



Office of the Director

## Office of Planning Review of Commemorative Work Application

**TO:** Commemorative Works Committee  
**FROM:** Chris Shaheen, Program Manager, Office of Planning  
**DATE:** January 19, 2022  
**SUBJECT:** Commemorative Work Application for Huseyn Javid

### **Summary of Application and Recommendation**

At its February 26, 2021 meeting, the Commemorative Works Committee (CWC or Committee) considered the proposed bust of Huseyn Javid in front of the United States-Azerbaijani Chamber of Commerce. The Committee requested additional information on the application:

- Incorporate information on Javid into the commemorative work through an interpretive panel or digital media;
- Provide additional information on the materials, fabrication, and finishes; and,
- Provide more information about the scale of the bust (i.e. will it be life-like?).

After receiving a revised application and additional information from the applicant and other reviewing agencies, the Office of Planning (OP) recommends the Committee support approval of the commemorative work by the Mayor and District Council.

### **Background**

The Azerbaijani Women of America proposed a bust to the memory of Huseyn Javid, a prominent Azerbaijani poet and playwright of the early 20th century, on a pedestal in public space controlled by the District Department of Transportation adjacent to the United States-Azerbaijan Chamber of Commerce (USACC) building at 1212 Potomac Street NW. The proposal has been revised so it is now a bronze sculpture attached to the façade of the building that projects into public space. The commemorative work has a total height of 2.1 feet, a width of 1.65 feet, and extends 6 inches into public space. The sculpture is bronze and includes a decorative scroll and inscription with the name “Javid.”

Due to its location in public space in the Georgetown Historic District, the sculpture was required to complete three reviews in addition to the Commemorative Work review process:

1. Old Georgetown Review Board/Commission of Fine Arts;

2. Historic Preservation Office; and,
3. Public Space Committee.

The Old Georgetown Board/Commission of Fine Arts recommended approval of the sculpture at its September 16, 2021 meeting. Historic Preservation Office staff has reviewed the application and has no objections. The Public Space Committee approved the application at its September 23, 2021 meeting.

Javid was one of the founders of progressive romanticism in contemporary Azerbaijani literature and a strong opponent of the repressive totalitarian Soviet regime. His literary work resulted in his conviction for anti-Soviet sentiments and led him into exile in 1937. Javid fell victim to Stalin's political repressions, which is also known as the Red Terror. There is no direct connection between Javid and the District of Columbia.

### **Assessment of the Application**

#### *Location and Relationship to the Subject Matter*

The proposed site is appropriate considering the subject and use of the adjacent building:

- The Draft Commemorative Work Location Strategy does consider using sidewalks and landscaped "public parking" as potential locations for commemorative works, although this specific location is not identified because of the narrowness of the street and "public parking;"
- There is a direct connection between subject and the site - a native of Azerbaijan and the US-Azerbaijan Chamber of Commerce;
- There are no other commemorative works in the immediate area surrounding the proposed commemorative work, the closest being the Francis Scott Key Memorial three blocks to the west at the southwest corner of M Street and the Francis Scott Key Bridge; and,
- The commemorative work's location next to the building's main entrance places it close to the sidewalk where it is visually accessible but entirely out of the pedestrian sidewalk.

The small scale and size of the sculpture and complements the residential scale of the historic two-story townhouses and more recently constructed four-story buildings along the street and the narrow 60' width of Potomac Street. The three feet of landscaping adjacent to the building creates a narrow green and park-like space that creates a protected area of the public space that the sculpture extends into. Additional graphics showing the installation of the commemorative work verify the size and scale of the commemorative work is appropriate for its proposed location.

#### *Proposed Work's Compatibility with District Policies and Values*

The proposed commemorative work appears to be consistent with District policies and values:

- Review of the commemorative work is being coordinated with the Commission of Fine Arts and located in an area outside of the Monumental Core, two policies specified in the Comprehensive Plan;

- The subject appears to be consistent with values defined in the final report of Mayor Bowser’s District of Columbia Facilities and Commemorative Expressions (DCFACES) Working Group that emphasized discouraging subjects that participated in slavery, systemic racism, mistreatment of, or actions that suppressed equality for, persons of color, women and LGBTQ communities and violation of the DC Human Rights Act;
- The subject is a native of Azerbaijan and consistent with the District’s goals to encourage commemorative works that represent a diversity of culture, race, gender or gender identity, sexual orientation, or disability status; and,
- The size and scale of the commemorative work is appropriate for the MU-4 zone - a mixed use zone that permits moderate density mixed-use development – where it is located.

*Materials Used in the Commemorative Work*

The materials proposed for the commemorative work are durable and appropriate for the subject. The sculpture is bronze, will have a natural finish, and will be treated to give it a darker patina. Bronze is a material that has historically been used for outdoor sculpture because of its durability. Additional information provided by the sponsor responds to three questions the Committee asked at its February 26<sup>th</sup> meeting:

1. Incorporation of information on Javid into the commemorative work through an interpretive panel or digital media.

A placard placed beneath the commemorative work will include the name “Huseyn Javid”, the dates of his life, “poet and playwright,” and a QR code that will lead directly to a section of the USACC website with a description of sculpture, a photo of Javid, and an example of his work.

2. Additional information on the materials, fabrication, and finishes.

The sculpture will be created by pouring molten bronze into a silicone mold, treated with chemicals to create a dark brown patina, and rubbed with a brush to create a polished finish. More detail on the fabrication process is included in the application.

An information placard with a QR code providing a link to additional information is made of the same bronze material used for the bust. It will be located beneath the sculpture and independently attached to the wall.

3. Provide more information the scale of the bust (i.e. will it be life-like?).

The scale of the sculpture is increased by 50% from real-life size (1-1/2 times larger than a real-life scale).

*Sponsor's Ability to Fund and Maintain the Commemorative Works*

The total cost to design, fabricate, and install the sculpture is \$9,000 and will be funded by the Azerbaijani Women of America. The United States-Azerbaijan Chamber of Commerce has committed to maintaining the sculpture after installation.

*Summary of Reviews by Other reviewing Agencies and Organizations*

Advisory Neighborhood Commission (ANC2E) – The Advisory Neighborhood Commission provided no comments on the commemorative work application.

District Department of Transportation (DDOT) – The Public Space Committee approved the application with the condition that a letter of no objection be provided from the adjacent property owner. The Eton Condominium Owners Association representing the adjacent property owners have submitted a letter in support of the application stating that the condominium board and individual residents have no objection to the application.

National Capitol Memorial Advisory Commission (NCMAC) – The Chair of NCMAC has reviewed the application, noted the commemorative work is not located in a park or other public or similarly prominent space, and concluded that given its placement no further review by the Commission is necessary.

Historic Preservation Office – The Historic Preservation Office staff reviewed and stated no objection to the application.

Old Georgetown Board/Commission of Fine Arts – The Old Georgetown Board/Commission of Fine Arts reviewed the application at their September 16, 2021 meeting and had no objections.

*OP/Commemorative Works Committee Recommendation*

OP staff recommends the Commemorative Works Committee support recommending approval of the Huseyn Javid sculpture to the Mayor and District Council as proposed.

Final report and recommendation on the application to the Mayor and District Council will incorporate relevant discussion and comments from the Commemorative Works Committee's January 21, 2022 meeting.