



Photo by OP

Pillar of Fire - 14th and S streets NW

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Honoring Whitman Walker Health and Healthcare Workers Assisting People Living with HIV/AIDS During the Height of the AIDS Epidemic



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“Pillar of Fire” is an illuminated glass sculpture at the northwest corner of 14th Street and S Street NW honoring Whitman-Walker Health (formerly Whitman-Walker Clinic) and the healthcare workers who assisted people living with HIV/AIDS during the height of the AIDS epidemic. Designed by artist William Cochran, the sculpture is composed of 370 layers of glass that change color throughout the day, is incorporated into raised planters around a sidewalk café, and part of the streetscape. The design is inspired by the ancient tale of a pillar of fire that led Israelites in their crossing of the Red Sea and through the desert after they fled Egypt.

As part of the JBG company’s redevelopment of the Whitman-Walker Clinic’s former building, the Historic Preservation Review Board (HPRB) suggested a plaque be placed on the building noting the history of the clinic. In response to that suggestion JBG proposed the sculpture to recognize the healthcare workers and clinic. The memorial was reviewed and approved by HPRB and supported by the local Advisory Neighborhood Commission – there was no review by the Commemorative Works Committee or formal approval by District Council. The artistic design of the memorial also compliments the goals of an arts overlay zone on 14th Street encouraging installation of public art. The total cost of the project was \$80,000.

Pillar of Fire was dedicated on November 4, 2013.