

Commemorative Works Committee Meeting

March 27th, 2020

WebEx Virtual Meeting

11:00 AM to Noon

MEETING MINUTES

Attendees

Andrew Trueblood, Director, Office of Planning (OP) & Committee Chair
Kathleen Beeton, Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs (DCRA) Member
Anna Chamberlin, Department of Transportation (DDOT) Member
Otto Condon, Citizen Member
Celeste Duffie, Department of Public Works (DPW) Member
Dulce Naime, Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) Member
Lauren Dugas-Glover, Commission on the Arts and Humanities (CAH) Member
Yohance Fuller, Department of General Services (DGS) Member
Rebecca Katz, Executive Office of the Mayor (EOM) Member

Chris Shaheen, OP
Malaika Scriven, OP
Kevin Storm, OP

Agenda

1. Meeting Outcomes
2. Define High Level Principles
3. Visioning
 - a. Location Strategy
 - b. Commemoration Strategy
4. Discussion
5. Next Steps

Minutes

Introduction:

- Andrew Trueblood (OP) welcomed committee members and gave an update on current efforts by District Council to adopt legislation related to commemorative work. He explained the work of this committee will inform the work of District Council.
- Chris Shaheen (OP) explained that the goal for today's meeting is to find agreement on approaches for:
 - a strategy to locate commemorative works in the District, and
 - a broad strategy to promote and develop a commemorative works program.
- Shaheen presented the high-level draft principles (reviewed by the Commemorative Works Working Group at their February meeting) for guiding the location and commemoration strategies.

Location Strategy:

Shaheen explained three concepts the Working Group is proposing for locating commemorative works throughout the District:

1. *Ceremonial Corridors – Universal Experiences*: these high-visibility corridors (described and identified in the Comprehensive Plan update) would be best suited for commemorating events like World War II,

9/11, Public Figures of City-wide Importance, or National Events. Examples of these corridors include gateways (e.g. MacArthur Boulevard, 16th Street, East Capitol Street), primary/secondary Avenues (e.g. Massachusetts Avenue, New Hampshire Avenue, Maryland Avenue), primary/secondary Long-Established Roads (e.g. Wisconsin Avenue, Georgia Avenue, Benning Road, Martin Luther King Boulevard), and primary/secondary parkways (e.g. Nebraska Avenue, South Dakota Avenue, Alabama Avenue).

2. *Community Spaces – Place-Based Cultural Identities*: these spaces are located throughout the District in areas designated in the Comprehensive Plan for commercial and mixed-use, a designation that implies places that have or will develop a character specific to the neighborhood in which they are located. These locations would be ideal locations to commemorate people, places, or events with a specific geographic association like Jazz on U Street, Jewish History in Petworth, or Central American Culture in Adams Morgan. Examples of these places include Regional Centers (Friendship Heights, Georgetown, Minnesota Avenue), Multi-Neighborhood Centers (e.g. Tenleytown, Brightwood, Florida Avenue Market, Skyland), Neighborhood Commercial Center (e.g. Spring Valley, S. Dakota and Riggs Road, E. Capitol and Benning Road, Columbia Heights Plaza), and Main Street Mixed-Use Corridors (e.g. Wisconsin Avenue, 14th Street, U Street, Rhode Island Avenue, 12th Street NE, H Street NE, MLK Avenue, etc.).
3. *Shared Spaces – DC Cultural Connections*: these spaces are notable for attracting a broad cross-section of residents due to their role as hubs or transfer points in the transportation system or for providing recreation facilities that attract residents from throughout the District. These are places where commemorative works that focus on cultural ties that connect all residents of the city – like go-go music or sports teams - could be located. Examples of these places include plazas at metro stations (e.g. Columbia Heights, Potomac Avenue), high ridership bus line stops or transfer points (e.g. 14th and Kennedy NW, Minnesota Avenue and E. Capitol Street), or public parks (e.g. Palisades Recreation Center, Emery Recreation Center, Turkey Thicket, Oxon Run).

Shaheen provided examples of the types of places in the city plan where a commemorative work could be (e.g. civic buildings and spaces, wide streets and sidewalks, and small parks and open spaces). He provided an example of how these potential places would work within the three concepts by showing all small parks and open spaces located along ceremonial corridors.

Commemoration Strategy:

Shaheen reviewed background information, ongoing initiatives, and work done in DC and other cities that could inform the District's approach to promote and grow a commemorative works program:

1. *Build on DC initiatives*: District agencies currently have plans and initiatives in place that can be used to further promote commemorative works. These include the DC Cultural Plan, Public Space Activation and Stewardship Guide, DC Creates! Public Art Master Plan, Crossing the Street (OP), and Riverwalk Design guidelines for Buzzard Point.
2. *Precedents from similar initiatives in DC and other US Cities*: Specific examples of events sponsored in cities that commemorated cultures, historic events or creative ways to commemorate include the District of Columbia's "Okuplaza Fest", Montreal's "Memory City: Projections of Montreal's History,

Old Montreal”, DC’s “John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts”, and NCPC’s Design Competition that showcased possible design for “Memorials for the Future”.

One particularly notable example was “Paper Monuments”, a two-year initiative in New Orleans that included a public discussion to consider what should replace four Jim Crow-era monuments taken down in 2017. The initiatives include three phases: a poster campaign that commissioned artwork celebrating people, places, events and movements in New Orleans history; a solicitation of public proposals submitted by people living in New Orleans responding to the question, “What is an appropriate monument for the city of New Orleans today?”; and, temporary events held throughout the city that emphasized storytelling, regular community canvassing, open artist calls, and more. The New Orleans initiative was undertaken as a partnership between the city and Monument Lab, a non-profit based out of Philadelphia and that does similar work across North America.

Shaheen explained that an implementation strategy in the District could be a combination of several efforts that build upon current work programs and precedents from other cities.

Discussion:

- Trueblood (OP) stated that the goal of the Commemorative Works Committee can be more than a review body as currently contemplated in legislation and be more supportive of groups that want to propose commemorative works. He asked Committee members to provide feedback on the presentation.
- Lauren Dugas-Glover (DCCAH) stated support of the ideas proposed in the presentation and noted that this strategy is sorely needed. She stated that developing and presenting this strategy was a good opportunity to engage the public or other groups that want to propose a commemorative work but are not sure what to do. She further stated support for an approach that goes beyond traditional memorials on a granite plinth and sees possible coordination efforts with DCCAH plans to update their public art master plan. Dugas-Glover also stated this initiative could be something that engages people through a unifying project after we get through the current COVID-19 event.
- Trueblood re-emphasized Dugas-Glover’s comments and supported the idea that the Committee’s work could be something hopeful and positive that the District can focus on after we come out of where we are today.
- Celest Duffie (DPW) stated she thought the presentation was a very thorough start to establishing a framework but thinks a logistical approach would be helpful. For example, the framework should be more specific about where the District wants to propose temporary commemorative works. She suggested a Ward-based approach to identify locations could be helpful for organizing them and that this approach could be a way for people wrap better understand the proposed ideas.
- Kevin Storm (OP) stated support for a location strategy that is Ward-based and suggested a next step could be to identify the most ideal locations for each Ward.
- Otto Condon (Citizen Member) supported the rigorous approach to developing a vision and

strategy. He encouraged going directly into a pilot project phase rather than finalizing vision and going into the regulatory process. He stated that what has been proposed here is something that could be implemented sooner rather than later.

- Becky Katz (EOM) agreed with Condon and thought that an alternative to defining gateways or specific sites for commemorative works would be to outline the concepts as location principles. She states if locations were more defined as principles, the District and Committee would not have to come back and find additional locations in the future.
- Storm stated that defining locations through principles was an interesting approach but referred to the National Capital Planning Commission's memorial plan that includes specific locations and how that had been helpful for organizations looking for locations. Shaheen stated that further refining the location concepts as principles is something the working group can do, but the types of questions OP usually gets from applicants is that they are looking for specific sites and thinks that is something we need. Katz agreed that this approach made sense.
- Dulce Naime stated support for the location strategy and wanted to know if the next step would include defining what sites would be available for commemorative works, physical characteristics of potential sites, and what type of commemorative work might be good for each site. Dugas-Glove stated support for specific information on potential sites as well as information on ownership. She stated there were existing plans the District can build on to include commemoration along corridors identified in the strategies and recommends doing this instead of starting from scratch. She also stated that DCCHA has found it challenging to coordinate with other agencies when trying to find potential sites for commemorative works. Kathleen Beeton (DCRA) stated that the principles should be revised to include something about the importance of DC agencies working together to identify spaces for commemoration as part of their work programs.
- Storm stated that further developing a location strategy was something OP can work on in-house and that a commemoration strategy was something that would likely require engaging with an outside consultant.
- Beeton (DCRA) suggested strengthening the language in the draft principle about coordination to ensure various agencies evaluate their work programs for commemorative works potential.

Next Steps:

Shaheen summarized the two recommendations from the working group:

1. Continue with the location strategy as proposed and providing more specifics on locations. Staff will need to determine how much specificity is possible and that the goal of the strategy was to provide general guidance, not be prescriptive, and allow for flexibility to determine what goes on each site; and,
 2. Developing a scope of work for a commemorative strategy.
- Duffie stated support for the two recommendations and that they give a very clear path forward.

She does not know how feasible it will be to provide specific information on each site but likes that idea. She stated it was likely we would find that the District has many sites with unique qualities located across the city.

- Malaika Scriven (OP) stated that to an extent the District will be able to develop a location inventory based on existing plans and studies. OP will be reaching out to partner agencies to find potential commemorative work locations in existing plans.
- Condon stressed the need for ongoing coordination between District other agencies, specifically infrastructure projects, that would make this strategy immediately tangible. He identified the K Street Transitway project that is currently underway as one example.

Conclusion:

Shaheen stated that OP will need to look at regulations as part of the next phase of the working groups work because of an immediate need to coordinate with District Council and pending legislation. He stated that feedback Committee members provided today will be incorporated into the draft high-level visioning document and could be used to help shape District Council legislation. The Committee is scheduled to meet again in June to wrap up current efforts to develop location and commemoration strategies and to review how current regulations may need to be updated to reinforce this effort.