Oral and Written Testimony of Torey Carter-Conneen, Hon. ASLA
Chief Executive Officer of the American Society of Landscape Architects
Before the National Capitol Planning Commission
On the United States Department of the Interior, Memorial Avenue, Washington, DC – New Monumental Arch (NCPC File Number 8778)
November 5, 2026

Good afternoon, Chairman and members of the Commission.

My name is Torey Carter-Conneen, and I serve as Chief Executive Officer of the American Society of Landscape Architects, also known as ASLA. ASLA represents more than 17,000 landscape architects who plan and design infrastructure projects nationwide.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

ASLA strongly opposes the proposed Triumphal Arch at Memorial Circle and respectfully urges the Commission not to approve the final site and building plans.

This project would permanently alter one of our nation's most significant historic landscapes, disrupt important viewsheds, and diminish the historic relationships connecting Arlington National Cemetery to the monumental core of Washington, D.C.

These impacts are not speculative.

Recently, the National Park Service, through its own review, formally identified adverse effects on historic properties associated with the proposed arch.[1]

NPS identified 42 historic properties within the project's area of potential effects, including six National Historic Landmarks and eight cultural landscapes. Its assessment determined that the proposed arch would adversely affect nationally significant historic resources.

These include Arlington National Cemetery, Arlington Memorial Bridge, Arlington House, the Lincoln Memorial Cultural Landscape, and the National Mall Historic District.

[1] National Park Service, *Triumphal Arch Assessment of Effect (Revised)*, August 28, 2026, https://parkplanning.nps.gov/document.cfm?documentID=153235.

As you know, the National Historic Preservation Act establishes a clear responsibility for federal agencies to consider the effects of their actions on historic properties. Section 106 requires meaningful consideration of adverse effects, while Section 110(f) establishes a heightened responsibility to minimize harm to National Historic Landmarks to the maximum extent possible.[2]

These protections are particularly important for a project of this scale and significance.

As recently as September 24, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation abruptly terminated consultation on the proposed Section 106 agreement, acknowledging significant public concerns about the project.[3]

This history alone should give the Commission pause as it considers final approval.

For many, including the landscape architecture community, the Memorial Avenue Corridor is far more than a roadway or a collection of monuments. It is a carefully designed commemorative landscape where open space, sightlines, and visual connections are essential to its historic character.

Siting memorials in public spaces should be done with careful and deliberate review to help ensure the preservation of the public realm, respect for the significance of the proposed memorial, and its relationship to any existing memorials.[4]

The proposed 250-foot arch would introduce a massive structure into this setting, permanently interrupting the visual relationships between Arlington National Cemetery, Arlington Memorial Bridge, and the Lincoln Memorial.

Viewsheds are not simply aesthetic features. They are defining elements of historic landscapes that shape how people experience and understand these important places.

And once these views are lost, they cannot be fully restored.

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[2] National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, Pub. L. No. 89-665, § 106, 80 Stat. 915, 917 (1966) (codified as amended at 54 U.S.C. § 306108). https://uscode.house.gov/us/usc/119-120/t54/s306108

[3] Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, "ACHP Announces Termination of Section 106 Consultation on Triumphal Arch Project," September 24, 2026. https://www.achp.gov/news/achp-announces-termination-section-106-consultation-triumphal-arch-project

[4] American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA), Memorials, Public Policy Statement (2018). https://www.asla.org/getcontentasset/635ab5c2-891f-4a64-8c38-8b7ac8a4b5ae/547f34a1-c94b-4748-b717-f9bca7683a68/memorials_2018.pdf

NPS's own assessment acknowledges that the submitted plans do not eliminate its adverse effects.[5] ASLA also believes the plans do not fully address the historic viewsheds and spatial relationships that would be altered by the proposed arch.

Landscape architects recognize that thoughtful design is not always about what we build—sometimes, it is about understanding what should remain untouched.

Washington's monumental landscape is a shared national treasure, shaped by generations of careful planning and stewardship. Its historic views, open spaces, and visual relationships deserve protection just as much as the monuments themselves.

ASLA urges the Commission to look beyond the proposed design and consider what its approval would mean for the long-term preservation and stewardship of our nation's capital.

The question before this Commission is not simply whether this arch can be built. It is whether it should be built at the expense of a historic place that is treasured and belongs to all Americans.

We urge you to choose protecting America's history and cultural heritage.

ASLA respectfully urges you to reject the request for approval of the final site and building plans for the proposed Triumphal Arch.

Thank you for your consideration.



Torey Carter-Conneen, Hon. ASLA
Chief Executive Officer
American Society of Landscape Architects

About ASLA: Founded in 1899, the American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA) is the professional association for landscape architects in the United States, representing more than 17,000 members. Landscape architects lead the planning, design, and stewardship of healthy, equitable, safe, and resilient environments.

[5] National Park Service, Triumphal Arch at Memorial Circle: Assessment of Effects Report (Revised), August 2026, p. 37, "Minimization and Mitigation." https://planning.nps.gov/showFile.cfm?projectID=136973&sfid=862935