

# **Fallen Journalists Memorial**

## **National Capital Planning Commission Review**

### **October 9, 2025**

#### **Background**

The Fallen Journalists Memorial was conceived in June 2019 on the one-year anniversary of the deadliest attack on American journalists in U.S. history, when a gunman shot his way into the newsroom of the Capital Gazette in Annapolis, Maryland, killing five people and wounding two others.

In December 2020, President Donald J. Trump signed bipartisan legislation, Public Law 116-253, authorizing the memorial sponsor to establish a commemorative on federal land in Washington, DC, to commemorate America's commitment to a free press by honoring journalists who sacrificed their lives in service to that ideal. In December 2022, the foundation was further authorized by bipartisan legislation, Public Law 117-328, to design and build the memorial within Area I, which is reserved for works of pre-eminent and lasting historical significance.

In April 2023, the foundation received site approval from the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts (CFA) to design the Fallen Journalists Memorial on the site located at Independence Avenue, Maryland Avenue, and 3rd Street, SW, between the National Museum of the American Indian and the Voice of America. This site was one of the two sites supported by the National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC) during its review.

On January 16, 2025, CFA "reiterated their strong support for the memorial's proposed design as beautiful and poetic, commenting that it will expand the design vocabulary used for commemorative public spaces."

In accordance with the Commemorative Works Act, the memorial will be 100 percent privately funded. In addition, the memorial sponsor will arrange for routine and long-term cleaning and maintenance of the memorial and establish an endowment that is sufficient to provide long-term memorial maintenance and repair.

The intent of the Fallen Journalist Memorial is to balance the duality of providing a place to commemorate a key pillar of the First Amendment – freedom of the press – while honoring those of have died while reporting on wars, corruption, and civil unrest or seeking to inform local communities.

The memorial sponsor plans to support and supplement the physical memorial by hosting ceremonies and events that commemorate the First Amendment and honor fallen

journalists, as well as developing curricula for high school students and long-term programming and digital content on the internet.

## **Submission Overview**

This submission for the preliminary review of the memorial design includes updates to various aspects of the memorial design based on comments from the Commission. These updates address:

- Visitor Access and Circulation
- Streetscape Design
- Site Drainage and Utilities
- Visitor Comfort
- Viewsheds
- Lighting
- Material Use and Durability

As part of this submission, the project team has also included an overview of outreach and coordination efforts and environmental and historical considerations.

## **Project Summary**

The Fallen Journalists Memorial will be located on parkland at a triangular site (Reservation 201) under the jurisdiction of the National Park Service (NPS) and managed by the National Mall and Memorial Parks. The site is situated at the intersection of Independence Avenue, Maryland Avenue, and 3rd Street, SW.

The memorial design features a hardscape stone plaza overlaid with a grove of trees and an array of cast glass beams that collectively form the primary memorial element. These beams create a circular Remembrance Hall at the heart of the site. Visitors would access the memorial through three entrances located at the northeast, southeast, and southwest corners of the site.

## **Outreach and Coordination**

The NPS held two scoping meetings and 30-day public comment periods related to the Fallen Journalists Memorial: one period for site selection (between April 3 and May 5, 2023, with a public meeting on April 19, 2023) and one for the design (between September 30 and October 30, 2024, with a public meeting on October 16, 2024). The public, agencies, and interested parties were invited to submit comments.

Comments focused on the L'Enfant Plan and the proposed design's treatment of public space.

## **Environmental and Historical Considerations**

### **National Historic Preservation Act**

Pursuant to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) and its implementing regulations (36 CFR Part 800) “Protection of Historic Properties,” the NPS initiated Section 106 consultation with the District of Columbia on October 8, 2024. Historic districts and structures partially or entirely within the Area of Potential Effect (APE) include the L’Enfant Plan of the City of Washington, National Mall Historic District, U.S Capitol and its Grounds, U.S. Botanic Garden, Wilbur J. Cohen Building, Hubert H. Humphrey Building, and several memorials and statues.

Additionally, the NPS held one Section 106 consulting party meeting virtually on April 23, 2025, and included a presentation of the APE, existing conditions, and proposed design. Following this consultation, the NPS determined that there would be no adverse effect on historic properties.

### **National Environmental Policy Act**

The NPS has prepared an Environmental Assessment (EA) in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The EA covers specific impact topics that are critical to the project area. The topics include historic districts and structures, cultural landscapes, archeological resources, and visitor use and experience. The EA will be available for public comment September 9-October 9, 2025.

### **Other Environmental Considerations**

No wetlands have been identified at the project site. Additionally, the project site is outside the proposed designated habitat for the federally proposed threatened Monarch Butterfly. The project site is within the 500-year floodplain. It would be designed to mitigate flood risk and prevent impacts to floodplain values. The memorial design incorporates both area drains as well as a trench drain to manage stormwater effectively. Drainage design would be done in compliance with the Department of Energy & Environment (DOEE) and the District Department of Transportation (DDOT) stormwater regulations.



August 18, 2025

National Capital Planning Commission  
401 9th Street, NW, Suite 500N  
Washington, DC 20004

Dear Commissioners:

I write in strong support of the preliminary site plan for the Fallen Journalists Memorial. As a citizen who values our nation's founding principles and the importance of First Amendment freedoms, I believe this memorial will stand as a fitting reminder of journalists who have died while in pursuit of truth.

Transparency in government is not a partisan issue; it is a principle rooted in the very fabric of our republic. In a democracy, journalists serve as vitally important watchdogs.

The preliminary site plan reflects a design that is dignified and respectful. It will provide a much needed place for solemn reflection where Americans of all backgrounds can honor those who gave their lives while doing their critically important work. In an era when mistrust of institutions runs high, this memorial underscores the enduring principle that the search for truth, is an essential part of self-governance.

I urge the commission to advance the site plan so that we can move closer to honoring fallen journalists in a manner consistent with what makes America great — our values of transparency, accountability, and freedom.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Christopher Ruddy". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Christopher Ruddy  
Chief Executive Officer



National Capital Planning Commission  
401 9th Street, NW, Suite 500  
Washington, DC 20004

Dear Commissioners,

I am writing to express my strong support for the proposal to establish the Fallen Journalists Memorial in Washington, D.C., which was authorized by President Donald J. Trump in December 2020.

Honoring those who gave their lives to pursue the news is a fitting tribute to the First Amendment.

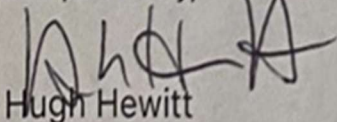
From Ernie Pyle and Andy Rooney to today's journalists covering hot wars in Ukraine, the Middle East and elsewhere, the free world's free press has made the courageous and dangerous choice to cover the story wherever they could reach. Some did not come home. Honoring their sacrifice honors the freedom they were exercising and indeed protecting.

From the very beginning of our country, patriots have run to the sound of guns to report on our military's battles. All the journalists in that long line have faced danger every day they are in combat zones. Many survive harrowing experiences. Some are wounded. And some do not come home. This last group of fallen journalists deserves the nation's respect and their place of honor in the nation's capital.

In addition, the memorial, as currently conceived, reflects a deep respect for American values of honor, sacrifice, and constitutional liberty. Its focus on openness, reflection, and permanence ensures that the memorial will stand as a unifying tribute to press freedom, reminding all Americans, regardless of political affiliation, that our rights are secured by those willing to bear witness and hold the powerful accountable.

Thank you for considering these perspectives in your deliberations.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Hugh Hewitt', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Host, The Hugh Hewitt Show