

STAFF RECOMMENDATION



C. Kelly

NCPC File No. 6979

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA WORLD WAR I MEMORIAL RESTORATION AND REHABILITATION

Independence Avenue and West Basin Drive, SW
Washington, DC

Submitted by the National Park Service

September 24, 2009

Abstract

The National Park Service has submitted for concept review the restoration and rehabilitation of the District of Columbia World War I Memorial located in West Potomac Park along Independence Avenue, SW. The memorial was built in 1931 to memorialize the residents of Washington D.C. who fought in World War I. The proposed project includes: cleaning and repairing of the memorial stone, replacement of deteriorating bluestone paving, removal of later vegetation close to the structure to restore its open setting, and the planting of elm trees according to the original landscape plan. The proposed project will also restore the Memorial's use as a bandstand.

Commission Action Requested by Applicant

Approval of comments on concept design, pursuant to 40 U.S.C. § 8722(b)(1) and (d).

Executive Director's Recommendation

The Commission:

Comments favorably on the concept design for the restoration and rehabilitation of the District of Columbia World War I Memorial and its grounds, as shown on NCPC Map File No. 1.43(73.10)42860.

Commends the National Park Service for the restoration and rehabilitation of this locally significant memorial and its grounds that will restore its use as a bandstand as well as its visibility in West Potomac Park.

Notes that the project is funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

* * *

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Site

The District of Columbia World War I Memorial is located in West Potomac Park near the intersection of Independence Avenue and West Basin Drive, SW, north of the proposed Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial.

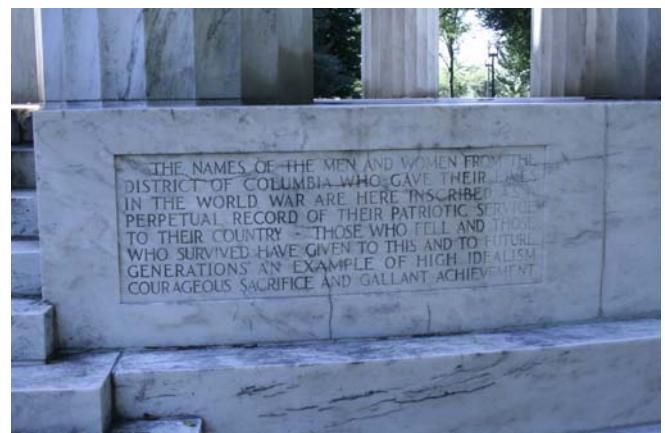


DC WORLD WAR I MEMORIAL LOCATION

Background

Memorial History

The District of Columbia War Memorial commemorates the citizens of the District of Columbia who served in World War I. Authorized by Congress on June 7, 1924, the memorial was funded by both organizations and individual citizens of the District. Construction of the memorial began in the spring of 1931 and the memorial was dedicated by President Herbert Hoover on November 11, 1931 (Armistice Day). It was the first war memorial to be erected in West Potomac Park, and remains the only local District memorial on the National Mall today.



The Memorial was designed by Washington architect Frederick H. Brooke, with Horace W. Peaslee and Nathan C. Wyeth as associate architects. Inscribed on the base of the Memorial are the names of the 499 District of Columbia citizens who lost their lives in the war. The Memorial was designed to be used as a bandstand as well as a memorial and is large enough to hold an 80-member band. Concerts were held there until the final documented performance on May 1st, 1960 by the U.S. Marine Corps Band. The Memorial is listed as a contributing structure in the East and West Potomac National Register nomination.

Existing Conditions

The D.C. War Memorial is a 47 foot tall circular domed Doric temple of Vermont marble. Resting on concrete foundations, the four foot high marble base defines a platform 43 feet 5 inches in diameter. Twelve 22 foot tall fluted Doric marble columns support the entablature and dome that is constructed of Guastavino tiles and clad in marble.



During the 1931-1939 period of significance, the memorial was surrounded by a 50' wide open lawn. An 8' wide decorative bluestone walk encircled the Memorial and the lawn panels along the north and south axis were flanked by two parallel gravel walks. It was intended that memorial elm trees be planted along the edge of the existing grove. Since the period of significance additional bluestone paving was added to the ring around the Memorial and the original gravel pathways were hardened with bluestone. A bluestone paved plaza was also added to the southern lawn.

In recent years the condition of the Memorial has been deteriorating. Open mortar joints and failed metal flashings have allowed water infiltration into the brick, terra cotta tile and marble; this has resulted in the formation of calcium carbonate deposits. Marble displacement, spalling, cracking and micro-cracking have been observed and leaking of the internal storm water conductors in four columns have caused heavy soiling. The exposed marble has become dirty and stained from atmospheric pollutants and biological growth.

The character of the memorial grounds have also changed in years since the period of significance. The memorial grove is now a mix of canopy hardwoods, evergreens, understory plantings, and non native plants, altering the intended character of the open grove. While the north and south lawn panels remain, the 50' wide open lawn around the Memorial and the memorial elm grove is no longer evident due to plant material. The bluestone paving is severely deteriorated and broken from vehicular use. The landscape shows of erosion and poor drainage.



Stone Staining and Cracking



Vegetation Overgrowth



Bluestone paving deterioration

EXISTING CONDITIONS OF THE MEMORIAL

EXISTING SITE CONDITIONS



Proposal

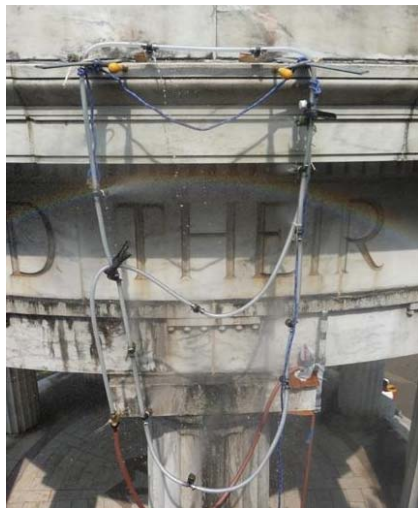
The proposed restoration and rehabilitation project includes three components: (1) the restoration of the memorial, (2) the reestablishment of the historic character of the memorial vegetation, and (3) improvement of circulation paths and patterns.

Component 1: Memorial Restoration

To the Memorial the NPS proposes to

- Restore the structure by re-pointing open mortar joints, repairing cracks, micro-cracks and spalled stone. Displaced stones of significant dimension will be evaluated to warrant removal and reinstallation
- Clean the stone to remove general soiling, calcium deposits, rainwater staining, and biological and non-biological staining.

Stone conservators are conducting tests to determine the best method for cleaning and removal of general and biological soiling, calcium crusts and brown floor stain, blue-green copper stains, orange-red stains, old paint and water replant that currently mars the Memorial. NPS's intends to clean the memorial with minimal intervention and restore it to an appearance consistent with the structure's age and material character.



Water mist cleaning



Copper stain removal on base



Marble cleaning on column



Micro-abrasive cleaning on column

Component 2: Reestablish the historic character of the Memorial vegetation

To the Memorial grounds NPS proposes to

- Re-establish the 50' wide vista of open lawn around the Memorial.
- Remove the non-historic vegetation and understory planting to re-establish sight lines and the open setting of the memorial.
- Replant the elm grove per the original landscape plan.
- Improve soils and drainage.

As stated previously, during the 1931-1939 period of significance, the Memorial was surrounded by a 50-foot open lawn set within a grove of trees and memorial elm trees were designated for planting along the edge of the existing grove. The memorial grove is now a mix of canopy hardwoods, evergreens, understory plantings, and non-native plants, altering the intended open feel of the grove. Encroaching overgrowth has contributed to the loss of the open lawn and the spatial definition of the memorial grove. NPS intends to remove the non-historic understory shrubs and small trees, selectively prune the mature trees, and re-establish the grove of American elms.

**PROPOSED VEGETATION REMOVAL**

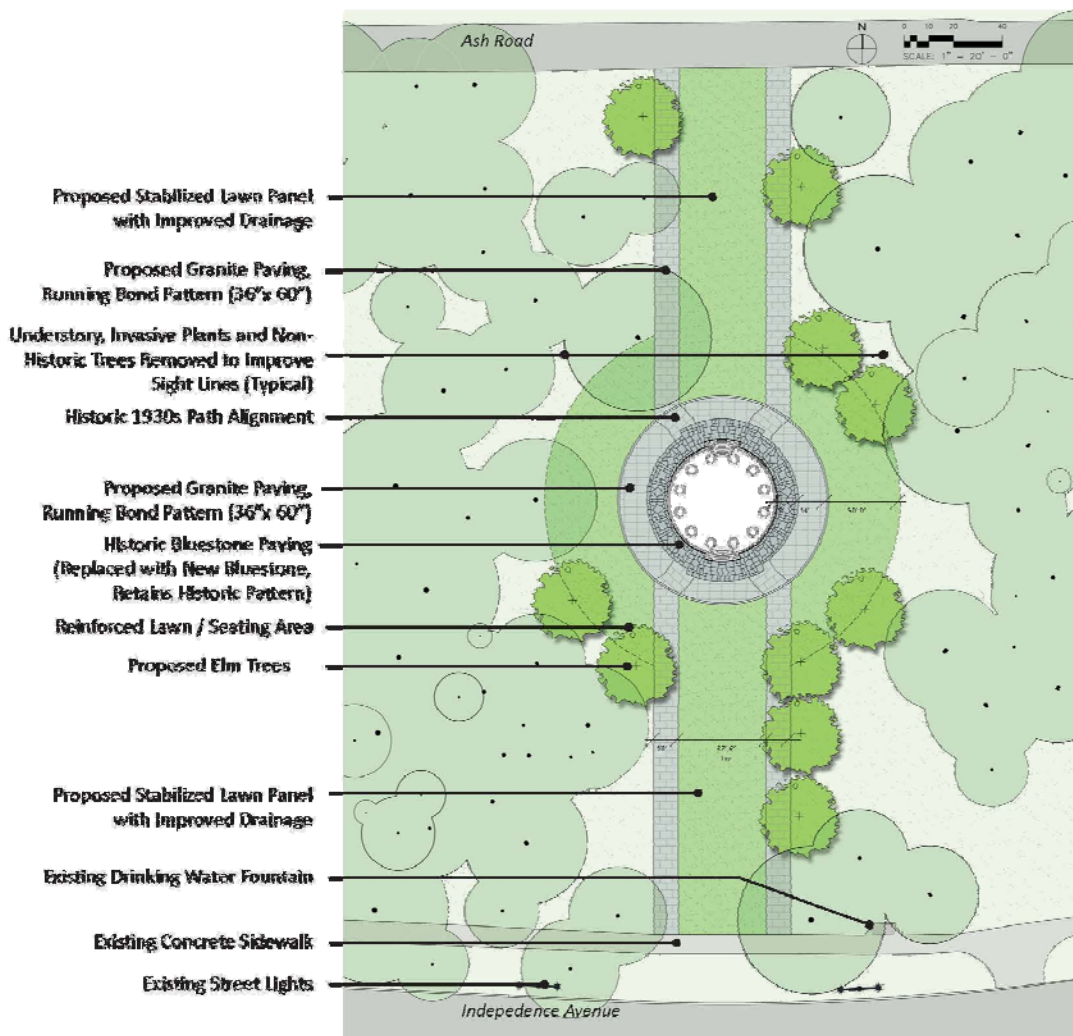
Component 3: Improvement of circulation paths and patterns

To the Memorial grounds NPS proposes to

- Rehabilitate the parallel walks and non-historic outer paving circle of the Memorial with new granite paving on a concrete base.
- Widen the walks from 8' to 10' to better accommodate public access and vehicle maintenance.
- Restore the 8' wide historic bluestone paving encircling the base of the Memorial.
- Improve soils and drainage.

The third component of the project focuses on pedestrian and vehicle circulation through the site. Due to the current deteriorated condition of paths and their potential future use, NPS is proposing to widen the walkways from eight feet to ten feet and new granite paving, a more durable material, would replace the non-historic bluestone paving. The use of different materials will distinguish the historic and non-historic features of the Memorial.

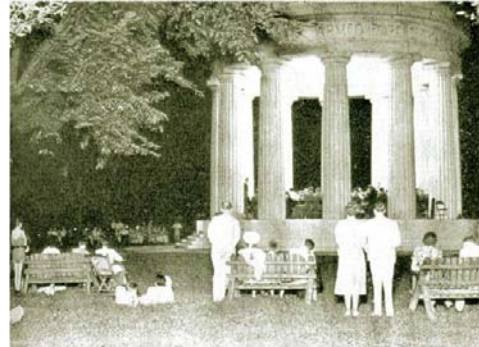
PROPOSED SITE IMPROVEMENTS



The final design will include the replacement of the current vault hatch that is in the floor of the memorial and will reintroduce lighting into the memorial. Historic photos show that there were concealed light fixtures in the dome and light was evenly disturbed across the dome interior. Further research is being conducted to determine the design for the vault hatch and the lights. New lighting concepts being researched include metal halide up-lights, cold cathode light strips, and light emitting diodes (LEDs). The final lighting will be designed to cross-light the dome for consistency of light with no hotspots near the cornice for an even wash of light. The lights will allow for evening concerts to occur at the Memorial again.



Existing vault cover in the floor of the memorial



A 1939 photo showing that the memorial was lit and used for evening concerts

Development Program

The total estimated cost of the project is \$5.2 million and is funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

The schedule for rehabilitation completion is September 30, 2012.

The lead consultant on the project is Hord Coplan Macht, Inc., a firm from Baltimore, Maryland.

PROJECT ANALYSIS

Staff supports the much needed cleaning and repairing of the memorial and supports the use of different materials to distinguish between the historic and non-historic features of the Memorial. Staff commends NPS for undertaking this long awaited and much needed restoration of the DC WWI memorial. Its condition has been noted in recent years by citizens and historic preservation organizations. The D.C. Preservation League has included the memorial on its “most endangered” historic landmarks list in the past.

Viewshed

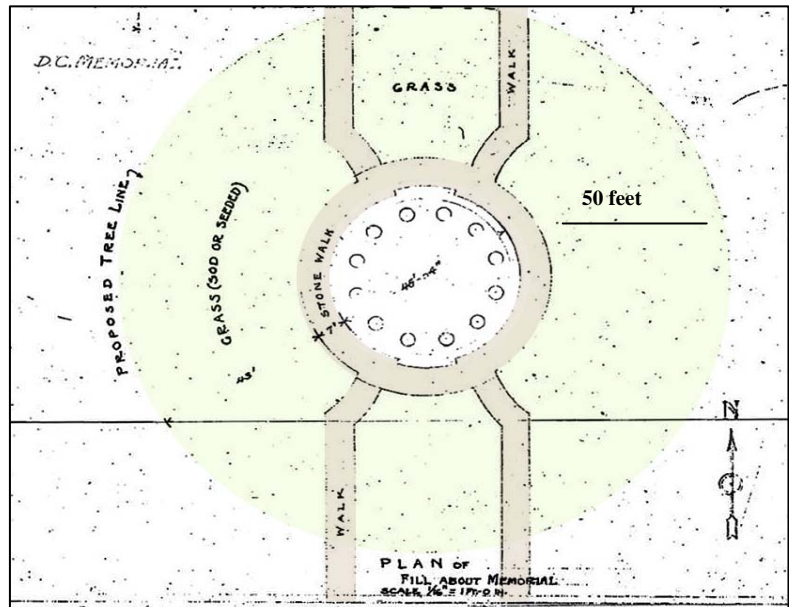
Staff supports the restoration of the historic 50’ open lawn around the memorial and is encouraged that NPS plans on using the Memorial as a bandstand again. The restoration of the

open lawn will restore vistas to and from the Memorial and allow space for people to gather to watch the bands.

The Memorial is located within section of West Potomac Park that will be experiencing increased visitation and visibility due to the location of the future Martin Luther King Jr. Staff praises NPS for undertaking the memorial restoration and rehabilitation of the grounds prior to the increased visitation.

Therefore staff recommends **the Commission comment favorably on the concept design for the restoration and rehabilitation of the District of Columbia World War I Memorial and its grounds and commend the National Park Service for the restoration and rehabilitation of this locally significant memorial and its grounds that will restore its use as bandstand as well as its visibility in West Potomac Park.**

Original Site Plan



H.R. 482: The Frank Buckles World War I Memorial Act

On January 13, 2009, Bill H.R. 482 was introduced in the House of Representatives. The bill would authorize the rededication of the District of Columbia War memorial as a National and District of Columbia World War I Memorial to honor the sacrifices made by American veterans of World War I. The bill gives the World War I Memorial Foundation the authority to rededicate the memorial including:

1. full restoration of the existing District of Columbia War Memorial
2. the addition of an appropriate sculptural or other commemorative element, which shall complement and preserve the existing memorial and its landscape, at the site of the existing memorial to make it a national memorial.

Since the bill separates the restoration of the DC World War I Memorial from the addition of other commemorative elements to create a national memorial component, the proposed project would not interfere with the implementation of the legislation if it were enacted.

CONFORMANCE

Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital

The project is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital, in particular the Preservation and Historic Features Element. The following are applicable policies from the Preservation and Historic Features Element:

National Capital Image

1. Express the dignity befitting the image of the federal government in the national capital.
5. Protect and enhance the vistas and views, both natural and designed that are an integral part of the national capital's image.

Stewardship of Historic Properties

5. Identify and protect both the significant historic design integrity and the use of historic landscapes and open spaces.

Federal Capital Improvements Plan

This project was funded with American Reinvestment and Recovery Act (ARRA) funds and did not appear previously in the Federal Capital Improvements Plan.

Relevant Federal Facility Master Plan

The proposed restoration of the memorial is a common element with all alternatives of NPS's National Mall Plan, now in development.

The National Environmental Protection Act

NPS is the lead agency regarding compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). NCPC requires NEPA to be complete before the project may be submitted for preliminary and final approval. As a project in the District of Columbia, NCPC has an independent NEPA responsibility.

National Historic Preservation Act

NPS is the lead agency regarding compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. NPS initiated consultation with the District of Columbia State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) on September 18, 2009, with a preliminary determination of "no adverse effect." NPS has notified interested parties of the memorial project and informed them that the project was on the Commission's October agenda.

CONSULTATION

Coordinating Committee

The Committee reviewed the proposal at its September 9, 2009 meeting, and forwarded it to the Commission with the statement that the proposal has been coordinated with all participating agencies. The participating agencies included: NCPC; the National Park Service; the General Services Administration; the District of Columbia Office of Planning; the District Department of Transportation; the Department of Housing and Community Development; and the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority.

Commission of Fine Arts

The Commission of Fine Arts reviewed the project as a consent calendar item at their September 17, 2009 meeting and found no objection to the concept proposal to restore and repair the District of Columbia World War I Memorial, to rehabilitate the adjacent landscaping, and to reconstruct the walkways. The Commission requested further consultation between the National Park Service and Commission staff on proposed paving materials and on vegetation removal prior to final plans.