall of



A PRAYER FOR  
D-DAY | JUNE 6 1944

1 inch text

MY FELLOW  
AMERICANS: Last night,  
when I spoke with you  
about the fall of Rome, I  
knew at that moment

7/16 inch text

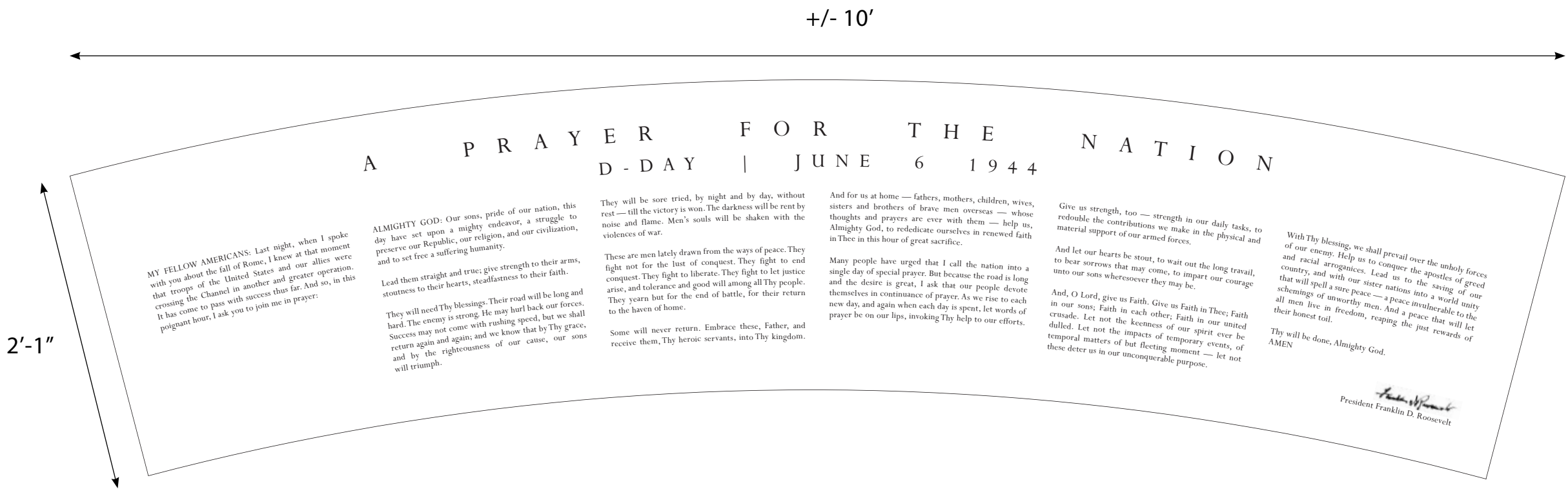
MY FELLOW  
AMERICANS: Last  
night, when I spoke  
with you about the fall  
of Rome, I knew at

1/2 inch text

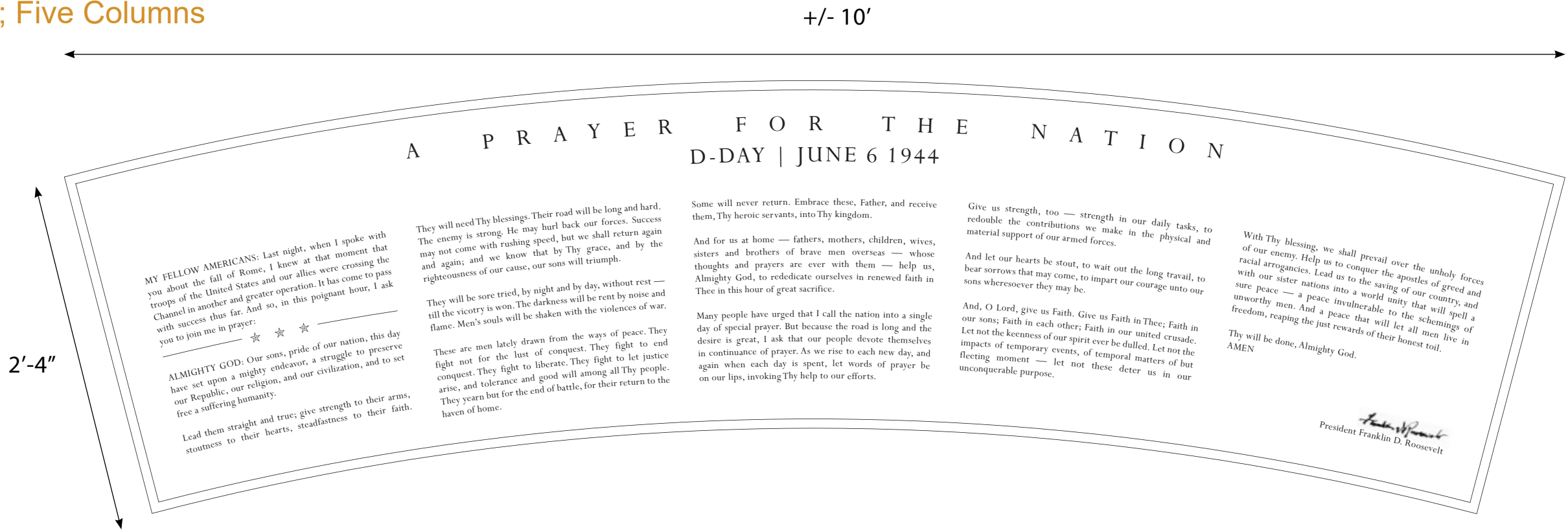


Plaque Layout Options

Option 1 | 7/16” Text; Six Columns



Option 2 | 1/2” Text; Five Columns





## Precedents | Bronze Plaques Raised Lettering

- Raised lettering is preferred by NPS for its durability and minimal maintenance
- Chemical patina finish colors surface of bronze without risk of chipping or peeling away over time
- Plaque will have a dark background and lighter raised lettering as shown in precedents below





Plaque Layout Options

Option 1 | 7/16” Text; Six Columns

- Dark patina with raised gold lettering provides desired contrast for legibility
- Curvature of text follows curvature of Plaque
- Six columns allows introduction to be separate
- Title and D-Day span over central columns

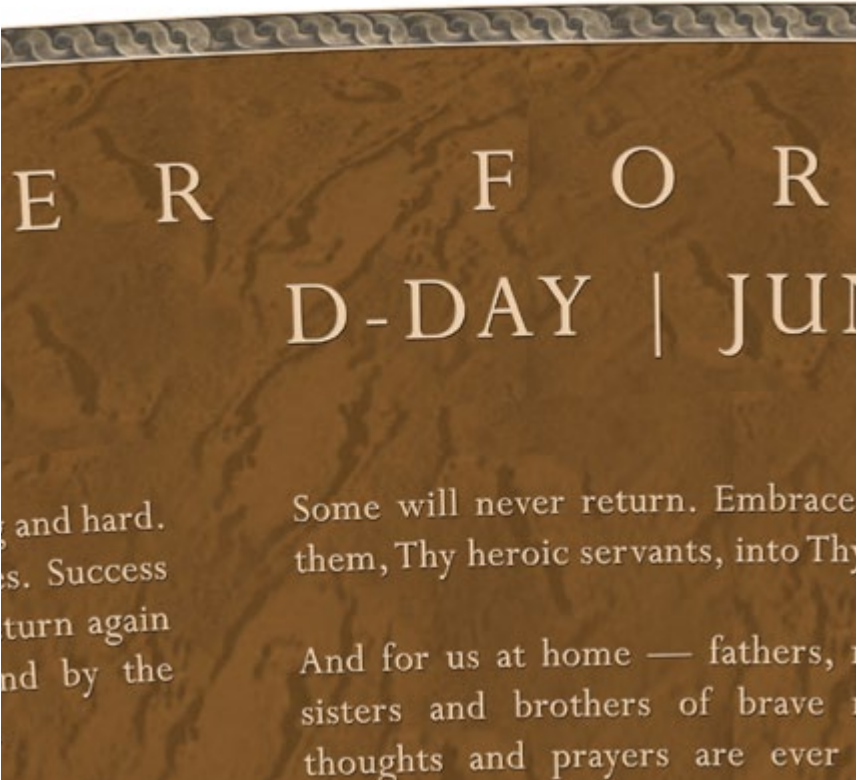




Plaque Layout Options

Option 2 | 1/2" Text; Five Columns

- Dark patina with raised gold lettering provides desired contrast for legibility
- Curvature of text follows curvature of Plaque
- Body text is enlarged to 1/2" and organized into five columns
- Star motif from the WWII Honor Wall separates introduction from Prayer
- Decorative border inspired by Medal of Freedom guilloché



+/- 10'

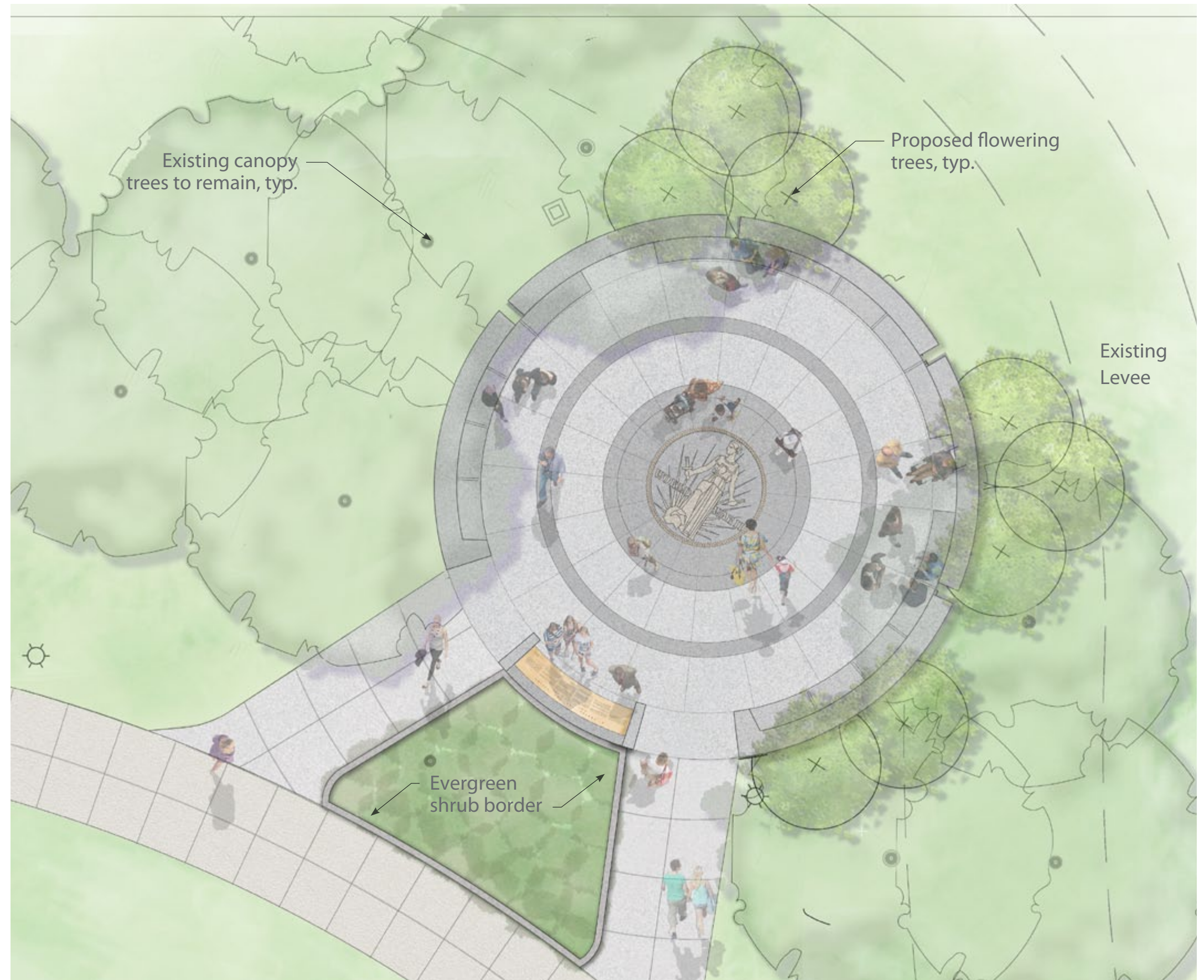
+/- 2'-4"





## D-Day Prayer Planting Design Concept Description

- Retains existing mature trees
- New flowering trees are arranged in small groups to strategically frame views of Constitution Gardens
- Hardy shrubs create a threshold into the Circle and a backdrop for the plaque





# D-Day Prayer Planting Design

## Representative Plant Palette

- Trees are underplanted with hardy groundcovers that will provide yearlong interest with minimal maintenance
- A mix of spring and summer bulbs are interspersed to provide seasonal interest
- White flowers for remembrance and symbolizing peace
- Hardy evergreen groundcover for seasonal interest, high traffic and minimal maintenance
- Flowering or fall color in the canopy, shrub, perennial and bulb layer



Existing multi-stem canopy trees: Chionanthus retusus



Proposed trees: Amelanchier grandifora 'Autumn Brilliance'



Proposed trees: Amelanchier grandifora 'Autumn Brilliance'



Sarcococca spp.



Carex spp.



Heuchera villosa 'Autumn Bride'



Helleborus orientalis



White narcissus



Snow drop species

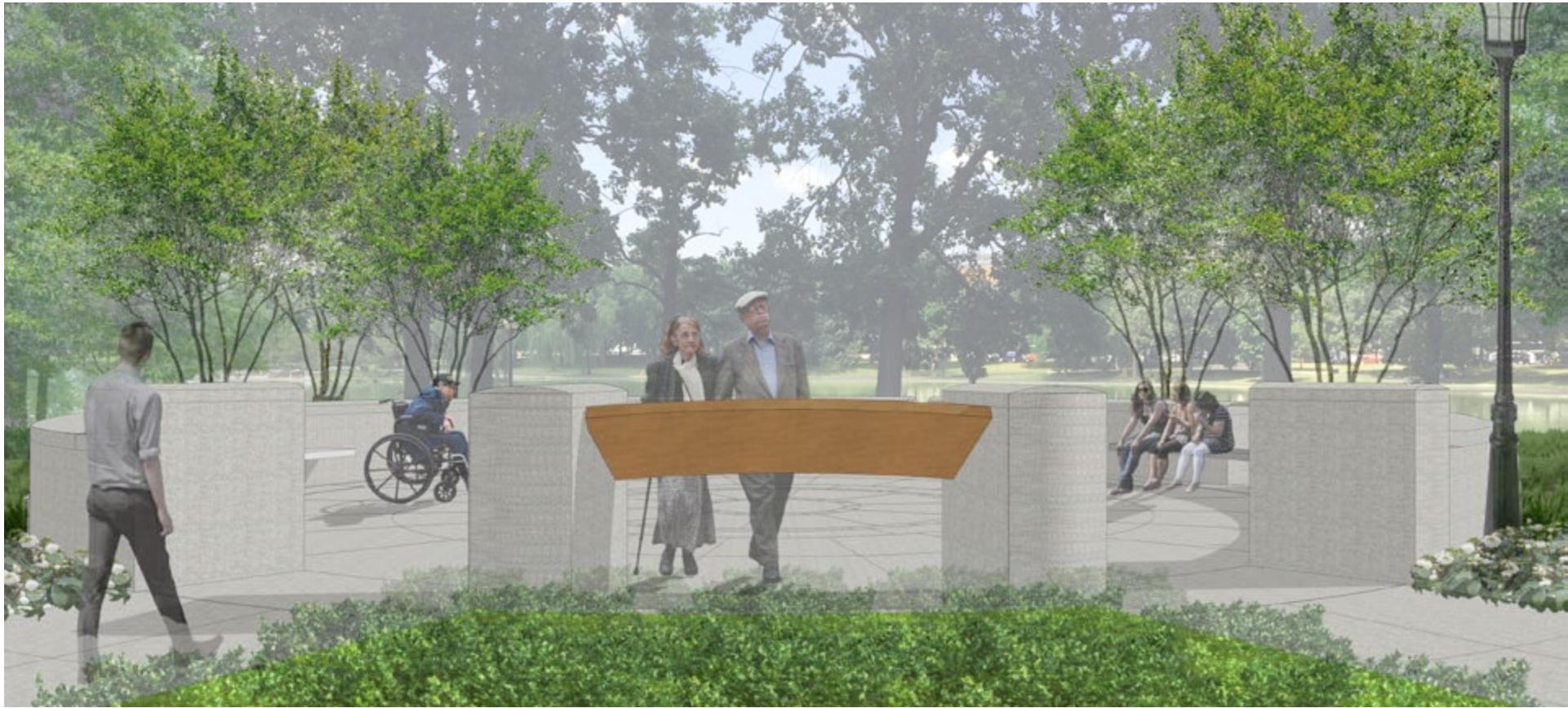


Discussion





Appendix

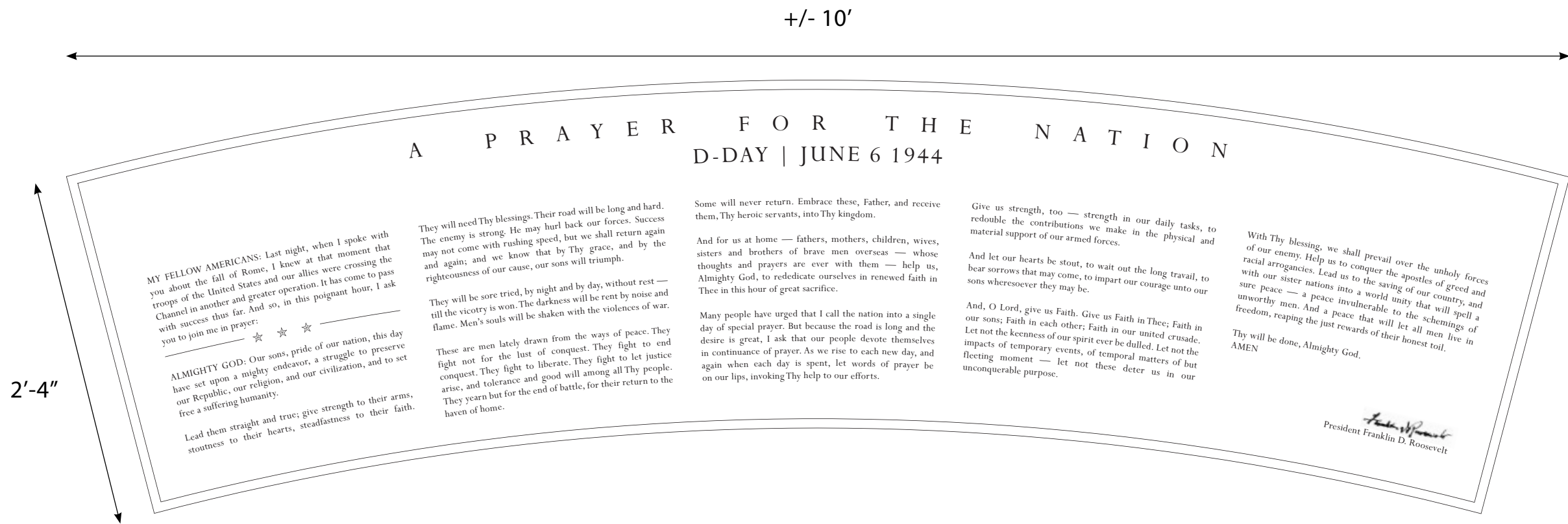


JANUARY 2021 CONCEPT COMPARISON

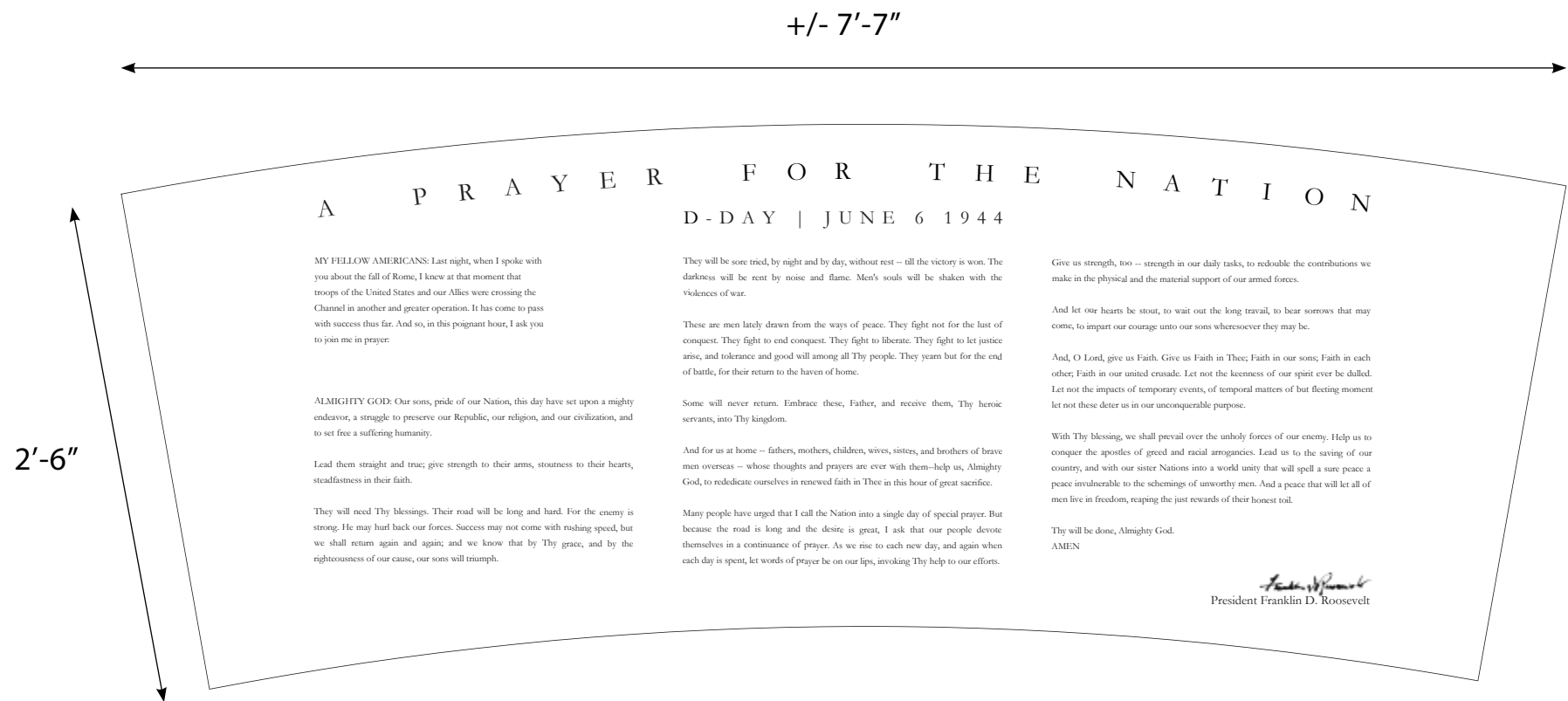


Plaque Layout Options

1/2” Text



Jan 2021 design





## D-Day Prayer Jan 2021 | View to Constitution Gardens

- The bronze Prayer plaque is held by stone pillars that create a threshold into the Circle while providing a strong foundation for the plaque
- Site walls are 36 inches tall and form the back for the cantilevered benches, which curve around the Circle
- A restrained planting palette is in keeping with the surrounding area and focuses views on both the WWII Memorial and Constitution Gardens Lake





## D-Day Prayer Jan 2021 | View to WWII Memorial

- The current design is slightly smaller than the original concept to keep the footprint consistent with the existing Circle and its orientation towards the WWII Memorial
- Studies of bronze casting methods and accessible legibility standards have informed the size and layout of the current plaque design
- Gently curved pillars announce entry into the Circle, interpreting elements of the WWII Memorial into a form and scale appropriate to the contemplative Circle

