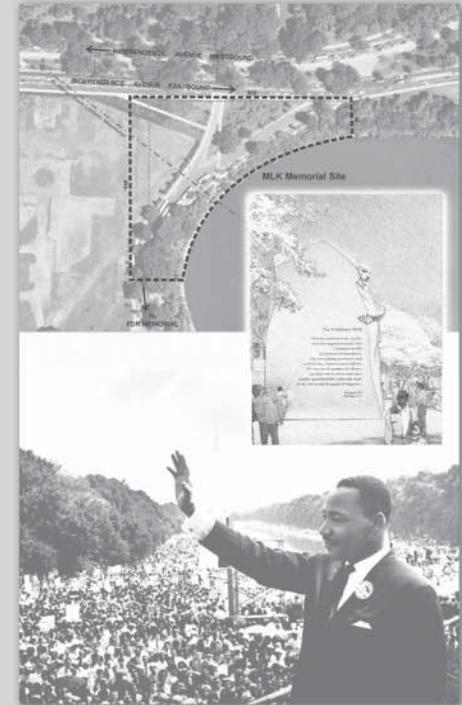


# 1.0 PURPOSE AND NEED

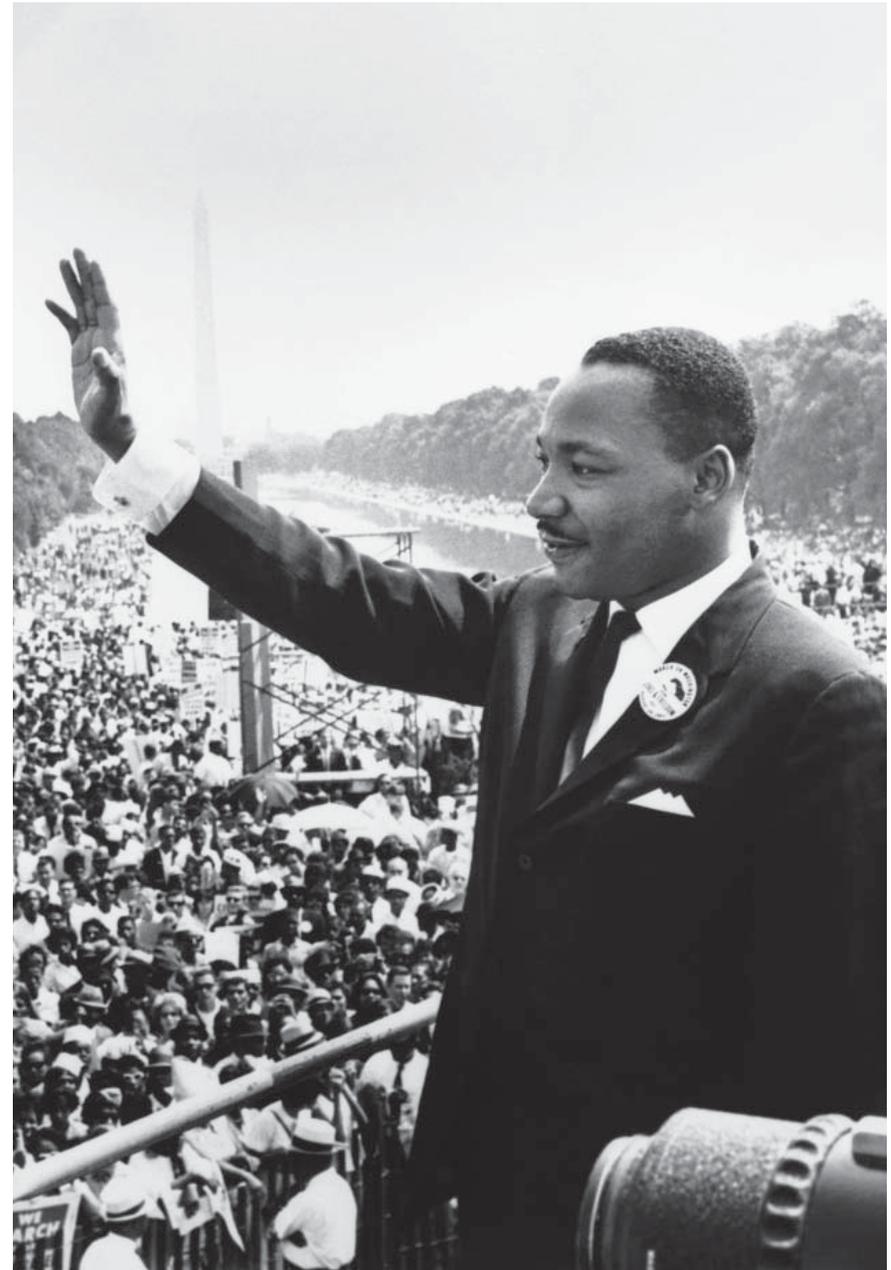


## 1.1 Introduction

The National Park Service (NPS) and the Washington, DC Martin Luther King, Jr. National Memorial Project Foundation, Inc. (Foundation) have proposed to establish and operate a national memorial to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. on an approved site in Washington, DC. The Martin Luther King, Jr. National Memorial (Memorial) is conceived as a space that is quiet and contemplative; but also uses powerful and evocative symbolism to convey Dr. King's message of justice, democracy, and hope.

Public Law 104-333, Section 508, as passed by the Congress, and signed into law by President William J. Clinton on November 12, 1996, established the procedures for establishing the Memorial to honor Martin Luther King, Jr.. Thereafter, upon the recommendation of the Secretary of the Interior, Congress considered it appropriate for the Memorial to be located within Area I as identified in the 1986 Commemorative Works Act. Congress passed legislation that authorized the selection of a site in Area I that was approved by President Clinton and enacted as Public Law 105-201 on July 16, 1998.

The Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity (Fraternity) has been authorized to establish the Memorial. The Fraternity has established within its organization the DC Martin Luther King, Jr. National Memorial Foundation (Foundation) to operate on behalf of the Fraternity in the development of the location, design, and construction of the Memorial. On behalf of the Secretary of the Interior, the National Park Service (NPS) and the Foundation are working together to undertake the requisite processes to enable the issuance of a permit to the Foundation. Upon completion and acceptance of the work necessary to construct the Memorial, in accordance with the directions of Public Law, the Memorial is to be maintained and operated by the National Park Service.



*Dr. King at the Washington Rally*  
Source: Corbis

The Foundation contracted for a study of alternative sites and in November 1998 indicated its preference for the selection and approval of a site at the east end of Constitution Gardens Lake, near the intersection of 17th Street, NW and Constitution Avenue, NW, adjacent to the site of the World War II Memorial. The preferred site and alternate sites were presented to and recommended by the National Capital Memorial Commission at its meeting on November 10, 1998. The Constitution Gardens site was submitted to the National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC) and the Commission of Fine Arts (CFA), with NCPC approving the preferred site on March 4, 1999, and CFA disapproving the site at its March 23, 1999, meeting. However, CFA indicated that the West Potomac Park location west of the Tidal Basin had greater potential.

In April and May 1999, refinement of the West Potomac Park site was attempted, with a 4-acre site being recommended for approval by NCPC at its July 1, 1999, meeting. This submission followed the June 17, 1999 adoption of that site by CFA. However, NCPC did not adopt the revised site, which led to a CFA/NCPC-NPS Joint Task Force effort which culminated in an October 21, 1999, agreement on 11 design parameters and the approvals of the site and design parameters by CFA and NCPC in December 1999.

The Foundation organized a Design Committee to consider the design intents of the Memorial. As stated by the Design Committee, the Foundation believes that “the memorial should be a timeless beacon for human justice and dignity, an enduring testament to active citizenship, and a place for reflection and connection across national and international boundaries”.

In September 2000, the Foundation publicly announced its selection of a design from the submissions that were offered as part of an internationally noticed design competition. The competition winning design was presented for informational purposes to the Commission of Fine Arts and the National Capital Planning Commission in May

and June 2001. Each approving agency advised the Foundation that elements of the competition winning design needed to be carefully considered, revised, or amended should the design be submitted for conceptual approval.

This environmental document does not include design revisions. Rather, the National Park Service and the Foundation seek formal comments in 2005 on the competition-winning design prior to making design changes. Therefore, the Memorial program elements of the Foundation and the impacts of the proposed concept design are the subject of this Environmental Assessment.

This EA seeks to document and describe the proposed action and determine the potential impacts and recommended mitigation measures related to its implementation. The EA also evaluates a No Action Alternative, as required by CEQ. The EA addresses: 1) short-term construction-related impacts, 2) long-term operations-related impacts, and 3) cumulative impacts that would result from this and other projects that have been completed recently, are currently under development, or are reasonably foreseeable within the study area.

The NPS and the Foundation have prepared this EA in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended (NEPA), the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations implementing NEPA [40 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 1500-1508], and the NPS Director’s Order-12 (as reflected in the DO-12 Handbook). The EA is also consistent with the requirements of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended (NHPA).



Map used with permission from Joseph R. Passonneau

*The proposed Memorial site is Federal parkland under the jurisdiction of and maintained by NPS.*

## 1.2 Purpose and Need for the Proposed Action

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was a dominant force in the Civil Rights Movement in the United States and made immeasurable contributions to world peace through non-violent social change. Although he was a leader in a number of historic moments in the Civil Rights Movement, such as the Montgomery Bus Boycott in 1956 and the March on Washington in 1963, Dr. King's lifelong dedication to the advancement of human rights is his enduring legacy to the world. He became a symbol of human rights and of a free America, where people of all races, creeds, and nationalities could live together in harmony. In short, Dr. Martin Luther King is a national hero and twentieth-century world leader. Despite his contributions and stature, there is no national monument to Dr. King in the Nation's Capital.

The purpose of the proposed action is to establish a memorial to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. on an approved site in Washington, DC. The Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial will commemorate the life and work of Dr. King and will be the first memorial in the Monumental Core to honor an individual African American.



*Civil Rights marchers en route from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama.*

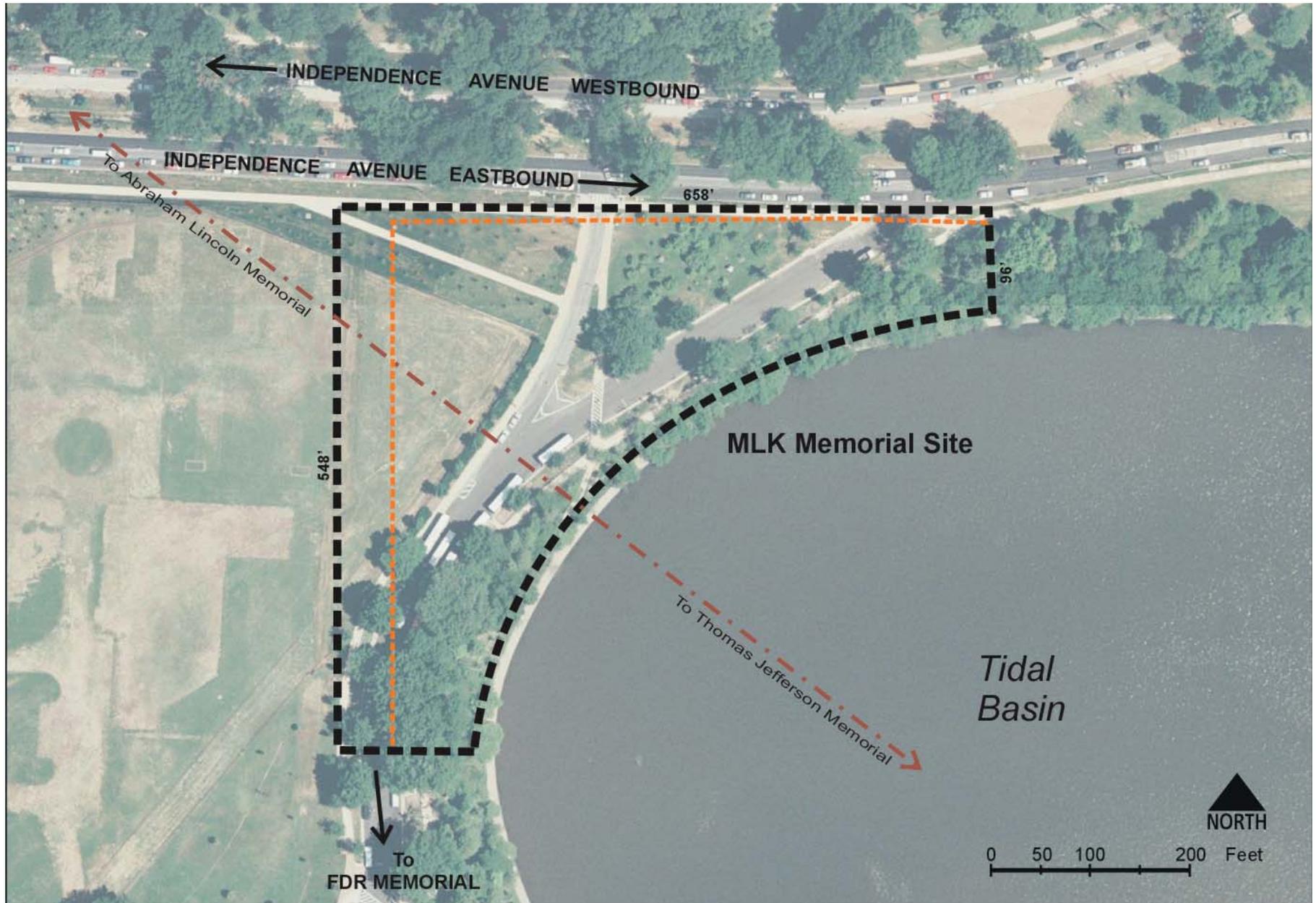
Source: Flip Shulke

The Foundation intends the Memorial to serve as a “life-affirming beacon; a guiding wellspring for a living reminder to each of us of our own inherent capacity for self-transformation and our everlasting human capacity to overcome.”



*Dr. King attends the signing of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 by President Lyndon B. Johnson.*

Source: United Press International



*The approved site of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial is located at the Tidal Basin and aligned with the visual axis from the Lincoln Memorial to the Jefferson Memorial.*

### 1.3 Project Setting

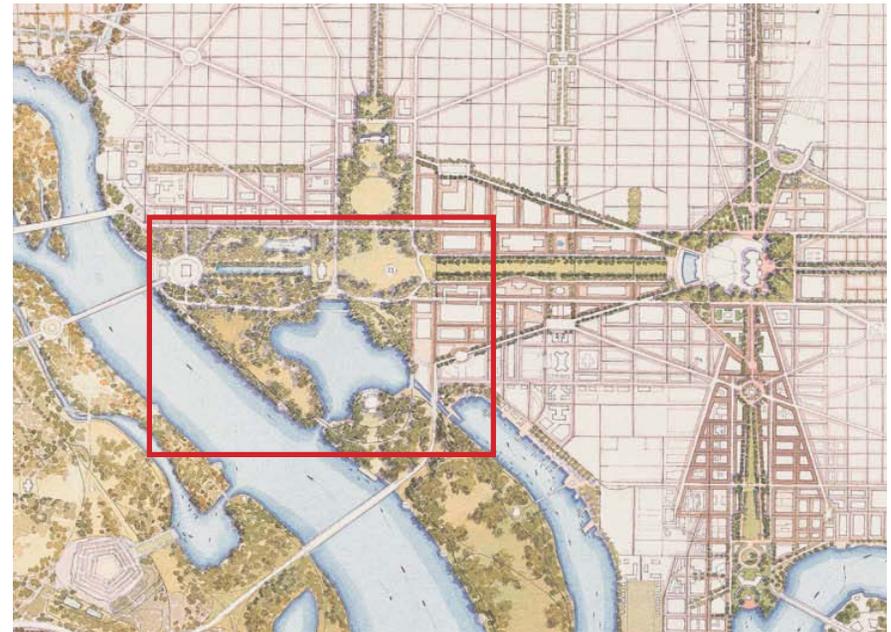
The approved site for the Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial is a four-acre parcel of land located on the northwestern side of the Tidal Basin within West Potomac Park. The triangular-shaped site is located across the Tidal Basin from the Jefferson Memorial and approximately 750 feet north of the Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial. The site is generally bounded by Independence Avenue on the north, the pedestrian walkway of the Tidal Basin on the east, the Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial on the south, and recreational open space on the west. The site also includes a portion of West Basin Drive. The site is within the Southwest Quadrant of Washington, DC.

The site location is within Area I, as established by the Commemorative Works Act of 1986 (40 U.S.C. 1001 et. seq.). Area I is a sensitive area that is designated for commemorative works of “preeminent historic and national significance.” Area I is the federally owned land generally bounded by Constitution and Pennsylvania Avenues to the north, the Capitol Reflecting Pool to the east, Maryland Avenue and the 14<sup>th</sup> Street Bridge to the south, and Boundary Channel Drive and Arlington National Cemetery to the west. The site lies inside the Reserve as established by Congress in Public Law 108-126 and was specifically exempted from the provisions of the Reserve since its selection and approval predated the enactment of the Public law.

The site is a prominent and symbolic location that is relevant to the subject of the Memorial. The site is in the line of sight between the Lincoln Memorial and the Jefferson Memorial. This alignment creates a visual ‘line of leadership’ from the Memorial to Abraham Lincoln, where King gave his famous “I Have a Dream” speech, to the Memorial to Thomas Jefferson, an author and participant in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution which Dr. King referred to as promissory notes in the speech.

#### 1.3.1 Study Area

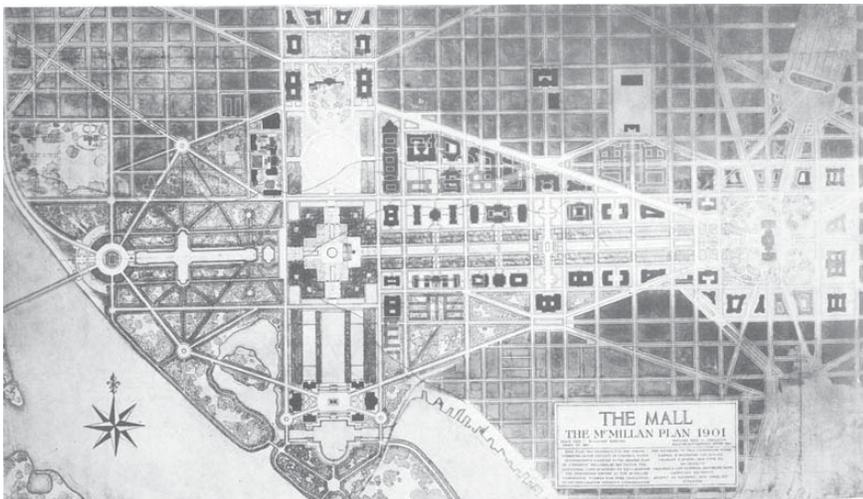
The study area for identifying potential environmental impacts from the proposed action is the central portion of the Monumental Core, including the National Mall, the Washington Monument Grounds, and West Potomac Park. An area of particular emphasis will be given to the portion of the study area that generally extends between the Lincoln Memorial and the Washington Monument, and between Constitution Avenue and the Jefferson Memorial. The broader study area is intended to serve as a guide within which short-term, long-term, and cumulative impacts of the proposed action are analyzed. The study area may expand or contract for each resource discipline, depending upon the potential for a specific impact to affect a given geographical area.



*The study area is generally defined to include the National Mall, the Washington Monument Grounds, and West Potomac Park.*



The L'Enfant Plan of 1791



The McMillan Plan of 1901

### 1.3.2 History of the National Mall

In the earliest plans for Washington, the area from the Capitol to the Washington Monument was intended as parkland, and the proposed Memorial site was part of the Potomac River. Over time, the National Mall and the larger Monumental Core area have expanded and become national repositories for the nation's museums and commemorative works. Today, the NPS has jurisdiction over public open space in the Monumental Core.

*L'Enfant Plan of 1791* – The National Mall was first planned in the 1791 L'Enfant Plan of Washington, DC. The Plan defines the physical and symbolic character of the nation's capital city through a coordinated system of radiating avenues and vistas overlaid upon an orthogonal grid of streets. The L'Enfant Plan is listed in the National Register of Historic Places and the DC Inventory of Historic Sites.

*McMillan Plan of 1901* - The Senate Park Commission of 1901, known as the McMillan Commission, expanded upon the L'Enfant Plan to enhance and extend the National Mall one mile to the west to create a site for the Lincoln Memorial. The features implemented from the 1901 McMillan Plan are protected historic resources.

*Other Plans* - In 1966, a Master Plan introduced several improvements to the Mall, including the creation of Constitution Gardens, construction of a reflecting pool west of the Capitol Building, and the transformation of two streets along both sides of the Mall into wide walkways. The plan also unified the National Mall and West Potomac Park into a single open area.

Current plans for the Monumental Core, such as the *Extending the Legacy Plan* and the *Memorials and Museums Plan*, build on the National Mall's success in providing a formal landscape within which America's ideals are memorialized. The National Mall is one of the best examples of design in the world and is the foremost location for icons of America's national and cultural heritage.

## 1.4 Significance of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Born in Atlanta, Georgia in 1929, Dr. King was the son of a pastor and schoolteacher. After receiving his bachelors degree from Morehouse College, he completed his doctorate in Theology at Boston University. In 1956, he made his first mark on the Civil Rights movement by mobilizing the black community to participate in a successful year-long boycott of the bus system in Montgomery, Alabama to protest its segregated seating policies. In 1957, Dr. King formed, and was elected president of, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, which assisted local communities working for full equality of black people in all aspects of American life.

Dr. King's nonviolent tactics were put to their test in Birmingham, Alabama in 1963 during a mass protest against segregation that included lunch counter sit-ins and marches. Police brutality against the marchers dramatized the plight of blacks to the rest of the nation. Although Dr. King was arrested, he wrote his famous "Letter from a Birmingham Jail" to refute his critics and emphasize his position.

In 1963, Dr. King spoke at the historic March on Washington, where he delivered his "I Have a Dream" speech, which is widely regarded as his most passionate address. His powerful message to the nation and its institutions at the seat of the Federal government movingly expressed the plight of black people and their struggle for freedom, greatly empowered the Civil Rights Movement, and established him as an American leader. After this pivotal moment in history, Dr. King continued with his advocacy work on a variety of issues, from the War on Poverty to voter registration in Selma, Alabama, which culminated in the Selma-to-Montgomery Freedom March. Intellectuals, clergymen, and Americans of every background were drawn to Dr. King's message and to the Movement. In 1964, Dr. King became the youngest person to receive the Nobel Peace Prize.

Dr. King's work led him to Memphis, Tennessee to support striking sanitation workers. While standing on the balcony of the Lorraine

Motel in Memphis with Jesse Jackson and Ralph Abernathy, Dr. King was assassinated on April 4, 1968. The violent death of a man who had been so dedicated to nonviolence caused grief and anger in communities across America. Because of his status as a national icon, Dr. King's birthday, January 15, is recognized as a national holiday.



*Image of the 'Stone of Hope' feature in the Memorial.*

Source: MLK Memorial Foundation



*Dr. King receiving the Nobel Prize for Peace in 1964.*  
Source: Bob Finch/Black Star



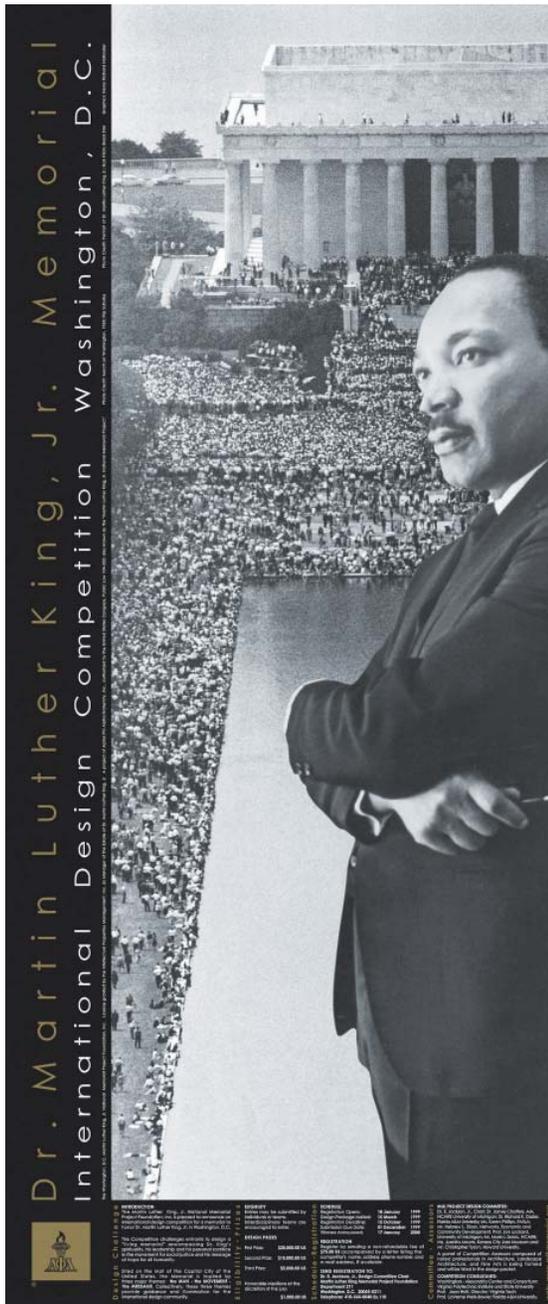
*Dr. King meeting with President Johnson at the White House*  
Source: Corbis



*Dr. King with Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru in New Delhi.*  
Source: Corbis



*Mrs. Coretta King with President Ronald Reagan in 1986, as he signs the bill making the birthday of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. a national holiday.*  
Source: Ebony Magazine



Design competition Call for Entries poster.  
Source: Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Foundation

## 1.5 Design Process

### 1.5.1 Design Competition

The Foundation formed a committee of architects, planners, artists, and landscape architects in March 1998 to coordinate the design and architectural process for the Memorial. An international design competition for the Memorial was launched in December 1999. In the competition package, entrants were asked to propose memorial designs that exemplify the mission, vision, and values of Dr. King.

#### *Design Challenges*

The essential design challenges included designing a “living memorial” that would convey themes of Justice, Hope, Democracy, and Love, as well as Dr. King’s leadership and spirituality. Through places of ‘contemplation, education and celebration’, the memorial would also :

- Capture the essence of Personal Empowerment (inner capacity)
- Capture the essence of Active Citizenship (common commitment)
- Capture the essence of Perpetual Quests for Justice (moral integrity)

#### *Design Parameters*

Specific design parameters for the Memorial included:

- The size of the site will be approximately four acres. No less than three acres, excluding West Basin Drive, and no more than four acres, including West Basin Drive, shall be devoted to the Memorial.
- The Foundation and the NPS will provide a general design for and construction of a relocated West Basin Drive.
- The Tidal Basin side of the site shall be defined by the western edge of the existing walkway along the Tidal Basin.

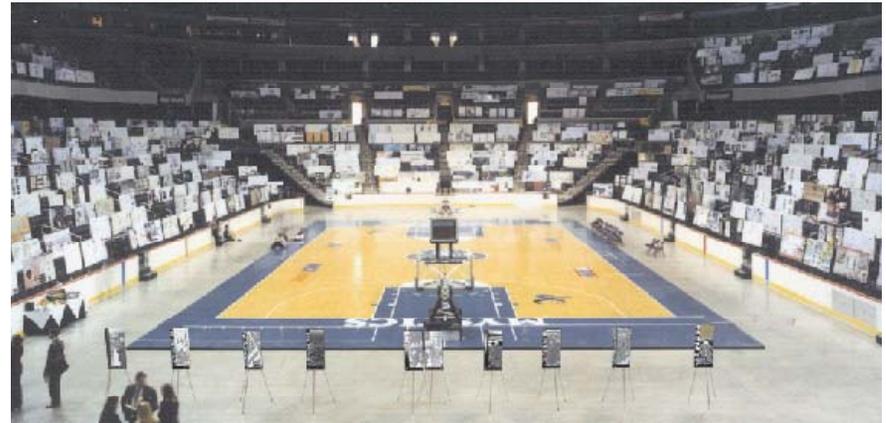
- All of the cherry trees along the Tidal Basin must be preserved. It is understood that one to three trees may be removed or repositioned if absolutely necessary for purposes of access between the Tidal Basin walkway and the Memorial at the location of the existing access way.
- No Memorial element shall be placed in the Tidal Basin.
- The existing visual transparency from Independence Avenue to the Tidal Basin shall be maintained.
- The relationship of hardscape to softscape shall be no greater than 1/3 hardscape and no less than 2/3 softscape (not including West Basin Drive or the Tidal Basin walkway).
- No element of the Memorial shall exceed 20 feet in height.
- There shall be no bookstore, museum, or other rooms located at the Memorial, above or below grade.
- There shall be no restroom facilities at the Memorial.
- There shall be no vehicle parking at the Memorial; however, three bus and six disabled vehicle spaces must be accommodated.

### ***Results of the Competition***

The design competition elicited more than 900 design submissions from architects, landscape architects, students, professors, and sculptors, representing 52 countries around the world. The submissions were evaluated based on the effectiveness with which they addressed the following questions:

1. To what extent is the design both educational and inspirational?
2. How well does the design engage and share the life of Martin Luther King and his message?
3. How well does the design succeed in harmonizing with nature?

In September, 2000, the jury selected the winning design submitted by ROMA Design Group of San Francisco, California. On December 4, 2000, the site was dedicated and a marble and bronze memorial marker was placed to symbolize the future use of the site.



*Design submissions displayed at the MCI Center in Washington, DC.*

Source: Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Foundation

### **1.5.2 Ongoing Design Review**

The focus of this EA is to identify the impacts of the Proposed Memorial and the No Action Alternative. Subsequent to completion of the EA, the project will undergo design review and approval by the NPS, NCPC, CFA, and the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). During preliminary informational presentations with these agencies, the competition-winning Memorial design concept received many favorable comments. Three unresolved issues were identified that will be considered for elimination during the design review and approval process. Two issues that should not affect the evaluation of impacts in this assessment are: (1) the niches named for other persons in the Civil Rights Movement along the upper walkway because that would violate the Commemorative Works Act by memorializing more than Dr. King without specific Congressional authorization, and (2) the footbridge spanning the entry portal because it intrudes on the meaning of cleaving the Mountain of Despair and its linkage to the Stone of Hope beyond. The third issue (3) was the height and length of the berm that would serve as a barrier to the views from Independence Avenue to the Tidal Basin and Jefferson Memorial in the winter. This is evaluated in Section 4.2.3, and may affect the configuration of the berm as the design evolves.





## 1.6 Cumulative Relationship to Other Projects

Several ongoing and planned projects in the vicinity of the Memorial site could generate cumulative impacts when considered together with the impacts of the proposed action. The projects are as follows:

- **World War II Memorial** - Recently opened, this Memorial is located across Independence Avenue from the Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial site and will be considered in the discussion of visitation patterns.
- **Jefferson Memorial Security Improvements** - This project involves the construction of a vehicular barrier system to improve security for the Jefferson Memorial.
- **Lincoln Memorial Circle Rehabilitation and Security Improvements** - This project includes transportation improvements to Lincoln Circle, a vehicular barrier system along the outer edge of the Lincoln Memorial, and construction of new visitor service areas.
- **Washington Monument Security Improvements** - This project involves improvements to the temporary security system at the Washington Monument, including construction of a permanent visitor screening facility and a vehicle barrier system.

## 1.7 Issues and Impact Topics

On January 7, 2003, a publicly noticed public scoping meeting was convened to solicit comments and concerns regarding the proposed Memorial program. The meeting was held in The American Institute of Architects Board Room at 1735 New York Avenue, N.W., Washington, DC. Attendees included members of the National Coalition to Save Our Mall, as well as representatives from the NPS, CFA, NCPC, and the Foundation. General topics determined through the scoping process to be key issues for analysis in this EA include :



*A public scoping session was held to solicit comments on the proposed Memorial.*

1. Cumulative impacts relating to the entire Monumental Core, including the Memorial's relationship to past, present, and future planning initiatives in the study area.
2. Potential issues related to the obstruction of certain views of the Tidal Basin and the characterization of views to and from the Memorial. The vehicular and pedestrian entry sequence to the site should be considered.
3. Potential impacts to existing vegetation on the site. Specifically, the EA should address any impacts to the historically and culturally important cherry trees along the Tidal Basin.
4. Potential issues related to the site's water resources and location in a floodplain. The cumulative effect of the World War II Memorial and proposed changes to Jefferson Memorial should be considered.
5. Potential impacts to the recreational open space and landscape character and/or historic features of West Potomac Park.
6. Potential impacts to the transportation network and circulation. The combined effects of visitation to and circulation among other memorials must be considered, and particular attention should be paid to peak access demands and fluctuations.