

# The Committee of 100 on the Federal City



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July 24, 2017

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Glenn DeMarr  
National Park Service  
National Capital Region  
1100 Ohio Drive SW  
Washington, D.C. 20242

Attn: Desert Storm War Memorial EA

SUBJECT: Comments on the National Desert Storm War Memorial Site Selection

Dear Mr. DeMarr:

The Committee of 100 on the Federal City is pleased to present these initial comments on the Site Selection for the National Desert Storm War Memorial. The National Desert Storm War Memorial (NDSWM) Association, in cooperation with the National Park Service, is proposing to construct a memorial to those who served in support of Operation Desert Shield and Operation Desert Storm. This Site Selection process is the first step in locating and designing the Memorial.

Two sites for the Desert Storm Memorial are being considered: Site 1 is the Memorial Circle Area at George Washington Memorial Parkway on Columbia Island and Site 2 is the Constitution Avenue Terminus Area near 23<sup>rd</sup> Street NW. Both of these sites are in the District of Columbia.

Committee of 100 members attended the scoping meeting held by the National Park Service on Wednesday, July 12; viewed the National Capital Planning Commission discussion of the sites on Thursday, July 13; attended the Commission of Fine Arts meeting on Thursday, July 20 where the site issue was discussed; and have reviewed the material that is now on line on the National Park Service PEPC website. From the presentations and discussions at these meetings and review of the information online, we believe that both sites have pluses and minuses.

Site Number 1, the Memorial Circle Area, has several plus factors. It is near Arlington National Cemetery, it is reasonably close to the Arlington Cemetery Metro Station and it is above the floodplain. It also has some negative factors. The site is surrounded by opposite lanes of the George Washington Memorial Parkway. This could make pedestrian access to the site difficult and even dangerous. There is also considerable traffic noise along the Parkway and at the traffic circle.

Site Number 2, the Constitution Avenue Terminus Area near 23<sup>rd</sup> Street, NW, has a number of plus factors. It is a more prominent location—in the Monumental Core and just north of the Lincoln Memorial. It is near other war memorials (Vietnam, Korea, World War II and the District of Columbia World War Memorial). It is accessible from the Foggy Bottom-GWU-Kennedy Center Metro Station to the north, though requiring a considerable walk. It is an area where many visitors and residents come to experience the National Mall and the major memorials, especially the Lincoln Memorial and the Washington Monument.

The site is just west of the “Reserve” where no new memorials can be constructed (23<sup>rd</sup> Street, NW is the western limit of the Reserve in this area). The site of the proposed Vietnam Veterans Memorial Visitors Center is also just east across 23<sup>rd</sup> Street from the proposed site of the National Desert Storm War Memorial. The Vietnam Veterans Memorial Visitors Center has been approved and fund raising is underway. This Visitors Center will be underground.

There are negative factors that need to be considered for Site Number 2. Much of the site is below the 500-year floodplain and, depending where the memorial is located, a dike, flood wall or site elevation may be required. DC Water has proposed a “drop shaft” on the site, though not at the location where the memorial would most likely be placed. Finally, there is highway noise from traffic in route to I-66 (over the Theodore Roosevelt Bridge) and to the Arlington Memorial Bridge.

After review of these two sites, and the pluses and minuses for each site, the Committee of 100 believes that Site Number 2 is the better site for this memorial. We understand that the sponsor of the Memorial, the National Desert Storm Memorial Association, favors this site. The location on the National Mall near other memorials is a key factor.

Although this is just the site selection phase, we note our belief that the Memorial design should not detract from the Lincoln Memorial to the south. We understand that the sponsors are thinking about a relatively low memorial, somewhat separated from the adjacent area. If Site 2 is selected, additional studies of views of the Memorial from adjacent areas, and views out of the Memorial, will be needed. In addition, if Site 2 is selected, we urge the National Park Service and the National Capital Planning Commission to give careful attention, from the start, to visitor information needs and visitor service needs (restrooms, etc.) in this overall area north of the Lincoln Memorial.

The problem of the “maze” or “spaghetti” pattern of roads just north of the site was discussed at both the National Capital Planning Commission meeting on July 13 and at the Commission of Fine Arts meeting on July 20. We note that the National Capital Planning Commission’s *Monumental Core Plan* (2009) called for study of improved connections between the Kennedy Center and the Monumental Core, including the area now proposed for this Memorial. We hope that the National Capital Planning Commission, the Commission of Fine Arts, and the District Office of Planning and Department of Transportation will use this as an opportunity for looking at the bigger transportation and land use issues in this broader area.

Finally, we note the discussion at the Commission of Fine Arts meeting on July 20 that perhaps a smaller memorial for the Desert Storm Memorial might be considered and that such a memorial might be located in another area of the city. This subject is to be discussed further at the September meeting of the Commission of Fine Arts.

Committee of 100 Initial Comments on the Site Selection  
Process for the National Desert Storm War Memorial  
July 24, 2017

There is a long history of discussions on this subject of the location of memorials in Washington D.C. In 2001, the National Capital Planning Commission, in cooperation with Joint Memorial Task Force, published the *Memorials and Museums Master Plan*. That “2M Plan” led to the creation of the “Reserve” covering much of the National Mall, where no new memorials can be built. In addition, the 2M Plan identified 100 potential sites for future memorials and museums throughout Washington, DC and Virginia.

We will have to wait to see if there is further discussion of alternative sites for this memorial. For now, we are limiting our comments to the two sites that have been outlined for consideration. As indicated previously, of the two sites, we believe that Site 2 is the better site for this memorial.

The Committee of 100 on the Federal City appreciates the opportunity to present these initial comments on this memorial. We look forward to the next steps with the location and design of the National Desert Storm War Memorial.

Respectfully submitted,



Stephen A. Hansen  
Chair

cc: Marcel Acosta, Executive Director -- National Capital Planning Commission

Thomas Luebke, Secretary – US Commission of Fine Arts

Peter May - Associate Regional Director, National Capital Region, National Park Service

Eric Shaw, Director – D.C. Office of Planning

David Maloney—State Historic Preservation Officer for the District of Columbia