

For Immediate Release  
January 10, 2020

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**NCPC Provides Comments on the National Desert Storm and Desert Shield Memorial**  
*Commission Provides Feedback on the Washington Union Station Expansion Project*

**Washington, DC**—At its [Thursday, January 9 meeting](#), the National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC) provided comments on concept plans for the [National Desert Storm and Desert Shield Memorial](#) to the National Park Service, which submitted the project in collaboration with the National Desert Storm War Memorial Association. The refined design concept is for a site on the southwest corner of 23<sup>rd</sup> Street and Constitution Avenue, NW. The memorial will honor those who served on active duty as members of the Armed Forces in support of Operation Desert Storm and Operation Desert Shield, an international effort led by the United States to liberate Kuwait in 1990. The memorial's overall design is inspired by several characteristics of the war, including the unique environmental and battle conditions, such as the dune formations and desert oasis landscape.

The design includes sweeping pathways configured around a central feature meant to express the “left-hook” strategy used by the U.S.-led armed forces in the conflict. The pathways would converge around a commemorative water feature surrounded partially by plant beds. The proposed memorial would be enclosed by two asymmetrical sculptural stone wall berms.

The design includes three commemorative themes that represent significant aspects of Operation Desert Storm and Desert Shield: 1) the “coalition” of multiple nations that came together during the conflict (represented by the central water feature) 2) the “storm” to commemorate the international service and sacrifice (represented by one wall composed of bas-relief or carved vignettes and framed by inscribed quotations) and 3) the “pivot” to recognize the restored faith in the U.S. military (represented by the second wall that would include an inscribed quote related this restored faith). Three statues of U.S. military service members are proposed to stand in front of the pivot wall. The memorial would have access points at 23<sup>rd</sup> Street NW and on Constitution Avenue, with the proposed entrance on 23<sup>rd</sup> and exit on Constitution.

The Commission strongly supported the memorial's landscape-oriented approach and thought that the themes effectively commemorated Operation Desert Storm and Desert Shield and created a strong thematic framework for the memorial. Vice Chairman Tom Gallas noted that “It really is something inspiring and I want to compliment the design efforts.”

Commission members had extensive discussion about the proposed statues, including where they should be located, their size, and their orientation to the rest of the memorial, noting this feature needs further study and refinement. They also recommended that the applicant study the angle of the walls and requested to see alternative treatments for the center water feature,

The Commission then engaged in a robust discussion on concept plans submitted by the Federal Railroad Administration for the [expansion of Washington's Union Station](#). The Union Station Redevelopment Corporation, in coordination with Amtrak, seeks to expand and modernize the multimodal transportation facilities at the station, which is the second busiest in Amtrak's network. Six project alternatives were developed, with one preferred option identified by the applicant. All options would expand the tracks and platforms, add a new train hall, create new entrances, and provide bus facilities and car parking.

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The Commission supported the project's overall goals to improve and expand rail service. They recognized the value of the historic station and its importance to the region as an intermodal transportation hub, noting that it is important to keep the bus station as close to the train station and Metro as possible. They supported the idea of adding a new east-west train hall and new station entrances to make it easier for people to enter the station and move about. The Commission also discussed public comments supporting pedestrian and bicycle connections and concerns about vehicle queuing and traffic congestion around the station.

They questioned the amount of parking proposed for a new garage and recommended that NCPC staff work with the Federal Railroad Administration, District Department of Transportation, and District Office of Planning, along with Akridge, the adjacent private air rights developer, to determine the right number of parking spaces needed for station users in the future. The Commission reiterated that the development process must involve all stakeholders, including residents of nearby neighborhoods and the private developer, and further noted that a true partnership is needed to make the plan a success.

Before adjourning, the Commission adopted a resolution finding that the [Comprehensive Plan Framework Amendment Act of 2019](#) would not have any negative impact on the federal government's interests or functions. The District's Framework Element is an introductory chapter in the Comprehensive Plan's District Elements that identifies the forces driving changes in the city, presents growth forecasts, indicates the core themes and guiding principles, and describes land-use designations.

The District Elements are organized around 13 Citywide Elements and 10 Area Elements. The Framework Element is one chapter within the Citywide Elements. It does not contain any policies or actions. The Commission noted its December 5, 2019 approval to terminate the Urban Renewal Plans for the Shaw School and the Downtown Urban Renewal Area. If the Council of the District of Columbia decides to also terminate Shaw School and Downtown Urban Renewal Areas, the text in the Framework Plan should be revised to reflect this termination.

*This month's agenda included six consent calendar items (no presentations were given):*

1. Preliminary and final site development plans for temporary security cameras on the National Mall. (8142)
2. Preliminary and final building plans for replacement of antennas at the Harvey W. Wiley Federal Building, 5100 Paint Branch Parkway, College Park, Maryland. (8139)
3. Preliminary and final building plans for minor modifications to Square 348, 1001 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW. (P8135)
4. Comments to the Council of the District of Columbia regarding the partial closing of Potomac Avenue in Square 744-SS, Lot 801 - S.O. 19-46967, bordered by 1st Street, Canal Street, and N Place, SE. (8124)
5. Concept plans for the St. Elizabeths East Campus Men's Shelter, 2700 Martin Luther King Jr Avenue, SE. (8136)
6. Preliminary and final site and building plans for Banneker Academic High School, 925 Rhode Island Avenue, NW. (8122)

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*The Executive Director approved four items under authority delegated by the Commission:*

1. Final site and building plans for a backwash equalization pumping station at the McMillan Reservoir, 2500 1st Street, NW. (8042)
2. Preliminary and final site and building plans for phase 3 modernization of the Building 245 Radiation Physics Laboratory at the National Institute of Standards and Technology, 100 Bureau Drive, Gaithersburg, Maryland. (7893)
3. Final site and building plans for refurbishment of a parking garage at the Defense Intelligence Agency Headquarters Building, 20 MacDill Boulevard, SE. (8004)
4. Approval of a report to the Zoning Commission of the District of Columbia regarding a text amendment for public school zoning regulations across Washington. (ZC 19-11)

*Video, Commission actions, and related materials are available [online](#) within five days of the meeting.*

*The National Capital Planning Commission is the federal government's central planning agency in Washington, DC and surrounding counties of Maryland and Virginia. The Commission provides overall guidance for federal land and buildings in the region. It also reviews the design of federal projects and memorials, oversees long-range planning for future development, and monitors capital investment by federal agencies.*

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