

**National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
George Washington Memorial Parkway**

June 2026

Triumphal Arch at Memorial Circle

NCPC Preliminary Project Report
Written Description

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Project Site Background Information

George Washington Memorial Parkway is a unit of the National Park Service that was established by Congress on May 29, 1930, through Public Law 71-284, the Capper-Cramton Act. The parkway runs along the Potomac River through two states—Virginia and Maryland—as well as the District of Columbia, protecting the landscape and natural shoreline of the river while offering magnificent scenic vistas of Washington, D.C., and the Potomac River. Along its route, George Washington Memorial Parkway connects several important historic sites, memorials, and scenic and recreation areas in the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area. George Washington Memorial Parkway is a scenic roadway honoring the nation's first president, that protects and preserves cultural and natural resources along the Potomac River between Great Falls and Mount Vernon, and is part of a comprehensive system of parks, parkways, and recreational areas surrounding the nation's capital.

The Triumphal Arch would be located within Memorial Circle, a formally designed feature of George Washington Memorial Parkway at the western end of Arlington Memorial Bridge.

Memorial Circle lies within Lady Bird Johnson Park, a manmade island constructed between 1915 and 1930 and renamed in 1968 in recognition of First Lady Claudia “Lady Bird” Johnson's conservation and beautification efforts. The park's landscaped grounds, native trees, pedestrian and bicycle facilities, and cultural features, including the Lyndon Baines Johnson Memorial Grove and the Navy–Merchant Marine Memorial, provide the broader setting that frames and supports Memorial Circle within the Parkway corridor.

Project Narrative

The project includes construction of the Triumphal Arch, associated plaza and landscape improvements, supporting utility and stormwater infrastructure, traffic and pedestrian circulation modifications, security features, lighting, and temporary staging and laydown areas required for construction.

The proposed Arch would be an approximately 250-foot-tall reinforced concrete structure clad in granite and ornamented by a central winged figure and two eagles, positioned above each arch leg. Dimensions will be finalized during future design efforts. The following dimensions are current approximations. The principal architectural component would rise approximately 166 feet above finish grade, with surmounting statuary extending the total height to approximately 250 feet. The main footprint of the structure would be approximately 91 feet by 166 feet, with a 15,197-square-foot footprint at ground level. The maximum lateral projection at the upper cornice would extend to 107 feet 4 inches by 183 feet 4 inches. The structure would contain 70,072 gross square feet distributed across five occupiable levels: a ground level, two service mezzanine levels not open to the public, a gallery level, and an observation deck level. The observation deck would provide 9,812 square feet of exterior deck area at 161 feet 6 inches above grade.

The Arch would serve as a monumental architectural feature aligned with the axis between Memorial Avenue and the Arlington Memorial Bridge. The Arch would be 166 feet wide with a 55-foot-wide opening, providing views from the observation deck to area landmarks. The Arch would be built from concrete and finished with granite. The granite used for the Arch would be sourced from one of three quarries, located in Vermont, North Carolina, or California—depending on availability and desired color.

Ground Floor Level: The ground level would contain security screening, back-of-house functions, and vertical circulation lobbies.

Mezzanine Levels: The mezzanine levels would contain mechanical and support spaces.

Gallery Level: The gallery level would contain exhibit space, back-of-house areas, restrooms, and vertical circulation lobbies, with the possibility of including a café and gift shop.

Observation Deck: The observation deck level would include the vertical circulation lobby and occupiable exterior deck.

The Arch would include six stairways and five elevators. Two pairs of elevators in the north and south legs would serve the lower public levels, and a fifth elevator would serve the observation deck. Two large circular spiral stairs would connect the ground level to the gallery level; two elliptical spiral stairs would connect the gallery level to the observation deck; and two egress stairs would connect all occupiable levels to dedicated exit-only doors at grade.

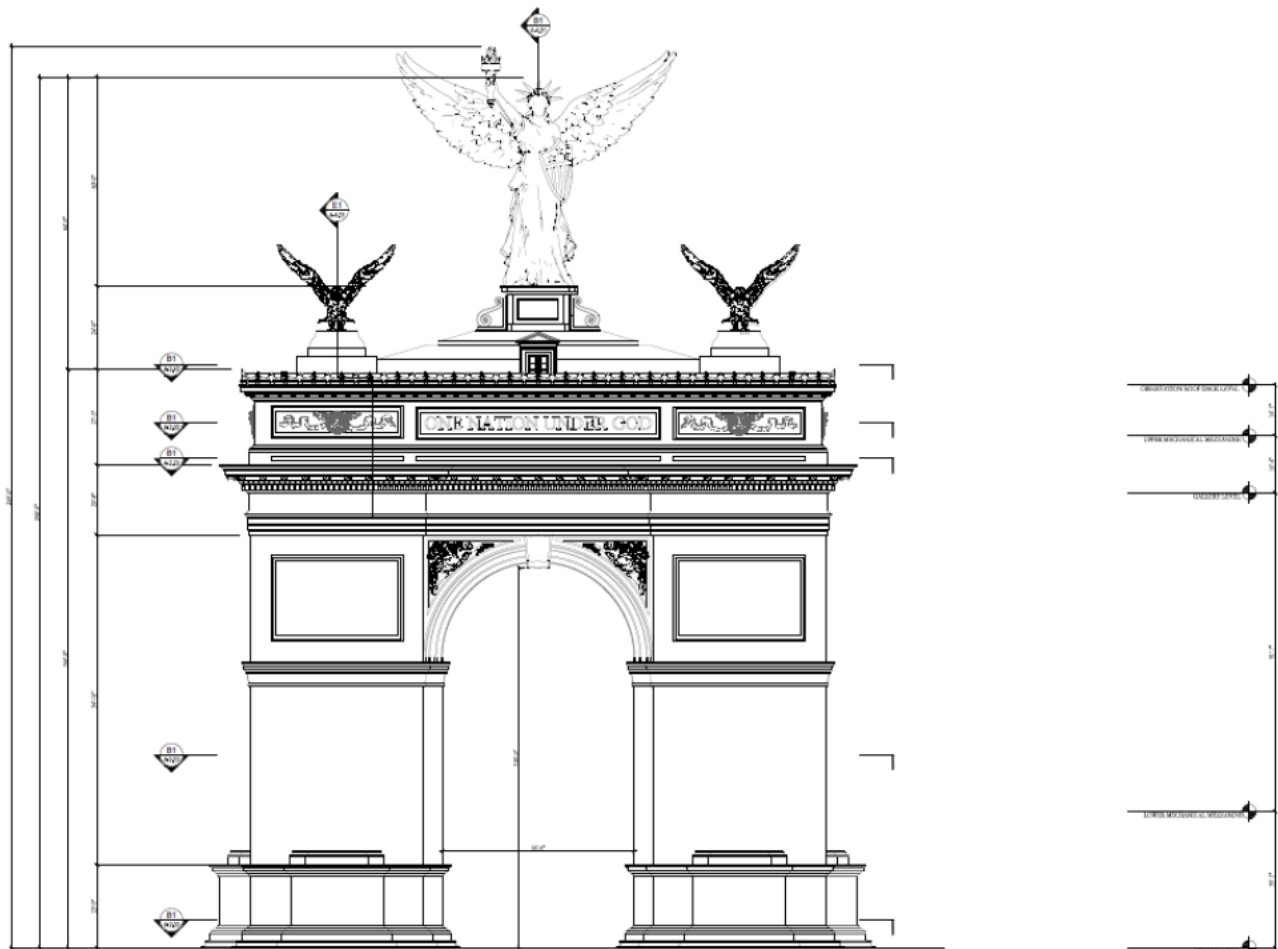


Image 1. Proposed Triumphal Arch ©Harrison Design

The proposed action would also include site development within and immediately around Memorial Circle. A paved public plaza would surround the Arch inside the traffic circle. The plaza would be protected by a barricade seat wall generally located at the existing inner curb and by removable or retractable bollards at authorized vehicle access points. Exterior lighting would be installed to illuminate the Arch and plaza, and the undertaking would include minimal exterior signage, perimeter and rooftop security cameras, access-control systems for major doors and nonpublic areas, interior and exterior video surveillance, and a security screening area with walk-through magnetometers, x-ray equipment, and explosive trace detection equipment. Vehicle access to the plaza would be restricted to authorized maintenance, contractor, law enforcement, and emergency vehicles.

Description of Project Area

The immediate project area is located within the Memorial Avenue Corridor cultural landscape, a nationally significant historic designed landscape extending between the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C., and Arlington National Cemetery in Arlington, Virginia. The corridor consists of the Watergate Steps, the Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway Entrance, Arlington Memorial Bridge, Memorial Circle, Memorial Avenue Bridge over Boundary Channel, Memorial Avenue, and the ceremonial entrance sequence into Arlington National Cemetery at the Arlington Hemicycle. Memorial Circle serves as the link between the Arlington Memorial Bridge and Memorial Avenue, providing a hub to secondary destinations and routes within a compressed urban geography. The circular travel pattern provides a scenic route for commuters to experience the Memorial Avenue Corridor. The entirety of the corridor forms a major component of the monumental core of Washington, D.C. and was conceived as both a ceremonial gateway to the nation's capital and a symbolic landscape commemorating national unity and reconciliation following the Civil War.

The conceptual origins of the corridor date to the report of the 1901–1902 Senate Park Commission, commonly known as the McMillan Plan, which proposed a monumental bridge and axial landscape composition linking the planned Lincoln Memorial with Arlington House, the former home of Robert E. Lee. Following the recommendations of the McMillan Plan, the Arlington Memorial Bridge Commission was established to develop a formal design for a monumental connection between the Lincoln Memorial and Arlington. The Commission's April 22, 1924, report translated the McMillan Plan's broader civic vision into a specific architectural and landscape framework for the bridge and its approaches, including formal plazas and commemorative architectural features at the western terminus on Columbia Island. Congress subsequently authorized construction of the project through the Act of February 24, 1925 (Public Law 68-463, 43 Stat. 974), which approved the bridge and approaches "in accordance with the design, surveys, and estimates of cost transmitted by said commission to Congress under date of April 22, 1924," thereby incorporating the Commission's report and design framework into the statutory authorization itself.

The bridge alignment and associated ceremonial landscape were intended to physically and symbolically unite North and South through a coordinated monumental composition extending across the Potomac River. The corridor was designed principally by the architectural firm McKim, Mead & White under project architect William Mitchell Kendall and reflects the formal planning principles of the City Beautiful movement and Beaux-Arts monumental design.

Construction of the corridor occurred in phases between the 1920s and 1940s. Arlington Memorial Bridge was constructed between 1926 and 1932, while Memorial Avenue and associated bridge and landscape features were developed concurrently. The corridor was designed as a processional sequence integrating architecture, engineering, sculpture, transportation systems, vegetation, and

expansive reciprocal views. Arlington Memorial Bridge established a new monumental crossing of the Potomac River and extended the east-west monumental axis of Washington westward toward Arlington National Cemetery and Arlington House. The corridor was conceived as an “Avenue of Heroes,” with memorial niches and commemorative landscapes incorporated into the overall design framework.

Memorial Circle occupies a central and highly significant position within this composition. Located on Columbia Island, now Lady Bird Johnson Park, Memorial Circle forms the ceremonial hinge between Arlington Memorial Bridge, Memorial Avenue, the George Washington Memorial Parkway, and the Mount Vernon Memorial Highway. Early plans for the Columbia Island plaza envisioned a far more monumental treatment than the traffic rotary ultimately constructed, including a formal elliptical plaza centered on two monumental columns 166 feet in height topped with winged victory figures symbolizing the reunification of the North and South following the Civil War. Designers centered a formal, cruciform plaza on the east-west axis of the avenue corridor and proposed two monumental columns offset in hemispherical transepts framing the corridor. The proposed column bases were 33.5 feet wide and tapered to fluted columns rising 166 feet in height topped with winged victory figures symbolizing the reunification of the North and South following the Civil War..[NL23.1] Additional proposals included monumental pavilions, fountains, balustrades, Greek temples, and cross-axis roadway compositions before the design was gradually simplified through the 1930s into the existing traffic rotary configuration designed principally by landscape architect Gilmore D. Clarke.

Memorial Circle was ultimately constructed beginning in 1940 and was intended to function both as a traffic rotary and as a formal organizing landscape feature within the larger ceremonial composition extending between the Lincoln Memorial and Arlington National Cemetery. Four monumental pylons framing the entrances to Arlington Memorial Bridge and Memorial Avenue were among the principal architectural features implemented from the earlier McKim, Mead & White design concepts.

The landscape surrounding Memorial Circle evolved substantially during the mid-twentieth century. While early designs emphasized formal open spatial relationships around the rotary, the character of the surrounding landscape changed during implementation of the Beautification Program associated with First Lady Claudia “Lady Bird” Johnson during the 1960s. Landscape architect Edward Durell Stone, Jr. developed a planting plan for Columbia Island that introduced extensive plantings of flowering dogwoods, white pines, daffodils, and other vegetation around Memorial Circle and throughout Lady Bird Johnson Park. These plantings transformed the character of Memorial Circle from a largely open rotary into a more heavily framed and naturalistic landscape setting while maintaining the circle’s ceremonial and commemorative role within the larger corridor composition.

Additional historical context and images illustrating early design intentions for Columbia Island and Memorial Circle is provided in **Appendix A**, which summarizes more than a century of proposals for monumental treatments at this site.

Description of the Proposed Development

The current concept places the Arch within the center of Memorial Circle and surrounds it with a new paved plaza protected by a barricade seat wall and removable or retractable bollards. The project would include security screening, exterior and interior surveillance, access-control systems, rooftop and perimeter cameras, lighting designed to illuminate the Arch and plaza, and minimal exterior signage. Visitor access would be controlled through timed entry and security screening. Exterior

plaza access would remain public, while the interior facility would operate during set hours and would include observation, exhibit, and visitor support uses.

The project would also include roadway and pedestrian changes in and around Memorial Circle. These include new or relocated signalized crosswalks, widened or reconfigured refuge areas and islands, modified traffic circulation, motorcoach accommodation, and designated pedestrian routes into the circle. During construction, the south side of Memorial Circle would be closed and used for construction access and staging, with traffic shifted to the north side of the circle and pedestrians and bicyclists detoured around the work zone.

Schedule

Based on current planning, construction would occur over approximately two to three years. Major phases would include site excavation; foundation and support-of-excavation work; structural concrete; precast cladding and interior rough-in; statue placement and ceiling installation; site hardscape, landscaping, and interior fit-out; and final restoration and demobilization. Temporary transportation changes would be required at the beginning of construction, during utility installation and major structure erection, and again at the end of construction to complete permanent circulation improvements.

DETAILED PROJECT INFORMATION

Architectural and Design Program

The building program includes security screening and vertical circulation at the ground level; mechanical and support functions at the mezzanine levels; exhibit, visitor support, restroom, and potential café/gift shop functions at the gallery level; and an observation deck at the uppermost public level. The project is designed to function as a screened federal visitor facility with timed entry, restricted authorized vehicle access to the plaza, and integrated interior and exterior security systems. The project would also include substantial lighting, both for architectural illumination and site safety, as well as aviation safety lighting required by applicable approvals.

Existing Tree Survey and Inventory

A tree inventory was completed for the monument area and the anticipated construction laydown area south of Memorial Circle. No trees are located within the lawn area at the center of the traffic circle where the Arch is proposed. The surveyed trees surrounding the project area are primarily in fair to good condition, and current civil planning materials indicate that tree removal is not anticipated for the laydown area at this stage. Construction staging and temporary work areas would need to remain outside critical root zones, and protective fencing and maintenance measures would be required during construction.

Transportation and Circulation

The project would introduce new traffic signalization, pedestrian-actuated crossings, refuge islands, and circulation changes within and around Memorial Circle. During construction, westbound traffic from Arlington Memorial Bridge would be reduced, certain turning movements from Memorial Avenue and Washington Boulevard would be restricted, and the south sidewalk would be temporarily detoured. Post-construction, Memorial Circle would be fully signalized, with new pedestrian crossings providing access into the center of the circle. The design would also include

narrower circulating roadway geometry, motorcoach accommodation, designated pickup and drop-off areas, and traffic-calming measures.

Construction access would primarily use I-395 via Route 27, with US 50 as a secondary route. The current construction planning materials indicate approximately 1,400 truckloads of soil export and approximately 400 truckloads of engineered fill import over the life of the project. A staging footprint immediately south of the circle and additional parking/staging space would support equipment, contractor trailers, generators, fuel and water storage, and material laydown.

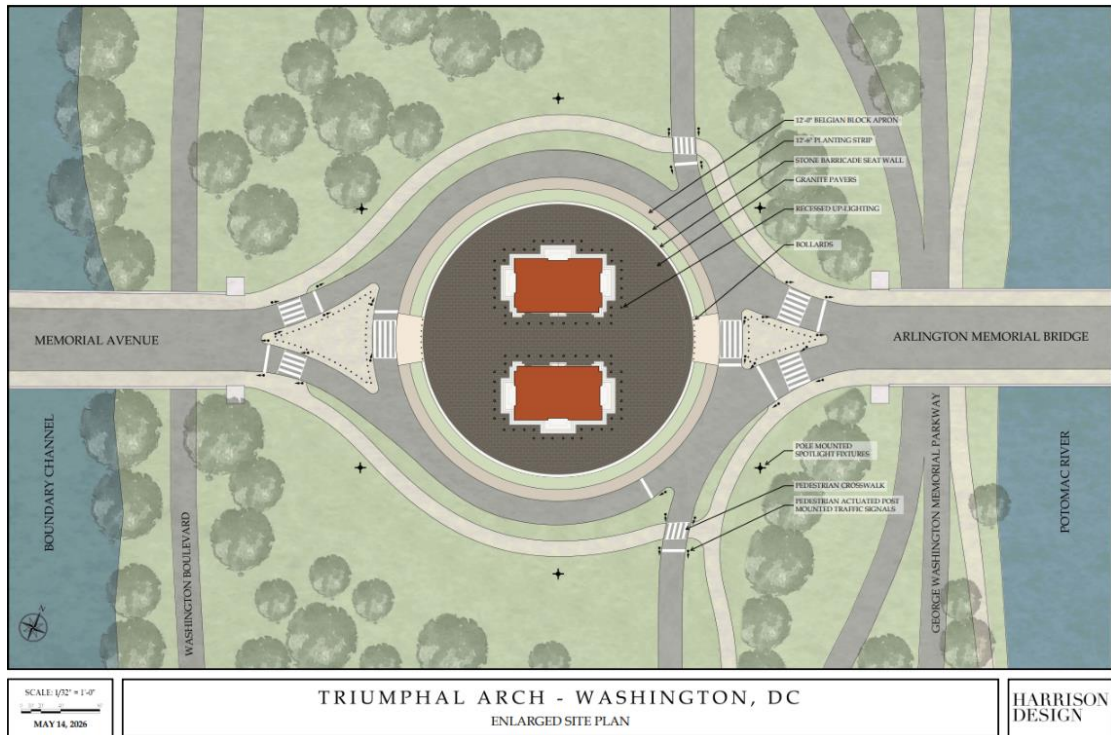
Perimeter Security

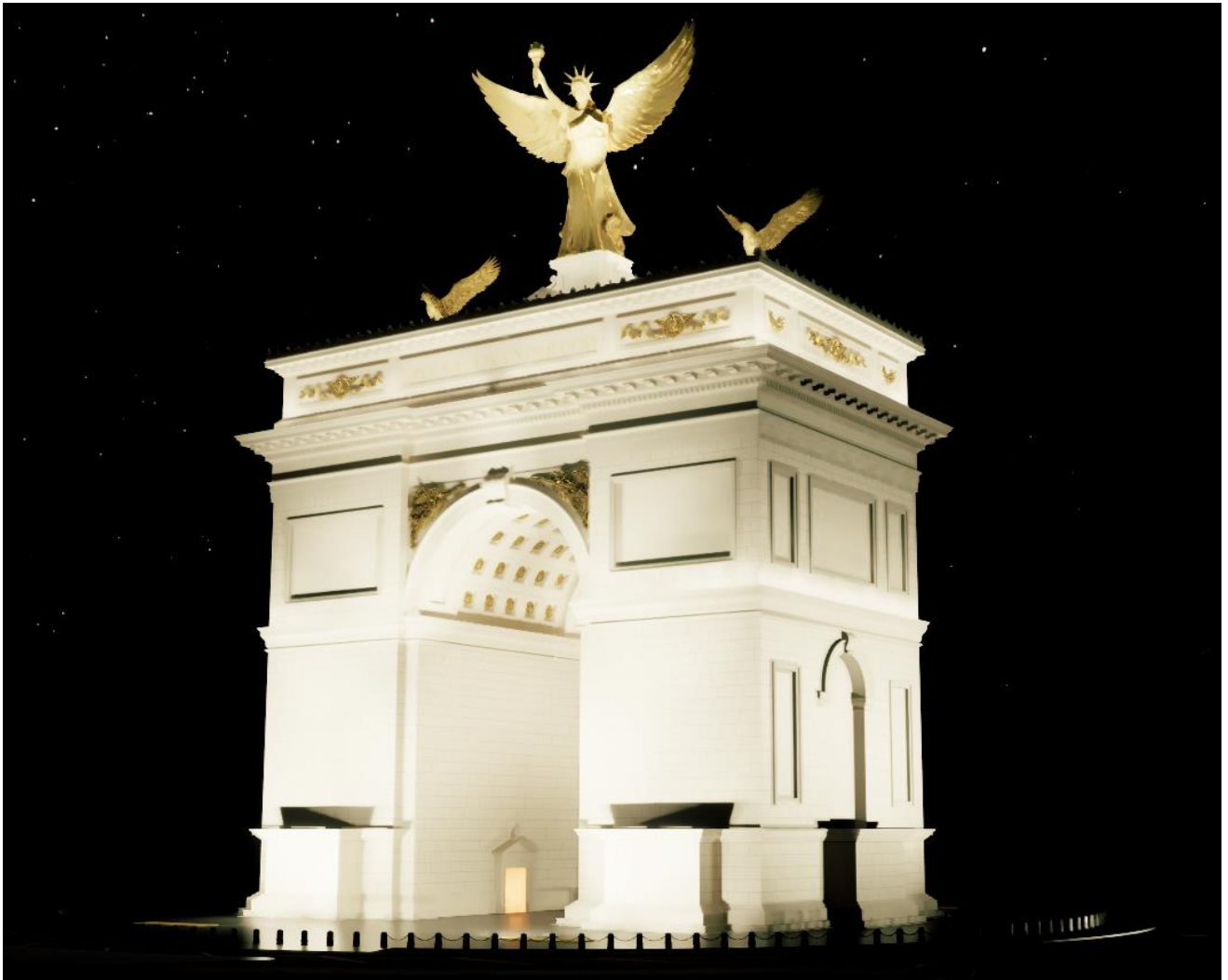
The plaza and interior facility would be operated as a controlled-access federal site. Authorized vehicle access would be managed by barricade walls and removable or retractable bollards. Visitors would queue between the Arch legs and enter a screening area equipped with walk-through magnetometers, x-ray machines, and explosive trace detection equipment. The site would include concentric layers of security through perimeter barriers, lighting, exterior and interior surveillance, access control on major and critical-path doors, and active patrol. The current operating concept assumes security screening is a key throughput constraint and would govern visitor access into the building.

Lighting

The Arch would be illuminated using a low spill, fully shielded lighting system designed to highlight the Arch. In addition, aviation-required safety lighting would be incorporated into the design using the least intrusive technology available, ensuring compliance with aircraft visibility requirements while limiting unnecessary light emission.

The Arch will be brilliantly illuminated at night, similar to other monuments and government edifices on the National Mall. Uplighting recessed into the ground at the plaza level and protected by transparent covers will light all major aspects of the Arch. Additionally, smaller uplights above the impost base, entablature, and attic story will light the upper registers and center vaulting of the Arch, to prevent any unsightly shadow lines that may be cast from the ground level uplighting. Directional lighting discretely mounted around the perimeter of the observation deck will light the surmounting statues from multiple angles. The high volume of lumens on the arch surface will create a glow that ensures even levels of ground lighting within the arch plaza. Illumination of the Arch would be supplemented by eight light stanchions, ranging from 14 to 20 feet in height, strategically located around the intersection. (see graphic below)





Materials

Exterior Cladding Options

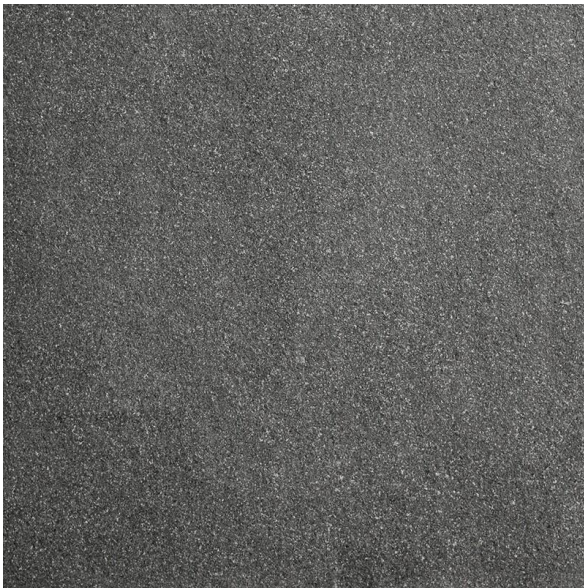


Sierra White Granite

White Mount Airy Granite



Bethel White Granite
Exterior Paving



Black Absolute Granite

Statuary and Exterior Doors



Bronze



Antique Bronze



Gold

Traffic and Circulation

The project would alter existing traffic operations at Memorial Circle during both construction and long-term operation, but the transportation concept has been developed with the intent of maintaining regional circulation while accommodating increased pedestrian activity associated with the Arch. During construction, the most substantial change would be closure of the south side of Memorial Circle for construction access and staging, with two-way traffic shifted to the north side of the circle. Most vehicle movements would remain open, but several lower-volume movements would be restricted or detoured, including the loss of the eastbound movement from Memorial Avenue to northbound Arlington Boulevard and the northbound movement from Washington Boulevard into the circle. Westbound traffic from Arlington Memorial Bridge would be reduced to two lanes during this period. Pedestrian and bicycle circulation would also be modified, with the south sidewalk closed and users detoured along the east and north sides of the circle using temporary crossings and accessible routes.

Under permanent operations, the project would replace the existing yield- and merge-based circulation pattern at Memorial Circle with a more controlled configuration centered on pedestrian access and signalized traffic management. The current concept includes full signalization of Memorial Circle and all pedestrian crossings, coordinated among the major approaches from Washington Boulevard, Arlington Boulevard, and Memorial Avenue. Pedestrian access to the Arch would occur at two locations on the Memorial Avenue axis, using a two-stage crossing system through intermediate refuge areas into the center of the circle. Traffic would be paused periodically to allow pedestrians to cross, with signal timing intended to balance pedestrian demand and

vehicular throughput. The pedestrian access analysis concluded that the site could accommodate up to 950 pedestrian arrivals and departures per hour, although that capacity depends on arrival patterns, queueing space, crosswalk dimensions, and adaptive signal timing.

The project also includes a series of physical roadway and public realm modifications intended to calm traffic and improve pedestrian safety. These include enlarged median islands, relocated crosswalks and curb islands, a narrowed circulating roadway, a mountable concrete truck apron, and other safety features such as raised crossings, curb extensions, refuge islands, reduced curb radii, and rumble strips. The long-term plan would retain most existing regional vehicle movements, with the notable permanent change that northbound traffic from Washington Boulevard would no longer enter the circle and would instead turn right onto Arlington Memorial Bridge. All vehicle lanes would be designed to accommodate motorcoaches, and NPS anticipates coordination with Arlington National Cemetery regarding motorcoach access, funeral procession operations, garage access, and designated rideshare pick-up and drop-off areas outside Memorial Circle.

Construction traffic could be substantial at times. The current construction concept anticipates primary truck access from I-395 via Route 27, with approximately 20 to 30 trucks per day carrying 80 to 100 loads per day during active haul periods. The project would require removal of approximately 1,400 truckloads of existing soils and import of approximately 400 truckloads of engineered fill. Trucks would be staged within the southern project staging area to reduce interference with surrounding traffic. These activities, together with temporary road closures and staging needs, would create short-term circulation impacts and additional operational complexity during the construction period.

Utilities and Infrastructure

The project would require installation of new utility and supporting civil infrastructure to serve the Arch and associated visitor facilities. Because Memorial Circle does not currently contain the utility systems necessary to support a large occupiable structure and public restroom functions, the project would introduce new potable water, sanitary sewer, electric, gas, and telecommunications service to the site through one or more utility corridors linking Columbia Island to existing infrastructure in Virginia and, potentially, across Arlington Memorial Bridge. The current concept is to route utilities along existing transportation or bridge corridors where feasible in order to consolidate impacts and reduce the extent of new ground disturbance.

Potable water service is proposed to extend from existing infrastructure near the Arlington National Cemetery Welcome Center, generally along Memorial Drive and across to Columbia Island through an existing bridge or transportation corridor. Sanitary sewer service would be provided through a gravity system collecting wastewater from the monument and associated restroom facilities and conveying it to a new pump station located outside the traffic circle in a landscaped area beyond the outer travel lanes. From there, wastewater would be pumped west through a sanitary force main to connect with existing Arlington-side gravity sewer infrastructure. The current preferred concept would attach the force main to an existing bridge spanning Boundary Channel rather than install it in or beneath the channel, thereby avoiding in-water work and reducing direct disturbance to the waterway. Electric and telecommunications service would similarly be extended from Virginia along comparable corridors.

The project would also require substantial stormwater management infrastructure because construction of the Arch and its plaza would create approximately 62,875 square feet of new impervious area. Preliminary calculations indicate that approximately 6,300 cubic feet of stormwater

retention would be required on site. To address this, the project proposes perimeter bioretention or rain garden facilities within the landscaped portions of Memorial Circle and the surrounding traffic circle. These facilities are intended to capture and treat runoff from the new hardscape, provide visible green infrastructure compatible with the memorial setting, and reduce the need for larger underground stormwater structures that could create additional conflicts with utilities, tree roots, or shallow groundwater.

Utility installation would occur over multiple construction phases and may involve a combination of open trenching, horizontal directional drilling, routing within or beneath roadways, and attachment to bridge structures, with final methods to be determined during later design. The utility work therefore has the potential to affect both the immediate project footprint and the broader transportation and landscape setting through excavation, trenching, bridge attachments, and associated access needs. Overall, the utility component of the undertaking would introduce a new network of permanent water, wastewater, power, communications, and stormwater infrastructure into Memorial Circle and its surrounding corridor, resulting in both direct physical disturbance and long-term changes to the site's operational and visual character.

Visitor Access and Experience

Under the current operating concept, the exterior plaza surrounding the Arch would remain publicly accessible, while access to the interior of the structure would occur during defined visitor hours and would be regulated through a timed-entry system. Visitors would enter through the south leg of the Arch, queue between the two columns, proceed through a security screening area, and then move through the public portions of the structure by stairs or elevator. The public program would include screening and circulation space at the ground level, exhibit and support functions at the mezzanine or gallery level, and access to the observation deck above.

Visitor access would be shaped primarily by security screening and controlled circulation rather than by unrestricted public entry. The current operational assumption is that approximately 20 visitors would be screened every 15 minutes, making screening the principal throughput constraint for the interior visitor experience. Timed-entry tickets would therefore be used to regulate arrivals and reduce congestion, similar to operations at the Washington Monument. After screening, visitors would enter the public portion of the Arch and proceed by stair or elevator to the mezzanine and observation levels, where visitor services could include exhibit space, restrooms, and potentially a café and gift shop. This operating model would create a structured, capacity-managed visitor experience rather than a free-flow public memorial condition.

Visitors would reach the Arch through a controlled pedestrian circulation system centered on the Memorial Avenue axis, with two-stage crossings from surrounding sidewalks to intermediate refuge areas and then into the center of Memorial Circle. New signals, crosswalks, curb islands, and related pedestrian safety features would be used to support this access pattern.

Viewsheds and Public Realm

The project would affect several historically significant public realm conditions and viewsheds that contribute to the ceremonial and commemorative character of Memorial Circle, the Memorial Avenue Corridor, Arlington Memorial Bridge, and the broader monumental core. The most important affected viewshed is the primary east-west axial relationship between the Lincoln Memorial and Arlington House. The proposed Arch would introduce a new permanent vertical element within Memorial Circle.

The Arch would affect broader views toward Memorial Circle from surrounding areas, including Parkway Drive and adjacent portions of Lady Bird Johnson Park, where the Arch would become a new vertical element within a landscape presently defined by roadway geometry, open space, bridge-related features, and vegetation. These changes would potentially alter the historic setting and visual character of the parkway corridor and its associated cultural landscapes.

Water Resources and Stormwater Management

The project would add approximately 62,875 square feet of new impervious surface and require approximately 6,300 cubic feet of on-site stormwater retention. The current stormwater concept relies on perimeter bioretention or rain gardens within the landscaped portions of the circle and surrounding area. Potable water, sanitary sewer, electric, gas, and telecommunications service would be extended to the site from one or more utility corridors, with alternatives including bridge-mounted, directional-bore, or roadway-based installation methods. Groundwater is present at roughly 14 to 16 feet below grade, and minimal dewatering is currently anticipated compared with the overall excavation and foundation work.

Construction Effects

Construction would occur in multiple phases over roughly two to three years and would require extensive staging, excavation, deep foundations, crane operations, utility installation, soil export and fill import, temporary traffic control, and temporary pedestrian detours. Construction work would involve substantial equipment, including tower cranes, drill rigs, forklifts, skid steers, concrete pumps, and large haul trucks. Work would continue year-round with long daily work windows.

FAA Coordination

Because of Memorial Circle's proximity to Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport, NPS has considered whether the proposed project would adversely affect aviation safety. NPS does not possess specialized expertise in aviation safety and therefore relies on the expertise of the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). The FAA completed a feasibility study and concluded that the proposed project would have no significant adverse effect on airspace or on visual or instrument procedures at Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport and would not have any effect on airport facilities or radio/visual navigational and landing aids. The FAA feasibility study determined that the project would require obstruction lights, which have been incorporated into the project description. The National Park Service will implement any required mitigation measures and will address additional FAA compliance steps as the project progresses through subsequent design phases.

ADA Access

All pedestrian access routes will meet applicable federal accessibility standards, including the Architectural Barriers Act Accessibility Standards (ABAAS) and the Public Right-of-Way Accessibility Guidelines (PROWAG). Notable accessible features will include wide sidewalks with compliant running and cross slopes, wide accessible curb ramps, and accessible pedestrian signals (APS) at crossings to provide crossing information to visually and mobility-impaired pedestrians. These elements will support safe, accessible, and convenient pedestrian circulation between Memorial Avenue and the Triumphal Arch for all visitors.

Visitor Loading and Unloading

Pedestrians will access the site at two locations along the Memorial Avenue axis, directly opposite the openings of the Triumphal Arch. Pedestrian access to these entry points is anticipated to occur in two stages: (1) crossings between the north and south sidewalks of Memorial Avenue and an intermediate triangular refuge area, and (2) crossings between the triangular refuge area and the center of the circle. Traffic will be periodically stopped to allow pedestrians to cross through coordinated signalization, balancing available green time for pedestrian crossings, when vehicles are stopped, with time allocated to conflicting vehicular movements, when pedestrians must wait. Similarly, pedestrians will exit the site using the same two access points along the Memorial Avenue axis. From the center of the circle, pedestrians will cross to the intermediate triangular refuge area and then continue from the refuge area to either the north or south sidewalk along Memorial Avenue.

Tour buses and ridehailing services will be another common method for visitors to access the site. Providing safe and dedicated locations for tour buses and ridehailing services to drop-off or pick-up passengers is critical to the success of the transportation operations. Tour bus and ridehailing services would be encouraged to load and unload at the Arlington Memorial National Cemetery garage.

Memorial Avenue is a wide, approximately 60-foot roadway with ample space for curbside loading and unloading. NPS owns Memorial Avenue through the bridge over the Richmond Highway. Providing active loading along Memorial Avenue will allow visitors, especially those in larger groups, to more easily access the site and minimize unnecessary driving or walking circulation. Loading and unloading along Memorial Avenue is expected under particular circumstances.

Micromobility (scooters, electric bike share, etc.) is not anticipated to be a common means of site access due to the entirety of Lady Bird Johnson Park being a designated Shared Mobility No Parking Zone.

ENVIRONMENTAL AND HISTORICAL CONSIDERATIONS

General Background

As part of the design process, the NPS has conducted a review under the National Environmental Policy Act and Section 106 review under the National Historical Preservation Act is ongoing. To comply with the National Environmental Policy Act, the NPS prepared an Environmental Assessment (EA) analyzing the alternatives and evaluating the potential environmental effects associated with constructing the proposed Triumphal Arch on the George Washington Memorial Parkway. The EA is prepared in accordance with 516 DM 1, U.S. Department of the Interior, Handbook of National Environmental Policy Act Implementing Procedures, February 2026 (DOI NEPA Handbook) and its appendices, along with the National Environmental Policy Act Implementing Regulations at 43 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 46. The Environmental Assessment along with a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) were completed on June 18, 2026, and were submitted with the design materials. The FONSI documents the NPS's determination that the proposed Triumphal Arch in Memorial Circle would not result in significant environmental impacts. However, this FONSI does not constitute a final decision or approval for the project. Typically, the NPS issues the FONSI and the associated Decision Document together; however, because certain components of the decision-making process have not yet been completed, including compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, the NPS

will issue a separate Decision Document at a later date. Preparation of a standalone Decision Document is consistent with the DOI NEPA Handbook.

To comply with Section 106 of the National Historical Preservation Act, the NPS prepared an Assessment of Effect which describes the undertaking and analyzes potential adverse effects on historic properties, including archeological resources, within the project area. This document along with a draft Programmatic Agreement was released for public comment on June 5, 2026, with a 10-day public comment period. The NPS initiated Section 106 consultation on June 5, 2026, and held a consulting parties meeting on June 15, 2026.

Historic Preservation

The undertaking would result in effects on historic properties meeting the criteria of 36 CFR § 800.5(a)(1). The project would introduce a new permanent structure, associated hardscape, lighting, security elements, utility and stormwater infrastructure, and traffic and pedestrian circulation changes into Memorial Circle and the surrounding setting. The undertaking has the potential to impact the integrity of setting, design, feeling, and association of the Memorial Avenue Corridor Cultural Landscape, Lady Bird Johnson Park Cultural Landscape, Arlington Memorial Bridge and related features, Arlington National Cemetery, Arlington House, and other historic properties within the Area of Potential Effects. The project would also alter the ceremonial and spatial relationship between the Lincoln Memorial and Arlington House and introduce visual elements not presently found within Memorial Circle.

Archaeological Resources

A Phase IA Archaeological Assessment concluded that the direct-effects area has moderate to high archaeological sensitivity for intact precolonial and historic archaeological resources beneath the existing twentieth-century fill. Memorial Circle and the anticipated laydown area sit atop approximately 10 to 14 feet of fill over an earlier buried landscape of sandy clay, alluvial deposits, sandbars, shallow tidal flats, and floodplain settings associated with the Potomac River. Although no previously recorded archaeological site was identified within the direct-effects area itself, the surrounding area contains a substantial archaeological context, and intact buried deposits may remain. The assessment allows for additional Phase IB subsurface investigation with geoarchaeological analysis if ground disturbance would extend more than 10 feet below existing grade.

APPENDIX A: Early 20th Century Visioning for Columbia Island

Dating back over 100 years, Congress and various commissions intended for a monumental work to adorn Columbia Island—the location of the Triumphal Arch. In 1902, the U.S. Senate “McMillan Commission” called for “a concourse suited to memorial treatment be established” on the westerly terminus of the Memorial Bridge. ([McMillan Commission](#), page 57)

In 1924, the congressional Arlington Memorial Bridge Commission said, “[Columbia Island] was always considered as a suitable site for formal park treatment, a fitting end for the Memorial Bridge, as well as an important feature in itself.” Specifically, the commission called for “a plaza with fitting architectural adornment in a measure supplemental to the Lincoln Memorial across the river.” ([Arlington Memorial Bridge Commission](#), page 9)

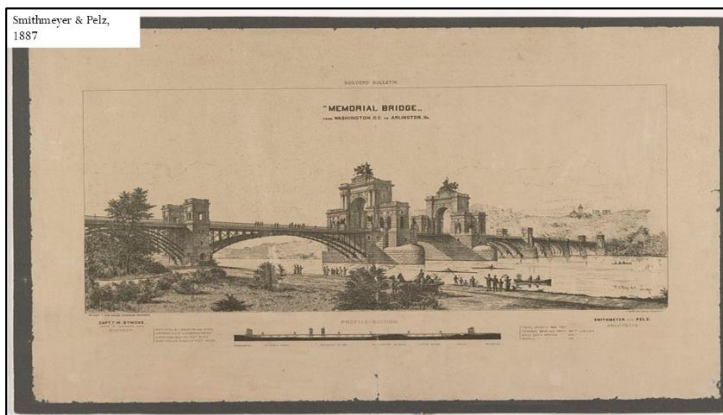
Various monumental designs have been contemplated—and hotly debated—for Columbia Island over the years, most notably two 166-foot-tall memorial columns topped by statues of Victory and adorned with ornamental carvings, sculptures, and inscriptions. Other contemplated designs included pavilions, fountains, temples, a Robert E. Lee memorial, and even a *memorial arch*.

Despite Congress’s intent, the site became a barren—unacceptably so—traffic circle lacking monumental treatment and significant historic value. The route extending from Arlington Memorial Bridge to Arlington National Cemetery was meant to serve as a grand entryway—an Avenue of Heroes—“for the Nation’s fallen heroes to their last resting place in the Arlington National Cemetery,” according to the 1924 Arlington Memorial Bridge Commission report. ([Arlington Memorial Bridge Commission](#), page 5)

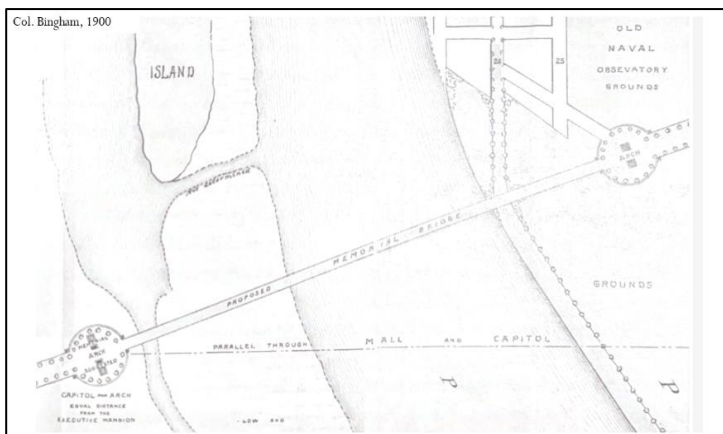
In 1932, Charles Moore—the longtime chairman of the Commission of Fine Arts *and*, notably, former clerk for the McMillan Commission—urged that Columbia Island “should not be suffered to fall from [its] intended high estate into a mere thoroughfare. . . . [T]he center of the island is to be treated in monumental fashion.” ([National Park Service](#), page 55)

Similarly, Ulysses S. Grant III— a member of the National Capital Park and Planning Commission and grandson of the former president and victorious Union general—decried the state of Columbia Island after World War II as a “temporary road with an informal circle.” He lamented that that “the central plaza on Columbia Island had never been undertaken and seems to be *absolutely essential* to link together the two parts of the project, namely the main bridge itself and the entrance to Arlington Cemetery.” ([National Park Service](#), page 74)

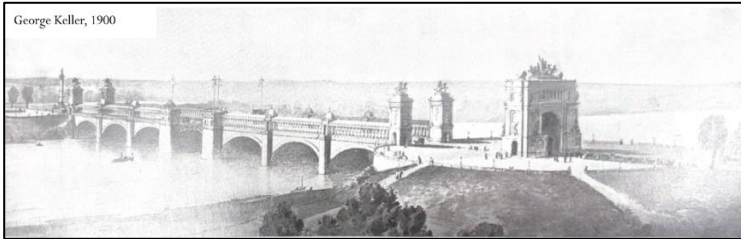
Below, please see examples of various design proposals proffered through the years.



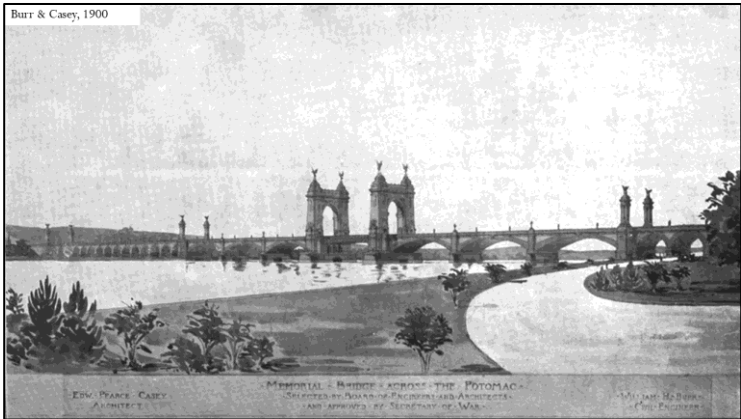
This rendering was from prominent Washington, D.C. architectural firm Smithmeyer & Pelz (best known for designing the Library of Congress Thomas Jefferson Building) alongside civil engineer Captain Thomas W. Symons of the Corps of Engineers. In 1886, Congress directed the United States Department of War to study the feasibility of building a monumental bridge across the Potomac River, and Representative Curtin of Pennsylvania in 1887 introduced a bill that included this design proposal.



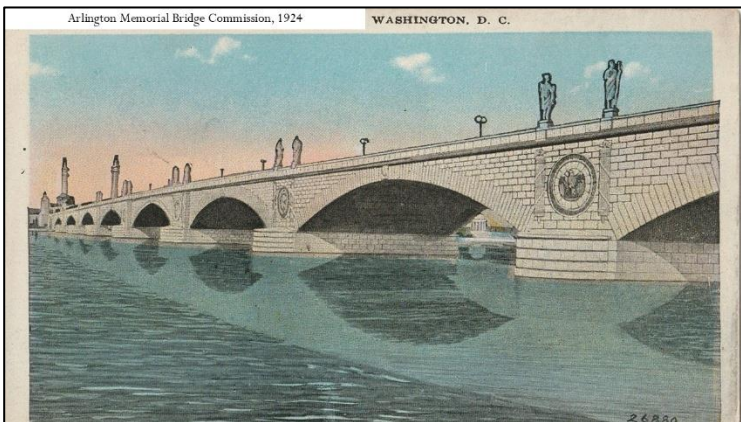
This plan for an arch on the westerly terminus of the Memorial Bridge was proposed by U.S. Corps of Engineers Colonel Theodore A. Bingham, who served as the Superintendent of Public Buildings and Grounds in Washington, DC.



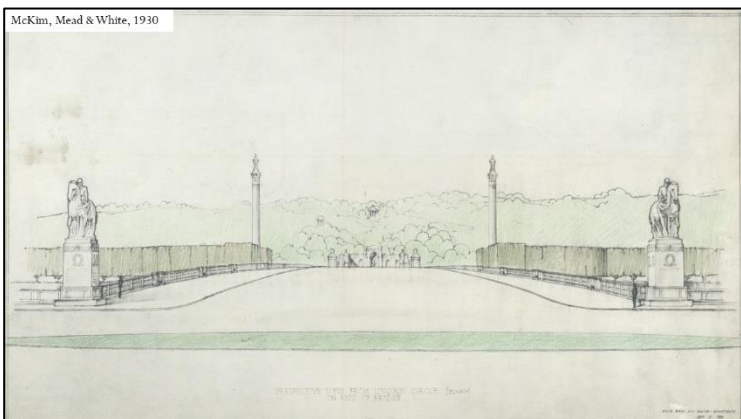
This rendering was commissioned by the National Memorial Bridge Association and designed by George Keller. The bridge, and its arch, was widely praised in architectural outlets.



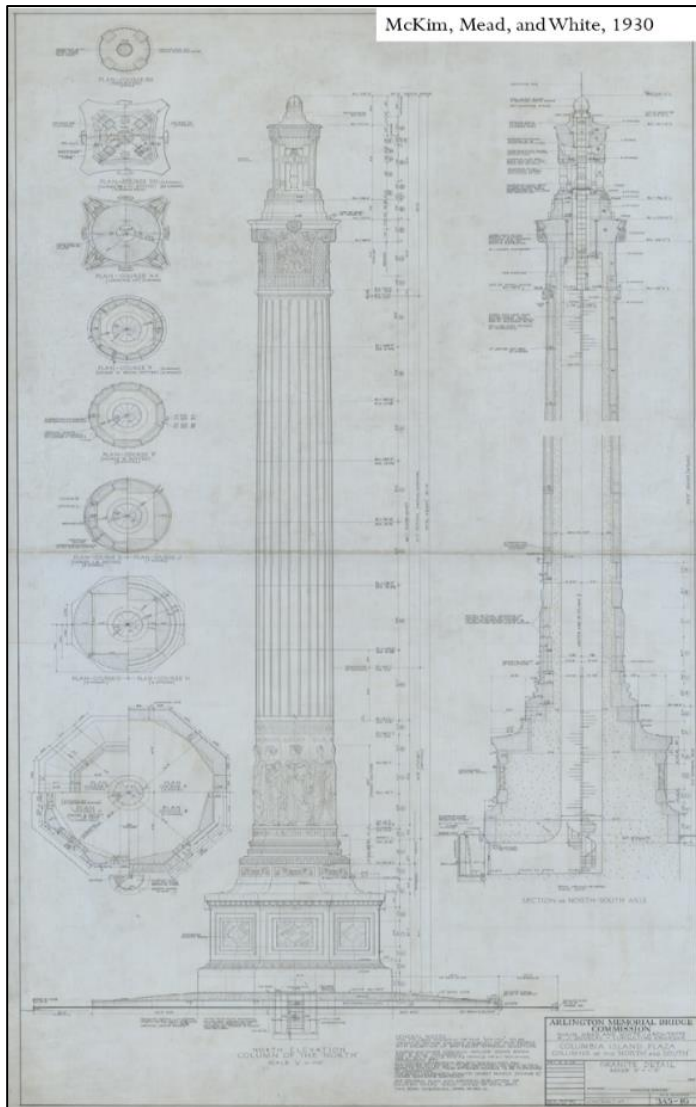
This rendering is the Burr-Casey design that won the 1900 design competition for Memorial Bridge. The Secretary of War approved the design and submitted it to Congress.



This rendering was the design submitted to Congress in the 1924 Arlington Bridge Commission Report.



This rendering was from McKim, Mead, and White—the lead designers for the Memorial Bridge project—as the Arlington Memorial Bridge Commission continued to contemplate designs for Columbia Island.



This technical design by McKim, Mead, and White for the Arlington Memorial Bridge Commission is for the columns on Columbia Island.