

AMERICAN VETERANS DISABLED FOR LIFE MEMORIAL

Washington Avenue and 2nd Street, SW
Washington, D.C.

Finding of No Significant Impact

SEP 26 2008

The National Park Service (NPS), on behalf of the Disabled Veterans' LIFE Memorial Foundation (the Foundation), has requested approval of preliminary site and building plans for the American Veterans Disabled for Life Memorial, as shown on NCPC Map File No. 1.72(73.10)42595. Pursuant to Section 102(2)(C) of the National Environmental Policy Act, the Council on Environmental Quality Regulations (40 CFR, Parts 1500-1508), and NCPC's Environmental and Historic Preservation Policies and Procedures, I have evaluated the Environmental Assessment (EA) provided by the NPS, comments that NPS received on the EA, and NPS responses to those comments.

Based on this evaluation, I have determined that the proposed memorial will not significantly affect the quality of the human environment. Provided that the design and construction for the memorial project satisfies the following mitigation measures, the proposed alternative will result in long-term positive impacts to the human environment with regard to cultural resources, natural resources, transportation, and pedestrian circulation:

1. Proper signage, detour routes, and way-finding measures must be placed around the site so that pedestrians and traffic can be redirected to alternate routes during construction.
2. A construction management plan must be prepared to manage construction-related traffic, parking, and materials delivery. The plan shall include coordination with other construction projects in the area to minimize cumulative impacts.
3. Second Street, SW must be widened to accommodate two-way traffic.
4. A design and maintenance plan for the memorial shall implement best management practices for water quality and stormwater management.



Marcel C. Acosta
Executive Director

Background

The National Park Service, on behalf of the Disabled Veterans' LIFE Memorial Foundation (the Foundation), proposes to develop the American Veterans Disabled for Life Memorial. The memorial fulfills the purpose of Public Law 106-348 by providing a national memorial to “honor veterans who became disabled while serving in the Armed Forces of the United States.” Additionally, creation of a memorial at the selected site, will transform a currently underutilized parcel of land to provide positive impacts to the human environment.

NCPC has adopted the Environmental Assessment (EA) prepared in June 2005 by the National Park Service and the Foundation to assist in decision-making by evaluating the potential impacts on the environment of the proposed site improvements. This environmental documentation addresses short-term construction-related impacts and long-term changes to existing environmental conditions under the alternatives, as well as the cumulative impacts that will result from this and other proposed projects in the area, and is consistent with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, as amended, the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations implementing NEPA [40 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 1500-1508], the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) of 1966, as amended, and NCPC’s Environmental and Historic Preservation Policies and Procedures (adopted April 1, 2004).

In accordance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, The District of Columbia State Historic Preservation Officer has completed its review and analysis of the proposed memorial, and has determined that there will be no adverse effect resulting from the proposed undertaking.

Public Participation

In accordance with NEPA and Section 10 of the Commission's Environmental and Historic Preservation Policies and Procedures, NCPC will announce its finding for the project on the agency website, including posting of this Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI). The EA, and comments about the EA analysis, are made available for review at the NCPC office. Additionally, the Tentative Agenda for the Commission's October 2, 2008 meeting contained a notice regarding review of the proposed project. The Tentative Agenda is distributed to more than 750 recipients.

Alternatives Considered in the EA Review

The EA examined in detail two alternatives; the proposed action (Memorial) alternative and the no action alternative. The EA found that the No Action Alternative would result in no changes to the existing open space parcel and would not satisfy the purpose and need to establish a national memorial as specified in the authorizing legislation. The NPS has selected the Proposed Memorial Alternative as the preferred alternative.

The Proposed Alternative

The Proposed Alternative is to building a new American Veterans Disabled for Life Memorial, to be located on Site 26 in NCPC's *Memorials and Museums Master Plan*. The site is generally bounded by Washington Avenue, SW to the north and east, 2nd Street, SW to the west, and C Street, SW to the south, and will combine smaller parcels of land to create a unified site of approximately two acres. Pursuant to Public Law 109-396, utility relocation and street re-alignment changes will also need to be undertaken, along with minor modifications to adjacent street intersections.

The proposed memorial design includes the following major elements that have been the foundation of the design since development of the initial concept: a central fire element within a water feature; a grove of trees adjacent to a reflecting pool; stone and glass walls that enclose the site and delineate its paths, landscaping, and lighting. Pedestrian access to and throughout the site will be enhanced as part of the memorial's site design.

Analysis of Potential Impacts

NCPC staff concurs with the following summary of analysis and proposed mitigation, as included in the EA prepared by the NPS:

Socio-Economic Environment

Land Use: The Memorial will support and strengthen the cultural character of the area and enhance visual relationships with several other features. In order to mitigate potential impacts, proper signage, detour routes, and way-finding measure will be placed around the site so that pedestrians and traffic can be redirected to alternate routes during construction.

Planning Controls and Policies: The Memorial in the chosen location will comply with applicable federal and local policies including the Commemorative Works Act of 1986 and NCPC's Museums and Memorials Master Plan.

Visitation: The proposed Memorial could result in a long term positive impact on pedestrian circulation by creating a new node of activity in the area.

Community Facilities and Services: Community facilities in the vicinity of the site are limited to nearby museums. No restroom facilities are provided at this site now, nor are they part of this project.

Safety and Security: The U.S. Park Police provide continuous patrol service in the area of the memorial. The District of Columbia provides fire protection and emergency medical protection for the site.

Cultural Resources

Archeological Resources: Construction of the interstate tunnels beneath the memorial site in 1960-64 disturbed and removed any potential remains; no archeological resources are present.

Historic Resources: The establishment of the Memorial will have a positive effect on historic resources by removing a non-historic portion of C Street and reinforcing the view corridor of its original east-west alignment within the L'Enfant Plan. The Memorial's orientation and design will frame views from the Memorial toward the US Capitol.

Visual Resources: The Memorial will enhance the visual character of the area through simplification of the street pattern and the creation of tree cover that does not currently exist. The Memorial will also create a new visual focus for visitors.

Natural Resources: Original soils of the site were displaced and removed when the interstate was constructed. Existing materials, including soil, trees, concrete walks, and sub-grade infrastructure are modern introductions to the site. Establishment of the Memorial will create a site that is potentially suitable for urban species such as birds and small mammals.

Vegetation and Wildlife: There are no aquatic species present on the site. No known endangered or threatened animal species currently exist on the site.

Noise Levels: The project will not introduce new sound into the sound pattern provided by the surrounding public streets and interstate roadways. The project will introduce additional trees and shrubs that may contribute to a reduction in noise levels.

Transportation

Roadways and Traffic: The street re-alignment construction phase of the project will have short-term construction related negative impacts by temporarily constraining and/or closing parking spaces, roadway lanes, or roadways in the project area; and traffic delays will occur on roadway segments during peak traffic periods. Mitigation for these impacts will include widening 2nd Street to accommodate two-way traffic and development of a construction management plan to manage construction related traffic, parking, and materials delivery. The plan will include coordination with other construction projects in the area.

Long-term positive impacts, resulting from reconfiguration of C Street and elimination of an existing spur from southbound Washington Avenue, will include simplification of street geometry and access improvements through and around the site to adjacent highways.

Parking: Reconfiguration of the Memorial site will result in modified parking configuration in and adjacent to the site. Approximately 8 to 10 existing metered parking spaces will be replaced by ten disabled spaces, and a metered lay-by for special needs vehicles, will result in an overall increase in parking.

Pedestrian and Bicycle Circulation: Although construction activities will temporarily limit pedestrian and bicycle circulation in the area, the overall pedestrian circulation will be improved, resulting in a positive impact.

Utilities and Infrastructure

Stormwater Management: The establishment of the Memorial will result in a significant increase in impervious surface, and an increased potential for impacts related to stormwater runoff. To mitigate potentially negative environmental impacts, a design and maintenance plan that will implement best management practices for water quality and stormwater management for the memorial is needed. The NPS has identified possible methods to convey, collect, and discharge stormwater from the Memorial site (i.e., underground holding tanks with filtration and separation systems), but final treatments will require coordination with the District of Columbia.

Sanitary Sewer: Treated water from the memorial's water features is to be collected and discharged into the public sewer system for treatment at DC-WASA's Blue Plains Wastewater Treatment Plant. The capacity of the sanitary sewer system of the site will not be impacted.

Site Utilities: The Memorial will use the existing electrical service, water supply, and gas service supplying the site. Relocation or improvements to the lines may be necessary and will be coordinated with the applicable utility service provider.

Highway Tunnels: The project has been designed to be structurally compatible with the existing underground tunnels.