

# STAFF RECOMMENDATION

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NCPC File No. 6179



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## AMERICAN VETERANS DISABLED FOR LIFE MEMORIAL

Bounded by C and 2<sup>nd</sup> Streets SW, and Washington Avenue, SW  
Washington, D.C.

Submitted by the National Park Service  
on behalf of the Disabled Veterans' LIFE Memorial Foundation

September 25, 2008

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### Abstract

The National Park Service, on behalf of the Disabled Veterans' LIFE Memorial Foundation, has submitted preliminary site and building plans for the American Veterans Disabled for Life Memorial in southwest Washington, DC. The proposed preliminary design retains the major elements of the initial design (star fountain with flame, triangular reflecting pool, marble and etched glass walls, sculptural elements, trees, landscaping, and lighting), but has incorporated changes in response to concept design review as well as concerns expressed by the Architect of the Capitol and the Department of Health and Human Services. Sculptural elements, landscaping, and lighting designs have also been refined since the prior submission.

### Commission Action Requested by Applicant

Approval of preliminary site and building plans pursuant to the Commemorative Works Act, 40 U.S.C. §8905, and Public Law 109-396.

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### Executive Director's Recommendation

The Commission:

**Approves** the 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, contingent upon the applicant's adherence to the following measures outlined as mitigation in the Executive Director's Finding of No Significant Impact:

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.

**Requires** the following to be included with the final project submission:

- Means for providing universal access and use of the memorial site by persons with disabilities, including persons with visual or hearing impairments.
- Final site lighting designs.
- Material samples for stone and glass elements.

**Notes** that Public Law 109-396 stipulates the final design of the south parking area is subject to approval of the Architect of the Capitol.

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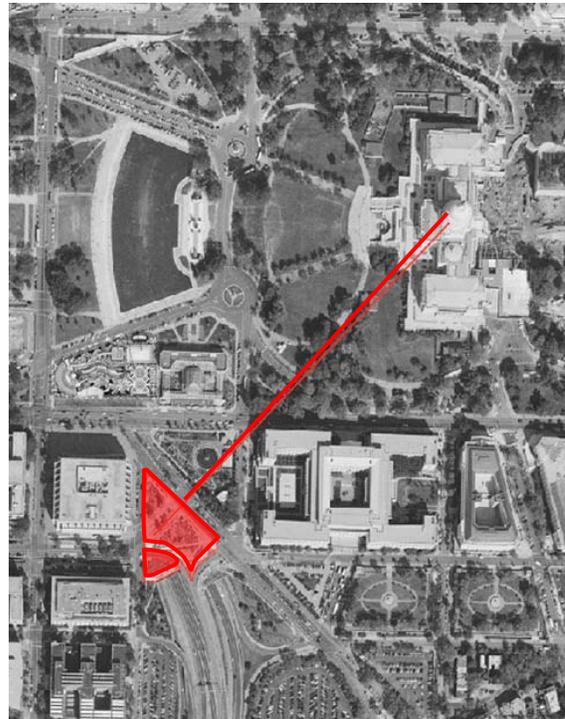
## PROJECT DESCRIPTION

### Background

The Disabled Veterans' LIFE Memorial Foundation (Foundation) was authorized by Public Law 106-348, enacted October 24, 2000, to erect a memorial to honor veterans who became disabled while serving in the Armed Forces of the United States. According to the memorial sponsor, the memorial is intended to “express the nation’s gratitude, serve as an eternal reminder of the human cost of conflict, and educate Americans about disabled veterans’ remarkable contributions to liberty and freedom.”

The land for the park was transferred from the District of Columbia to the National Park Service on December 15, 2006 (Public Law 109-396).

Authorization for the memorial was extended by Public Law 110-106 on October 25, 2007, and will expire on October 24, 2015.



**PROJECT LOCATION**

### Site

The American Veterans Disabled for Life Memorial will be located on a triangular site in southwest Washington, DC bounded on the west by 2<sup>nd</sup> Street, on the east by Washington Avenue, and on the south by opposing entrance ramps to Interstate-395. The Architect of the Capitol currently maintains and landscapes the area, which is used as a pedestrian route from the Southwest Federal Center to Capitol Hill.

The existing site is slightly sloped, with a grade increase of approximately three feet from north to south, with a gentle slope from east to west. The design of the park will not modify the natural slope of the site and will continue to accommodate the current use as a pedestrian thoroughfare.

Several federal facilities are in the immediate vicinity. Bartholdi Park (US Botanic Garden) and the Rayburn House Office Building are located across Washington Avenue northeast of the site; the Capitol Grounds and Mall are located across Independence Avenue north of the site; the southwest federal center, including the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the Ford House Office Building, are located west and southwest of the site; and the I-395 freeway tunnels and other below-grade utilities run directly below the site.

### Proposal

The National Park Service (NPS) and their design team made changes as part of the revised concept design (November 2006) for the American Veterans Disabled for Life Memorial in response to security concerns and site changes requested by the Architect of the Capitol and the U.S. Capitol Police. A Site/Civil and Traffic Engineering study has recently been completed to fully evaluate the effects and feasibility of the street/intersection changes proposed as a result of the revised site configuration; findings of the study conclude that there will not be a decrease in performance of intersections, and that traffic flow to/from the Rayburn House Office Building will not be negatively impacted, as a result of the proposed changes.

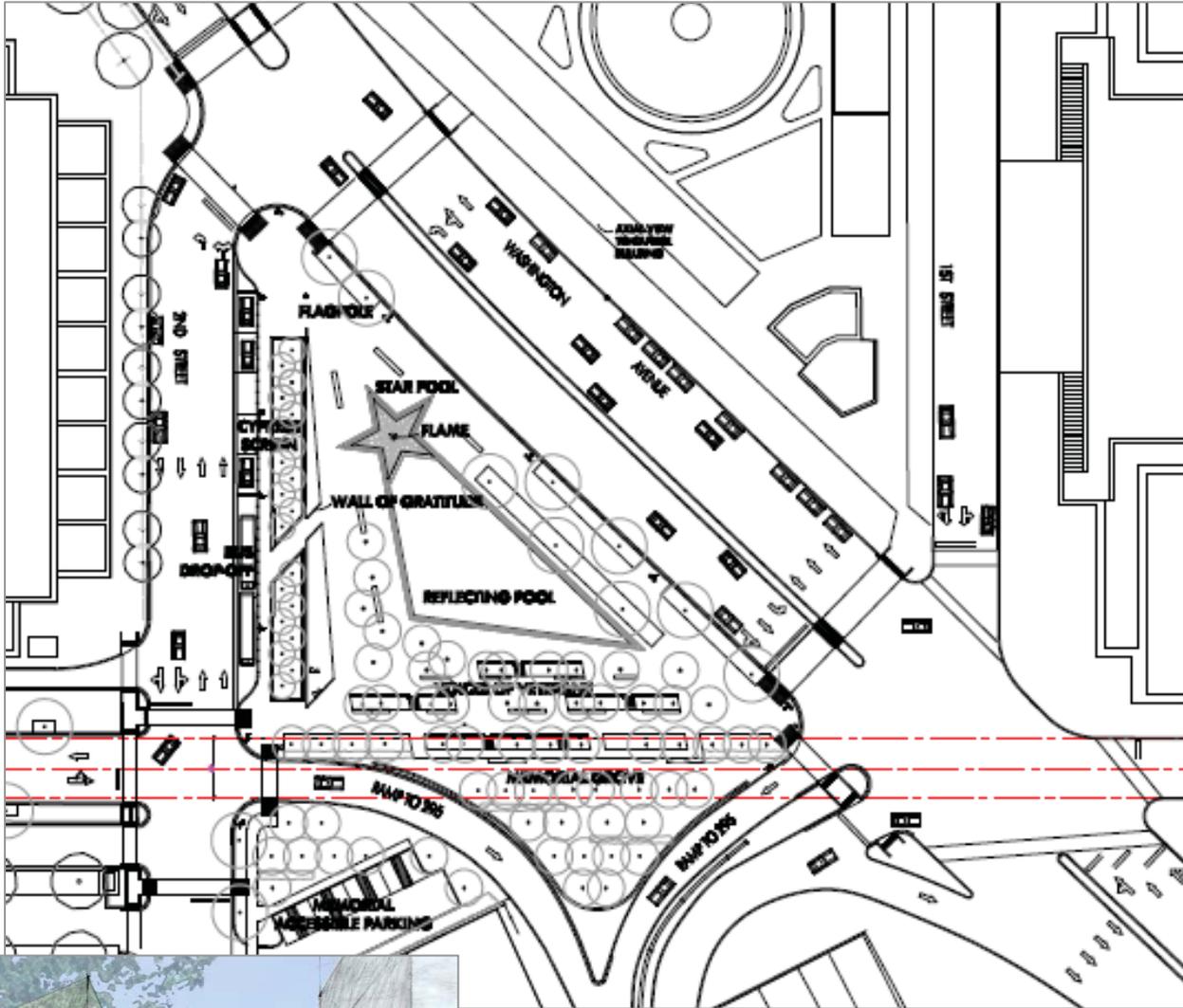
Overall, the design retains the major design elements that have been carried through from the initial concept design: star fountain with flame, triangular reflecting pool, granite paving, marble and etched glass walls, sculptural elements, trees, landscaping, and lighting.

In summary, the following design changes have been made in response to the Commission's Revised Concept Design review:

- Additional seating has been incorporated throughout the site; granite slab benches have been added along the west and east perimeter as well as within the "Voices of Veterans" section at the south end of the memorial.
- Intersections around the site perimeter have been redefined for both safety and accessibility. Streetscape designs for intersections, incorporating granite curbs/paving, tactile granite paving at ramps, and reflective painted crosswalks have been detailed through consultation with the U.S. Access Board.
- Pedestrian circulation and edge treatments at critical intersections have been refined, incorporating low concrete retaining walls and hedges to prevent pedestrians from crossing the highway access ramps from the middle of the site.
- Landscaping and lighting designs have been further developed.
- Sculptural elements, now glass art panels, have replaced earlier bronze reliefs - an updated aesthetic that the Foundation feels is more compatible with the other materials throughout the memorial and will also take advantage of the southern orientation.

The Disabled Veterans' LIFE Memorial Foundation (the Foundation) is the sponsoring group for the memorial, and will be responsible for fundraising, design oversight, and construction of the memorial. The National Park Service, per Public Law 109-396, will be responsible for the perpetual care and operations of the memorial; maintenance will be coordinated between NPS, the Foundation, and DDOT. Staffing for the memorial has not been planned for at this stage of the project.

Street and infrastructure improvements related to the memorial site are being addressed as a concurrent, but separate, project. Coordination between the National Park Service, the Foundation, and the District Department of Transportation, is ongoing, and final work scope and details are expected to be completed by March 2009.



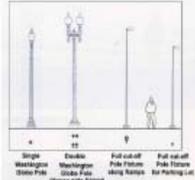
**PRELIMINARY SITE PLAN**



**VIEW TO CAPITOL THROUGH  
"WALL OF GRATITUDE"**



Looking towards the Capitol



Street Light and Site Lighting Fixtures



North entry

**LIGHTING CONCEPTS**

1. The Flame provides a radiant focus for the Memorial from the center of the star fountain.
2. Not Used
3. Voices of Veterans glass walls are illuminated by continuous backlighting. Luminous glass provides diffuse vertical light for adjacent pathways.
4. Bronze silhouettes glow with the reflected light of the glass walls.
5. Wall of Gratitude illuminated on 2nd Street to identify Memorial name and entry.
6. Flag to be lit from adjacent pole mounted accent lights.
7. Memorial plaza ambient lighting provided by low level light from pole mounted downlights.
8. Memorial Grove trees to have low level lighting from pole mounted downlights.
9. Memorial accessible parking lot evenly lit with full cut-off pole mounted lights.
10. Washington Globe standard poles provide perimeter lighting at sidewalks. Housing side shields control light entering Memorial site.
11. Full cut-off roadway fixtures at adjacent entrance ramps prevent light spilling onto Memorial site.

**LIGHTING**



Schematic Lighting Plan

**PRELIMINARY LIGHTING SCHEME**

**BOSQUE TREES**



GBP: Ginkgo



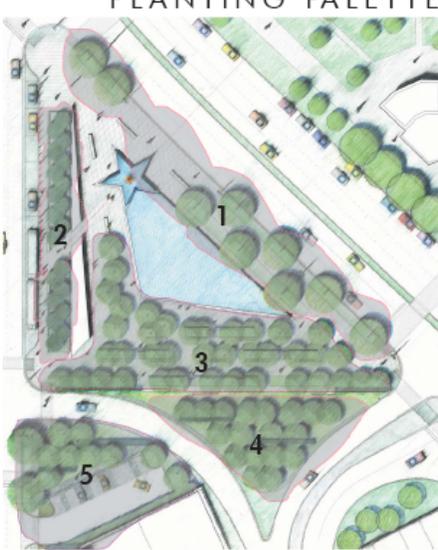
TDP: Pond Cypress

**STREET TREES**



UAP: American Elm

**PLANTING PALETTE**



**PLANTING PALETTE:**

1. Washington Ave: UAP trees with LIR groundcover
2. Cypress Screen: TDP trees with MEV, DRE, DEP & AFF perennials
3. Voices of Veterans: GBP trees with OPH & HEF groundcover/perennials
4. Memorial Grove: GBP trees with CAH, IHV, OHG, PL, & VB shrubs, and OPH & HEF groundcover/perennials
5. Memorial Accessible Parking: GBP trees with IVH shrubs, and MEV, DRE, DEP, & AFF perennials

**SHRUBS**



CAF: Carolina Allspice



CAH: Dwarf Sweet Pepperbush



IVH: Harry's Garnet Sweetspire



OHG: Gulfside Holly Osmanthus



PL: Cherry Laurel



VB: Burkwood Viburnum

**PERENNIALS**



AFF: Lady in Pad Northern Lady Fern



DEP: Hayscented Fern



DRE: Autumn Fern



HEF: Christmas Rose



MEV: Virginia Bluebells

**GROUNDCOVER**



OPH: Mondo Grass



LIR: Creeping Liriope

**PRELIMINARY PLANTING PLAN**

## PROJECT ANALYSIS

The National Park Service (NPS) has made refinements to the design for the American Veterans Disabled for Life Memorial, while retaining the major elements and aesthetic of the concept design (star fountain with central flame, triangular reflecting pool, marble and glass etched walls, granite paving, sculptural elements, trees/landscaping, and site lighting).

Staff has identified the following issues that the applicant and design team are encouraged to explore further as the memorial design is finalized:

- **Means for providing universal access and use of the memorial site by persons with disabilities, including persons with visual or hearing impairments.** The applicant, in collaboration with the U.S. Access Board and the Disabled American Veterans, has made significant improvements with regard to wheelchair accessibility at intersections and at fountains; and has initiated development of web- and/or cellular-based audio programs for visually impaired visitors. Staff encourages the applicant to continue development of accommodations for all types of disabilities.
- **Revised site lighting designs.** The applicant continues to study lighting at the site perimeter and within the memorial, and also to explore the use of new technologies. As a result, the final lighting scheme is expected to change and will likely become more simplified.
- **Material samples for stone and glass elements.** Materials should be durable and able to withstand weathering and heavy use. Additionally, stone materials used for the fountain and reflecting pool should retain their character when either wet or dry.

The applicant and design team should continue to coordinate with the District Department of Transportation, the Architect of the Capitol, and others having jurisdiction over streets and adjacent property. These efforts should focus on designing intersections that are pedestrian-friendly, safe, and universally accessible; developing best management practices to limit stormwater runoff from the site; and developing a long-term care and maintenance plan for the memorial.

The AOC previously expressed concerns with the performance of the proposed Washington Ave/2nd Street intersection with regard to egress patterns from the Rayburn Office Building, and requested analysis to determine the impacts that might result. To satisfy the AOC's concerns, the applicant completed a traffic study in 2007 that indicated that the new intersection configurations will not alter the current Level of Service (LOS) at either the Washington Ave/2<sup>nd</sup> Street or the Washington Ave/C Street intersections (which currently operate at LOS A and B, respectively). Therefore, there are no adverse affects anticipated as a result of the proposed street modifications.

## PRIOR COMMISSION ACTIONS

The Commission approved the revised concept submission for the memorial at its December 1, 2006 meeting; approved the initial design concept submission at its April 1, 2004 meeting; and approved the site location at its October 10, 2001 meeting.

## CONFORMANCE

### Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital

The proposed memorial is not inconsistent with the Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital, and its creation and design conform to several of the Plan's preservation and maintenance policies of the "Parks and Open Space" Federal element.

### NCPC Memorials and Museums Master Plan

The memorial is sited on site Site 26 of NCPC's Memorials and Museums Master Plan, and has the potential to serve as a gateway connecting the Mall with future development along South Capitol Street, via Washington Avenue, SW. Streetscape design along Washington Avenue includes several standard District elements (i.e., Washington Globes) to allow for a more natural transition.

### National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)

On behalf of the Disabled Veterans' LIFE Memorial Foundation, Inc., the National Park Service prepared an Environmental Assessment (EA) for the American Veterans Disabled for Life Memorial to be located at 2nd Street and Washington Avenue, Southwest Washington, DC. This EA identified the potential impacts associated with the implementation of the proposed memorial at the Commission approved location, together with a No Action Alternative. The Commission is identified as a cooperating agency in the issuance of the EA that was prepared in June 2005. The Comment period for the EA concluded in August 2005; a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) was executed by the NPS on September 05, 2008.

The Executive Director issued a FONSI for the project at the preliminary design stage, noting both potential positive and negative impacts resulting from the proposed memorial. Potential short-term negative impacts resulting from construction and transportation-related changes, and long-term negative impacts resulting from site design, were identified by the Executive Director. The following measures have been identified to mitigate identified impacts:

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.

### National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA)

The National Park Service initiated Section 106 consultation in August 2001 (site selection) and continued that process for the memorial design. In March 2004, the applicant determined that the project site and initial concept design (that contemplated re-establishing C Street, SW) would not affect historic properties; the SHPO concurred on March 31, 2004. As ongoing compliance with Section 106, the EA was provided to the DC SHPO for comment in June 2005.

More recent review of the current plans by the DC SHPO, in July of 2008, resulted in a determination that the proposed memorial design would have an effect on the L'Enfant Plan for the City of Washington. The SHPO does not consider this effect to be adverse, and requires no further Section 106 review. NCPC concurs with this determination.

### COORDINATION

#### Coordinating Committee

The project was reviewed and fully coordinated by all parties in attendance at the August 13, 2008 Coordinating Committee meeting. The participating agencies were NCPC, the District of Columbia Office of Planning, the District Department of Transportation, the District Department of Housing and Community Development, the General Services Administration, the National Park Service, and the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority.

#### Commission of Fine Arts

At its meeting on July 17, 2008, the Commission of Fine Arts reviewed a revised concept design and requested further study of the layout and overall complexity of the western wall and southern sculptural elements. The Commission recommended changes to the lighting scheme that would result in a reduction in pole lighting, and also requested material samples of the fountain stone. No formal action was taken by the Commission.

#### Architect of the Capitol

Upon review of the revised concept design in December of 2006, representatives from the Architect of the Capitol (AOC) provided the following comment that still applies:

- Public Law 109-396 stipulates that the final design of the south parking area is subject to approval of the Architect; the AOC has concerns with regulation and enforcement of this parking area, since it is not under DDOT jurisdiction.