



Office of Planning Review of Commemorative Works Application

To: Commemorative Works Committee
From: Chris Shaheen, Program Manager, Office of Planning
Date: July 11, 2023
Subject: Commemorative Works Application for Bernardo de Gálvez

Summary of Application and Recommendation

At its July 15, 2022 meeting, the Commemorative Works Committee (CWC or Committee) considered the proposed statue of “Bernardo de Gálvez: A Friend of Independence” in front of the Embassy of Spain at 2375 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW. During the July 15 review, the Committee provided the following guidance to the applicant:

- Refine the design with an asymmetric seating area and placement of the statue directly off the 24th Street sidewalk; and,
- Further consider design and location of the interpretive panel.

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 for Bernardo de Gálvez by the Mayor and District Council.

Background

The Embassy of Spain installed a statue of Gálvez in District of Columbia public space in June 2019 with seeking the appropriate permits. In September 2021, the Spain-USA Foundation began working with the District to obtain the necessary permit and proceed through the commemorative works review process. Since then, the Spain-USA Foundation submitted an application and worked with District agencies to prepare and complete the commemorative works review process.

Although the statue has already been installed, the Spain-USA Foundation is proposing to relocate and make additional improvements around the statue of Gálvez, a Spaniard who was governor of Spanish Louisiana and a General who led Spanish troops fighting for the United States during the Revolutionary War against Great Britain. The statue is in public space controlled by the District Department of Transportation adjacent to the Embassy of Spain at 2375 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW. The location of the proposed commemorative work is in the landscaped “public parking” area of 24th Street, between the sidewalk and building façade. The

commemorative work has a total height of 90" (6'6"), including a 39" statue atop a 51" pedestal.

Because 2375 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW is a District Landmark and the commemorative work is in public space under the jurisdiction of DDOT, the application is required to go through two additional reviews in addition to the commemorative works review process:

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

Both the Public Space Committee and Historic Preservation Office reviewed and approved the application.

The bronze statue depicts Gálvez in military dress standing with a sword in one hand, referencing his heroic actions in 1781 that forced the Spanish entry into Pensacola Bay and past British batteries at Fort Barrancas as part of efforts to force the British out of west Florida. This led King Charles III of Spain to allow Gálvez to place on his coat of arms the words "Yo solo" (I Alone). These words are engraved on a plaque at the base of the statue.

Gálvez was a citizen of Spain who fought in the United States Revolutionary War, risked his life for the freedom on the United States people, and provided supplies, intelligence, and military support. He helped draft the terms of the treaty ending the Revolutionary War and commanded the Spanish war ship "Galveston." The large city of Galveston, TX, and the small town of Galveston, LA, are named for Gálvez. In 2014, Galvez became one of eight people the US Congress awarded honorary US citizenship. A memorial of Gálvez at Virginia Avenue and 22nd Street NW - authorized by Congress in 1976 and dedicated in 2007 - is maintained by the National Park Service and was a gift from King Juan Carlos of Spain to the United States in honor of the United States' bicentennial.

There is no direct connection between Gálvez and the District of Columbia.

Assessment of the Application

Location and Relationship of the Subject Matter

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

- The site is identified as a potential commemorative work location in Locate, DC's commemorative work location strategy, because of wide sidewalks and landscaped "public parking" and a nearby transfer point of two bus lines;
- There is a direct connection between subject and the site - a native of Spain and the Spanish Embassy;
- There is an association between the subject and the nearby statue of George Washington – Gálvez fought in the American Revolutionary War and George Washington commanded the American forces during the War;

- The setting includes seating and is within a landscaped green space adjacent to the sidewalk where it is visually accessible and entirely out of the pedestrian walkway;
- An interpretive plaque is located at the back of the sidewalk, near the seating area, and next to the entrance to the embassy;
- The small scale and size of the statue and base complements the residential scale of the adjacent, historic three-story building façade and more recent eight-story building across the 90' width of 24th Street; and,
- The 17 feet of landscaping adjacent to the building creates a green and park-like space for the small commemorative work.

Proposed Works Compatibility with District Policies and Values

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

- The commemorative work is located in an area outside of the Monumental Core, a policy specified in the Comprehensive Plan;
- The subject is 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 Spain 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 RA-5 zone – a zone that permits urban residential development and compatible institutional and semi-public buildings - 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 statue is bronze, and the base and seating are finished concrete. Bronze is a material that has historically been used for outdoor sculptures because of its durability.

Sponsor’s Ability to Fund and Maintain the Commemorative Work

The Embassy of Spain has committed to fund the construction and maintenance of the commemorative work.

Summary of Reviews by Other Reviewing Agencies and Organizations

Advisory Neighborhood Commission (ANC-2A) – The Advisory Neighborhood Commission considered and voted to support the application at its June 19, 2023 regular meeting.

District Department of Transportation (DDOT) – The Public Space Committee approved the application at its April 27, 2023 meeting.

National Capitol Memorial Advisory Commission (NCMA) - The Chair of NCMAC 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 the application and stated it can be approved by staff and does not require review by the Historic Preservation Review Board (HPRB).

Recommendation

Office of Planning (OP) recommends the Commemorative Works Committee support approval of the commemorative work by the Mayor and District Council.