

DRAFT FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT REGARDING A VISITOR EDUCATION CENTER (VEC) FOR THE 9/11 PENTAGON MEMORIAL ON THE GROUNDS OF ARLINGTON NATIONAL CEMETERY, ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA

Introduction

Army National Military Cemeteries (ANMC) prepared an Environmental Assessment (EA) to evaluate potential environmental impacts resulting from the proposed construction and operation of a Visitor Education Center (VEC) for the 9/11 Pentagon Memorial on land owned by ANMC and located on the grounds of Arlington National Cemetery (ANC) in Arlington, Virginia. ANMC proposes granting a license to the Pentagon Memorial Fund (PMF) to construct and operate the VEC.

The site for the proposed Pentagon Memorial VEC is adjacent to the Southern Expansion area of ANC within a 3.71-acre parcel of land bounded by Columbia Pike, East Joyce Street, and Washington Boulevard. Approximately 900,000 individuals are projected to visit the 9/11 Pentagon Memorial VEC every year. The facility would include exhibits, event space, a bookstore, and a café.

The EA provides an overview of the environmental resources that may be affected, the interrelationship of these resources, and potential impacts on the human environment. The EA was prepared in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) (42 United States Code (USC) 4321 *et seq.*), Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations at Title 40 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Parts 1500-1508, and the Army NEPA regulation at 32 CFR Part 651 (Environmental Analysis of Army Actions). This draft Finding of No Significant Impact (FNSI) briefly states why the discretionary aspects of the proposed action will not significantly affect the human environment and that an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) will not be prepared.

Description of the Proposed Action

The proposed action (constructing and operating the VEC) would provide interactive exhibits and educational programs to give 9/11 Pentagon Memorial visitors a sense of the broad impact of the tragedy from a variety of perspectives. The VEC would provide facilities, including a dedicated parking area, permanent restrooms, shelter for visitors, a café, bookstore, and event space, that are not currently available to visitors of the memorial. Current visitation records support the need for a facility to serve and educate visitors.

Alternatives Considered

The EA analyzes the effects of five proposed alternatives, including a no-action alternative. The four action alternatives consider different potential building designs, building heights, and parking configurations for the proposed VEC. All four action alternatives locate the VEC on the same 3.71-acre parcel of land bounded by Columbia Pike, East Joyce Street, and Washington Boulevard in Arlington, Virginia. Alternative 3, the “preferred alternative,” locates the VEC at the lowest site elevation, requiring that the building have two fronts, one from the southern parking area and the other from the north (in the direction of the memorial). The structure aligns with both the Memorial and the parking area. The lower level, which is on grade at the north end, would be dedicated to the exhibition spaces and a bookstore; the upper level provides the main entrance off the south parking and includes conference space, a café, and administrative

offices. The height of the building at the first floor is approximately 36'-0" and the maximum elevation of the building under this alternative is approximately 91'-0". This makes this the lowest elevation building alternative.

In addition, four other alternatives were identified and eliminated from detailed analysis during the planning process, since they did not meet the purpose and need of the project.

Anticipated Environmental Effects

Alternative 3, the "preferred alternative," has been determined to have no significant impacts to any environmental resources. Adverse impacts from implementing the proposed action will be negligible to all environmental resource areas. Specifically, there will be no significant impacts to land use, air quality, greenhouse gases, noise, geological resources, water resources, biological resources, cultural or historic resources, socioeconomic, traffic and transportation, airspace, utilities, hazardous or toxic materials and hazardous waste. The project will have a beneficial impact on visitor use and experience at the Pentagon Memorial. Potential minor impacts from construction would be short-term and would cease upon completion of construction activities.

30-Day Public and Agency Review Period

The EA and a draft copy of the Finding of No Significant Impact were made available to the public, interested and affected parties, and to appropriate government agencies for review and comment during a 30-day period that began on November 1, 2024, with the publication of a Notice of Availability on the ANC website and in local newspapers. The EA, along with supporting documentation and instructions for submitting comments, were made available on the ANC website at: <https://www.arlingtoncemetery.mil/About/Policies-and-Public-Notices/Public-Notices>. Additionally, electronic and hardcopy versions of the EA were made available for review at the Arlington Public Library's Central Library and the Arlington National Cemetery Welcome Center.

[A summary of comments received will be inserted here after the public comment period closes. All comments will be considered in making this finding. It will be noted if the comments do not identify any significant impacts that would preclude reaching a Finding of No Significant Impact for the action and if the comments did not identify significant new circumstances or information relevant to environmental concerns, or bearing on the proposed action or its impacts, which would require supplementation of the EA.]

Findings

Based on the analysis contained in this EA and taking into consideration comments received from the public and from appropriate government agencies, I have concluded that implementation of the proposed action would not constitute a major federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment. Consequently, implementation of the proposed action does not require the preparation of an EIS.

Approved by:

KAREN DURHAM-AGUILERA
Executive Director
Army National Military Cemeteries