

# STAFF RECOMMENDATION

NCPC File No. 6329



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**UNITED STATES AIR FORCE MEMORIAL**  
Arlington Naval Annex  
Arlington, VA

Submitted by the Department of Defense

July 29, 2004

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*Abstract*

The Department of Defense (DoD), on behalf of the Air Force Memorial Foundation (AFMF), has submitted the final design plans for the U.S. Air Force Memorial. The memorial will be located at the promontory of the Arlington Naval Annex property overlooking the Pentagon and affording views into the Monumental Core. The memorial will be located at one of 20 prime sites identified in the Commission's 2001 *Memorials and Museums Master Plan*. The design of the memorial is intended to evoke the soaring images of flight, while providing a spectacular visual gateway into the nation's capital.

*Commission Action Requested by the Applicant*

Approval of preliminary and final site and building plans pursuant to Section 5 of the National Capital Planning Act (40 U.S. C. § 8722 (b)(1)).

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*Executive Director's Recommendation*

The Commission:

**Approves** the preliminary and final site and building plans for the U.S. Air Force Memorial at the Arlington Naval Annex, Arlington, Virginia, as shown on NCPC Map File No. 1.61(73.10)-41404.

**Understands** that the westernmost guardhouse will be removed as it is a redundant and unnecessary security feature.

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## PROJECT SUMMARY

### Site Description

The Air Force Memorial will be located on the promontory, or bluff, which occupies the easternmost point of the Arlington Naval Annex (also referred to as Federal Office Building 2, or FOB 2), in an area that is presently improved with a surface parking lot and Wing 8 of the Annex building. The three-acre site rises approximately 100 feet above the Pentagon. The site provides clear views of the Pentagon, Arlington National Cemetery (ANC), and the Monumental Core.

The Naval Annex is bordered by Columbia Pike to the east and south, I-395 to the south, Southgate Road and ANC to the north, and residential housing to the west. The Annex property is served by a Metro bus line and lies within walking distance of two Metro Stations – Pentagon City and the Pentagon, both on the Blue and Yellow line.

In preparation for the construction of the memorial, Wing 8 of FOB 2 will be removed. The remainder of FOB 2 will be demolished by 2010, and the land will be transferred to the Department of the Army for the expansion of Arlington National Cemetery.

### Background

In 1993, Public Law 103-163 authorized the Air Force Memorial Foundation (AFMF) to establish an Air Force Memorial in the Washington region, (the Air Force is the only service without a memorial in the Nation's Capital). Three years later the Commission granted conceptual design approval of the proposed Air Force Memorial at Arlington Ridge, near the U.S. Marine Corps (Iwo Jima) Memorial and Netherlands Carillon. Subsequent approvals were not sought due to objections by the Marine Corps and a group of nearby residents that resulted in a lengthy litigation process. In 2000, the AFMF began to explore an alternative location for the Air Force Memorial at the Naval Annex site, one of many locations considered during the early site selection process. In December 2001, Congress passed the 2002 National Defense Authorization Act which directed the Secretary of Defense to make available up to three acres of land "...includ[ing] the promontory adjacent to, and the land underlying, Wing 8 of Federal Office Building #2 in the northeast quadrant of the Arlington Naval Annex." The legislation gave the Secretary of Defense the exclusive authority in all matters relating to the siting and design of the memorial. Furthermore, the Act exempted the memorial from the requirements of the Commemorative Works Act.

### Previous Commission Action

On March 12, 2003 the Commission approved the Air Force Memorial concept design plan with the following recommendations:

The Commission:

- Encouraged the Department of Defense (DoD) to consult with the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority, the Virginia Department of Transportation and the Arlington County Government during the development of the Naval Annex Master Plan and the Pentagon Revised Master Plan to develop an urban design plan for the area between the Pentagon and the future Air Force Memorial with the goal of improving pedestrian and vehicular connections and circulation patterns.
- Recommended that DoD and the Air Force Memorial Foundation (AFMF) include the District of Columbia State Historic Preservation Office, along with the Virginia State Historic Preservation Office, in its Section 106 consultation on the potential visual effects of the memorial.
- Recommended that in the preparation of preliminary and final site and building plans, the DoD and the AFMF pursue a lighting scheme that does not include a flashing red light but utilizes another form of lighting to illuminate the memorial at night, to the satisfaction of the Federal Aviation Administration.
- Recommended that the DoD and AFMF study removing the honor guard statuary on the parade ground because of its:
  - (1) Incompatibility with the memorial's striking contemporary design.
  - (2) Possible interference with the ceremonial activities of the parade ground.
- Recommended that the DoD and AFMF keep the memorial open until 10:00 p.m. so that visitors can enjoy the night views.
- Recommended that the DoD and AFMF provide additional parking spaces if the planned number of parking spaces are insufficient.

#### Development Program

Applicant:	DOD/Air Force Memorial Foundation
Architect:	Pei Cobb Freed & Partners/James Freed
Site Area:	3 acres
Estimated Cost:	Approximately \$31 million
Schedule:	Construction to begin Fall 2004; completion expected September 18, 2006 – 59 <sup>th</sup> anniversary of the USAF

#### Proposal

The design of the memorial has not changed significantly and the proposed modifications are rather refinements to the conceptual design plan. The primary elements of the memorial include:

- Three stainless steel spires measuring 270 feet, 232 feet and 202 feet on a triangular podium measuring 92 feet on all sides.
- A five-pointed star in granite at the center of the podium.
- A central parade ground.
- A chapel-like space called the Chamber of Contemplation defined by 10-foot, inscribed glass panels at the northern end of the parade ground.
- An 8-foot bronze honor guard statue at the southern end of the parade ground.
- 10-foot granite backdrop walls with inscriptions behind the contemplation area and the honor guard.
- Stone seating/steps west of the parade ground facing the spires and the monumental core.
- Retention of some of the existing mature landscaping and significant additional plantings.
- A small structure for restrooms, administrative space, information kiosk and mechanical equipment.
- Entrance gate on Columbia Pike flanked by granite signage walls and two stainless-steel guard booths measuring 8 feet wide by 8 feet deep by 10.5 feet tall.
- Bollards (stainless steel and granite clad, both fixed and retractable) at the main entrance and at the parking area to restrict vehicular access to the memorial spires.
- Parking under the tree canopy for up to 25 vehicles, and bus parking in the turn around. The parking area will not be accessible to the public until post-2010 when the ANC expands to include the Annex property. Prior to ANC management of the site, 25 off-site parking spaces will be provided in the existing lots across Columbia Pike.
- Materials consist of Jet Mist and Absolute Granite, and stainless steel.
- Memorial hours will be from 8 am until 10 pm.

The minimal changes made between the Commission's conceptual approval of the memorial and the final plans consist of the removal of the glass enclosed space at the base of the spires; rearrangement of the walls defining the Chamber of Contemplation; enlarged granite backdrop walls behind the Chamber of Contemplation and the honor guard statue; refined entrance gate, including security elements; and, consolidation of the administration building and restrooms into a single structure.

## PROJECT ANALYSIS

### Executive Summary

Staff recommends approval of the preliminary and final site and building plans for the U.S. Air Force Memorial. The design of the Air Force Memorial gracefully evokes the symbolism associated with flight and with the United States Air Force and will significantly enhance the already spectacular views from the escarpment of Washington's monumental core. The skyline of Washington will be clearly visible from nearly every vantage point within the memorial, while from Washington only the delicate spires will be visible. The design incorporates both traditional memorial elements, such as the parade ground and the wall inscriptions, and more contemporary elements, such as the three stainless steel spires rising to a maximum height of 270 feet. The memorial fulfills many of the goals outlined in the Commission's *Memorials and*

*Museums Master Plan* – from establishing a new gateway into the nation’s capital to memorializing significant national achievements.

In finalizing the plans for the memorial, DoD has also addressed the Commission’s recommendations of March 2003. At this final review, staff has suggested – and the Air Force Memorial Foundation has agreed – that the westernmost guard booth at the memorial’s entrance will be removed. A discussion of each of the issues raised by the Commission is provided below, followed by a discussion of the guard booth issue.

#### Vehicular and Pedestrian Access

Since the Commission last saw the proposed memorial DoD, has developed a draft master plan for the Naval Annex site and a revised master plan for the Pentagon Reservation (the Commission will review both plans in the next few months). Although the documents are not yet available for public review, they address many of access issues raised by the Commission in March 2003. The Naval Annex master plan, if approved, would:

- Potentially realign Columbia Pike from roughly the Air Force Memorial in a straight eastward direction, replacing the sharp north turn the road now takes;
- Allow for the possibility of light-rail along Columbia Pike connecting the Pentagon with the commercial and residential areas further west on Columbia Pike, as envisioned by Arlington County officials; and,
- Provide more direct and accessible pedestrian and bicycle routes between the Air Force Memorial and the September 11<sup>th</sup> Memorial at the Pentagon.

With the reuse of the larger annex site for the ANC after 2010 there may be additional opportunities to link all of the nearby visitor attractions.

#### Historic Preservation Consultation

The Naval Annex is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. DoD determined that the Navy Annex Master Plan and the proposed Air Force Memorial would have an adverse effect on FOB 2.

DoD consulted with the Virginia Department of Historic Resources (the State Historic Preservation Office, VA SHPO) to consider the effects of the proposed memorial on historic resources. A Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) was executed between DoD and the VA SHPO to address the HABS-standard documentation of FOB 2 (including written history and large-format photography) prior to its demolition and the potential for finding and documenting archeological resources at the site during construction.

DoD also consulted with the District of Columbia State Historic Preservation Office (DC SHPO) at the direction of the Commission; the DC SHPO concluded that there would be no adverse effect on District of Columbia resources and that no further consultation would be needed.

### Lighting

The Air Force Memorial Foundation, in consultation with the Federal Aviation Administration, has developed a lighting scheme that illuminates the memorial spires from below. The tip of each spire will be illuminated to a higher foot-candle. The lighting will be bright enough to be visible to planes in the flight path and will provide spectacular nighttime views of the memorial.

### Honor Guard

At their March 2003 meeting the Commission recommended that the realistic honor guard statue be removed from the memorial plan because it was in stark contrast to the abstract contemporary design of the memorial. The Commission also suggested that the statuary honor guard might interfere with actual honor guard activities on the parade ground.

Since the Commission last reviewed the memorial plans, the honor guard has been slightly reduced in height (from 9 feet to 8 feet) and the real flags proposed as part of the statue will now be replaced with cast bronze flags. The Foundation continues to feel strongly that the statue is an integral element of the memorial and should remain. The honor guard represents, and is present, at both the beginning and the end of military service, as well as ceremonial events, for all ranks of the U.S. Air Force. The honor guard is intended to represent the human element of the Air Force. The Foundation has also demonstrated that the presence of the honor guard statue will not interfere with trooping activities on the parade ground. While staff would have preferred to see a subtler rendition of the Air Force honor guard depicted at the memorial, such as a bas relief, or a more modern, abstracted honor guard, staff nonetheless understands the importance of the honor guard to the Air Force Memorial Foundation and no longer opposes it.

### Memorial Hours of Operation

The AFMF has determined that the memorial will be open to the public until 10 pm as recommended by the Commission. After the memorial opens, later hours may be considered during the summer tourist season.

### Parking

DoD believes that prior to the demolition of FOB 2 the 25 designated parking spaces in the existing parking lot across Columbia Pike will be sufficient. The parking will be limited to 25 spaces only during business hours, because during non-business hours the existing parking lots in the vicinity of the memorial will provide more than ample parking. The amount of on-site memorial parking will be reevaluated before the surrounding site is modified for use by ANC.

### Guard Booths

Between conceptual and final design development the Foundation undertook a security analysis of the memorial. Although the overall governing principle is an “open” memorial – there will be no fence to enclose the memorial – certain security features, such as guard booths and bollards,

have been integrated into the design of the memorial to restrict vehicular access. The use of bollards is limited to the vehicular entrance and to areas on either side of the seating area where vehicles could approach the memorial spires. The grade up to the memorial from the east provides sufficient security due to its steepness.

Two 8-foot by 8-foot stainless steel guard booths are proposed on either side of the driveway, although only the eastern booth will be used to monitor vehicular and pedestrian access to the site. Prior to 2010, the guard booths will monitor the limited vehicular access to the memorial when increased security risks could exist due to its proximity to FOB 2. After FOB 2 is demolished and the site incorporated into ANC, the gate and bollards will still be an integral part of the memorial security plan. The Foundation has indicated that there are no immediate plans to use the westernmost guard booth. In the opinion of staff, two guard booths flanking a narrow entrance drive are not justified and only one guard booth should be installed. As a result, staff has suggested that the westernmost guard booth be removed because it is a redundant and unnecessary security feature. The Air Force Memorial Foundation has concurred with staff's recommendation.

## PROJECT CONFORMANCE

### Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital

The proposed memorial is consistent with the draft *Federal Elements of the Comprehensive Plan* for the National Capital, which recommends that federal agencies locate and design new memorial and museums in accordance with the *Museums and Memorials Master Plan*.

### Memorials and Museums Master Plan

The Air Force Memorial will be located at one of the 20 prime sites identified in the Commission's 2001 *Memorials and Museums Master Plan*. The master plan describes the entire 36-acre Annex complex and its urban design conditions as follows:

The location represents a potential major gateway. The hilltop setting of these potential sites provide dramatic views over the Pentagon and into the L'Enfant City. The hillside on which Federal Building 2 is located is a prominent location that is highly visible from Columbia Pike and I-395. Proximity to the southern limits of Arlington National Cemetery affords a distinguished landscape setting and suggests an opportunity to complement the adjoining setting with a related commemorative use.

This area would create a signature portal between Washington and Virginia, particularly as viewed from the vehicular approach from I-395.

The master plan also outlines specific design considerations for the Naval Annex site, two of which are relevant to the Air Force Memorial:

- The design of the memorial...could define and establish a new gateway near the border of Washington and Virginia. Due to the site's strategic location, the distinctive topographic and visual features of the site create a sense of arrival into the monumental core from Virginia.
- The size and scale of this site provide ample opportunities for a major memorial or museum that would emphasize significant national achievements and sacrifices such as those honored today at Arlington National Cemetery.

Two general policies for new museums and memorials are relevant to the Air Force Memorial:

- Prominent sites, such as promontories and broad intersections, should be reserved for significant memorials.
- Locating commemorative works close to other civic projects will likely increase tourism and educational opportunities.

The proposed Air Force Memorial meets many of the objectives outlined in the plan, from its thematic relevance and connection to Arlington National Cemetery to its ability to capitalize on the site's spectacular location and gateway qualities.

#### National Environmental Policy Act

NCPC staff has analyzed, in conformance with the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the prepared Environmental Assessment (EA) completed by the Department of Defense (DoD), Washington Headquarters Service, for planning and construction of the Air Force Memorial at the Naval Annex Site, Columbia Pike and Southgate Road, in Arlington, Virginia. The DoD determined a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) on June 28, 2004. The staff's independent review finds that the EA conclusions represent an effective analysis of the potential environmental impacts of the plans submitted to the Commission and conform to the Commission's Environmental and Historic Preservation Policy and Procedures.

The NCPC staff in April 2003 provided comment to EA issues in a letter addressed to the DoD. The Department responded to all matters in their FONSI determination indicating the concerns would be addressed by the final project design, and detailed in the responses several measures that have been implemented. The issues noted by staff involved lighting of the memorial, pedestrian access to the site, erosion control measures, operation hours of the memorial, and coordination of vehicular and pedestrian access planning with VDOT, WMATA and the Pentagon.

The DoD, in coordination with the Air Force Memorial Foundation (AFMF), would be responsible for preparing the site, including demolition of FOB 2 Wing 8, and the adjacent parking area. The AFMF is anticipating that the site would be transferred to them by late September 2004. Construction of the proposed memorial is anticipated to last for approximately 20–24 months with demolition and construction-related activities that are likely to directly and indirectly affect land uses in areas adjacent to the memorial project area. These temporary impacts may include increased noise and dust, higher construction truck traffic levels, and an



altered visual environment. Utilizing appropriate construction practices would minimize these short-term impacts. Overall, short-term construction-related impacts are anticipated to be minor and would have a temporary effect on land uses adjacent to the Naval Annex Site. Alternative A, the DoD preferred alternative, would result in the addition of a commemorative and open space use in an area that currently functions as government office space. In the immediate period after the Memorial is open to the public, there is potential for minor impacts on the remaining offices in the Naval Annex site. These potential conflicts could include an increase in pedestrian and vehicular traffic during the non-peak hours. In the long-term, once the remaining Wings of FOB 2 are demolished and the site is transferred to the Arlington National Cemetery, the Memorial would be compatible with, and help expand the Cemetery's open space and contemplative uses. The proposed Memorial is not anticipated to have an adverse impact on other surrounding uses in the immediate Arlington area.

Staff finds the minor environmental effects and their mitigation supportable and fully defined by the EA evaluation. Cumulative effects of the proposed action have been identified and considered in the EA. Staff believes the DoD determinations are sufficient for evaluation of the effects of the proposed project and support the mitigation actions identified in the EA.

#### National Historic Preservation Act

The Naval Annex is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. DoD determined that the Navy Annex Master Plan and the proposed Air Force Memorial would have an adverse effect on FOB 2.

DoD consulted with the Virginia Department of Historic Resources (the State Historic Preservation Office, VA SHPO) to consider the effects of the proposed memorial on historic resources. A Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) was executed between DoD and the VA SHPO to address the HABS-standard documentation of FOB 2 (including written history and large-format photography) prior to its demolition and the potential for finding and documenting archeological resources at the site during construction.

DoD also consulted with the District of Columbia State Historic Preservation Office (DC SHPO) at the direction of the Commission; the DC SHPO concluded that there would be no adverse effect on District of Columbia resources and that no further consultation would be needed.

#### CONSULTATION

##### Commission of Fine Arts

The Commission of Fine Arts gave conceptual approval of the Air Force Memorial on March 20, 2003, and final approval on April 15, 2004. In giving final approval, however, the Commission strongly recommended that the honor guard statue be eliminated and as an alternative suggested that the honor guard be depicted in bas-relief.