

**Note: At the January 9, 2020 meeting, the Commission amended the recommendations proposed in this EDR. The Commission Action reflects the Commission's approved comments on concept plans.**



## **Executive Director's Recommendation**

Commission Meeting: January 9, 2020

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<b>PROJECT</b> <b>National Desert Storm and Desert Shield Memorial</b> National Mall Southwest Corner of 23rd Street and Constitution Avenue, NW Washington, DC	<b>NCPC FILE NUMBER</b> 7745
<b>SUBMITTED BY</b> United States Department of the Interior National Park Service	<b>NCPC MAP FILE NUMBER</b> 1.44(73.10)45053
<b>REVIEW AUTHORITY</b> Commemorative Works per 40 U.S.C. § 8905	<b>APPLICANT'S REQUEST</b> Approval of comments on concept plans
	<b>PROPOSED ACTION</b> Approve comments on concept plans
	<b>ACTION ITEM TYPE</b> Staff Presentation

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### **PROJECT SUMMARY**

The National Park Service (NPS), in collaboration with the National Desert Storm War Memorial Association (the Association), has submitted a conceptual design for the proposed Desert Storm and Desert Shield Memorial for Commission review and comment. The Association is the project sponsor of the memorial. Congress authorized the memorial in Public Law 113-291, which states the Association may establish the National Desert Storm and Desert Shield Memorial as a commemorative work on Federal land in the District of Columbia to commemorate and honor those members of the Armed Forces who served on active duty in support of Operation Desert Storm or Operation Desert Shield.

Through Public Law 115-18, Congress authorized the memorial to be located within Area I as defined by the Commemorative Works Act (CWA). The CWA defines approval requirements related to the location, design, and construction of commemorative works in the District of Columbia and its environs. The National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC) and the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts (CFA) approve the site and design for new commemorative works.

In April 2018, the Commission provided comments on the conceptual design schemes for three sites under consideration and stated its support for the Constitution Avenue site as the preferred location for the proposed memorial. The Commission requested the applicant continue to develop the conceptual design scheme for this site to include a landscape-orientated approach that minimizes vertical elements and explores alternative commemorative strategies. As such, the Association and NPS have developed a refined design concept for the Constitution Avenue site in response to the comments provided by NCPC and CFA.

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## KEY INFORMATION

- Operations Desert Storm and Desert Shield resulted from the 1990 invasion of Kuwait by Iraq. An international coalition was assembled to liberate the country and prevent further conflict.
- 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 U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI) and the US General Services Administration (GSA).
- In addition to the CWA site location criteria, the sponsor, in coordination with NPS, has developed more refined site location criteria for the project.
- In general, in accordance with the CWA, the key benchmarks for authorizing a new commemorative work are summarized below:
  - (1) Congress authorizes the purpose (subject) of each new commemorative work and a commemorative work sponsor by separate federal law.
    - Public Law 113-291 states the Association may establish the National Desert Storm and Desert Shield Memorial as a commemorative work, on Federal land in the District of Columbia to commemorate and honor those who, as a member of the Armed Forces, served on active duty in support of Operation Desert Storm or Operation Desert Shield.
    - Public Law 115-18 authorizes the memorial to be located within Area I as defined by the CWA
  - (2) The sponsor consults with the National Capital Memorial Advisory Commission (NCMAC) on alternative sites and design concepts.
    - NPS, in collaboration with the Association, submitted two potential memorial sites for consideration, including the Memorial Circle area and the Constitution Avenue terminus near 23rd Street, NW in Washington, DC.
    - NCMAC commented favorably on advancing both sites for further evaluation at its May 16, 2017 meeting.
  - (3) NCPC, CFA, and the DOI must each approve the site and design for new commemorative works.
    - The site selection analysis of potential memorial locations is an early step towards these approvals.

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- NCPC reviewed the Constitution Avenue and Memorial Circle sites on July 13, 2017 and provided comments to NPS and the applicant.
  - NCPC reviewed preliminary conceptual design concepts for the Walt Whitman Park, Constitution Avenue and Belvedere sites at its April 5, 2018 meeting and supported the Constitution Avenue site as the preferred site. The Commission requested the applicant further develop the design concept for this site.
  - CFA originally endorsed the Belvedere site for the proposed memorial at its March 15, 2018 meeting. Subsequently, CFA reconsidered the site selection for the proposed memorial and supported the Constitution Avenue site at its June 21, 2018 meeting, noting the distinct benefits of this site include its ease of accessibility and proximity to other attractions and commemorative works on the National Mall.
  - CFA initially reviewed the conceptual design for the memorial at its meeting on November 15, 2018 and endorsed the general design concept with comments at its November 21, 2019 meeting, noting significant conceptual issues that remain to be resolved and additional details needed to explore regarding the commemorative elements of the memorial.
- (4) NCPC, CFA and DOI must approve and permit the final site and design for each new memorial, after the steps above are completed. NPS is generally responsible for the long-term maintenance and interpretation of commemorative works.

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## RECOMMENDATION

The Commission:

**Supports** the conceptual design scheme at the Constitution Avenue site and commends the landscape-oriented approach that minimizes the use of vertical elements and respects its open setting and views to the Lincoln Memorial and National Mall.

**Finds** the memorial's proposed themes ("storm", "pivot", and "coalition") effectively commemorate Operation Desert Storm and Desert Shield and create a strong thematic framework for the design of the memorial.

**Finds** the size and location of the memorial preserve adequate open space for recreational use and/or future commemorative works on the remainder of the site while also fostering a contemplative gathering space buffered from adjacent activities.

**Finds** the proposed siting and design of the memorial create an opportunity to envision greater changes to the roadway infrastructure which dominates the adjacent land to the west.

Regarding commemorative elements:

*Layout and Circulation*

**Notes** that visitors could access the memorial from 23<sup>rd</sup> Street, NW or Constitution Avenue and finds that visitors will primarily enter the memorial from the 23<sup>rd</sup> Street, NW access point.

**Finds** the entrance to the memorial from 23<sup>rd</sup> Street, NW is significant to experiencing the commemorative elements as intended.

**Recommends** the applicant explore visual cues to direct east-bound pedestrians on Constitution Avenue NW and south-bound pedestrians on 23<sup>rd</sup> Street, NW (from Metro) to enter the site from the 23<sup>rd</sup> Street, NW access point.

**Supports** the use of green space and a water feature within the memorial to evoke a desert oasis, recalling this as a unique characteristic of the desert landscape.

*Berms*

**Finds** the berms effectively suggest the dune forms in the desert landscape of Kuwait.

**Finds** the asymmetrical placement and height of the berms provide adequate enclosure for the memorial, buffer noise from traffic and adjacent activities, and enable views to the Lincoln Memorial and National Mall while minimizing visibility to the memorial from these sites.

*Central Element*

**Finds** the coalition theme is successfully expressed through the circular form of the central element and the recognition of the multiple nations involved in the War around the circumference.

**Requests** the applicant provide alternatives for the surface treatment of the central element as seen when the water feature is turned off, noting that the treatment should contribute to the overall narrative.

*Sculptural Walls*

**Finds** the height, scale, and placement of the commemorative sculptural walls respect surrounding views, and address visibility and security issues.

**Recommends** the applicant study the angle of the walls to deter unwanted activities such as climbing or skateboarding, and to also optimize readability of the information on the walls.

**Recommends** the proposed cast sculpture of the falcon and eagle symbolizing liberation and leadership relate to the imagery proposed on the “storm” wall.

**Finds** the proposed quotations support the “storm” and “pivot” themes; however, the overall physical expression of the commemorative themes can be strengthened through further design of the stone carvings and bas-relief imagery.

#### *Statues*

**Finds** the scale, orientation and placement of the statues appearing above the berm creates an unwelcoming approach from the corner of 23<sup>rd</sup> Street, NW and Constitution Avenue.

**Notes** the literal depiction of the service members conflicts with the abstract design of the landscape-oriented memorial.

**Requests** the applicant consider alternatives to the statues that express the “pivot” theme and complement the landscape character of the memorial in the next submission.

#### Regarding infrastructure and existing resources:

##### *Potomac Park Levee and Clean Rivers Project*

**Notes** the siting and design of the proposed memorial are intended to have minimal impacts on these future infrastructure projects.

##### *Existing Vegetation*

**Notes** the applicant has made a conscious effort to minimize tree loss and proposes new trees to maintain the allee of trees on 23<sup>rd</sup> Street, NW and Constitution Avenue and maintain consistency with the Lincoln Memorial Cultural Landscape.

**Recommends** the applicant consult with a certified arborist to evaluate impacts to existing trees based on the proposed grading and conceptual design and to ensure proper tree protection measures are in place.

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## PROJECT REVIEW TIMELINE

<b>Previous actions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- July 2017 – Comments on Site Selection</li><li>- December 2017 – Comments on Site Selection</li><li>- April 2018 – Comments on Site Selection</li></ul>
<b>Remaining actions</b> (anticipated)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Approval of preliminary memorial and site development plans</li><li>– Approval of final memorial and site development plans</li></ul>

## PROJECT ANALYSIS

### Executive Summary

NPS, in collaboration with the National Desert Storm War Memorial Association, has submitted a refined memorial design concept for the preferred site at Constitution Avenue and 23<sup>rd</sup> Street, NW. The applicant studied alternatives and developed a design concept for the site in response to the Commission's comments and in coordination with CFA and the DC State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). The proposed concept successfully incorporates landscape features such as low walls and berms strategically placed to enclose the memorial and preserve views to the Lincoln Memorial and National Mall. As such, staff recommends the Commission **supports the conceptual design scheme at the Constitution Avenue site and commends the landscape-oriented approach that minimizes the use of vertical elements and respects its open setting and views to the Lincoln Memorial and National Mall.**

The applicant proposes three commemorative themes that represent significant aspects of Operation Desert Storm and Desert Shield: 1) the "storm" to commemorate the international service and sacrifice, 2) the "pivot" to recognize the restored faith in the U.S. military as a result of their efforts and success, and 3) the "coalition" of multiple nations that came together during the conflict. Staff recommends the Commission **finds the memorial's proposed themes ("storm", "pivot", and "coalition") effectively commemorate Operation Desert Storm and Desert Shield and create a strong thematic framework for the design of the memorial.**

The primary elements that express the commemorative themes include two sculptural landscape walls, realistic statues of three service members, and a central water feature. Staff notes that although the physical expression of the commemorative themes can be strengthened through further design development, the proposed conceptual design of the memorial at the preferred site and the narrative of commemorative themes are successful.

### Analysis

Operation Desert Storm and Desert Shield represented a coalition of 34 countries, an unparalleled international effort led by American Armed Forces to liberate Kuwait. Almost 700,000 American

service members participated, and ultimately several hundred members gave their lives in protection of their country. The operations were an unqualified combat success that restored faith in the prowess of the US military. As such, the event holds a unique place in history by helping close the wounds of the Vietnam War, including the treatment of returning service members, and offering the respect given now to veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan.

Staff analyzed this project using guidance in the Commemorative Works Act (CWA), the Comprehensive Plan, and the applicant's site selection criteria and program needs. A general principle set forth in the Comprehensive Plan is to protect and improve the open space 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.

As a reminder, the CWA (40 U.S.C. 8905) includes decision criteria for site and design approval:

- Surroundings – to the maximum extent possible, a commemorative work shall be located in surroundings that are relevant to the subject of the work.
- Location – a commemorative work shall be located so that it does not interfere with or encroach on, an existing commemorative work, and to the maximum extent practicable, it protects open space, existing public use, and cultural and natural resources.

The Constitution Avenue location serves as a gateway to the Monumental Core. It is anticipated that the proposed Desert Storm Desert Shield Memorial on this site may be a catalyst for future memorials along the Constitution Avenue corridor west of 23<sup>rd</sup> Street, NW. This approach is consistent with the vision to restore the original Constitution Avenue alignment that terminated at the Belvedere overlooking the Potomac River. As such, staff recommends the Commission **finds the proposed siting and design of the memorial create an opportunity to envision greater changes to the roadway infrastructure which dominates the adjacent land to the west.**

The proposed memorial is sited nearest to the intersection of 23<sup>rd</sup> Street, NW and Constitution Avenue. The memorial is primarily circular in form and has a generally compact footprint measuring approximately one-half of an acre, leaving more than three acres of the existing lawn area intact. The commemorative space is adequately setback from the adjacent streets and buffered by the existing vegetation and proposed berm formations that enclose the memorial. For these reasons, staff suggests the Commission **finds the size and location of the memorial preserve adequate open space for recreational use and/or future commemorative works on the remainder of the site while also fostering a contemplative gathering space buffered from adjacent activities.**

### Commemorative Elements

The three commemorative themes for the proposed memorial are expressed using landscape walls, statues, and a central water feature. In addition to these commemorative themes, the overall design of the proposed memorial is inspired by several other characteristics of the War including the unique environmental and battle conditions of Kuwait, such as the dune formations

and oasis landscapes found in the desert. The commemorative elements and design inspiration are discussed further in the following comments.

### *Circulation and Layout*

The design concept proposes two pedestrian access points, one on 23<sup>rd</sup> Street, NW and another on Constitution Avenue. The primary entrance point to the memorial is considered the access point on 23<sup>rd</sup> Street, NW due to the high volume of existing foot traffic on the National Mall. As such, staff suggests the Commission **notes that visitors could access the memorial from 23<sup>rd</sup> Street, NW or Constitution Avenue and finds that visitors will primarily enter the memorial from the 23<sup>rd</sup> Street, NW access point.** The applicant proposes circulation to flow from the primary entrance point in a clockwise direction through the memorial and ascend to a high point located at the center of the space. The ascension into the site is intended to symbolize the rising view of the U.S. military as a result of their success in the War. Therefore, staff recommends the Commission **finds the entrance to the memorial from 23<sup>rd</sup> Street, NW is significant to experiencing the commemorative elements as intended.**

While the access point on Constitution Avenue is considered secondary, the memorial itself is anticipated to increase foot traffic on Constitution Avenue west of 23<sup>rd</sup> Street, NW. Therefore, use of this secondary access point is likely to increase overtime. Since the memorial is designed for visitors to circulate in a clockwise ascension from the primary access point on 23<sup>rd</sup> Street, NW, staff suggests the Commission **recommends the applicant explore visual cues to direct east-bound pedestrians on Constitution Avenue, NW and south-bound pedestrians on 23<sup>rd</sup> Street, NW (from Metro) to enter the site from the 23<sup>rd</sup> Street, NW access point.**

Both access points lead to sweeping pathways configured around a central feature meant to express the “left-hook” strategy used by the U.S.-led armed forces to invade lower Iraq and Kuwait. The sweeping pathways converge at the center of the proposed memorial around a central commemorative water feature surrounded partially by plant beds. Together, the plant beds and water feature are intended to evoke a desert oasis. Staff suggests the Commission **supports the use of green space and a water feature within the memorial to evoke a desert oasis, recalling this as a unique characteristic of the desert landscape.**

### *Berms*

The proposed memorial is enclosed by two asymmetrical berms offset to the northeast and southwest. In addition to providing a means of enclosure and buffering noise from surrounding uses, the design of the berms is inspired by the dune formations of the desert landscape. It is proposed that the berms will be planted with low-growing vegetation to optimize the views around the memorial and recall a dune-like appearance. For this reason, staff recommends the Commission **finds the berms effectively suggest the dune forms in the desert landscape of Kuwait.**

The applicant prepared photorealistic renderings within and around the perimeter of the proposed memorial that illustrate eye-level views from the memorial to the Lincoln Memorial and

National Mall remain unobstructed by the berms or other design elements. Site photos from critical vantage points, such as the Lincoln Memorial, toward the proposed memorial show little to no visibility of the memorial elements given their low form and landscape-oriented approach. Therefore, staff recommends the Commission **finds the asymmetrical placement and height of the berms provide adequate enclosure for the memorial, buffer noise from surrounding activities, and enable views to the Lincoln Memorial and National Mall while minimizing visibility to the memorial from these sites.**

#### *Central Element*

A water feature commemorating the coalition of nations and their diplomacy is placed in the center of the proposed memorial. This commemorative element is designed as a low, circular table with water flowing in the center. A thick band around the circumference of the table displays the names and national flags of the 34 countries that participated in the coalition. As such, staff recommends the Commission **finds the coalition theme is successfully expressed through the circular form of the central element and the recognition of the multiple nations involved in the War around the circumference.**

The water feature will provide a cooling experience in the warmer months, muffle noise from surrounding activities, and foster reflection. In the winter months when the fountain is not in use, this central element is intended to be an interpretive feature. The current conceptual design of the feature shows a patterned concrete surface that will be revealed when the water is turned off. Staff notes this surface is an opportunity to reinforce the memorial's overall narrative and commemorative themes. As such, staff recommends the Commission **requests the applicant provide alternatives for the surface treatment of the central element as seen when the water feature is turned off, noting that the treatment should contribute to the overall commemorative narrative.**

#### *Sculptural Walls*

The applicant proposes two asymmetrical, sculptural stone walls that retain the dune-like berms and provide a means to express the commemorative themes of "storm" and "pivot." The walls vary in height and length with the high points strategically placed to allow open views toward the Lincoln Memorial and National Mall. The highest point on both walls is six- and one-half feet and offset from the center. The height then tapers to the ground at either end with most of the wall heights measuring less than four feet. For these reasons, staff recommends the Commission **finds the height, scale, and placement of the commemorative sculptural walls respect surrounding views and address visibility and security issues.** The walls are also designed to batter, or angle, away from the adjacent walking surface. This angle will promote visibility of the wall facades, which will be designed with inscribed quotes, textures and bas-relief imagery that commemorates the "storm" and "pivot" themes. Therefore, staff suggests the Commission **recommends the applicant study the angle of the walls to deter unwanted activities such as climbing or skateboarding, and to also optimize readability of the information on the walls.**

The proposed sculptural walls are a primary commemorative element of the memorial's conceptual design. They serve as the medium to honor significant themes of the memorial's commemorative narrative. A description of each wall is provided:

- The “storm” wall: This wall is composed of bas-relief or carved vignettes, framed by inscribed quotations and a dune-like surface texture. The proposed quotes will relate to the operations of the War and the international efforts involved. The vignettes are intended to illustrate the turbulence of war with references to the mass of personnel involved and/or sandstorms. A cast sculpture of a falcon and an eagle is proposed on the wall, representing liberation and leadership. The cast sculptures are shown flying above the top edge of the wall in an ascending manner away from the vignettes. As such, the sculptures' proximity to the vignettes suggests an opportunity for the two commemorative elements to be integrated; therefore, staff suggests the **Commission recommends the proposed cast sculpture of the falcon and eagle symbolizing liberation and leadership relate to the imagery proposed on the “storm” wall.**
- The “pivot” wall: This wall includes an inscribed quote related to the restored faith in the prowess of the U.S. military as a result of the War. The remainder of the wall is proposed to receive a dune-like surface texture.

Given the significant role the walls have in expressing two of the memorial's primary commemorative themes, staff recommends the Commission **finds the proposed quotations support the “storm” and “pivot” themes; however, the overall physical expression of the commemorative themes can be strengthened through further design of the stone carvings and bas-relief imagery.**

### *Statues*

The applicant proposes three freestanding, realistic statues of U.S. military service members located in front of the “pivot” wall. The statues are intended to also commemorate the “pivot” theme and the return of service members after the War. The statues feature a woman and two men dressed in military attire with the intention of representing the U.S. Army, Air Force, and Navy. The figures are shown walking away from the “pivot” wall, with one figure turning to the side with a “thumbs-up” gesture.

A photorealistic eye-level rendering prepared by the applicant illustrates the top of the figures appearing above the northeast berm when viewed from the corner of 23<sup>rd</sup> Street, NW and Constitution Avenue toward the south and east. Therefore, staff recommends the Commission **finds the scale, orientation and placement of the statues appearing above the berm creates an unwelcoming approach from the corner of 23<sup>rd</sup> Street, NW and Constitution Avenue.** Further, since the design inspiration and commemorative themes of the memorial are primarily expressed through landscape elements, staff recommends that the Commission **notes the literal depiction of the service members conflicts with the abstract design of the landscape-oriented memorial.** For the reasons noted above, staff recommends the Commission **requests the**

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**applicant consider alternatives to the statues that express the “pivot” theme and complement the landscape character of the memorial in the next submission.**

Impacts to Infrastructure and Existing Resources

*Potomac Park Levee and Clean Rivers Project*

As discussed during a previous review, two possible infrastructure projects have potential to affect the Constitution Avenue site. DC Water, as part of its Clean Rivers Project, is currently working with NPS on the potential alignment of the Potomac River Tunnel and the Army Corps of Engineers is currently evaluating the site for the Potomac Park Levee.

The memorial's compact footprint and siting nearest to the northeast corner of the site maximize the remaining amount of space that may be used to install the necessary underground infrastructure work associated with the Clean Rivers Project. To address the Potomac Park Levee improvements, the applicant has designed the berm to the southwest of the proposed memorial to incorporate the Washington, D.C., and Vicinity Flood Risk Management Protection improvements. Therefore, staff recommends the Commission **notes the siting and design of the proposed memorial are intended to have minimal impacts on these future infrastructure projects.**

*Existing Vegetation*

An allee of existing trees on 23<sup>rd</sup> Street, NW and Constitution Avenue frame the north and east sides of the proposed memorial. The applicant inventoried the health of the existing trees which indicates they range from poor to good condition. The proximity of the memorial to the existing trees is anticipated to promote their preservation; however, some tree loss is anticipated. In addition to replacing the trees that are lost, the applicant proposes new trees within and around the proposed memorial in addition to new trees adjacent to the Lincoln Memorial Circle consistent with the Lincoln Memorial Cultural Landscape. Overall, the concept plan proposes a net increase of 16 trees on or near the memorial site. As such, staff recommends the Commission **notes the applicant has made a conscious effort to minimize tree loss and proposes new trees to maintain the allee of trees on 23<sup>rd</sup> Street, NW and Constitution Avenue and maintain consistency with the Lincoln Memorial Cultural Landscape.** Further, staff suggests the Commission **recommends the applicant consult with a certified arborist to evaluate impacts to existing trees due to the proposed grading and conceptual design elements and to ensure proper tree protection measures are in place.**

**CONFORMANCE TO EXISTING PLANS, POLICIES AND RELATED GUIDANCE**

**Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital**

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

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### **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. The sites currently under consideration are identified as sites for memorials within the 2M Plan.

### **National Historic Preservation Act**

NCPC and NPS each have an independent responsibility to comply with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA). NCPC will complete the requirements of Section 106 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 memorial. NPS will prepare 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 will provide comments during the scoping period. A number of topics will be evaluated during the NEPA process, including urban design and visitor experience, historic and cultural resources, transportation systems and sustainability.

## **CONSULTATION**

### **Coordinating Committee**

The Coordinating Committee reviewed the proposal at its December 18, 2019 meeting. The Committee forwarded the proposed comments on site selection to the Commission with the

statement that the proposal has been coordinated with all participating agencies. The District Department of Energy and Environment (DOEE) noted that it was not coordinating and recommended that the applicant reach out to DOEE to determine its local regulatory obligations, as the area of land disturbance may trigger stormwater requirements. The District of Columbia State Historic Preservation Office (DC SHPO) noted that their coordination is conditioned upon satisfactory completion of the Section 106 review process. The participating agencies were: NCPC; NPS; the District Office of Planning; the District Department of Energy and Environment; the DC SHPO; and the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority.

### **U.S. Commission of Fine Arts**

The U.S. Commission of Fine Arts (CFA) initially reviewed the conceptual design for the memorial at its meeting on November 15, 2018 and endorsed the general design concept with comments at its November 21, 2019 meeting. They commended the applicant for the memorial's overall configuration and the general direction of the symbolic, artistic, and narrative elements of the design. They further noted significant conceptual issues that remain to be resolved and additional details are needed to explore regarding the commemorative elements of the memorial.

### **National Capital Memorial Advisory Commission**

Section 8905(a)(1) of the Commemorative Works Act requires memorial sponsors to consult with the National Capital Memorial Advisory Committee (NCMAC) on the selection of alternative sites and design concepts prior to submitting the project to NCPC for formal review. NCMAC reviewed the site selection analysis on January 28, 2016 and May 16, 2017. Initial site selection included 18 sites, with the two finalist sites were advanced with NCMAC support. NCMAC has not reviewed the revised site selection. However, the proposed memorial design on the selected site will be submitted to NCMAC for review prior to final approval by NCPC.

### **ONLINE REFERENCE**

The following supporting documents for this project are available online at [www.ncpc.gov](http://www.ncpc.gov):

- Submission Package
- Project Synopsis
- CFA Letter November 27, 2019

Prepared by Stephanie Free  
12/17/2019

### **POWERPOINT (ATTACHED)**

# National Desert Storm and Desert Shield Memorial

Southwest Corner of 23rd Street and Constitution Avenue, NW, Washington DC

Approval of Comments on Concept Plans

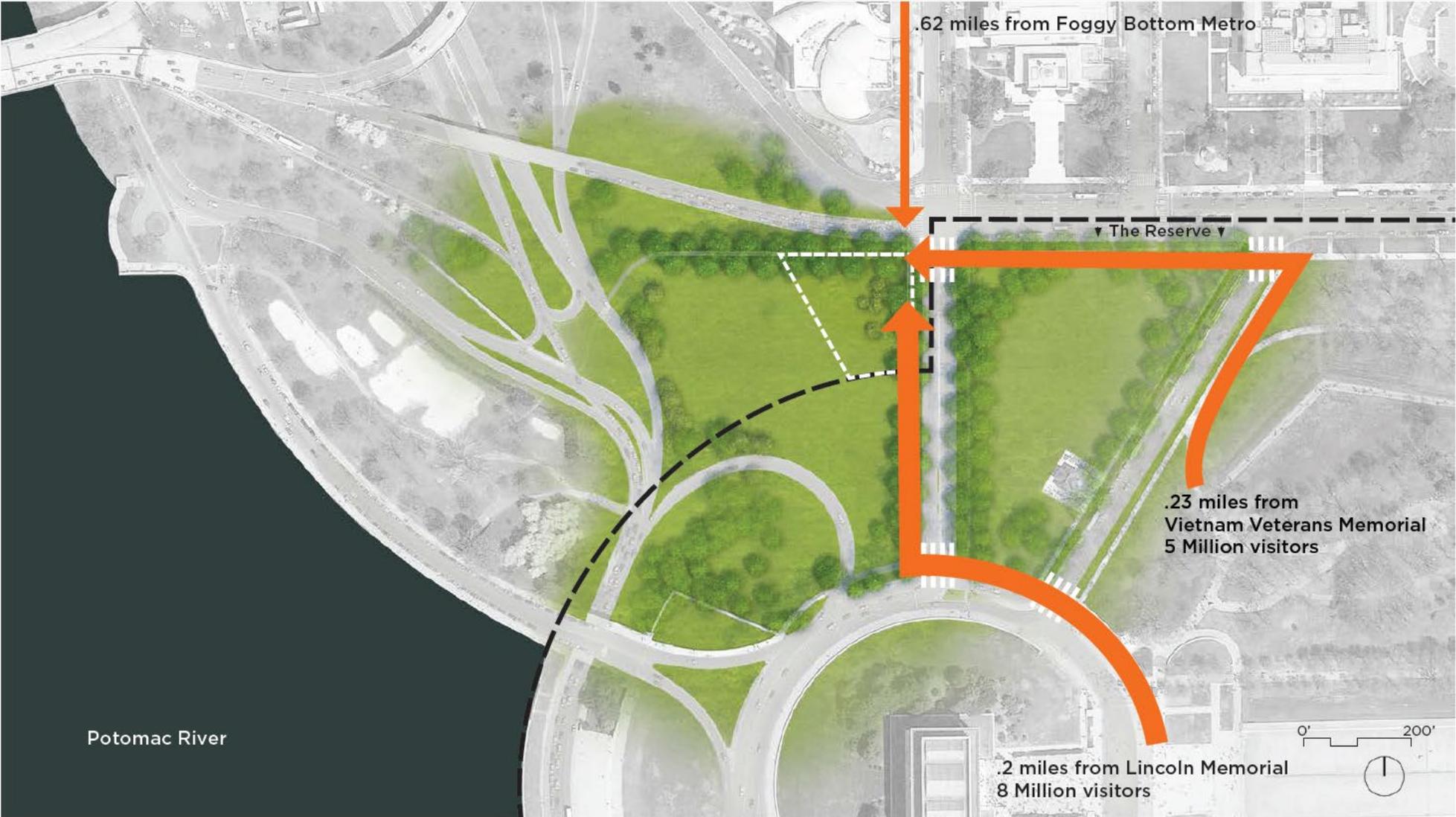
United States Department of the Interior

# Site Location



Location Map

# Site Analysis



# Site Analysis



# Site Analysis

National Desert Storm and Desert Shield Memorial

## Existing Flood Elevations

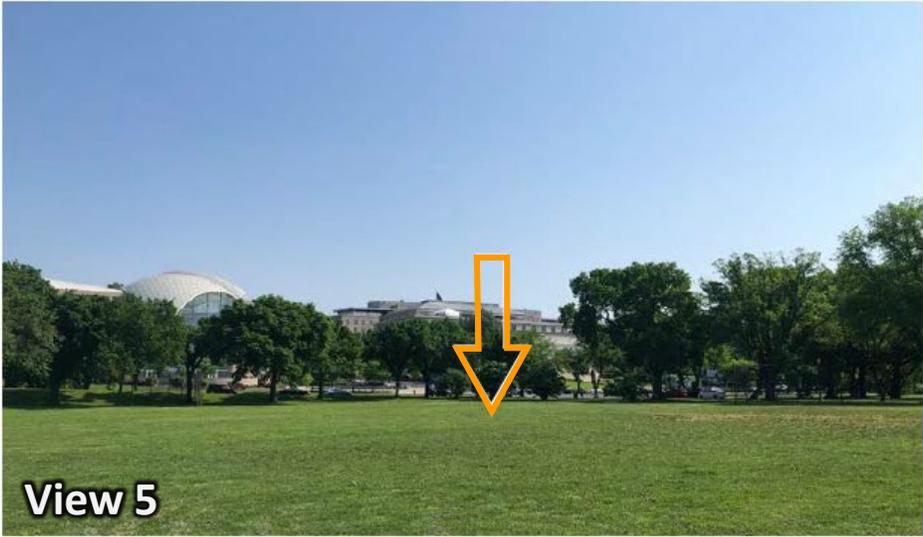


The 23rd Street Closure of the Potomac Park Levee System would be at approximate elevation 20'.

# Site Context Images



# Site Context Images



View 5



View 6

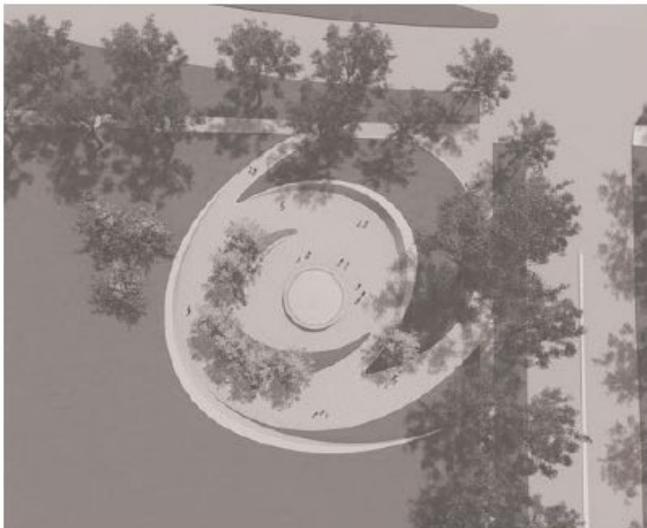
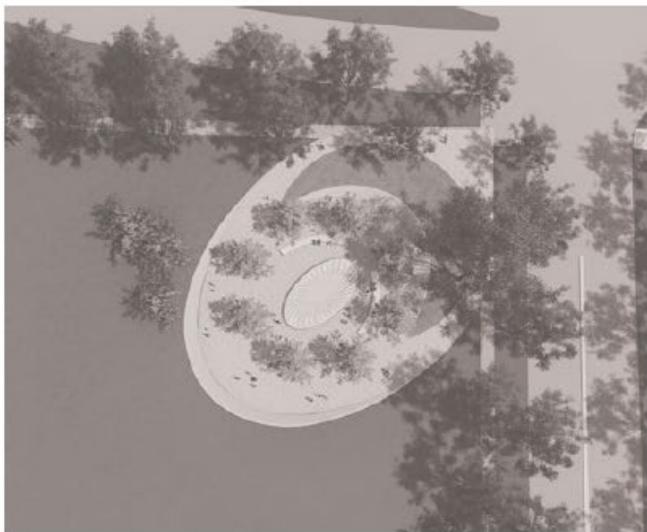
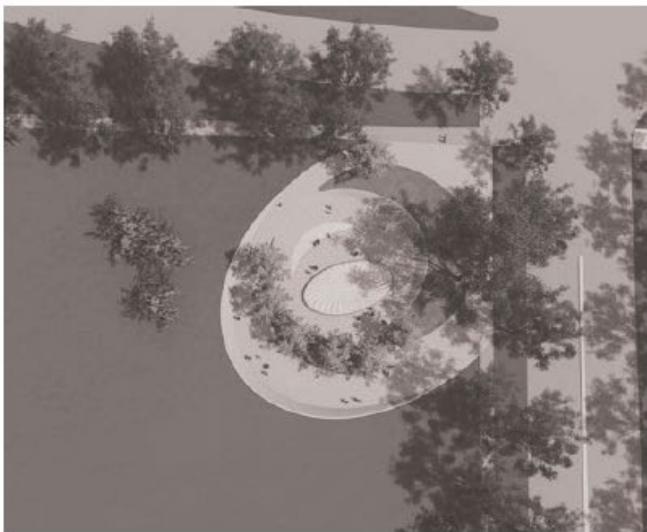


View 7

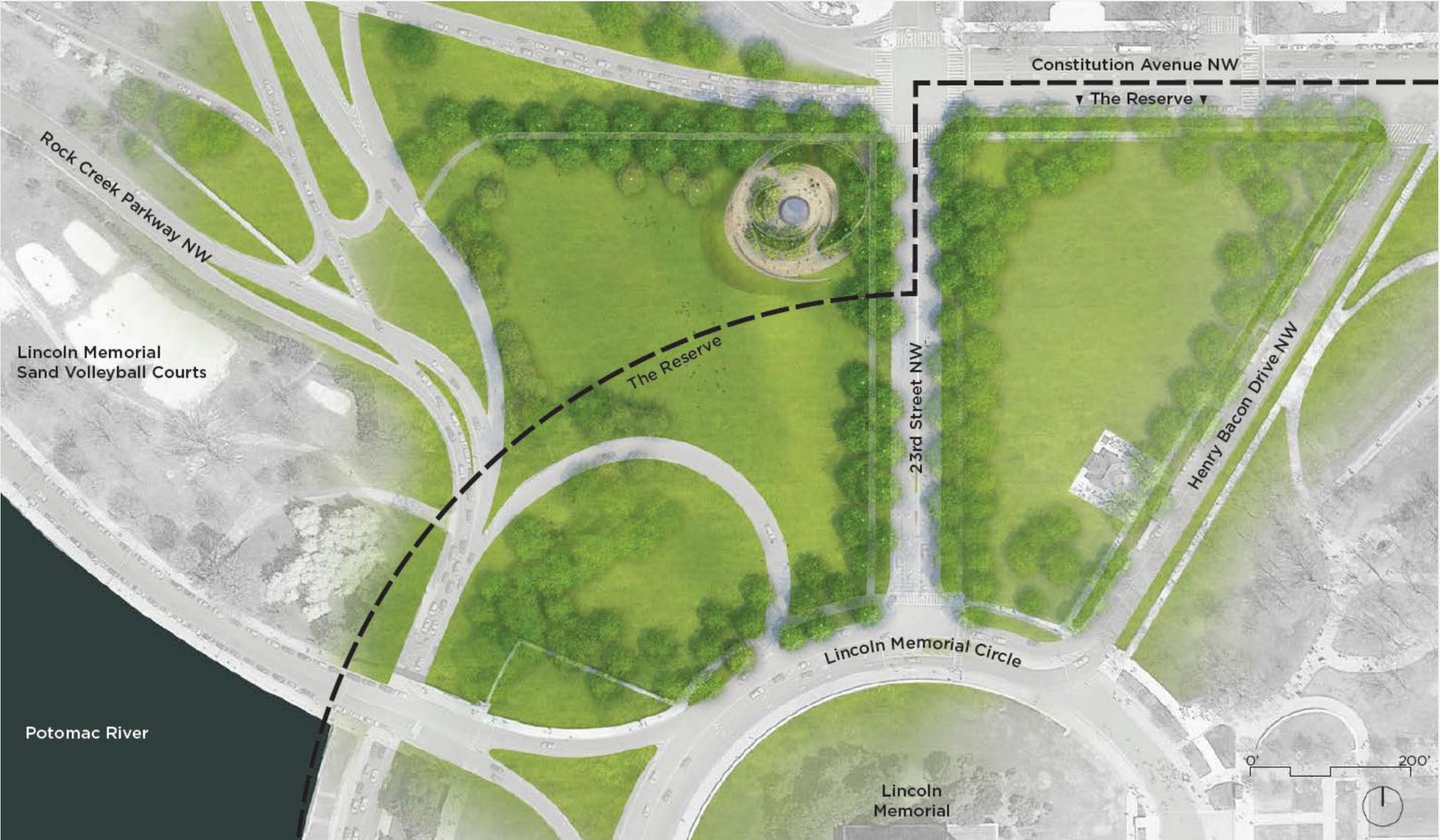


View 8

# Design Process



# Proposed Site Plan



# Memorial Plan



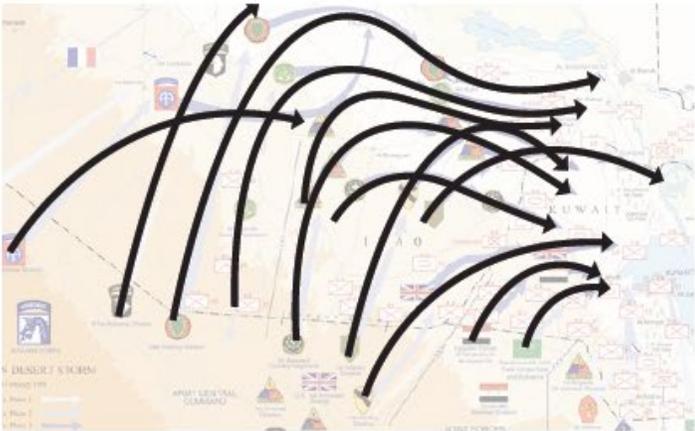
# Memorial Plan



# Design Inspiration



Dunes



Left Hook



Coalition



Storm



Oasis

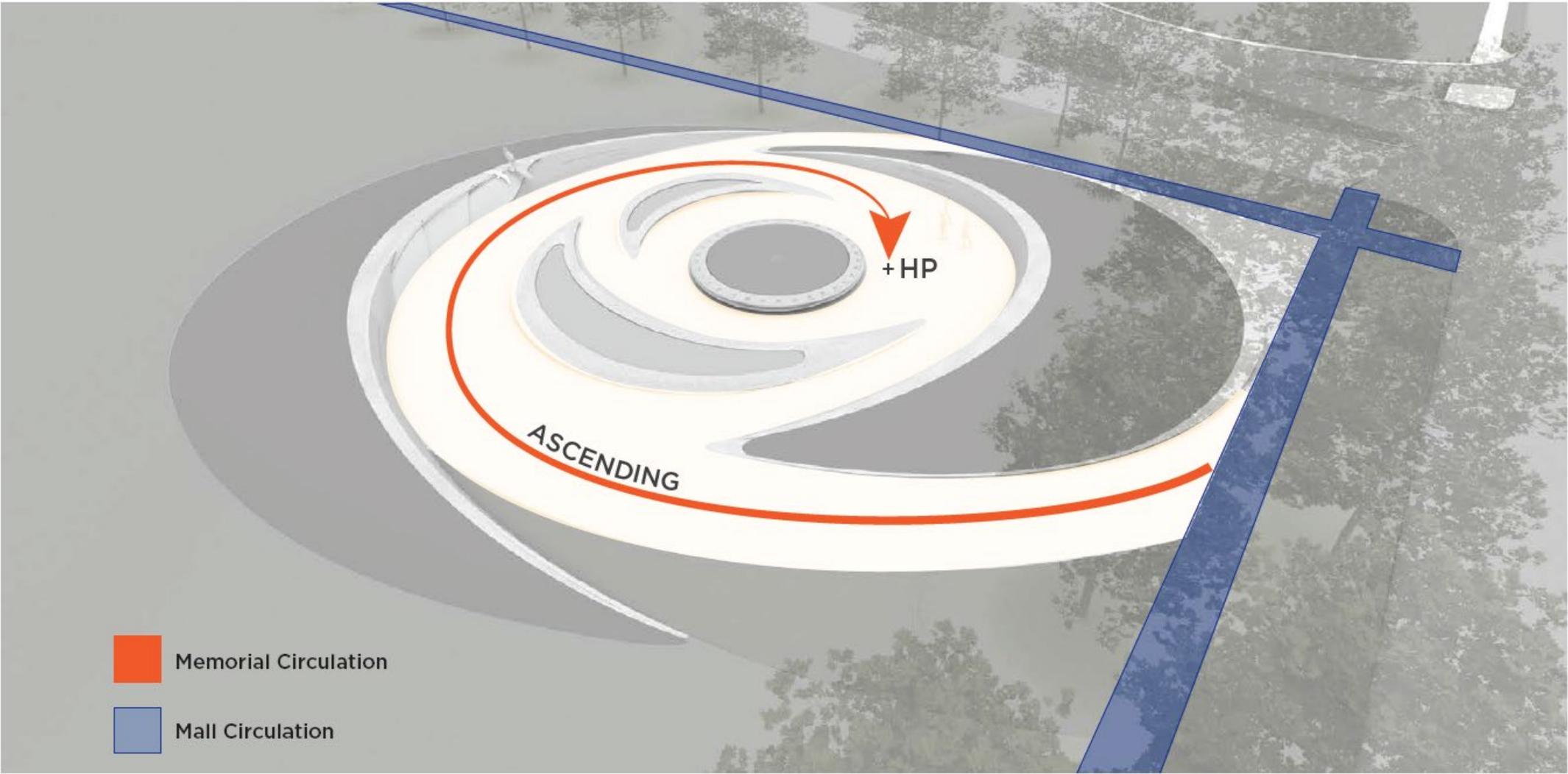


Transformation

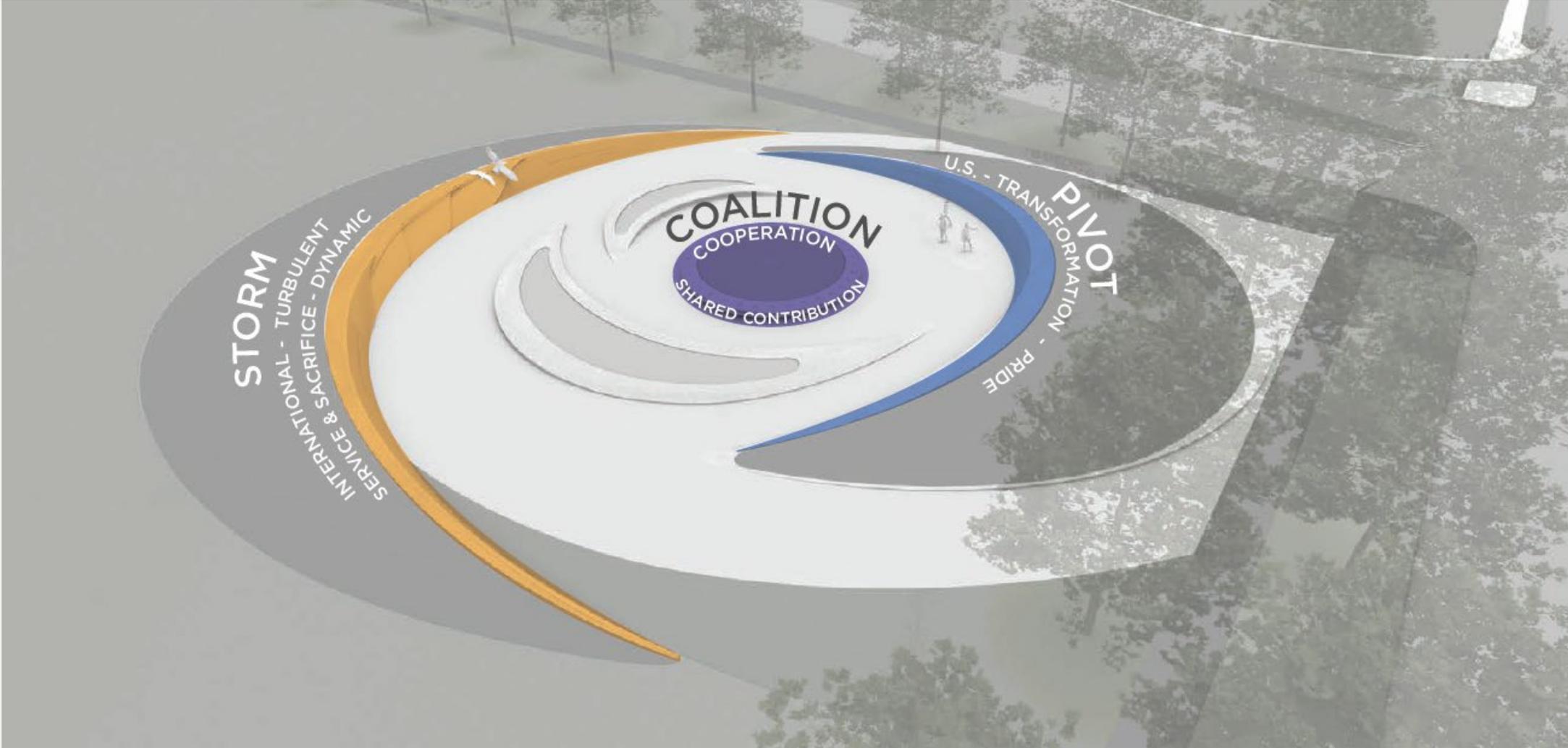
# Memorial Aerial Perspective



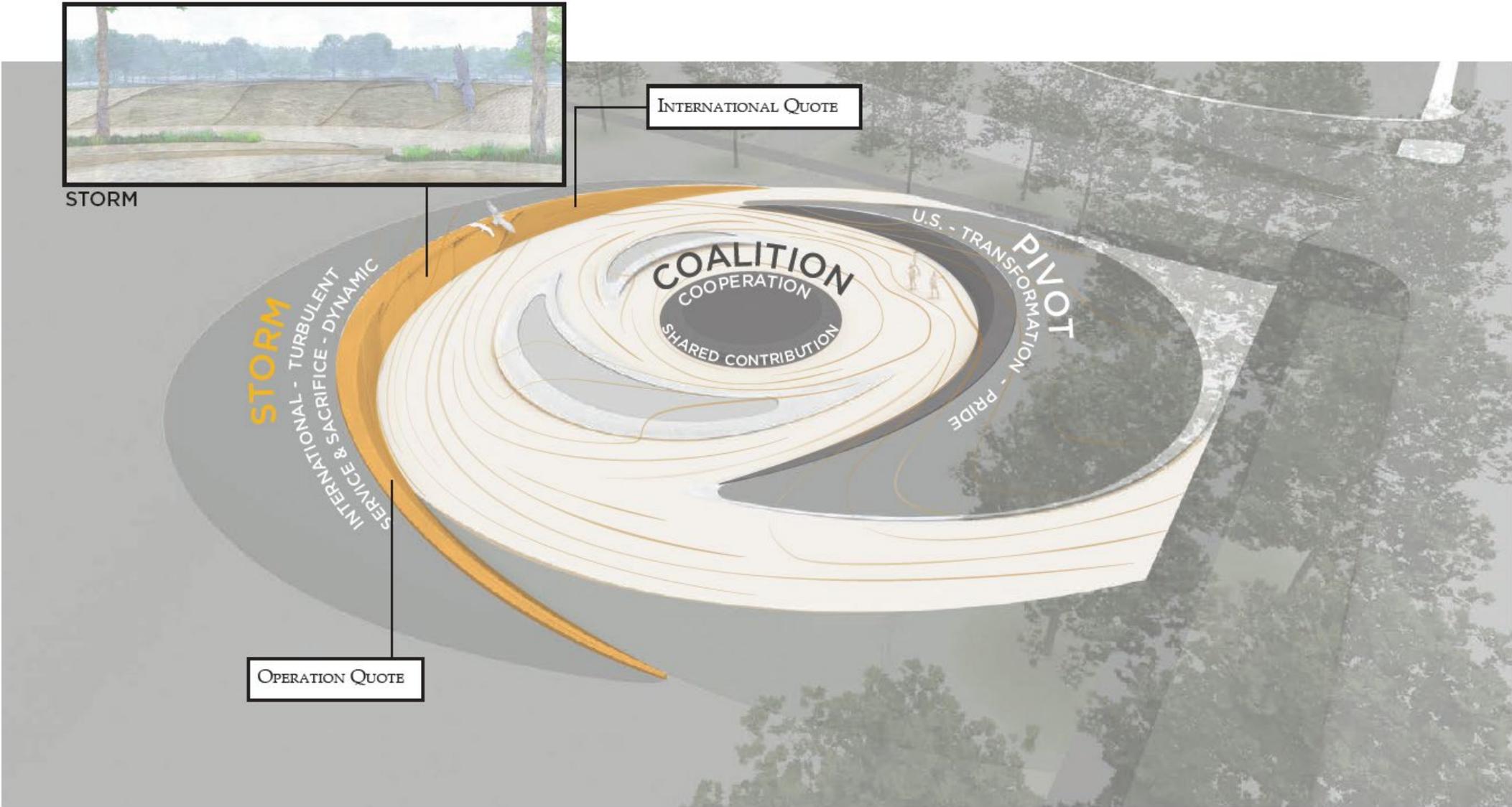
# Circulation



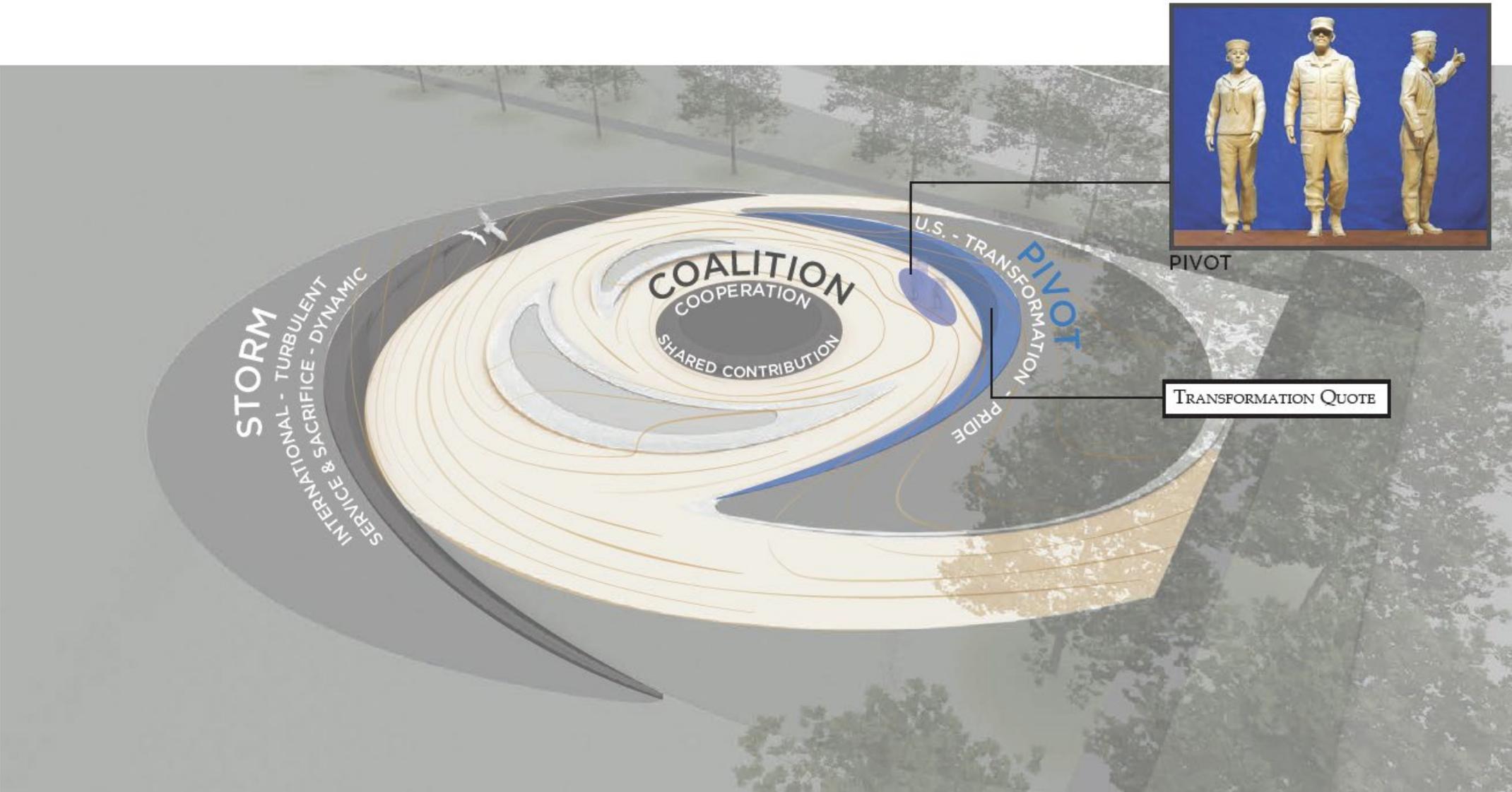
# Commemorative Themes & Design Framework



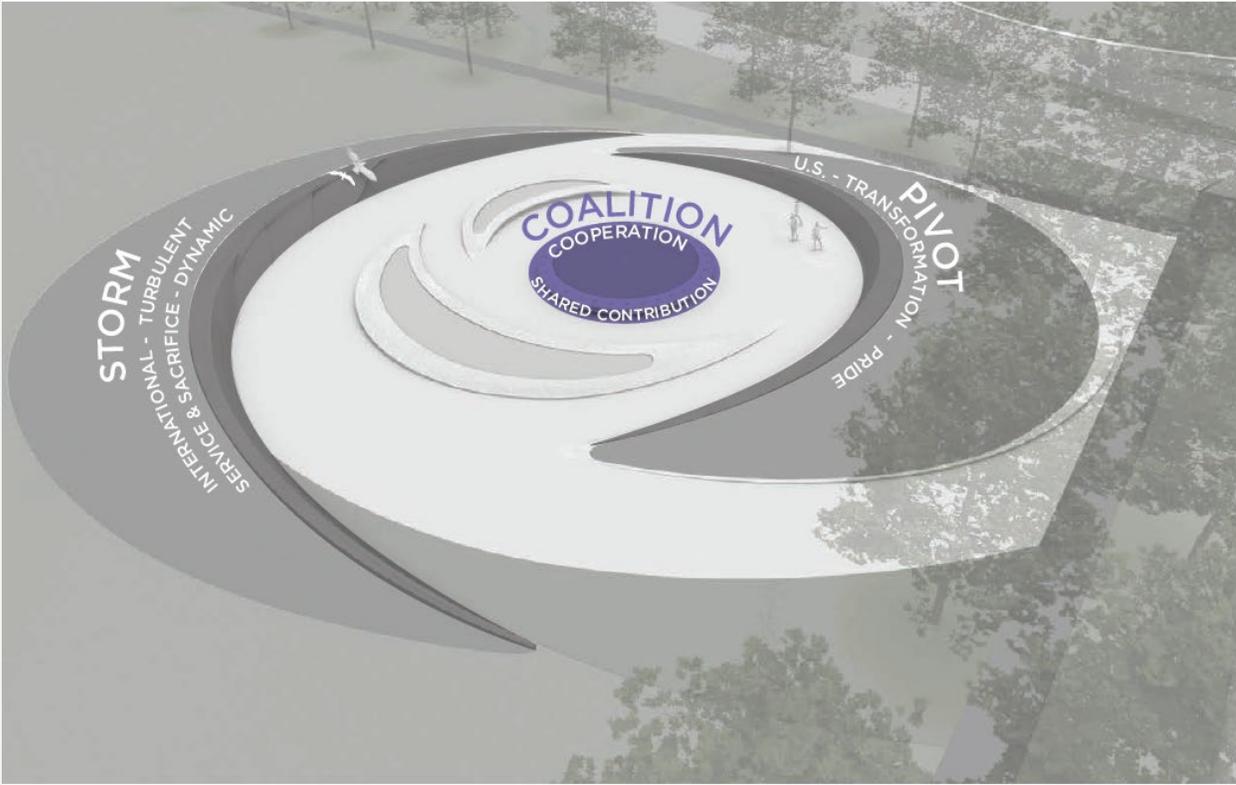
# Storm



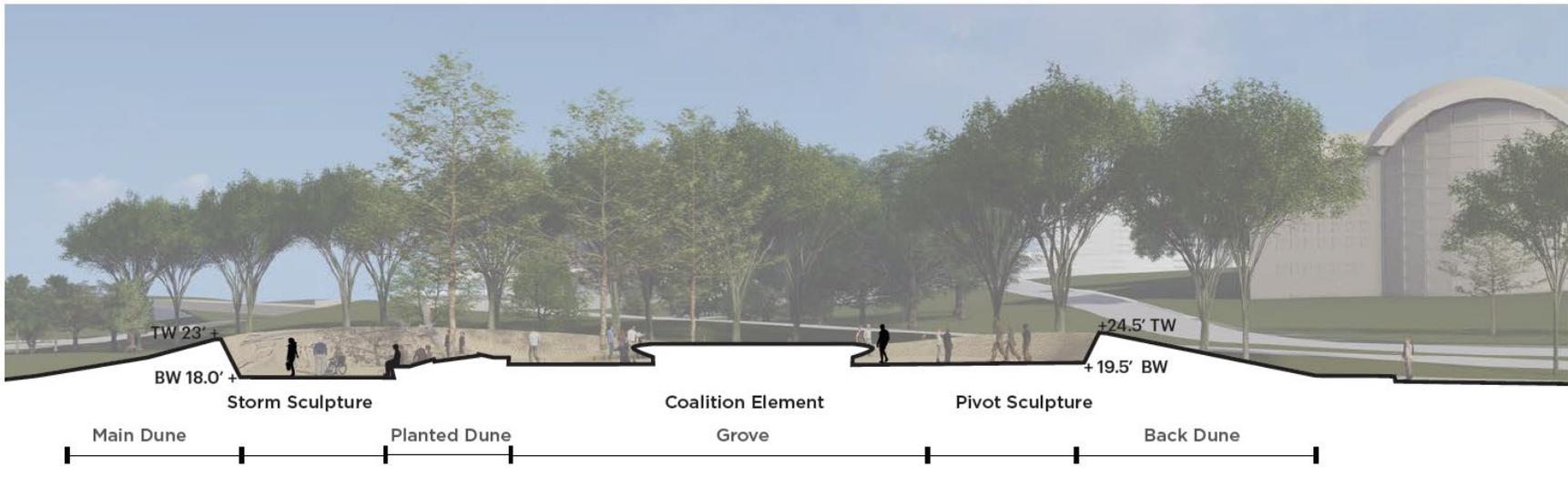
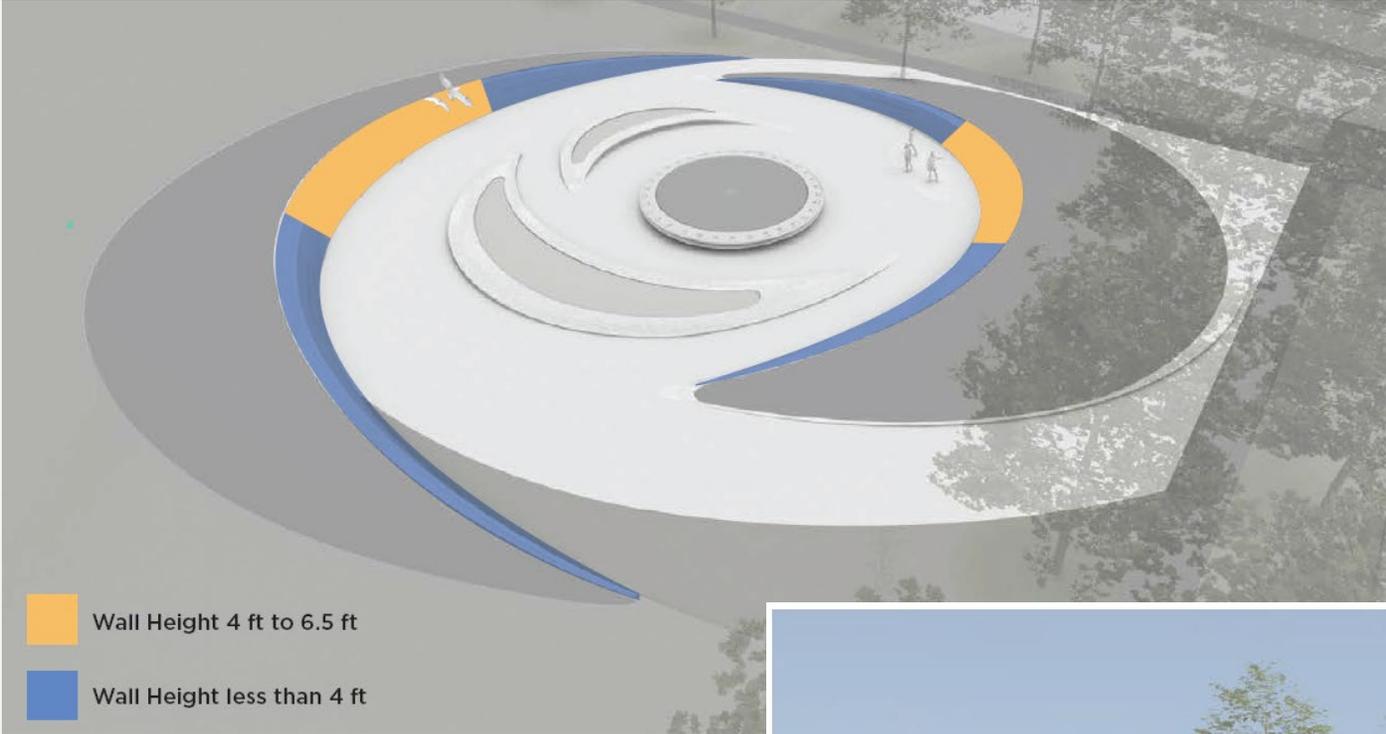
# Pivot



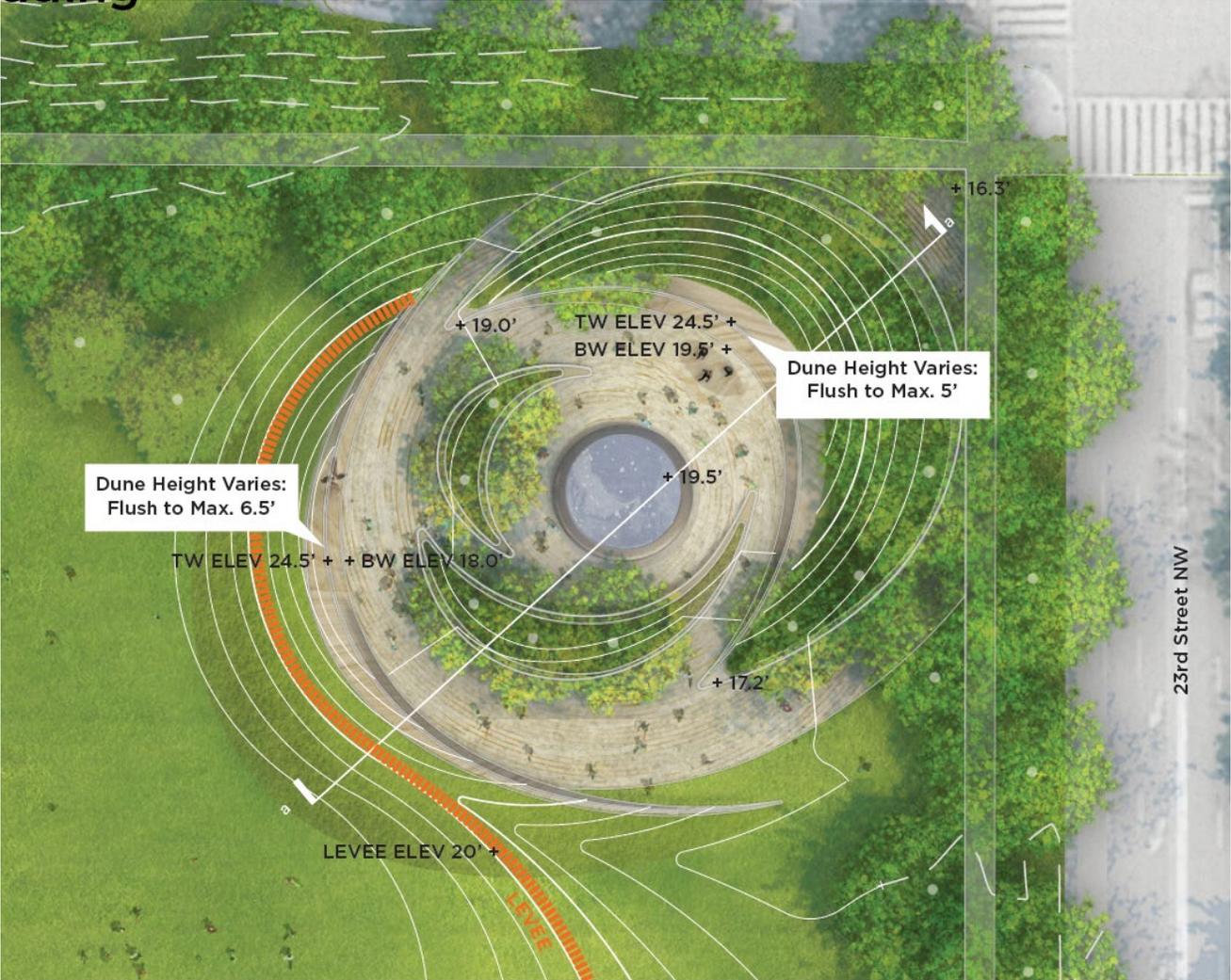
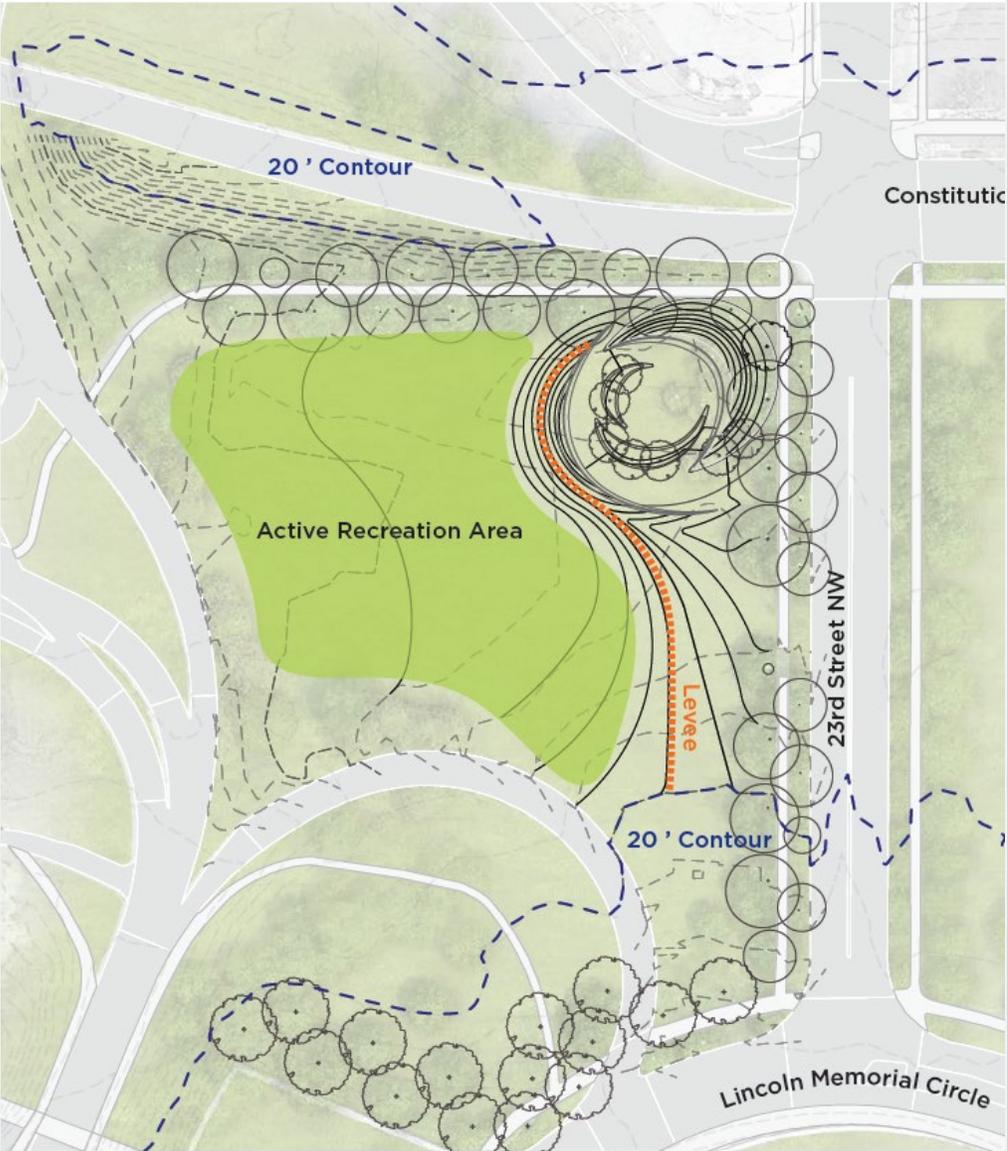
# Coalition



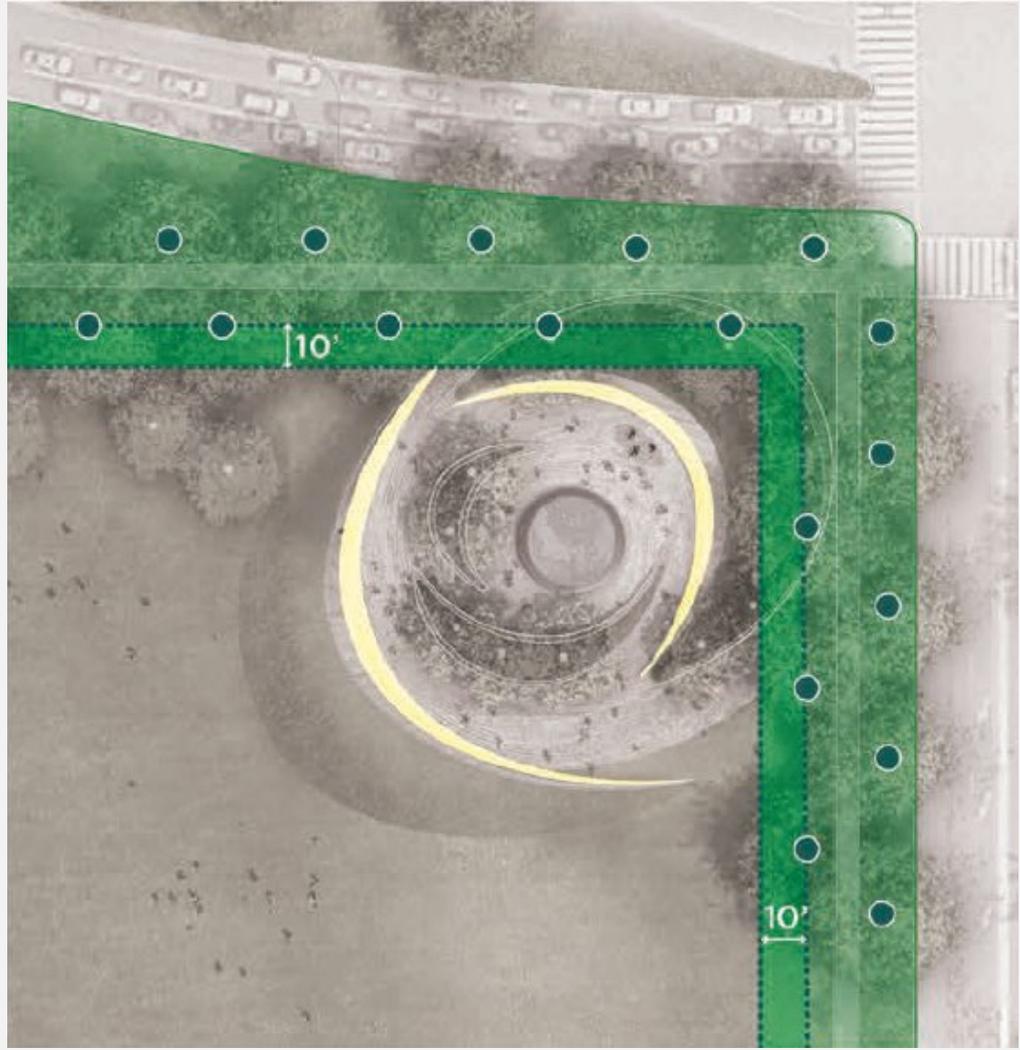
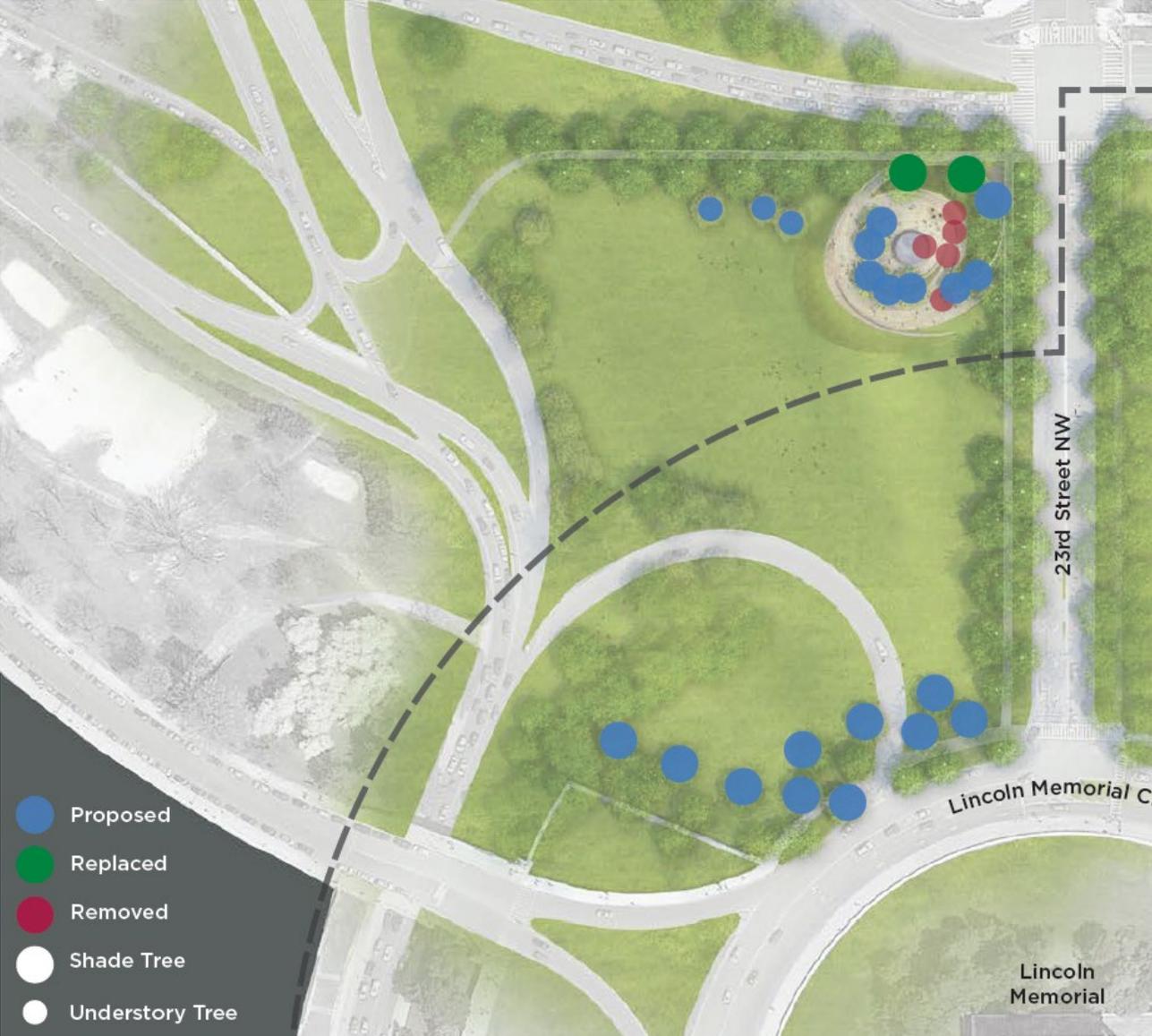
# Impacts: Views



# Impacts: Open Space & Grading



# Impacts: Trees



# Proposed Views



View looking south towards the Lincoln Memorial.

# Proposed Views



View looking southwest from the intersection of Constitution Avenue NW and 23rd Street NW.

# Proposed Views



View looking north towards the U.S. Institute of Peace.

# Proposed Views



Interior view of Memorial looking southeast towards the Lincoln Memorial.

# U. S. COMMISSION OF FINE ARTS

ESTABLISHED BY CONGRESS 17 MAY 1910

401 F STREET NW SUITE 312 WASHINGTON DC 20001-2728 202-504-2200 FAX 202-504-2195 WWW.CFA.GOV

27 November 2019

Dear Ms. Mendelson-Ielmini:

In its meeting of 21 November, the Commission of Fine Arts reviewed a second concept design submission for the National Desert Storm and Desert Shield Memorial, proposed to be located near the southwest corner of 23rd Street and Constitution Avenue, NW. The Commission approved the general concept, providing the following recommendations for the development of the memorial's thematic elements and details.

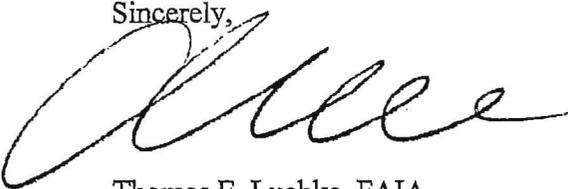
The Commission members commended the progress made in resolving the memorial's overall configuration as a spiraling progression through a dynamic, asymmetrical composition of dune-like forms as well as the general direction of the symbolic, artistic, and narrative elements of the design. However, they identified several significant conceptual issues that remain to be resolved in order to complete the concept design phase. First, they observed that the historical narrative of the military intervention's purpose and the location in Kuwait is weakly expressed or absent in the design, and they recommended elaborating this, perhaps through information on the largest dune wall or through a map at the center. They also questioned the overall design of the memorial's center, which features an elevated table-like fountain presenting the names of the countries supporting the military coalition in the conflict; they suggested that the center could be conceived instead as a place of gathering, and that the idea of an oasis within the desert landscape might best be expressed as water emerging from the ground. They suggested further study of the appropriate design for this element—such as relocating the coalition names to one of the walls, retaining the elevated table form, adding a contextual map to the center, maintaining the symbolism of the shield—to ensure the success of the memorial's symbolic program. In addition, they recommended reconsidering the thematic expression of the “Pivot” wall, which they commented may seem primarily focused on how the military views itself rather than on the larger, global themes of the memorial. They criticized the proposal for the three freestanding, realistic figures in front of this wall, finding them to be strangely informal in pose, facial expression, and attire—and therefore inappropriate for the gravity of the memorial's subject. They cautioned that these statues appear to be incidentally placed and may elicit undignified behavior by visitors, and that their overly realistic depiction may invite public criticism regarding the demographic representation conveyed; they therefore strongly questioned whether these should be included in the design, suggesting that the message represented by the figures could be expressed elsewhere in the memorial.

For the development of the elements of the memorial, the Commission members identified several details to be explored, particularly regarding the design of the dune forms. In general, they cited the rich opportunity of the two-sided forms, which may be articulated as contrasts of gentle or steep, textured or smooth, grass or stone; they suggested introducing some irregularity in this expression, particularly at the crests of the walls. They identified the sloping stone surfaces of these walls as the best place to present the historic and narrative themes of Desert Storm / Desert Shield, and they

recommended a more flowing, cinematic approach to the series of bas-relief images, rather than the framed vignettes as shown. They expressed support for the sculptures of the falcon and eagle associated with these walls, although they questioned the great scale of these figures and how they would reasonably be structurally supported within the artistic composition. Finally, they suggested studying the character of the lower, arcing planters and associated seatwalls toward the center of the memorial, questioning whether these should be defined by the same details as the higher honorific walls, or be treated differently.

The Commission appreciates the constructive responsiveness to its previous advice and looks forward to reviewing a revised concept submission that incorporates revisions to this concept design addressing these comments. As always, the staff is available to assist you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'T. Luebke', written in a cursive style.

Thomas E. Luebke, FAIA  
Secretary

Lisa Mendelson-Ielmini, Acting Regional Director  
National Park Service, National Capital Region  
1100 Ohio Drive, SW  
Washington, DC 20242

cc: Skip Graffam, The Olin Studio  
Scott Stump, National Desert Storm War Memorial Association  
Marcel Acosta, National Capital Planning Commission