

**AMERICAN VETERANS DISABLED FOR LIFE MEMORIAL -
SITE LOCATION**

Washington Avenue (Canal Street) and Second Street SW

Report to the National Park Service and the
Disabled Veteran's Life Memorial Foundation

October 10, 2001

Abstract

The National Park Service, on behalf of the Disabled Veteran's Life Memorial Foundation, has submitted a proposed site for the American Veterans Disabled for Life Memorial at Washington Avenue and Second Street SW. This preferred site is a result of an Alternative Site Selection study, which identified several sites for the new memorial. All six of the alternative sites evaluated in the study were identified from the draft Memorials and Museums Master Plan, prepared by the Joint Task Force on Memorials.

Authority

Public Law 106-348 and the Commemorative Works Act (40 U.S.C. 1001 et. Seq.)

Commission Action

The Commission:

- **Approves** the location for the American Veterans Disabled for Life Memorial at Washington Avenue (Canal Street) and Second Street SW, as shown on NCPC Map File No.1.72(73.10)-40952; and
- **Requests** that the National Park Service and the Disabled Veterans Life Memorial Foundation configure the siting and design of the memorial to avoid encroaching into the C Street right-of-way so as not to foreclose the possibility of restoring C Street's historic alignment in the future.

* * *

BACKGROUND AND STAFF EVALUATION

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSAL

The National Park Service (NPS), on behalf of the Disabled Veteran's Life Memorial Foundation (DVLMF), has submitted a proposed location for an American Veteran's Disabled for Life Memorial. The DVLMF prepared a site selection study, which identified several possible locations for the new memorial. All locations evaluated in the study were identified from the draft Memorials and Museums Master Plan that was prepared by the Joint Task Force on Memorials.

The proposed location for the new memorial is Location No. 26 – Washington Avenue (Canal Street) and Second Street, SW. This approximately 2-acre site is across Washington Avenue from the landscaped grounds of the U.S. Botanic Gardens and just southeast of the Department of Health and Human Services headquarters building. This modified triangular-shaped site is bounded by Second Street on the west, Washington Avenue on the east, and the I-395 tunnel portals on the south. The District of Columbia government has jurisdiction of the property and supports the use of the site for memorial purposes. Other particulars of this location include:

- The configuration of the property resulted from the construction of the I-395 tunnel beneath the Mall. The present area, near a mixing bowl of access ramps, bears no relationship to the historic configuration of the L'Enfant Plan that crossed Canal Street to connect C and Second Streets.
- No public restrooms would be located at the site. Restrooms are available at the U.S. Botanic Gardens across Independence Avenue.
- There is a high level of pedestrian circulation in the immediate vicinity of this location. Pedestrian traffic past the site is associated with the Capitol and the Senate and House office buildings as well as the Mall, museums and memorials to the west. When the renovations to the U.S. Botanic Gardens and the construction of the National Museum to the American Indian are completed, pedestrian traffic will increase.
- Regarding vehicular traffic, the site contains three roadways of which two provide access to I-395. The adjacent local arteries are Washington Avenue and Second Street.
- Visitors to the future memorial can use the Capitol South and Federal Center SW Metro Stations.
- The location is not in the Potomac or Anacostia Rivers 100-year flood plains and storm water from this location is currently dissipated across the grassed surface. Run-off from paved surfaces (sidewalks) drain into the existing storm sewer system.

EVALUATION

Staff recommends approval of Location No. 26 for the site of the American Veterans Disabled for Life Memorial. Staff is particularly pleased that the DVLMF used the Memorials and Museum Master Plan as a basis for its site selection study that eventually selected Location No. 26 for the proposed memorial. The location has a very strong visual and physical proximity to the U.S. Capitol. This proximity is important to the memorial sponsors because it will serve as a reminder to legislators, who must consider approval of significant military actions, to preserve the national interests of the United States related to (1) human costs associated with such decisions, and (2) the continuing, long-term commitment to ensuring the health and rehabilitation of those injured as a result of such military actions. Therefore, Location No.26 is superior to the other locations considered.

The selection of Location No. 26 for the memorial will also provide for the appropriate enhancement and visual definition of an area that is currently visually dominated by a roadway system. Staff urges the DVLMF and NPS to thoroughly examine existing and anticipated pedestrian and vehicle circulation patterns for this location to ensure that the actual siting of the memorial will allow ease of pedestrian flow and access in conjunction with other attractions in the immediate vicinity. Also, the siting and configuration of the memorial should not encroach into the C Street right-of-way so as not to foreclose the possibility of restoring C Street's historic alignment in the future.

COORDINATION

Coordinating Committee

The Coordinating Committee reviewed this item at its meeting on September 12, 2001, and forwarded the proposal to the Commission with the statement that the project has been coordinated with all agencies participating. The participating agencies were NCPC; the District of Columbia Office of Planning; Fire Department; the Department of Housing and Community Development; the Department of Public Works; the General Services Administration; the National Park Service; and the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority.

National Capital Memorial Commission

At its August 30, 2001 meeting, the National Capital Memorial Commission (NCMC) unanimously endorsed the proposed site of the American Veterans Disabled for Life Memorial at Washington Avenue and Second Street S.W. Additionally, the NCMC urged the sponsors and the NPS to configure the memorial site in a manner that does not preclude the future possibility of restoring C Street's historic alignment.

Commission of Fine Arts

At its September 20, 2001 meeting, the Commission of Fine Arts approved the site location for the American Veterans Disabled for Life Memorial.

CONFORMANCE

Comprehensive Plan

The site for the proposed memorial is located adjacent to the historic Capitol Grounds and adjacent to Washington Avenue (Canal Street), which is a designated Special Street in the Preservation and Historic Features Element of the Comprehensive Plan. The proposed site is prominently located and underutilized. A well-designed and appropriately landscaped memorial at this location would serve to enhance the character of the Special Street and would be compatible with the historic surroundings of the Capitol Grounds. The proposed location, therefore, is consistent with applicable Comprehensive Plan policies that provide for the protection of historic sites and landscapes and for the protection and enhancement of the unique character and vistas of Special Streets in the Nation's Capital.

National Environmental Policy Act

The National Park Service has developed a programmatic environmental assessment for the proposed location and program of the memorial.

The site for the memorial would be consistent with other land uses within the area as identified in the Commission's approved master plan for memorials completed in August 2001. Further evaluation of the location would reasonably occur in subsequent environmental documentation during memorial concept design.

The memorial site is not subject to flooding nor does it contain any significant environmental attributes.

Circulation routes for both pedestrian and vehicular traffic are potentially accommodated at the proposed site. Relocation of existing sidewalks and adjacent roadway curbs may occur pending further site evaluation and memorial design definition. Tour Bus and taxi drop-off areas could reasonably be incorporated into any roadway re-alignment. Maintaining vehicle circulation routes in the vicinity of Washington Avenue and 2nd Street, SW, which are commuter and local traffic links, is important. As no parking currently exists in the immediate vicinity of the site, staff anticipates that no additional parking spaces will be provided at the memorial. Adjacent side streets do exhibit the potential to provide limited accessible parking that could reasonably serve the memorial. Accommodation for handicapped accessible parking will be anticipated.

Metrorail access is achieved from the Federal Center Southwest Blue/Orange line station, and is deemed "Fair" by the master plan review. The master plan also identifies the preferred site as located within the future DC circulator route that could provide service to the memorial. NPS notes that special attention will be dedicated to solving any potential conflicts involving the exit ramps from Interstate Route 395, near the proposed site.

The project is considered acceptable to advance to concept site development with further tiered environmental documentation occurring in conjunction with that effort. At that time, impacts associated with a specific access design will be evaluated.

As NPS prepares design guidelines for concept site development plans, staff offers two recommendations regarding environmental attributes:

- NPS should clearly identify the addition of trees, and maximize the use of trees or shrubs near the boundaries, to serve as a setting and context for the memorial. A buffer would serve a visual purpose and improve site drainage characteristics related to site run-off and erosion control; and
- Visual analysis of various perimeter views of the proposed site should occur to identify selected views toward the site that would incorporate screening for noise buffering purposes and visually screen adjacent roadway areas. There would be significant importance in this regard to not completely obscure the site.

National Historic Preservation Act

NPS notified the D.C. State Historic Preservation Office on August 31, 2001 that it finds that no historic properties would be affected by this undertaking. NPS has determined that the L'Enfant Plan parcels and the street plan at the site, including C Street, SW, were disrupted by the construction of I-395. NPS has further notified the D.C. State Historic Preservation Office that if a potential for archaeology is found to exist, NPS will proceed with Section 106 consultation.