

# U.S. COMMISSION OF FINE ARTS

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30 November 2015

Dear Mr. Vogel:

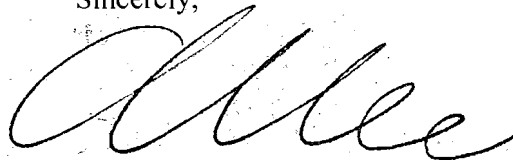
In its meeting of 19 November, the Commission of Fine Arts heard an information presentation on the five designs selected as finalists in the competition for a National World War I Memorial at Pershing Park, an existing national memorial site on Pennsylvania Avenue, NW. The Commission was pleased to have the opportunity to present the following comments.

In their stated support for the worthy intent of honoring the veterans of World War I at this prominent location, the Commission members found that the adaptation of Pershing Park for this new commemorative purpose is a reasonable strategy. However, they commented that the presented competition designs generally treat Pershing Park as an isolated site, when in fact this park has been central to the Pennsylvania Avenue Development Corporation's transformation of the corridor linking the White House and the U.S. Capitol into a compelling visual symbol of the American democracy. They expressed concern that the designs are excessively focused on completely reinventing the existing site without addressing the park's outstanding characteristics and vital role within a series of symbolic urban spaces.

The Commission members observed that the competition designs appear to proceed from the underlying assumption that the existing park design is a failure, whereas its problems are the direct result of inadequate maintenance. They commented that many features of the park—such as the berms and other topographical elements which help create a sheltered space at the center of the park and which are eliminated in most of these schemes—are the very characteristics of the design that make the existing park an appropriate setting for a contemplative memorial. Thus, they criticized the competition program for understating the value and importance of the existing park design, and they encouraged conceiving of the project as a new memorial within an existing park.

The Commission looks forward to reviewing a concept design that acknowledges the memorial's significant existing landscape and its location within a unique urban context while enhancing the park for a broader commemorative purpose. As always, the Commission and its staff are available for continued consultation and assistance.

Sincerely,



Thomas E. Luebke, FAIA  
Secretary

Robert Vogel, Regional Director  
National Park Service, National Capital Region  
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Washington, DC 20242

cc: Edwin L. Fountain, U.S. World War I Centennial Commission