



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: April 26, 2021
SUBJECT: Commemorative Works Application for the Lincoln: Emancipation Proclamation Freedom and Union Statue

Summary of Application and Recommendation

The Commemorative Works Committee considered at its February 26, 2021 meeting the proposed statue of President Lincoln in front of the African American Civil War Museum (Museum). The Committee requested additional information on the application:

- Lighting of the statue;
- Finish of the bronze;
- Incorporation of interpretive panel or digital media; and,
- Renderings showing the proposed statue together with its surrounding architectural features (stairs, building entrance/door, etc.).

After receiving additional information from the applicant and other reviewing agencies, the Office of Planning (OP) recommends the Commemorative Works Committee (CWC) support approval of the commemorative work by the Mayor and District Council with lighting removed from the proposal.

Background

The African American Civil War Memorial Freedom Foundation, a non-profit corporation with a mission to raise awareness of the United States Colored Troops who fought for the Union in the United States' Civil War, is proposing a statue of President Lincoln in public space controlled by the District Department of Transportation. The public space is adjacent to the Museum, which is part of the Archibald Grimke School at 1925 Vermont Avenue. The Museum is across the street from the African American Civil War Memorial (Memorial). The commemorative work is proposed to be placed on a podium integrated into stairs in front of the Grimke School building's north wing. The sidewalk and public space around the statue are designed as an extension of Memorial. The statue of Lincoln is a total height of 5' and sits upon a podium that is 3'6" above

the sidewalk. The statue is made of bronze and depicts President Lincoln seated as he signs the Emancipation Proclamation.

Due to its location in public space and in the Greater U Street Historic District, the statue is required to go through two reviews in addition to those required as part of the commemorative work review process:

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

The applicant has submitted a public space application to the District Department of Transportation and was considered by the Public Space Committee (PSC) at their April 22, 2021 meeting. The Historic Preservation Office has completed its review and approved the statue.

There is a strong connection between the commemorative work, its location, and the District of Columbia. It is located near the Civil War-era contraband Camp Barker that was home to runaway slaves eventually freed by President Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation. President Lincoln also routinely traveled past the location of the proposed commemorative work on his way to and from the White House and the summer cottage he used at the Soldiers Home.

Assessment of the Application

Location and Relationship to the Subject Matter

The proposed site is appropriate considering the subject, use of the adjacent building, its association to important aspects of slavery in the District of Columbia, and direct ties to President Lincoln:

- The Draft Commemorative Work Location Strategy identifies the location as a potential "Shared Space" for a commemorative work as a District-owned property along Vermont Avenue, which is identified in the strategy as a Primary Corridor;
- The statue, design of public space, and Museum are intended to be an extension of the Memorial that is across Vermont Avenue from the proposed site; and,
- The commemorative work's setting is incorporated into a grand staircase leading to the original, main entrance to the Grimke School, close to the sidewalk where it is visually accessible, and entirely out of the pedestrian sidewalk.

There is also a strong and direct connection between the proposed commemorative work and site specific to the District of Columbia. Slavery was legal in the District of Columbia during the Civil War until 1862 when Congress authorized the DC Compensated Emancipation Act authorizing President Lincoln to purchase the freedom of about 3,100 enslaved persons living in the District. At the time of the compensated emancipation, more than 3,500 mostly runaway slaves were living at contraband Camp Barker located in an area near the proposed commemorative work, between 11th and 13th Streets NW and from S Street south to Logan Circle. A few of the slaves living there were freed by the April 16, 1862 Act, but most were not because they did not have their owners' consent.

President Lincoln would also occasionally travel north along Vermont Avenue to reach the Soldiers Home from the White House, passing the location of the proposed statue. In late June 1862 while writing the Emancipation Proclamation, the President stopped and visited former slaves at the site of William Lloyd Garrison Elementary School, two blocks south of the commemorative work's proposed location. Several community institutions important to DC's African American history grew out of Camp Barker: Howard University Hospital (which evolved out of Camp Barker Freedman's Hospital), Metropolitan Baptist Church, Vermont Avenue Baptist Church, and the first African American residents in the area of what would become the center of African American culture in the District of Columbia along U Street.

Proposed Work's Compatibility with District Policies and Values

The proposed commemorative work is consistent with District policies and values:

- The commemorative work's location is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan's policy to locate commemorative works outside of the Monumental Core and furthers the goal of the ARTS-2 zone where it is located, which is intended to promote art-related uses, encourage pedestrian activity, and strengthen the design character and identity of the area;
- President Lincoln is a person consistent with values defined in the final report of Mayor Bowser's District of Columbia Facilities and Commemorative Expressions (DCFACES) Working Group that emphasizes 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; and,
- The design of public space and incorporation of the statue into the redevelopment of the Grimke School is consistent with recommendations in the Office of Planning's DUKE plan (2004) that specifically calls for distinct streetscape improvements in front of the school to visually connect it to the Memorial plaza across Vermont Avenue and to install public art in front of the school.

Design of and Materials Used in the Commemorative Work

The materials proposed for the commemorative work are durable and appropriate for the subject. The statue and base are proposed to be bronze, a material that has historically been used for outdoor sculpture because of its durability. Additional information provided by the sponsor responds to four questions the Committee asked at its February 26th meeting:

1. **Lighting** Based on the high degree of nighttime activity in the area of the statue, the Committee requested additional information on lighting. In response to this comment, the Sponsor proposed lighting the statue with four "Beamer Projector" lights shining on the statue from its base and spotlights attached to an adjacent streetlight. The Public Space Committee considered the proposed lighting as part of the Department of Transportation's review of the commemorative work and noted a streetlight approved as part of streetscape plans for 1923 Vermont Avenue located less than 20' from the commemorative work that will shine light directly on the statue. The Sponsor's lighting consultant stated they believed the streetlight will adequately light the statue. **Based on these comments, OP staff recommends lighting be removed from the proposal and supplemental lighting be**

considered as an addition to the commemorative work later if considered necessary by the Sponsor.

2. Bronze Finish - Side-by-side images provided by the sponsor show a consistent finish and patina used for the Memorial statue and Lincoln statue.
3. Interpretive Information - The sponsor will provide a mobile application available directly to users through cell phone display that informs the public about locations, exhibits, and other points of interest such as the African American Civil War Memorial Plaza, Spirit of Freedom Statue, Wall of Honor and Lincoln Statue to visitors.
4. Illustrations of the Statue and Context - Two illustrations provided by the sponsor show the steps of the Grimke School, podium, and Lincoln Statue directly in front of the main entrance to Museum during the day and night.

Sponsor's Ability to Fund and Maintain the Commemorative Work

The Lincoln statue was purchased with a matching grant from DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities that was matched by the Museum through fundraising. It was fabricated and delivered to the museum in July 2020 where it is in storage awaiting installation. Construction work necessary to prepare the site for installation is being funded through a grant from District Department of Transportation. Formal installation will cost about \$12,000 and the museum has reserved funds for this task. The Management and Indemnification Agreement between the Museum as tenant and Community Three Grimke as landlord requires the Museum to make a \$25,000 deposit and agree to maintain all improvements in public space in front of the Grimke building including the Lincoln statue. This agreement also requires the Museum to maintain insurance on items it installs.

Summary of Reviews by Other Reviewing Agencies and Organizations

Advisory Neighborhood Commission (ANC) - The ANC provided comments to OP on March 8, 2021 and raised no concerns with the application. Its support for the commemorative work is documented in their August 1, 2019 letter to the DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities. This letter states, "Since 2014, ANC1B has promoted a vision for a 'civic plaza' at U Street and Vermont Avenue. The civil plaza will engage individuals existing the metro with a view of the African American Civil War Memorial, and the historic Grimke School." The ANC also states support for a design of public space that includes, "the use of granite pavers, plants and trees, (and) installation of iconic statue of Spirit of Freedom and President Lincoln signing the Emancipation Proclamation."

District Department of Transportation (DDOT) – The Public Space Committee (PSC) reviewed this application for DDOT at their April 22, 2021 meeting and approved the location of the statue. However, it did not approve the lighting, noting a streetlight that is part of approved streetscape plans less than 20' from the proposed location of the statue and recommending additional lights be added later if the Sponsor determines it is necessary. PSC members also raised concerns about locating non-standard lighting in public space, specifically attaching non-

standard spotlights to a light pole that can damage the structural integrity of the pole and how lights projecting onto the statue from its base would contribute to light pollution.

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 has reviewed and approved the public space application associated with this project.

OP/Commemorative Works Committee Recommendation

OP staff recommends the Commemorative Works Committee support recommending approval of the Lincoln Statue to the Mayor and District Council with lighting removed from the proposal.

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 April 30, 2021 meeting.