

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

N. Witherell

NCPC File No. 6265



LINCOLN MEMORIAL LINCOLN MEMORIAL CIRCLE SECURITY IMPROVEMENTS, EAST SIDE – BARRIER LOCATION AND DESIGN WASHINGTON, DC

Submission by the National Park Service

September 29, 2005

Abstract

The National Park Service has submitted site development plans for the location and design of a vehicle security barrier on the east (Mall) side of the Lincoln Memorial. At the July 2005 meeting, the Commission approved a revised concept submission that was similar to the current proposal. The Commission of Fine Arts did not fully approve the submission at its July 2005 meeting. The National Park Service has not gained the approval of and concluded consultation with the D.C. State Historic Preservation Office and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation under the terms of the Memorandum of Agreement, and therefore the Commission cannot take final action on this submission at this time.

Commission Action Requested by Applicant

Approval of final site development plans for the barrier line location and approval of preliminary site development plans for the security design, 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 development plans for a bollard line that crosses Memorial Circle at Bacon and French Drives, continues at the outer curb edge of Memorial Circle Drive, descends the outer sides of the lower stairs inside 4-foot-high holly hedges, and continues across the front of the lower stairs at the Reflecting Pool level, as shown in NCPC Map File No. 1.44(38.40) 41681.

Recommends that the National Park Service develop an unfluted bollard sleeve through further consultation and design study.

Requires the National Park Service, before returning to the Commission for final approval, to fabricate and place for inspection at the site:

- a prototype of a bollard sleeve design, painted the proposed color
- a prototype of a painted bollard core, together with a sample of the holly hedge at its full height.
- A prototype of a hydraulic bollard proposed for the roadway near Bacon and French Drives.

* * *

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Site

The Lincoln Memorial was sited by the McMillan Commission and designed by one of Charles McKim's protégés, architect Henry Bacon. Built between 1914 and 1922, the national memorial to President Lincoln is the western terminus of the extended Mall and the focal point of West Potomac Park. The Reflecting Pool and Rainbow Pool were designed by Bacon, who collaborated closely with Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr. They were constructed between 1922 and 1924. Olmsted had been a member of the McMillan Commission and was sitting as the landscape architect on the Commission of Fine Arts during that time. Olmsted later served as a member of the National Capital Park and Planning Commission from 1926 to 1932.

Background and Previous Commission Action

The current submission by the National Park Service (NPS) is a component of a larger improvement project at the Lincoln Memorial that includes roadway and sidewalk reconstruction; the installation of vehicle barriers around the memorial, including a 35-inch retaining wall around the inner edge of Memorial Circle; and the construction of two concession buildings to improve visitor services. The other components of the project were approved by the Commission in December 2003, February 2004, and January 2005.

In July 2002, for the east side vehicle barrier, the Commission approved a barrier location (proposed by Laurie Olin, sometimes referred to as "the landscape solution", and illustrated in the Urban Design and Security Plan) that consisted of bollards and retaining walls below Memorial Circle descending the lower stairs to the Reflecting Pool level.

In December 2003, NPS changed its preferred barrier location and submitted a bollard line at the outer edge of Memorial Circle. The Commission did not approve this location, instead recommending the development of an alternative that minimized the visibility and extent of the unbroken line of bollards.

In March 2005 the Commissioners made a site visit to study a mock-up of bollards in various locations on the plaza—the inner and outer edges of Memorial Circle crossing the Mall axis, as well as locations for the barrier line to cross the circle. The juncture of the retaining walls with the access ramps was also studied.

At its April 2005 meeting the Commission approved a revised concept design for a bollard line near the base of the memorial stairs (at the level of Memorial Circle, near the inner edge of the Circle).

At its July 2005 meeting, following a reassessment by the review agency staffs of the 2002 landscape scheme, the Commission approved a revised concept submission. The changes in the 2005 submission were that the descending bollards were planted inside hedges and that bollards rather than retaining walls were used at the bottom of the stairs.

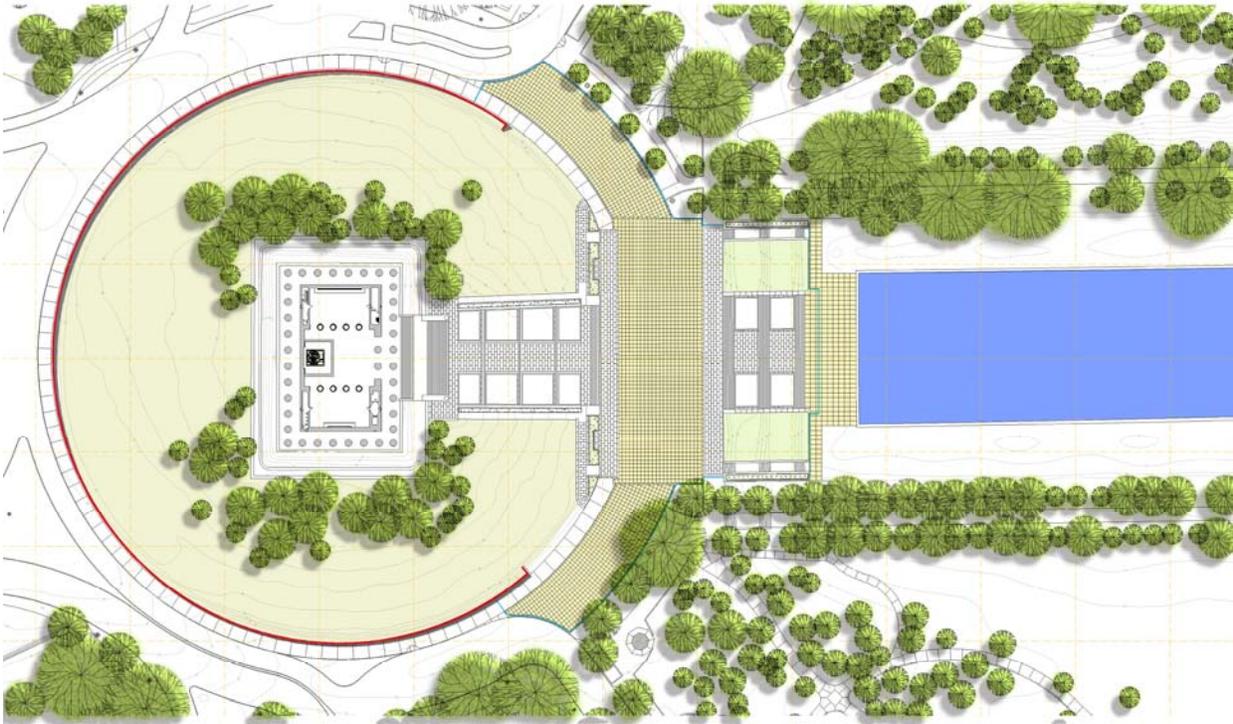
(The Commission of Fine Arts (CFA) reviewed the submission at its July 21, 2005 meeting and endorsed the concept of the barrier line at the lower stairs and the use of hedges; CFA did not endorse the proposed barrier location at the upper level in Memorial Circle. See the attached letter.)

Proposal

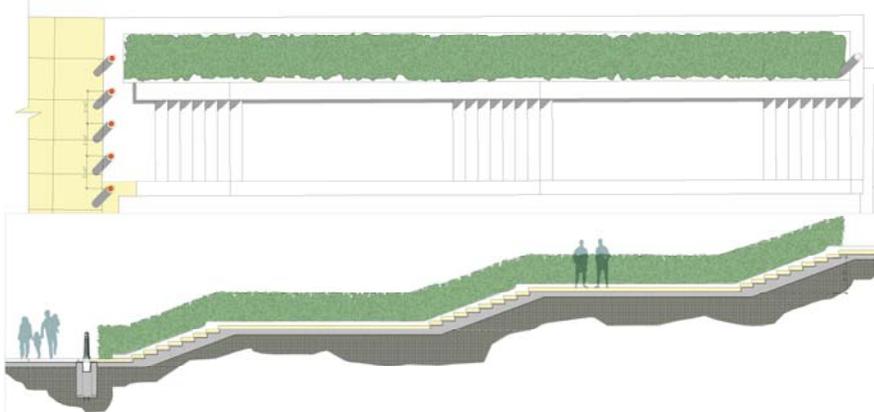
The current preliminary site development plans are similar to those approved in concept by the Commission at its July 2005 meeting. They include:

- Terminating the inner circle retaining wall (now under construction around the memorial) near Bacon and French Drives, leaving the memorial's east walls and ramps unattached.
- Crossing Memorial Circle with a line of 38-inch bollards toward Bacon and French Drives (two of the bollards on each side will be hydraulic bollards to allow authorized vehicles to pass).
- Continuing the bollard line at the outer curb line of Memorial Circle on both sides until the outer edges of the lower stairs are reached.
- Installing bollard structural cores without their decorative sleeves down the outer edges of the lower stairs, and planting holly hedges around them. The holly hedges (*Ilex crenata*) will be installed at their full desired height of 4 feet and will spread across the top of the bollards, which will be installed in a concrete band parallel to the historic granite curb along the edge of the stairs. The proposed width of the hedge is 6 feet 6 inches, allowing for 2 feet of hedge on either side of the bollards.

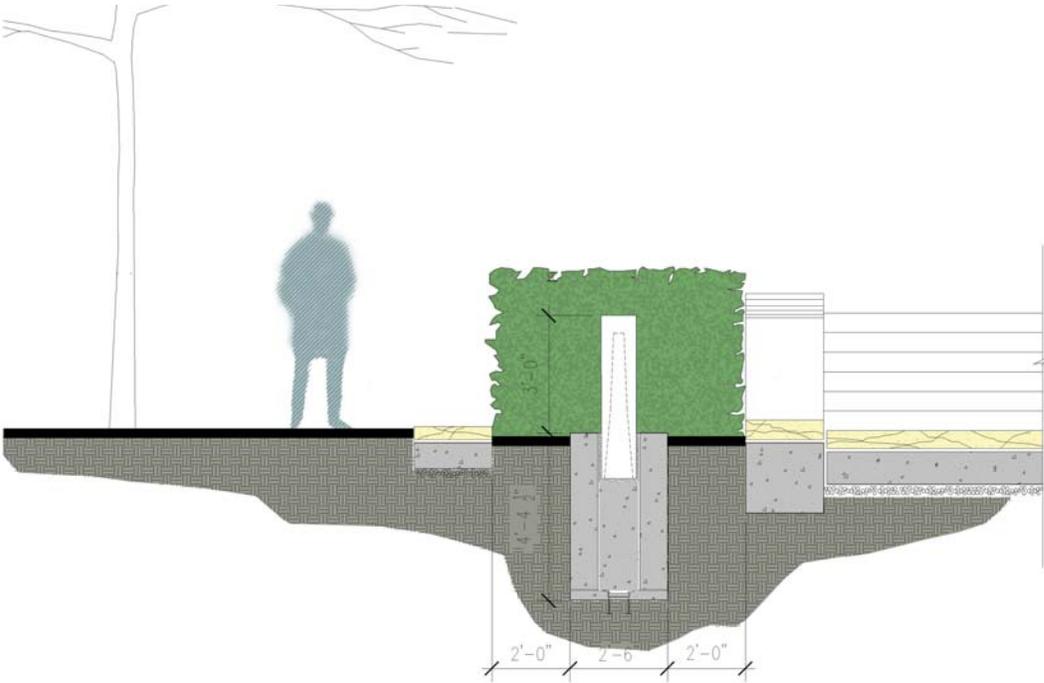
- Returning the security line (using bollards with their decorative sleeves) across the bottom of the lower stairs. The level of the grassy slopes will be extended three feet to increase the distance that the bollard line can project from the base of the stairs. The bollard line projects approximately 4 feet in front of the side stairs and approximately 11 feet in front of the center stairs.



Site Plan



Plan detail of 4-foot high holly hedge adjacent to outer stairs



Section detail of bollard structural core inside holly hedge adjacent to outer stairs



Proposed unfluted bollard sleeve for free-standing bollards

PROJECT ANALYSIS

Although the National Mall and West Potomac Park were altered many times in the last century, the formal setting of the Lincoln Memorial at the western terminus of the Mall is recognized and revered as a consummate architectural and landscape design statement about our national democratic principles. Because of the importance of the continuity of access and ascendance, as well as the views of the memorial and its setting, the insertion of a vertical barrier has been especially difficult to even imagine, much less design.

Underlying the discussion of this project for the past several years is the fundamental necessity of conceiving of the memorial setting as a whole and the project as a well-integrated landscape design. The proposed security design should be commensurate with the setting of the Lincoln Memorial and the western terminus of the Mall.

All agree that the proposed solution will strongly affect the Lincoln Memorial's architectural and landscape setting and the National Mall's axis. All agree that an intervention will affect the symbolic open access to the memorial and that new elements in the landscape will alter the original character of the memorial and its setting. The degree of change at the site will be significant.

The proposed security design acknowledges that the landscape will be altered regardless of the design and location selected. It emphasizes that the principal objectives are to avoid the alteration of historic fabric and to treat the lower stairs as integral to the original design of the memorial. The proposal does add elements to the landscape below Memorial Circle, something that had been previously deliberately avoided. However, the proposal has the benefit of avoiding as much as possible the appearance of bollards in the viewshed from the top of the Memorial, although it increases the visibility of the barrier line from the level of the Reflecting Pool.

Staff notes that the paving material at the base of the lower stairs (between the stairs and the Reflecting Pool) is concrete and non-historic. The installation of bollards in this location avoids punching holes in original granite pavement, which had been a concern with other schemes, including the scheme recommended earlier by the staff.

The National Park Service, in studying the use of a cable system within the proposed hedges, found the cable barrier to be a worse solution than using structural bollard cores in a hedge. The vertical posts of a cable system would project another 6 to 10 inches above the horizontal cable line (at 36 inches) and the cable ends would also project in either direction in order to be tied into the ground. Therefore, the National Park Service recommends the use of sleeveless bollard cores--36 inches in height, painted green--inside the hedge. This is a significant intervention in the historic landscape design, but it is one that is reversible since it avoids physical interference with the granite stairs. The National Park Service has stated that it intends to install the holly hedges at the full desired height of 4 feet (to surround the 36-inch tall bollards). Hollies are among the species used in front of and around the memorial itself.

The staff agrees with the D.C. State Historic Preservation Office (see the Section 106 discussion below on page 7) that the location of the bollard line is closer to the base of the stairs than desirable. The Commission of Fine Arts, at its July meeting, endorsed the staggered bollard line at the base of the stairs, which increases the distance between the bollards and the base of the stairs at the center section only. CFA has been consistent in stating the desirability of a generous distance between the base of stairs and any barrier line at the Lincoln Memorial. However, staff and other agency staffs reviewed alternatives to the proposed bollard line in the field in July with National Park Service staff without developing a better alternative.

Ideally, the plaza to the east of the Reflecting Pool would be redesigned in its entirety to incorporate not only materials more commensurate with the quality of the memorial but a better-integrated security barrier design as well as adequate access for authorized vehicles. NPS maintenance and police vehicles must be able to drive north-south across the Mall at the western end of the Reflecting Pool, outside the bollard line.

In the absence of a comprehensive design and planning solution for the entire lower plaza, which NPS has stated is not possible in the foreseeable future, possible alternatives to the proposed location of the bollard line will require the construction of additional hardscape closer to the Reflecting Pool, to create a new path for authorized vehicles outside the bollard line. In addition, the farther the bollard line extends from the base of the stairs, the more likely it is that visitors crossing the Mall to the north or south will pass through the bollard line several times.

Staff believes it is crucial that fabricated prototypes of the proposed elements—bollards and hedges—be studied at the site before the National Park Service seeks final approval from the Commission.

CONFORMANCE

Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital

The following are the applicable policies in the *Preservation and Historic Features Element* of the Comprehensive Plan:

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.

The Historic Plan of Washington, DC

2. Promote continuity in the historic design framework of the nation's capital by protecting and enhancing the elements, views, and principles of the L'Enfant Plan.
5. Protect the reservations that contain historic landscapes and features from incompatible changes or incursions.

Federal Capital Improvements Plan

NPS submitted a budget estimate of \$6.3 million for a vehicular barrier system around the perimeter of the Lincoln Memorial in spring 2002 for FY 2003.

National Capital Urban Design and Security Plan

The proposed security barrier for the Lincoln Memorial in the *Urban Design and Security Plan*, which the Commission also approved in concept in 2002, indicates a retaining wall around the north, west, and south sides of the inner edge of Lincoln Memorial Circle. It also proposes a barrier line on the east side that is similar to the current proposed barrier location. The major change is in the addition of hedges along the lower stairs and the use of retaining walls at the base of the slopes at the Reflecting Pool level. .

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)

The Commission's review of NPS's plans for the Lincoln Memorial East Side Perimeter Improvements is governed by NCPC's Environmental Policy and Procedures, in coordination with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

The Executive Director issued a FONSI (Finding of No Significant Impact) on November 17, 2003, based on adoption of the prepared Environmental Assessment (EA) issued by the National Park Service for the project. NCPC staff's review of the document concluded that the analysis was sufficient and demonstrated no significant environmental impacts from the planned actions examined by that analysis and where similar in extent, location, and impact to the current proposed action. The preferred alternative of that EA analysis was constructing a retaining wall behind the existing sidewalk beginning at Daniel French Drive on the south side of the Lincoln Memorial and continuing around the west side, to the north side, and ending at Henry Bacon Drive. Metal bollards along the outer ring would begin where the retaining wall ended at Henry Bacon Drive and crossed Lincoln Circle to the outer perimeter of the memorial site. Bollards were identified to continue along the outer ring and would descend the outside portion of the middle stairs.

The current proposal essentially duplicates the evaluated location with revisions further to the east slope of the greensward descending along the stairs. The modifications do not introduce any additional information or environmentally significant new circumstances regarding the planned action compared to the existing EA and its findings. The conclusion of the environmental review considers the mitigation efforts established under the Memorandum of Agreement, pursuant to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, which establishes important provisions to the proposal in the context of historic resource impacts.

National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA)

Architecture, landscape, topography, and location combine to create the Lincoln Memorial as the western terminus of the National Mall and the centerpiece of West Potomac Park. The memorial and its setting 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.

The memorial itself, the circle, and the series of steps and turf and stone terraces leading to the memorial from the level of the Mall at the Reflecting Pool form a significant historic designed landscape that deliberately evokes through calibrated levels of ascendance a reverence for Lincoln as the savior of the Union. In addition, however, the site is heavily visited and over the years the Park Service has incorporated alterations for handicapped accessibility, visitor services, and construction for temporary events. Lincoln Circle used to be a true traffic circle, and even though the eastern portion has been closed to general traffic since 1976, the rest of the circle continues to serve as a commuter route for traffic entering and leaving the District of Columbia via Memorial Bridge.

NPS initiated consultation with the D.C. State Historic Preservation Officer (DC SHPO) and with the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (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 has 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.

NPS executed a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) on October 31, 2004 with the DC SHPO and the ACHP. All the parties have been operating under the MOA in the ongoing consideration of a barrier line for the east side of the Lincoln Memorial. The MOA stipulates that the bollard line “be placed at the outer edge of the plaza and circle on the east side of the Memorial.”

Consultation on the east side security measures resumed in October 2004 after a hiatus of ten months. NPS held the most recent meeting with all the parties on March 24, 2005, and a further meeting with agency staffs in June and July. On July 27, 2005, NPS held a consultation meeting with various agencies and public parties in attendance.

The MOA, which was developed in October 2003 before the current proposal was under consideration, had a contingency for subsequent changes to the plans:

NPS shall ensure that any changes to the Undertaking proposed subsequent to the execution of this Agreement and not covered by this agreement will be developed in consultation with the SHPO, the ACHP, and any interested consulting parties, and all such changes will be submitted to the SHPO and the ACHP for review and to NCPC for approval.

Should the SHPO or the ACHP object within 30 calendar days to any plans, specifications, change orders or construction documents provided for review pursuant to the terms of this agreement, NPS shall consult with the objecting party to resolve the objection. . . .

The current plans have not been submitted to the SHPO and ACHP, and the SHPO, in a meeting on September 26, indicated dissatisfaction with the proximity of the bollards to the bottom of the stairs, dissatisfaction with the lack of a better solution for the plaza configuration between the stairs and the Reflecting Pool, and the wish for possible future consultation with NPS and other parties. *Given the absence of agreement with the MOA signatories, the staff notes that the Commission can review only at the preliminary site development stage at this time.*

CONSULTATION

Coordinating Committee

The Coordinating Committee has reviewed various iterations on this project on different occasions since June 2002, most recently on February 9, 2005. The project was coordinated with all agencies represented.

Commission of Fine Arts

The Commission's July 29, 2005 letter in response to its deliberations at its July 21, 2005 meeting is attached. The National Park Service has not scheduled further reviews with the Commission.