



Executive Director's Recommendation

Commission Meeting: September 7, 2023

PROJECT National Desert Shield and Desert Storm Memorial Updates National Mall 23rd Street and Constitution Avenue, NW Washington, DC	NCPC FILE NUMBER 7745
SUBMITTED BY United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service	NCPC MAP FILE NUMBER 1.44(73.10)45710
REVIEW AUTHORITY Commemorative Works per 40 U.S.C. § 8905	APPLICANT'S REQUEST Approval of revised final site development plans
	PROPOSED ACTION Approve revised final site development plans
	ACTION ITEM TYPE Staff Presentation

PROJECT SUMMARY

The National Park Service (NPS), in collaboration with the National Desert Storm War Memorial Association, has submitted revised final site development plans for the proposed National Desert Shield and Desert Storm Memorial (Memorial) to be located at the southwest corner of the intersection of 23rd Street, NW and Constitution Avenue, NW in Washington, DC. The Commission approved the final site development plans for the Memorial in December 2022 with strong support for its commemorative theme and design elements. Four updates are proposed, including pedestrian safety improvements at the corner of 23rd Street and Constitution Avenue; a revised stormwater management approach; an updated planting palette; and the addition of a flagpole. Overall staff finds the updates are relatively minor and do not alter the memorial concept or create any new impacts.

KEY INFORMATION

- Public Law 113-291 states the National Desert Storm War Memorial Association may establish the National Desert Shield and Desert Storm 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 Commemorative Works Act.
- NCPC, the Commission of Fine Arts (CFA), and the Department of the Interior must each approve the site and design for new commemorative works.
- NCPC approved the final site development plans for the Memorial in December 2022. CFA approved the revised concept for the Memorial in October 2022 and delegated the review of final plans to CFA staff. The proposed revisions will be incorporated into the final CFA staff review this fall.

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- Four updates are proposed, including pedestrian safety improvements at the corner of 23rd Street and Constitution Avenue; a revised stormwater management approach; an updated planting palette; and the addition of a flagpole.
 - The proposed revisions have been coordinated with all applicable federal and District agencies, including the District Department of Energy and the Environment and the District State Historic Preservation Office.
 - The Memorial broke ground on July 14, 2022 and is currently under construction.
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RECOMMENDATION

The Commission:

Approves the revised final site development plans for the National Desert Shield and Desert Storm War Memorial.

Finds the proposed revisions do not significantly alter the approved Memorial design or create any new impacts.

Finds the proposed pedestrian safety improvements are complimentary to the Memorial and the streetscape. Similar safety measures are used at the United States Institute of Peace site located just north of the intersection.

Recommends that if NPS and the U.S. Park Police determine pedestrian safety improvements are necessary on the east corner of 23rd Street and Constitution Avenue in the future, those improvements should be complimentary to the current proposal.

Notes the originally-approved design intended to capture and reuse rainwater to irrigate the Memorial's planted areas. The revised design proposes to treat rainwater via bioretention and use potable water for irrigation.

Encourages limited use of the proposed irrigation system after plantings are established to reduce potable water use.

Notes the refined planting palette uses pollinator-friendly species, including milkweed, in response to Commission comments.

Supports incorporating a flagpole on the Memorial site and finds the proposed location does not interrupt views of the Lincoln Memorial.

PROJECT REVIEW TIMELINE

Previous actions	-July 2017 – Comments on Site Selection -December 2017 – Comments on Site Selection -April 2018 – Comments on Site Selection -January 2020 – Comments on Concept Plans -March 2022 – Comments on Preliminary Site Development Plans - December 2022 – Approval of Final Site Development Plans
Remaining actions (anticipated)	– None

PROJECT ANALYSIS

Executive Summary

The Commission approved the final site development plans for the National Desert Shield and Desert Storm War Memorial at its December 2022 meeting. At that time, the Commission noted strong support for the design of the commemorative elements and commended several aspects of the design including its landscape-oriented approach, the proposed material palette, and the lighting and signage approach. The Commission also noted that the applicant was working to refine the planting palette and incorporate milkweed species at that time. The proposed revisions include adjustments to the stormwater management approach; the addition of a flagpole; new pedestrian safety improvements at the corner of 23rd Street and Constitution Avenue; and updates to the planting palette. As the proposed revisions are limited in scope, staff recommends the Commission **finds the proposed revisions do not significantly alter the approved Memorial design or create any new impacts**. Therefore, staff recommends the Commission **approves the revised final site development plans for the National Desert Shield Desert Storm War Memorial**.

Analysis

The proposed revisions are the result of additional coordination between NPS and federal and District agencies, including the United States Park Police (USPP), the Commission of Fine Arts, and the District Department of Energy and Environment, that followed the Commission's final approval in December 2022. The following bullet points describe the proposed revisions and the impetus for their addition.

- *Pedestrian Safety Improvements at the Corner of 23rd Street and Constitution Avenue*

The proposal includes the addition of four stainless steel bollards located approximately eight to ten feet behind the curb line. The bollards themselves will measure 30 inches in height and six inches in diameter and will be spaced six feet apart. Two stone seat walls are also included in the pedestrian safety improvements. The stone walls would measure 12 feet long and 18 inches in both depth and height. They are proposed in alignment with the inner edge of the north and east street tree wells located nearest to the corner of 23rd Street and Constitution Avenue. The stone used for the seat walls will be slabs of Giallo Antico granite, which is the same granite being used throughout the Memorial design. Overall, staff recommends the Commission **finds the proposed pedestrian safety improvements are complimentary to the Memorial and the streetscape. Similar safety measures are used at the United States Institute of Peace site located just north of the intersection.** The addition of bollards and seat walls serve as a visual deterrent to potentially errant high-speed vehicular traffic (i.e. vehicles turning left onto 23rd Street from Constitution Avenue), as requested by the United States Park Police.

In addition, the Global War on Terrorism Memorial is being considered on the site immediately opposite of the Memorial on the east side of 23rd Street, NW. Therefore, staff suggests the Commission **recommends that if NPS and the U.S. Park Police determine pedestrian safety improvements are necessary on the east corner of 23rd Street and Constitution Avenue in the future, those improvements should be complimentary to the current proposal.**

- *Stormwater Management Approach*

Staff recommends the Commission **notes the originally-approved design intended to capture and reuse rainwater to irrigate the Memorial's planted areas. The revised design proposes to treat rainwater via bioretention and use potable water for irrigation.** The bioretention area is proposed at the southwest portion of the site, at the bottom of the "dune" berm. It is designed to provide a seamless visual transition between the adjacent lawn/recreation area and the carex plantings proposed on the berm with additional carex species that will maintain an evergreen appearance and grow to a mature height that would conceal the approximate two-foot depth of the bioretention basin. The size of the bioretention basin is dictated by the associated drainage area, functional side slope requirements, and feasibility of grade tie-ins to the larger memorial site.

NPS indicated that incorporation of the bioretention area allows for the removal of the previously proposed irrigation skid and cistern, resulting in a more efficient, cost-effective, and maintenance-friendly stormwater management system. Staff suggests the Commission **encourages limited use of the proposed irrigation system after plantings are established to reduce potable water use.** This is an environmentally sensitive approach that balances water conservation with the need for irrigation as plants develop their root systems over the first two- to three- growing seasons.

- *Planting Palette*

The planting palette is updated to include diversified tree species and a simplified palette of the interior “mini dune” plantings to resemble a desert oasis and incorporate milkweed species, in response to feedback received from the Commission of Fine Arts and the Commission at its December 2022 final review. Overall, staff **notes the refined planting palette uses pollinator-friendly species, including milkweed, in response to Commission comments.**

- *Flagpole*

A 25-foot height flagpole is proposed near the main entrance to the Memorial on 23rd Street, in alignment with the street trees. NPS indicates that the flagpole will serve to reinforce the historic integrity of the Memorial site and its relationship to other war memorials in the vicinity. Overall, staff recommends the Commission **supports incorporating a flagpole on the Memorial site and finds the proposed location does not interrupt views of the Lincoln Memorial.**

CONFORMANCE TO EXISTING PLANS, POLICIES AND RELATED GUIDANCE

Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital

The Memorial design was reviewed for consistency with the Federal Elements of the Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital. The proposed revisions to the Memorial are not inconsistent with the Comprehensive 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 has designated NPS the lead agency for Section 106 review. For the overall design, the DC SHPO concurred with the NPS finding of “no adverse effect” on historic properties in a letter dated October 14, 2020, conditioned upon additional consultation on any significant alterations to the proposed design. The SHPO has reviewed the most recent design updates and determined that the changes do not appear to have potential for adverse effects.

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. Based on staff review of the final project materials, consultation with the public and applicant, and information documented in the final EA, staff drafted a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) that describes mitigation for potential future project impacts. The FONSI formally concludes that the project would result in no significant

impacts. The proposed updates do not significantly alter the potential impacts of the proposed memorial.

CONSULTATION

Coordinating Committee

The Coordinating Committee reviewed the proposal at its August 16, 2023 meeting. The Committee forwarded the proposed comments on the updates to the Commission with the statement that the proposal has been coordinated with all participating agencies. The participating agencies were: NCPC; NPS; the General Services Administration; the Commission of Fine Arts; 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. As noted above, CFA approved a revised concept at its October 20, 2022 meeting where the Commission expressed strong support for the proposal and suggested refinement to simplify the planting palette. CFA delegated review of the final design to staff which will be reviewed at its meeting in September 2023.

ONLINE REFERENCE

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

- Submission Package
- Project Synopsis

Prepared by Stephanie Free
08/15/2023

POWERPOINT (ATTACHED)

National Desert Shield and Desert Storm Memorial Updates

National Mall

23rd Street and Constitution Avenue, Washington DC

Approval of Final Site Development Plans

United States Department of the Interior

Project Summary

Commission Meeting Date: September 7, 2023

NCPC Review Authority: 40 U.S.C. § 8905

Applicant Request: Approval of Revised Final Site Development Plans

Session: Consent Calendar

NCPC Review Officer: Stephanie Free

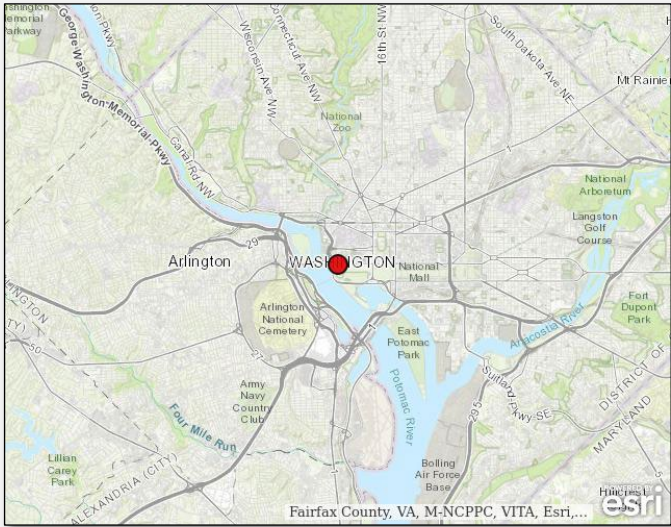
NCPC File Number: 7745

Project Summary:

The National Park Service has submitted updates to the design of the National Desert Shield and Desert Storm Memorial. NCPC approved the final Memorial in December 2022. The submitted updates would be an amendment to the NCPC-approved design. The updates include:

- *Revision to the stormwater management approach.* The revision proposes to install a bioretention basin at the bottom of the south “dune.” The bioretention basin will be planted with Carex species to transition the landscape from the adjacent lawn area to the dune plantings. The landscape will now be irrigated with potable water.
- *Location of a flagpole on the Memorial site.* The flagpole is proposed near the entrance to the Memorial on 23rd Street. The pole is set in alignment with the street trees to avoid impacts to the view of the Lincoln Memorial.
- *Pedestrian safety elements at the corner of 23rd Street and Constitution Avenue.* The proposal includes 4 bollards and two 18-inch height stone seat walls that align with the street tree planter boxes on 23rd and Constitution.
- *Updates to the planting palette.* The plant palette is simplified to strengthen the experience of moving past the dune walls to the central space reminiscent of an oasis.

Site Location

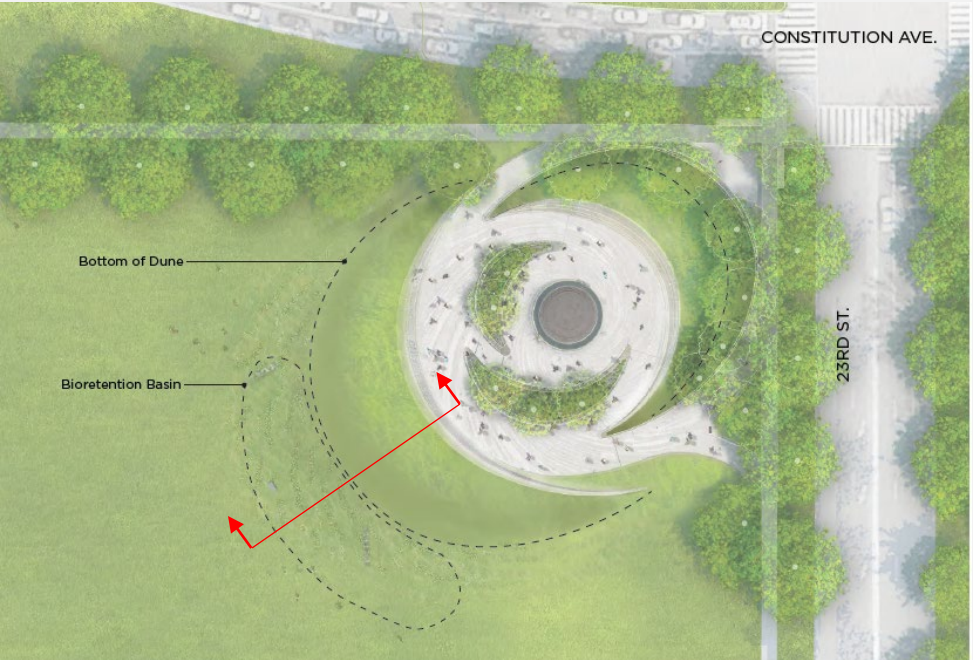


Location Map

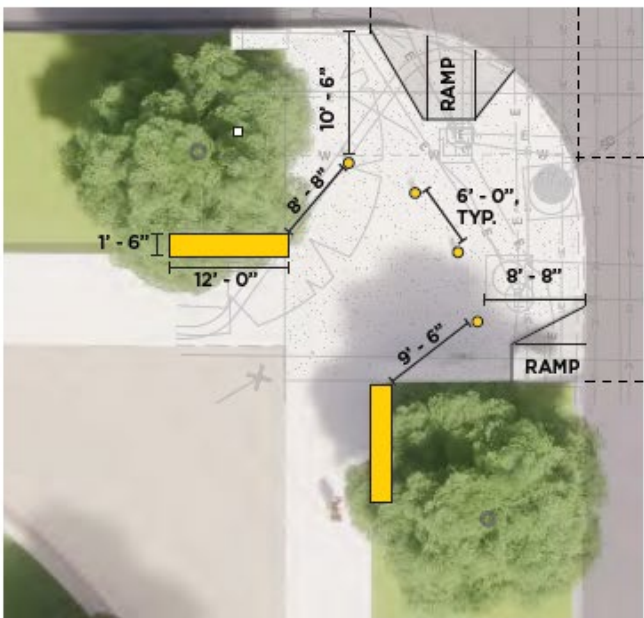
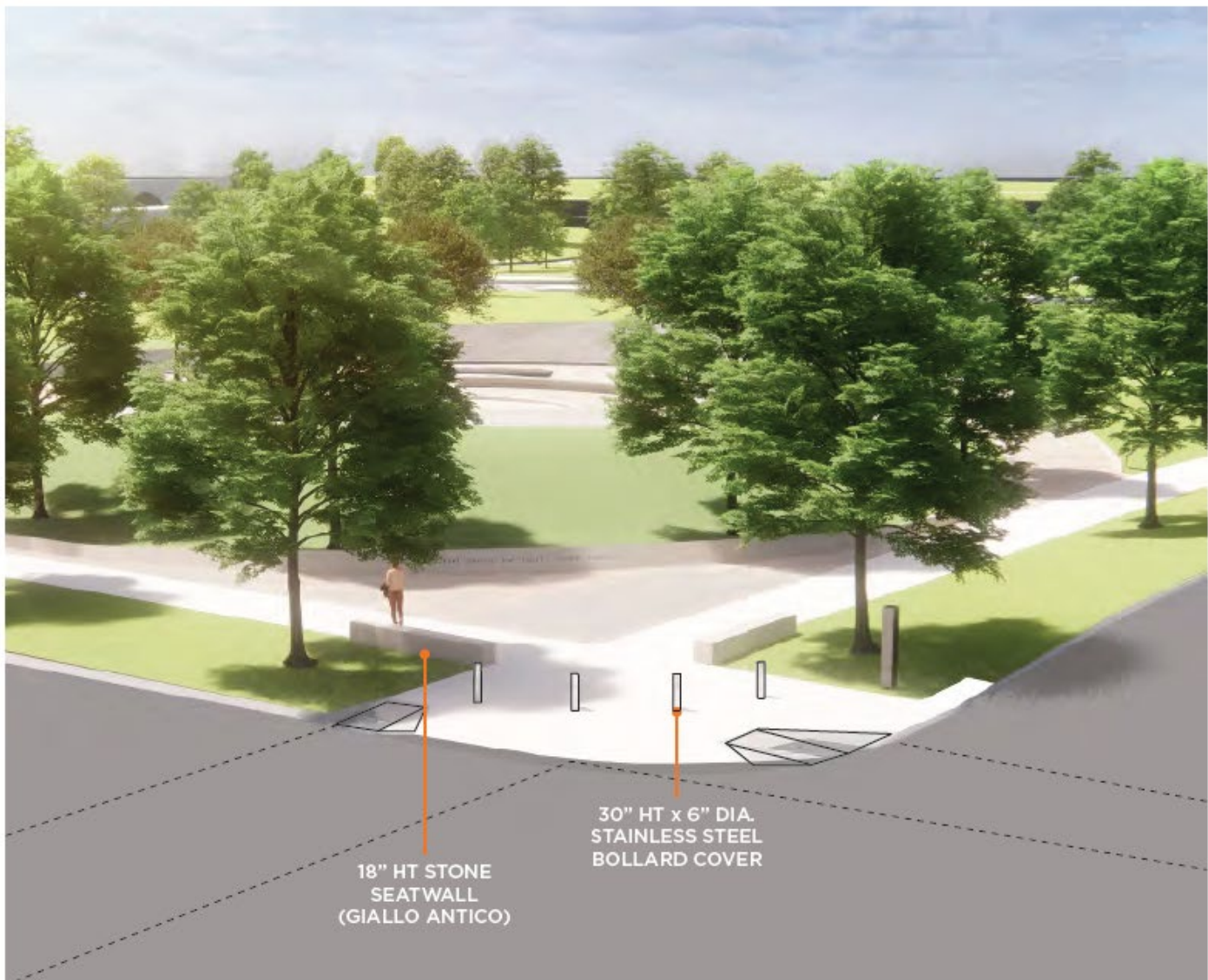
Site Overview – Design Updates



Bioretention Basin

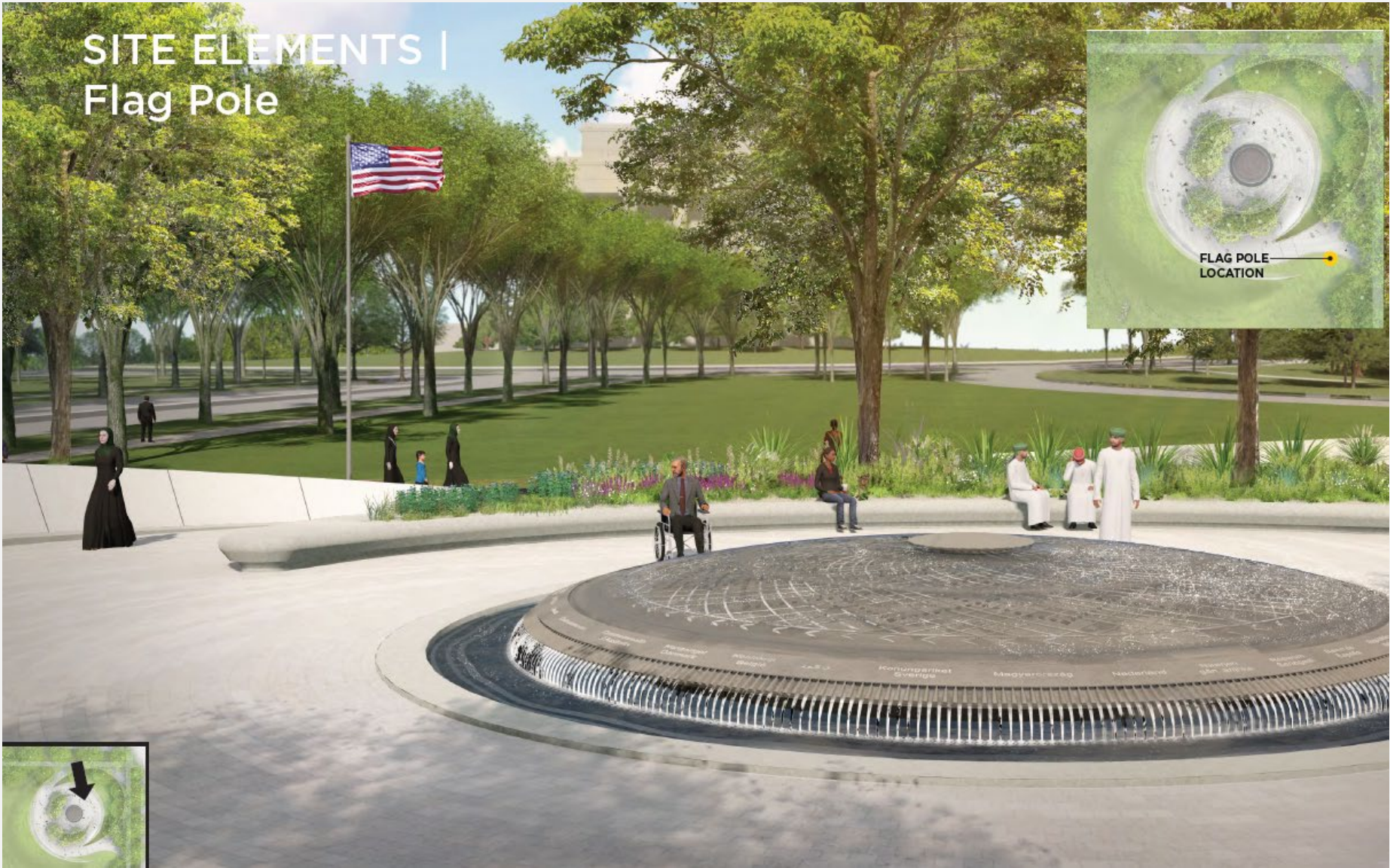


Pedestrian Safety

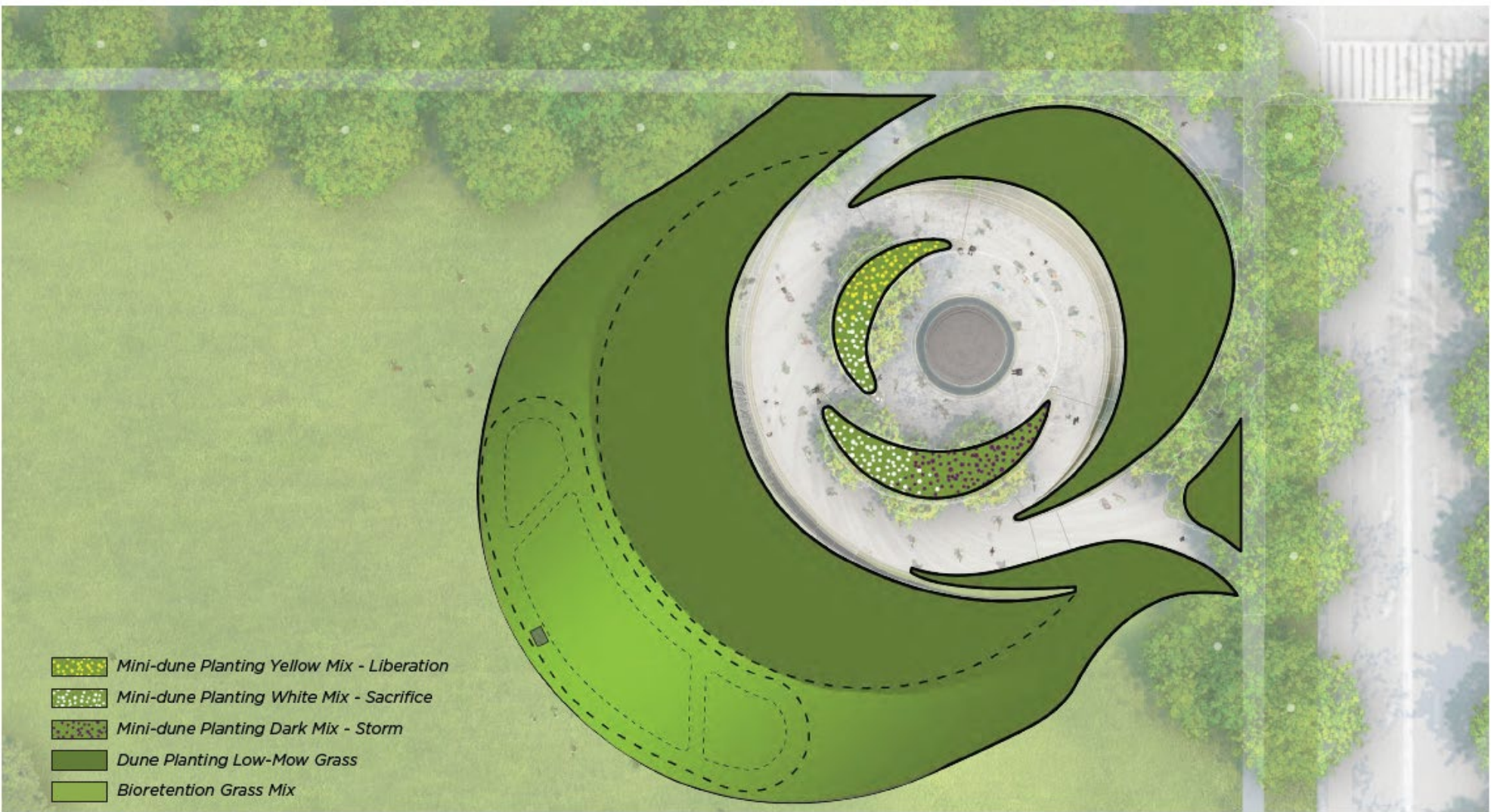


VIEW FROM EAST

Flagpole



Planting Palette - Overall



Vegetative plantings will reflect the Memorial's dune landforms. Along the left-hook progression in the Memorial's interior, the mini dunes' planting palette will transition from dark tones to yellow.

Planting Palette - Trees



Cladastris Kentukea - American Yellowwood



Spring Flowers



Nyssa Sylvatica - Tupelo



Fall Leaves



Ulmus x 'Morton Glossy' - Triumph Elm



Proposed Trees to replace Existing Allee Trees

Planting Palette – Mini Dunes



Schizachyrium scoparium
'Prairie Blues'
(little bluestem)



Bouteloua curtipendula
(sideoats grass)



Sesleria autumnalis
(autumn moor grass)



Yucca glauca
(soapweed yucca)



Viola pedata
(bird's foot violet)



Asclepias verticillata
(whorled milkweed)



Euphorbia corollata
(flowering spurge)



Asclepias syriaca
(common milkweed)



Achillea 'Moonshine'
(yarrow)



Solidago sphacelata
'Golden Fleece'
(autumn goldenrod)



Liatris aspera
(rough blazing star)



Penstemon pallidus
(pale beardtongue)



Antennaria plantaginifolia
(pussytoes)



Symphyotrichum ericoides
(heath aster)



Baptisia tinctoria
(wild indigo)



Penstemon digitalis
'Husker Red'
(foxglove beardtongue)



Euphorbia corollata
(flowering spurge)



Artemisia stelleriana
'Silver Brocade'
(beach wormwood)



Penstemon pallidus
(pale beardtongue)



Ranunculus fascicularis
(early buttercup)

Planting Palette – Mini Dunes

Botanical Name	Common Name	Native Range ¹	Area	Category	Height	Width	OC	Pollinator Value ²	Flower & Foliage Color	Spring												Sun	Water	KEY: 🍄 food 🐛 larval host 🏠 nesting habitat
										Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb			
<i>Bouteloua curtipendula</i>	sideoats grass	US, including Mid-Atlantic	ALL	grass	18-30"	18-24"	18"	🐛	🍄													full sun	dry	
<i>Schizachyrium scoparium</i>	'Prairie Blues' little bluestem	US, including Mid-Atlantic	DARK	grass	24-36"	12-24"	18"	🐛	🍄													full sun	dry to medium	
<i>Sesleria autumnalis</i>	autumn moor grass	Southeastern Europe	ALL	grass	8-12"	6"-12"	12"	🐛	🍄													full sun to part shade	dry to medium	
<i>Yucca glauca</i>	soapweed yucca	Mid-west US	ALL	perennial	16-20"	24-36"	36"	🍄	🍄													full sun	dry	
<i>Artemisia stelleriana</i>	'Silver Brocade' beach wormwood	Northeast Asia & Alaska	DARK	perennial	6-12"	12-30"	24"	🐛	🍄													full sun	dry to medium	
<i>Asclepias syriaca</i>	common milkweed	Eastern US, including Mid-Atlantic	DARK	perennial	24-36"	8-12"	12"	🍄	🍄													full sun	dry to medium	
<i>Liatris aspera</i>	rough blazing star	Eastern US, including Mid-Atlantic	DARK	perennial	24-36"	12-18"	18"	🍄	🍄													full sun	dry to medium	
<i>Penstemon digitalis</i>	'Husker Red' foxglove beardtongue	Eastern US, including Mid-Atlantic	DARK	perennial	28-32"	15-18"	18"	🍄	🍄													full sun to part shade	dry	
<i>Viola pedata</i>	bird's-foot violet	Eastern North America	DARK	perennial	4-12"	4-12"	12"	🍄	🍄													part shade to shade	dry	
<i>Phlox divaricata</i>	'Blue Moon' woodland phlox	Eastern US, including Mid-Atlantic	DARK	perennial	12-18"	24-32"	24"	🍄	🍄													part shade	moist, well-drained soils	
<i>Antennaria plantaginifolia</i>	pussytoes	Eastern US, including Mid-Atlantic	WHITE	perennial	6-12"	8-18"	12"	🍄	🍄													full sun	dry to medium	
<i>Physostegia virginiana</i>	'Miss Manners' obedient plant	Eastern US, including Mid-Atlantic	WHITE	perennial	24-30"	24-30"	24"	🍄	🍄													full sun	medium	
<i>Penstemon palidus</i>	pale beardtongue	Eastern US, including Mid-Atlantic	WHITE	perennial	18-30"	12-18"	12"	🍄	🍄													full sun to part shade	dry to medium	
<i>Euphorbia corollata</i>	flowering spurge	SE Canada to Central, Eastern US	WHITE	perennial	12-24"	12-24"	12-18"	🍄	🍄													full sun to part shade	dry	
<i>Symphotrichum ericoides</i> (syn. <i>Aster ericoides</i>)	heath aster	US, including Mid-Atlantic	WHITE	perennial	12-36"	12-24"	24"	🍄	🍄													full sun	dry to medium	
<i>Asclepias verticillata</i>	whorled milkweed	Eastern US, including Mid-Atlantic	WHITE / YELLOW	perennial	12-30"	12-24"	18"	🍄	🍄													full sun to part shade	dry to medium	
<i>Achillea</i>	'Moonshine' yarrow	n.a. (sterile interspecific hybrid)	YELLOW	perennial	12-24"	8-12"	12"	🍄	🍄													full sun	dry to medium	
<i>Baptisia tinctoria</i>	yellow wild indigo	Eastern US	YELLOW	perennial	24-36"	24-36"	24"	🍄	🍄													full sun to part shade	dry to medium	
<i>Ranunculus fascicularis</i>	early buttercup	Eastern US, including Mid-Atlantic	YELLOW	perennial	9"	6"	6"	🍄	🍄													full sun	dry	
<i>Solidago sphacelata</i>	'Golden Fleece' autumn goldenrod	SE United States, including lower Mid-Atlantic	YELLOW	perennial	18-24"	24-36"	30"	🍄	🍄													full sun to part shade	dry to medium	

¹The Biota of North America Program; Missouri Botanic Garden Plant Finder

²U.S. Department of Transportation Ecoregional Revegetation Application (ERA)