

July 17, 2018

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

Re: Pershing Park

Dear Mr. Powell:

Docomomo DC, which is dedicated to increasing public awareness, appreciation, and protection of Modern architecture, landscapes, neighborhoods and sites in Washington, D.C., and its surrounding areas in Maryland and Virginia, is writing to voice concerns about the current concept plans for Pershing Park and support for an alternative design solution that allows the World War I Memorial to be sensitively integrated into a significant civic public space.

As you are aware, the DC Historic Preservation determined Pershing Park is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. Retaining a high degree of integrity, Pershing Park, which was designed by M. Paul Friedberg, with a planting plan by Oehme van Sweden, is a nationally significant design and should be treated with respect.

Docomomo DC does not support the revised Option A - "Freestanding Sculpture" concept design that will be presented to the Commission on July 19, 2018. This approach will fundamentally alter both the basin and cascade fountain, both of which are significant, intact features of the Friedberg design. The freestanding sculpture, in our view, will also alter the important spatial relationships and views between the key vertical features in the original design: the cascade fountain, the kiosk, and the Pershing Memorial. This approach would also block views from the west side of the site across the park.

Docomomo DC encourages the retention and rehabilitation of the pool basin and cascade fountain, both significant, character-defining elements of the park, and placement of the memorial sculpture elsewhere on the site. Of the other alternative sculpture locations that are presented, we encourage further study and consideration of the cylindrical drum concepts shown as options C and D. Perhaps consideration could also be given to replacing the kiosk, which was not fully executed to Friedberg's original design, with the memorial sculpture.

This fall, Docomomo DC's annual Tour Day event on October 13th will focus on the evolution of Pennsylvania Avenue and highlight Freedom Plaza and Pershing Park. To be titled **Pennsylvania to Pershing**, the tour will correspond to the national Tour Day theme—Public Spaces-Inside and Out. This is a reminder of the vital role public space and landscapes from the modern and postmodern eras play in the vitality of cities across the country. Washington is fortunate to have many modern public spaces, such as Pershing Park, that should be preserved, celebrated, and thoughtfully transformed to meet today's needs.

Docomomo DC supports a World War I Memorial within Pershing Park, but we urge the Commission of Fine Arts to recommend relocation of the sculpture to a location on the site that will not fundamentally alter the pool basin and cascade fountain.

Thank you for your consideration of Docomomo DC's comments.

Sincerely,



Thomas C. Jester, AIA, FAPT, LEED AP  
President, Docomomo DC

cc: Marcel Acosta, NCPD; David Maloney, DC State Historic Preservation Officer; Rebecca Miller, DCPL; Charles Birnbaum, The Cultural Landscape Foundation



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