

July 17, 2018

Earl A. Powell III, Chairman  
U.S. Commission of Fine Arts  
401 F Street, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20001

Dear Chairman Powell:

Oehme, van Sweden & Associates (OvS) would like to express our concern regarding the World War I Memorial slated for Washington, D.C.'s, Pershing Park. We have followed the design competition and submissions to date, as well as the recent articles in the press and social media, and we are compelled to add our input to the public record. As local landscape architects with extensive experience with the Commission of Fine Arts (CFA) approval process and intimate knowledge of Pershing Park, we have the following concerns:

OvS has a 40-year legacy practicing landscape architecture in and around the monumental core of Washington, D.C., and has presented numerous projects to the CFA, including The World War II Memorial, The Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial, The Francis Scott Key Memorial, The Federal Reserve Campus, and numerous other projects. We voice our support of the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts. This organization has provided consistent, well-founded, factual insight that has proven vital to the success of countless public and private projects throughout Washington, D.C. The collaborative and informative nature of the CFA has provided a cultural and historic continuum necessary for fitting public engagement to create memorials, buildings, and landscapes that benefit our city, region, and nation for generations.

Pershing Park was designed by leading modernist landscape architect M. Paul Friedberg and functioned as an intimate sanctuary in the busy downtown business district of Washington, D.C. Pershing Park, along with Freedom Plaza, designed by the renowned architect Robert Venturi, was commissioned by the Pennsylvania Avenue Development Corporation (PADC), established by President John F. Kennedy in an effort to rehabilitate Pennsylvania Avenue as America's Main Street. These two public spaces anchored the western flank of what is considered the most important thoroughfare in the United States.

OvS' founding principals, Wolfgang Oehme and James van Sweden, were fortunate to be commissioned by PADC as the landscape architects of record for the project. Charged with bringing horticultural design to America's Avenue, Oehme and van Sweden humanized the street with color, texture, and movement, transforming a hard-edged urban space into a lush, green oasis in the middle of the city. The park was one of the first examples of the firm's "New American Garden," a signature style that challenged the plastic, evergreen look of the

Washington cityscape in the 1980s and celebrated all four seasons with indigenous American planting.

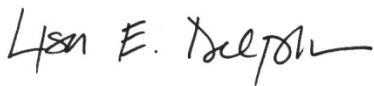
As part of the public realm for over 30 years, Pershing Park is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. This, in addition to the park's significant design legacy, is proof of the intrinsic historical and cultural virtue of the space.

To retain this virtue, we strongly favor the "Round Sculpture" (depicted on p.13 of the World War I Memorial submission to CFA, dated July 19, 2018) in the location of the current kiosk, which would have a minimal impact on the original design of Pershing Park. This sculpture is a most beautiful and appropriate memorial, not only befitting the veterans who served in World War I but also representing the perfect integration with the memorial to General Pershing and the "New American Garden," thus honoring the original synthesis of the Freidberg park design and the OvS planting overlay. The Round Sculpture Memorial, combined with the restoration of Pershing Park, would reinstate an urban oasis that would celebrate the American meadow in a contemplative civic space that engages the public in a memorial setting.

We have confidence that the CFA's process and insights will once again prevail, and that, with the design team's expertise and attention to detail (which have been consistently evident to date), the World War I Memorial will be approved and built, providing an elegant and timeless landscape that will inspire generations to come.

We respectfully submit this letter and public testimony to be included for the CFA meeting scheduled for Thursday, July 19, 2018.

Sincerely,



LISA E. DELPLACE, ASLA  
CEO / Principal



ERIC D. GROFT, FASLA  
VP / Principal



SHEILA A. BRADY, FASLA  
VP / Principal

CC: Charles Birnbaum, President and CEO, The Cultural Landscape Foundation  
Stephanie Toothman, Associate Director, Cultural Resources, Partnerships, and Science;  
Thomas Luebke, Secretary, U.S. Commission of Fine Arts;  
David Maloney, State Historic Preservation Officer for the District of Columbia;  
Liz Waytkus, Executive Director, Docomomo US;  
Tom Jester, Docomomo DC;  
Brett Wallace, President-Elect, Potomac ASLA;  
Jennifer Nitzky, President, ASLA New York Chapter.