



Executive Director's Recommendation

Commission Meeting: October 3, 2024

PROJECT Fallen Journalists Memorial 300 Independence Avenue, SW Washington, DC	NCPC FILE NUMBER 8449
SUBMITTED BY United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service	NCPC MAP FILE NUMBER 1.71(73.10)45887
REVIEW AUTHORITY Commemorative Works per 40 U.S.C. § 8905	APPLICANT'S REQUEST Approval of comments on concept plans
	PROPOSED ACTION Approve comments on concept plans
	ACTION ITEM TYPE Staff Presentation

PROJECT SUMMARY

The National Park Service (NPS), in collaboration with the Fallen Journalists Memorial Foundation (Foundation) has submitted concept plans for Commission comment regarding the Fallen Journalists Memorial. The site is located at Independence Avenue, Maryland Avenue, and 3rd Street SW and is within the Monumental Core. The concept design consists of a 0.3-acre triangular park with a hardscape stone plaza overlaid with a grove of trees and an array of cast glass elements. The site will have three outdoor areas: Remembrance Hall, press room, and a classroom.

The Commission is not formally approving a memorial design or site location at this stage of the process. Rather, NCPC is submitting planning comments that weigh the opportunities and challenges of the concept plan. The NPS and Foundation will take NCPC's comments into account as well as those received from the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts (CFA) and interested stakeholders as they develop a preliminary design plan.

In 2020, Public Law 116-253 authorized the establishment of a commemorative work in the District of Columbia and its environs to commemorate America's commitment to a free press by honoring journalists who sacrificed their lives in service to that cause, in accordance with the Commemorative Works Act (40 U.S.C. §8901) (CWA). The CWA defines approval requirements related to the location, design, and construction of commemorative works in the District of Columbia and its environs. NCPC and the CFA approve plans for new commemorative works.

The CWA allows for the location of a memorial within Area I if it is determined that the subject "is of preeminent historical and lasting significance to the United States." In January 2023, Public Law 117-328 authorized the approval of locating the memorial within Area I as outlined in the

CWA. On April 6, 2023, the Commission reviewed the Fallen Journalists Memorial Site Selection and supported advancing the Maryland & Independence Avenue at 3rd Street, SW site (Site O) as well as Edward Murrow Park (Site T) for further evaluation. On April 27, 2023, the CFA reviewed the site selection study and approved Site O. In June 2023, the Foundation initiated a design competition by inviting a broad and diverse group of 118 architects, designers, and artists from the U.S. and abroad to submit proposals. In March 2024, the Foundation announced the selection of John Ronan Architects to design the memorial. The applicant has determined that the Maryland Avenue site is the preferred site.

At the September 4, 2024 National Capital Memorial Advisory Commission (NCMAC) meeting, the Foundation and John Ronan Architects presented the concept plan for the memorial. NCMAC reviewed and supported the concept plan and provided feedback on access, circulation, lighting, safety, landscaping, interpretation, and maintenance of the concept design.

The U. S. Commission of Fine Arts reviewed the concept design for the Fallen Journalists Memorial at their September 19, 2024 meeting and approved the concept plan. Feedback was given on acoustics, perimeter circulation, design of the right-of-way, dimensions of the glass elements, and tree and landscaping.

KEY INFORMATION

- The Commission is not formally approving a memorial design or site location at this stage of the process. Rather, NCPC is submitting planning comments that weigh the opportunities and challenges of the concept plan.
- The CWA establishes requirements related to the location, design, and construction of commemorative works on federal lands within the District of Columbia and its environs. It applies to lands under jurisdiction of the Department of Interior (DOI) and the General Services Administration (GSA).
- In general, in accordance with the CWA, the key benchmarks for authorizing a new monument are summarized below:

(1) Congress authorizes each new monument purpose (subject) and a monument sponsor by separate federal law.

- Public Law 116-253, “The Fallen Journalists Memorial Foundation may establish a commemorative work on Federal land in the District of Columbia and its environs to commemorate America’s commitment to a free press by honoring journalists who sacrificed their lives in service to that cause.”
- Public Law 117-328 authorizes the approval of locating the memorial within Area I as defined by the CWA.

(2) The sponsor consults with the NCMAC on alternative sites and design concepts.

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- At the October 5, 2021, NCMAC meeting, the NPS in collaboration with the Foundation presented the site selection study and the four sites for comment and sought authorization to establish the memorial within Area I as defined by the CWA.
 - NCMAC commented favorably on Site O: Maryland & Independence Avenues at 3rd Street SW and generally dismissed Site A: Freedom Plaza given the need to relocate the Pulaski statue, along with likely future redevelopment. NCMAC recommended to the Secretary of Interior that Area 1 be legislated so that the Foundation can obtain its preferred site, which was subsequently enacted in Public Law 117-328.
 - In April 2023, NCPC supported advancing Sites O and T: Edward R. Murrow Park for further consideration and recommended that the sponsor no longer consider Sites A: Freedom Plaza and D: Pennsylvania Avenue & Constitution Avenue NW. They requested that the applicant develop one or more design concepts for any sites advanced for further evaluation, including variations in scale, placement, and orientation.
 - CFA approved Site O in April 2023.
 - At the September 4, 2024 meeting, NCMAC reviewed and supported the concept plan while giving feedback on access, circulation, lighting, safety, landscaping, interpretation, and maintenance of the concept as designed.
 - (3) NCPC and CFA must each approve the site and design for new commemorative works.
 - At the September 19, 2024 meeting, CFA approved the concept plan while giving feedback on acoustics, perimeter circulation, design of the right-of-way, dimensions of the glass elements, and tree and landscaping.
 - (4) DOI or GSA, as appropriate, must approve and permit the final site and design for each new memorial, after the steps above are completed.
 - Site O is under the jurisdiction of the NPS. The site is not in NCPC's Memorials & Museums Master Plan (2M Plan).
 - Site O is sited along Maryland Avenue, SW, which is identified as a preeminent view corridor with a linear view from the U.S. Capitol to the Tidal Basin in the Urban Design Element. These views are critical to maintain as they contribute to the visual importance and hierarchy of nationally symbolic public buildings.
 - Site O is located within the Monumental Core Streetscape boundary and should be consistent with the Monumental Core Streetscape Design Guidelines.
 - The Foundation and John Ronan Architects envision a three-component concept plan for the memorial that will allow for various programming (Remembrance Hall, press room, and a classroom).

RECOMMENDATION

The Commission **approves** the following comments:

Supports the design approach, which thoughtfully applies the use of glass in a unique way to convey the purpose of the memorial and the role of journalists.

Finds the design must balance memorial purpose, materiality, and functionality, while considering the site context and visitor experience; and therefore

Visitor Access and Circulation

Notes the memorial design includes a series of elements placed across the site that generally define circulation paths and gatherings spaces.

Finds circulation and access for visitors, particularly from the perimeter of the site, may be challenging to perceive or navigate, especially for those with mobility concerns or visual impairments.

Recommends the applicant continue to refine the access and circulation, with a focus on creating clear paths of movement that will help guide visitors of all abilities through the memorial.

Requests the applicant provide, as part of the next review, further information on the programming and interpretation and how they will be inclusive and accommodate visitors of all abilities.

Visitor Comfort

Finds that while the concept design includes a grove of trees, the site is proposed to be fully paved, which in combination with the glass elements, may impact visitor comfort particularly during the warmer months of the year.

Requests the applicant evaluate additional approaches to enhancing visitor comfort and reducing the urban heat island effect, including alternative ground treatments and tree wells, and additional trees and alternate species, and other landscaping.

Viewsheds

Notes the site is located along Maryland Avenue, SW, which is identified as a preeminent view corridor with a linear view from the U.S. Capitol to the Tidal Basin.

Requests a viewshed analysis to understand the memorial's visual impacts to the U.S. Capitol and Maryland Avenue, SW preeminent view corridor. The viewshed analysis should include the

relationship to curbs, buildings, trees, and other landscape features between 6th to 3rd Streets SW and the U.S. Capitol in all seasons and show the surrounding areas.

Notes the central Remembrance Hall is intended to provide a view toward the U.S. Capitol dome.

Requests the applicant continue to explore the overall height and design of the Remembrance Hall to better frame the view to the U.S. Capitol Dome.

Lighting

Notes the submission indicates the memorial lighting approach includes up-lit glass elements which would create a glow across the site.

Notes the lighting approach should respect the visual importance and hierarchy of memorials, monuments, and important civic buildings and spaces in the nation's capital, with the U.S. Capitol and Washington Monument the most prominent features in the nighttime skyline; and therefore

Recommends the applicant include a lighting study as part of the next review that demonstrates the proposed lighting levels and how they may impact the hierarchy of the U.S. Capitol and surroundings museums.

Streetscape Design

Notes NCPC, along with the Monumental Core Interagency Working Group (IWG), recently completed the Monumental Core Streetscape Guidelines, which reinforces the hierarchy of streets and vistas of the L'Enfant Plan.

Notes NCPC and Smithsonian, in consultation with the District of Columbia and other local and federal stakeholders are preparing an urban design study on Independence Avenue to improve north-south and east-west connectivity for pedestrians and multi-modal transportation (physical and visual connectivity) and provide streetscape amenities to improve pedestrian accessibility and comfort.

Requests the applicant coordinate with NCPC and the Monumental Core IWG to evaluate how the proposed memorial design can align with the Monumental Core Streetscape Design Guidelines and improve the pedestrian experience along Independence Avenue.

Material Use and Durability

Commends the applicant's detailed exploration, symbolism, and proposed application of the glass material in a national memorial.

Notes the site is located in the 100-year floodplain.

Requests the applicant provide, as part of the next submission, further information about:

- The durability of the glass elements, and how they will be maintained and cleaned;
- How climbing and or skateboarding will be addressed;
- Whether the glass elements could withstand a vehicular crash and how the memorial is generally addressing security; and
- The flood mitigation approach.

Equity Considerations

Requests the applicant provide as part of the next submission responses to the equity considerations outlined in the Submission Guidelines.

PROJECT REVIEW TIMELINE

Previous actions	April 2023 – NCPC approved both Sites O: Maryland & Independence Avenue at 3 rd Street SW and T: Edward R. Murrow Park for the site location.
Remaining actions (anticipated)	– Approval of preliminary memorial plans – Approval of final memorial plans

PROJECT ANALYSIS

Executive Summary

The NPS, in collaboration with the Fallen Journalists Memorial Foundation (Foundation), has submitted the concept plan of the Fallen Journalists Memorial. Staff has analyzed the concept plan in accordance with the CWA's guidance on commemorative works and the policies set forth in the *Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital*. Overall, staff finds the proposed design is an exciting application of form and material in way that seeks to honor journalists who sacrificed their lives in service to that cause. As such, staff recommends the **Commission express support for the design approach, which thoughtfully applies the use of glass in a unique way to convey the purpose of the memorial and the role of journalists.** Further, staff recommends the **Commission find the design must balance memorial purpose, materiality, and functionality, while considering the site context and visitor experience.** As the project advances, the applicant will need to further refine the design of the memorial focusing on visitor access and circulation, visitor comfort, viewsheds, lighting, streetscape design, material use and durability, and equity. The next submission should provide additional details about the physical relationship of the memorial to the surrounding context and provide information about the programming and interpretation for the memorial.

Analysis

Background

The enabling legislation authorized a memorial that commemorates “America’s commitment to a free press by honoring journalists who sacrificed their lives in service to that cause.” Although the memorial will honor journalists who have died carrying out their profession, the primary subject of commemoration is freedom of the press, as listed in the Constitution. The intent of the memorial is to balance the duality of providing a place of commemoration and serving as an inspiration for journalists and the public. There are three main goals of the memorial: Commemoration, Inspiration, and Education. The memorial design consists of the interplay of three superimposed design elements – a hardscape stone plaza overlaid with a grove of trees that sidestep the array of cast glass elements which aggregate to form the memorial’s circular Remembrance Hall at the heart of the site.

Staff analyzed this project using guidance in the Commemorative Works Act (CWA), the Comprehensive Plan, and in consideration of the applicant’s site selection criteria. A general principle set forth in the Comprehensive Plan is to protect and improve the open space character of the Monumental Core and the integrity of each memorial and park element. Further, the Comprehensive Plan includes policies to enhance the quality of the visitor experience to the Nation’s Capital, particularly at major cultural sites, such as the Monumental Core.

As a reminder, the CWA (40 U.S.C. 8905) includes decision criteria for site and design approval:

- Surroundings – to the maximum extent possible, a commemorative work shall be located in surroundings that are relevant to the subject of the work.
- Location – a commemorative work shall be located so that it does not interfere with or encroach on, an existing commemorative work, and to the maximum extent practicable, it protects open space, existing public use, and cultural and natural resources.

Visitor Access and Circulation

The memorial design includes a series of transparent, solid glass elements placed across the site that generally define circulation paths and gatherings spaces. Visitors would access the memorial from Maryland Avenue, Independence Avenue, and 3rd Street, SW. Bench-height glass elements are arranged to create designated paths for visitors to enter the Remembrance Hall that are ADA-compliant, while there are other paths that connect to them are not ADA compliant. Multiple glass elements are stacked together to create the over 9-foot walls of the Remembrance Hall. The arrangement of blocks and the dispersed, seemingly rand will require further consideration, particularly to ensure that those of various abilities can safely navigate the memorial. Therefore, staff recommends the **Commission find circulation and access for visitors, particularly from the perimeter of the site, may be challenging to perceive or navigate, especially for those with mobility concerns or visual impairments.** In addition, staff recommends the **Commission**

recommend the applicant continue to refine the access and circulation, with a focus on creating clear paths of movement that will help guide visitors of all abilities through the memorial. Further, the Commission should request the applicant provide, as part of the next review, further information on the programming and interpretation and how they will be inclusive and accommodate visitors of all abilities.

Visitor Comfort

In general, the memorial design should consider visitor comfort. The proposed design includes a grove of honey locust trees, but no other plantings or other strategies to help reduce heat on-site. Staff recommends the **Commission find that while the concept design includes a grove of trees, the site is proposed to be fully paved, which in combination with the glass elements, may impact visitor comfort particularly during the warmer months of the year.** Additional approaches could be considered as the design develops, including additional plantings, trees species with broader canopies, or reduced paving. Therefore, staff suggests the **Commission requests the applicant evaluate additional approaches to enhancing visitor comfort and reducing the urban heat island effect, including alternative ground treatments and tree wells, and additional trees and alternate species, and other landscaping.**

Viewsheds

The site is located along Maryland Avenue, SW, which is identified as a preeminent view corridor with a linear view from the U.S. Capitol to the Tidal Basin. Regarding external views, staff recommends the **Commission requests a viewshed analysis to understand the memorial's visual impacts to the U.S. Capitol and Maryland Avenue, SW preeminent view corridor. The viewshed analysis should include the relationship to curbs, buildings, trees, and other landscape features between 6th to 3rd Streets SW and the U.S. Capitol in all seasons and showing the surrounding areas.**

Regarding internal views, staff notes the central Remembrance Hall is intended to provide a view toward the U.S. Capitol dome. The submission indicates the applicant is exploring the appropriate height of the glass blocks to help preserve the view from the Hall to the Dome. A lower height may be appropriate to help protect the view, but further exploration is needed. As such, staff recommends the **Commission requests the applicant continue to explore the overall height and design of the Remembrance Hall to better frame the view to the U.S. Capitol Dome.**

Lighting

The submission indicates the memorial lighting approach includes up-lit glass elements which would create a glow across the site. The Urban Design Element of the Comprehensive Plan states the following policy UD.B.1.5 "Utilize building, street, and exterior lighting that respects the hierarchy of memorials, monuments, and important civic buildings and spaces in the nation's capital, with the U.S. Capitol and Washington Monument the most prominent features in the nighttime skyline." The lighting approach should respect the visual importance and hierarchy of memorials, monuments, and important civic buildings and spaces in the nation's capital, with the

U.S. Capitol and Washington Monument the most prominent features in the nighttime skyline; and therefore staff suggests the **Commission recommends the applicant include a lighting study as part of the next review that demonstrates the proposed lighting levels and how they may impact the hierarchy of the U.S. Capitol and surroundings museums.**

Streetscape Design

NCPC, along with the Monumental Core Interagency Working Group (IWG), recently completed the Monumental Core Streetscape Guidelines, which reinforces the hierarchy of streets and vistas of the L'Enfant Plan. NCPC and Smithsonian, in consultation with the District of Columbia and other local and federal stakeholders are close to completing an urban design study on Independence Avenue to improve north-south and east-west connectivity for pedestrians and multi-modal transportation (physical and visual connectivity) and provide streetscape amenities to improve pedestrian accessibility and comfort. Further coordination will be necessary to ensure the proposed memorial streetscape and site perimeter best align with the broader streetscape strategy Independence Avenue. Therefore, staff recommends the **Commission requests the applicant coordinate with NCPC and the Monumental Core IWG to evaluate how the proposed memorial design can align with the Monumental Core Streetscape Design Guidelines and improve the pedestrian experience along Independence Avenue.**

Material Use and Durability

Staff recommends the **Commission commend the applicant's detailed exploration, symbolism, and proposed application of the glass material in a national memorial.** As the memorial design further develops, additional details and evaluation will be necessary regarding several issues: For example, the memorial site is located in the 100-year floodplain. In addition, several questions regarding the glass material should be considered. As such, staff recommends the **Commission requests the applicant provide, as part of the next submission, further information about:**

- The durability of the glass elements, and how they will be maintained and cleaned;
- How climbing and or skateboarding will be addressed;
- Whether the glass elements could withstand a vehicular crash and how the memorial is generally addressing security; and
- The flood mitigation approach.

Equity

In June 2024, the Introduction Chapter of the *Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital: Federal Elements* was updated to provide a planning framework and new guiding principles to address equity in all the Federal Elements. The *NCPC Submission Guidelines* were also amended at that time to reflect the Comprehensive Plan equity guidance. The aim of the guidelines is to encourage applicants to conduct early and meaningful community engagement, and to provide information about the equity impacts of plans and projects to inform the decision-making process. Staff recommends the **Commission requests the applicant provide as part of the next submission responses to the equity considerations outlined in the Submission Guidelines.**

CONFORMANCE TO EXISTING PLANS, POLICIES AND RELATED GUIDANCE

Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital

This project generally conforms to elements of the *Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital*. As noted above, the planning and design comments are designed to ensure the proposal meets basic goals of the Comprehensive Plan. In particular, policies related to Visitor Experience and Urban Design have been considered. Further analysis will be provided as the memorial design advances.

Commemorative Works Act

The CWA contains a set of foundational level decision criteria that NCPC is required to use when considering site and design proposals for commemorative works. Specifically, the CWA states that in considering site and design proposals, NCPC shall be guided by a number of criteria, including surroundings, location, material, landscape features, and site-specific guidelines. As noted above, the planning and design comments are designed to ensure the proposal broadly meets the CWA criteria.

Memorials and Museums Master Plan

The 2001 Memorials and Museums Master Plan (2M Plan) provides guidance regarding the placement of future commemorative works. In particular, the Plan seeks to reinforce the historic urban design features of the city, minimize intrusion on existing memorials, and reduce adverse environmental and transportation impacts and enhance positive economic and other effects on local neighborhoods. The 2M Plan states that memorials, when properly placed and sensitively designed, can provide a source of community identity and pride, while bolstering revitalization efforts. The site location chosen at Maryland & Independence Avenues, is not a site location for memorials within the 2M Plan.

Monumental Core Streetscape Design Guidelines

The Monumental Core Streetscape Design Guidelines are a set of guidelines of high-quality elements developed to achieve consistency across streetscapes and improve connections and relationships between the monumental core and surrounding neighborhoods. NCPC and the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts use the guidelines in their review of major site redevelopment or capital improvement projects within the Monumental Core Streetscape boundary. As noted above, additional coordination as the design develops will ensure consistency.

National Historic Preservation Act

NCPC and NPS each have an independent responsibility to comply with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA). NCPC will complete the requirements of Section 106 prior to the Commission's final approval of the project.

The NPS and Foundation initiated consultation under Section 106 of the NHPA with the District of Columbia Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) in 2021. Initiation letters to tribal communities with an interest in the region will also be sent. The NPS and Foundation will notify the SHPO and tribal communities of the site selection public scoping period and provided access to the related materials for review. The NPS and Foundation will continue to consult with these and other interested parties as the project advances.

National Environmental Policy Act

NCPC and NPS will each have an independent responsibility to comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA); NCPC's responsibility stems from its approval authority over the site and design of the monument. NPS will prepare an Environmental Assessment (EA) to identify alternatives and assess the potential impacts of the proposed memorial. NCPC is a cooperating agency for purposes of the EA, and NCPC staff will provide comments during the scoping period. A number of topics will be evaluated during the NEPA process, including urban design and visitor experience, historic and cultural resources, transportation systems and sustainability.

With its current review and action, the Commission is providing comments on the concept design for the project. Final NEPA documentation is not required at this time but will be completed prior to the Commission's action on the final site and memorial design.

The NPS and Foundation initiated the 30-day NEPA scoping process on April 4, 2023, which extended to May 5, 2023. A public site selection scoping meeting was scheduled for April 19, 2023. A second public scoping process will occur for the design phase in late September or October 2024. The NPS and the Foundation will produce an Environmental Assessment (EA) following the design scoping period.

CONSULTATION

Coordinating Committee

The Committee forwarded the proposed comments on concept plans to the Commission with the statement that the proposal was coordinated with some, but not all, participating agencies. The District Department of Energy and Environment (DOEE) noted they were not coordinated. The proposed improvements will likely trigger stormwater requirements based on the level of disturbance and the amount of impervious surface created. DOEE recommends developing a stormwater management plan. A pre-development review meeting should be scheduled to discuss the project and determine how the sites stormwater will be managed. In previous discussion DOEE mentioned that we would like to see preservation of the sites existing trees. This should still be considered. The DC SHPO stated coordination is conditioned upon completion of the Section 106

review process. The District Office of Planning (DCOP) noted that while it is excited about the design, it has concerns about the amount of hardscape, especially during the summer (with the heat and reflection on the pavement), and wondered if green space could be incorporated into the design.

The District Department of Transportation (DDOT) echoed this sentiment and noted the design bleeds into the right-of-way, and this needs further consideration as the design develops. DDOT also thought there should be more space on the sides to improve the streetscape and requested that the trees in the right of way are preserved. CFA staff noted that the project is on its September meeting agenda and that NCMAC reviewed the concept designs last week.

U.S. Commission of Fine Arts

The U. S. Commission of Fine Arts reviewed the concept design for the Fallen Journalists Memorial at their September 19, 2024 meeting and approved the concept plan. Feedback was given on acoustics, perimeter circulation, design of ROW, dimensions of the glass elements, and tree and landscaping.

ONLINE REFERENCE

The following supporting documents for this project are available online at www.ncpc.gov:

- Submission Package
- Appendix Glass Research
- Appendix Additional Information on the Concept Plan

Prepared by Melissa Lindsjo
09/26/2024

POWERPOINT (ATTACHED)

CFA Letter regarding its review of the Fallen Journalists Memorial (ATTACHED)

Fallen Journalists Memorial

300 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington DC

Approval of Comments on Concept Plans

United States Department of the Interior

Project Summary

Commission Meeting Date: October 3, 2024

NCPC Review Authority: 40 U.S.C. § 8905

Applicant Request: Approval of Comments on Concept Plans

Session: Staff Presentation

NCPC Review Officer: Melissa Lindsjo

NCPC File Number: 8449

Project Summary:

The National Park Service (NPS), in collaboration with the Fallen Journalists Memorial Foundation (Foundation) and John Ronan Architects has submitted a concept plan for the Commission to review and comment. The memorial design consists of a stone plaza with a collection of transparent, solid glass elements arranged on the site with cylindrical space in middle and a grove of trees.

In 2020, Congress authorized the Foundation to establish a commemorative work in the District of Columbia and its environs to commemorate America's commitment to a free press by honoring journalists who sacrificed their lives in service to that cause (PL 116-253). At the October 5, 2021 National Capital Memorial Advisory Commission (NCMAC) meeting, the Foundation and their consultants presented site selection study for comment. The NCMAC generally dismissed Site A: Freedom Plaza given the need to relocate the Pulaski statue, along with likely future redevelopment. In January 2023, the president authorized locating the memorial within Area I as outlined in the Commemorative Works Act (CWA) (Public Law 117-328). In April 2023, the Foundation received site approval from the National Capital Planning Commission and the US Commission of Fine Arts to design the memorial on the site located at Independence Avenue, Maryland Avenue, and 3rd Street SW. In June 2023, the Foundation initiated a design team competition by inviting a broad and diverse group of 118 architects, designers, and artists from the U.S. and abroad to submit proposals. In March 2024, the Foundation announced the selection of John Ronan Architects to design the memorial.

At the September 4th NCMAC meeting, the Foundation and John Ronan Architects presented the concept plan. The NCMAC gave feedback about access, lighting, safety, landscaping, interpretation, and maintenance of the concept.

Site Location



Memorial Goals

Commemoration

- Recognize and honor journalists' heroism and lives sacrificed in service to democracy.
- Convey the dangers journalists face in protecting and documenting the truth enabled by freedom of the press.
- Provide a place for reflection and intimate contemplation for the public and serve as a focal point for those personally connected to fallen journalists.

Inspiration

- Serve as a beacon for freedom of the press and emphasize that a free and independent press is a worthy cause in the past, present, and future.
- Showcase America's commitment to a free press as a world-wide example and source of aspiration.
- Inspire young memorial visitors to consider a career in journalism.

Education

- Raise awareness and educate visitors about risks to a free press and the contributions of journalism as a pillar of democracy (i.e., the Fourth Estate).
- Illustrate journalists' role in witnessing, recording, and documenting historic events and seminal moments from diverse backgrounds and perspectives.
- Convey the breadth and depth of the various forms of journalism protected by free press principles

Program

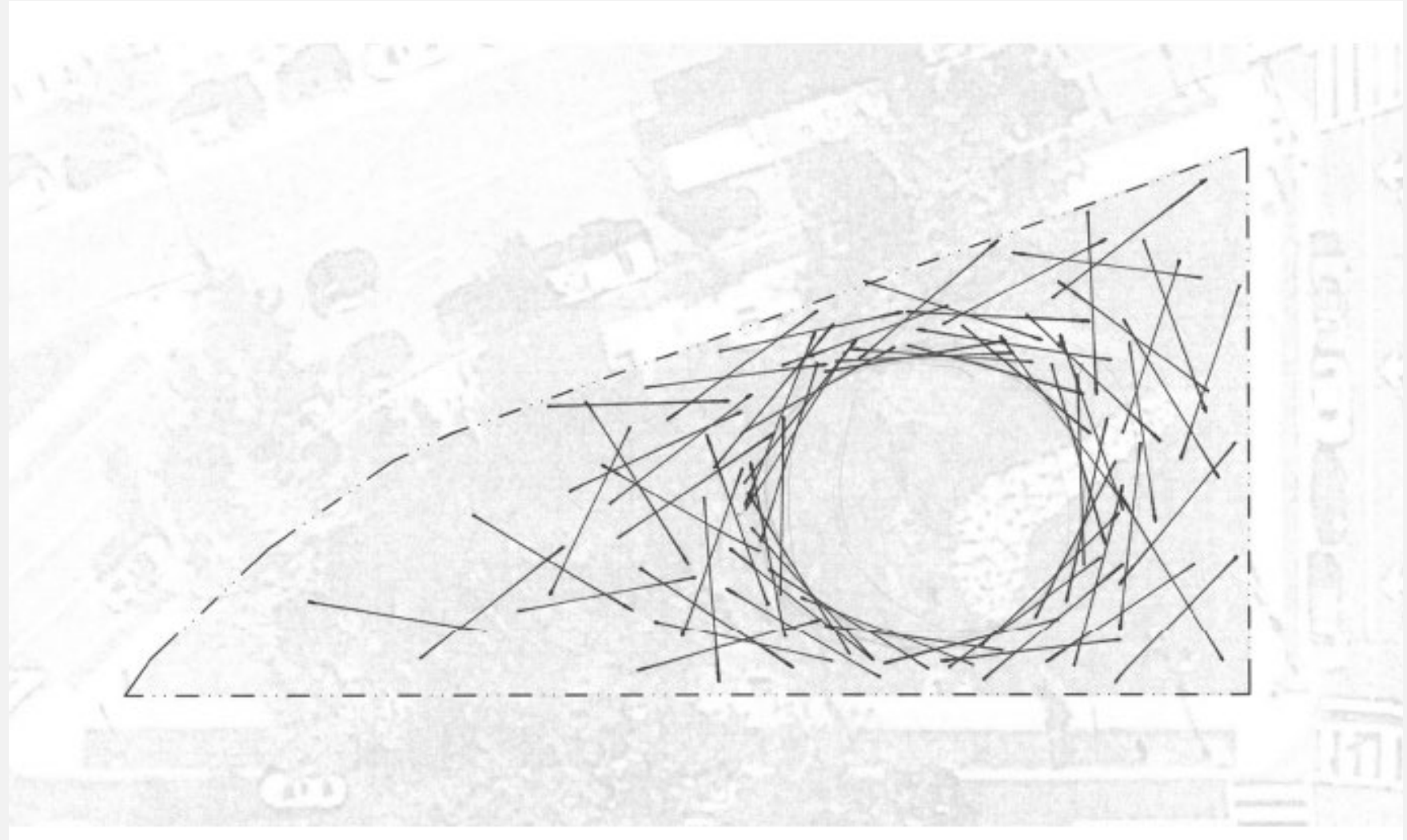
To advance the goals of commemoration, inspiration, and education, the foundation desires a memorial that will include an outdoor site with a commemorative feature and other elements, such as a plaza, benches, and interpretive signage.

These physical elements would be supported by online educational information. Combined, the memorial will serve as:

- A daily place of reflection to inspire respect for the sacrifice made by journalists in the cause of seeking truth to preserve our freedoms, and for family and friends to remember those journalists who have given their lives
- A focal point for understanding the First Amendment and how it has enabled the work of journalism in seeking truth to advance democracy and maintain freedom
- A convening place for commemorative events to honor journalists and to study the future of journalism in an evolving world
- An attraction that stimulates visitors to the Nation's Capital to access online educational programming to learn more about the importance of a free press to a functioning democracy

Memorial as Story

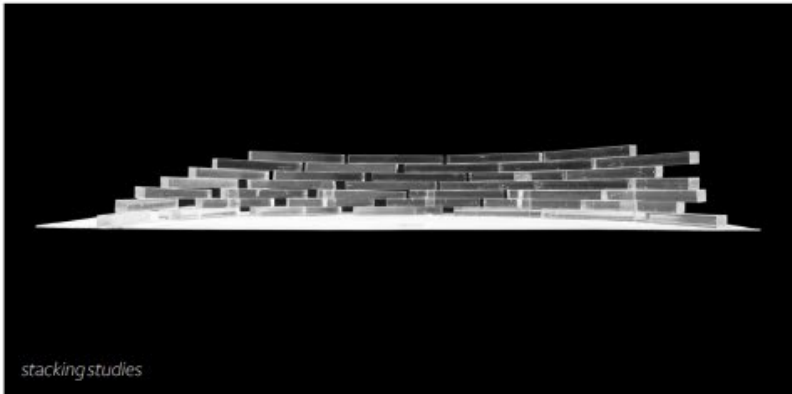
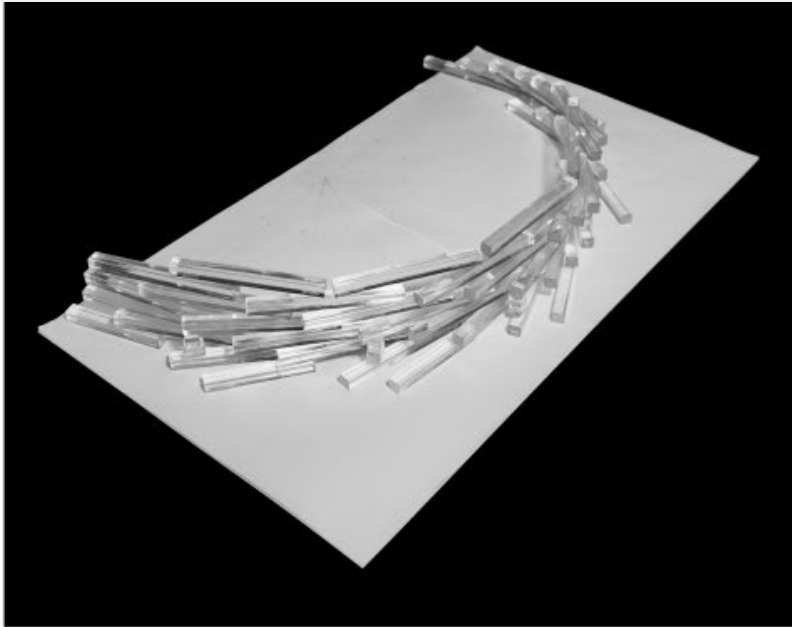
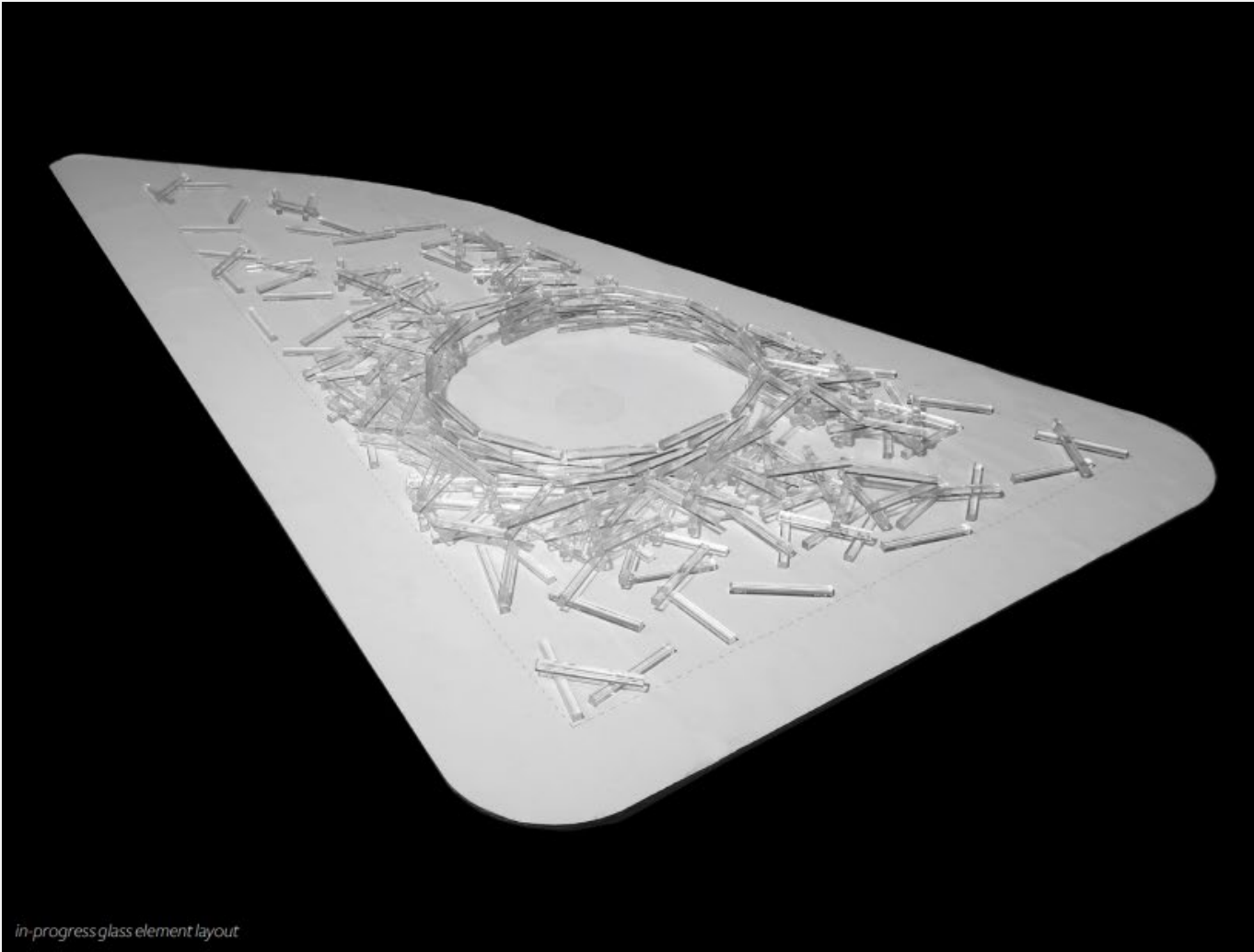
The memorial design consists of a collection of transparent, solid glass elements arranged on the site in a seemingly accidental manner which aggregate to form a pure cylindrical space at the heart of the site, suggesting the way ostensibly disconnected facts coalesce to form a journalist's story. Experiencing the memorial is a journey of discovery that unfolds slowly, space by space like a story, and casts the visitor in the role of investigative journalist pursuing truth wherever it leads



Concept Sketch

John Ronan Architects

Model Photos



Thematic Links

1. US Capitol Building

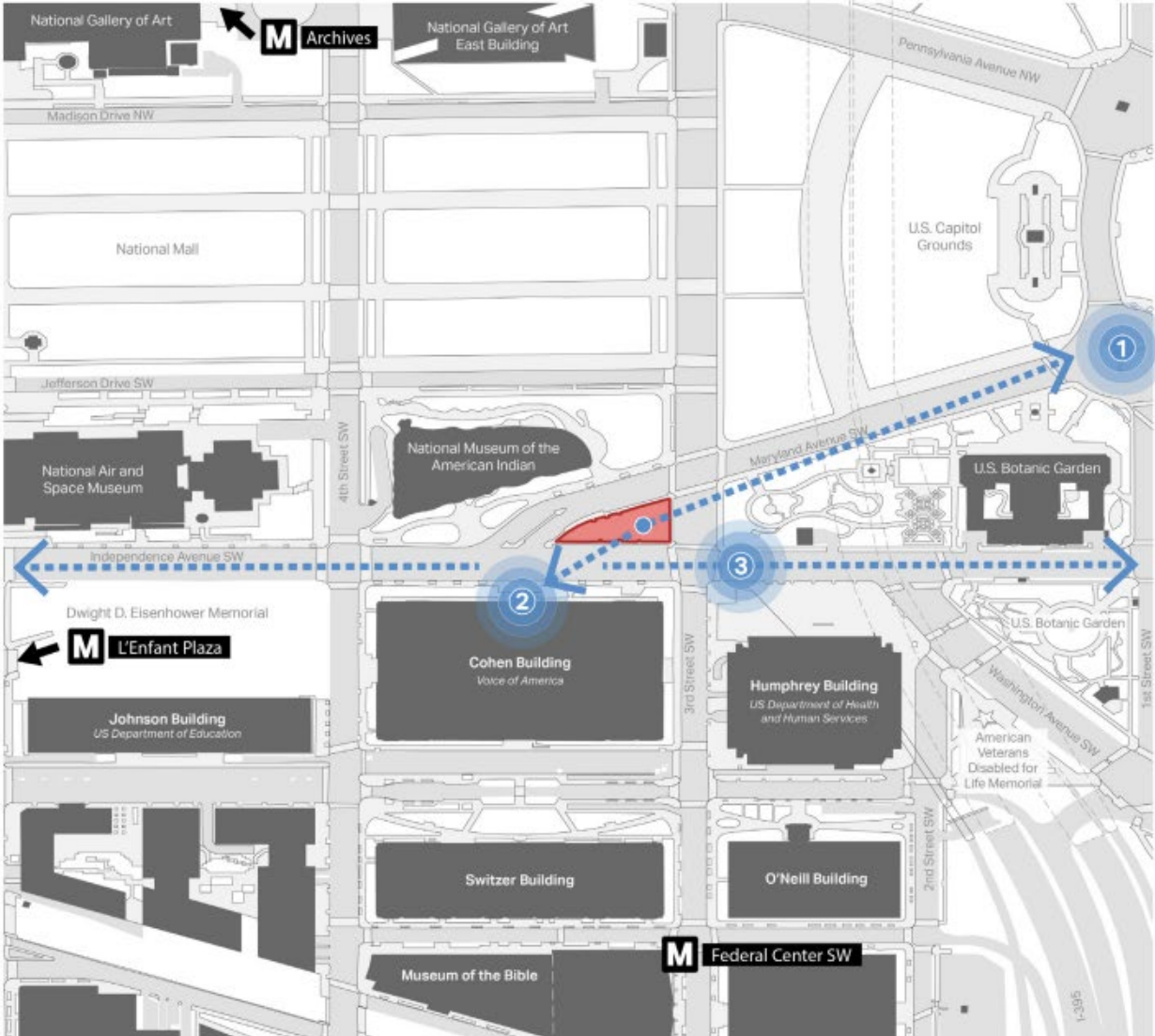
Adjacent to the U.S. Capitol grounds and with a direct, axial, and reciprocal view of the Capitol Dome, the site has a strong visual connection to the seat of the legislative branch of the U.S. federal government. This view underscores the independent relationship between the government and the press.

2. Voice of America (Cohen Building)

Directly north of the Cohen Building, the site has a strong visual connection to the headquarters of Voice of America, the oldest and largest American international broadcaster. Voice of America produces media in 47 languages and distributes throughout the world.

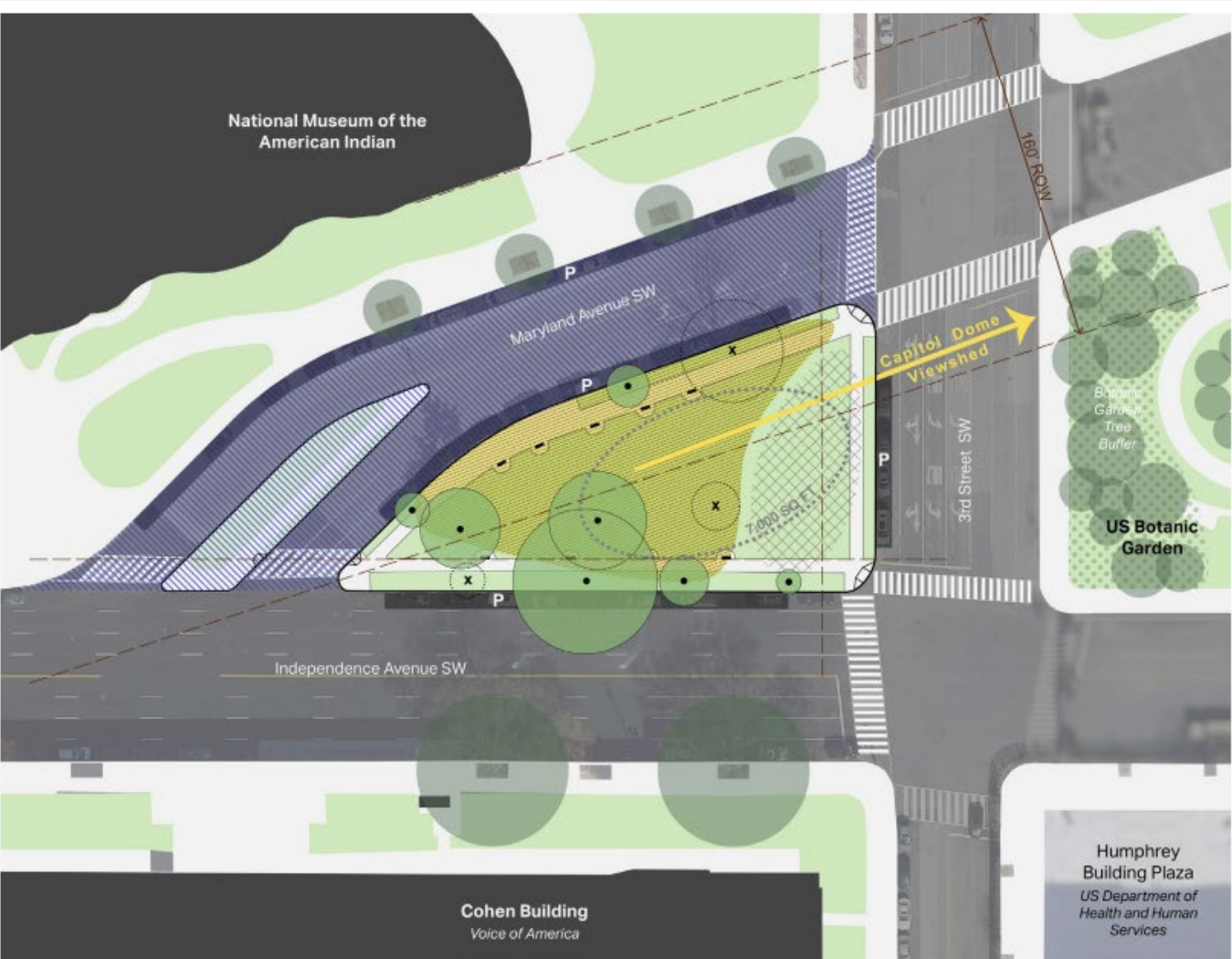
3. Independence Avenue

Independence Avenue forms the southern border of the site, emphasizing the importance of an independent free press.

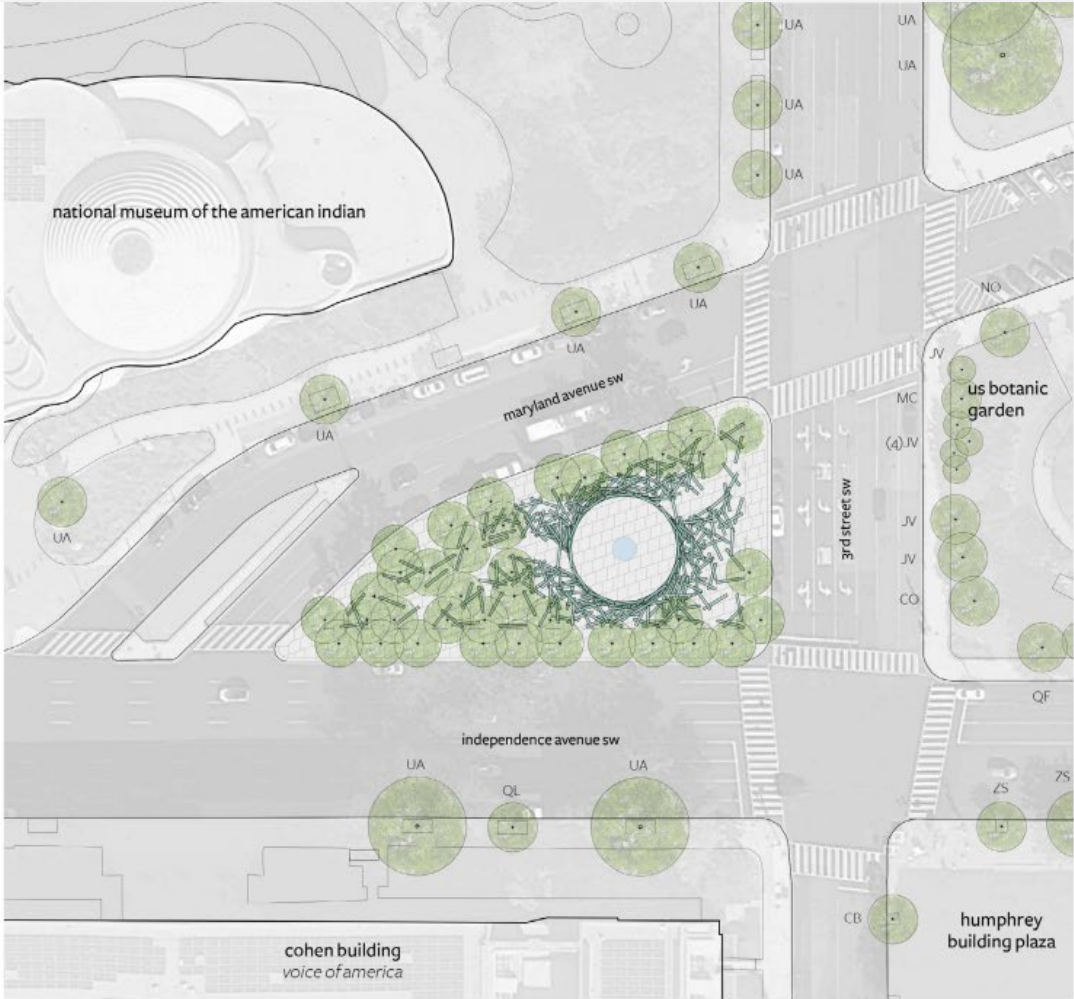


Site Study

The memorial design for Site O would likely be oriented toward the U.S. Capitol, which would be visible from most of the site; views would likely be constrained over time due to vegetation growth at the U.S. Botanic Garden. The site could accommodate a central memorial area of approximately 7,000 square feet. The open turf of the site provides flexibility for the memorial design.



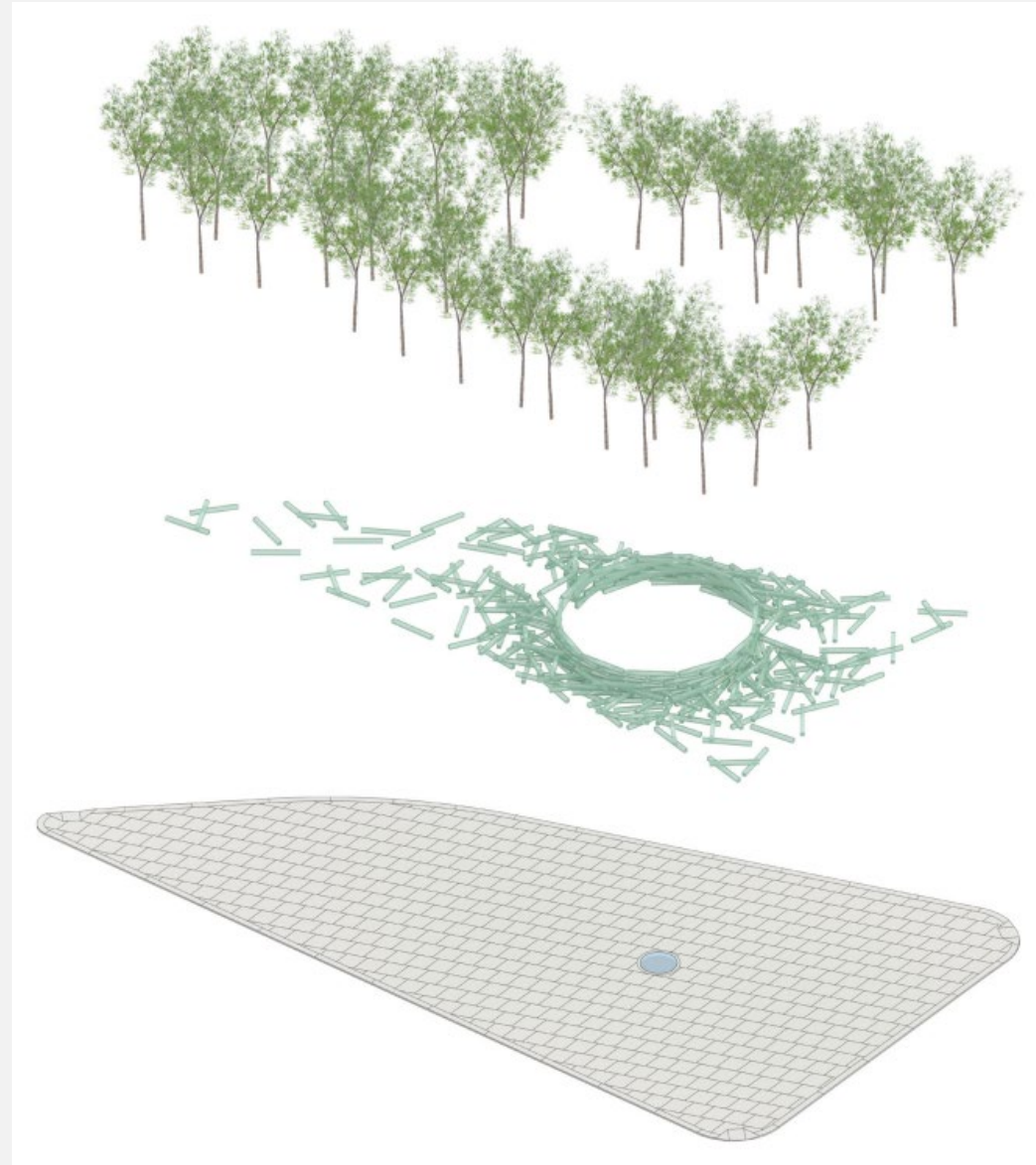
Context Plan



tree species key	CB - carpinus betulus (european hornbeam)	CO - cotinus obovatus (american smoketree)	JV - juniperus virginiana (virginia juniper)
	MC - myrica cerifera (southern wax myrtle)	NO - nyssa ogeche (ogechee tupelo)	QF - quercus floridianum (southern sugar maple)
	QL - quercus lyrata (overcup oak)	UA - ulmus americana (american elm)	ZS - zelkova serrata (japanese zelkova)

Memorial Components

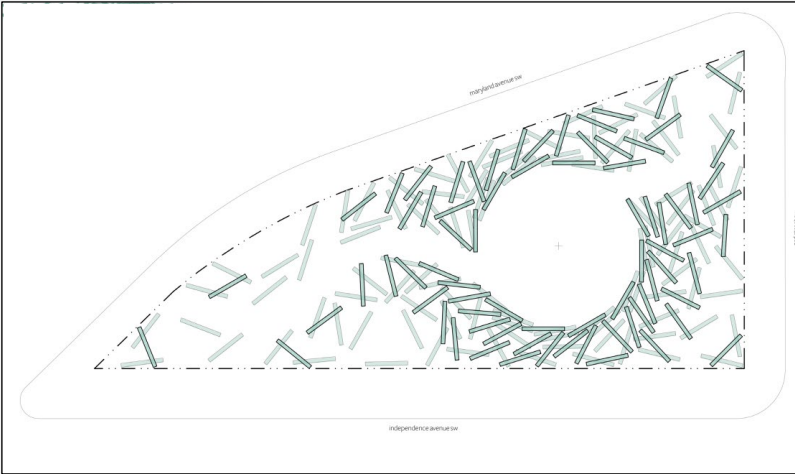
The memorial design consists of the interplay of three superimposed design elements – a hardscape stone plaza overlaid with a grove of trees that sidestep the array of cast glass elements which aggregate to form the memorial's circular Remembrance Hall at the heart of the site.



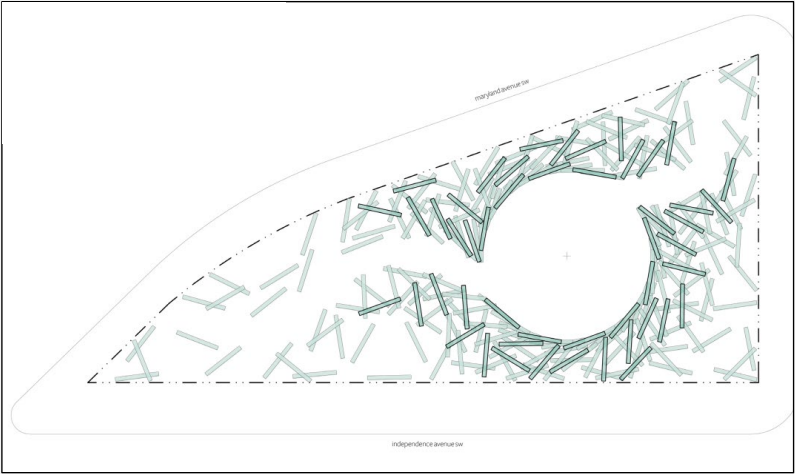
Glass Elements



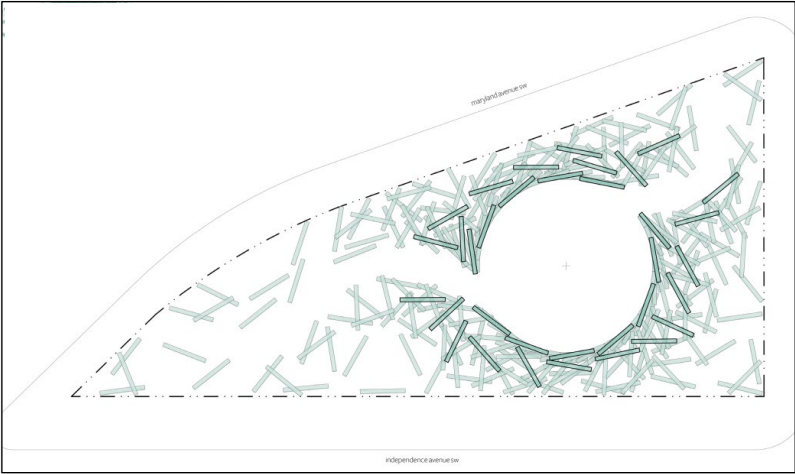
Layer 1



Layer 2

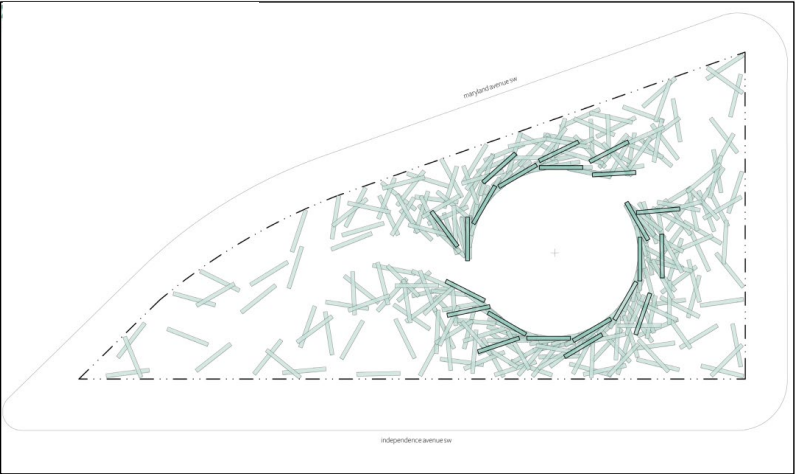


Layer 3

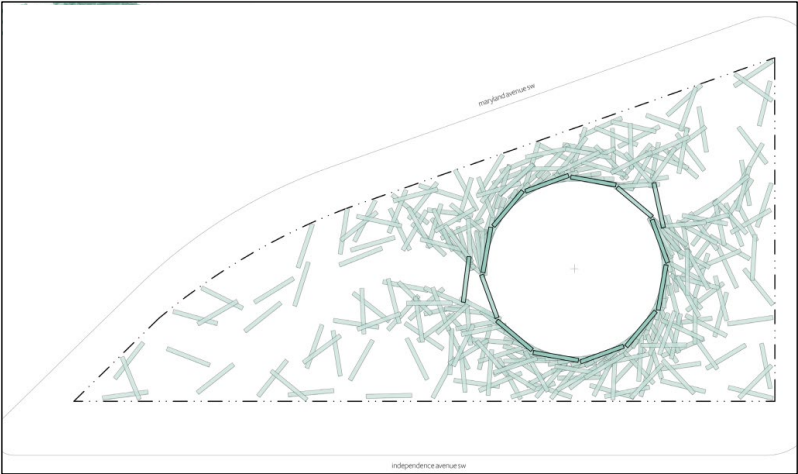


Layer 4

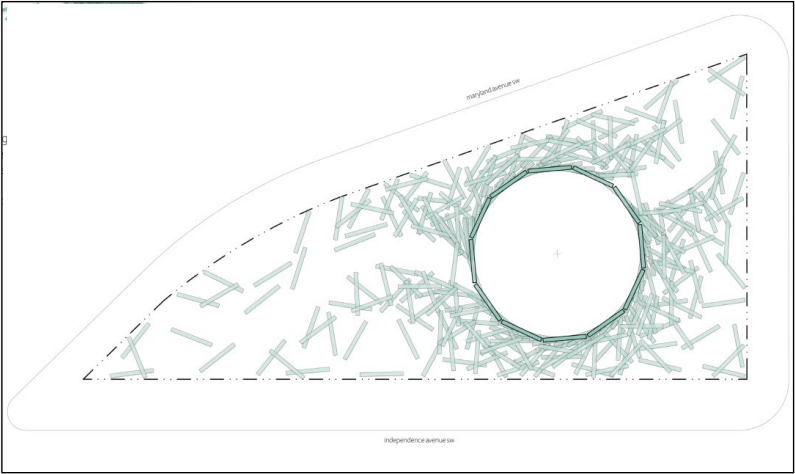
Glass Elements Continued



Layer 5

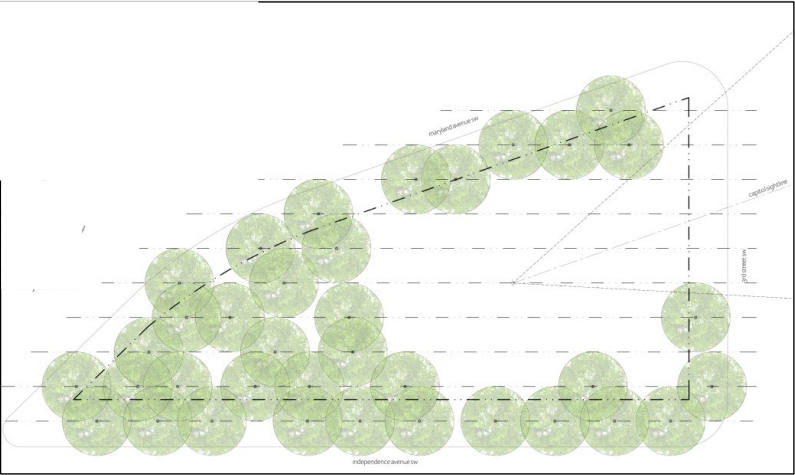


Layer 6

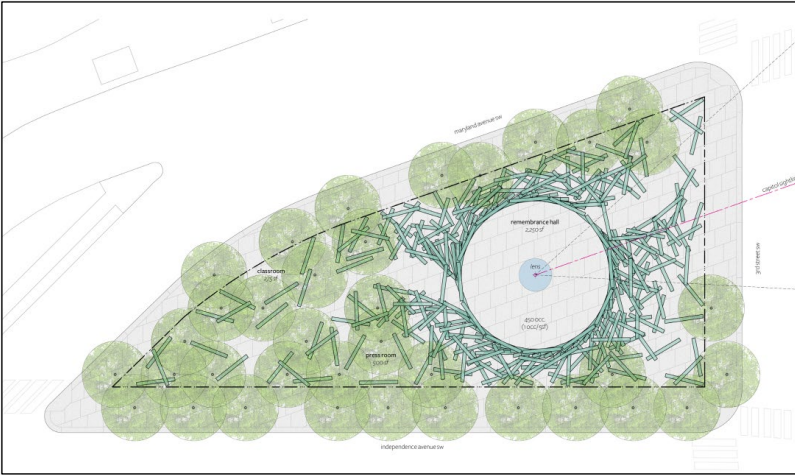


Layer 7

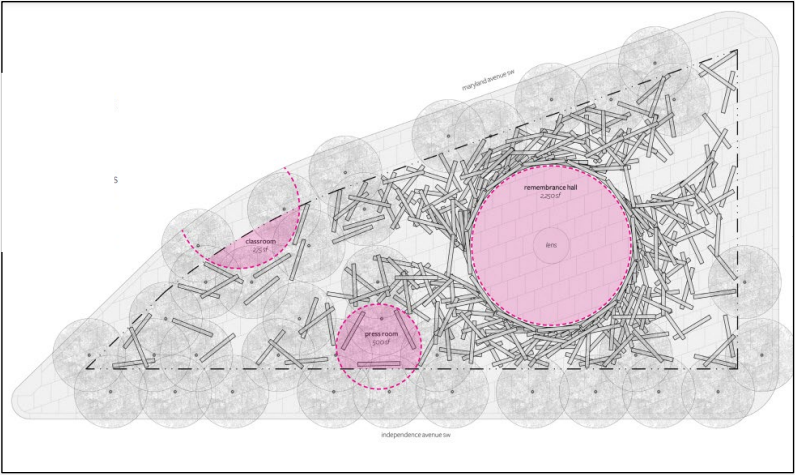
Elements



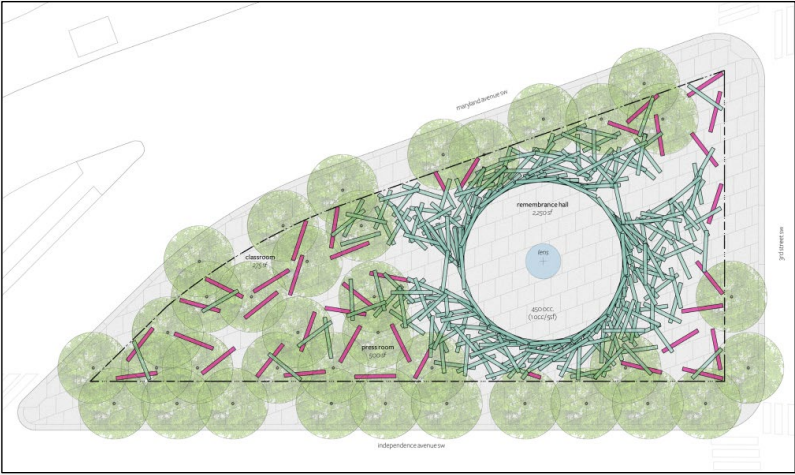
Grove of Trees



Clearing in Tree coverage for Capitol View

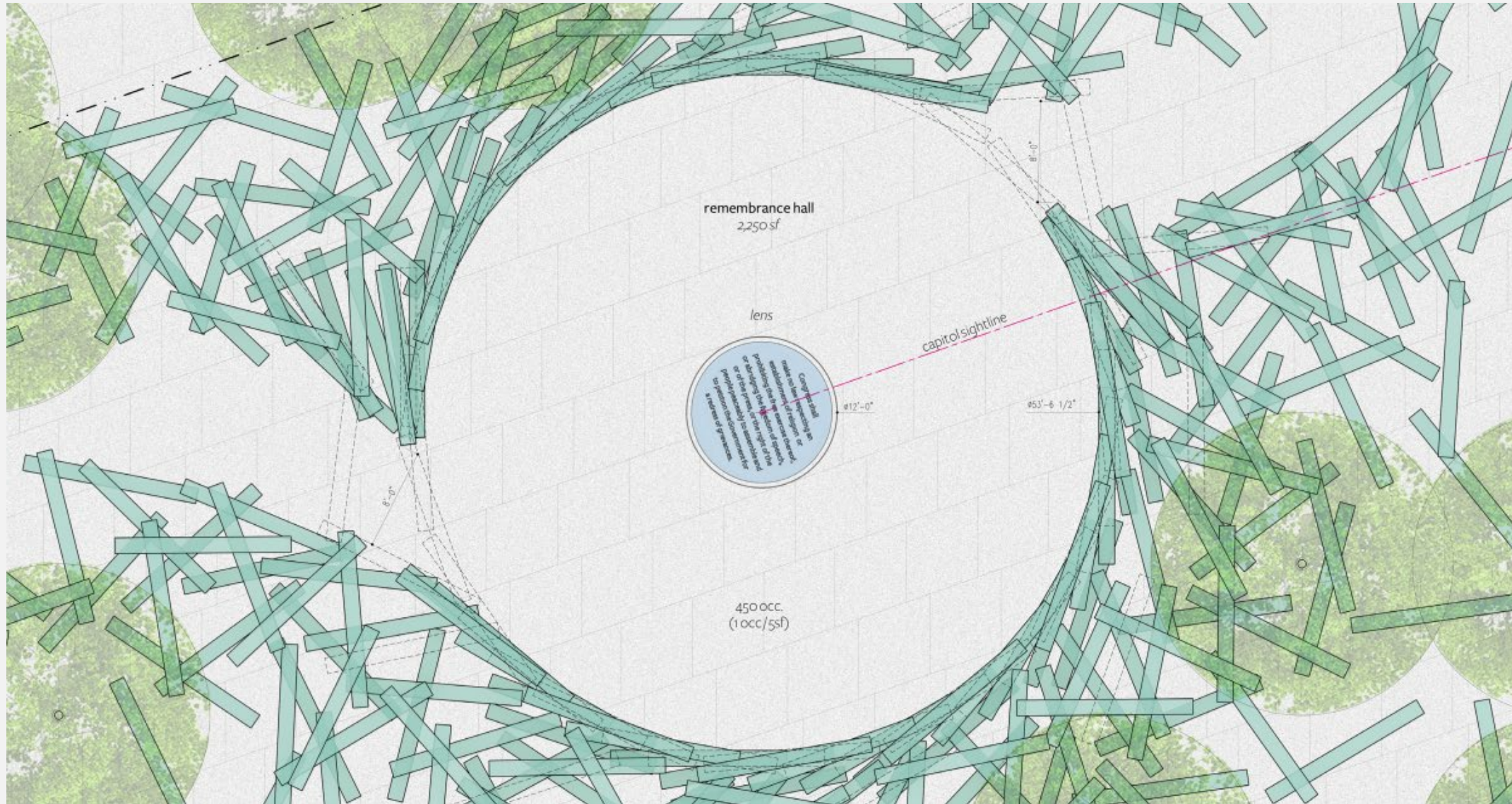


Education, Inspiration, Commemoration (Rooms)



Seating

Remembrance Hall



Elements in Action



Bench Seating



Pathway into Remembrance Hall



Informal classroom



Shade from Trees

Journalism Content



quotes engraved in horizontal bench elements



metal discs trigger digital audio content within memorial app



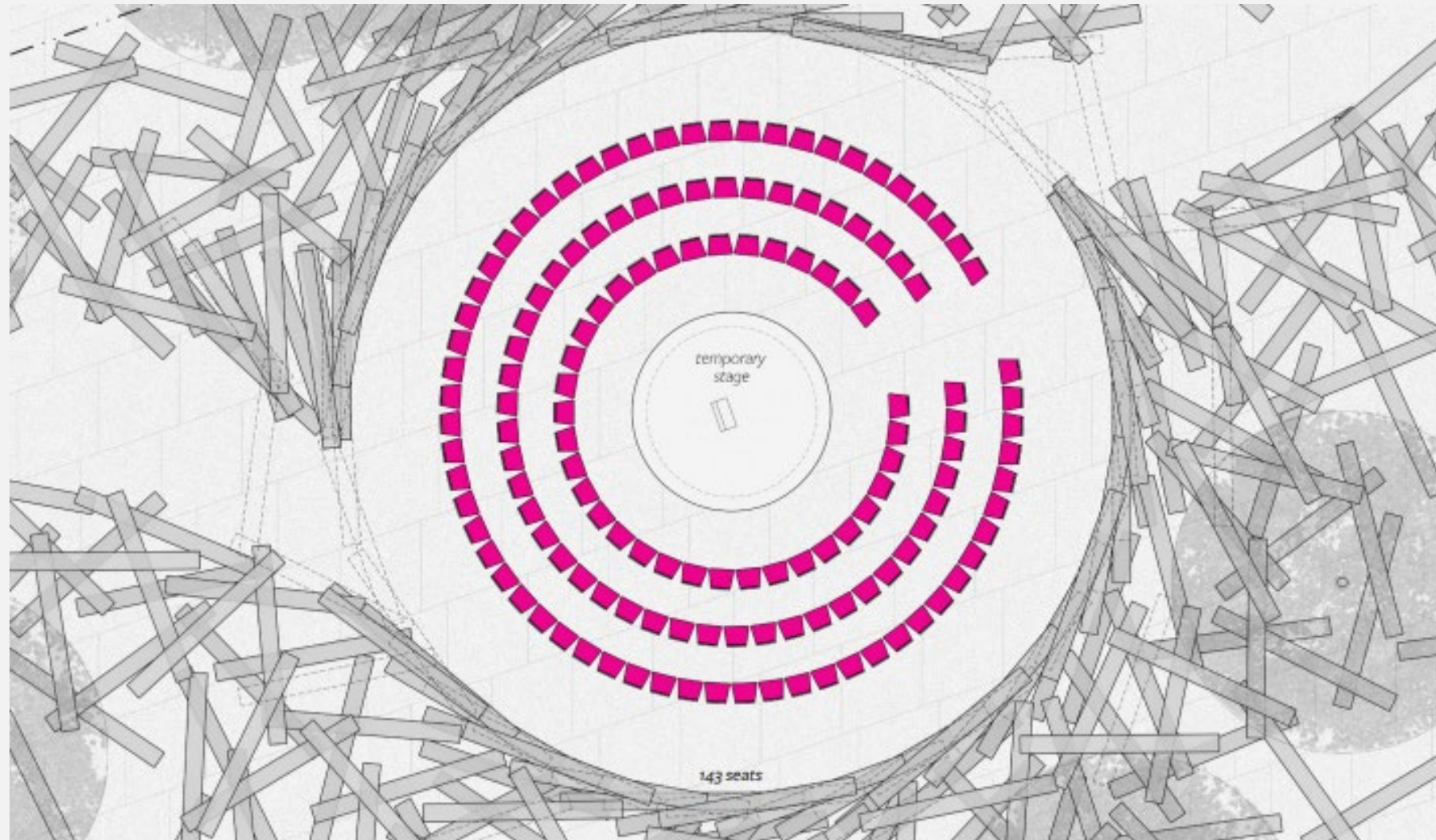
three dimensional engraved images related to journalism (printing press, camera, etc.)



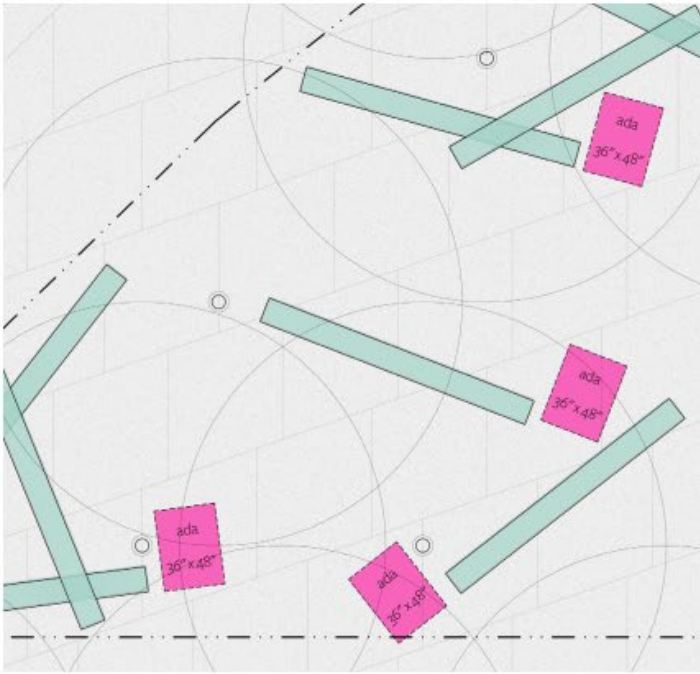
quotes engraved in ends of elements

Programming

- hosting ceremonies and events commemorating fallen journalists and annual days of awareness (i.e., World Press Freedom Day, International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists)
- developing long-term programming and digital content
- developing curricula for high school students
- organizing volunteers to provide on-site docents during peak visitor times
- providing a space for reporting news
- arranging professional cleaning and general upkeep of the memorial



ADA and ABA Requirements

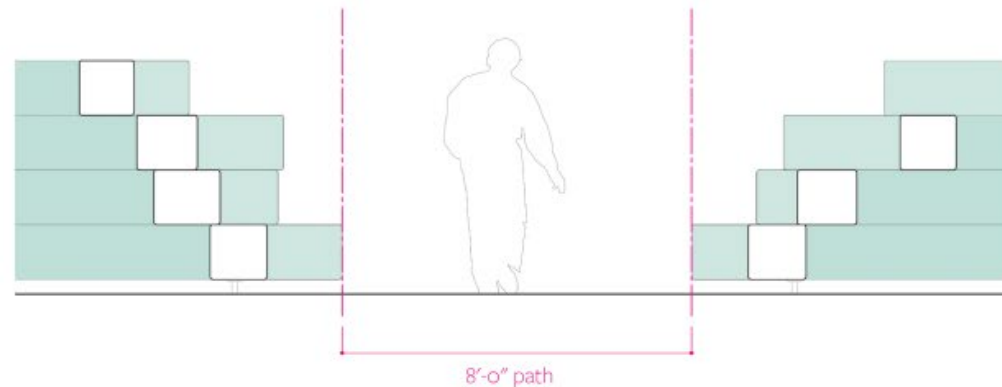
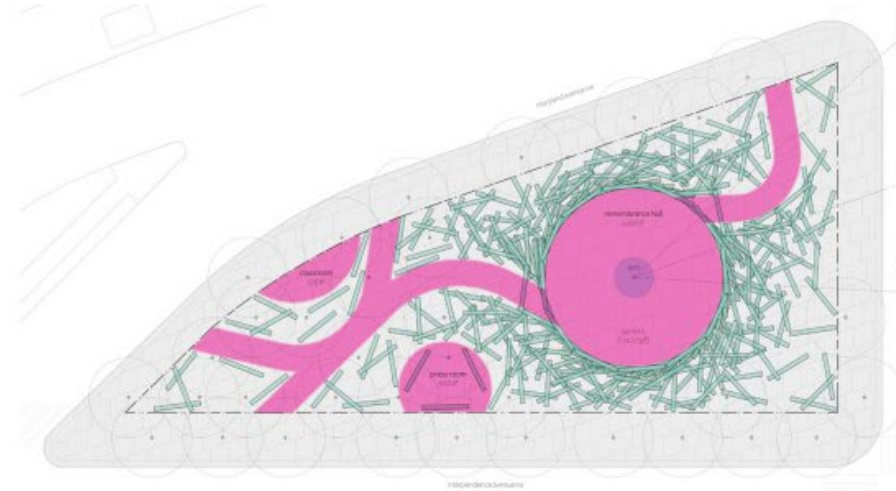


(above)

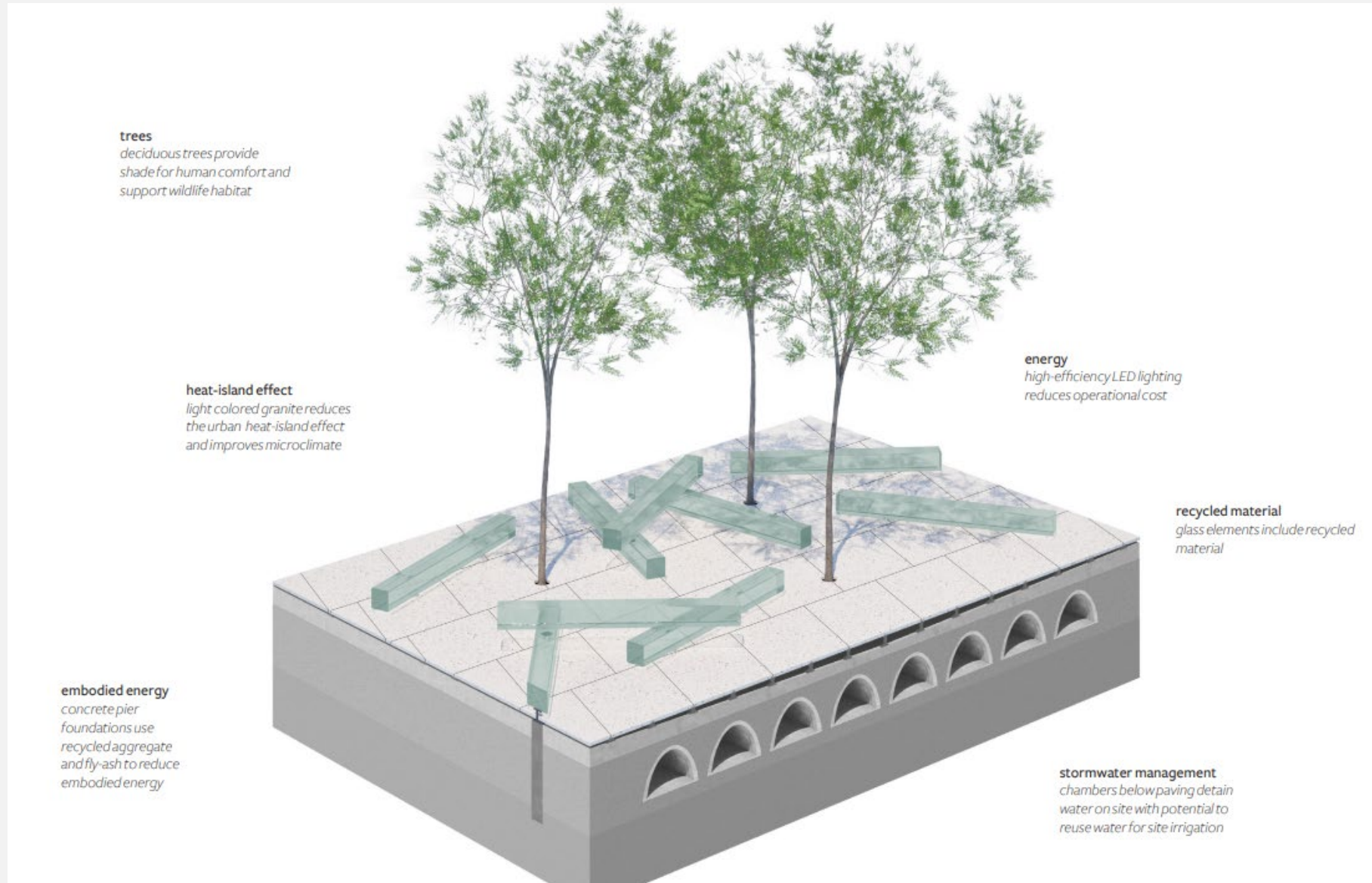
Per ABA and ADA requirements, ADA clear space is provided throughout the site alongside seat-height elements for wheelchair users.

(right)

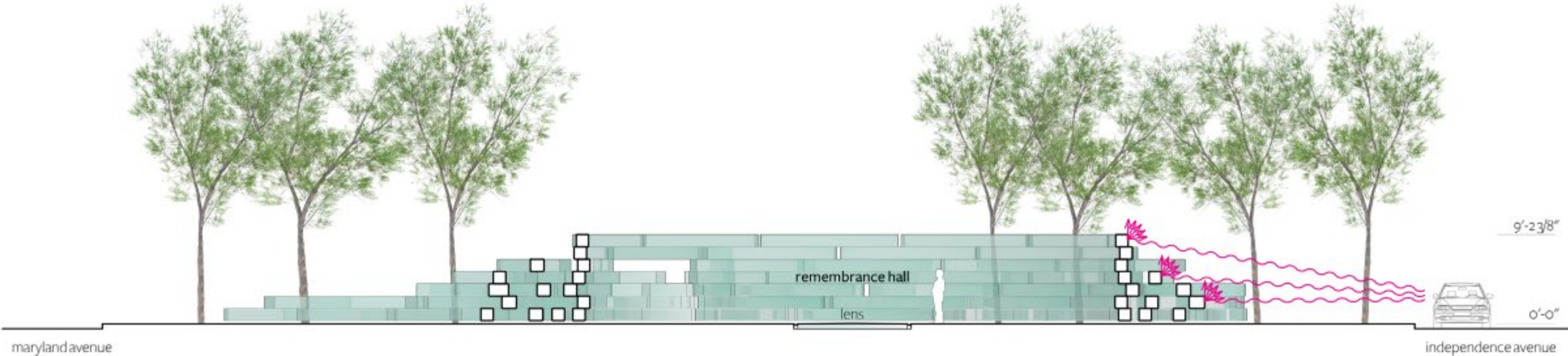
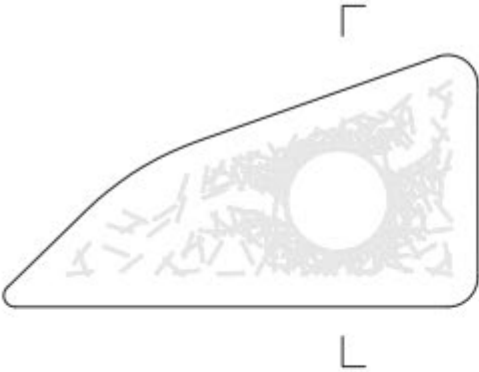
The visitor path maintains an 8' clear width throughout (3' clear width is required per the ADA and ABA). The walls of the visitor path are stacked such that no elements project into the clear width of the path.



Sustainability



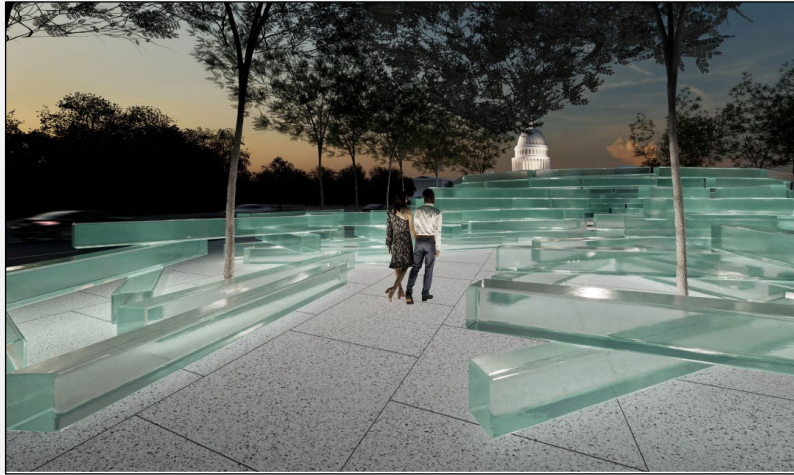
Site Acoustics



Capitol View Study



Views



Path - Night



Outside of Remembrance Hall



Remembrance Hall - Day



Remembrance Hall - Night

Aerial View - Daytime



Aerial View - Night



View Looking West



U.S. COMMISSION OF FINE ARTS

ESTABLISHED BY CONGRESS 17 MAY 1910

401 F STREET NW SUITE 312 WASHINGTON DC 20001-2728 202-504-2200 FAX 202-504-2195 WWW.CFA.GOV

25 September 2024

Dear Ms. Hall:

In its public meeting of 19 September conducted by videoconference, the Commission of Fine Arts reviewed a concept design for the Fallen Journalists Memorial, to be located on the triangle park bounded by Maryland and Independence Avenues and 3rd Street, SW (Reservation 201). Expressing strong support for the proposal, the Commission approved the concept submission and provided the following comments for its development.

The Commission members characterized the proposed design as elegant and poetic, and they said it would establish a compelling new language for Washington's commemorative landscape that would convey in physical form fundamental values inherent in American society, the freedom of the press, and the work of journalists. They commended the use of stacked cast-glass bars in a seemingly random composition to form a central commemorative and gathering space—with transparency, visual and physical access, and a spatial experience intended to communicate these values. Noting the proposed concept's high degree of resolution, they offered several observations to aid the further development of the design, particularly emphasizing the importance of each detail to the whole.

In their support of a welcoming and accessible character for the memorial, they recommended extending the same level of attention to the design of the site's perimeter. They noted a lack of resolution in accommodating pedestrian movement from crosswalks and curb cuts to the memorial entrances, and the potential conflict of trees emerging from the middle of continuous pavement along the street edges. While acknowledging the intended quality of dappled light provided by honey locust trees, they expressed concern that this species does not create a robust shade canopy and has a softer structure with a tendency to lose branches; they suggested exploring the specification of a different tree. They also advised considering how the openings in the granite paving would accommodate growth of the trees over time.

The Commission looks forward to the further review of this important project, noting that future submissions will also need to address such topics as materials, acoustics, lighting, signage, equipment storage, and seasonal maintenance. Please continue consulting on the design development with the staff which, as always, is available to assist you.

Sincerely,



Thomas E. Luebke, FAIA
Secretary

Kym A. Hall, Area Director
Region 1 – National Capital Area
National Park Service
1100 Ohio Drive, SW
Washington, DC 20242

cc: John Ronan, John Ronan Architects
Michael Boucher, Michael Boucher Landscape Architecture
Barbara Cochran, Fallen Journalists Memorial Foundation