

# STAFF RECOMMENDATION



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NCPC File No. 6979

## DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA WAR MEMORIAL RESTORATION AND REHABILITATION

Independence Avenue and West Basin Drive, SW  
Washington, DC

Submitted by the National Park Service

March 25, 2010

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### Abstract

The National Park Service has submitted preliminary and final site and building plans the restoration and rehabilitation of the District of Columbia War Memorial located in West Potomac Park along Independence Avenue, SW. The memorial was built in 1931 to memorialize the residents of Washington D.C. who fought in World War I. The proposed project includes: cleaning and repairing of the memorial stone, replacement of deteriorating bluestone paving, removal of vegetation close to the structure to restore its open setting, and the planting of elm trees according to the original landscape plan.

### Commission Action Requested by Applicant

Approval of preliminary and final site and building plans pursuant to 40 U.S.C. § 8722(b)(1) and (d).

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### Executive Director's Recommendation

The Commission:

**Approves** the preliminary and final site development plans for the restoration and rehabilitation of the District of Columbia War Memorial and its grounds, as shown on NCPC Map File No. 1.43(73.10)42860.

**Notes** that the project is funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

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## PROJECT DESCRIPTION

### Site

The District of Columbia War Memorial is located in West Potomac Park near the intersection of Independence Avenue and West Basin Drive, SW, north of the proposed Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial.



### DC WORLD WAR I MEMORIAL LOCATION

#### Background

In recent years the condition of the Memorial has been deteriorating. Open mortar joints and failed metal flashings have allowed water infiltration into the brick, terra cotta tile and marble; this has resulted in the formation of calcium carbonate deposits. Marble displacement, spalling, cracking and micro-cracking have been observed and leaking of the internal storm water conductors in four columns have caused heavy soiling. The exposed marble has become dirty and stained from atmospheric pollutants and biological growth.

The character of the memorial grounds have also changed in years since the period of significance. The memorial grove is now a mix of canopy hardwoods, evergreens, understory plantings, and non native plants, altering the intended character of the open grove. While the north and south lawn panels remain, the 50' wide open lawn around the Memorial and the memorial elm grove is no longer evident due to plant material. The bluestone paving is severely deteriorated and broken from vehicular use. The landscape shows of erosion and poor drainage.

At its October 2009 meeting, the Commission commented favorably on the concept design for the restoration and rehabilitation of the DC War Memorial and its grounds and commended the National Park Service for the restoration and rehabilitation of this locally significant memorial and its grounds that will restore its use as a bandstand as well as its visibility in West Potomac Park.

### Proposal

The proposal has not changed from the concept design submittal. The proposed restoration and rehabilitation project includes three components:

#### Component 1: Memorial Restoration

To the Memorial the NPS proposes to

- Restore the structure by re-pointing open mortar joints, repairing cracks, micro-cracks and spalled stone. Displaced stones of significant dimension will be evaluated to warrant removal and reinstallation
- Clean the stone to remove general soiling, calcium deposits, rainwater staining, and biological and non-biological staining.



**Water mist cleaning**

#### Component 2: Reestablish the historic character of the Memorial vegetation

To the Memorial grounds NPS proposes to

- Re-establish the 50' wide vista of open lawn around the Memorial.
- Remove the non-historic vegetation and understory planting to re-establish sight lines and the open setting of the memorial.
- Replant the elm grove per the original landscape plan.
- Improve soils and drainage.

#### Component 3: Improvement of circulation paths and patterns

To the Memorial grounds NPS proposes to

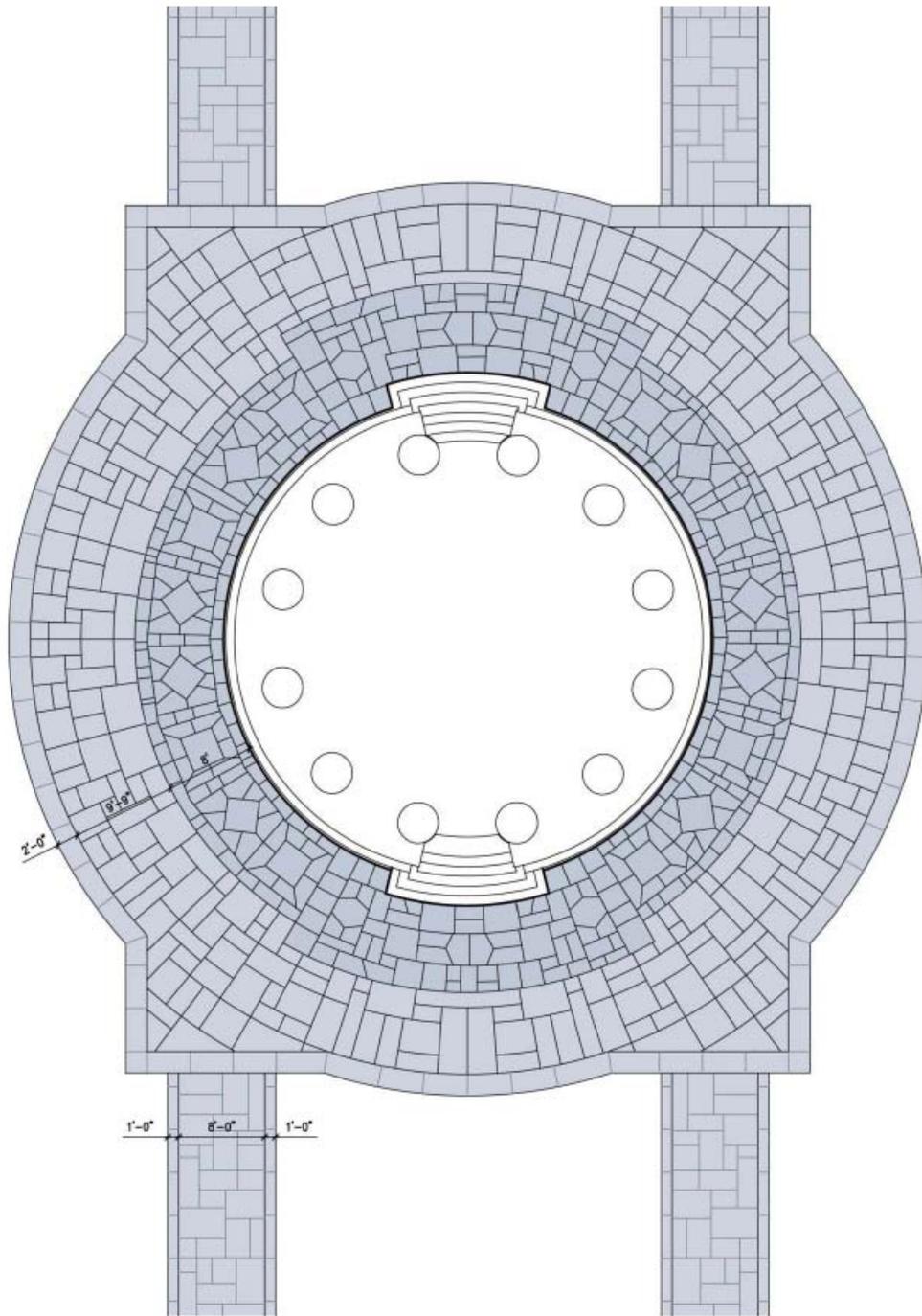
- Rehabilitate the parallel walks and non-historic outer paving circle of the Memorial with new granite paving on a concrete base.
- Widen the walks from 8' to 10' to better accommodate public access and vehicle maintenance.
- Restore the 8' wide historic bluestone paving encircling the base of the Memorial.
- Improve soils and drainage.

Two elements of the project were finalized for the preliminary and final submission:

1. the paving pattern and
2. the vegetation to be removed to restore the 50 foot wide open lawn around the memorial.

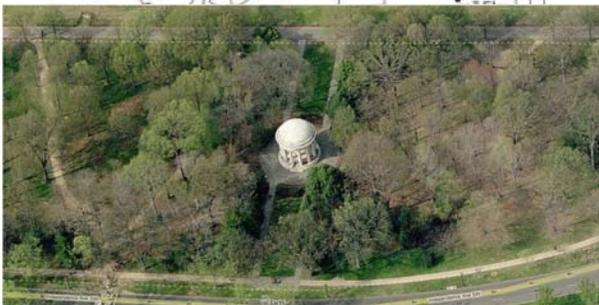
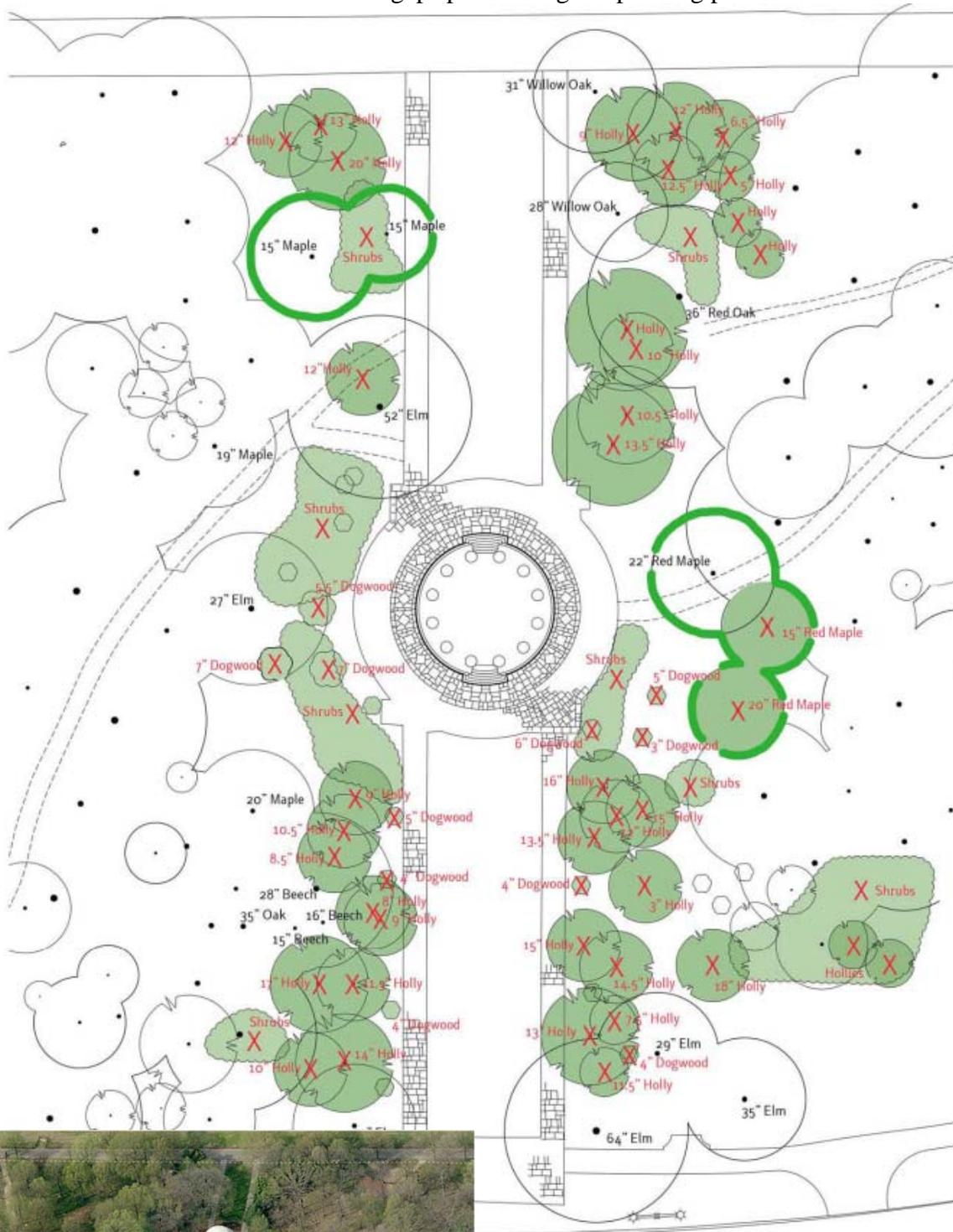
NPS proposes to use four inch thick bluestone set on a cementitious base for the pavers. The thickness will support proposed visitor usage. NPS proposes to rehabilitate the proposed walking

paths to conditions of the 1939 time period. NPS will restore the eight foot historic bluestone pattern around the base of the memorial. The remainder of the pavers will have a random rectilinear radial pattern. The squared corners where the walkways and paving surrounding the base of the memorial will be retained.



**Proposed Paving Pattern**

NPS finalized the plan for trees that will be removed to re-establish the 50 foot lawn area around the memorial. Most of the trees to be removed are hollies and dogwoods. Many of the shrubs are azalea bushes planted on site in the 1980's. NPS will keep the elms that flank the walkway and add additional elms where there are gaps per the original planting plan.



### Development Program

The total estimated cost of the project is \$5.2 million and is funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

The schedule for rehabilitation completion is September 30, 2012.

The lead consultant on the project is Hord Coplan Macht, Inc., a firm from Baltimore, Maryland.

### PROJECT ANALYSIS

Staff supports the much needed cleaning and repairing of the memorial. Staff also supports the restoration of the historic 50' open lawn around the memorial and is encouraged that NPS plans on using the Memorial as a bandstand again.

Staff has evaluated the proposed paving pattern and praises NPS for restoring the historic bluestone eight foot ring at the base of the memorial. In addition to the historic ring at the base of the Memorial, NPS will also replace the paving that was added to the eight foot ring in 1939. While the additional bluestone ring around the base of the memorial does not follow the original design of the memorial, the additional paving was added in order to handle increased visitation and use not taken into account with the original design. Staff is supportive of NPS using the shape of the 1939 paving as it will handle anticipated increases in visitation expected at the site once the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial is opened. Staff praises NPS for undertaking the memorial restoration and rehabilitation of the grounds prior to the increased visitation.

Therefore staff recommends the Commission **approve the preliminary and final site and building plans for the restoration and rehabilitation of the DC War Memorial and its grounds.**

### CONFORMANCE

#### Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital

The project is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital, in particular the Preservation and Historic Features Element. The following are applicable policies from the Preservation and Historic Features Element:

#### *National Capital Image*

1. Express the dignity befitting the image of the federal government in the national capital.
5. Protect and enhance the vistas and views, both natural and designed that are an integral part of the national capital's image.

### *Stewardship of Historic Properties*

5. Identify and protect both the significant historic design integrity and the use of historic landscapes and open spaces.

#### Federal Capital Improvements Plan

This project was funded with American Reinvestment and Recovery Act (ARRA) funds and did not appear previously in the Federal Capital Improvements Plan.

#### Relevant Federal Facility Master Plan

The proposed restoration of the memorial is a project within the preferred alternative of NPS's National Mall Plan, now in the public comment phase.

#### The National Environmental Protection Act

In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), NPS has determined that the project is a categorical exclusion under its regulations C.4 for routine maintenance and repairs to cultural resource sites, structures, utilities and grounds if the action would not adversely affect the cultural resource. NCPC staff has independently reviewed the project information and has determined that the project is categorically excluded under Section 8(c)(2) of NCPC's Environmental and Historic Preservation Policies and Procedures.

#### National Historic Preservation Act

Pursuant to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), NPS submitted the project to the District of Columbia State Historic Preservation Officer (DC SHPO) for review. NPS determined and the DC SHPO concurred that the project will have no adverse effect to known historic properties. Staff has independently evaluated the project information for potential effect on historic properties and concurs with NPS's determination of no adverse effect.

### CONSULTATION

#### Coordinating Committee

The Committee reviewed the proposal at its September 9, 2009 meeting, and forwarded it to the Commission with the statement that the proposal has been coordinated with all participating agencies. The participating agencies included: NCPC; the National Park Service; the General Services Administration; the District of Columbia Office of Planning; the District Department of Transportation; the Department of Housing and Community Development; and the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority.

#### Commission of Fine Arts

The Commission of Fine Arts reviewed the project as a consent calendar item at their September 17, 2009 meeting and found no objection to the concept proposal to restore and repair the District of Columbia World War I Memorial, to rehabilitate the adjacent landscaping, and to

reconstruct the walkways. The Commission requested further consultation between the National Park Service and Commission staff on proposed paving materials and on vegetation removal prior to final plans.