

# The Committee of 100 on the Federal City



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**SUBJECT:** Comments and Questions on the Latest Design for the World War I Memorial in Pershing Park

Dear Ms. Dewey:

At the Consulting Members Meeting on the World War I Memorial in Pershing Park, held on Wednesday, June 28, 2017, the attendees were invited to submit questions and comments on the new “Restored Pool Concept” that was presented at the meeting. We note that the concept was not completely clear and attendees were asked to submit questions and comments by Wednesday, July 12. We understand that revisions/refinements to the concept design will be made after the review of the latest design by the National Capital Planning Commission (July 13), the Commission of Fine Arts (July 20) and review of questions and comments received from the Consulting Parties.

We note that the comments and questions in this letter are provided for the purpose of obtaining answers to questions and hopefully stimulating the next stage of design development. We want to stress that these comments and questions do NOT represent the final position of the Committee of 100 on the Federal City on the latest design concept that was presented at the June 28 Consulting Parties Meeting, because some elements of that design are unclear and others appear to be evolving

Elizabeth Purcell and John Fondersmith represented the Committee of 100 at the June 28 Consulting Parties Meeting and draft comments and questions have been reviewed with other C100 members involved in the World War I Memorial in Pershing Park. We note that the Committee of 100 has most recently submitted comments to the National Park Service on this matter on February 22, 2017.

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### June 2017 Restored Pool Concept

This new “Restored Pool Concept” was presented at the June 28, 2017 Consulting Parties Meeting. The material provided indicates that “The intent of this design is to create a memorial which shares a symbiotic relationship with the existing park. The fountain provides the water, sound, and ambiance to the park while the water in the pool reflects the fountain, trees and the sky”. Please describe the expected sound of the fountain's water flow.

Our understanding is that the dimensions of the pool in this concept are the same as the existing pool in Pershing Park. Is this true? Please provide the dimensions and, if there are differences, please provide the information on the differences. Is it true that this is not really a full pool, with a walkway across it, but is actually separate pools of water? Please confirm.

This Restored Pool Concept has an ‘L’ shaped walkway with water on both sides. The long side (east-west) of the L walkway will have water on two sides. The somewhat shorter north-south portion of the walkway is wider and parallels the World War I sculptural wall. Is a railing or other barrier needed to ensure visitor safety? If so, what design and materials should be used?

What is the plan to ensure visitor safety when they are viewing the WWI sculptural artwork separated from the walkway by two feet of water? Is this two-foot gap intended to prevent visitors from touching the artwork? If so, will it fulfill this function? Would it further the goals of the design to install a Plexiglas barrier to prevent people from reaching across the gap? Alternatively, would it be possible to eliminate the two-foot water gap while preserving the water, sound, and ambiance of the fountain?

The materials state:

The “Restored Pool Concept” requires that some means of pathway be created in order to facilitate visitors with an accessible route from the lower terrace region [sic] to the sculptural bas-relief wall. By merging the materiality of this route with an appropriate pool bottom covering the design team intends that the entire pool region will read as a single continuous surface. The pathway through the water is only revealed by the presence of water within the pool basin.

What does this mean?

Is there a plan that the long side of the "L" walkway might be a scrim? If so, will this be safe for all pedestrians, including the disabled and families with strollers?

What material will be used on the bottom of the pool?

In an earlier Consulting Parties Meeting, NPS referred to its financial problems in maintaining other water features. Will there be funds to maintain the restored pool and fountain?

What will be the depth or depths of the pool? The June 28 presentation mentions varying depths.

Will the pool be drained during the winter? Would it be possible to have a “bubbling” water feature in part of the pool that would make it possible to maintain the pool even in the winter?

#### 2017 Restored Pool Concept-POSSIBLE MODIFICATION

We suggest that a modification of the “Restored Pool Concept” be considered in which the full pool would be visible (similar to the existing pool design). There would be a walk along the south side of the pool and a walkway at the west end of the pool, in front of the World War I Sculpture. It appears that the long walk on the south side of the pool might then line up with the Pershing statue to the east.

#### Pershing Statue Area

Some discussion of the Pershing statue would be useful, including if it is to be moved. It would also be useful to have more information about what is to be done, if anything, to the walls, etc. around the Pershing statue. The walls now provide text and maps, but are difficult to read. Is there a plan to re-gild these?

#### Condition of Trees and Shrubs

It would be useful to have more information about which trees or shrubs are in poor health, and where they are located? We note that the “Existing Park Analysis-Planting Investigations” graphic on page 11 of the material provided to the National Capital Planning Commission shows missing trees and some information about other types of trees, but just what the symbols mean is not clear.

#### Flag Pole at the Kiosk Location

We understand that a flag pole will be provided at the location of the existing kiosk and that some sculptural element may be included. It would be useful to have information on this feature of the design.

#### More Information Needed

Despite what has been done, there are still many questions. We hope that some more clarity can come out of the presentations and discussions at the National Capital Planning Commission (July 13) and at the Commission of Fine Arts meeting on July 20, and as answers to questions and comments from the consulting parties. The Commission of Fine Arts recommended preparing a physical model of the World War I Sculptural Feature and the related fountain and walkways. We agree that a model of the entire proposed memorial would be helpful, with separate details that include narrative descriptions of the bas-relief, fountain, pool, and walkway.

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World War I Information

The bas-relief at the west end of the pool is the main World War I commemorative feature. We do have questions about how the visitor to the World War I Memorial will gain some appreciation of American involvement in the war, as well as the effect on Europe. Will this be handled at the Pershing area at the southeast corner of Pershing Park?

We raised the question at the June 28 meeting about how information on World War I will be provided to visitors by National Park Service rangers in the form of tours, brochures, etc. While we understand that such operating matters may come later, we believe it will be useful to think about how information will be provided and how they might relate to the overall park design.

Thank you for considering our questions and comments. We hope that with the actions of the National Capital Planning Commission and the Commission of Fine Arts, and the questions and comments of the Consulting Parties, that the design of the World War I Memorial in Pershing Park can be resolved at the next Consulting Parties meeting.

Respectfully submitted,



Stephen A. Hansen

Chair

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

Thomas Luebke, Secretary -- U.S. Commission of Fine Arts

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

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

Edwin Fountain – World War I Centennial Commission

Claire Sale -- AECOM