

# STAFF RECOMMENDATION

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NCPC File No. 6179



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## AMERICAN VETERANS DISABLED FOR LIFE MEMORIAL

Bounded by C, 2<sup>nd</sup> Street SW, and Washington Avenue  
Washington, D.C.

Submitted By the National Park Service

November 30, 2006

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### Abstract

The National Park Service has submitted revised concept plans for the American Veterans Disabled for Life Memorial in southwest Washington, DC. The proposed design has incorporated changes in response to security concerns and site changes requested by the Architect of the Capitol and the United States Capitol Police. The revised concept retains the major elements of the initial design (star fountain with flame, triangular reflecting pool, marble and etched glass walls, sculptural elements, trees, landscaping, and lighting), but proposes adjustments in the overall site configuration and alignment. Sculptural elements and lighting design have also been refined for the current submission.

### Commission Action Requested by Applicant

Approval of concept design pursuant to the Commemorative Works Act, 40 U.S.C. § 8905.

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### Executive Director's Recommendation

The Commission:

**Comments favorably** on the revised design concept for the American Veterans Disabled for Life Memorial as shown on NCPC Map File No. 1.72(73.10)42141.

**Requires** the following at the preliminary design stage:

- Details of water elements illustrating the character and flow of water, including during periods when water will be turned off.
- Details of accommodations and seating for the physically disabled, including persons with visual or hearing impairments.
- More fully developed streetscape designs at edges of interstate entrance ramps and at crosswalks; design elements should prevent mid-block and/or entrance ramp pedestrian crossings.
- Findings of the Site/Civil and Traffic Engineering study currently under development.

**Notes** that the Architect of the Capitol requests of the applicant the following:

- Additional study of traffic impacts at the intersection of Washington Avenue with 2<sup>nd</sup> Street, SW to determine whether the intersection design will allow an acceptable level of service during peak periods for left turn traffic from northbound Washington Avenue to southbound 2<sup>nd</sup> Street, SW.; and whether the intersection design will adversely affect the vehicular egress patterns from the Rayburn Office Building.
- Additional study of site lighting, particularly along Washington Avenue.
- Coordination with the Department of Health and Human Services to determine whether exhaust from bus circulation associated with the site will adversely affect the Health and Human Services daycare facility.
- Information on how the site will be maintained.

**Commends** the National Park Service and the design team for the excellent response to unanticipated site modifications, while improving on the overall design and functionality of the memorial.

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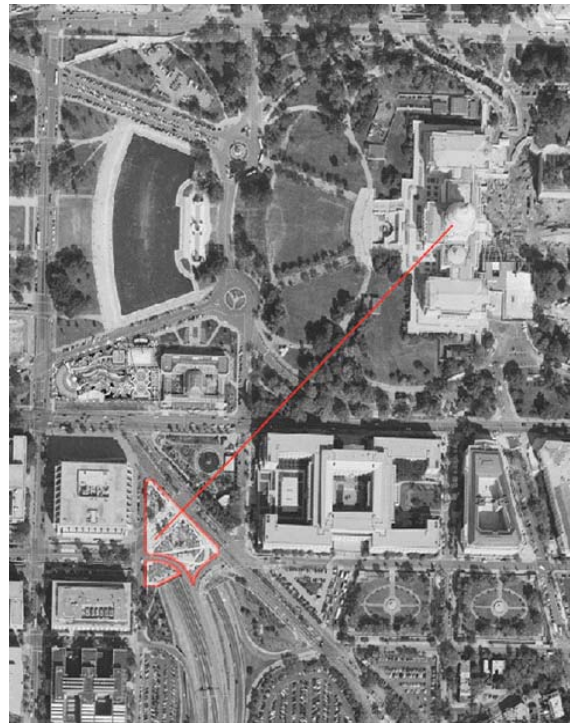
## PROJECT DESCRIPTION

### Background

The Disabled Veterans' LIFE Memorial Foundation (Foundation) was authorized by Public Law 106-348, enacted October 24, 2000, to erect a memorial to honor veterans who became disabled while serving in the Armed Forces of the United States. The Memorial is intended to "express the nation's gratitude, serve as an eternal reminder of the human cost of conflict, and educate Americans about disabled veterans' remarkable contributions to liberty and freedom."

Revisions made due to site modifications resulting from security concerns of the Architect of the Capitol and US Capitol Police.

The land for the park is owned by the District of Columbia and will be transferred to the National Park Service upon the President's signature of the *Federal and District of Columbia Government Real Property Act of 2006* [H.R.3699.ENR, enrolled 11/16/2006].



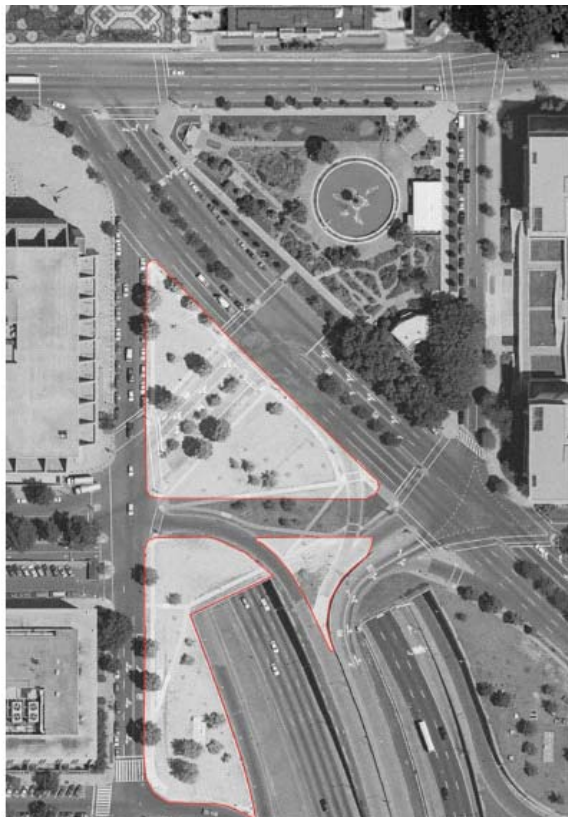
**PROJECT LOCATION**

Site

The American Veterans Disabled for Life Memorial will be located on a triangular site in southwest Washington, DC bounded on the west by 2<sup>nd</sup> Street, on the east by Washington Avenue, and on the south by opposing entrance ramps to Interstate-395. The land is currently unimproved but is maintained/landscaped by the Architect of the Capitol and used as a pedestrian route from the Southwest Federal Center to Capitol Hill.

The existing site is slightly sloped, with a grade increase of approximately three feet from north to south, with a gentle slope from east to west. The design of the park will not modify the natural slope of the site and will continue to accommodate the current use as a pedestrian thoroughfare.

Several federal facilities are in the immediate vicinity. Bartholdi Park (US Botanic Garden) and the Rayburn House Office Building are located across Washington Avenue northeast of the site; the Hubert H. Humphrey building and Food and Drug Administration building are located west and southwest of the site; the I-395 freeway tunnels are located south of the site; and the Capitol Grounds and Mall are located across Independence Avenue north of the site.



**PRIOR SITE**



**REVISED (CURRENT) SITE**

## Proposal

The National Park Service (NPS) has made changes to the concept design for the American Veterans Disabled for Life Memorial in response to security concerns and site changes requested by the Architect of the Capitol and the US Capitol Police. The revised design responds to adjustments to the site boundaries and proposes modifications to adjacent street/intersection configurations; a Site/Civil and Traffic Engineering study is currently under development to evaluate the effects and feasibility of the proposed street/intersection changes.

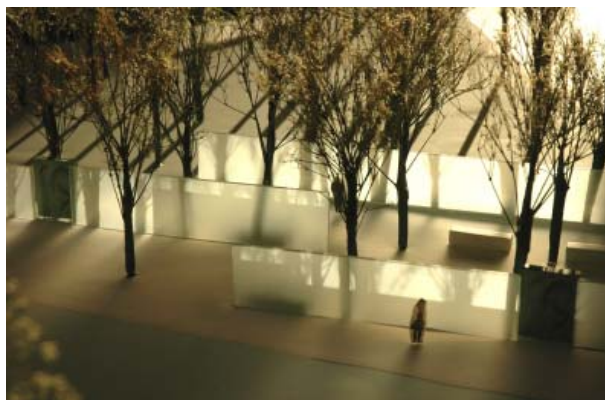
Overall, the design retains the major design elements of the initial concept design: Star fountain with flame, triangular reflecting pool, marble and etched glass walls, sculptural elements, trees, landscaping, and lighting.

In summary, the following design modifications are being proposed as part of the revised concept design:

- Site orientation will be shifted from center northward (to retain axial view to the Capitol)
- C Street, SW will not be re-opened to vehicular traffic
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Street will be widened to a four-lane/two-way street
- Intersections around the site perimeter and with Independence Avenue will be redefined
- Deceleration ramp from Washington Avenue will be eliminated
- Special use parking will be established on 2<sup>nd</sup> Street and on small south parcel
- Bus drop-off will be established on 2<sup>nd</sup> Street
- Pedestrian circulation will be improved with less traffic crossings as well as a widened sidewalk along Washington Avenue

Additionally, the revised concept design has further developed landscaping, lighting, and sculptural elements of the memorial. The grove at the south/interior end of the site are proposed to be planted with ginkgo trees; bald cypress are proposed along 2<sup>nd</sup> Street behind the marble wall; and an allee of elm trees are expected to line the wide sidewalk along Washington Avenue.

The current design calls for a variety of lighting. Perimeter lighting is expected to utilize single and double-headed Washington Globes along 2<sup>nd</sup> Street and Washington Avenue, respectively; glass walls are to be washed from trench lighting at their bases; and pole lighting will accent the flagpole and sculptural elements. To emphasize the flame as the centerpiece of the memorial, lighting interior to the site will be less bright.



**PROPOSED LIGHTING**



**SCULPTURE**

Sculptural artist, Larry Kirkland, has been selected to design four bronze pieces. These will be designed as an integral part of the quote narrative along the glass-walled path through the grove at the south end of the site.



**REVISED SITE PLAN**



**PRIOR SITE PLAN**



**VIEW THROUGH MEMORIAL TO CAPITOL**

## Development Program

Applicant: National Park Service  
Sponsoring Group: Disabled Veterans' LIFE Memorial Foundation  
Architect: Michael Vergason Landscape Architects, Ltd.  
Size Area: 1.72 Acres  
Estimated Cost: \$35 million (hard costs) + \$3.5 million (operations fund)

Tentative Schedule: Preliminary Design: February 2007  
Street/Infrastructure Decisions\*: April 2007  
Groundbreaking: November 2008  
Street/Infrastructure Complete\*: December 2008  
Opening Ceremony: November 2010  
Final Completion: April 2011

*\* Street/Infrastructure project is concurrent (but separate) from the Memorial design project. Coordination is ongoing.*

The Disabled Veterans' LIFE Memorial Foundation is the sponsoring group for the memorial, and will be responsible for fundraising, design oversight, and construction of the memorial.

Land transfer from the District of Columbia to the National Park Service is expected to be completed in December 2006 (HR 3699 ENR, awaiting President's signature).

## PROJECT ANALYSIS

Staff commends the National Park Service and the design team for the excellent response to unanticipated site modifications, while improving on the overall design and functionality of the memorial.

There are a few issues that staff encourages the design team to explore further when moving on to preliminary and final design, as follows:

- **Water features** should be designed for year-round use and/or appearance; aesthetics should not be compromised in cold months when water must be turned off.
- **Accessibility and seating areas** for physically disabled users should continue to be developed, including persons with visual or hearing impairments. With visitation to the memorial by persons with special needs potentially high, the incorporation of access, seating, visual and oral notification devices should be included in the design (rather than added following completion).
- **Street Edges and Crosswalks** require careful consideration and attention to detail due to the heavily trafficked environment of the park. The applicant and design team should work with the District Department of Transportation and others having jurisdiction over streets to design safe and accessible intersections.

## PREVIOUS COMMISSION ACTIONS

At its April 1, 2004 meeting, the Commission approved the first design concept submission for the Memorial. At that time, the Commission also recommended that the applicant continue to study existing and anticipated transportation and vehicular movement around and through the memorial, and refine circulation patterns accordingly.

The Commission approved the site location at its October 10, 2001 meeting.

## CONFORMANCE

### Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital

The proposed concept is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital. One of the goals of the Preservation and Historic Features element is to “Preserve and enhance the urban spaces, circles, squares, and plazas generated by the L’Enfant Plan and McMillan Plan and the unique views and vistas of the National Capital.”

### NCPC Memorial and Museums Master Plan

The site of the memorial is consistent with the NCPC Memorials and Museums Master Plan (Candidate Site 26) and has the potential to serve as a gateway connecting the Mall with future development along South Capitol Street.

### National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)

On behalf of the Disabled Veterans’ LIFE Memorial Foundation, Inc., the Park Service had prepared a draft Environmental Assessment (EA) for the American Veterans Disabled for Life Memorial to be located at 2nd Street and Washington Avenue, Southwest Washington, DC. This EA identified the potential impacts associated with the implementation of the proposed Memorial at the Commission approved location, together with a No Action Alternative. The Commission is identified as a cooperating agency in the issuance of the EA that occurred in June 2005. The Comment period for the EA concluded in July 2005; the EA has not yet been finalized.

Given the revisions of the concept design, the Park Service will re-evaluate issues of the current EA analysis and determine whether a supplemental document must be completed to address any potentially significant environmental effects. NCPC staff at this time finds no major significant modification of environmental effect issues, although it will likely be needed to assess the effects, if any, resulting from the changes to circulation in and around the site.

A completed EA is required to be submitted at the Preliminary Design phase, in accordance with NCPCs Environmental and Historic Preservation Policies and Procedures and Project Plans Submission Requirements.

### National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA)

The National Park Service initiated Section 106 compliance in August 2001 (site selection) and continued that process for the memorial design. In March 2004, the applicant determined that there no historic properties will be affected by the proposed project site and design; the SHPO concurred on March 31, 2004. As ongoing compliance with Section 106, the EA was provided to the DC SHPO for comment in June 2005.

## COORDINATION

### Coordinating Committee

The project was reviewed and fully coordinated by all parties in attendance at the March 10<sup>th</sup> 2004 Coordinating Committee meeting. The participating agencies were NCPC; the District of Columbia Office of Planning; the Department of Housing and Community Development; the General Services Administration; the National Park Service and the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority.

### Commission of Fine Arts

At its meeting on November 16, 2006, the Commission of Fine Arts approved the concept design.

### Architect of the Capitol

Upon review of the current revised concept design, representatives from the Architect of the Capitol (AOC) provided the following comments:

- The intersection of 2nd Street SW and Washington Avenue needs to include a reasonable flow of traffic and left turn movement from northbound Washington Avenue to southbound 2nd Street SW at peak commuter times. DDOT may wish to require a traffic study to determine the best methods for controlling congestion at the new intersection of 2nd Street SW and Washington Avenue; the AOC requested verification that northbound Washington Avenue traffic, going toward Independence Avenue, will not back up and block the left turning movement onto 2nd Street due to the elimination of the mid-block traffic light. An evaluation should also be made to determine if the new traffic light configuration will affect the vehicular egress pattern from the Rayburn building (that currently forces a right turn onto Washington Avenue).
- Heavy landscaping is required at ramp edges to prevent pedestrians from crossing through the site, particularly through the accessible parking area on the south parcel. In general, landscaping and design should force circulation along the intended paths.
- The land transfer Bill [HR 3699 ENR] stipulates that the final design of the south parking area is subject to approval of the Architect; the AOC has concerns with regulation and enforcement of this parking area, since it is not under DDOT jurisdiction.
- Site lighting, particularly along Washington Avenue, requires further development.
- Maintenance issues (i.e., trash collection) need to be addressed.
- Bus parking on 2nd Street is in close proximity to the outdoor playground of the HHS daycare facility, and may generate harmful fumes. The AOC encourages coordination with HHS to determine methods for reducing exposure to exhaust.