

National World War I Memorial

Washington D.C.

U.S. World War I Centennial Commission

UU+ Studio

Forge Landscape Architecture

GWWO, Inc./Architects

U.S. Commission of Fine Arts

Submission May 4, 2017

Introduction

Of the four major wars of the 20th century, World War I alone has no national memorial in the nation's capital. More American servicemen were lost in World War I than in the Korean and Vietnam wars combined, with 116,516 lost and 200,000 more wounded. In December 2014, President Obama signed legislation authorizing the U.S. World War I Centennial Commission (WWICC) to establish a new memorial. P.L.113-291, Section 3091 of the National Defense Authorization Act of 2015 re-designates Pershing Park in the District of Columbia, an existing memorial to General John J. Pershing, commander of American forces in World War I, as a national World War I Memorial, and authorizes the WWICC to further honor American servicemen and women in World War I:

a. (3) AUTHORITY TO ENHANCE COMMEMORATIVE WORK

(A) IN GENERAL. The Commission may enhance the General Pershing Commemorative Work by constructing on the land designated in paragraph (1) [Pershing Park] as a World War 1 Memorial appropriate sculptural and other commemorative elements, including landscaping, to further honor the service members of the United States Armed Forces in World War I.

The existing park is a 1.8 acre parcel bounded by Pennsylvania Avenue on the north and south, 15th Street NW on the west and 14th Street NW on the east. The park was designed by M. Paul Friedberg and Partners in 1979-80 and constructed by the Pennsylvania Avenue Development Corporation as part of a congressionally authorized effort to rehabilitate the Avenue. In the southeast corner of the site sits a memorial to General John J. Pershing, designed by architect Wallace K. Harrison. Landscape architects Oehme van Sweden redesigned the park planting shortly after the park was constructed in 1981, supplementing and changing portions of the original Friedberg design.

The national World War I Memorial will serve a dual function, as a space of commemoration and as an urban park situated within the Pennsylvania Avenue National Historic Site. The memorial design must balance these two functions with great sensitivity, providing an expanded commemorative identity worthy of a National World War I Memorial while at the same time honoring the historic significance of the park and its greater context.

Site Location



WWI Memorial Competition

The primary objective of the WWI Memorial Competition was to generate designs that would honor the service of American forces in World War I through the transformation of a park with a small memorial situated within it, into a site that serves primarily as a national World War I Memorial within a well-functioning urban park. Designers were asked to create a distinct sense of place that would revitalize the park and connect to the larger network of memorials and monuments of the National Mall, while strengthening the park's relationship to the urban context. The competition also asked designers to consider the integration of the existing Pershing Memorial and physical park elements with new commemorative features, to balance a sense of enclosure with openness and visibility, and to develop a design that is timeless and meaningful for future generations.

The WWICC sponsored an open, two stage international design competition. Of the more than 350 entries received, five were chosen to participate in the second stage by an independent jury of experts in landscape architecture, planning, architecture, and history. The Design Oversight Committee, consisting of representatives from the World War I Centennial Commission, the National Parks Service, National Capital Planning Commission, Commission of Fine Arts, General Services Administration, DC State Historic Preservation Office, and other stakeholders, met with each of the five finalists on three separate occasions. On January 6th, 2016, the finalists presented their designs to the Competition Jury.

The Competition Jury unanimously chose the design concept submittal *The Weight of Sacrifice*, recommending to the WWICC that the design team be selected to continue work to make the Memorial a reality:

"The Weight of Sacrifice comes closest to meeting all National World War I Memorial goals. Properly executed, this design concept promises to remind and inspire visitors for generations to come about American involvement and sacrifice in World War I. And it promises as well to become a popular, well-functioning, animated urban park in the heart of the nation's capital."

The Weight of Sacrifice, proposed the allegorical idea that public space and public freedom are hard won through the great sacrifices of countless individuals in the pursuit of liberty. The raised figurative walls visually expressed a narrative of the sacrificial cost of war, while also supporting a literal manifestation of freedoms enjoyed in this country: the open park space above. The urban design intent was to create a new formal link along Pennsylvania Avenue which ties together the memorial to General Sherman on the West and Freedom Plaza on the East. This was achieved by lowering the visual barriers surrounding the existing Pershing Park and reinforcing dominant axes that come from the adjacent context.

The raised form in the center of the site honored the veterans of the First World War by combining figurative sculpture and personal narratives of servicemen and women in a single formal expression. The integration of a park around and atop the memorial alluded to the idea that public space and personal freedom are only available through the sacrifice of our soldiers. Above all, the memorial sculptures and park design stressed the glorification of humanity and enduring spirit over the glorification of war.

Competition Design

The competition scheme was selected by the WWICC because it best fulfilled the Commission's key objectives:

- Establish a memorial with weight and gravity commensurate with that of the war memorials on the Mall
- Design a well-integrated park-and-memorial that would facilitate a variety of park uses, and that would harmonize with the surrounding urban space
- Place the memorial as the central or focal feature of the overall design
- Convey the significance of World War I as an event in U.S. and world history
- Convey the scale of American sacrifice, which exceeded that of all our nation's wars other than the Civil War and World War II
- Create the most opportunity to preserve existing features of the park



Following the selection of the winning competition scheme, the design team began the adaptation of the competition scheme to balance the mandate to transform Pershing Park into an appropriately commemorative National World War I Memorial with the importance of respecting the design of the existing park. On May 26, 2016, the design team met with staff from the CFA, NCPC, NPS, and DC SHPO, to solicit feedback on design concepts. Discussion focused on two main ideas, maintaining more of the character defining features of the existing park, specifically the primary unified space “the oasis” and the way the visitor views and experiences this space, and the interrelationship between commemorative elements on the site.

On July 22, 2016, the design team presented a new design concept which responded to the prior feedback received, while simultaneously addressing the challenges identified with the existing park. The design included a central lower precinct similar to the existing park, and maintained the basic bermed perimeter layout of the site, while improving universal accessibility and increasing the park's openness to its urban context by substantially altering the topography. Stakeholders and agencies staff appreciated the demonstrated sensitivity to the existing park, and acknowledged the success of the design in its own right as a compelling vision for a new national World War I Memorial. This design, with some minor revisions, was submitted in September for formal consideration by the National Capital Planning Commission.



View Looking West from Upper Lawn

October 2016 Concept Design

Key adaptations:

- Shifts the bas-relief wall west into a sunken central room within the park
- Improves universal accessibility throughout the park
- Increases visual access into and out of the park
- Creates stronger connections with the urban context
- Proposes enduring and maintainable features and materials

Key features preserved:

- Central, lowered precinct
- Basic berm architecture with its attendant benefits (seclusion, enclosure, buffering, etc.)
- Openness and flow within the site and between the site and its surroundings



View Looking West from Lower Lawn

Following the October 2016 submission, the design team adapted the scheme with continued respect for the design of the existing park. The primary comments and concerns raised by the CFA and NCPD were that the design and the presentation of the design needed to show a more direct translation between the existing park and the proposed design with a clear distinction between elements retained and elements modified. The importance of both the Friedberg design and the Oehme Van Sweden planting plan were reconsidered for how they could be reinterpreted into a memorial landscape. The resultant studies focused on balancing the commemorative desires of the WWI commission with the existing character defining features of the park while reducing the topographical and sectional adjustments in each design.

On December 19, 2016, the design team met with the CFA agency staff and shared two new design concepts. Both designs focused heavily on the concept that the primary unified space “the oasis” was the central point of engagement for visitors coming to experience the landscape and the existing built features of the park. The first concept, entitled “Memorial Plaza”, retained the envelope of the park with minimal change to the topographic features and allowed for circulation around the bas relief wall by means of the existing west terrace stairs. The primary change made was to the footprint of the existing pool to allow for visitor circulation up to, and around, the primary memorial element. This scheme went on to be presented at the February CFA meeting under the name “Pool and Plaza”. The second scheme presented to CFA staff on the 19th was entitled “Stone of Sacrifice”. This design replaced the kiosk with a piece of commemorative sculpture and the existing fountain with a large piece of limestone from the Western Front in France. Stakeholders appreciated the design team’s willingness to venture into other design strategies and explorations into creating a more authentic rehabilitation scheme, however all parties believed that the elements in “Stone of Sacrifice” were too abstract for their commemorative purposes and were not unified well with the existing park design or with each other. The design team therefore chose to proceed with the pool and plaza scheme to the February 2017 CFA submission with some minor revisions.

The design team also began a renewed evaluation of the condition of existing materials, vegetation, and the spatial organization of the park. A general analysis of these conditions were submitted as addenda in the February 2017 CFA and NCPD submission packages.

February 2017 Concept Design

Pool and Plaza

The Pool & Plaza concept recognizes that the existing park is spatially organized around the sunken plaza and pool at its center. For the existing park to operate as a national World War I Memorial, the primary commemorative element must be set within the central room.

The Pool & Plaza concept adapts the central sunken room to feature the bas-relief wall describing the narrative of a soldier's valor and sacrifice in his departure and return from the War. The length of the wall is slightly reduced from previous designs without losing its ability to commemorate the magnitude of service and sacrifice of American forces in the Great War.

The 10.5' high x 75' long bas-relief wall along the western edge of the plaza establishes an upper terrace overlook with a long view across the memorial. A flagpole occupies a circular plinth at the site of the former cafe kiosk. Within the inner precinct of the Memorial, the vertical surfaces of planters along Pennsylvania Avenue are rebuilt in bronze and inscribed with the stories of the lost generation.

The reflective pool recalls the former water feature while accommodating circulation within the plaza. Precisely-laid stone pavement is set at or near water level to bring visitors in close proximity to the water.

ASSESSMENT

- Axial formality of wall challenges informal, omni-directional park
- Maintains substantial historic fabric and overall spatial organization while changing the character of the central space



February 2017 Concept Design

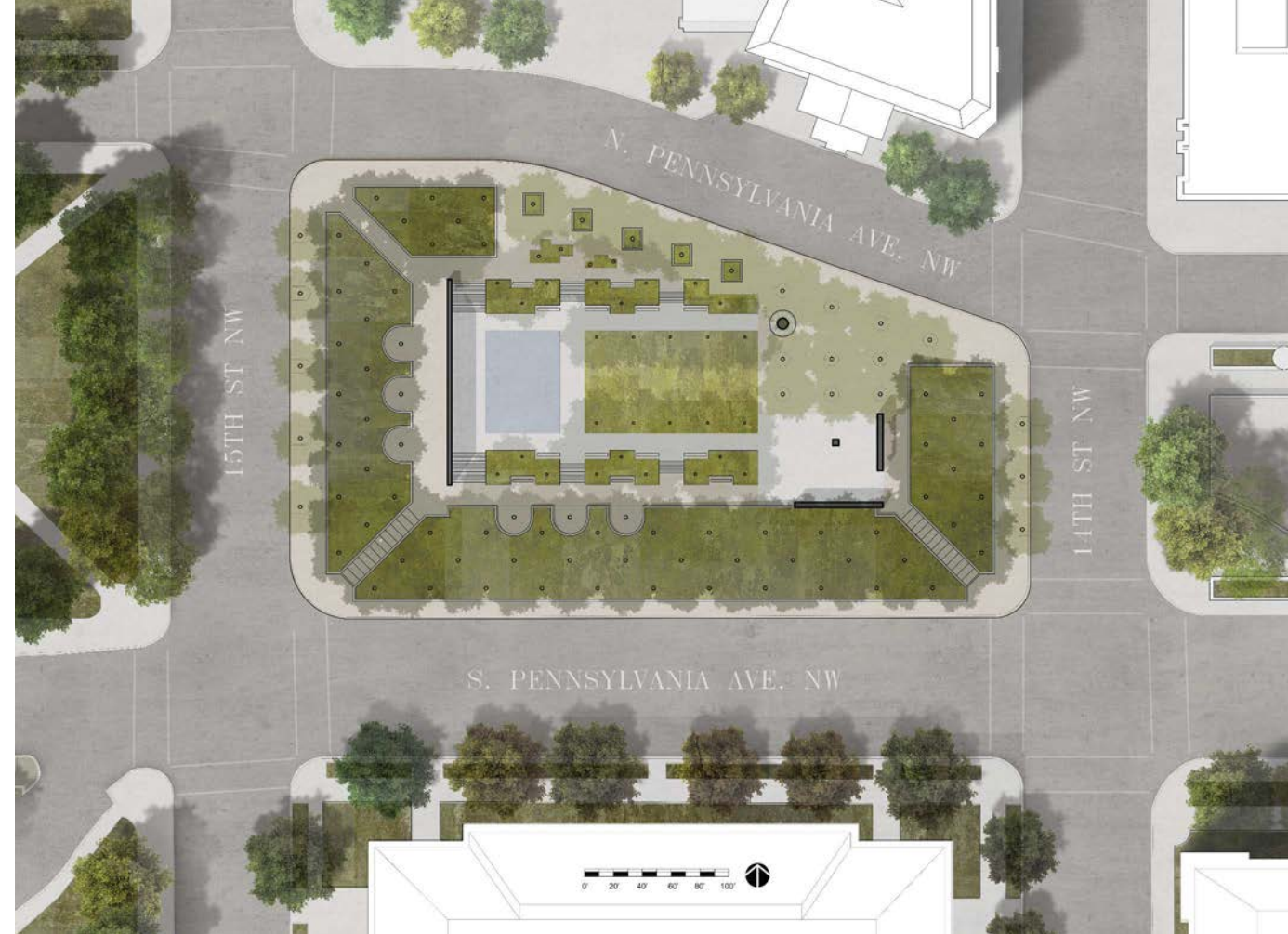
Scrim and Green

The Scrim & Green concept recognizes that the symmetrical bas-relief wall offers the most commemorative impact when set within a space which reflects its dimension, scale, and axially. A wide sloping lawn framed by red maples, descends into a sunken space where the bas-relief wall stands above a scrim of water. Views of the bas-relief are afforded at multiple angles and distances throughout the space. The scale of the wall in the memorial precinct properly expresses the magnitude of service and sacrifice of American forces in the Great War.

The Scrim & Green concept replaces the central sunken room of the existing park with a symmetrical sloped space sheltered within the existing berms, PADC streetscape and access points of the existing park. The 10.5' high bas-relief wall along the western edge of the sloping room establishes an upper terrace overlook with a long view across the memorial. A flag pole stands near the site of the former cafe kiosk.

ASSESSMENT

- Pathway and allée create strong linkage between new memorial element and Pershing statue
- Lawn expands park uses
- Provides a linkage between pool and Pershing, which in current design are disconnected
- Removal of steps makes park more accessible
- Raising of the sunken portion of the park makes the space more visible
- Creates a greater choice of universally-accessible circulation throughout the park



View Looking East from Upper Terrace

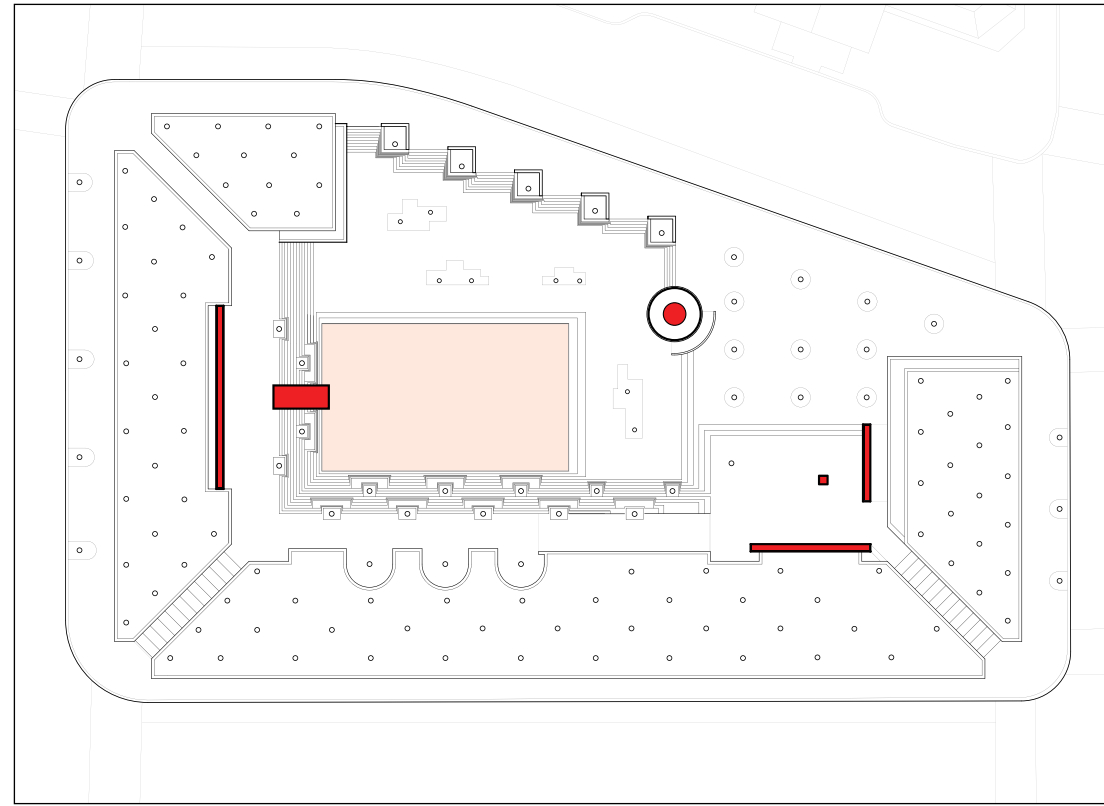
Following the February 2017 submission, the design team revisited and expanded the explorations involving memorial type, form and scale. A survey of existing memorials in the District of Columbia was conducted in order to better understand the use of “walls”, and other surfaces, as commemorative elements. Similarly the design team looked at precedents of memorials from around the world to better understand the macro context of commemorative strategies. Based on these explorations the design team presented multiple possible concepts to the WWICC; some of which considered moving the “wall” to different locations within the park and some utilized other forms of commemoration. Concurrent with these explorations, the design team met with park’s original designer, M. Paul Friedberg, to discuss the original design intent and history of Pershing Park.

The core concepts taken from the explorations (page 9) and the meeting with M. Paul Friedberg were that the memorial element needs to have an appropriate level of commemoration commensurate with that of other wars of this magnitude and that the existing pool and sound of the cascading water are important and should be retained. It was agreed that considerations and modifications to the pool may be made in order to incorporate the water as complementary to the memorial. Additionally important is the idea that the park/memorial be inviting both at nighttime and throughout the year.

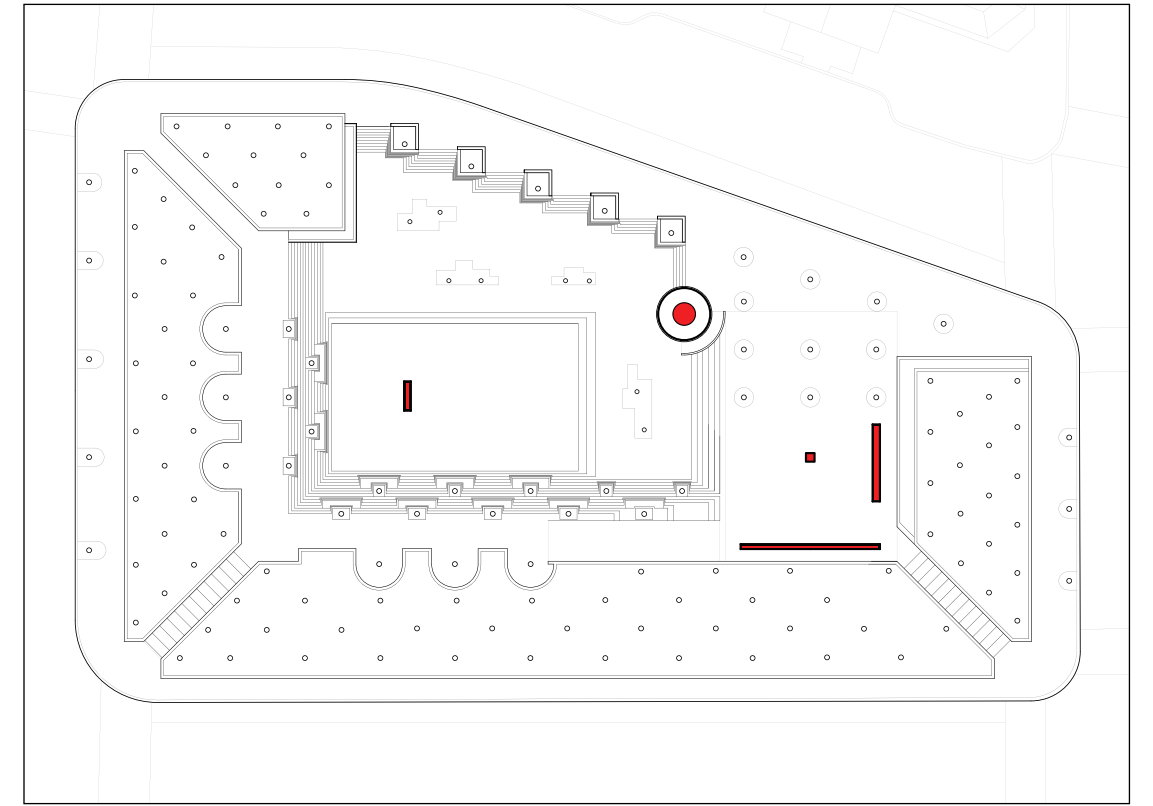
Design Studies

Through the pursuit of multiple design iterations the efforts shown on this page confirmed to the design team that a refined version of the “Pool and Plaza” concept is the most appropriate scheme for meeting the goals of the WWI Centennial Commission and mitigating the adverse effects to the existing park. A revised design solution should integrate the existing pool, the sound of cascading water, and a commemorative element while restoring the qualities of the once contemplative and reflective pool.

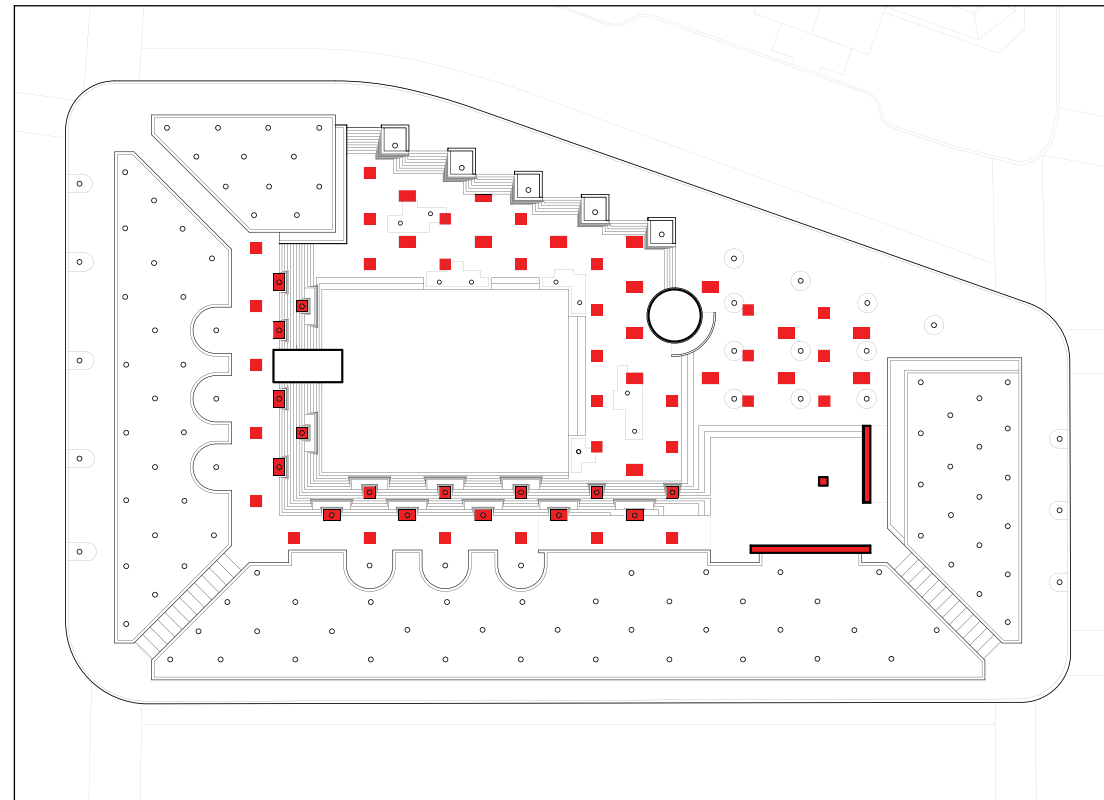
The solutions shown here were attempts to reconfigure the design and meet the aforementioned goals. Each of the solutions was evaluated and ultimately dismissed because it either failed to meet the commemorative goals of the WWI Commission, caused significant change to the existing park features, or resulted in a design which had overall negative consequences on the experience and function of the park.



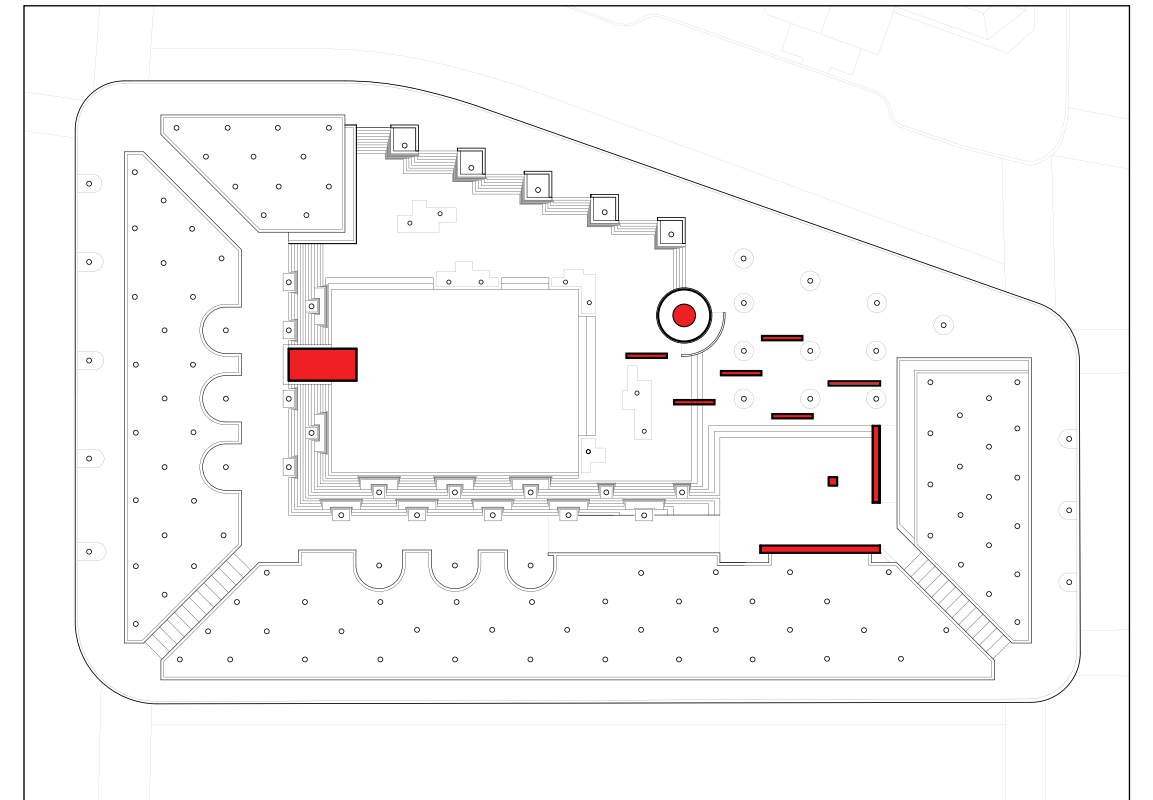
UPPER WALL DESIGN



TRIUMPHAL COLUMN DESIGN



DISTRIBUTED MEMORIAL PAVING



DISTRIBUTED MEMORIAL WALLS

Restored Pool Concept

The intent of this design is to create a memorial which shares a symbiotic relationship with the existing park. The fountain provides the water, sound, and ambiance to the park while the water in the pool reflects the fountain, trees, and the sky. By joining these two features together the memorial becomes as much about the narrative of life and war depicted above the water as it becomes about the loss reflected below.

In order to accomplish this, the existing fountain element is expanded equally north and south to become a larger 65' wide art object nestled in the western terrace stair. Similar to the functionality of the existing fountain, a pool of water wells up from the fountain and cascades over the sides and back into troughs which bring it down to the pool. The side of the fountain facing the pool includes the bronze bas relief and only has water running down the left and right edges of the sculpture. A pathway has been created within the pool to allow for visitors to access the artwork.

ASSESSMENT

- Redefines the existing fountain and pool as the primary commemorative expression
- Redefines circulation of the lower pool area while maintaining pool integrity
- Requires a change to the western terrace seating

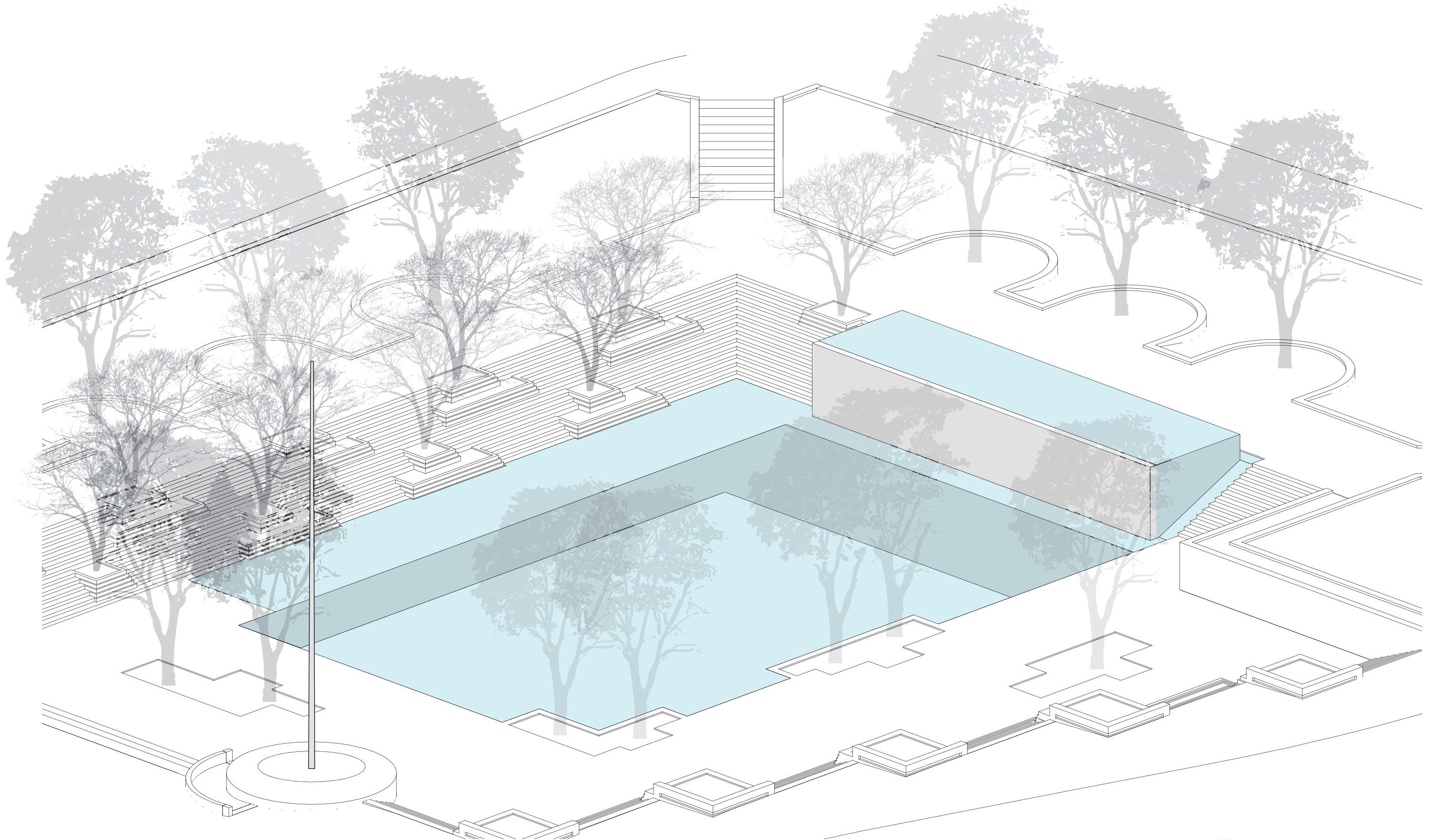


Restored Pool Concept



View Looking South West

Restored Pool Concept



Restored Pool Concept



PROJECT UNKNOWN
-Photo: Urban River - Salvador San Vicente



INNICHEN
-Alleswirdgut architektur



ESPACES PUBLICS DE CASTELSARRASIN
-Kaplan Projects



PROJECT UNKNOWN



NASHER SCULPTURE CENTER
-PWP



NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY, KOGOD COURTYARD
-Foster+Partners and GGN

Restored Pool Concept



View Looking West

Sculptural Artwork



PERSIAN PROCESSIONAL RELIEF



ROMAN SACRIFICIAL RELIEF, UFFIZI GALLERY



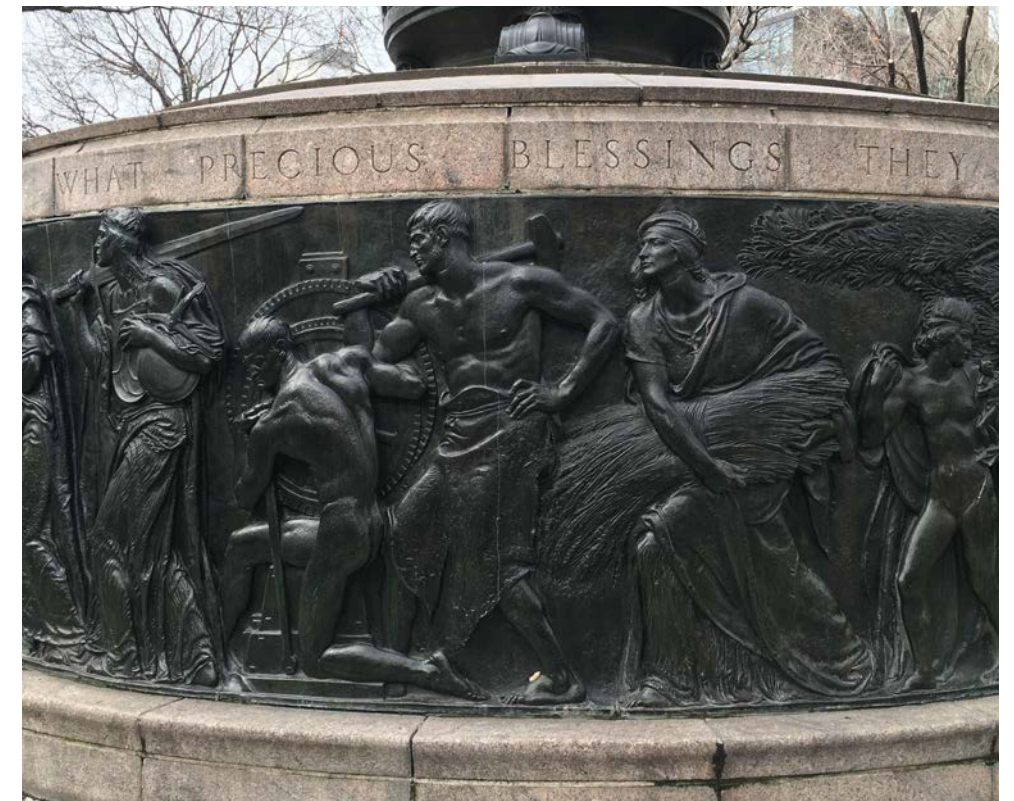
GHIBERTI DOORS, FLORENCE



GATES OF HELL
-RODIN



WW1 RELIEF
-CHARLES JAGGER



UNION SQUARE MEMORIAL, NYC

Sculptural Artwork

The central memorial feature is a monumental work of sculpture in bronze bas-relief, conceived of as a visual and emotional narrative. The work is meant to convey feelings of honor, pride, and loss.

"The soldier will journey from the arms of his family, through the brutality of battle, past figures representing death and madness, into the care of a nurse, and finally return home forever changed." -The Wall Street Journal

The narrative consists of a series of scenes depicting five "acts" of the war: the call to arms, the departure, the battle, the aftermath, and the return. A recurring figure appears throughout, as the man takes leave of his family, joins the march to war and then the battle, suffers the shock of casualty, and then returns home. In the first scene the man takes his helmet from his young daughter; in the last, he returns his helmet to his older, wiser child, a symbol of American coming-of-age in World War I and a harbinger of the war that the next generation would fight twenty years later.

On another level, the central battle scene conveys the courage and heroism of American forces in the war, which was as profound as that in better-remembered wars. The scene of aftermath depicts the physical and mental toll of the war, followed by a scene of proud return recognizing the accomplishments of American troops, with a parade of soldiers marching into "the American century."

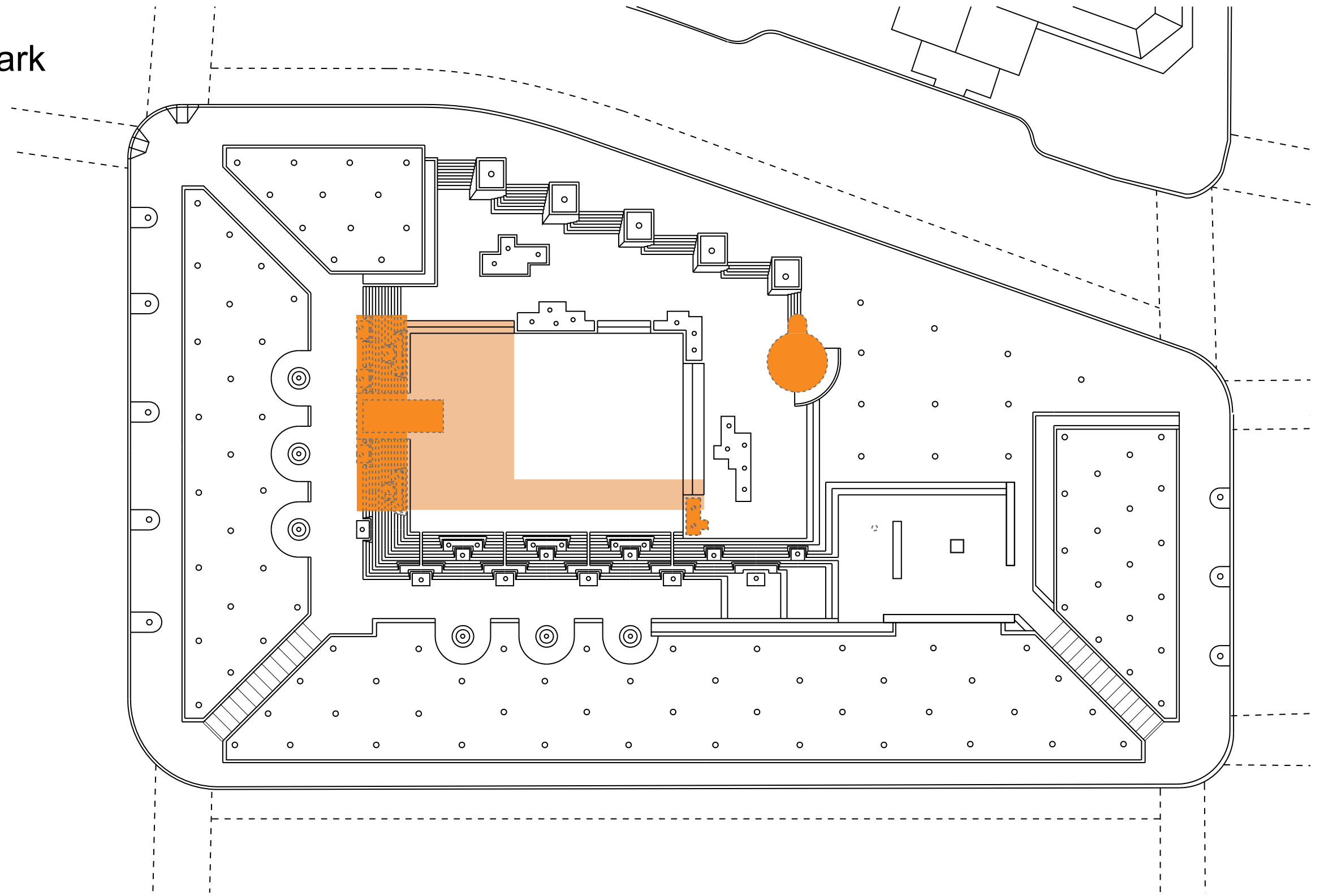


Restored Pool Concept

Modifications to Existing Park

Critical character-defining features:

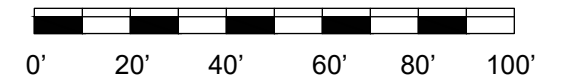
- Views and vistas retained
- Spatial organization retained with minor modifications to circulation
- Pershing Memorial retained
- PADC streetscape retained
- Terraced seating and planters mostly retained
- Granite materials retained
- Distinct rooms bounded by steps primarily retained except where replaced by fountain and universally accessible walkway
- Three focal point organization maintained:
 - Fountain replaced with bas-relief wall
 - Kiosk replaced with Flagpole on plinth
 - Pershing statue repositioned
- Water feature retained and modified to accommodate commemorative circulation
- Cascading water retained on sides and back of fountain



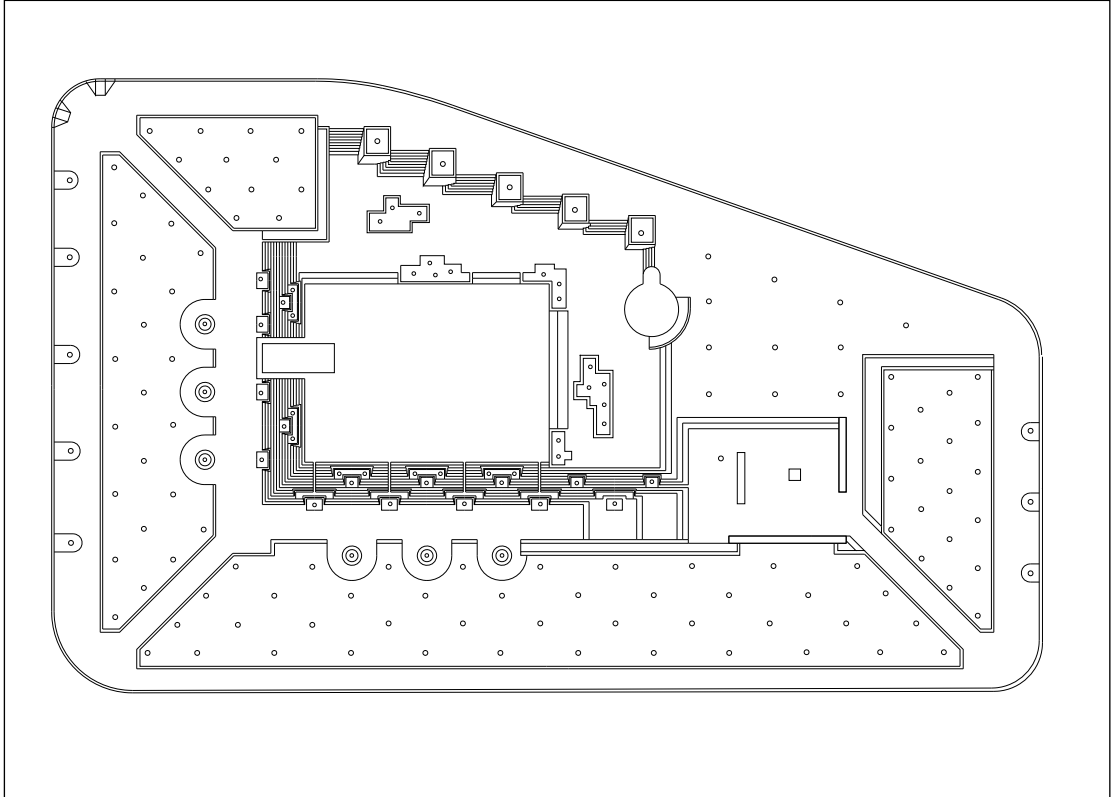
 Removed

 Modified

 Existing



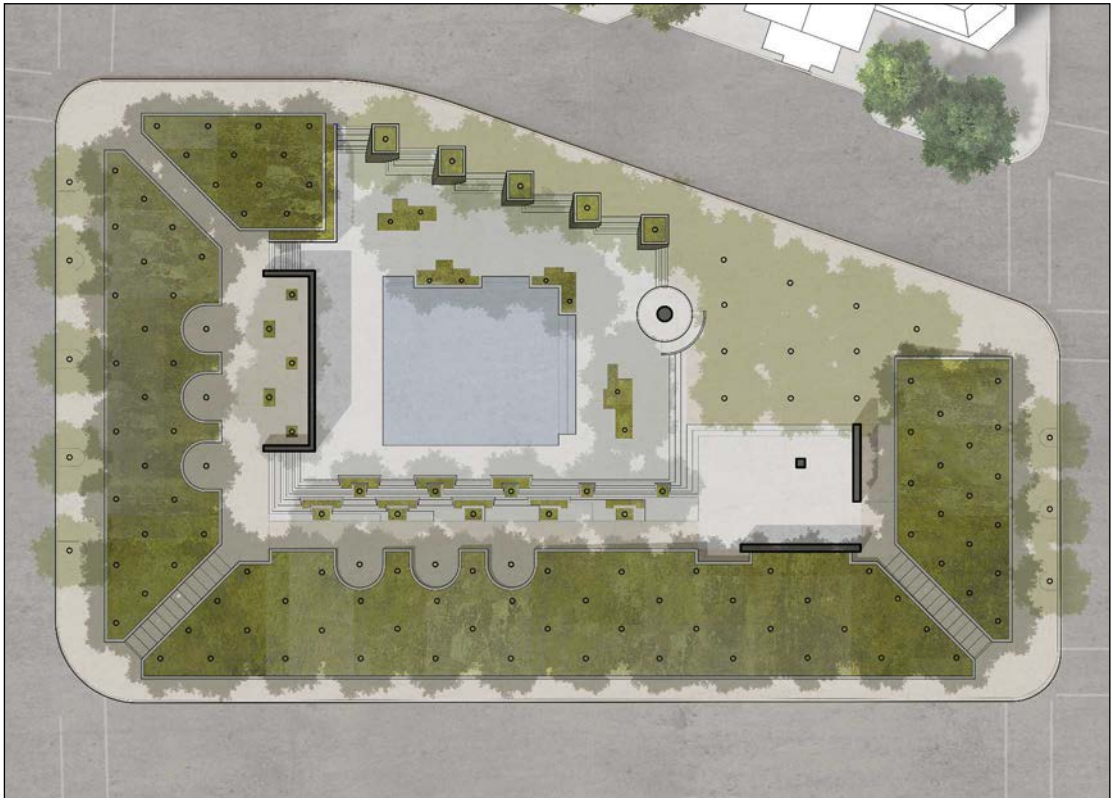
Concept Comparisons Plans



EXISTING PARK DESIGN



OCTOBER 2016 CONCEPT



POOL AND PLAZA CONCEPT - FEBRUARY 2017



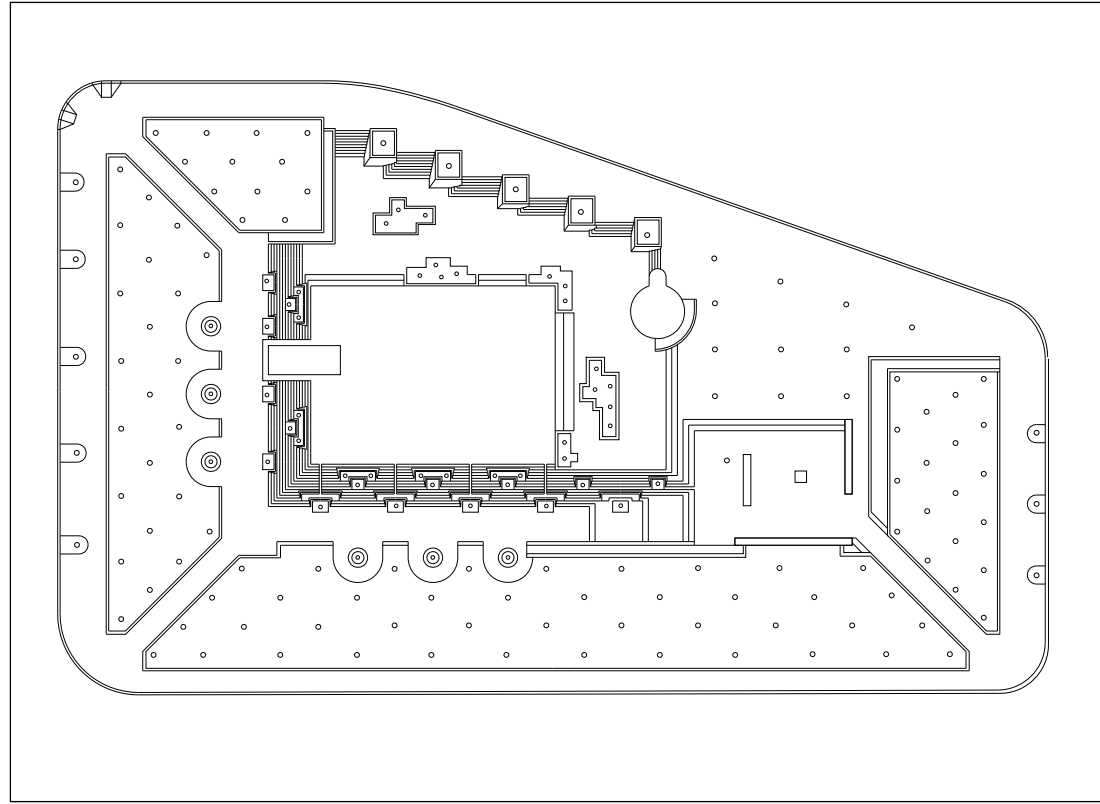
RESTORED POOL CONCEPT

Concept Comparisons

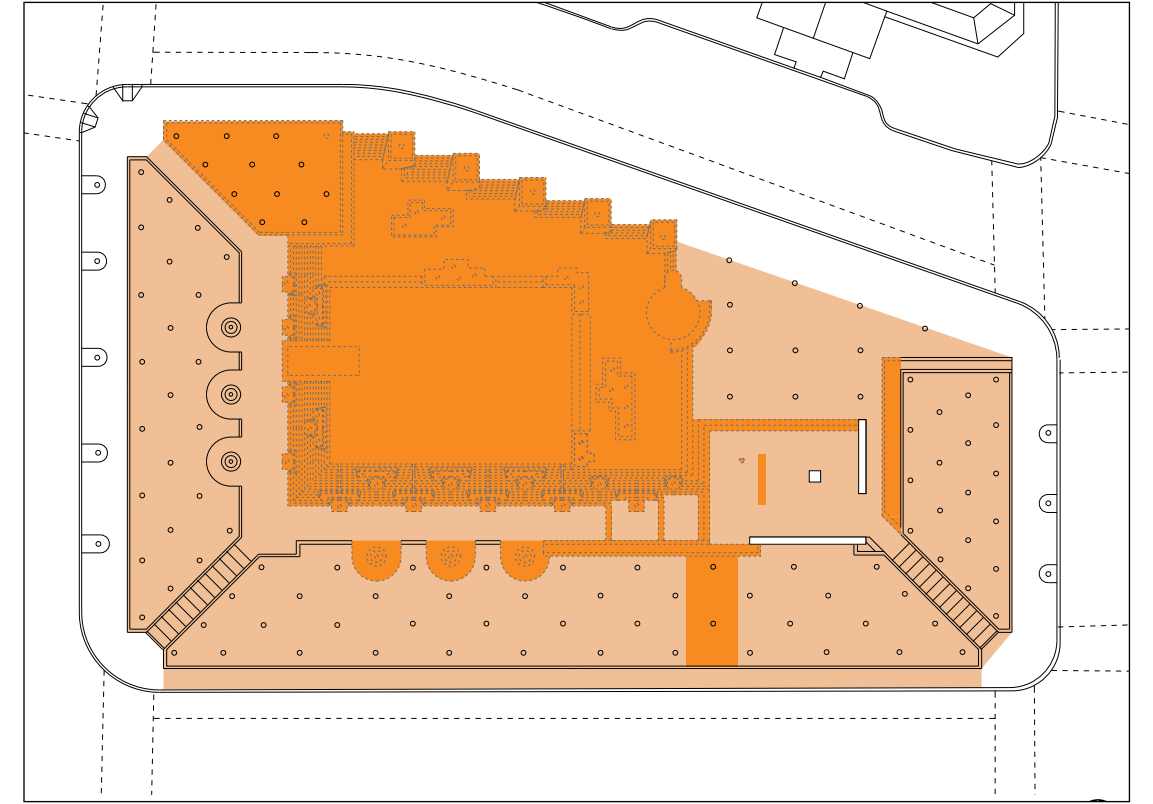
Modifications

Key Changes to Revised Concept:

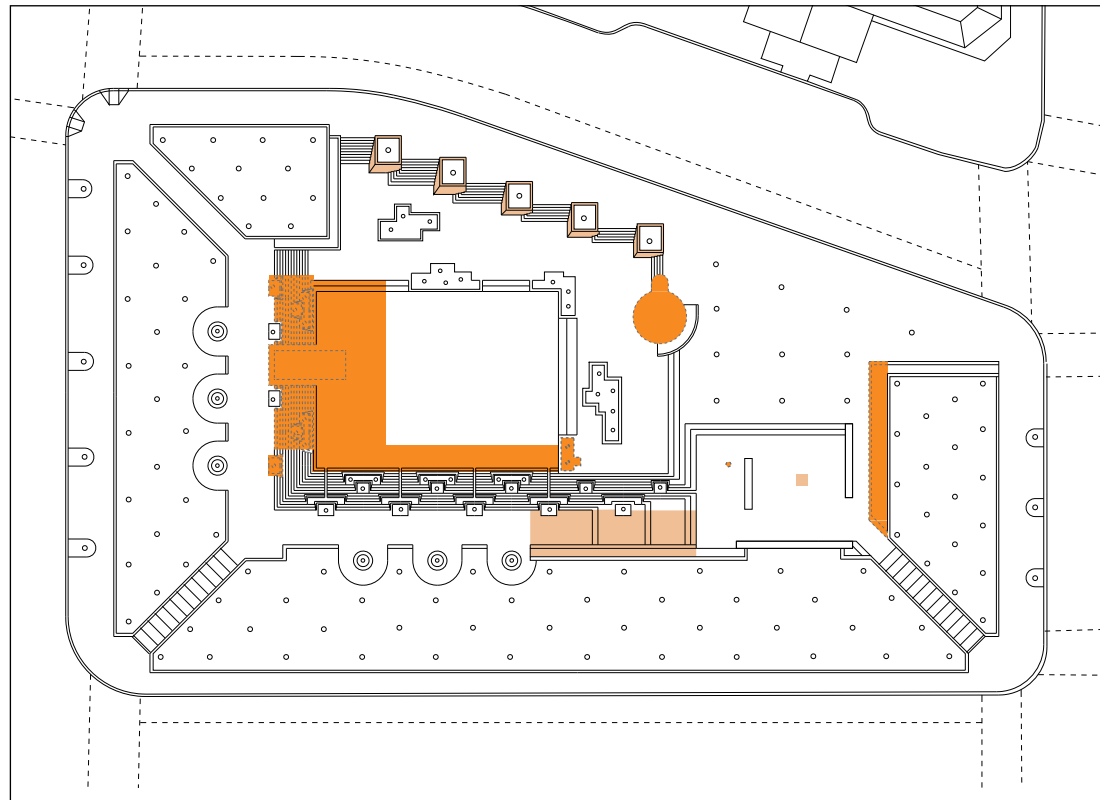
- Existing fountain structure expanded north and south with no other changes to its functionality
- Replacement of the existing kiosk with a flagpole, retaining the existing footprint of the kiosk element
- Modifying the existing pool bottom and pumping/filtering systems to allow for variation in water depth based on seasonal or commemorative necessity



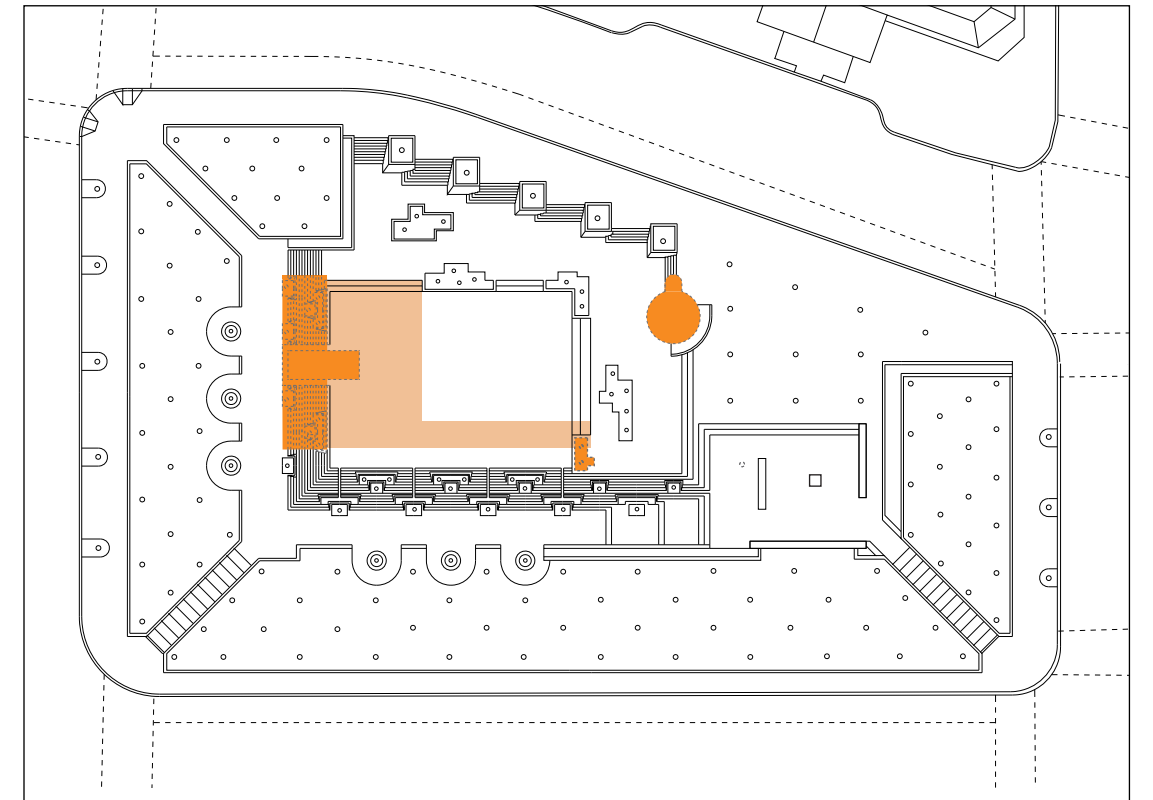
EXISTING PARK DESIGN



OCTOBER 2016 CONCEPT



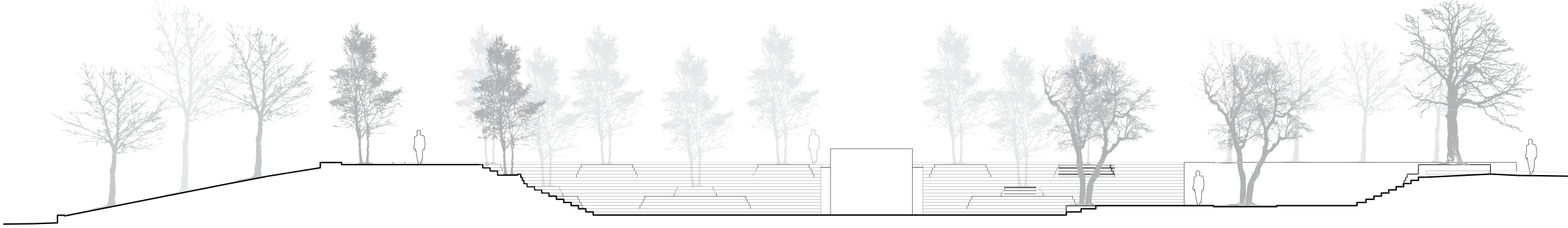
POOL AND PLAZA CONCEPT - FEBRUARY 2017



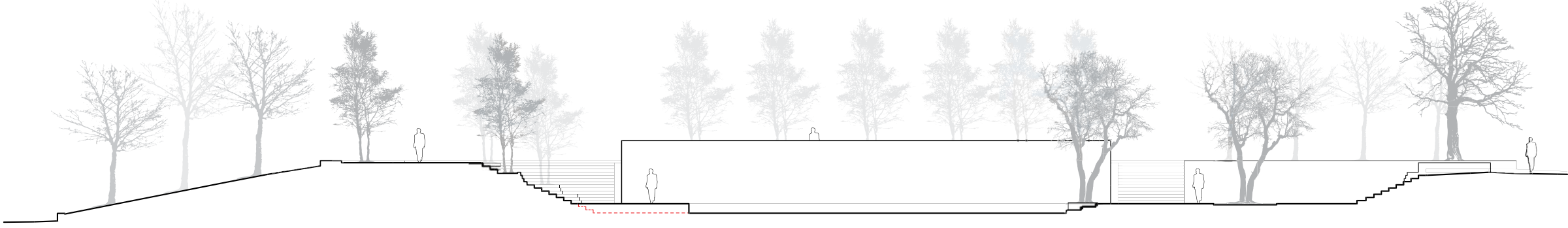
RESTORED POOL CONCEPT

Concept Comparisons

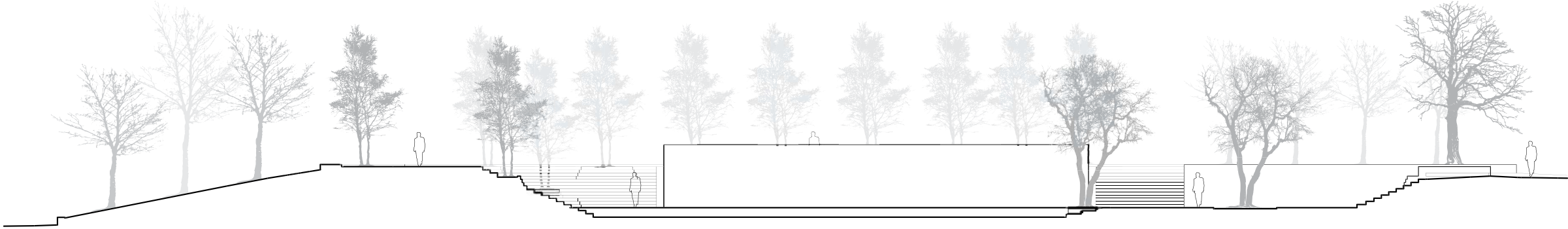
Sections



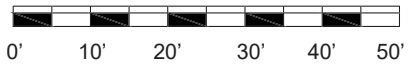
Existing section facing West



Pool and Plaza Concept section facing West

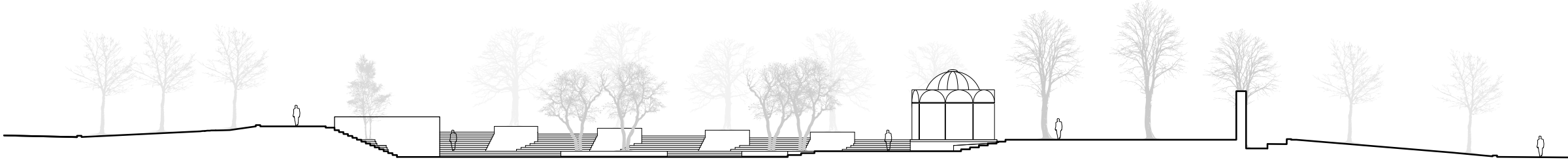


Restored Pool Concept section facing West

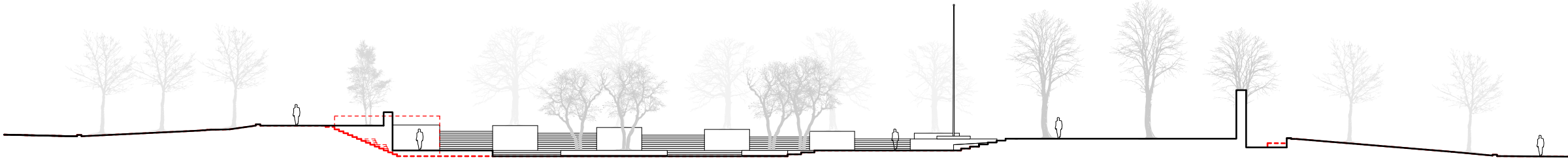


Concept Comparisons

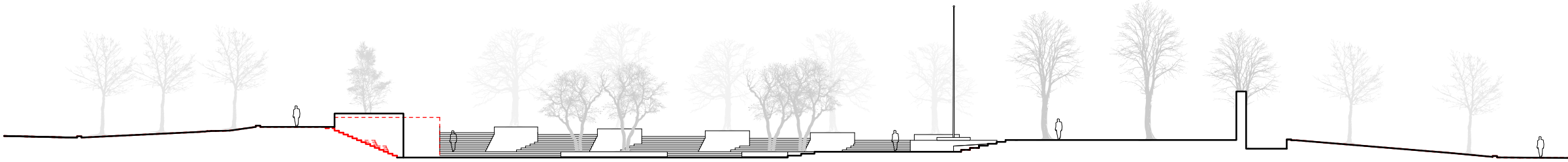
Sections



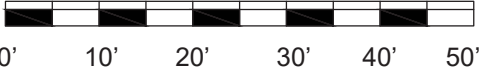
Existing section facing North



Pool and Plaza Concept section facing North



Restored Pool Concept section facing North



Restored Pool Concept



View Looking East from Upper Terrace

Appendices

Appendix:

- Existing Park Conditions
- Existing Park Analysis - Rooms and Focal Points
- Existing Park Analysis - Spatial Investigations
- Existing Park Analysis - Tree Planting Investigations
- Existing Park Analysis - Oehme Van Sweden Planting Plan

Existing Site Photos



Existing Park - View Looking Northeast



Existing Park - View Looking West



Existing Park - View of Pershing Statue



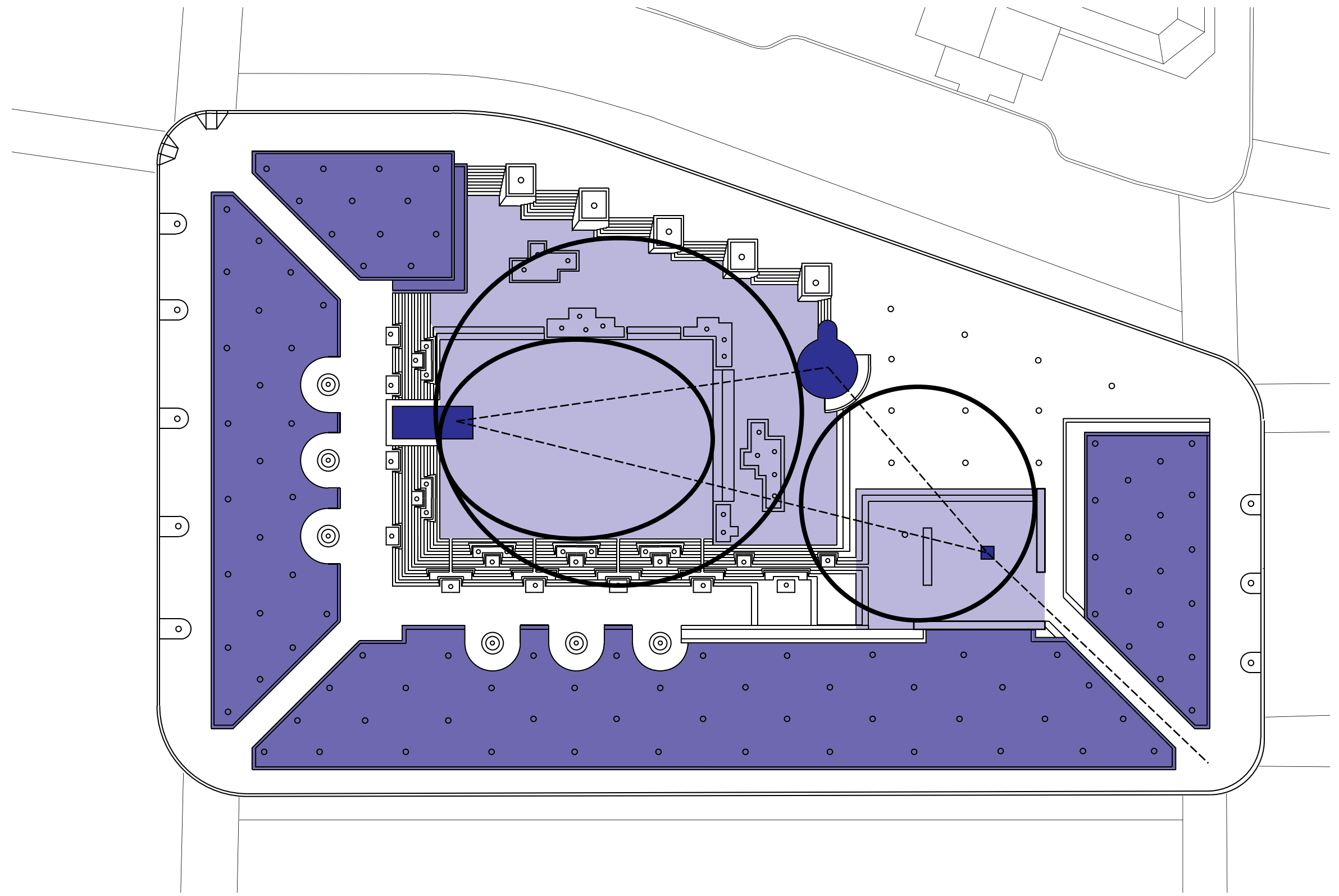
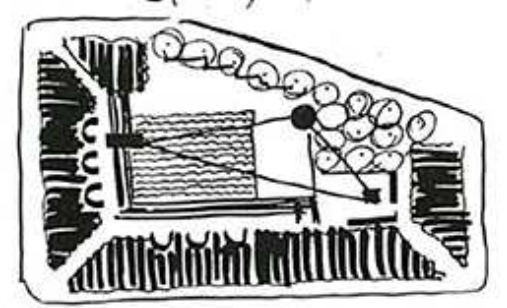
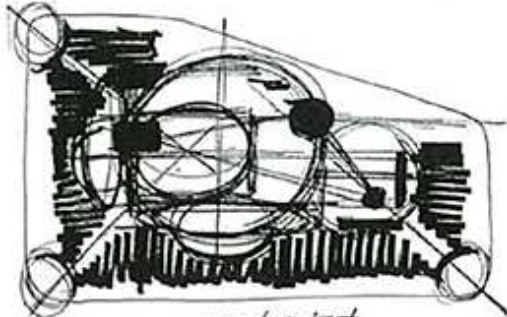
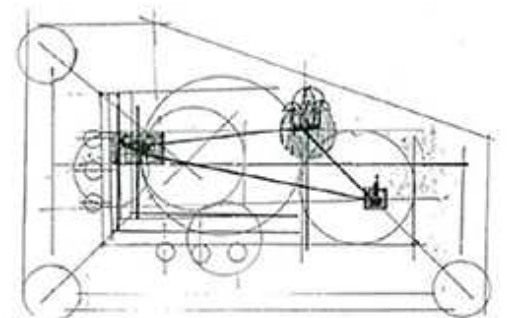
Existing Park - View Looking East



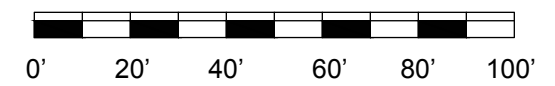
Existing Park - View of Kiosk

Existing Park Analysis

Rooms and Focal Points



-  Enclosure
-  Rooms
-  Focal points

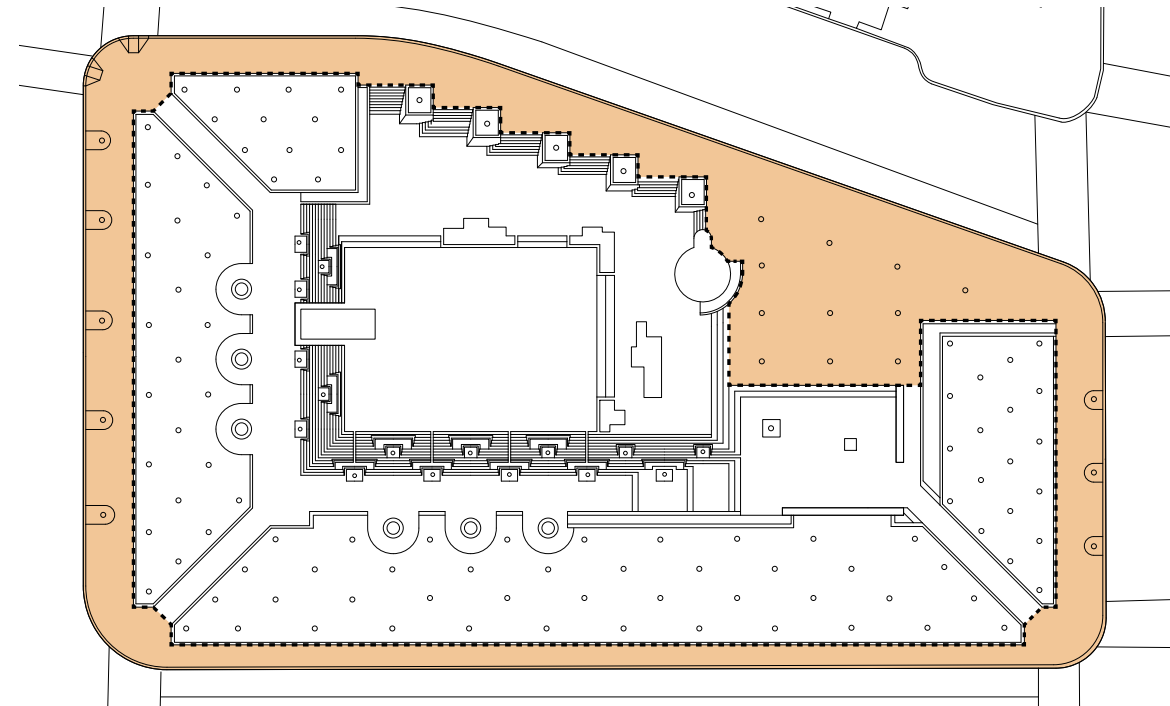


Existing Park Analysis

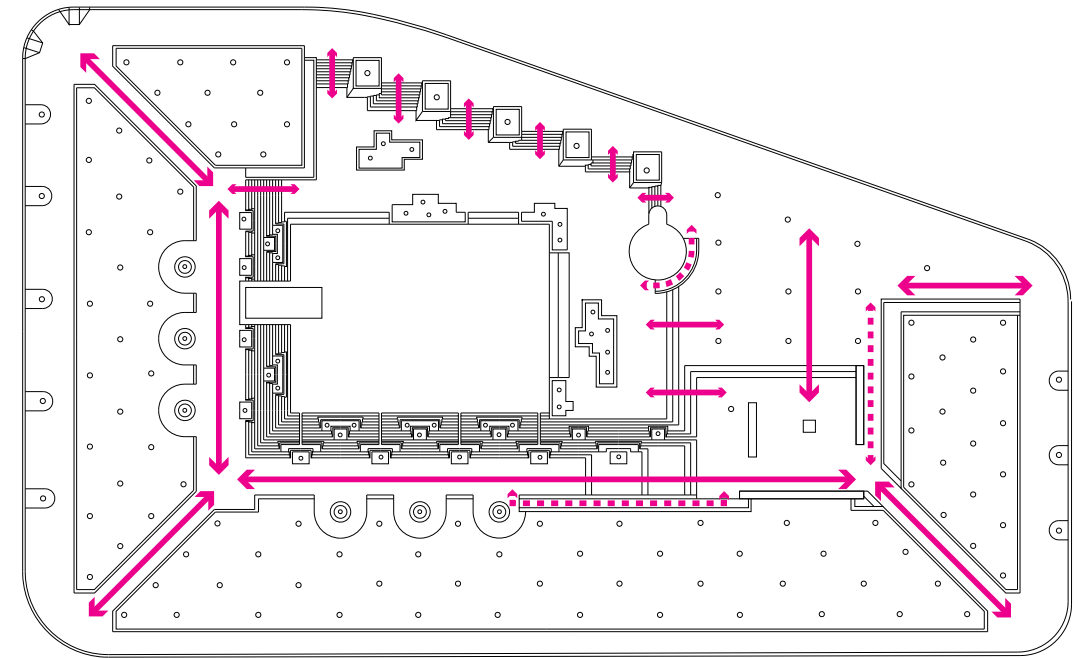
Spatial Investigations

Key observations:

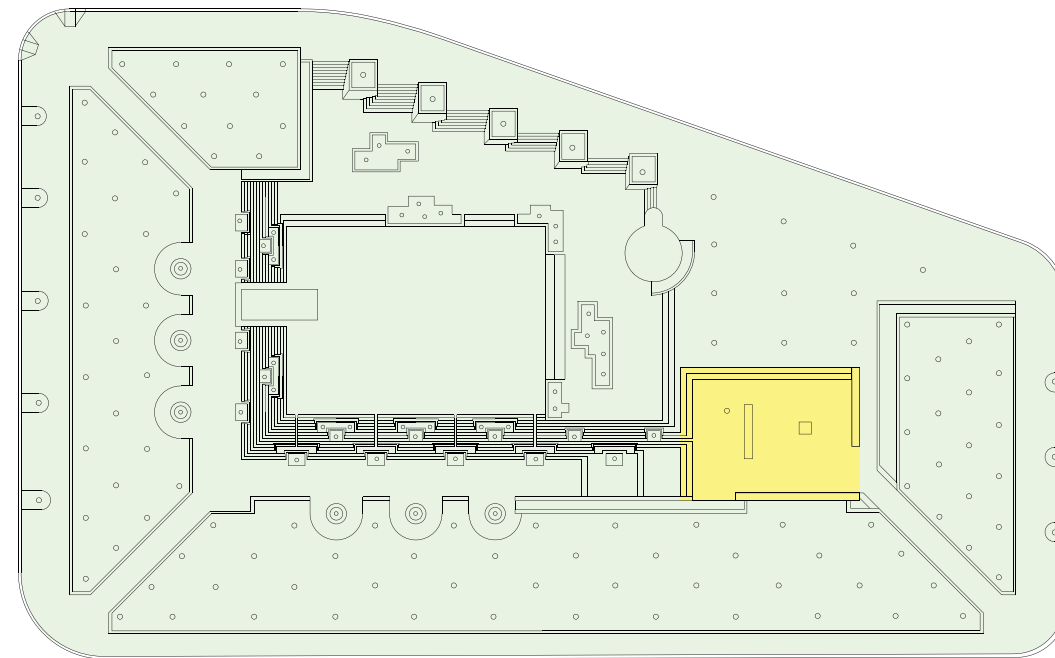
- PADC Streetscape limits can be accommodated within an authentic rehabilitation scheme
- Circulation is omni-directional and unhierarchical
- The General Pershing Memorial is a relatively small and distinct secondary space within Pershing Park
- Pershing Park includes distinct rooms on clearly articulated levels
- The sunken pool is the dominant space within the park, and the focal point around which the park is organized in plan and section



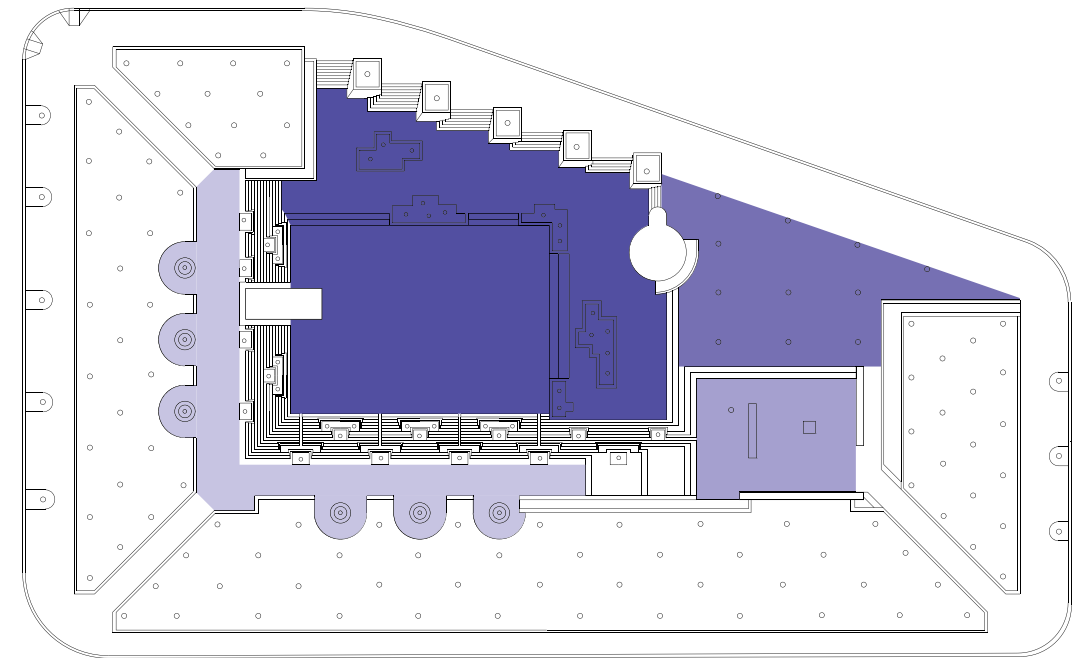
PADC STREETSCAPE LIMITS



CIRCULATION



MEMORIAL



DISTINCT LEVELS

Existing Park Analysis

Planting Investigations

- Visual inventory of existing trees indicates that many trees are missing or in poor health
- Design team anticipates significant replanting will be required
- Thorough arboreal assessment is required to determine which specimens and/or species will require replacement



Missing tree



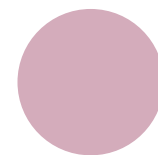
Gleditsia triacanthos - Thornless Honeylocust
Deciduous canopy tree producing dappled shade
Planting exhibiting signs of extreme stress



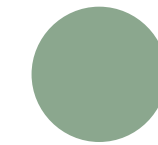
Betula nigra - River Birch
Multi-trunk deciduous shade tree
Planting near end of life span, exhausting soil volume



Lagerstroemia indica twilight - Lavender Crepe Myrtle
Multistemmed flowering understory tree
Planting exhausting soil volume



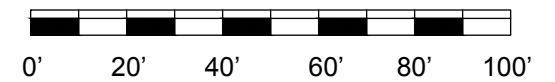
Fagus sylvatica purpurea - Copper Beech
Low-branching specimen shade tree
Tree missing



Quercus phellos - Willow Oak
Pennsylvania Avenue Street Tree
Planting exhibiting moderate stress



Quercus borealis - Northern Red Oak
Deciduous shade tree
Planting appears mostly healthy



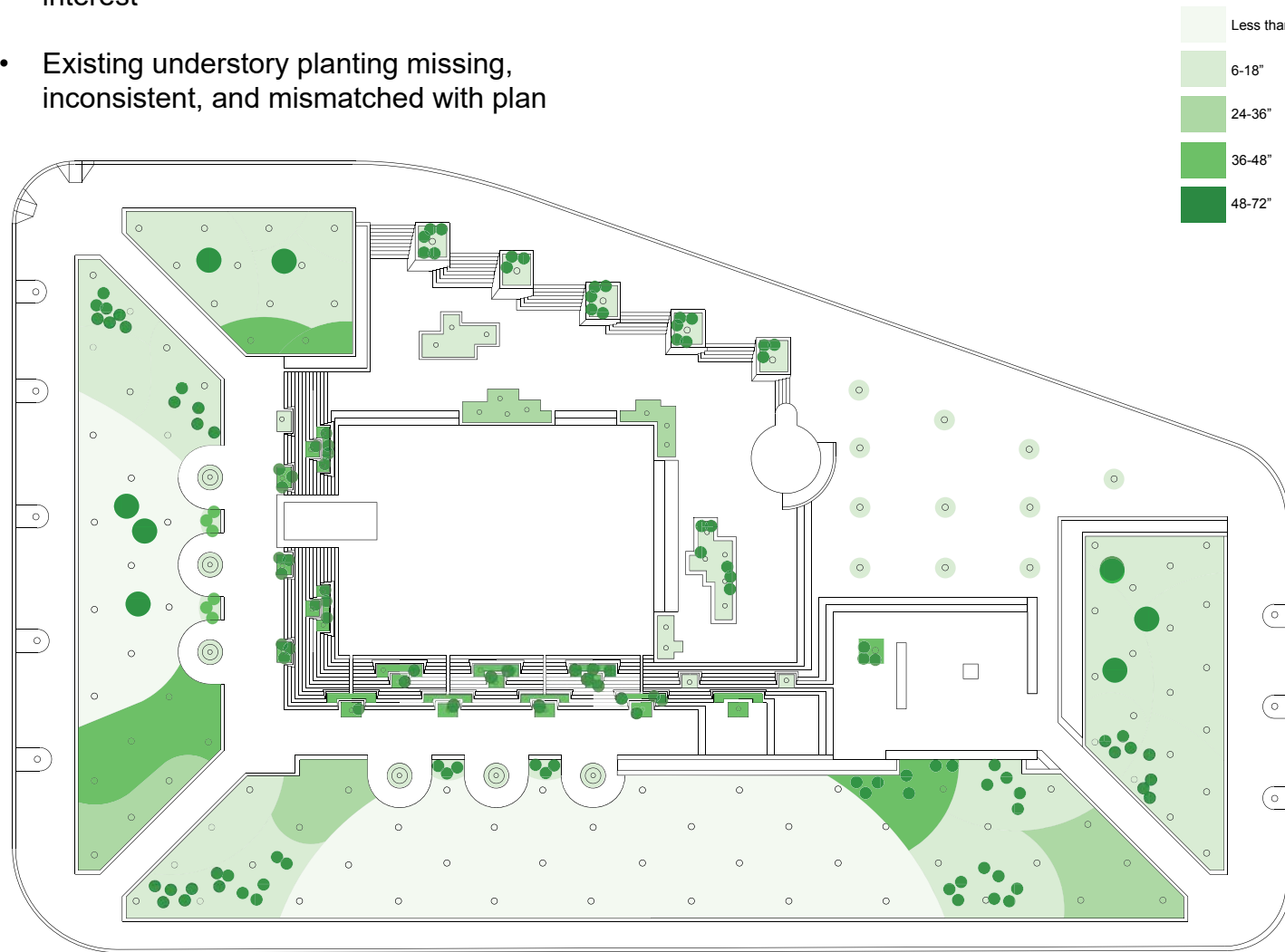
Quercus imbricaria - Shingle Oak
Deciduous shade tree
Planting appears mostly healthy

Existing Park Analysis

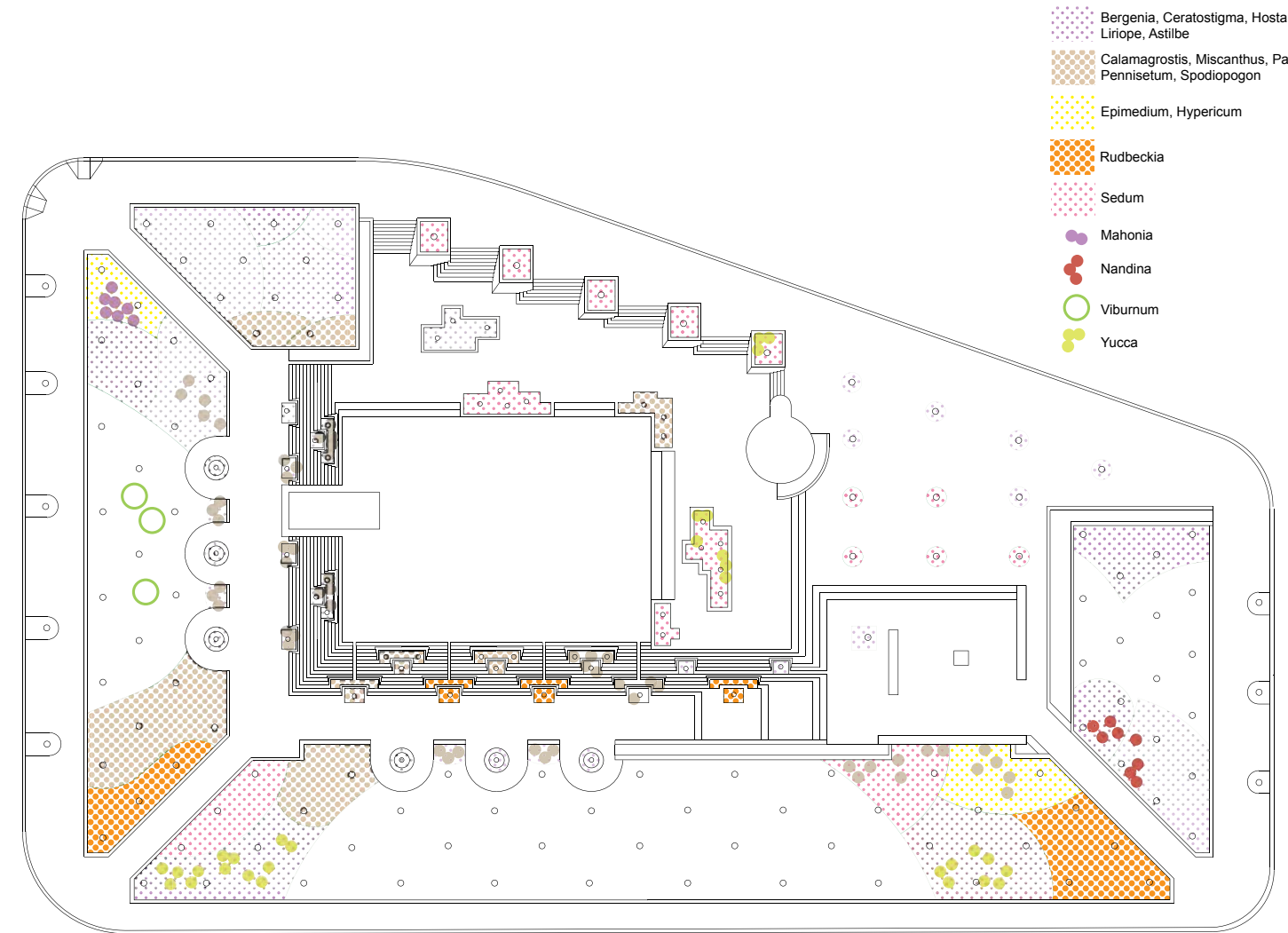
Planting Investigations

Oehme van Sweden planting plan

- Mixed shrubs, perennials, and grasses create layered planting with year round interest
- Existing understory planting missing, inconsistent, and mismatched with plan



HERBACEOUS AND SHRUB PLANTINGS: HEIGHT



HERBACEOUS AND SHRUB PLANTINGS: COLOR

