



# Executive Director's Recommendation

Commission Meeting: April 6, 2023

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<b>PROJECT</b> <b>First Division Monument Modification</b> President's Park 17th Street and State Place, NW Washington, DC	<b>NCPC FILE NUMBER</b> 8329
	<b>NCPC MAP FILE NUMBER</b> 1.35(73.10)45633
<b>SUBMITTED BY</b> United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service	<b>APPLICANT'S REQUEST</b> Approval of preliminary and final site development plans
<b>REVIEW AUTHORITY</b> Commemorative Works Act per 40 U.S.C. § 8905	<b>PROPOSED ACTION</b> Approve preliminary and final site development plans with comments
	<b>ACTION ITEM TYPE</b> Consent Calendar

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## PROJECT SUMMARY

The National Park Service (NPS), in partnership with the Society of the First Infantry Division, has submitted preliminary and final site development plans for proposed modifications to the First Division Monument. The Commission previously reviewed concept plans for the project in December 2021 and found the proposed modifications are consistent with the history of the monument and reflect the established design vocabulary of granite plinths and bronze plaques. The design has not changed substantially since the previous review.

The monument is located within President's Park, just south of the Eisenhower Executive Office Building and east of Seventeenth Street, NW. The First Division Monument site currently includes components commemorating World War I, World War II, the Vietnam War, and Operation Desert Storm. These elements include the names of First Division members to honor their sacrifice. The initial World War I column and statue was completed in 1924. Subsequent additions occurred from the 1950s to 1990s. As such, the monument has continually evolved to accommodate the commemoration of additional military operations.

The changes to the monument were authorized by Section 1083 of the National Defense Authorization Act for FY21 (Public Law 116-92) on January 1, 2021. The First Infantry Division may make modifications to the First Division Monument to honor the dead of the First Infantry Division, United States Forces, in Operation Desert Storm; Operation Iraqi Freedom and New Dawn; and Operation Enduring Freedom. Modifications to the monument may include construction of additional plaques and stone plinths on which to put plaques.

The proposal includes the addition of three stone plinths to accommodate plaques displaying approximately 27 names from Operation Desert Storm and 631 names from Operation Iraqi Freedom, Operation New Dawn and Operation Enduring Freedom. As part of the project, the

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existing Operation Desert Storm plaque located to the east of the World War I column would be removed, and the central planting bed restored. Three new stone plinths composed of granite, approximately ten feet wide by 32 inches tall, sloping up to 38 inches, would be constructed north of the east planting bed. Each granite plinth would hold cast bronze plaques. The applicant evaluated several hedge planting configurations per the request of the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts (CFA). The final design includes a double row of hedges on the north side per the CFA's recommendation.

### KEY INFORMATION

- Eisenhower Executive Office Building and east of 17th Street, NW. The First Division Monument site currently includes components commemorating World War I, World War II, the Vietnam War, and Operation Desert Storm.
- The monument has continually evolved to accommodate the commemoration of additional military operations.
- The column and gold statue of the World War I component was constructed in the early 1920s and dedicated on October 4, 1924, to designs by architect Cass Gilbert. The site was then expanded to the west to include the World War II Memorial, dedicated in 1957 and designed by Gilbert's son, Cass Gilbert, Jr. The Vietnam War addition to the east was dedicated in 1977 and the small Operation Desert Storm plaque was dedicated in 1995.
- The monument components each include individual names in honor of First Division members.
- The changes to the monument were authorized in 2021. The First Infantry Division may make modifications to the First Division Monument to honor the dead of the First Infantry Division, United States Forces, in Operation Desert Storm; Operation Iraqi Freedom and New Dawn; and Operation Enduring Freedom.
- Modifications to the monument may include construction of additional plaques and stone plinths on which to put plaques.
- The applicant proposed the addition of three new stone plinths composed of granite, approximately ten feet wide by 32 inches tall, to be constructed north of the east planting bed. Each granite plinth would hold cast bronze plaques.
- The existing Operation Desert Storm plaque located to the east of the World War I column will be removed, and the names will be incorporated into the new plinths.
- NCPC reviewed the concept plans for the proposed modification in December 2021 and found the proposed modifications are consistent with the history of the monument and reflect the established design vocabulary of granite plinths and bronze plaques.

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### RECOMMENDATION

The Commission:

**Approves** the proposed modifications to the First Division Monument located in President's Park in Washington, DC.

**Encourages** the National Park Service and United States Secret Service to continue coordination and explore strategies that help ensure public access to the monument while considering security needs for President's Park and the White House complex.

### PROJECT REVIEW TIMELINE

<b>Previous actions</b>	- December 2021 – Commission provided comments on Concept Plans for Memorial Modification
<b>Remaining actions (anticipated)</b>	- None

### PROJECT ANALYSIS

#### Executive Summary

The National Park Service (NPS), in partnership with the Society of the First Infantry Division, proposes to modify the existing monument to commemorate First Infantry Division soldiers who served in Operation Iraqi Freedom, Operation New Dawn and Operation Enduring Freedom. The monument currently honors those who served in World War I, World War II, the Vietnam War, and Operation Desert Storm. The monument has expanded over time to accommodate additional commemorative components. As such, staff finds the proposed additions are not inconsistent with the history or evolution of the monument. The proposal includes the addition of three granite plinths with plaques that are consistent with existing design elements within the monument. The design is consistent with concept plans the Commission previously reviewed in December 2021. As such, staff recommends the **Commission approve the proposed modifications to the First Division Monument located in President's Park in Washington, DC.**

#### Background

The modification to the First Division Monument was authorized by Congress in 2019, allowing the Society of the First Infantry Division to move forward with plans to add service members names for several military operations. The project includes the addition of three stone plinths to accommodate plaques displaying approximately 27 names from Operation Desert Storm and 631 names from Operation Iraqi Freedom, Operation New Dawn and Operation Enduring Freedom. In addition, the existing Operation Desert Storm plaque located to the east of the World War I column would be removed, and the central planting bed restored. Three new stone plinths composed of granite, approximately ten feet wide by 32 inches tall, sloping up to 38 inches, would be constructed north of the east planting bed. Each granite plinth would hold cast bronze plaques. The

current location includes a taxus hedge row of plantings. The plantings would be replaced in kind or with an appropriate and similar replacement flanking the new plinths after their installation. NPS has indicated that all of the hedges on the north and south side will be replaced at the same time.

The First Division Monument site currently includes elements that commemorate World War I, World War II, the Vietnam War, and Operation Desert Storm. Each component includes the names of First Division members to honor their sacrifice. The monumental column and gold statue of the World War I component was constructed in the early 1920s and dedicated on October 4, 1924, to designs by architect Cass Gilbert. The site was then expanded to the west to include the World War II Memorial, dedicated in 1957 and designed by Gilbert's son, Cass Gilbert, Jr. The Vietnam War addition to the east was dedicated in 1977 and the small Operation Desert Storm plaque was dedicated in 1995. As such, the site has continually evolved to accommodate the commemoration of additional events.

Consistent with the history of the monument, NPS and the Society of the First Infantry Division plan to honor those from Operation Desert Storm, Operation Iraqi Freedom, Operation New Dawn, and Operation Enduring Freedom. The applicant explored several different locations for integrating new plinths with plaques. The selected location is east of the World War I component and north of the eastern planning bed. The low plinths are consistent with the existing plinths in the monument. The location would not affect any views or viewsheds, and reciprocal views to and from the Ellipse of President's Park are retained. The only loss of fabric includes approximately 30 feet of the taxus hedges, with the remaining northern and southern hedge rows being replaced in kind. These hedges have been replaced several times over the years when they have become overgrown as they are now. Both taxus and privet species have been installed in the past. As noted previously, the project would remove the existing Operation Desert Storm Plaque which appears temporary and restores the central planting plan to its original design. The applicant also identified the location of a potential future expansion to the west side of the monument, which would continue the symmetry of the site. However, the western expansion is not part of the current approval request.

### **Analysis**

In general, staff has not identified any concerns with the proposed modifications. The three plinths with associated plaques are consistent with the design vocabulary already in use within the monument. The project will result in the loss of some hedging, but the new plinths will retain the sense of enclosure and setting of the monument, without impacting views to or from the monument. As noted previously, the monument already includes the names of First Division members from previous military operations. Therefore, proposal is consistent with the original intent and evolution of the monument. The design is also consistent with the design previously reviewed by the Commission as a concept in December 2021.

As staff previously noted during concept review, President's Park is often closed to public access at the request of the United States Secret Service. The closures can restrict access to the monument. This may create challenges for those who seek to visit the monument or commemorate their loved

ones. As such, staff recommends the **Commission encourage the National Park Service and United States Secret Service to continue coordination and explore strategies that help ensure public access to the monument while considering security needs for President's Park and the White House complex.**

## **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. In particular, staff focused on policies related to historic preservation and visitor experience.

### **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. In this instance, the proposal is the expansion of an existing monument.

### **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 Section 106 consultation process should be initiated with concept review. NPS initiated consultation with the DC SHPO on July 9, 2021. On February 15, 2022, the DC SHPO concurred with the finding of no adverse effect, conditioned upon submittal of final plans, once fully approved; submission of a final archaeological technical report; and copies of all data generated (digital and paper) including GIS data and any additional associated records for curation, all prepared following DC Archaeology Guidelines. NCPC concurs with finding and designated NPS as lead federal agency for Section 106 purposes.

### **National Environmental Policy Act**

NCPC and NPS each have an independent responsibility to comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Due to the limited nature of the expansion and associated improvements, NPS applied categorical exclusion 3.3.C.18 which applies to the construction of minor structures, including small improved parking lots, in previously disturbed or developed areas. Likewise, pursuant to § 601.12 of NCPC's NEPA Regulations, NCPC has determined that the project can be categorically excluded from further environmental analysis based on categorical exclusion #2, which pertains to the "approval of the installation or restoration of minor site elements...." Prior to applying this categorical exclusion, NCPC staff determined that no extraordinary circumstances were present.

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## CONSULTATION

### Coordinating Committee

The Coordinating Committee reviewed the proposal at its March 15, 2023 meeting. Without objection, the Committee forwarded the project to the Commission with the statement that the proposal has been coordinated with all participating agencies. The participating agencies were: NCPC; the District of Columbia Office of Planning; the District Department of Transportation; the DC SHPO; the General Services Administration; and the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority.

### U.S. Commission of Fine Arts

The U.S. Commission of Fine Arts (CFA) reviewed the proposed monument modification at their March 16, 2023 meeting and approved the final memorial plans. The applicant evaluated several hedge planting configurations per the request of the CFA. The final design includes a double row of hedges on the north side per the CFA's recommendation (Alternative 2). The double row preserves the continuity of planting where the new plinths would have otherwise created a break. NCPC staff concur with this option. A copy of the action is attached.

## ONLINE REFERENCE

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

- Submission Package
- Project Synopsis

Prepared by Matthew Flis  
03/30/2023

## POWERPOINT (ATTACHED)

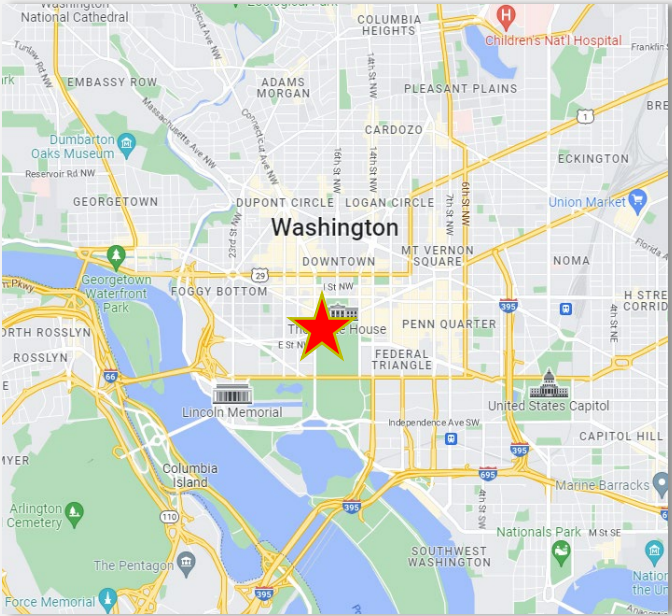
# First Division Monument Modification

17th Street and State Place, NW, Washington DC

Approval of Preliminary and Final Site Development Plans

United States Department of the Interior

# Site Location

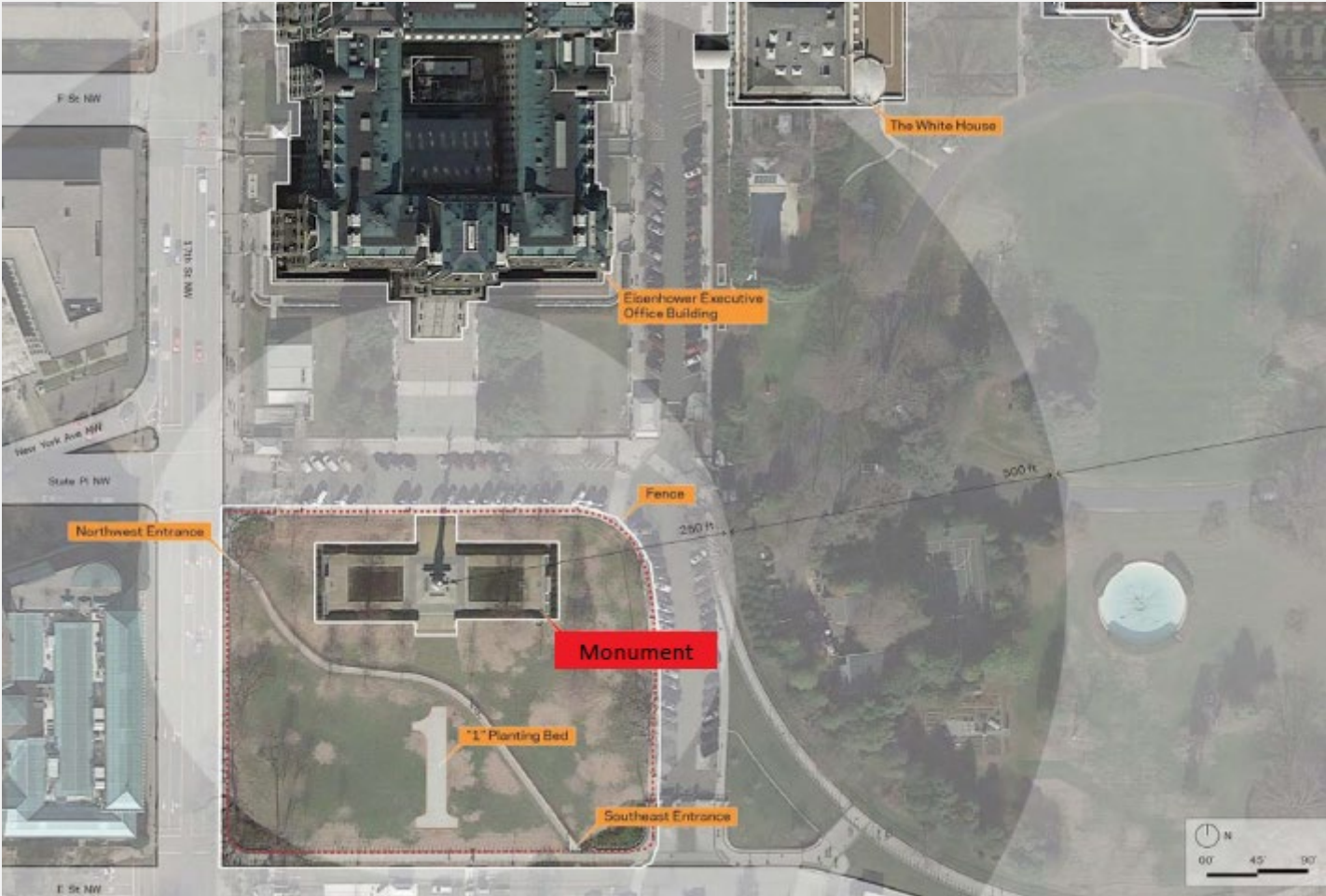


Location Map

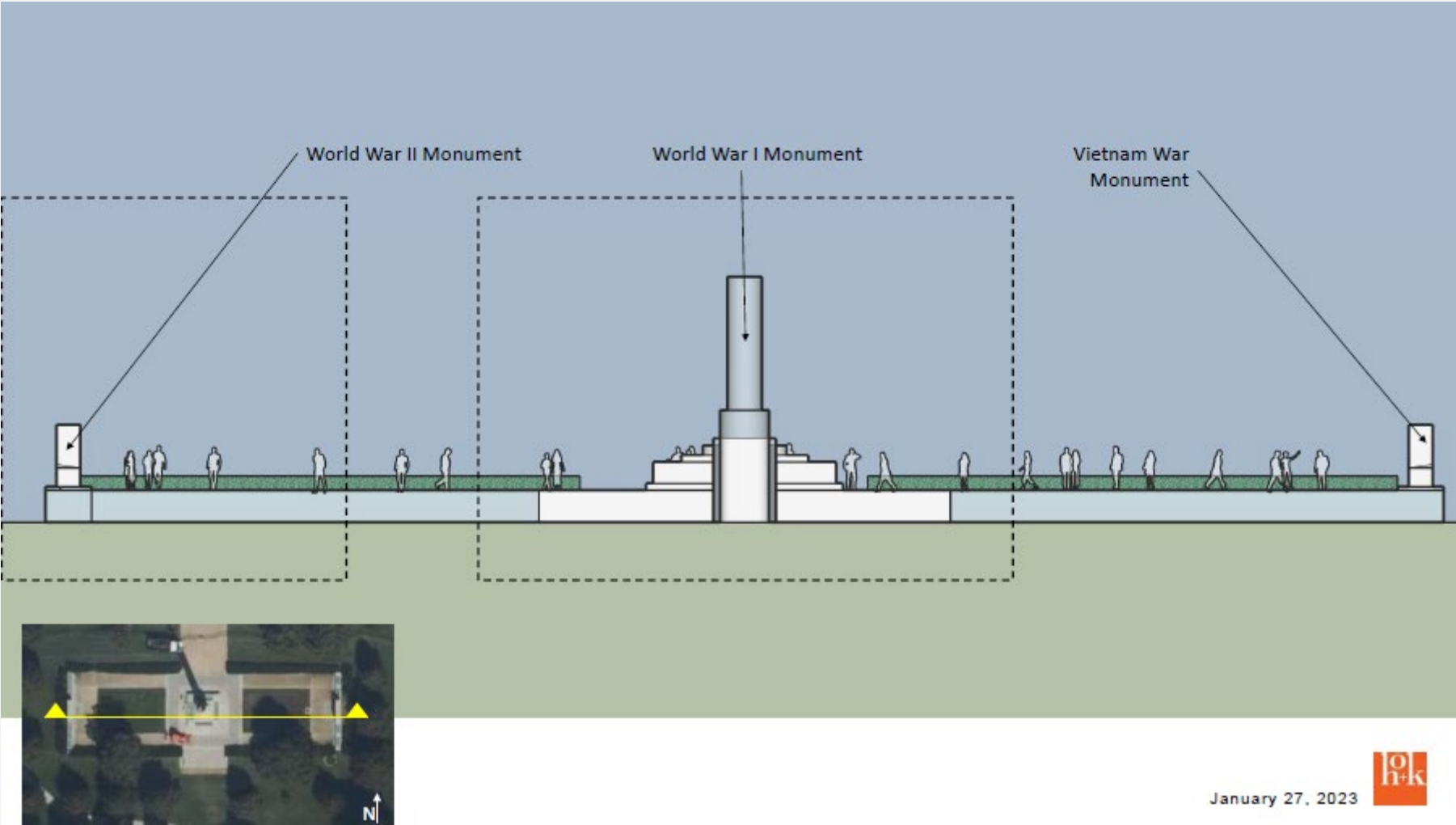
# Site Context



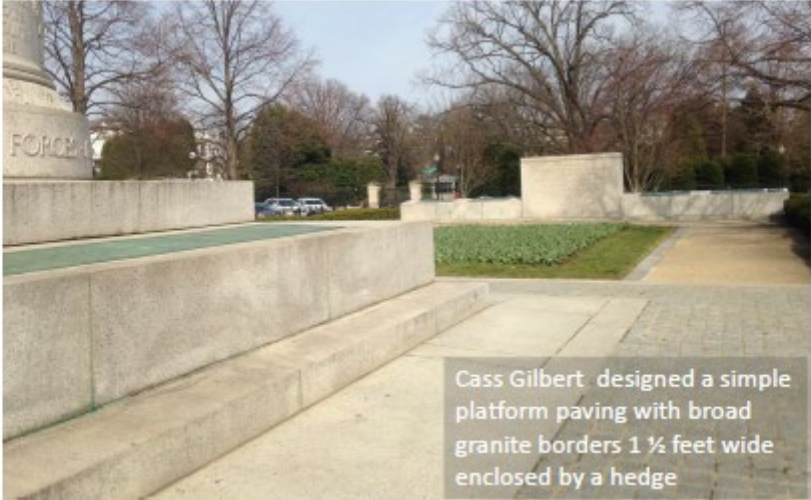
# Enlarged Site Context



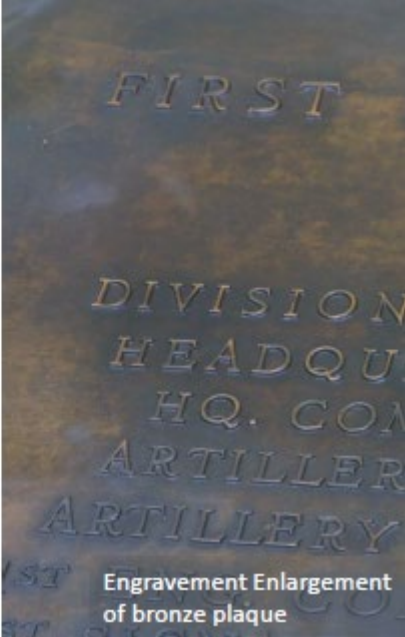
# Existing Site Section



# Existing Conditions - WWI



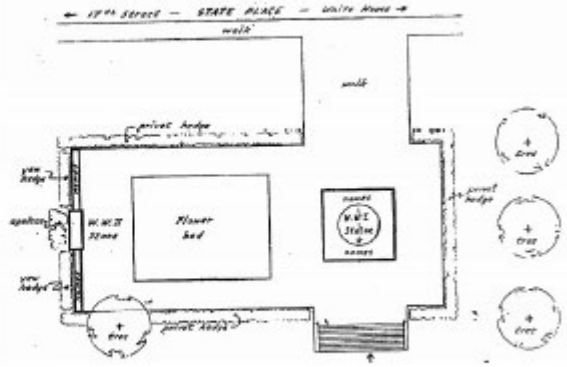
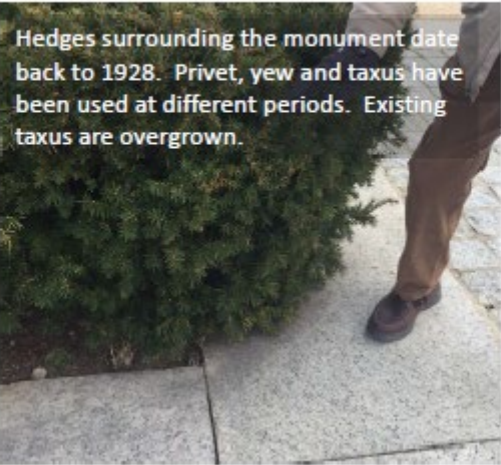
# Existing Conditions – WWII and Vietnam Addition



# Existing Conditions – Desert Storm

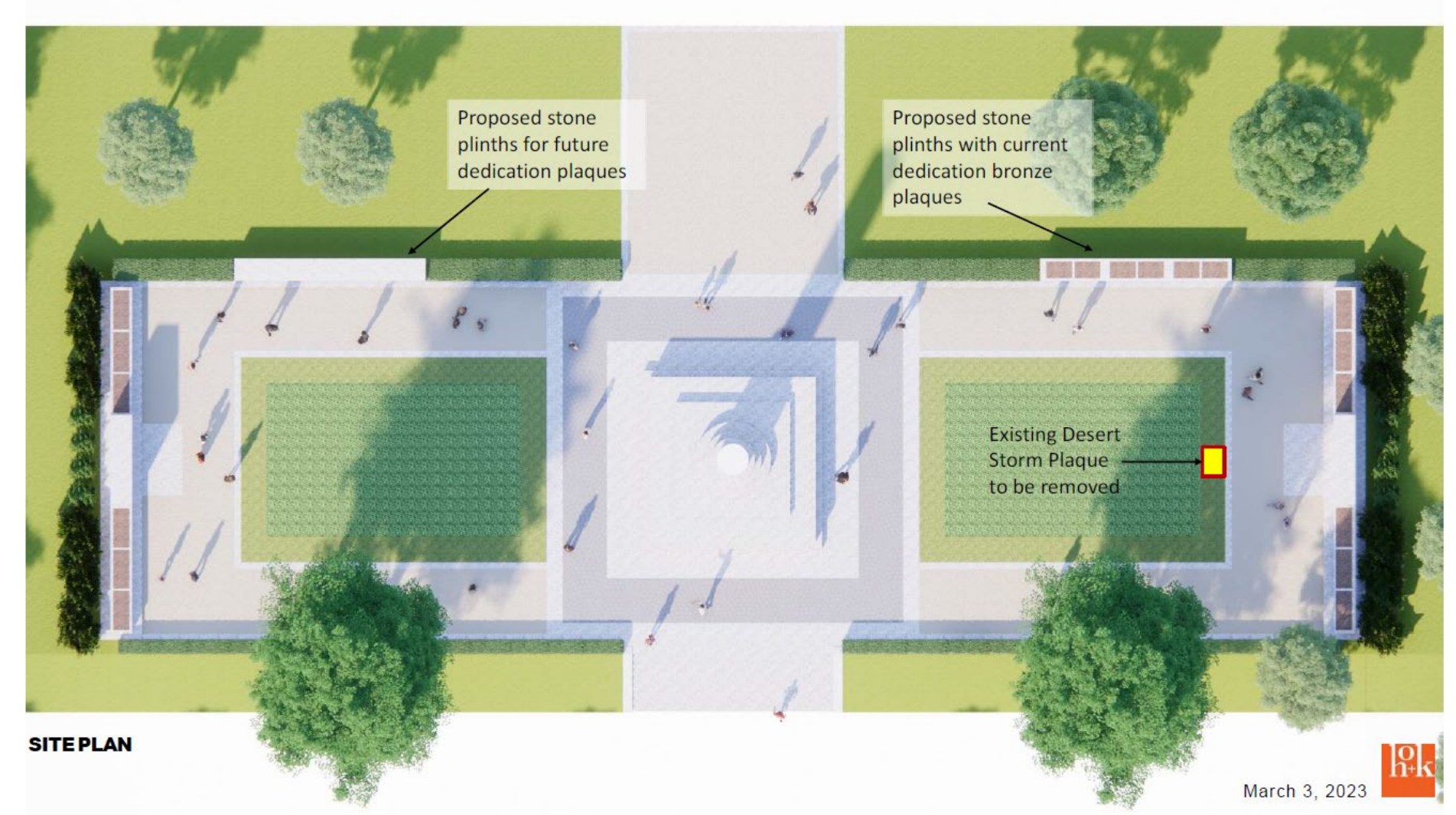


# Existing Conditions - Plantings

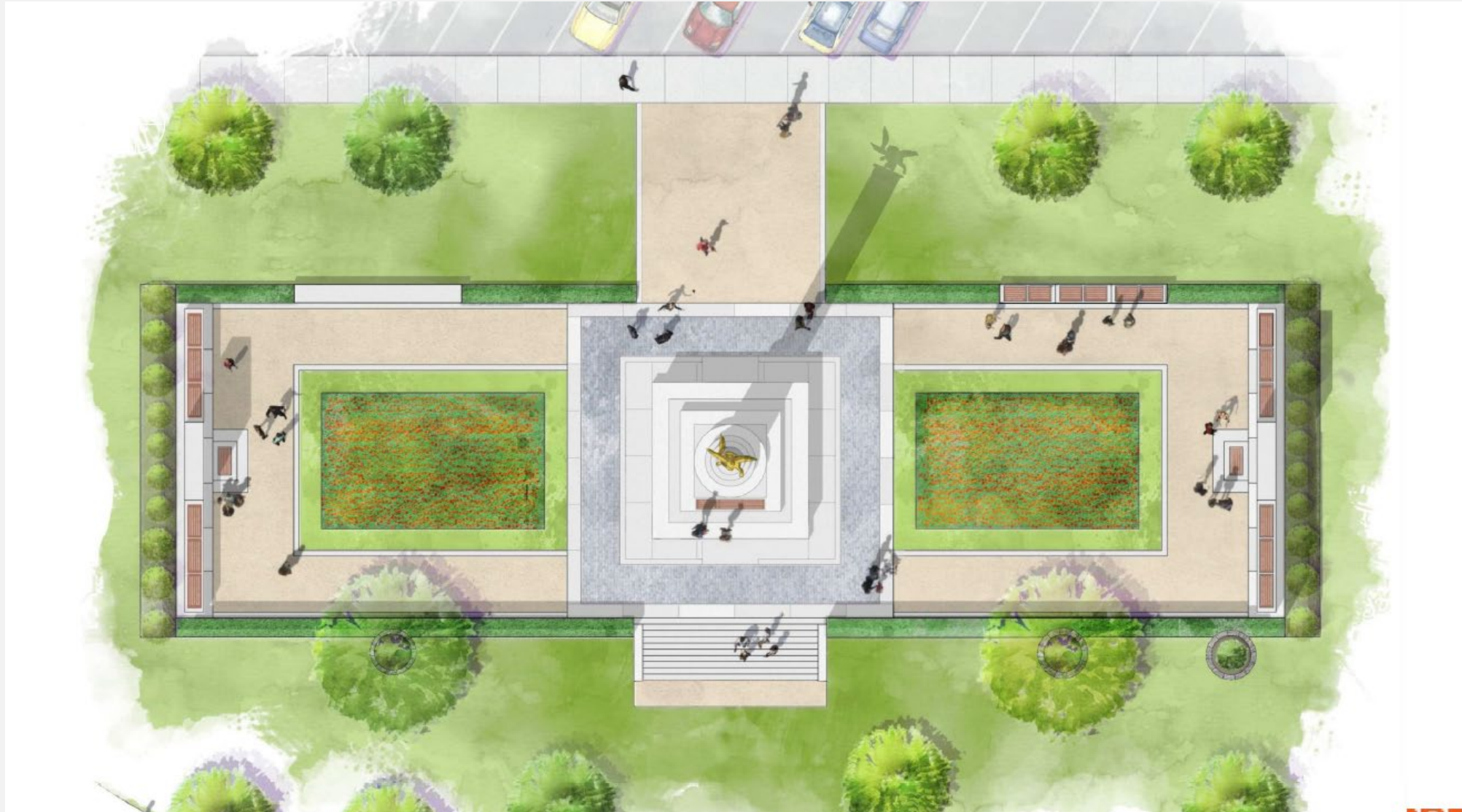


Planting Plan – 1973 prior to addition of the Vietnam monument

# Proposed Design



# Proposed Design



# Hedge Replacement – Double Row (Final Design)



# Hedge Replacement – Double Row (Final Design)




# Proposed Design – Hedge Replacement



PLANT SAMPLE FROM NURSERY



MATURE PLANT HEDGE

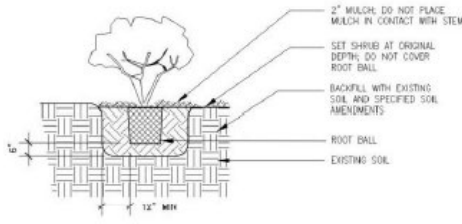
PLANT SCHEDULE							
SHRUBS	CODE	BOTANICAL NAME	COMMON NAME	SIZE	CONTAINER	HEIGHT	SPACING
	BW	BUXUS SINICA VAR. INSULARIS 'WINTERGREEN'	WINTERGREEN KOREAN BOXWOOD	7 GAL.	CONTAINER	36"	36" o.c.

- WINTERGREEN BOXWOOD FEATURE: great-looking, with oval leaves that feature a finely-textured look as their bright green hues darken slightly with age.
- TYPE: MULTI-STEMMED, DENSE, COMPACT EVERGREEN SHRUB, EASY TO SHAPE, FORMAL LOOKING, GREAT MATERIAL AS HEDGE
  - PEST AND DEER RESISTANT
  - HEIGHT: 2 - 4 FT, MATCHING HEIGHT TO THE NEW PROPOSED GRANITE MONUMENT
  - WIDTH: 2 - 3 FT
  - GROWTH: 1.5 - 2 IN PER YEAR, SLOW GROWING PLANT MATERIAL
  - WATER: AVERAGE
  - MAINTENANCE: AVERAGE
  - USDA HARDINESS ZONE: 4 - 9, THRIVES ALL THE WAY DOWN TO -10 DEGREES

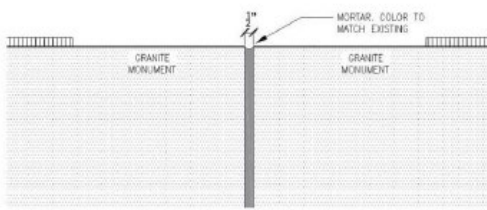
March 3, 2023 



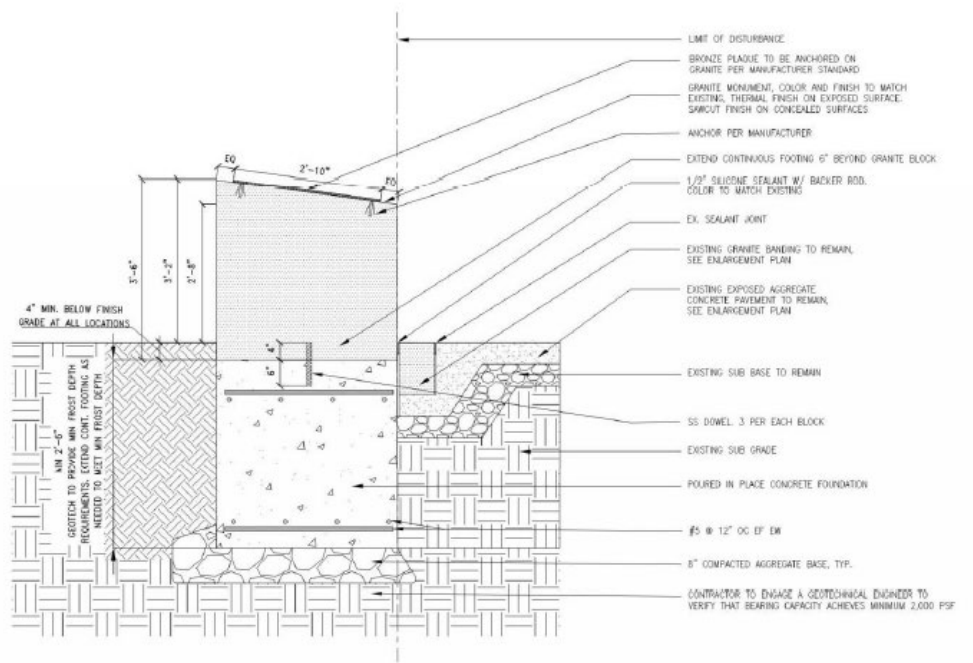
# Proposed Design – Construction Details



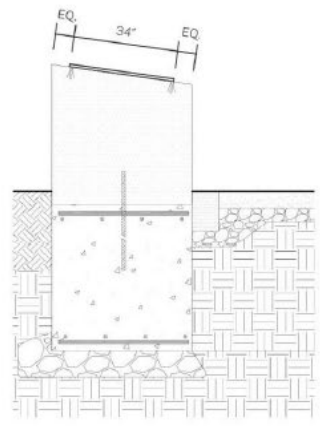
3 SHRUB PLANTING  
3/8" = 1'-0"



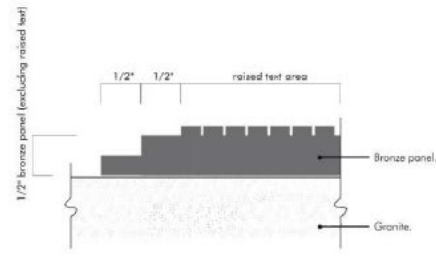
2 GRANITE MEMORIAL JOINT DETAIL SECTION  
3" = 1'-0"



1 GRANITE MEMORIAL WITH BRONZE PLAQUE DETAIL SECTION  
3/4" = 1'-0"



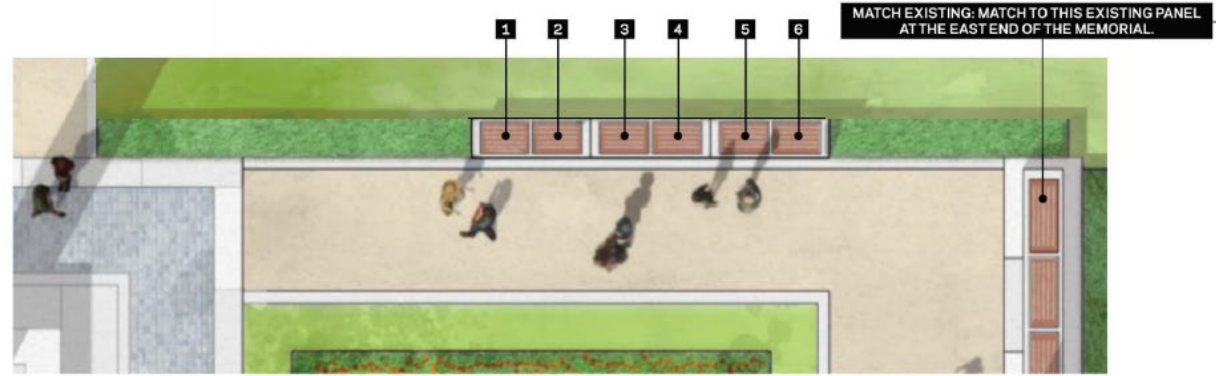
1 END VIEW DETAIL  
Scale: none



2 EDGE DETAIL  
Scale: full



3 END VIEW DETAIL  
Scale: none



4 SITE PLAN DETAIL  
Scale: none

March 3, 2023

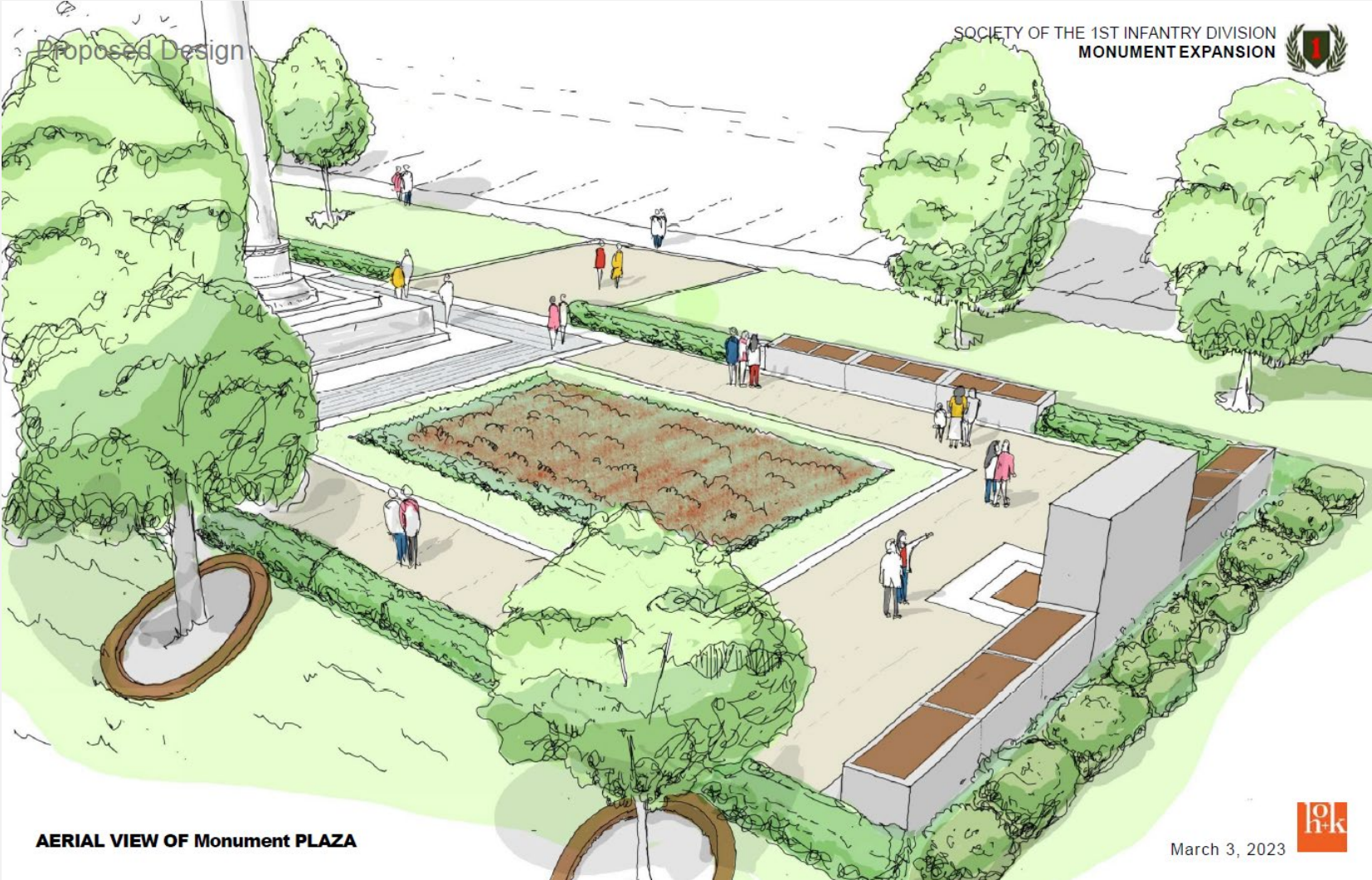
# Proposed Plaque



# Proposed Design – Looking East



# Proposed Design – Looking Northwest



# 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

23 March 2023

Dear Ms. Hall:

In its public meeting of 16 March conducted by videoconference, the Commission of Fine Arts reviewed a proposed final design for modifications to the First Division Monument, located in President's Park near 17th Street and State Place, NW. The Commission approved Alternative 2, which would add two new granite plinths within a continuous wide border of boxwood hedges on the north side of the memorial, and provided the following comments.

The Commission members expressed appreciation for the additional documentation of the proposed alterations, including views from the north. They observed that the approach to the monument is characterized by a clearly defined precinct—a symmetrical raised plaza surrounded by a perimeter hedge, interrupted only by stairs at the centers of the long north and south sides—which was designed to emphasize the colossal granite column surmounted by a gilded bronze statue of Victory. They reiterated their previous concern that the project team's preferred alternative would interrupt the plaza's green frame by leaving the backs of the new plinths exposed, which would fundamentally alter the perception of the monument as seen from the north. Therefore, they commended Alternative 2 as a simple and elegant solution that respects both the monument and its formal setting.

The Commission appreciates the proposal's anticipation of future commemorative expansion and looks forward to the completion of the addition to this important monument. As always, the staff is available to assist you.

Sincerely,



Thomas E. Luebke, FAIA  
Secretary

Kym A. Hall, Area Director  
Region 1 – National Capital Area  
National Park Service  
1100 Ohio Drive, SW  
Washington, DC 20242

cc: Suzette Goldstein, HOK  
Lt. Gen. Thomas Rahme, Society of the First Infantry Division