



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: February 22, 2012
SUBJECT: Commemorative Work Application for Huseyn Javid

Summary of Application and Recommendation

The proposed bust of Huseyn Javid in front of the United States-Azerbaijan Chamber of Commerce is a commemorative work appropriately scaled to its surrounding and consistent with the policies and values of the District of Columbia. Additional information is needed on the decorative elements on the column supporting the bust.

The Office of Planning (OP) recommends the Commemorative Works Committee approve the application in concept so that the applicant can proceed with additional required reviews prior to final review by the Committee.

Background

The Azerbaijani Women of America is proposing a bust to the memory of Huseyn Javid, a prominent Azerbaijani poet and playwright of the early 20th century, in public space controlled by the District Department of Transportation adjacent to the United States-Azerbaijan Chamber of Commerce building at 1212 Potomac Street NW. The location of the proposed commemorative work is in a narrow green space between the sidewalk and building façade, an area known as landscaped “public parking”. The commemorative work has a total height of 6’ that includes a 2’ bust atop a 4’ pedestal. The bust is bronze and the pedestrian is black marble with decorative scroll work and inscription with the name “Javid”.

Due to its location in public space in the Georgetown Historic District, the bust is required to go through three reviews in addition to the Commemorative Work review process:

1. Old Georgetown Review Board;
2. Public Space Committee; and,
3. Historic Preservation Office.

The applicant has presented this application to and received concept approval from the Old Georgetown Board (OGB) at their February 4th meeting and is scheduled to be on the OGB Appendix at the Commission of Fine Arts meeting scheduled for February 18th, 2021. The applicant has initiated review with the Historic Preservation Office but has not yet submitted a public space application, which is required to initiate Public Space Committee review.

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 to 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 wide 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 setting within a narrow green space locates it close to the sidewalk where it is visually accessible and entirely out of the pedestrian sidewalk.

The small scale and size of the bust and base complements the residential scale of the historic two-story townhouses and more recent four-story buildings along the street and the narrow 60' width of Potomac Street. The three feet of landscaping adjacent to the building does create a green and park-like space for the small commemorative work. More information about the suitability of the site in public space will be provided as part of the Public Space Committee's review. However, additional graphics showing the installation of the commemorative work in public space will further 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 pending further review by OHR:

- 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 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; and,

Materials Used in the Commemorative Work

The materials proposed for the commemorative work are durable and appropriate for the subject. The bust is proposed to be bronze and the base a black marble. Both materials have historically been used for outdoor sculpture because of their durability. It is not clear on what the decorative elements at the top of the pedestal are and how they are applied. More information on these decorative elements is needed as part of the final review of this proposal.