



Commission Action

July 9, 2026

PROJECT New Monumental Arch George Washington Memorial Parkway Memorial Avenue Washington, DC	NCPC FILE NUMBER 8778 NCPC MAP FILE NUMBER 1.45(73.10)46221
SUBMITTED BY United States Department of the Interior	APPLICANT'S REQUEST Approval of preliminary site and building plans
REVIEW AUTHORITY Federal Projects in the District per 40 U.S.C. § 8722(b)(1) and (d)	ACTION TAKEN Approved preliminary site and building plans with comments

The Commission:

Approves the preliminary site and building plans for the proposed Monumental Arch, located at Memorial Circle on Columbia Island in Washington, DC, with comments to be addressed prior to final review.

Supports the purpose of the project to celebrate America's Semiquincentennial.

Notes the general site was identified as a location for potential design features as part of the McMillan Commission (1902) and Arlington Bridge Commission (1925); and

Notes, as with these previously contemplated designs, any new monumental structure at this location must balance urban design, visitor experience, historic preservation, transportation, and other considerations.

Notes that, in response to the Commission's concept review requests, the applicant has provided additional information regarding various topics as outlined in this report and further detailed in the analysis.

Height of Buildings Act

Notes that NCPC's role as the central planning agency for the federal government in the nation's capital has included application of the Height of Buildings Act to preserve the horizontal skyline of the District.

Notes that in light of the applicant submission, NCPC is continuing to consider the positions regarding the Height of Buildings Act and whether it is binding on the federal government, which the Commission will need to decide prior to taking final action on the project.

Requests the applicant provide a justification for the project's height when the project returns to NCPC for final approval.

Pedestrian Accessibility

Notes the Commission requested a transportation or traffic study that evaluated the proposed pedestrian access to ensure that visitors can avoid pedestrian and vehicular conflicts.

Notes the proposed design has been updated to include four full traffic signals at each of the eight pedestrian crossings, instead of flashing pedestrian signals, as well as eliminating vehicular merge movements through the circle, including northbound and westbound traffic movements around the circle from northbound Washington Boulevard, improving driver expectations.

Finds traffic movement will be simplified and the addition of pedestrian-activated traffic signals will provide safer pedestrian and bicycle circulation for visitors to the arch, as well as daily commuters.

Finds that while the proposed traffic signals will improve pedestrian safety, the inclusion of 32 individual traffic signal poles around the circle could also create visual clutter in the viewshed and **encourages** the applicant to consider fewer individual traffic signal poles should additional analysis warrant a reduction without compromising safety.

Vehicular Network

Notes that the Commission requested a transportation or traffic study that identifies any potential impacts of the proposed project on the road network and level of service.

Notes that the applicant has prepared a traffic study, and according to the submission, there will be impacts to vehicular traffic and access around the circle including:

- Potential traffic delays during the weekday morning peak of almost half a mile on the Washington Boulevard and the George Washington Memorial Parkway; and
- Removal of northbound and westbound movements around the circle from Washington Boulevard, where visitors will no longer be able to access Arlington National Cemetery from Washington Boulevard.

Finds that while the project will limit overall vehicular traffic movement around the circle and potentially increase delays on Washington Boulevard from the south, the design will improve pedestrian and bicycle safety and circulation.

Notes that the applicant has stated that further refinement of traffic signal timing will occur as visitation to the arch is better understood.

Requests the applicant provide, as part of the final submission, updated information regarding the potential off-site impacts to the vehicular transportation network in response to comments from the District Department of Transportation and Arlington County, Virginia.

Requests the applicant continue to work with the Federal Highway Administration, District Department of Transportation, Arlington County, and other agencies as appropriate, regarding the proposed changes and impacts to the surface transportation network.

Loading/Unloading

Notes that the Commission requested information regarding parking and loading/unloading for visitors to the arch to ensure safe access for those of all abilities and minimize disruption to the traffic network.

Notes that the applicant is proposing to utilize the Arlington National Cemetery Garage for visitor parking and Memorial Avenue for visitor pick up and drop off.

Requests the applicant provide details regarding pick-up, drop-off, and loading locations, and coordinate with Arlington National Cemetery prior to final review regarding the use of the Memorial Avenue and the cemetery parking garage for arch visitor parking.

Visitor Safety

Notes at concept review, the Commission requested the applicant provide, as part of this review, a risk assessment and evaluation of the project to ensure that the proposed design will address security considerations.

Note the applicant included a summary of the project's security considerations and details regarding the site elements.

Supports the integration of site security features, including the seat wall, to help protect the visitor experience while not detracting from the project design.

Aviation Safety

Notes the Commission previously recommended the applicant continue consultation with the Federal Aviation Administration to evaluate potential impacts of the proposed project on air navigation and provide an update to the Commission as part of the next review, and advised them that any design recommendations provided by the FAA should be incorporated into the proposed project prior to the Commission's final action.

Notes the Federal Aviation Administration conducted a limited aeronautical review concerning the feasibility of the arch and found the structure would have no significant adverse effect on airspace and visual/instrument procedures at Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport, subject to the inclusion of red obstruction lights.

Notes the Federal Aviation Administration requires a full aeronautical study for the actual design of the arch prior to its construction; and therefore

Requests the final plans include any navigational or safety lighting as required by the Federal Aviation Administration.

Advises the applicant that if, subject to the full Federal Aviation Administration study, any component of the project design must be altered, the updated design must be submitted to the Commission for review.

Viewsheds

Notes at concept review, the Commission requested:

- Updated photo-visualizations (renderings) of existing and proposed pedestrian-level views from the north steps of the Jefferson Memorial looking toward the Lincoln Memorial, and from the George Washington Memorial Parkway, one looking south toward the circle from a point immediately south of I-66, and one looking north toward the circle from a point near the Lyndon B. Johnson Memorial Grove; and
- Design options that were explored to avoid or minimize impacts on the visual connection between Arlington House and the Lincoln Memorial.

Notes that the applicant has included updated renderings from several vantage points which demonstrate the visual impact of the arch.

Finds that based on newly submitted renderings from the north and south of the George Washington Memorial Parkway and more distant views, the visual impacts will be evident but less visible than the direct views from the Memorial Avenue/Arlington Bridge axis.

Notes the applicant has stated that various smaller arch heights were evaluated. The smaller arches were ultimately dismissed because according to the applicant, they would have had greater impacts on the cultural landscapes, specifically the views between the Lincoln Memorial and Arlington National Cemetery. The smaller designs fully obstructed this view and did not create any new viewing opportunities, in contrast to the proposed arch, which would allow a less obstructed view through its central opening. In addition, because the arch is intended to celebrate 250 years of American independence, the smaller heights were not considered representative of this milestone.

Finds the scale of the arch and its opening have a relational impact on direct and panoramic views from different elevations resulting in tradeoffs, which should be considered in balance with the project's overall purpose and need. In its current form, the proposed arch will:

- Allow for framed views of the Lincoln Memorial and Arlington House from the lower elevations of Memorial Bridge and Memorial Avenue.
- Fully obstruct reciprocal views of the Lincoln Memorial and Arlington from the higher elevations of Arlington House and the Lincoln Memorial terrace; and
- Introduce a new panoramic view of the monumental core from the observation deck.

Requests the applicant continue to consult as necessary with the federal agencies and the Section 106 consulting parties, to continue to explore ways to minimize impacts to historic resources, and to determine appropriate mitigation to resolve adverse effects, to be included in a Programmatic Agreement.

Project Design and Materials

Notes that the Commission previously requested the applicant provide, as part of this submission, information regarding the proposed arch and site materials palette, including cladding, paving, pedestrian features, and security elements, the proposed lighting strategy, including nighttime renderings from key views demonstrating the lighting concept in context, and the proposed stormwater management strategy.

Notes that the applicant has submitted the proposed materials including three potential granite cladding options for the exterior of the arch with the final selected dependent on availability and desired color.

Requests that, prior to final review, the applicant provide information about the final granite cladding selection.

Notes that the applicant intends to include lighting at the site including in-ground recessed uplighting, up-lights above the impost base, entablature, and attic story, and to up-light the statuary, with eight 14- to 20-foot tall, ground-mounted light stanchions around the circle to ensure the arch is brilliantly illuminated.

Requests the applicant submit a narrative describing the proposed lighting concept and its relationship to the Lincoln Memorial and Arlington National Cemetery that includes relevant details on the proposed lighting stanchions and any other site lighting, including illumination levels proposed (foot lambers, or other measure) to understand the relative brightness of the monument as compared to other national monuments and memorials, and to protect the lighting hierarchy of the National Mall.

Notes that the applicant included stormwater management details in the submission and will utilize bioretention with native grasses and shrubs around the perimeter of the circle to accommodate runoff, and additional coordination with the District Department of Energy and Environment will be necessary to meet all applicable permitting requirements.

Project Coordination

Notes the Commission previously requested as part of this submission, updates on the Section 106 process and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) evaluation process, as completion of both processes is required prior to the Commission's final action.

Notes the applicant is lead federal agency for the preparation of an Environmental Assessment and Finding of No Significant Impact pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act, and NCPC utilized the applicant's EA for purposes of compliance with the Act.

Notes the National Park Service initiated the Section 106 process of the National Historic Preservation Act on June 6, 2026, and prepared a draft Assessment of Effects and Programmatic Agreement and held a consulting parties meeting on June 15, 2026.

Notes NCPC designated the National Park Service as lead federal agency for the purpose of compliance with the Section 106 process of the National Historic Preservation Act.



7/10/2026

Meghan Hottel-Cox
Secretary to the National Capital Planning Commission

