

COMMISSION ACTION

NCPC File No. 6597



VIETNAM VETERANS MEMORIAL VISITOR CENTER

Approval of Site Selection and Design Guidelines

On the Grounds of the Lincoln Memorial bounded by Constitution Avenue, Henry Bacon Drive, Lincoln Memorial Circle, and 23rd Street, NW
Washington, D.C.

Submitted by the National Park Service

August 3, 2006

Commission Action Requested by Applicant

Approval of site selection and design guidelines pursuant to Public Law 108-126 and the Commemorative Works Act (40 U.S.C. 8905).

Commission Action

The Commission:

Finds that the Environmental Assessment prepared by the applicant for the site selection phase of the project and the public comments on the Environmental Assessment provide additional useful information to guide the Commission in its decision-making and that based on the Environmental Assessment and the other submission materials the Executive Director has issued a finding of no significant impact for the site selection conditioned on a set of mitigation actions to be undertaken by the applicant.

Approves Site A for the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Visitor Center, on the parcel bounded by Constitution Avenue, Henry Bacon Drive, Lincoln Memorial Circle, and 23rd Street, NW as shown on NCPC Map File No. 1.43(73.10)42074, conditioned upon the implementation of the package of mitigation set forth in the design guidelines below that is necessary to reduce the otherwise significant impacts of the proposed action, as indicated in the Executive Director's finding of no significant impact for the site selection:

1. The Visitor Center will be constructed underground as required by the authorizing legislation for the project with no portion of the building or related building elements visible from any portion of the Lincoln Memorial steps and podium, from Constitution Avenue, and from within the axial viewsheds of 23rd Street, NW and Henry Bacon Drive, NW.

2. The Visitor Center's entrance will be only minimally visible from the Vietnam Veterans Memorial to satisfy the project's purpose and need, but in accordance with the authorizing legislation will not interfere with or encroach upon the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.
3. To maintain the character of the historic landscape, the Visitor Center's design concept will be based on maintaining the existing grade, and any new slopes will be gradual. The project will raise the existing site grade only to allow for an accessible entry ramp.
4. The Visitor Center will be designed such that light emanating from the Center's interior will not be visible from any portion of the Lincoln Memorial, from Constitution Avenue, and from the Vietnam Veterans Memorial so as not to interfere with or encroach upon the Lincoln Memorial or the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.
5. The Visitor Center will not intrude into the landscape. No protrusions, such as skylights, monitors, light wells, or sunken areaways, will be visible from the sidewalk surrounding the site.
6. The Visitor Center's site lighting for public safety will not interfere with or encroach upon views to and from the Lincoln Memorial and the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.
7. The Visitor Center's design will provide only the paved area necessary for visitors to enter and exit the building and which will also provide service access. The design will not include additional paved area for gathering space or queuing.
8. The project will not include new vehicle parking areas.
9. The Visitor Center will have a single entrance for both visitors and service.
10. The Visitor Center's associated pedestrian street crossing points will be designed to address traffic impacts effectively and to protect pedestrian safety.
11. The Visitor Center will be constructed only on the portion of the site that lies outside of the critical root zone of existing elm trees. The applicant will develop a tree protection plan to protect and preserve the trees both during and after construction in accordance with standard design and construction procedures.
12. The project will place new landscaping on the site in accordance with the National Park Service's Cultural Landscape Report for the Lincoln Memorial referenced in the Environmental Assessment and will maintain the open grass panel on the site surrounded at the site's perimeter by elm trees.
13. The Visitor Center design will not impede the use of the site for multi-purpose recreation on the site.
14. The Visitor Center will be designed without guardrails or perimeter security elements.

The above guidelines are mutually agreed upon by the National Capital Planning Commission and the Commission of Fine Arts pursuant to Public Law 108-126. These design guidelines supersede the design guidelines submitted by the applicant.

Requires the National Park Service to reconstruct softball fields lost as a result of this project on another site within one-half (1/2) mile of Site A, in accordance with the mitigation required in the Executive Director's finding of no significant impact for the project.

Notes the importance of the Commission's early consultation process and **recommends** that the applicant meet with staff for consultation during the development of concept and subsequent design phases to facilitate the Commission's review of the project under its statutory review and approval process.

Deborah B. Young
Secretary to the National Capital Planning Commission