

I am an architect who has been practicing in Washington DC for almost 50 years. I am also an inveterate history buff, especially of American history. As both, I appreciate the profound significance that DC's iconic buildings have on the symbolic expression of that history. The very fabric of the Federal City is in itself a monument to the founding of this country, a constitutional republic based on the radical idea that the people can govern themselves. Now, on the eve of the 250th anniversary of that idea, I fear that the National Capital Planning Commission, in conjunction w/ the National Park Service, is about to approve and embark on a project that will destroy one of the most symbolic aspects of that physical monument. That project is the proposed triumphal arch at Memorial Circle.

NCPC and NPS has already received thousands of comments, 99% of which are adamantly opposed to construction of this arch. Major objections are based on important considerations: safety (pedestrian, vehicular *and* air!); design (the height and mass of the arch is wildly inappropriate); environment (no Environmental Impact Study has been done); legal (various federal laws governing construction of federal monuments as well as those requiring adherence to local review processes have been flouted); funding (Congress must appropriate this and to date has not); structural (can the island on which Memorial Circle sits support the arch's massive stone and concrete piers?).

But the most important one, that threatens the monumental expression of the Federal City as a symbol of American democracy, is the destruction of the iconic axis between the Lincoln Memorial and Arlington House. Described on NPS's own website as the Memorial Avenue Corridor, this axis was 'conceived as a grand entryway to Arlington Cemetery and a symbolic link between the Lincoln Memorial and Arlington House.' The sightline established between the DC and Virginia anchors was intentional and meant to symbolize the call for national reconciliation that occurred after the Civil War.

And this it has, profoundly, majestically, meaningfully. But over the years, the 'Memorial Avenue Corridor' has become so much more: not only as an integral part of the nation's architecture of remembrance, but as a profound memorial for veterans, for families of the fallen buried at ANC, for all Americans who honor and cherish the service rendered by our troops. The monstrously inappropriate size of this 'triumphal arch' will block this sightline, destroying the visual connection and its symbolic memorial to sacrifice, honor and valor.

NCPC must stop this obscene proposal before it is ever built. And before it can further desecrate the brave men and women who are buried at Arlington National Cemetery.