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*Park:* George Washington Memorial Parkway  
*Project:* Triumphal Arch at Memorial Circle  
*Document:* Triumphal Arch - Section 106 Assessment of Effect and Draft Programmatic Agreement

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*Comments:* The Lincoln Group of the District of Columbia (LGDC) respectfully submits the following comments on the proposal by the U.S. Department of the Interior to construct a United States Triumphal Arch at Memorial Circle on The George Washington Memorial Parkway. LGDC is a nonpartisan organization dedicated to promoting the life and ideals of Abraham Lincoln. With 500 members we conduct educational programs and have collaborated with the National Park Service and many non-profit organizations to call attention to the sites and documents that convey the continuing importance of Lincoln's life in American society and culture. In May 2022, we produced, with the National Park Service, a centennial celebration of the dedication of the Lincoln Memorial. Our comments present two objections: (1) the dramatic and irreversible impacts the proposed structure would impose on the historic view of the National Mall; and (2) the proposal's impact on the Lincoln Memorial and its historic and symbolic relationship with the Arlington National Cemetery.

First, the proposed Arch would cause dramatic and irreversible harm to the planned historic view of the National Mall. The National Mall is one of the most significant civic landscapes in the world. The view from the Lincoln Memorial across the Reflecting Pool to the Washington Monument, and the reciprocal view westward from the Capitol across the Mall and out to the horizon beyond the Lincoln Memorial, represent more than 120 years of deliberate planning and refinement. The proposed Triumphal Arch would destroy that composition. At 250 feet in height, the structure would stand more than twice as tall as the Lincoln Memorial, which rises 99 feet.

The Washington Monument, at 555 feet, was designed as the singular vertical punctuation of the entire Mall composition, visible from all directions precisely because nothing else competes with it. A 250-foot arch at Memorial Circle would introduce a second competing visual element of enormous mass at the western end of the Mall, permanently altering the way visitors experience the Lincoln Memorial from the east, the Washington Monument from the west, and the entire landscape in

between.

The view from the Lincoln Memorial across Memorial Bridge to Arlington House is one of the most symbolic vistas in the United States. The Arch would completely obstruct this visual connection of the Mall with Arlington National Cemetery. The view from the National Mall looking westward toward the Lincoln Memorial, experienced by tens of millions of visitors each year, would be transformed. Where visitors now see the Lincoln Memorial rising against an open sky, they would instead see a 250-foot arch looming beyond it. Viewed from the Virginia side of the Potomac, the arch would visually overwhelm the Lincoln Memorial and fundamentally alter the character of the entire monumental skyline.

Second, Arlington National Cemetery and the Lincoln Memorial are not merely adjacent landmarks, they are the two anchoring elements of one of the most deliberate and historically resonant acts of civic design in American history. When Congress authorized Memorial Bridge in 1925, it did so with an explicit symbolic purpose: to physically and visually unite the Lincoln Memorial, representing the Union, with Arlington House and the cemetery that surrounds it, the former home of Robert E. Lee and the ground where the nation's war dead are interred. The bridge was designed low with a classical restraint that would not interrupt the sightlines between the Memorial and the cemetery. A design for the Memorial Bridge that copied the scale of London's Tower Bridge was rejected because it obstructed this symbolic view. The landscape of Memorial Circle and the approach to Arlington were designed to frame and honor that connection. The proposed Triumphal Arch would physically and symbolically shatter that relationship.

Both the scale and location of the proposed Triumphal Arch would disrupt the historically symbolic views intentionally created to emphasize the grandeur of the sacrifice of America's 16th President and those brave men and women who have fought and died for their country since the Civil War.

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