# Executive Director's Recommendation

**Commission Meeting:** March 3, 2022

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROJECT</th>
<th>NCPC FILE NUMBER</th>
<th>APPLICANT'S REQUEST</th>
<th>PROPOSED ACTION</th>
<th>ACTION ITEM TYPE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>National Desert Storm and Desert Shield</strong></td>
<td>7745</td>
<td>Approval of preliminary site and building plans</td>
<td>Approve with comments</td>
<td>Staff Presentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Memorial**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Mall and Memorial Parks</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>147 23rd St NW</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washington, DC</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SUBMITTED BY</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States Department of the Interior</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Park Service</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>REVIEW AUTHORITY</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal Projects in the District</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>per 40 U.S.C. § 8722(b)(1) and (d)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## PROJECT SUMMARY

The National Park Service (NPS), in collaboration with the National Desert Storm War Memorial Association (the Association), has submitted preliminary site and building plans for the proposed Desert Storm and Desert Shield Memorial for Commission review and approval. 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 provided comments on the conceptual design of the memorial at the January 2020 meeting and requested the applicant continue to refine the memorial details including the water feature, large and small statuary, the entry design, wall angles and tree preservation. Since that time the applicant has updated the memorial design to address the Commission's comments.
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.
     - NCMAC commented favorably on the concept design with recommended changes regarding the statuary and the details of the water feature at the February 2020 meeting.

  3. NCPC, CFA, and the DOI must each approve the site and design for new commemorative works.
     - NCPC reviewed and approved comments on the concept design at the February 2020 meeting.
     - CFA reviewed the conceptual design for the memorial at its meeting on November 15, 2018 and November 21, 2019 meetings, noting significant conceptual issues 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.
RECOMMENDATION

The Commission:

Approves the preliminary site and building plans for the National Desert Shield and Desert Storm Memorial at the intersection of Constitution Avenue and 23rd Street, NW.

Commends the landscape-oriented design that minimizes the use of vertical elements and respects its open setting and views to the Lincoln Memorial and National Mall.

Finds the applicant has revised the design to address many of the Commission’s comments at the concept review. Changes include:

- Additional detail of the central water feature which includes the surface treatment and water flow.
- Articulating how the cast sculptures of the falcon and eagle relate to the imagery on the wall.
- Eliminating the statues from the design and commemorative framework.

Notes that the applicant simplified the commemorative framework of the memorial design to ensure that visitors clearly understand the purpose of the memorial.

Requests that for final review the applicant:

- Determine whether wayfinding from the south and west is necessary to navigate the memorial entry.
- Coordinate with the District Department of Energy and Environment on stormwater requirements to ensure they do not negatively impact the memorial design.
- Determine if the angle of the walls and berm treatment are designed to sufficiently deter unwanted climbing and similar activities.

PROJECT REVIEW TIMELINE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Previous actions</th>
<th>Remaining actions (anticipated)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- July 2017 – Comments on Site Selection</td>
<td>- Approval of final memorial and site development plans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- December 2017 – Comments on Site Selection</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- April 2018 – Comments on Site Selection</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- January 2020 – Comments on Concept Design</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PROJECT ANALYSIS

Executive Summary
NPS, in collaboration with the National Desert Storm War Memorial Association, has submitted a preliminary memorial design for the site at Constitution Avenue and 23rd Street, NW. The applicant has worked to address the comments received by the Commission, CFA, and the DC State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) during the preliminary design stage. The proposed preliminary design 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 approves the preliminary site and building plans for the National Desert Shield and Desert Storm Memorial at the intersection of Constitution Avenue and 23rd Street, NW.

The applicant proposes one commemorative theme in three elements that represent significant aspects of Operation Desert Storm and Desert Shield: Service. The approximately one-acre memorial employs a landscape-based approach, using sloped berms to enclose a memorial featuring two walls: the Storm Wall and the Inscription Wall. The interior enclosure provided by the walls would contain a central commemorative element, the Unity Shield; vegetated berms; and seating. Staff recommends the Commission commends the landscape-oriented design that minimizes the use of vertical elements and respects its open setting and views to the Lincoln Memorial and National Mall.

The design has been updated to reflect requested changes by the Commission and although the physical expression of the commemorative theme can be strengthened through further detail development, the proposed preliminary design of the memorial at the site and the narrative of commemorative theme is successful. Staff recommends the Commission finds the applicant has revised the design to address many of the Commission’s comments at the concept review. Changes include:

- Additional detail of the central water feature which includes the surface treatment and water flow.
- Articulating how the cast sculptures of the falcon and eagle relate to the imagery on the wall.
- Eliminating the statues from the design and commemorative framework.

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 23rd 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.

The proposed memorial is sited nearest to the intersection of 23rd 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.

While the applicant has addressed many of the Commissions comments from the concept design, additional minor details are still needed for the final review. As such, staff recommends the Commission requests that for final review the applicant:

- **Determine** whether wayfinding from the south and west is necessary to navigate the memorial entry.
- **Coordinate** with the District Department of Energy and Environment on stormwater requirements to ensure they do not negatively impact the memorial design.
- **Determine** if the angle of the walls and berm treatment are designed to sufficiently deter unwanted climbing and similar activities.

**Commemorative Elements**

The applicant has updated the memorial to focus the commemorative framework on ‘Service’. This is expressed using landscape walls and a central water feature collectively covey the sacrifice and leadership, hardship and success of American servicemembers. In addition to the commemorative theme, 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 memorial is conceived
as an oasis, formed between two dune landforms rising out of the fabric of the National Mall. Within these earthworks, two curving walls encircle a shady grove. The sound of water bubbles from a source within the trees, unifying the space and creating a sanctuary. Sculptural elements punctuate the artfully carved bas-relief wall. Staff recommends the Commission notes that the applicant simplified the commemorative framework of the memorial design to ensure that visitors clearly understand the purpose of the memorial.

The applicant proposes visitors experience the memorial by traversing clockwise in a “left hook” circulation pattern, which emulates the famed circuitous attack conceived by General H. Norman Schwarzkopf. The primary path rises subtly in elevation along its curving trajectory through the memorial, allowing the visitor to ascend through the space to the central feature, a place of solemn appreciation and reflection. 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. Between the two walls, a central water feature commemorates the unique global coalition that came together in service and sacrifice to liberate Kuwait. The commemorative narrative is revealed slowly and sequentially from left to right.

The proposed memorial is enclosed by two asymmetrical berms offset to the northeast and southwest. The ‘Storm Wall’ approximately 240 feet in length and an average height of 4.5 feet (maximum height of approximately 6.5 feet), displays Service In The Conflict: how they served and changed the nation. The bas-relief on this wall depicts the build-up of the Operation, the troops on the ground, and the dawn of a new day. The bald eagle and falcon symbolize the leadership of the United States and the role of regional allies and commemorate the liberation of Kuwait. The central bas-relief figures highlight the humanity of the ground effort. Visitors are confronted with this personalized moment as a direct reflection of the individual sacrifice and shared experience throughout the conflict. Patinated stainless steel sculptures of raptors in flight pull the movement up and along the wall, flying out of the sunrise. Beyond the raptors, the movement on the wall reflects a calmer tone leading to the Inscription Wall.

The 'Inscription Wall’, approximately 165 feet in length and an average height of approximately four feet (maximum height of approximately six feet), displays Service And Sacrifice: how they sacrificed. The inscription honors those who volunteered to serve and those who lost their lives in service. Linked wreaths signify Operation Desert Storm and Desert Shield and recall the Kuwaiti Liberation Medal. The ten significant battles are noted across the length of the wall. Staff finds the updates to the commemorative wall elements create a simple but powerful design that convey the importance of Desert Shield and Desert Storm.

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. 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.

The memorial’s centerpiece is a cascading water feature situated within an open plaza and sheltered by a grove of trees. The fountain washes over a circular battle shield. Around the edge
of the Unity Shield, the names of 35 countries are engraved to commemorate the international Coalition that acted together to enforce UN Resolution 660 and liberate the country of Kuwait. The complete ring of countries highlights the significance of this moment in history: a new, cooperative approach to resolving conflict that united the world and marked the end of the Cold War. This commemorative element is designed as a low, circular table with water flowing in the center. The wash of the water has various modes of intensity. As a high flow, it emphasizes the turbulence and upheaval of battle. In a gentler flow, water becomes a cleaner, more reflective surface. When the shield is dry, the detailed patterning and battering of the shield are obvious. 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. Staff finds the updates to the central water feature will improve the understanding of the memorial.

While the access point on Constitution Avenue is considered secondary, the memorial itself is anticipated to increase foot traffic on Constitution Avenue west of 23rd 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 23rd Street, NW, the Commission had suggested the applicant explore visual cues to direct east-bound pedestrians on Constitution Avenue, NW and south-bound pedestrians on 23rd Street, NW (from Metro) to enter the site from the 23rd Street, NW access point. The applicant has included a title on a low wall facing the entries on 23rd Street, NW and Constitution Avenue. Staff suggests the applicant evaluate wayfinding from the south and west to ensure pedestrians can clearly navigate to the memorial entry.

**Lighting**
The overall lighting approach of the memorial is subdued and intended to minimize the addition of new light sources at the site to the extent practicable. The existing site receives a substantial amount of ambient light from existing streetlights and from the nearby Institute of Peace. The lighting design focuses on the proposed key commemorative elements. Low-level, linear lighting along the base of site elements accent the walls and provide the footcandles required to illuminate and guide visitors along pathways. Discreet poles within the memorial landscape accent commemorative elements from above. The lighting of these features would be subordinate to other important elements of the National Mall, such as the Lincoln Memorial. The lighting design provides the base level of lighting required to meet code requirements and would retain existing street lighting on adjacent streetscapes, which would continue to provide ambient light. Combined, these features would be designed to avoid glare and would meet dark skies requirements. Staff finds the proposed lighting will create an appropriate mood and setting for the commemorative design.

**Stormwater Management**
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. As discussed during a previous review, two possible infrastructure projects have potential to affect the Constitution Avenue site.
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.

The proposed memorial has a disturbance footprint larger than 5,000 square feet and will need to comply with local stormwater management requirements. The applicant has previously coordinated with the District Department of Energy and Environment (DOEE) on the design and requirements, but further coordination is needed, and staff recommends the Commission request the applicant continue to coordinate with DOEE on the stormwater requirements to ensure they do not negatively impact the memorial design.

**Tree Replacement**

An allée of existing trees on 23rd 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. The proposed project would remove approximately five understory trees outside the streetscape allées and approximately 15,250 square feet of turf. The memorial would also replace the existing delineated ball field and backstop with turf open space. The southwest portion of the site would accommodate informal ball games through the placement of the memorial in the northeast corner of the site. Outside the new memorial, but within the project site, one additional tree along 23rd Street and nine trees along Lincoln Circle would be planted, consistent with the implemented historic planting plan for the grass panel.

**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. Specifically, the design conforms to the recommendation that new memorials ‘Protect open spaces, existing public uses, and cultural and natural resources when locating and designing new commemorative works, to the maximum extent practicable’ in the *Visitors and Commemoration Element*. The design also respects the importance of visual hierarchy established in the cityscape and supported by the *Urban Design Element*.

**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 several 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 site currently under consideration is 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). The DC SHPO concurred with the NPS finding of no adverse effect in October 2020. 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 has prepared 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 comment period that started on February 9, 2022. 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 February 9, 2022 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 the applicant should reach out to DOEE to continue coordinating on the stormwater requirements. The District of Columbia State Historic 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. CFA reviewed and approved the concept at its October 21, 2021, meeting, noting their appreciation at the memorial updates and requesting additional landscape and design details at a future review. They further noted additional details are needed 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. The proposed memorial design 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:

- Submission Package
- CFA Letter October 21, 2021
- DC SHPO Letter October 14, 2020

POWERPOINT (ATTACHED)
National Desert Storm and Desert Shield Memorial

147 23rd St NW, Washington DC

Approval of Preliminary Site and Building Plans

United States Department of the Interior

March 3, 2022 | File: 7745
Site Location
Site Location

- 0.23 miles from Vietnam Veterans Memorial
  5 Million visitors

- 2 miles from Lincoln Memorial
  8 Million visitors

Potomac River
Site Context Images
Site Context Images
Site Analysis

Existing Tree Condition

Life expectancy:
- <5 yrs
- 10-20 yrs
- >25 yrs

Shade Tree
Understory Tree
Site Analysis

Existing Flood Elevations

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

Dunes

Left Hook

Coalition

Storm

Oasis

Transformation
Proposed Site Plan
Tree Planting Plan
Memorial Plan - Grading
Memorial Plan - Section
Commemorative Framework: Service

1. SERVICE IN THE CONFLICT
   how they served and changed the nation

2. SERVICE AND SACRIFICE
   how they sacrificed

3. SERVICE OF THE COALITION
   how they worked together
Commemorative Framework: Service Elements

1. SERVICE IN THE CONFLICT
   how they served and changed the nation

   The bas-relief on this wall depicts the build-up of the Operation, the troops on the ground, and the dawn of a new day.

   The bald eagle and falcon symbolize the leadership of the United States and the role of regional allies, and commemorate the liberation of Kuwait.

2. SERVICE AND SACRIFICE
   how they sacrificed

   The inscription honors those who volunteered to serve and those who lost their lives in service.

3. SERVICE OF THE COALITION
   how they worked together

   The Unity Shield commemorates all nations of the Coalition, highlighting success of cooperation and underscoring their shared sacrifice in this conflict.

   Reminiscent of a battle shield of antiquity, this element represents the collective effort of all coalition nations to join forces and assist the nation of Kuwait.
Commemorative Framework: Storm Wall
Commemorative Framework: Storm Wall Detail
Commemorative Framework: Storm Wall
Commemorative Framework: Storm Wall Quotes

"My confidence in you is total. Our cause is just! Now you must be the thunder and the lightning of Desert Storm."

General H. Norman Schwarzkopf Jr.

Build-up (Introductory Quote)

"We set out to confront an enemy abroad, and in the process transformed a nation at home."

President George H. W. Bush

Liberation (Concluding Quote)
Commemorative Framework: Inscription Wall
Commemorative Framework: Inscription Wall
Commemorative Framework: Inscription Wall
Commemorative Framework: Unity Shield

Shield Design Inspiration
Commemorative Framework: Unity Shield
Commemorative Framework: Unity Shield

- Water cascading down the shield’s texture would have a lively and mesmerizing effect when the flow is highest.
- At more solemn moments of commemoration, the water flow can be reduced to create concentric reflective pools.
- When the water is off, the shield’s subtle patterns become pronounced.
Commemorative Framework: Unity Shield

Details and dimensions of the Unity Shield.
Memorial Views
Memorial Views
Memorial Views
Memorial Views
Memorial Views
Memorial Views
28 October 2021

Dear Ms. Hall:

In its public meeting of 21 October conducted by videoconference, the Commission of Fine Arts reviewed a revised concept submission for the National Desert Storm and Desert Shield Memorial, to be located near the southwest corner of 23rd Street and Constitution Avenue, NW. The Commission approved the revised concept proposal and provided the following comments for the refinement of the design.

The Commission members expressed appreciation for the project team’s positive responsiveness to their prior advice, which included eliminating the freestanding figural sculptures; they commented that the resulting composition of artistic elements, while varied in character, is now successfully balanced within the memorial precinct. They cited as a unifying concept the cinematic experience envisioned for the Storm Wall, created by the bas-relief depicting the conflict and extended to the two metal sculptures of raptors symbolizing the outcome of the historical narrative. They again endorsed the overall configuration of the memorial, comprising dune-like berm walls curving around a central plaza and fountain, which they said will create a restful space for visitors to reflect on the service and sacrifice of those involved in the conflict and an oasis for others passing by.

For the development of the design, the Commission members agreed that the landscape plan should evoke the image of the memorial as a desert oasis, and they anticipated future details of the planting plan and palette. For the central fountain, they advised adding tactile paving around the perimeter of the basin as a safety measure; they also suggested modifying the inner slope of the basin’s curving rim to prevent water from collecting and staining the perimeter stone. They commended the forming of the topography around the memorial to incorporate the storm levee and, noting the heavy volume of traffic at the adjacent intersection of Constitution Avenue and 23rd Street, suggested continued consideration of ways to reduce its visual and auditory effects on the memorial experience.

In order to advance the project through design development toward final approval, the Commission members requested the opportunity to review the various components of the memorial design in clusters of related topics, as is typical for commemorative works of this prominence and complexity. These submissions should address the refinement of such elements as the sculptures, inscriptions, and fountain; the selection of stone and other materials; landscape plans and specifications; and systems of signage and lighting.

As a more general issue for the National Park Service in its efforts to plan for future commemorative works, the Commission members noted that West Potomac Park and
the National Mall are being used increasingly as a location for war memorials; they recommended a broad, comprehensive consideration of what subjects of national commemoration should be more strongly represented within this highly symbolic civic landscape.

The Commission looks forward to continuing its review of this new addition to the National Mall. Please consult with the Commission staff for guidance on future submissions for the continued review of the memorial design.

Sincerely,

Thomas E. Luebke, FAIA
Secretary

Kym A. Hall, Director
Region 1–National Capital Area
National Park Service
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