

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Revised – 2/4/04

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NCPC File No. 6265



LINCOLN MEMORIAL
LINCOLN MEMORIAL CIRCLE REHABILITATION AND SECURITY IMPROVEMENTS -
FOOD CONCESSION BUILDINGS AND RETAINING WALL
WASHINGTON, DC

Submission by the National Park Service

January 29, 2004

Abstract

The National Park Service has submitted preliminary site and building plans for the two food concession buildings to be constructed to the north and south of the Lincoln Memorial as part of the overall traffic, security, and visitor service improvements at the memorial. At its December 2003 meeting, the Commission approved the “location, function, and number of concession buildings” and requested that NPS “develop an alternative building design.” The current submission is in response to that request. In addition, the National Park Service has submitted additional design information about its proposed retaining wall around three sides of Memorial Circle. The Commission at its December 2003 meeting gave preliminary approval to the retaining wall, requiring that NPS provide “design details for a more articulated retaining wall, of a quality commensurate with the memorial and setting.” The National Park Service has submitted clearer information showing the design and articulation of the retaining wall and requests final site and building plan approval for the wall.

Commission Action Requested by Applicant

Approval of preliminary site and building plans for the concession buildings and final site and building plans for the retaining wall pursuant to 40 U.S.C. §8722(d) and Section 5 of the National Capital Planning Act (40 U.S.C. §8722(b)(1)).

Executive Director’s Recommendation

The Commission:

Approves preliminary site and building plans for the two concession buildings on Bacon and French Drives, and final site and building plans for the perimeter security retaining wall around Memorial Circle, as shown on NCPC Map File No. 1.44(73.10) 41302.

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BACKGROUND AND STAFF EVALUATION

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Lincoln Memorial

The Lincoln Memorial was sited by the McMillan Commission and designed by one of Charles McKim's protégés, architect Henry Bacon. Built between 1914-1922, the national memorial to President Lincoln is the western terminus of the extended Mall and the focal point of West Potomac Park.

Project Submission

The current proposal contains phases of two elements of the project by the National Park Service (NPS) to improve security, traffic, and visitor services at and near the Lincoln Memorial.

1) Construction of two concession buildings on Bacon and French Drives

The Commission requested at its December 2003 meeting that NPS develop an alternative building design for the food concession stands. The Commission's concern focused on the style of the buildings, particularly the shape of the roof. A related matter was the relation of the two proposed concession buildings to the four kiosks on the Mall and to the two future concession buildings anticipated for the Washington Monument Grounds.

Since the December meeting, NPS and its design architect have studied different footprints for the buildings as well as different roof forms, and have met with Commission staff to review these studies. NPS has determined that it will continue to use the existing Mall kiosks as the design model for the new buildings at the Lincoln Memorial, but that it will reduce the height of the roof that had resulted from the larger footprint of the Lincoln concession buildings.

The existing Mall kiosks are 22 feet by 22 feet in footprint and 18 feet in height, with the roof comprising 8 feet of the total height.

The December submission for the Lincoln concession buildings was 34 feet by 34 feet in footprint, and 20 feet in height, with the roof comprising 10 feet of the total height.

The current submission shows the same 34-foot by 34-foot footprint and the same wall elevation height. The roof, however, has been reduced in height by about 2 feet. Therefore, the proposed concession buildings are no higher than the kiosks on the Mall. The revised roof is about 8 feet high, for a total building height of approximately 18 feet. The lower roof is still capable of containing all the mechanical equipment to support the building. The proposed paved seating areas remain unchanged in the current submission.

2) *Construction of a Pink Milford granite retaining wall around the north, west, and south sides of the memorial*

NPS has submitted more detailed information about the walls than it had previously submitted. The design has not changed. The previous submission contained inadequate information for the staff to determine the design and quality of the construction of the wall.

NPS has determined that a wall with rectilinear lines and a flat seating wall, without curves or articulated classical ornament, are most appropriate at this location, given the severe lines of the memorial's stylobate (base) and the walls at the memorial steps. Granite panels, approximately 24 inches by 48 inches, will comprise the principal vertical face of the wall, above a stepped curb and below a capstone that may also serve as a seating wall. NPS has selected the same Pink Milford granite used in the memorial base and proposes a thermal finish that will appear similar but not identical to the finish of the historic fabric.

The total height of the wall is 900 millimeters, or 35 inches, not 30 inches as understood by the staff since the inception of this project in 2002. The other review agencies also understood that the height of the retaining wall was 30 inches, and that is the dimension stated in NPS's Section 106 MOA. NPS has explained to staff with the current submission that the capstone cannot be made to be structurally capable of withstanding a vehicular attack due to its construction and size, and so cannot be included as part of the minimum vertical height required for a security wall. Therefore, the capstone's 150 millimeter height (approximately 6 inches) is added to the 750 millimeter (approximately 30 inches) of structural vertical height of the wall, (which includes the curb and the wall). The actual cumulative vertical height of the wall is 900 millimeters, which is approximately 35 inches.

PREVIOUS COMMISSION ACTION

At its December 2003 meeting, the Commission approved the "location, function, and number of concession buildings" and requested that NPS "develop an alternative building design."

The Commission at its December 2003 meeting gave preliminary approval to the retaining wall, requiring that NPS provide "design details for a more articulated retaining wall, of a quality commensurate with the memorial and setting."

The Commission approved final site and building plans for traffic improvements at the December 2003 meeting, and did not approve proposed security and pavement alterations for the east side of the Lincoln Memorial facing the Mall.

EVALUATION

Concession Buildings

Staff recommends preliminary approval for the construction of the two 34-foot by 34-foot concession buildings, with the revised roof height of approximately 8 feet rather than the 10 feet shown at the December 2003 meeting. NPS revised the roof form in response to direction by the

Commission at the December 2003 meeting and by Commission staff at a subsequent consultation meeting. Commissioners informally supported the revised design in an information presentation by NPS at the January 2004 commission meeting.

Staff believes that the reduction in height of the roof satisfactorily improves the proportional relationship of the roof to the wall of the building, which in turn de-emphasizes the form and style of the roof.

NPS studied alternative footprints and alternative roof forms before concluding that revising the roof height of the previous design was the most appropriate design approach. Commission staff has reviewed these alternative footprint and roof studies and concurs with NPS's assessment. In addition, NPS believes that continuing the recognized form of the food kiosks on the Mall at the Lincoln Memorial is necessary so that visitors can identify and find the buildings easily.

Two locations for future concession buildings proposed for 15th Street, NW north of Madison Drive and south of Jefferson Drive are shown in NPS's Development Concept Plan for the Washington Monument Grounds (approved by the Commission in 1993 and reaffirmed in 2002). This planning and design issue will come before the Commission at a future date. NPS still remains under a directive by Congress in Section 206(2) of Public Law 108-126, The Commemorative Works Clarification and Revision Act of 2003, to work in consultation with NCPC and the Commission of Fine Arts (CFA) "to relocate, redesign or otherwise alter the concession facilities that are within the Reserve to the extent necessary to make them compatible with the Reserve's character" by May 2004.

Retaining Wall

Staff recommends final approval for the construction of a 35-inch-high retaining wall around the inner edge of the circle, inside the sidewalk. The wall will be constructed of Pink Milford granite to match the stylobate of the memorial. The submission of details for the retaining wall satisfies the staff's concern for its design and construction. The wall will consist of granite panels as facing stone and smooth joints, cut to resemble ashlar construction. The granite will have a thermal finish, to complement but not replicate the original granite. The capstone, approximately 6 inches thick, is appropriately substantial. The retaining wall turns into the slope of the lawn near Bacon and French drives. The turn of the wall is suitable for the formal, classical memorial and circle. NPS will need to ensure during the construction phase that the new wall complements the historic fabric and appearance of the memorial.

In the staff's opinion, the 35-inch height of the wall will not be a noticeable change from a 30-inch wall from a distance, given both the size and scale of the memorial and its setting. Nor will it change the appearance of the Lincoln Memorial beyond the alteration to the site already acknowledged by NPS by the very construction of the wall. But staff notes that the 35-inch height may make a difference to some wishing to sit on the wall, although the projecting curb will lessen the apparent height. However, staff concurs with NPS that if the purpose of the wall is to prevent a vehicle from breaching the site, and if the size and attachment of the capstone precludes its being made structurally sufficient, then there is no feasible alternative. The staff believes that the capstone should be proportionally wide and thick, and substantial in appearance

from all views, including the return into the lawn slope. Therefore, a thinner, veneered capstone that would reduce the total height of the wall would not be an acceptable alternative in the staff's opinion.

COORDINATION

Coordinating Committee

The Coordinating Committee reviewed this item at its meeting on November 12, 2003, and forwarded the proposal to the Commission with the statement that the project had been coordinated with all agencies participating. The participating agencies were NCPC; the District of Columbia Office of Planning; the Department of Housing and Community Development; the District Department of Transportation; the General Services Administration; and the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority.

CONFORMANCE

Urban Design and Security Plan

The proposed security barrier for the Lincoln Memorial in the *Urban Design and Security Plan* indicates a retaining wall around the north, west, and south sides of the inner edge of Lincoln Memorial Circle, as also shown in the current submission.

Comprehensive Plan

The following are the applicable policies in the Parks, Open Space and Natural Features Element and in the Preservation and Historic Features Element of the Comprehensive Plan:

- The great cross-axes of the Mall, from the Capitol to the Lincoln Memorial and from the White House to the Jefferson Memorial, constitute a unique national place and that must be protected. The Mall is considered complete and any improvements should be limited in scope and sensitively designed to reinforce the integrity of this unique place.
- New construction of Historic Landmarks in Historic Districts should be compatible with the historic architectural character and cultural heritage of the landmark or district.

Commission of Fine Arts

CFA's letter following its November 20, 2003 consideration of the project is attached. CFA approved the concession buildings but asked that NPS paint the buildings darker colors. CFA asked for further articulation and "shaping" of the retaining wall.

National Environmental Policy Act

The Executive Director issued NCPC's FONSI (Finding of No Significant Impact) on November 17, 2003, concluding that the analysis was sufficient and demonstrated no significant environmental impacts from the planned action. As part of the EA review, staff stated in a July 18, 2003 letter to NPS that a third alternative be analyzed: the placement of the bollard line on the inner edge of the Lincoln Memorial Circle.

The Commission's review of NPS's site and buildings plans for the Lincoln Memorial Circle Rehabilitation is governed by NCPC's Environmental Policy and Procedures, in coordination with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). NCPC staff analyzed, in conformance with the requirements of NEPA, the prepared Environmental Assessment (EA) completed by NPS in June 2003.

The EA reviews two alternatives for developing security measures at the memorial as follows:

- Alternative B (The NPS Preferred Alternative that proposes to rehabilitate Lincoln Memorial Circle, construct a vehicular barrier system, and enhance visitor services areas.)
- Alternative C (To rehabilitate Lincoln Circle, provide security against a potential terrorist attack from a vehicle bomb, and improve visitor services.)

A third alternative action, Alternative A, is the "No Action" (the alternative specified as a requirement for NEPA) and is reviewed and evaluated in the EA.

In any of the assessed alternatives there would be no change to the Lincoln Memorial itself.

Under Alternative B, the Preferred Alternative of the Park Service, NPS proposes to rehabilitate Lincoln Memorial Circle, construct a vehicular barrier system, and enhance visitor services areas.

The Commission staff reviewed the EA analysis and concluded that the environmental effects for Alternative B would have minimal impacts on environmental attributes of the immediate memorial site. Important visual effects are essential in comparing the various alternatives and staff has determined the proposed project review and approval does not require an environmental impact statement, pursuant to NEPA, because no resources are significantly impacted by either the intensity of the action or its context.

Mitigation actions accomplishing the project, through the NCPC project review process, are listed below as associated with the attribute resource potentially affected:

Transportation Effects

The mitigation of any potential traffic or vehicle impacts would require synchronization of traffic signals at 23rd Street (north)/Lincoln Circle and Constitution Avenue/Henry Bacon Drive during afternoon peak times and may include timing of pedestrian crossing signals as well. This effort would help control traffic at these two intersections; however, they should not adversely impact

other traffic/flows. NCPC staff review would assure appropriate signage will be installed to warn motorists and pedestrians of potential conflict areas in the vicinity of the Memorial reservation. Appropriate traffic control measures would be used during construction.

Visual Impacts

Mitigation of any potential viewshed impacts involving Alternative B would be mitigated through the use of compatible appropriate sympathetic context design and materials in keeping with the cultural landscape and historic setting of the Lincoln Memorial. These would include:

- Design techniques and construction materials that would preserve the aesthetic qualities of the original roadway design at its historic location, including curb line
- Restoration of the east side of the Memorial to its historic layout
- Rehabilitation of the sidewalks to their historic appearance
- Restoration of the historic tree landscape plan
- Construction measures that would minimize any disturbance to roots, limbs, and branches that are character defining features of the Lincoln Memorial Grounds
- Massing, scale, and materials reflective of or consistent with the surrounding park resources and historic designed landscape

Historic Resource Effects

To comply with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, the National Park Service would enter into a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the DC State Historic Preservation Office and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation to provide consultation in order to avoid major adverse effects associated with the views and vistas of the Lincoln Memorial. Consultation and coordination would continue with the Commission of Fine Arts and the National Capital Planning Commission. Alternative B would be mitigated through the use of compatible appropriate sympathetic context design and materials in keeping with the cultural landscape and historical setting of the Lincoln Memorial. These would include:

- Design techniques and construction materials that would preserve the aesthetic qualities of the original roadway design at its historic location, including curb line
- Restoration of the east side of the Memorial to its historic layout
- Rehabilitation of the sidewalks to their historic appearance
- Restoration of the historic tree landscape plan
- Construction measures that would minimize any disturbance to roots, limbs, and branches that are character defining features of the Lincoln Memorial Grounds
- Massing, scale, and materials would be reflective of or consistent with the surrounding park resources and historic designed landscape.

Specifically, the agreed-upon Memorandum of Agreement identifies the following:

- To the extent possible, the undertaking shall be compatible with the historic and architectural qualities of the Memorial and grounds in terms of scale, massing, color, and

materials and shall be consistent with the recommended approaches to rehabilitation and new construction set forth in *the Secretary of Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for Preserving, Rehabilitating, Restoring, and Reconstructing Historic Buildings* (U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1995).

- To minimize the adverse effect caused by the introduction of the low stone retaining wall around the memorial, historic Pink Milford granite will be used to match the material of the memorial's stylobate wall. The finish of the new retaining wall will be complementary, but will not be identical to the historic wall finish.
- A new pedestrian plaza will be constructed on the eastern quarter of the Lincoln Memorial Circle that would feature metal bollards and will be compatible with the memorial. The bollards also would be placed at the outer edge of the plaza and circle to minimize their appearance on the east side of the memorial.
- Future concession kiosk structures will be placed outside the memorial area and the existing food service trailers would be removed. The design of the kiosks would be a modified version of the four existing food kiosks located on the Mall at the Air and Space Museum, the Museum of American History, the Natural History Museum, and the Arts and Industries Building.

Consultation and coordination of all physical planned improvements would continue to be coordinated with the Commission of Fine Arts and NCPC.

Impacts to visitor use and experience

To mitigate effect to the visitor experience, the following actions will be monitored by NCPC staff during the review submissions of the project:

- Design techniques and construction materials that would preserve the aesthetic qualities of the original roadway design at its historic location, including curb line
- Restoration of the east side of the memorial to its historic layout
- Rehabilitation of sidewalks to their historic appearance

Visitor service improvement effects

To mitigate impacts to visitors during the construction of the visitor services areas, the north service area would be constructed first and would allow the existing gift shop and concession stand to remain open. The gift shop, concession stand, and information kiosks on the south side would then be transferred to the north side so that construction could begin on the south visitor services area, thereby eliminating disruption to visitor use and experience.

National Historic Preservation Act

Pursuant to the October 31, 2003 MOA among NPS, the D.C. State Historic Preservation Officer (DC SHPO), and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP), NPS must circulate the revised designs for the concession buildings for comment by the DC SHPO, ACHP, and the

consulting parties. NPS must take these comments into account and make modifications it deems appropriate.

NPS initiated consultation with the DC SHPO and with the ACHP on July 1, 2002, determining that the proposed security alterations and the loss of the roadway in the eastern portion of the traffic circle would have an adverse effect on the National Register qualities of the Lincoln Memorial. The consultation included both of the above agencies, as well as NCPC staff and public groups and individuals such as the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the Committee of 100, the National Coalition to Save Our Mall, and the ANC representative.

The elements of the memorial and site are of high historic significance and designed to be seen and experienced as a whole, creating a symbolic and commemorative landscape setting for the Lincoln Memorial within the spacious precinct of West Potomac Park and the Mall itself, and extending westward across the Memorial Bridge to Arlington National Cemetery.