

STAFF RECOMMENDATION



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NCPC File No. 7049

THOMAS JEFFERSON MEMORIAL PERIMETER SECURITY

West Potomac Park
Washington, DC

Submitted by the National Park Service

September 30, 2010

Abstract

The National Park Service (NPS) has submitted concept plans for the location and design character of a vehicle barrier to provide perimeter security for the Thomas Jefferson Memorial. The proposed plan also includes the provision of parking for handicapped visitors, spaces for tour bus loading and unloading, and a new kiosk in a new location for continued food service. The current kiosk would be demolished. NPS is preparing an environmental assessment for this project that includes three build alternatives. All three have been submitted to the Commission for comment at the concept phase. NPS has initiated Section 106 consultation with the District of Columbia State Historic Preservation Office and has held public scoping and consultation meetings.

Commission Action Requested by Applicant

Approval of comments on the concept plans for perimeter security at the Thomas Jefferson Memorial on the National Mall in West Potomac Park, Washington, DC, pursuant to 40 U.S.C. § 8722 (b) (1) and (d).

Executive Director's Recommendation

The Commission:

Comments favorably on the barrier location in Alternative 1, which incorporates a vehicle barrier as a streetscape feature at the southern edge of the memorial site along East Basin Drive, as well as on associated improvements for visitors to the Thomas Jefferson Memorial, including

the location of tour bus loading and unloading, parking for handicapped visitors, a new and relocated food kiosk, and landscaping to screen views of the highway from the memorial.

Recommends that the National Park Service continue to consider some of the design concepts developed for the walls and benches in Alternatives 2 and 3, which may be useful and appropriate in the further development of the Alternative 1 barrier design.

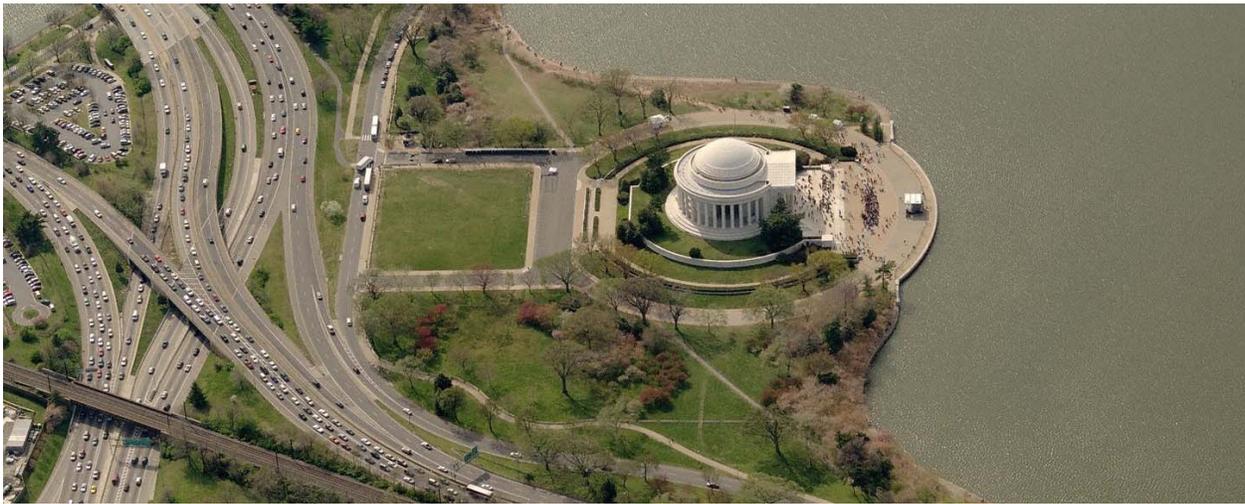
Commends the National Park Service for developing three meaningful alternatives for the barrier location and design, all of which have merit and all of which will be useful in informing the environmental analysis and future design development.

* * *

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Site

The Thomas Jefferson Memorial is located to the south of the Tidal Basin, in West Potomac Park, on the National Mall. The parking lot directly south of the memorial has been closed to private vehicles, although emergency vehicles can gain access to the memorial as necessary. The paved parking lot, which is an original feature of the memorial setting, is envisioned in NPS's National Mall Plan as an area for public, permitted events that require a hardscape surface.



The Jefferson Memorial today (north is to the right)



The Jefferson Memorial in 1949

Background

Following the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, NPS determined that seven national icons under its jurisdiction required the construction of physical security barriers to protect the icons against vehicle-laden explosives. Three of the icons are on the National Mall. The Commission has previously approved final plans for barriers at the Washington Monument and the Lincoln Memorial. (A vehicle barrier at the Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial was subsequently proposed by NPS and approved by the Commission.) Although NPS has met periodically with Commission staff and the staffs of other review agencies and with consulting parties and the public in recent years, this is the first submission to the Commission of a proposal for a vehicle barrier at the Jefferson Memorial.

The Thomas Jefferson Memorial was designed by noted architect John Russell Pope and completed by his successor firm in 1942, five years after Pope's death. The neoclassical design of the memorial was famously the subject of much controversy within the architecture profession in its day but was promoted by President Franklin D. Roosevelt, who laid the cornerstone in 1938. The landscape plan was developed by Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr. (the surviving member of the Senate Park Commission) with a plan and tree list characteristic of his picturesque and naturalistic landscape treatments in that era and deemed especially appropriate for this monumental garden temple. The landscape treatment was a dramatic contrast to the Beaux Arts-style plan for a memorial and water basin conceived by the Senate Park Commission as the southern terminus of the Mall's cross-axis and illustrated in its 1901/1902 plan and report.

Since its completion during World War II, the setting of the memorial has been altered by modifications to the pedestrian paths and plantings as well as by the encroachment of roads and

highways to the south of the memorial. The Tidal Basin itself, however, and the Inlet and Outlet Bridges predate the memorial and are contributing historic features of West Potomac Park. The memorial was one of the first historic properties to be listed in the National Register of Historic Places following the passage of the National Historic Preservation Act in 1966.

Proposal

NPS has developed three alternatives for the *location* and *related design character* of the vehicle barrier. Each alternative represents a different design approach to the treatment of the memorial, the memorial landscape, and the barrier itself. Each was developed following a thorough examination of the historical record to confirm the surviving original trees and plantings and to compare Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr.'s 1943 as-built landscape plan with the current condition of the landscape as it has been altered in the intervening years.

Each alternative considers a different location for the barrier line and then renders that barrier alignment in a style or character appropriate to the alignment's presence in the memorial landscape. Staff recommends that the Commission endorse and comment favorably on the *location* shown in Alternative 1, but notes (as have other review agencies and interested parties) that some of the design concepts developed for the barriers in Alternatives 2 and 3 are worthy of further study once the barrier location or alignment has been determined.

NPS states that at present the barrier is designed with a structural height of 36 inches. NPS is conducting further analysis on the appropriate barrier height.

The three alternatives are:

Alternative 1: Barrier as a Streetscape Feature

Alternative 2: Barrier as a Landscape Feature

Alternative 3: Barrier as a Formal Feature

Alternative 1: Barrier as a Streetscape Feature

Location: Alternative 1 extends from the Inlet to the Outlet Bridge, generally along East Basin Drive. The barrier is treated as an element of the streetscape, relating to the sidewalk and road rather than penetrating the memorial landscape.

Design Character: In concept, the barrier borrows elements from the bridges, proposing stone piers connected by cables sheathed in rigid metal (similar to the bridge railings). Since the barrier would be visible from the road, openness is important, hence the piers, which are typically spaced 8 feet on center. Benches would be inserted among the piers.

South Lawn Treatment: At the south lawn, the sidewalk would be widened, with the barrier (piers and railing) bisecting the sidewalk so that pedestrians and cyclists would be separated.

Landscape Impacts: With the barrier at the perimeter of the landscape, this alternative would avoid physical intrusion into the memorial setting, landscape, internal paths, and the Tidal Basin path once inside a 20-foot swath along the East Basin Drive sidewalk. Olmsted, Jr.'s original interior path scheme could be constructed or reconstructed. However, this alternative would have the most impact of the three alternatives on the trees because some of the historic trees are clustered near the East Basin Drive sidewalk. Construction of the barrier in this location would cause the removal of seven (7) historic trees and 46 non-historic trees planted at the southern edge of the setting near the sidewalk and road, for a loss of 701 caliper inches.

In the site plans shown for Alternatives 1, 2, and 3 on subsequent pages of this report, the red lines indicate the proposed locations or alignments of the vehicle barrier.



- Edges Ohio Drive between Inlet and Outlet Bridges
- Maximizes transparency to mitigate visual impact from roadway and edge path
- Modular arrangement of piers, walls sections, horizontal bars and bench inserts

Alternative 1: Barrier as a **STREETScape** Feature



Alternative 1: Overall Plan

Alternative 1

South View Edge



PERSPECTIVE

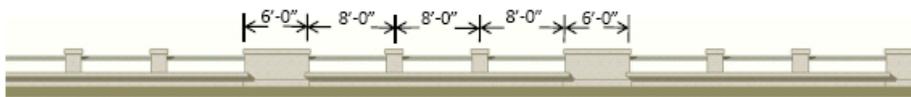


Alternative 1

Drop-off Walk



PERSPECTIVE



ELEVATION



PLAN



Alternative 1

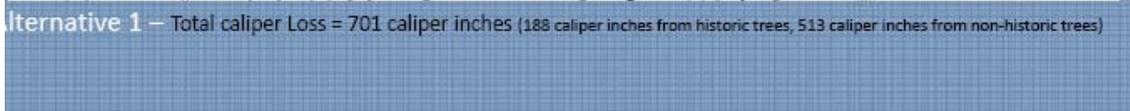
Outlet Bridge End



PERSPECTIVE



Alternative 1 – Total caliper Loss = 701 caliper inches (188 caliper inches from historic trees, 513 caliper inches from non-historic trees)



Alternative 2: Barrier as a Landscape Feature

Location: Alternative 2 meanders through the memorial grounds, reinforcing the informal, picturesque quality of the landscape. The two ends of the barrier wall would meet the Tidal Basin path itself rather than the Inlet and Outlet Bridges, as in Alternative 1.

Design Character: Rather than a wall with modules of piers and open space, the barrier would be primarily a solid stone wall with random courses and textured ashlar blocks, taking its design cues from park features of the era of the memorial. Seating would be incorporated in benches in the wall. At path intersections and at key vistas from the south, the wall sections would break open and slide past each other, with steel or stone bollards across the paths or in lieu of the wall. Near the edge of the Tidal Basin, the walls would die away with designed, terminus elements that would be visible from the Tidal Basin and the Tidal Basin path. Bollards would be installed across the Tidal Basin path to the water's edge.

South Lawn Treatment: All three alternatives propose a more formal, frontal treatment at the South Lawn and all three align the barrier parallel to the sidewalk. In Alternative 2, stone walls would be used at rounded corners and bollards would be installed across the lawn frontage, north of the widened sidewalk.

Landscape Impacts: The impact on the memorial landscape would include the intrusion of a physical barrier through the landscape and adjacent to or across pedestrian paths, including the Tidal Basin path, which would receive bollards across its width at both ends. In comparison with Alternative 1, the visibility of the barrier would be reduced somewhat along East Basin Drive, since the wall would be set back from the road, especially on the west (Inlet Bridge) side. Opportunities for restoring the landscape would exist but would be limited by the location of the barrier wall. Opportunities for restoring the original path alignment would be limited, given the intrusion of the wall into the grounds. However, this scenario would have no impact on historic trees, as none would be removed. Sixty-nine (69) non-historic trees (the greatest of any of the alternatives) would be removed, though, for a total of 403 caliper inches.



- Alignment meanders through the grounds to reinforce landscape's informal quality
- Affords framed openings at key view points of the Memorial
- Simple textured wall with integrated seating and modest articulation at openings (termini)

Alternative 2: Barrier as a LANDSCAPE Feature



Alternative 2: Overall Plan

Alternative 2

South View Edge



PERSPECTIVE



Alternative 2

Drop-off Walk



PERSPECTIVE



Alternative 2

East Basin Entry



PERSPECTIVE



Alternative 2 — Total caliper Loss = 403 caliper inches



Alternative 3: Barrier as a Formal Feature

Location: Alternative 3 treats the barrier as a formal element that responds to the architectural form and character of the memorial rather than to the landscape. The barrier line is a concentric circle surrounding the memorial, except at the South Lawn, where the barrier line is extended southward to the widened sidewalk on East Basin Drive, as in the other alternatives.

Design Character: Befitting its alignment, this is the most formal barrier design of the three alternatives, with a classicized treatment of uniform granite walls with even courses and pronounced capstones and termini. Where the two ends of the wall meet the Tidal Basin path, seating walls and benches of a similar formal character would be used in conjunction with bollards across the Tidal Basin path itself.

South Lawn Treatment: The wall would be identical or similar in character at the south lawn as it would be throughout the site, and at the driveway would incorporate end piers with capstones and seating. As with the other alternatives, the sidewalk would be widened.

Landscape Impacts: The impact on the landscape setting would include the physical intrusion of a barrier through the landscape and across pedestrian paths. The Tidal Basin path would receive bollards across its width at both ends of the wall. The visibility of the barrier from Ohio Drive would be the most minimized in this alternative, since the setback would be the greatest. Opportunities for restoring the historic landscape and paths would be quite limited, given the change in character resulting from the barrier alignment. Two (2) historic trees would be removed, and 42 non-historic trees would be removed, for a loss of 229 caliper inches—the lowest total caliper inches among the three alternatives.



- Encircles Memorial as a concentric wall
- Recedes into the landscape through straightforward geometry, line work and finish
- Uninterrupted mass (except at access points, highlighted at termini through piers and seating elements)

Alternative 3: Barrier as a **FORMAL** feature



Alternative 3: Overall Plan

Alternative 3

South View Edge



PERSPECTIVE – WALL OPTION



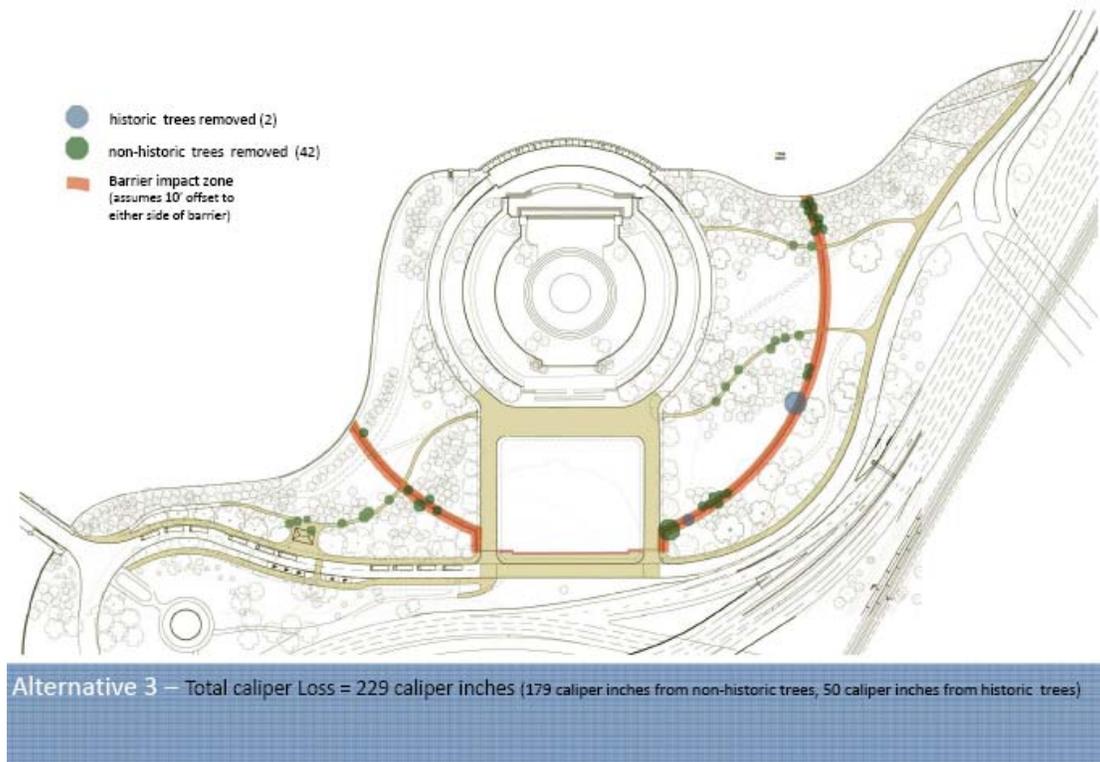
Alternative 3

East Basin Entry



PERSPECTIVE





Proposals common to all alternatives (shown on the site plan of each alternative)

- The food kiosk would be moved westward, closer to the tour bus drop-off area and away from the more formal south lawn and the viewsheds between the memorial and East Basin Drive.
- Ten dedicated spaces for tour bus drop-off and pick-up would be located at the western end of East Basin Drive, near the Inlet Bridge. (This is the current location for buses.)
- Five spaces for handicapped parking would be provided (and a pedestrian crosswalk marked) on the south side of East Basin Drive, near the proposed new location for the food kiosk and a small but paved plaza.
- The East Basin Drive sidewalk south of the south lawn would be widened to accommodate visitors (seated or taking photographs) as well as pedestrians and bicyclists. Special paving would be constructed in East Basin Drive in front of the south lawn and memorial. Trees would be planted on the south side of East Basin Drive opposite the memorial to screen visitors' views of the highway from the memorial.

PROJECT ANALYSIS

The staff commends NPS and its design team for developing three possible approaches to solving the difficult design challenge of inserting a physical barrier into a historic setting where no permanent barrier exists. Each has merit. Each reflects different aspects and qualities of the memorial and its setting.

The staff recommends that the Commission comment favorably on the alignment indicated in Alternative 1. Its location at the vehicle edge of the memorial landscape is its greatest strength, even though the alignment would result in the greatest loss of trees and be the most visible from East Basin Drive. By linking the vehicle barrier to the edge of the roadway, however, it avoids the physical and visual intrusions into the landscape setting itself (once past the 20-foot swath at the edge of the sidewalk). The barrier would be visible at the street edge rather than a visual intrusion and physical deterrent to pedestrians throughout the landscape and along the Tidal Basin path. The barrier would not restrict the movements of pedestrians within the site. The barrier would not be visible from or physically intrude upon the Tidal Basin path or the Tidal Basin itself.

As the design has been developed to date, the use of piers and cables for the barrier would allow the long barrier alignment to be as open as possible, providing views into the landscape from East Basin Drive. The proposed design vocabulary of the barrier is suggested by the Inlet and Outlet Bridges, which feature horizontal railings between stone piers. In addition, the placement of the barrier outside the landscape would allow for some of the original Olmsted, Jr. paths, as well as the planting plan, to be constructed or restored.

Alternative 2's drawbacks are its intrusion (at a height of more than 36 inches) through the landscape, defining and dividing the open space and physically and visually encroaching on the Tidal Basin and the Tidal Basin path. Its advantages include no loss of historic trees and the proposal of a naturalistic, parklike stone wall with well-integrated seating. Breaks in the wall at paths would be graceful, but would require the installation of bollards across the paths. However consistent the qualities of the proposed barrier wall with park structures of the memorial's era may be, they were never built at the Jefferson Memorial itself and they would interrupt the landscape and limit possible restoration of the landscape plantings and paths.

Alternative 3 seems very appealing in plan, for it has the shortest barrier line of the three alternatives and a classical simplicity. In addition, from the road it would be the least visible and visually intrusive of the three alternatives since it would be set back the farthest from East Basin Drive. Although drawing inspiration from the memorial itself, the wall's formal form and character would alter the memorial's setting very significantly, however, and be a notably foreign physical barrier throughout the naturalistic and informal landscape. It would also likely create the most prominent, visible intrusions from the Tidal Basin and Tidal Basin path, depending on the development of the wall treatment at both ends. This alternative, as with alternative 2, would require the installation of bollards across the Tidal Basin path itself.

Although staff recommends Alternative 1 for its location and general architectural character, the informal qualities of the seating walls in Alternative 2 may nevertheless lend themselves to the area near the tour bus drop-off area, and some of the formal qualities of the proposed walls and benches in Alternative 3 may suit the edge of the South Lawn more compatibly than the piers in Alternative 1. As NPS and its team proceed, staff recommends that the comments NPS has received during agency and public consultation that resulted in the development of the three alternatives continue to be assessed for incorporation in the design as appropriate.

Staff also recommends that the commission comment favorably on the other primary elements of the plan, all of which require further development:

- The location of tour bus drop-offs near the Inlet Bridge.
- The parking spaces for handicapped visitors on the south side of East Basin Drive.
- The widening of the sidewalk at the south lawn to create a small plaza and the separation of pedestrians and bicyclists.
- The removal of the current kiosk and the construction of a new kiosk farther to the west, near the tour buses and outside the formal viewshed to and from the memorial. Since the plan proposes a small paved area around the kiosk, its location is sensitive. The kiosk has not been designed.

CONFORMANCE

Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital

The proposals are not inconsistent with the federal elements of the Comprehensive Plan, as they propose a high level of design consistent with the highest standards for federal projects in Washington's monumental core.

National Capital Urban Design and Security Plan

The proposals, at the concept design stage, reflect recommendations in the plan and professional design experience and expertise developed in the intervening years, including the incorporation of a variety of elements and features and the use of barrier elements other than bollards when possible.

Relevant Federal Facility Master Plan

The draft National Mall Plan includes perimeter security at the Jefferson Memorial as a future project. The draft Plan also proposes improved food services and the relocation of the kiosk away from the primary north-south viewshed between the memorial and East Basin Drive.

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)

NPS is developing an environmental assessment with three build alternatives and a no build alternative. NPS has held a scoping meeting for the project and has posted information on its public comment website. The environmental assessment is required prior to a preliminary-level submission to the Commission.

National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA)

NPS has initiated consultation with the District of Columbia State Historic Preservation Officer (DC SHPO), anticipating that the vehicle barrier will result in an adverse effect that will lead to the development of a Memorandum of Agreement. NPS, the DC SHPO, NCPC staff, Commission of Fine Arts staff, and consulting parties have discussed a future barrier for the Jefferson Memorial periodically for some years, including at a recent public Section 106 meeting in August, and have visited the site on several occasions to study potential alignments in relation to the landscape features and viewsheds. The current proposal reflects the discussion at the earlier as well as the more recent consultation meetings and the collaborative work of NPS's current design team.

CONSULTATION

Coordinating Committee

The Coordinating Committee reviewed the proposal at its September 15, 2010 meeting and forwarded the proposal to the Commission with the statement that the proposal was coordinated with all participating agencies. The participating agencies were NCPC; the General Services Administration; the District Department of Transportation; the Department of Housing and Community Development; the District of Columbia Fire Marshal; the National Park Service; the General Services Administration; and the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority.

Commission of Fine Arts

At its September 16, 2010 meeting, the Commission of Fine Arts (CFA) unanimously and strongly endorsed the location and direction of the barrier design character in Alternative 1, but also recommended "flexibility" as the barrier design itself is developed.