



Executive Director's Recommendation

Commission Meeting: October 4, 2018

PROJECT National World War I Memorial Pershing Park Washington, DC	NCPC FILE NUMBER 7682
SUBMITTED BY United States Department of the Interior National Park Service	NCPC MAP FILE NUMBER 1.23(73.10)44812
REVIEW AUTHORITY Commemorative Works per 40 U.S.C. § 8905 and Public Law 113-291	APPLICANT'S REQUEST Approval of comments on revised concept plans
	PROPOSED ACTION Approve comments on revised concept plans
	ACTION ITEM TYPE Staff Presentation

PROJECT SUMMARY

The National Park Service (NPS), in collaboration with the World War I Centennial Commission (WWICC), has submitted revised concept design plans for the National World War I Memorial. WWICC is the project sponsor of the Memorial in accordance with Public Law 112-272, and is responsible for planning, developing, and executing programs, projects, and activities to commemorate the centennial of World War I through 2018. The Commission provided comments on the concept design in November 2016 and July 2017. Since that time, the proposal has been further developed. The most significant change to the design is the use of a freestanding memorial wall in lieu of a wall integrated into the western plaza steps.

Title 30, Section 3091 of the National Defense Authorization Act of 2015 (Pub. Law 113-291) designates Pershing Park in downtown Washington, DC, along with the Liberty Memorial in Kansas City, as national World War I memorials. The Act further authorizes the WWICC to honor the service of members of the United States Armed Forces in World War I. A two-stage competition was held to select a memorial designer. Stage I included an open call for design concepts that was completed in August 2015. The competition jury selected five finalists to continue to Stage II, and NCPC heard an information presentation on these finalists in December 2015. The winning design, "The Weight of Sacrifice," was selected by WWICC in early 2016. One of the most critical components of the design was a commemorative wall with bas-relief sculpture expressing the war experience. Since that time, the sponsor has continued to develop the proposed design, with the wall remaining the primary commemorative element.

KEY INFORMATION

- The Commemorative Works Act (CWA) establishes requirements for building commemorative works on federal lands within the District of Columbia and its environs. It applies to lands under jurisdiction of the US Department of the Interior (DOI) and the US General Services Administration (GSA).
- Public Law 113-291 designates Pershing Park in downtown Washington, DC, along with the Liberty Memorial in Kansas City, as national World War I memorials. The Act further authorizes the WWICC to honor the service of members of the United States Armed Forces in World War I.
- Pershing Park is located within the 1974 Pennsylvania Avenue Development Corporation (PADC) Plan area. The Plan called for a public open space at the site to serve as a transition between the more formal landscape of President's Park and the hardscape of Freedom Plaza.
- Pershing Park is also located within the Pennsylvania Avenue National Historic Site (NHS).
- Pershing Park is a work of the landscape architect M. Paul Friedberg, and the park has been determined individually eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.
- The Commission provided comments on the concept plans for the memorial in November 2016 and July 2017.
- The Commission of Fine Arts (CFA) reviewed the proposed memorial in February, May and July 2018, and approved the concept design at its July 2018 meeting, including the freestanding memorial wall.
- Pursuant to the CWA, NCPC, CFA, and the DOI must each approve the design for the new commemorative work.

RECOMMENDATION

The Commission:

Notes the design has changed over time to now restore and rehabilitate a substantial portion of the existing park while accommodating the memorial program.

Finds the park and memorial improvements can enhance the Pennsylvania Avenue corridor experience and contribute positively to an active downtown Washington, DC.

Memorial Wall

Finds the memorial wall length has been reduced and a water feature has been integrated into the wall, consistent with the Commission's previous request.

Finds the freestanding wall in its current design creates a clear front and back, and the space at the rear of the wall is not yet fully developed.

Requests the applicant provide alternative design strategies that treat the memorial element in a unified way, without a front or a back, so that it is not perceived as dividing the park, but a feature that can engage visitors from all sides. Alternative strategies should also consider the treatment of the western steps and how the space might be designed to encourage people to gather and use the space in a positive way.

Pool and Walkway

Notes the applicant has developed three options for the pool and walkway configuration.

Finds the "L" Walkway with Existing Pool Depth most closely retains the original pool depth and configuration, and provides a new pedestrian connection between the eastern and northern portions of the plaza.

Finds the "L" Walkway with Partial Deep Pool and Scrim provides a new pedestrian connection between the eastern and northern portions of the plaza, and alters the original pool depth in the area proposed to be a scrim of water.

Finds the "U" Walkway with Partial Deep Pool and Scrim provides a pedestrian path that begins and ends at the eastern side of the plaza, and alters the original pool depth in the area proposed to be a scrim of water.

Requests that for each of the three options, the applicant describe how the water feature and plaza area will be used throughout the year, recognizing the extreme temperatures of the summer and winter months.

Notes that the original pool design included a variety of plantings in and near the pool, and the opportunity exists to incorporate additional plantings to soften the hardscape, support the memorial program, and improve the visitor experience.

Notes the applicant has indicated they continue to work with NPS to address issues related to safety and fall protection, and any measures if necessary, should be included in future submissions to the Commission.

Park Use and Programming

Requires a plan be prepared that identifies the proposed urban park spaces and potential programming or activities that can occur in those spaces.

Notes the berms and limited entry points from the southern perimeter of the site create challenges for pedestrian access and visibility.

Requires the applicant provide design options as part of the next submission that improve the sense of entry at the southeast and southwest corners of the site, highlight pedestrian access, and encourage visitation to the park and memorial from the south.

Finds that the commemorative elements should largely be limited to the memorial wall, kiosk area, and existing Pershing Memorial to highlight their importance and to allow for other types of park uses within the site.

Supports improvements to the legibility of the Pershing Memorial walls; and requests additional information be provided describing the proposed enhancements.

PROJECT REVIEW TIMELINE

Previous actions	December 2015 – Information Presentation on five finalists November 2016 – Review of Concept Plans July 2017 – Review of Concept Plans
Remaining actions (anticipated)	– Approval of preliminary memorial and site development plans – Approval of final memorial and site development plans

PROJECT ANALYSIS

Executive Summary

In November 2016, and later in July 2017, the Commission provided a series of comments on the proposed design of the World War I Memorial at Pershing Park. Since that time, the applicant has continued to develop the proposal in response to Commission and other agency comments, including the Commission of Fine Arts. Staff has analyzed this project based on this input, and in consideration of the Commemorative Works Act (CWA) and the Comprehensive Plan. A general

principle set forth in the Comprehensive Plan is to protect and improve the open space and character of the Monumental Core and the integrity of each memorial and park element. Further, the Comprehensive Plan includes policies to enhance the quality of the visitor experience to the Nation's Capital, particularly at major cultural sites. Staff has also evaluated policies related to urban design given the memorial's position within downtown Washington, DC along Pennsylvania Avenue, NW.

The Commission has indicated support for several general planning and design principles related to the proposed memorial. These include:

- A memorial design that combines urban park and commemorative features successfully, integrating park uses and dignified commemorative components in a manner that is balanced and enduring.
- A memorial design that respects the historic, symbolic, and civic importance of the Pennsylvania Avenue corridor, and preserves the unified streetscape and framed views of the U.S. Capitol.
- Strategies that enhance Pershing Park while rehabilitating or reusing elements of the original park design.

Staff has evaluated the concept based upon these principles, and the analysis has been organized to focus on three major aspects of the proposal, including the memorial wall, the pool and plaza and the urban park experience.

Analysis

The park and memorial design has changed substantially since the competition winner was selected in 2016. Since that time, the proposal has focused on restoring and rehabilitating much of the original park design. The proposed interventions are more limited than the original scheme, and are focused on those changes necessary to accommodate the memorial program or to enhance the functionality of the site. Overall, the applicant seeks to improve the park and staff believes this will be beneficial to the Pennsylvania Avenue corridor and the surrounding area. As such, staff recommends the **Commission find the park and memorial improvements can enhance the Pennsylvania Avenue corridor experience and contribute positively to an active downtown Washington, DC.**

Memorial Wall

The memorial wall placement and design in the previous concept reinterpreted the location of Friedberg's original waterfall and expanded it across the western plaza steps. This approach allowed for a clear "front" of the memorial wall facing the pool, where it would be approached and viewed by the public. By integrating the wall into terrace, it also allowed the creation of an overlook and space at the top of the steps that could allow visitors to stop and view the plaza.

The new design no longer integrates the memorial wall into the terrace and steps. Instead, the feature is a stand-alone element that is placed within the western end of the pool. The original park waterfall is eliminated and the western terrace steps are expanded to fill that space. The freestanding wall includes a sculptural narrative on the eastern face and a water feature and potential inscription on the western face. Staff notes that the freestanding wall is shorter in length (56'-6") than the integrated wall the Commission previously reviewed (64'-6"). It also integrates a water feature at the base. Both of these changes are consistent with requests by the Commission in July 2017. As such, staff recommends the **Commission find the memorial wall length has been reduced and a water feature has been integrated into the wall, consistent with the Commission's previous request.**

By moving the memorial wall into the pool, it becomes a feature with multiple sides and multiple viewpoints. The eastern face and sculpture is intended to be the primary view, however the standalone wall creates a secondary face that will be visible and must be treated appropriately. The applicant has proposed a waterfall and inscriptions on the western side, but it is unclear if this will be sufficient to create a space that will attract visitors or be comfortable to occupy.

Walls can create challenges by blocking views and being perceived as barriers. This is evident with other walls, such as the Pershing Memorial located on the eastern side of the park. If the freestanding feature is advanced, it should be designed holistically. While the east side may be considered the primary face from a commemorative perspective, the other sides, including the west, should be designed in a complementary and integrated manner. The west side should not feel like a back. For example, the entire wall could be perceived as a sculpture, allowing some of those commemorative elements to be expressed on all sides, not just the east face. The entire object can be designed together, not just a wall with a sculpture affixed to one side.

Likewise, the space created by the wall and western steps should be a space that is comfortable and engaging to visitors. It is unclear whether the current design will accomplish this. As such, staff recommends the **Commission find the freestanding wall in its current design creates a clear front and back, and the space at the rear of the wall is not yet fully developed.** For example, it is uncertain whether the freestanding element is sufficiently set back from the terrace steps, or whether additional space is necessary to create an appropriate viewpoint for the freestanding element. Further, the applicant should evaluate how the western steps will be used given the new design. While extending the Friedberg designed steps may be appropriate, alternatives should be developed to explore additional seating, plantings or other approaches that respond to the new freestanding wall and allow the space to be useful and inviting. As such, staff recommends the **Commission request the applicant provide alternative design strategies that treat the memorial element in a unified way, without a front or a back, so that it is not perceived as dividing the park, but a feature that can engage visitors from all sides. Alternative strategies should also consider the treatment of the western steps and how the space might be designed to encourage people to gather and use the space in a positive way.**

Pool and Walkway

As with the previous scheme, the current design includes rehabilitating the central plaza and pool and adding a pedestrian path that would allow visitors to circulate in front of the commemorative wall. The Commission had previously found that water features help activate urban park spaces when designed appropriately, and asked the applicant to evaluate the visual and functional impacts of the pool when in use, and also emptied of water. Pursuant to the Commission's request, the applicant has provided additional details regarding the proposed pool modifications, including the design of the proposed pedestrian path.

The applicant has also provided three options regarding the path alignment and pool design. As with other aspects of the design, the options weigh functionality, programming and historic preservation concerns. The first option includes an "L" shaped walkway and retains the existing pool depth of twelve inches. This most closely retains the original pool depth and configuration, while providing a new pedestrian connection between the eastern and northern portions of the plaza. This additional connection may be beneficial by providing visitors a new route that passes by the memorial. As with most water features in Washington, DC, the pool is likely to be empty for part of the year. In this case, the empty pool is not likely to function for other uses. As such, staff recommends the **Commission find the "L" Walkway with Existing Pool Depth most closely retains the original pool depth and configuration, and provides a new pedestrian connection between the eastern and northern portions of the plaza.**

The second option includes an "L" shaped walkway with a sixteen-inch deep pool around the outside of the walkway. Inside the walkway, a scrim with a thin sheet of water would be used. The introduction of the scrim retains the general footprint of the pool but alters the depth for this portion. Because the scrim would be flush with the plaza, it could be accessible and used for programming when the water is turned off. Therefore, staff recommends the **Commission find the "L" Walkway with Partial Deep Pool and Scrim provides a new pedestrian connection between the eastern and northern portions of the plaza, and alters the original pool depth in the area proposed to be a scrim of water.**

The third option uses a "U" shaped walkway with a sixteen-inch deep pool outside the walkway, and a scrim of water inside the walkway. The applicant has indicated this is currently their preferred approach. The pedestrian path starts and finishes at the eastern side of the central plaza. Because of this configuration, more area is required for the walkway as compared to the other options. As with the previous option, the scrim could be turned off and used for programming, including commemorative events. Therefore, staff recommends the **Commission find the "U" Walkway with Partial Deep Pool and Scrim provides a pedestrian path that begins and ends at the eastern side of the plaza, and alters the original pool depth in the area proposed to be a scrim of water.**

To better understand the tradeoffs between the options, staff recommends the **Commission request that for each of the three options, the applicant describe how the water feature and plaza area will be used throughout the year, recognizing the extreme temperatures of the summer and winter months.**

Staff notes the original pool design included a variety of plantings in and near the pool, and the opportunity exists to incorporate additional plantings to soften the hardscape, support the memorial program, and improve the visitor experience. Planted areas would be cooler and inviting, and could help mitigate the hardscape of the pool or scrim when emptied of water. Certain plantings could also relate to the story of the memorial.

Finally, the applicant has indicated they continue to work with NPS to address issues related to safety and fall protection. Any such measures, if necessary, should be included in future submissions to the Commission.

Urban Park

The project design should accommodate the memorial program as well as support a successful urban park. Accommodating park activities is critical to the success of the site, as is evidenced by nearby examples such as the Navy Memorial. Pershing Park is located in a thriving downtown, near hotels and other commercial uses, civic uses, such as the Commerce Building and Wilson Building. Given its location on Pennsylvania Avenue near the White House and National Mall, as well as an active downtown, the memorial has the opportunity to attract and engage a variety of visitors. It can be a destination for residents, office workers, as well as tourists, if designed appropriately.

Previously, the Commission requested the applicant provide information about how the site would continue to function as an urban park, as well as potential programming or activities that could occur there. This request seeks first to understand the locations where park activities could occur on the site; and secondly, to understand what kind of park uses might be reasonable and appropriate near the memorial, from the applicant's perspective.

For example, areas along the northern portion of the north plaza might be appropriate for tables and chairs, and could function as a gathering area for having lunch. Similarly, the grove of trees at the northeast corner of the site could also have urban park uses. As such, staff recommends the **Commission require a plan be prepared that identifies the proposed urban park spaces and potential programming or activities that can occur in those spaces.**

Views and visibility into the park, and in particular connections to the south of the site, had previously been raised as an issue for further consideration. In July 2017, the Commission requested the applicant provide alternatives to improve pedestrian access and visibility from the southern perimeter of the site. The applicant has not provided any additional evaluation or alternatives to address this request. Staff recognizes that the berms and sense of enclosure are important components of the park's original design. However, given the changing context and need to create a place that will attract visitors, enhancing pedestrian access would be beneficial. Possible approaches could include highlighting the existing entry points with landscaping, signage or other elements. This could provide visual clues for visitors who may not be aware of the memorial or park space. As such, staff recommends the **Commission require the applicant provide design options as part of the next submission that improve the sense of entry at the**

southeast and southwest corners of the site, highlight pedestrian access, and encourage visitation to the park and memorial from the south.

Other Elements

The submission includes several other components with alternative options under consideration. For example, a flagstaff is proposed in three different locations, and the kiosk is identified as a potential site for interpretive elements. The applicant has also identified numerous other locations for other commemorative elements, with the details yet to be determined.

Staff finds that the kiosk site is an appropriate location for interpretive elements related to the memorial given its direct view of the memorial wall across the pool, as well as its centralized location. Further staff finds the north berm location is an appropriate for a flagpole given its locations just to the right of the memorial wall. Regarding the other locations for additional commemorative elements, staff believes they are unnecessary and would detract from use of the rest of the site as an urban park. As described previously, the site should accommodate both park and memorial components, and expanding the memorial program across the entire site would be counter to that goal. As such, staff recommends the **Commission find that the commemorative elements should largely be limited to the memorial wall, kiosk area, and existing Pershing Memorial to highlight their importance and to allow for other types of park uses within the site.**

Finally, past reviews have noted that the existing Pershing Walls are hard to read. As such, staff recommends the **Commission continue to support improvements to the legibility of the Pershing Memorial walls; and requests additional information be provided describing the proposed enhancements.**

CONFORMANCE TO EXISTING PLANS, POLICIES AND RELATED GUIDANCE

Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital

As noted above, the planning comments are designed to ensure the proposal meets basic goals of the Comprehensive Plan.

Commemorative Works Act

The Commemorative Works Act (CWA) contains a set of foundational level decision criteria that NCPC is required to use when considering site and design proposals for commemorative works. Specifically, the CWA states that in considering site and design proposals, NCPC shall be guided by a number of criteria, including surroundings, location, material, landscape features, and site specific guidelines. As noted above, the planning and design comments are designed to ensure the proposal broadly meets the CWA criteria.

Memorials and Museums Master Plan

The 2001 Memorials and Museums Master Plan (“2M Plan”) provides guidance regarding the placement of future commemorative works. In particular, the Plan seeks to reinforce the historic urban design features of the city, minimize intrusion on existing memorials, and reduce adverse environmental and transportation impacts and enhance positive economic and other effects on local neighborhoods. The Plan states that memorials, when properly placed and sensitively designed, can provide a source of community identity and pride, while bolstering revitalization efforts.

National Historic Preservation Act

NCPC and NPS each have an independent responsibility to comply with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA). NPS initiated consultation with the District of Columbia Historic Preservation Office (DC SHPO) on May 1, 2015. A determination of eligibility (DOE) for Pershing Park was completed and found the park eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. On September 21, 2016, the consulting parties reviewed the draft DOE for Pershing Park, and discussed the proposed design concept. The Section 106 process, culminating in a memorandum of agreement (MOA) will be completed prior to the Commission’s final approval of the project.

National Environmental Policy Act

NCPC and NPS will each have an independent responsibility to comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA); NCPC’s responsibility stems from its approval authority over the site and design of the monument. A public scoping meeting was held on May 20, 2015 to discuss the memorial authorization and site characteristics. NPS is preparing an Environmental Assessment (EA) to identify alternatives and assess the potential impacts of the proposed memorial. NCPC is a cooperating agency for purposes of the EA, and NCPC staff provided scoping comments on June 2, 2015. These recommended evaluation of a number of topics through the NEPA process, including urban design and visitor experience, historic and cultural resources, transportation systems and sustainability. Final NEPA documentation is not required at this time, but will be completed prior to the Commission’s action on the final site and memorial design.

Commission of Fine Arts

The Commission of Fine Arts (CFA) reviewed the proposed memorial in February, May and July 2018, and approved the concept design at its July 2018 meeting, including the freestanding memorial wall.

Coordinating Committee

The Coordinating Committee reviewed the proposed plans at their September 12, 2018 meeting. Without objection, the Committee forwarded the proposed comments on concept plans to the Commission with the statement that the proposal has been coordinated with all participating agencies.

The participating agencies included the National Park Service, General Services Administration, District Department of Transportation; the District Office of Planning; the District Office of Energy and Environment; the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority; and the District of Columbia State Historic Preservation Office (DC SHPO). The DC SHPO noted that its coordination is contingent upon the completion of a Section 106 Memorandum of Agreement.

ONLINE REFERENCE

The following supporting documents for this project are available online at www.ncpc.gov:

- Submission Package

Prepared by Matthew Flis
09/27//2018

ATTACHMENTS

- Powerpoint
- Commission of Fine Arts Letters

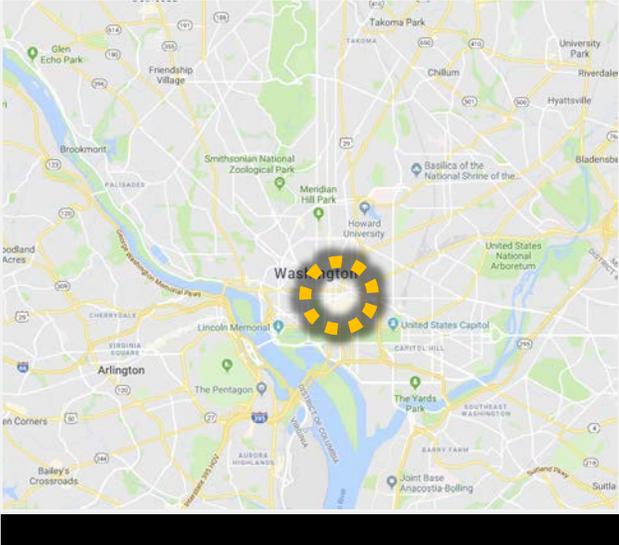
National World War I Memorial

Pershing Park, Washington, DC

Comments on Concept Design

National Park Service

Site Location



Location Map

Restored Pool Concept – July 2017



Memorial Wall Development

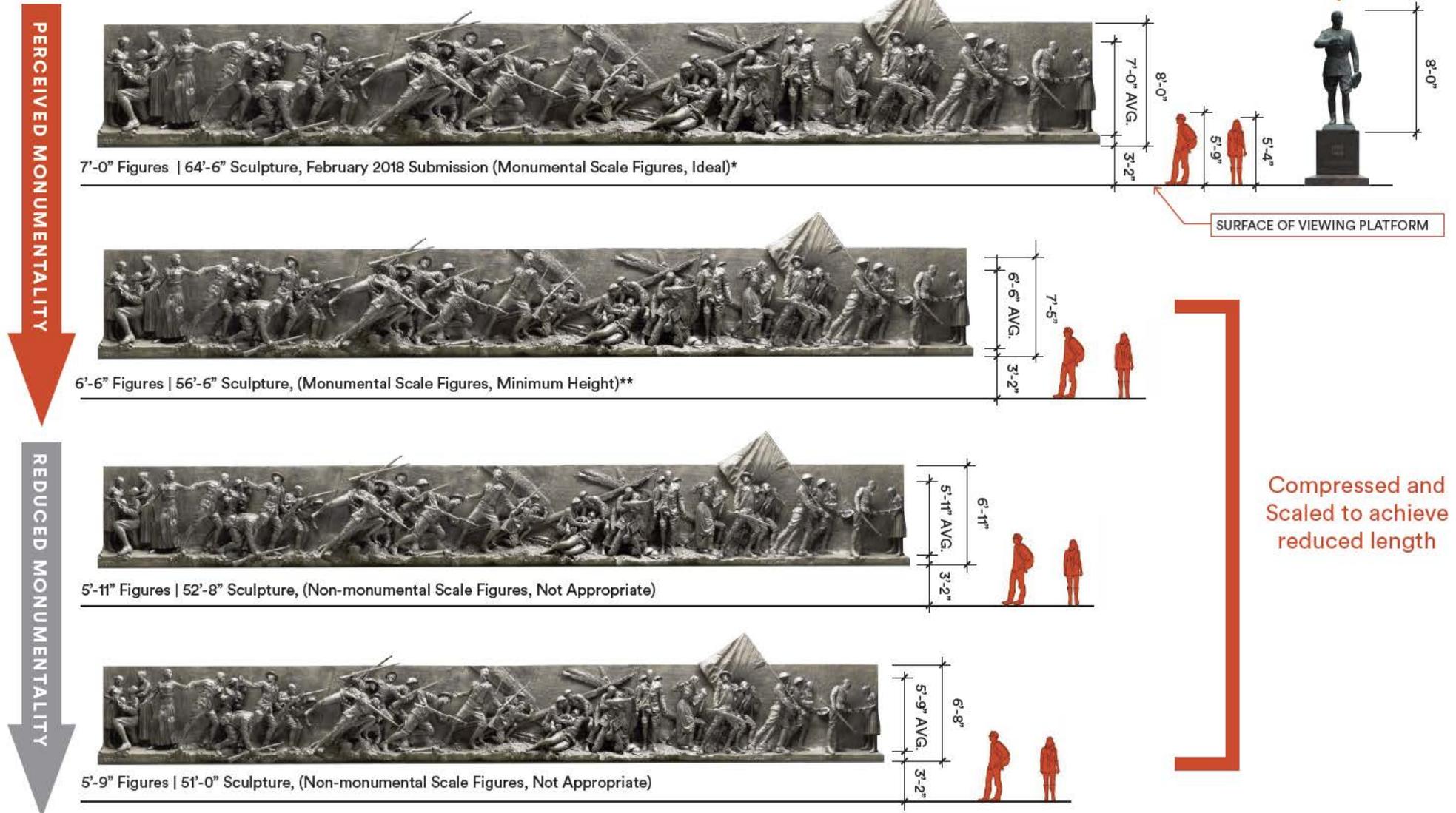


OPTION A - FREESTANDING SCULPTURE: 6'-6" FIGURES, 56'-6" LENGTH



OPTION B - INTEGRATED SCULPTURE: 6'-6" FIGURES, 56'-6" LENGTH

SCULPTURE REDUCTION



*Commonly accepted ratio between viewer and sculpture for monumentality 1.25 (resulting in 7' figures)

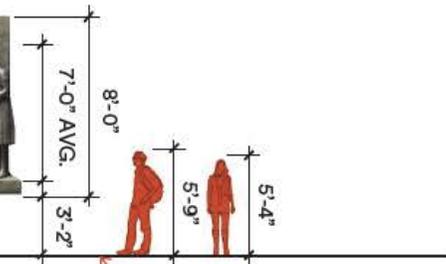
**Ratio with sculpture reduction 1.15 (6'-6" figures)

REDUCED SCULPTURE LENGTH

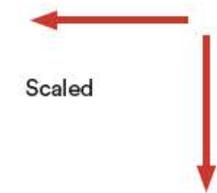
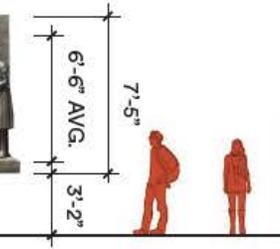
SCULPTURE COMPRESSION



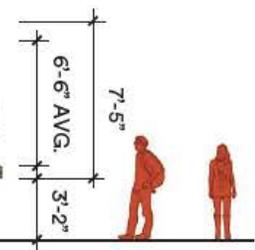
7'-0" Figures | 64'-6" Sculpture, February 2018 Submission (Monumental Scale Figures, Ideal)



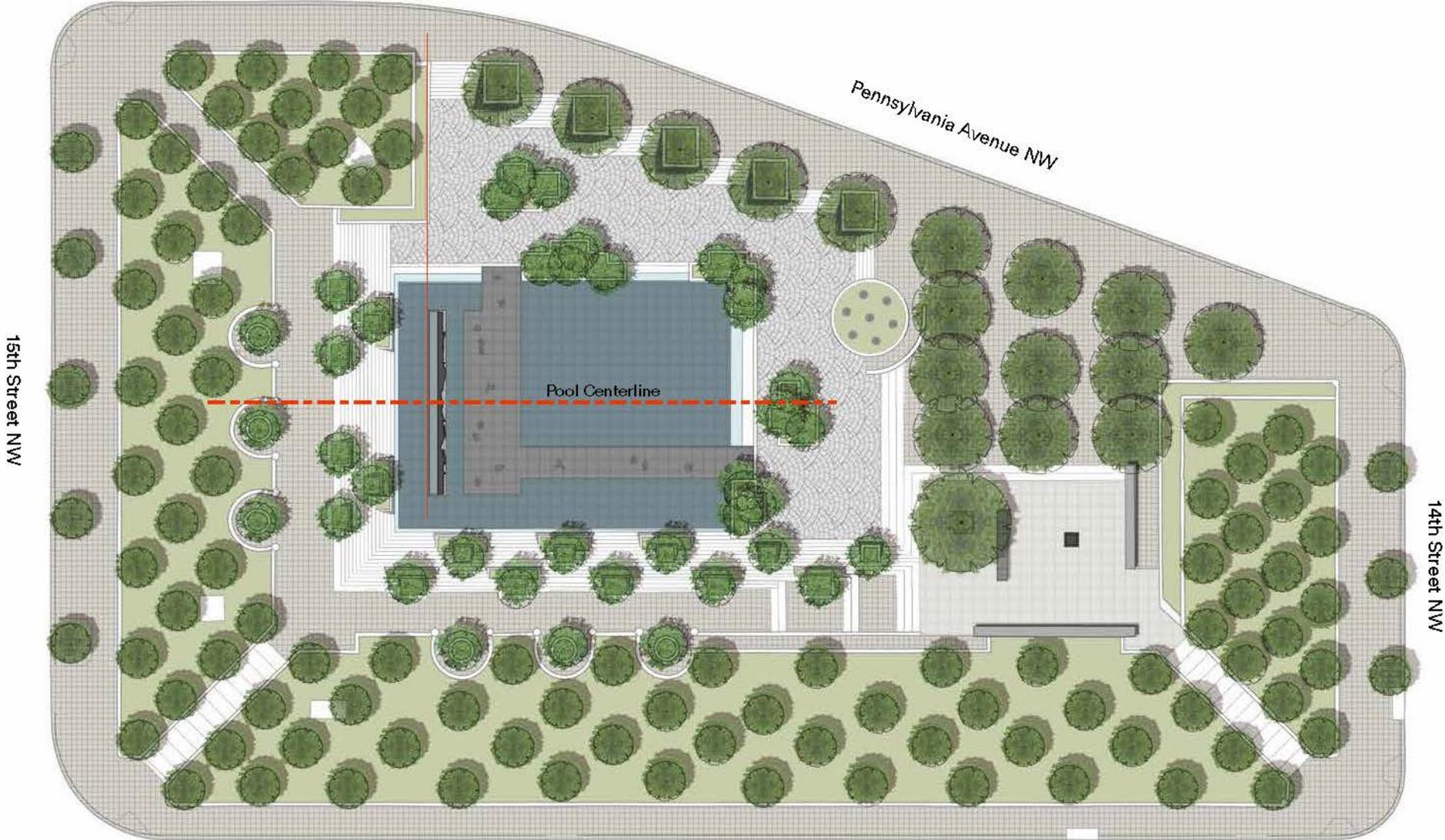
6'-6" Figures | 59'-6" Sculpture, (Monumental Scale Figures, Minimum Height)



6'-6" Figures | 56'-6" Sculpture, (Monumental Scale Figures, Minimum Height)



Freestanding Wall - Plan



Freestanding Wall – Base and Water Options

SIMILAR TO PREVIOUS SUBMISSION (MAY 2018): FRONT + BACK CASCADE



CAP: FRONT + BACK CASCADE



FRAME: SIDE + BACK CASCADE



West Side of Freestanding Wall

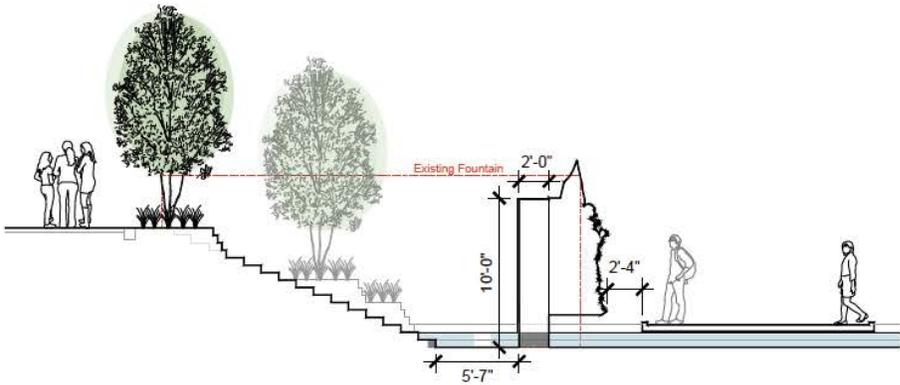
FOUNTAIN SEASONALITY - FREESTANDING

Tempered pool basin with cascade turned off during winter months

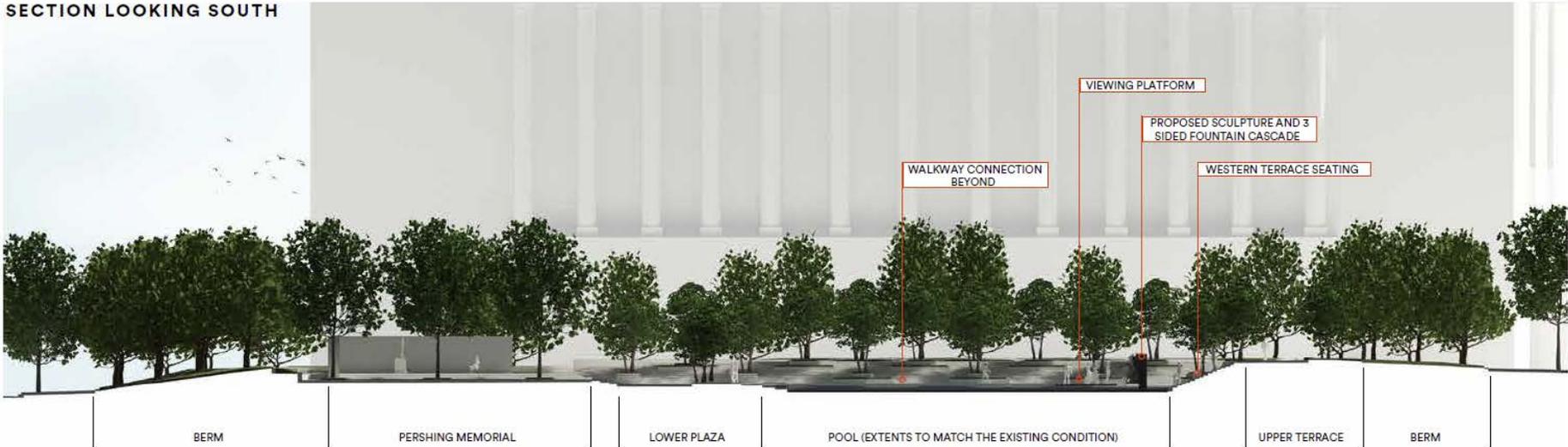


Freestanding Wall - Section

SCULPTURE WALL - OPTION A: FREESTANDING WALL



SECTION LOOKING SOUTH

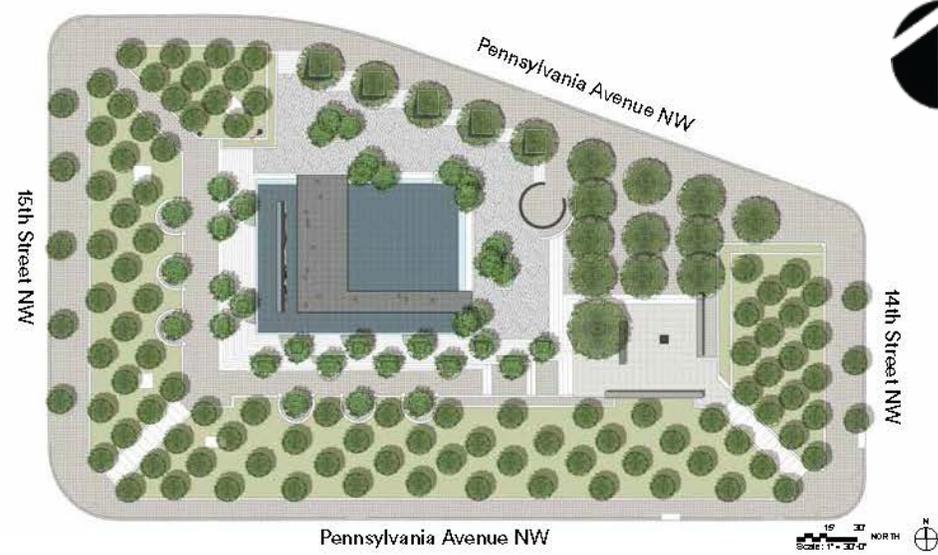


Walkway Options

“L” WALKWAY PER MAY CFA SUBMISSION



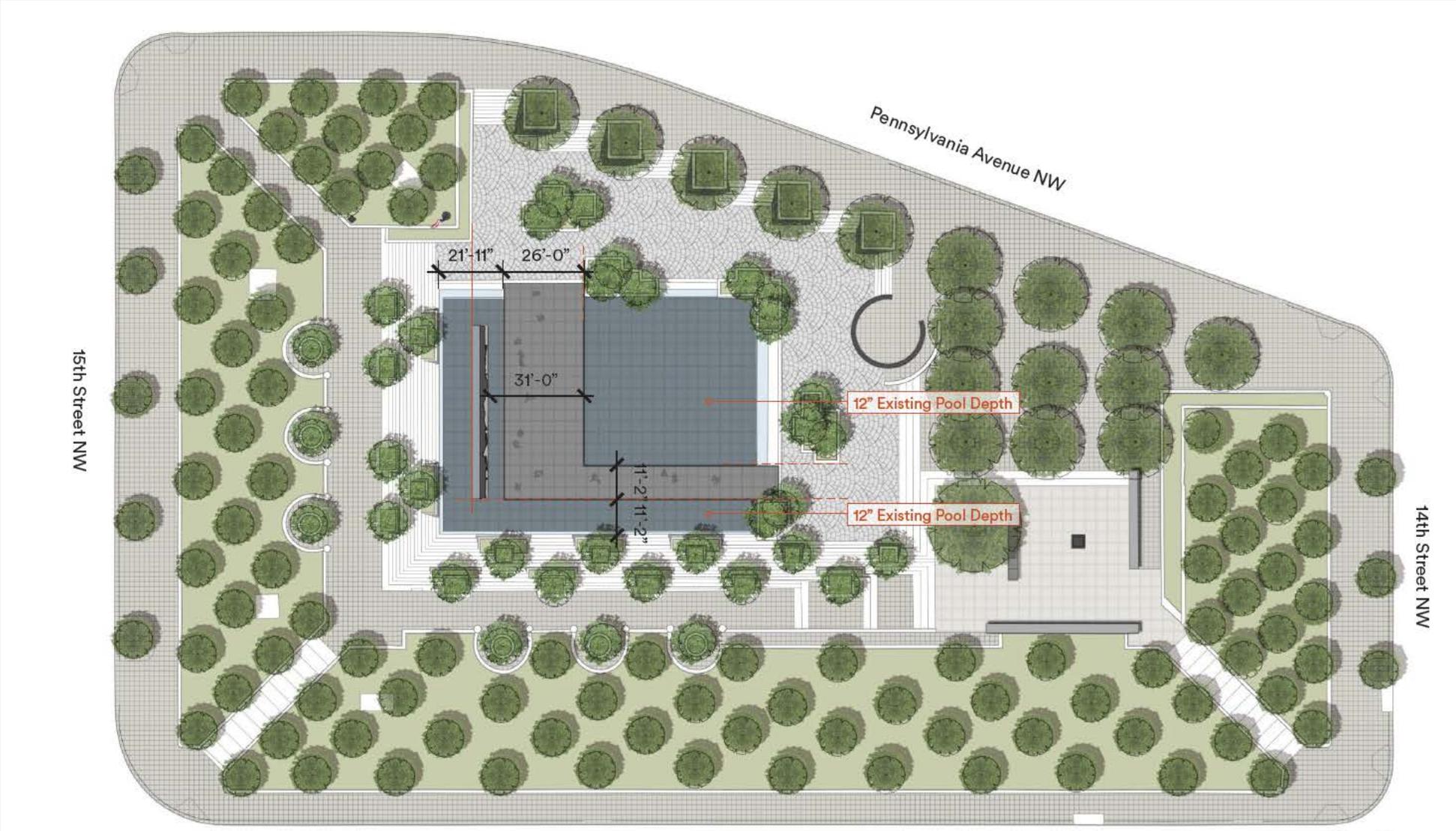
REFINED “L” WALKWAY



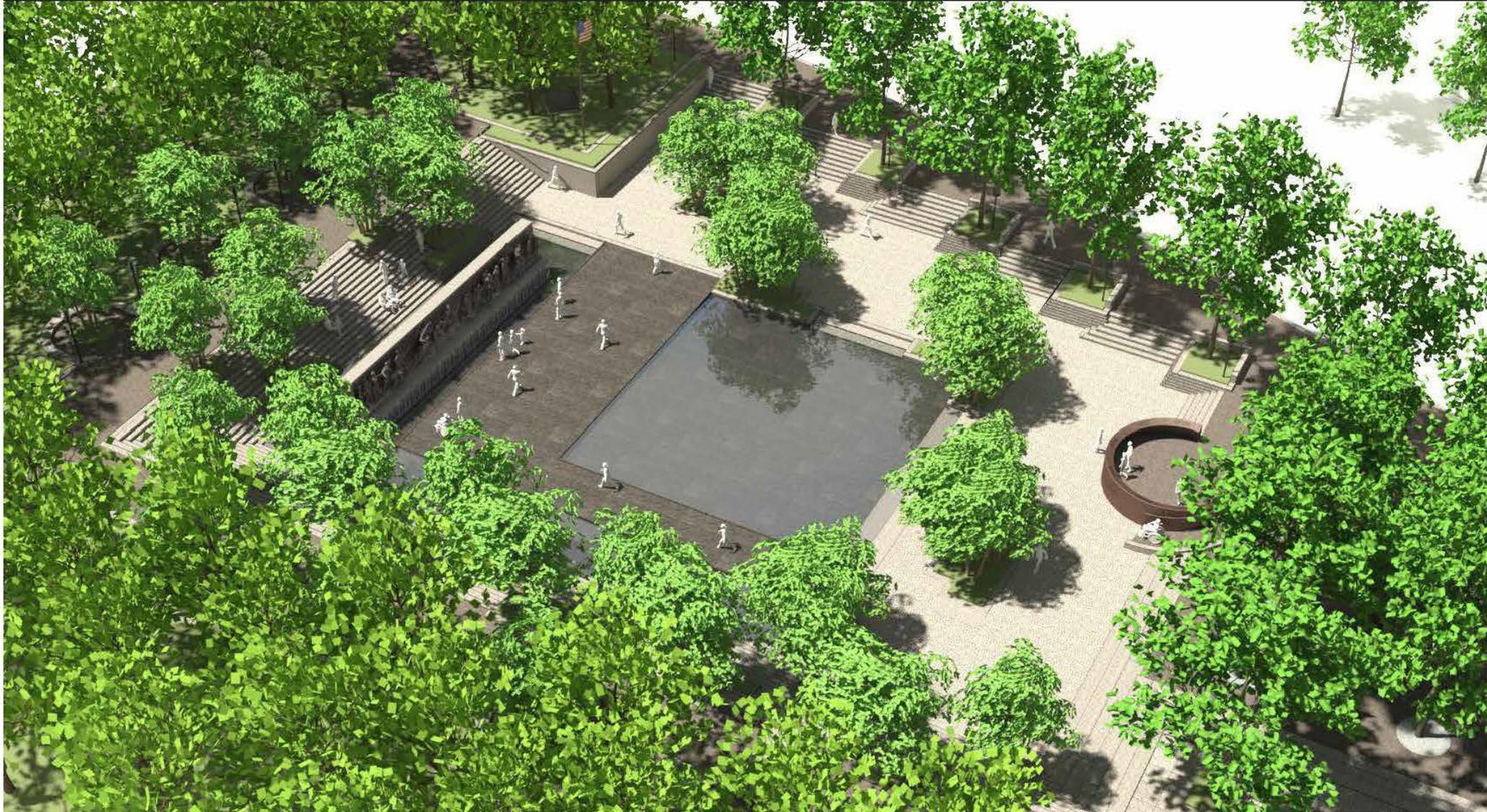
“U” WALKWAY



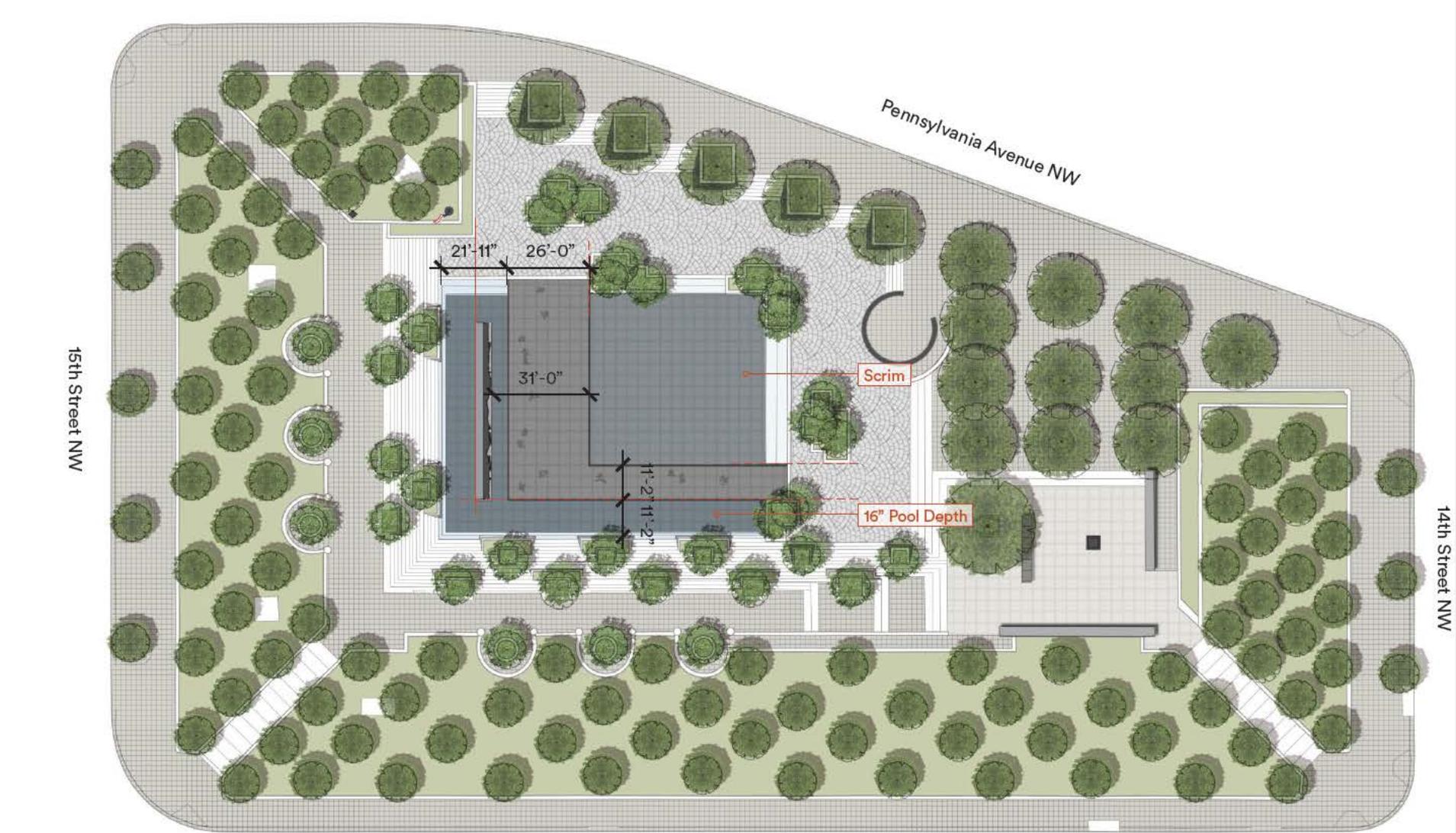
“L” Walkway – 12” pool depth



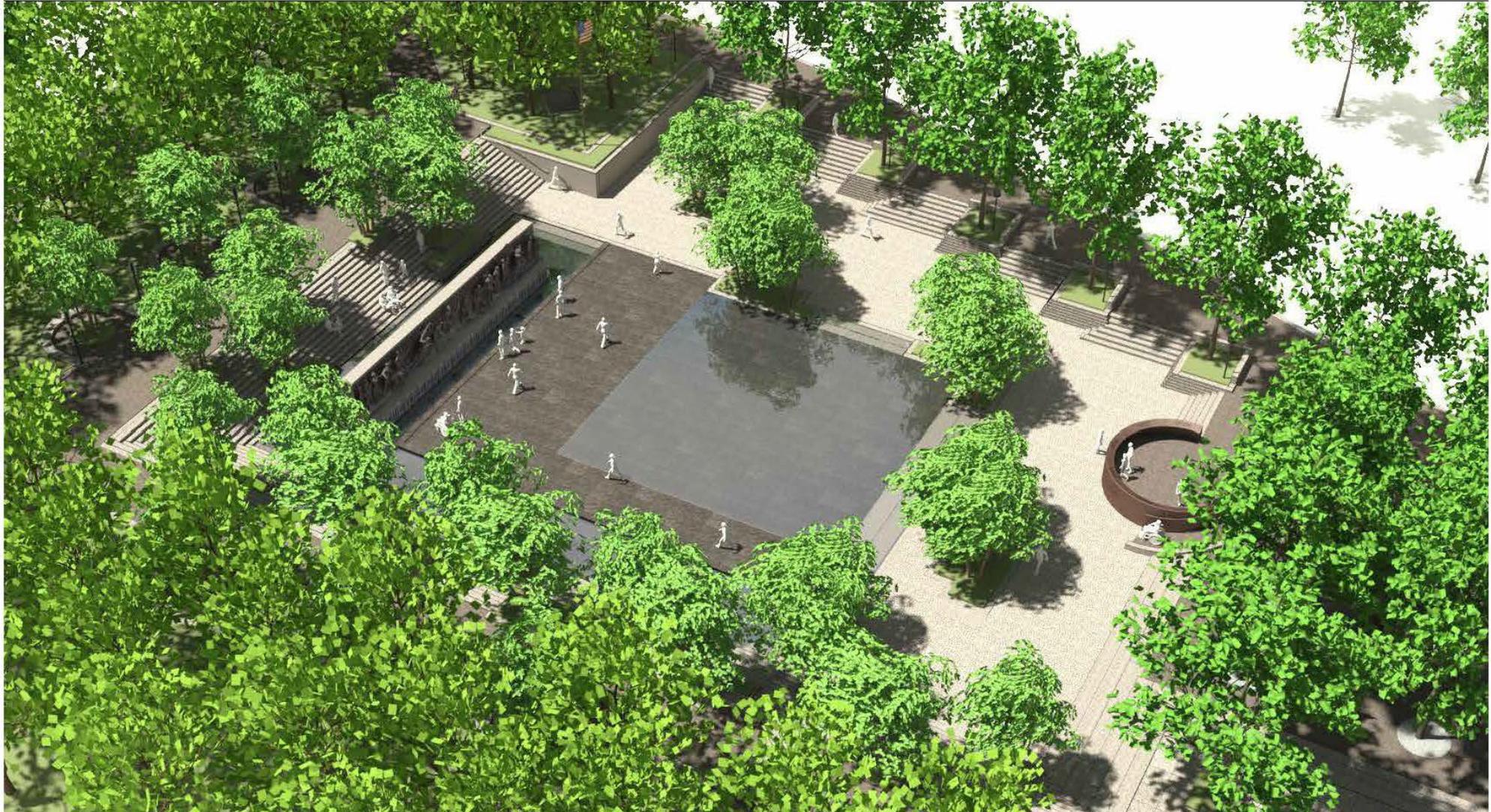
“L” Walkway



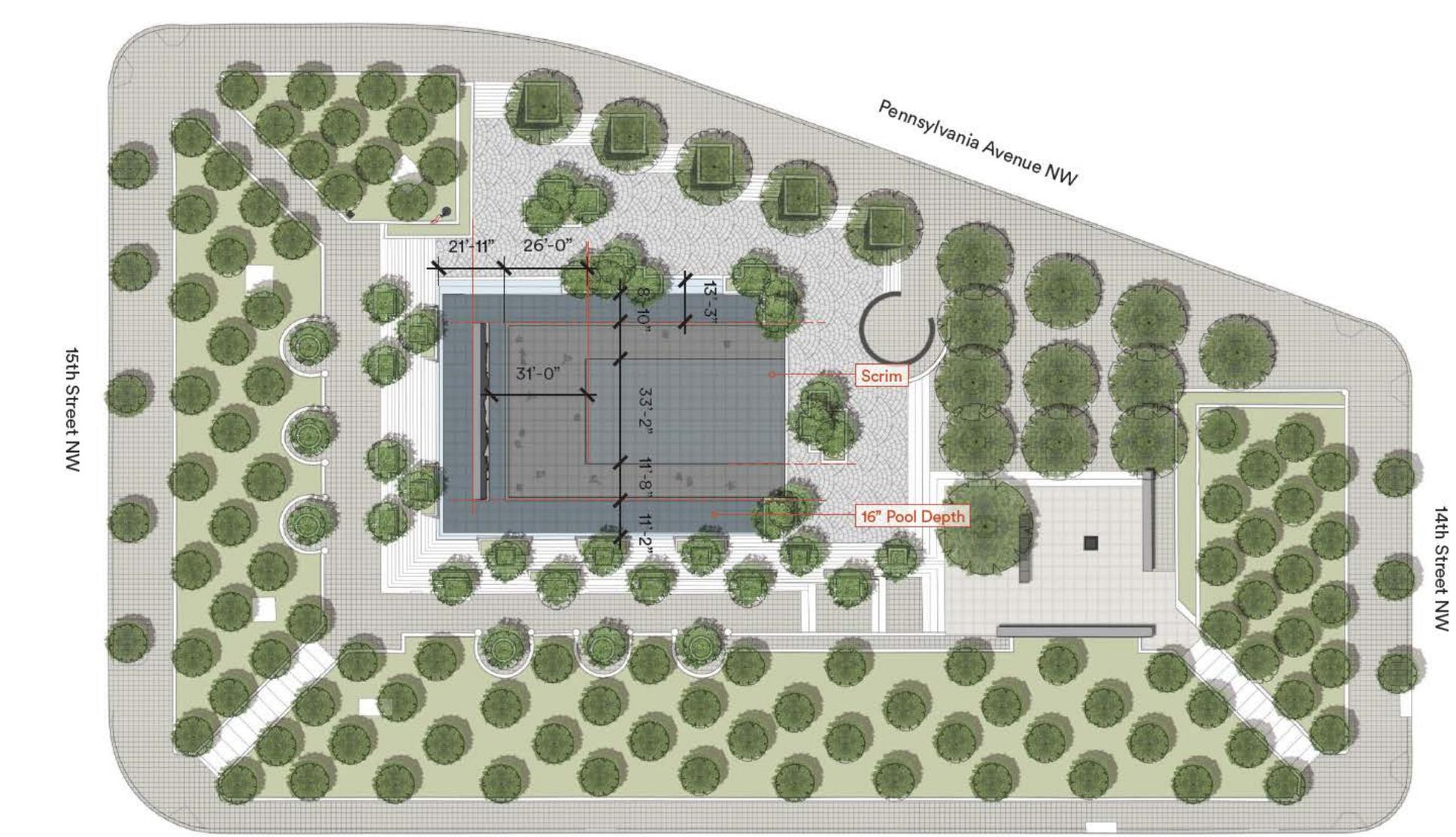
“L” Walkway – with scrim



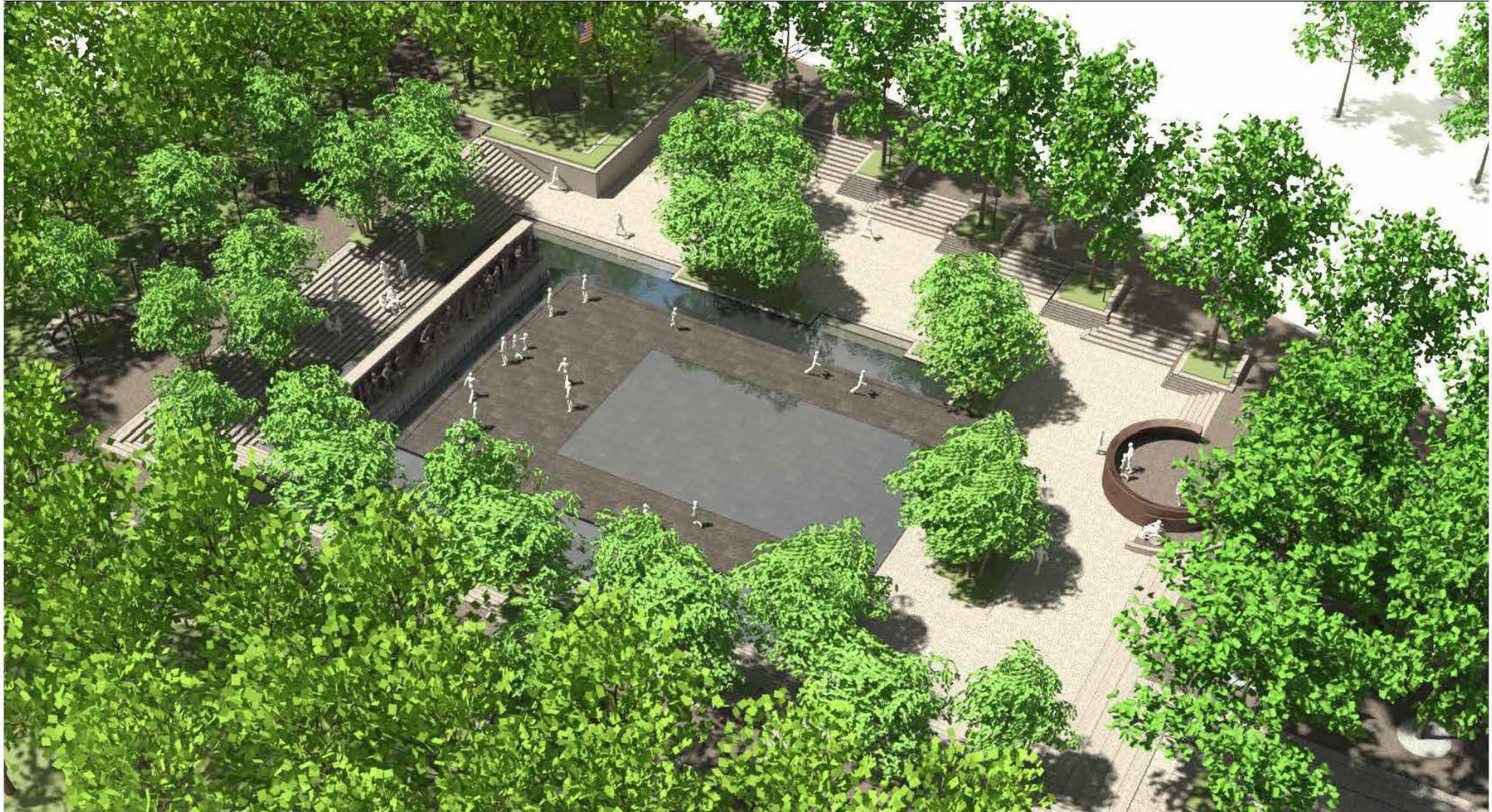
“L” Walkway – with scrim



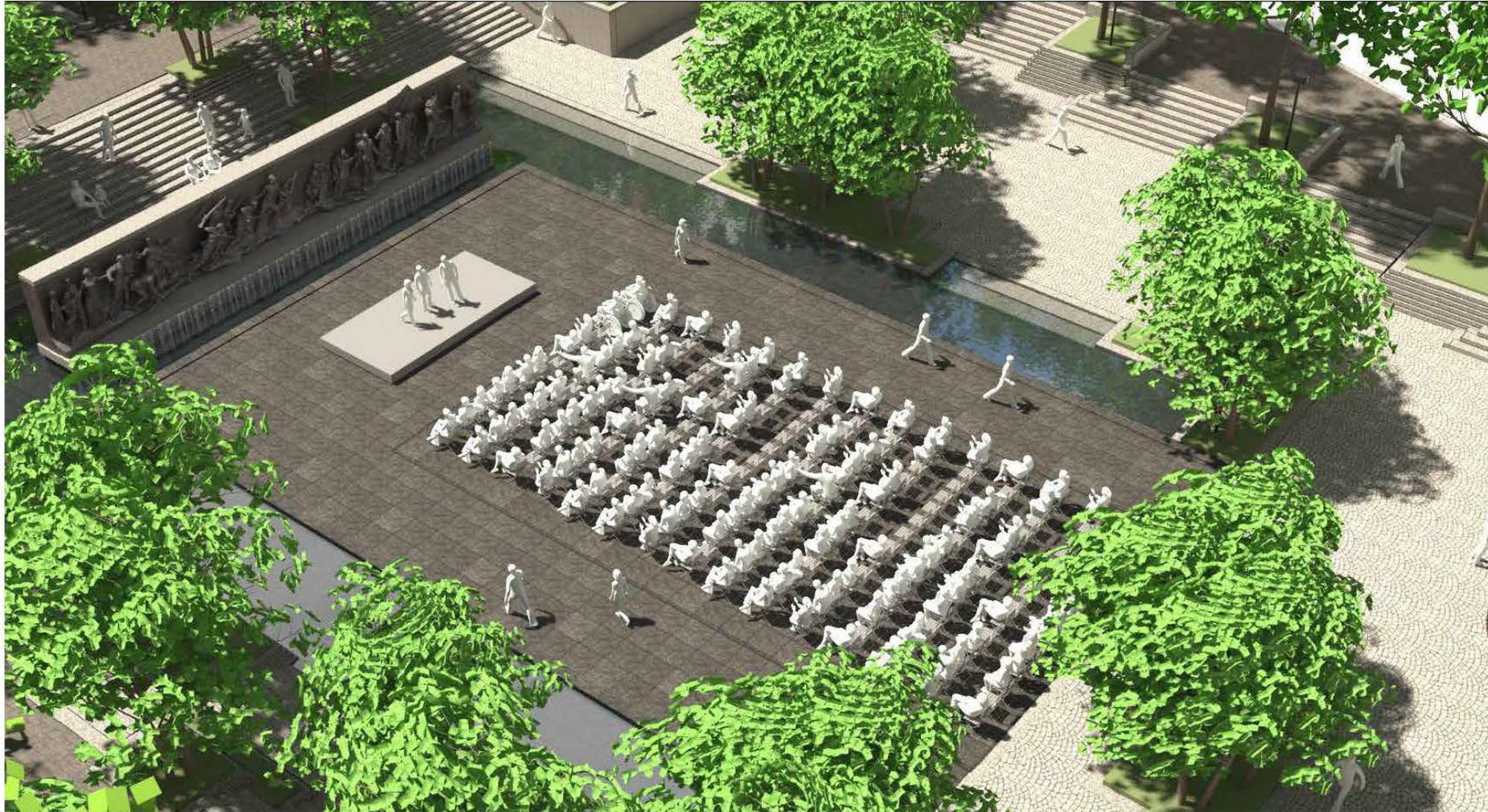
“U” Walkway – with scrim



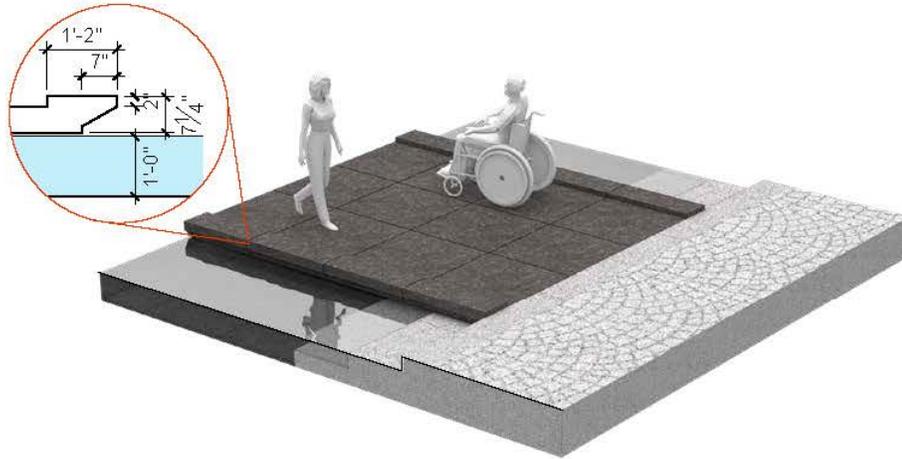
“U” Walkway – with scrim



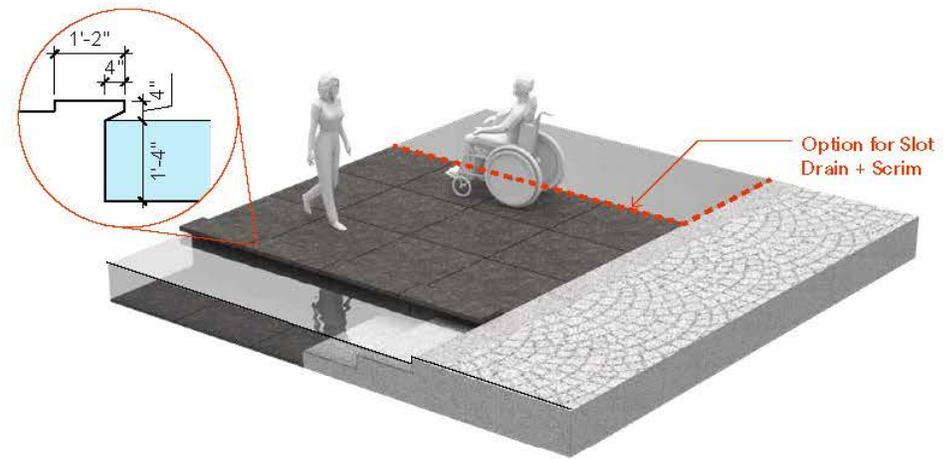
“U” Walkway – scrim not in use



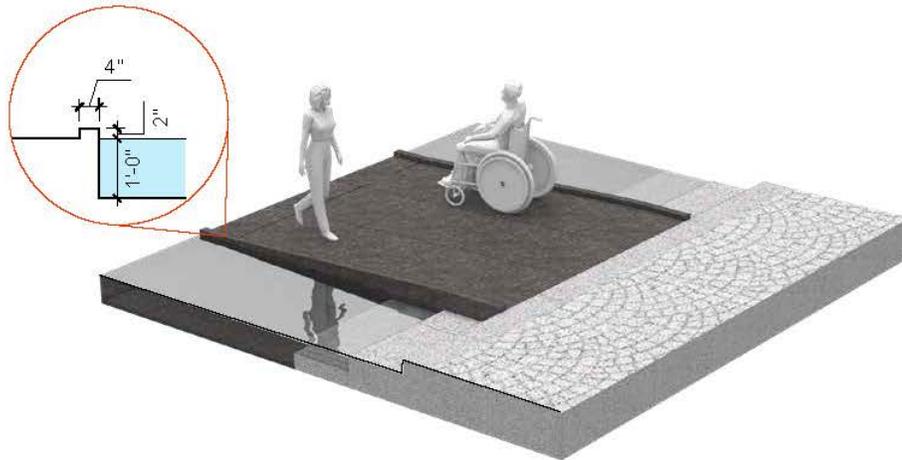
Walkway/Pool Relationship Options



FLUSH WITH PLAZA + ABOVE EXISTING WATER LEVEL



FLUSH WITH PLAZA + ELEVATED WATER LEVEL



SLOPES TO MEET EXISTING WATER LEVEL*

Flagstaff Options



Flagstaff - Kiosk



Flagstaff – North Plaza



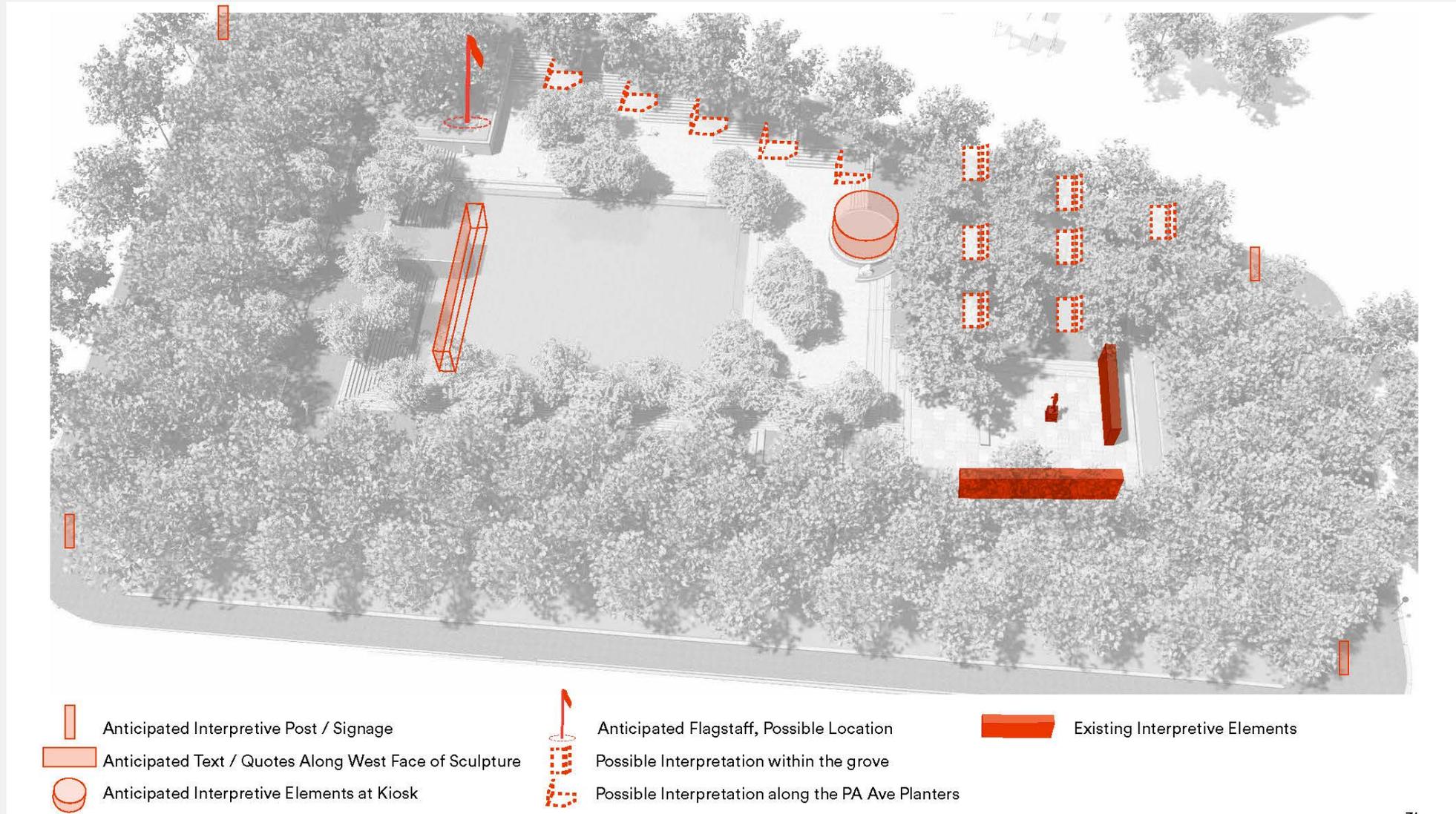
Flagstaff – North Berm



Views to and from South

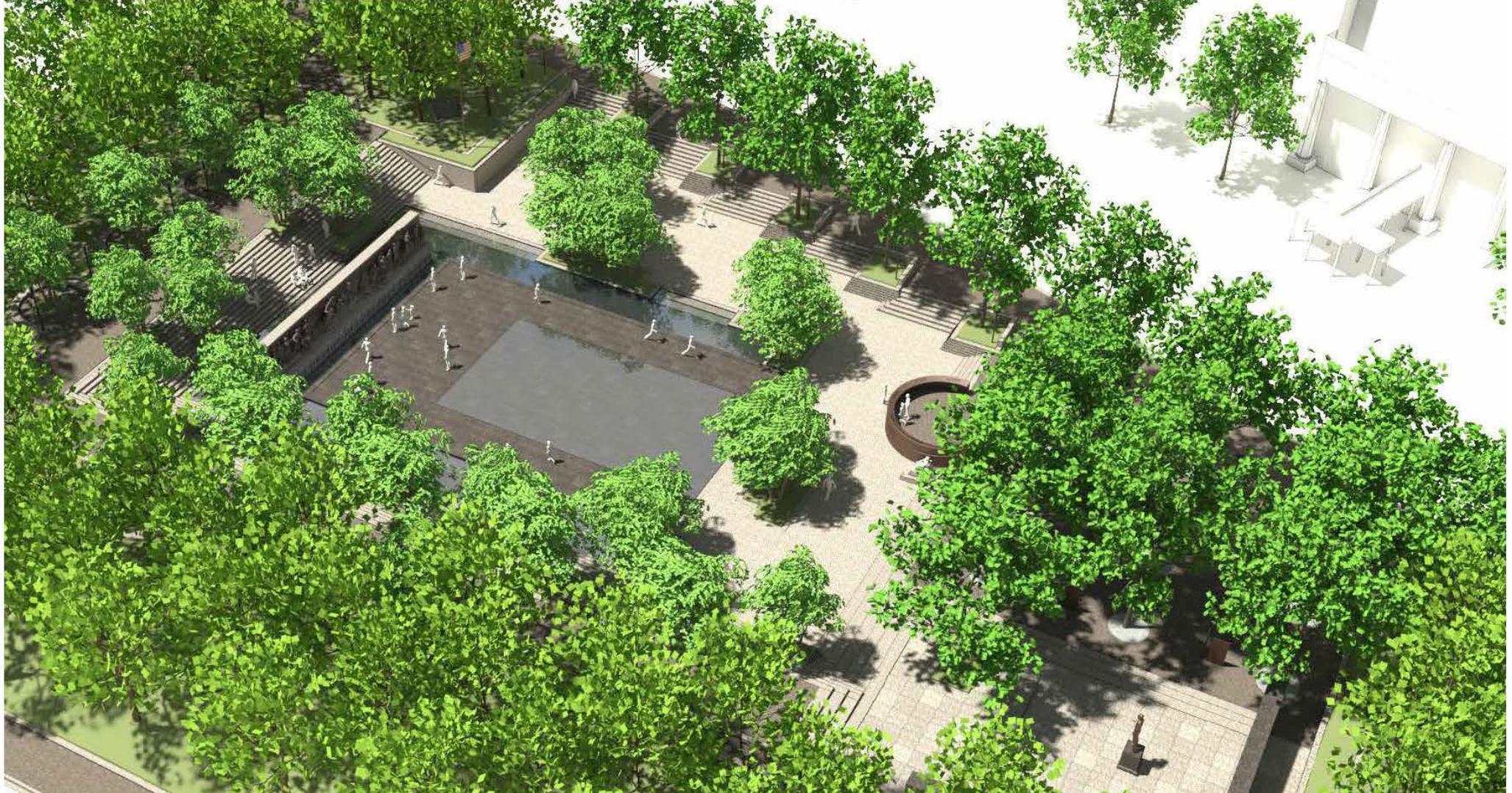


Other Memorial Elements



Applicant Preferred Combination

Freestanding with Cap | Front + Back Cascade | U Walkway | North Berm Flag | Interpretive Overlook | Grove Blades



CFA 19/JUL/18-2

LOCATION:

Pershing Park, Pennsylvania Avenue, between 14th and 15th Streets, NW
Washington, DC

OWNER:

National Park Service (NPS)

PROPERTY:

National World War I Memorial

DESCRIPTION:

New memorial

REVIEW TYPE:

Revised concept

PREVIOUS REVIEW:

CFA 17/MAY/18-3

Letter

27 July 2018

Dear Mr. Vogel:

In its meeting of 19 July, the Commission of Fine Arts reviewed a revised concept design for the National World War I Memorial proposed for Pershing Park, located on Pennsylvania Avenue between 14th and 15th Streets, NW. The Commission thanked the memorial design team for its diligence in developing alternative configurations for the memorial's central features, approving Option A as a development of the concept design approved in May 2017 and providing the following comments for the refinement of the proposal.

In their approval of the revised concept, the Commission members commented that the presentation demonstrated that the new commemorative purpose and the preservation of the historic park are not antithetical goals, and that the insertion of the freestanding sculpture wall at the western end of the central pool would successfully reinterpret the existing landscape. They also endorsed the project team's preferred configuration of creating a large paved area or viewing platform within the historic pool, bordered by a significant perimeter of water. However, they recommended studying the extension of this water along the pool's eastern edge, and they expressed concern about the necessity and appropriateness of the scrim water feature proposed on the platform. To advance the review process, they advised that a series of related details must now be developed—including the edges of the platform, the depth of the surrounding water, the location of walkways to the platform, the presence and character of the scrim, and potential safety features such as handrails.

For the design of the sculpture wall, the Commission members reiterated their prior guidance that the high-relief artwork and the wall should be understood as a single, powerful element rather than a discrete work of bronze sculpture mounted onto and framed by a masonry wall. They emphasized that the refinement of the design details—such as reducing the thick stone frame at the base and eliminating it at the top, wrapping the rough stone finish of the rear onto the sides, and raising the source of the fountain water at the front—will create the most successful and seamlessly integrated design for the sculpture. They cited the dramatic projection of the sculptural figures from their background in Option C, which they suggested could inform the development of the sculpture in Option A to further emphasize the silhouettes of the high-relief figures extending into surrounding space, unconstrained by a frame. They also recommended a strong textural treatment of the sculpture's bronze surface on the extensive areas of empty background between the figures.

Regarding the development of other elements within the park, they expressed support for the proposed location of the flagstaff in the northwestern corner, and they continued to recommend the kiosk site as a strong opportunity for interpretation of the memorial and park as a whole. Noting the number of potential commemorative and interpretive elements within the design, they did not support the introduction of additional elements, such as the presented field of vertical metal panels proposed for the northeastern part of the site.

The Commission of Fine Arts looks forward to continuing its review of this important national memorial to World War I and the enhancement of historic Pershing Park. In order to advance the project through design development toward final approval, the Commission requested that the applicant team present the various components of the memorial design in clusters of related topics, as is typical for other commemorative works of this scale, complexity, and prominence. These components will include such topics as: the refinement of the detailing of the pool and sculpture as described above; inscriptions and interpretive elements; the selection of stone and other materials; landscape plans and specifications; and systems of signage and lighting. Please consult with the Commission staff for guidance on these future submissions for the continued review of the memorial design.

Sincerely,

/s/Thomas E. Luebke, FAIA
Secretary

Robert Vogel, Regional Director
National Park Service, National Capital Region
1100 Ohio Drive, SW
Washington, DC 20242

CFA 17/MAY/18-3

LOCATION:

Pershing Park, Pennsylvania Avenue between 14th and 15th Streets, NW
Washington, DC

OWNER:

National Park Service (NPS)

PROPERTY:

National World War I Memorial

DESCRIPTION:

New memorial

REVIEW TYPE:

Revised concept

PREVIOUS REVIEW:

CFA 15/FEB/18-1

Letter

24 May 2018

Dear Mr. Vogel:

In its meeting of 17 May, the Commission of Fine Arts reviewed a revised concept design for the National World War I Memorial proposed for Pershing Park, located on Pennsylvania Avenue between 14th and 15th Streets, NW. The Commission provided the following comments for the further development of the proposal.

The Commission members expressed their continuing support for a design that balances two works of art—the existing Pershing Park by M. Paul Friedberg and the proposed linear relief sculpture by Sabin Howard—as an appropriate way to commemorate World War I within a monumental and historic context. They identified the central dilemma as how to honor the exemplary design of this romantic, serene landscape centered on a large cascading fountain and a simple pool, while inserting an equally compelling monumental artwork—a heroically scaled “film in bronze” depicting the experience of a soldier through the war—within the park without compromising its essential character. They emphasized that the park as a historic landscape could reasonably accommodate some alteration, but they suggested that the conception of the sculpture appears to be unchangeable due to self-imposed constraints that are inhibiting a satisfactory resolution of the design. They reiterated their concerns raised in past reviews about unresolved issues that remain in the presented alternatives, particularly the scale of the sculpture wall, the wall’s relationship to the water, the change in the auditory and visual experience of the park landscape, and the inadequacy of the proposed treatment of the kiosk site within the overall composition.

Therefore, the Commission members again urged more flexibility and collaboration on the part of the sculptor and landscape architect to integrate the two works of art, involving an earnest reconsideration of the wall, sculpture, and fountain beyond what has been presented. They suggested that reversing the freestanding wall at the west side of the pool—placing the relief sculpture facing the west terraces for convenient viewing, and restoring a cascading fountain facing east—would help to resolve many of the issues, including eliminating the need for walkways through the pool which may eventually require obtrusive and undesirable handrails. This simple reorientation of the sculpture wall would have the welcome effect of using the east side of the wall for the cascade in order to maintain the established character of the park landscape, while creating a focus for commemoration and contemplation on the west. They also suggested other ideas that could help to resolve the design, such as letting the sculpture emerge past the ends of the wall, returning the sculpture around to the other side, or introducing water into the sculpture itself.

The Commission members continued to express dissatisfaction with the suggested treatment of the existing kiosk area, describing the proposal for a grouping of several flagpoles as lacking in monumentality and too weak for the importance of this location in Friedberg’s original design. They suggested developing a solution that could elaborate upon the memorial’s narrative of the sculpture wall, whether artistic or interpretive, which could create a stronger connection to the Pershing Memorial elements and help block noise and views of traffic to the north.

The Commission emphasized its continuing desire to assist in the creative adaptation of Pershing Park into a fitting national memorial to World War I. They encouraged further consultation with staff in the development of a revised design.

Sincerely,

/s/Thomas E. Luebke, FAIA
Secretary

Robert Vogel, Regional Director
National Park Service, National Capital Region
1100 Ohio Drive, SW
Washington, DC 20242

cc: Edwin L. Fountain, U.S. World War I Centennial Commission
David Rubin, Land Collective
Sabin Howard, Sabin Howard Sculpture

CFA 15/FEB/18-1

LOCATION:

Pershing Park, Pennsylvania Avenue between 14th and 15th Streets, NW
Washington, DC

OWNER:

National Park Service (NPS)

PROPERTY:

National World War I Memorial

DESCRIPTION:

New memorial

REVIEW TYPE:

Revised concept

PREVIOUS REVIEW:

CFA 18/MAY/17-2

Letter

23 February 2018

Dear Mr. Vogel:

In its meeting of 15 February, the Commission of Fine Arts reviewed a revised concept design for the National World War I Memorial proposed for Pershing Park, located on Pennsylvania Avenue between 14th and 15th Streets, NW. Expressing appreciation for the presentation of a maquette of the sculpture wall and of two alternatives for its placement within the park, the Commission provided the following comments for the development of the design.

The Commission members cited the inherent tension between conveying the enormity of World War I and maintaining the delicate character and experience of respite intrinsic to Pershing Park, a nationally significant work of landscape design. They said that the fundamental problem is how to insert a new work of art within an existing work of art; they strongly advised that both of these need to be integrated within a single, coherent design that balances many values—artistic, commemorative, historic, urbanistic—to create a compelling experience for all users of this park and to avoid designing the landscape merely to accommodate the new wall of sculpture. They therefore recommended close collaboration between the sculptor and the landscape architect, emphasizing that the success of the design will depend on an understanding of the sculpture and the wall as a unified element within the park, rather than as a long bronze artwork simply attached to a long stone wall.

In their discussion, the Commission members found that the length of the sculpture wall in both alternatives—currently proposed at roughly 65 feet—is unacceptable for its impact on the historic design of Pershing Park, and it must be reduced. They suggested that a length of roughly 50 feet for the commemorative wall would relate to the extent of existing barriers and planters on the east and west sides of the pool; they recommended using these datums to establish the appropriate position and length of the new wall within the historic landscape. While open to the development of either of the alternatives presented, they expressed particular enthusiasm for the opportunities of the freestanding wall in Option A to reduce its perceived heaviness, retain existing terraces, and foster social interaction. In addition, they encouraged the consideration of locating the freestanding sculpture wall elsewhere within the park, such as near the eastern or northern side of the pool.

Regarding the sculpture wall, the Commission members expressed strong support for the narrative of the hero's journey as an abstraction of the American experience in World War I, and for the change in the sculpture from a bas relief to a more in-the-round composition. Given the increased depth of the sculpture, they observed that oblique views along it would be dramatic and recommended that these be accommodated. They also advised that this highly modeled sculptural ensemble—presented as sometimes exceeding three feet in depth, and appearing to hover over the pool—needs to be integrated with the design of the wall supporting it. They noted a redundancy of figures within the sculpture, and they advised eliminating some of these to reduce the length of the wall; they also recommended verifying the historical accuracy of depicting racially integrated fighting units. Finally, they reiterated the opportunity offered by the kiosk site as a place to extend the memorial's narrative established in the sculpture wall instead of serving only as a location for the display of flags.

In addition to the reduction in the length of the sculpture wall, the Commission members made several recommendations for the development of the site design, particularly requesting more clarity in the relationship of the walkways to the stepped edges of the pool and to the sculpture wall. They encouraged refinement of the walkways generally—such as to be clearly above the water or more coplanar with it, anticipating any additional safety features such as railings or curbs, and avoiding the obtrusive, light-colored paving adapted from the Pershing Memorial area of the park. For the design of water elements, they emphasized the importance of the sound of cascading water for the experience of the park, and they recommended careful consideration of the appearance of the fountain walls and the pool during winter months. They cautioned against odd conditions in the pool, such as the notch proposed at the north side of the wall in both alternatives and the potentially narrow, dark strip of water against the western side of the wall in Option A.

The Commission thanks the National World War I Memorial project team for its diligence in refining the design of this important commemorative work within a nationally significant urban landscape. The Commission anticipates reviewing the results of the collaboration between the landscape architect and the sculptor, presented in a single site model at a scale large enough to convey the design relationships between the new sculptural wall and the elements of the existing park's microtopography, such as its ground planes, steps, and walls. For the next submission, please consult with the Commission staff which, as always, is available to assist you.

Sincerely,

9/27/2018

CFA 15/FEB/18-1 | Commission of Fine Arts

/s/Thomas E. Luebke, FAIA
Secretary

Robert Vogel, Regional Director
National Park Service, National Capital Region
1100 Ohio Drive, SW
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cc: Edwin L. Fountain, U.S. World War I Centennial Commission
David Rubin, Land Collective
Sabin Howard, Sabin Howard Sculpture
Joseph Weishaar