



Office of Planning Review of Commemorative Work Application

To: Commemorative Works Committee
From: Chris Shaheen, Program Manager, Office of Planning
Date: November 9, 2021
Subject: Commemorative Works Application for Bernardo De Gálvez

Summary of Application and Recommendation

The Application is for the installation of a statue, “Bernardo de Gálvez: A Friend of Independence,” in front of the Embassy of Spain, located at 2375 Pennsylvania Avenue NW. The statue is positioned to the right of an entrance, appropriately scaled to its surrounding, located on a site that is associated with the subject, and is of a person consistent with the policies and values of the District of Columbia. Additional information is needed on the design of the landscape surrounding the statue and on the design and location of the interpretive sign.

The Office of Planning (OP) recommends the Commemorative Works Committee approve the application in concept with a request for further development of the application prior to final review:

- Additional information on landscape plans for the area surrounding the statue that make it the focal point of the area between the sidewalk and adjacent entrance;
- More information on lighting of the statue;
- Specification for the interpretive sign panel; and,
- Information on who is responsible for maintaining the associated website.

Background

The Embassy of Spain installed a statue of Gálvez in District of Columbia public space in June 2019 and was unaware of commemorative works review process. The Embassy has been working with District agencies to prepare and submit a commemorative work application since March 2021.

The Spain-USA Foundation is proposing the statue of Gálvez, a Spaniard who was governor of Spanish Louisiana and a General who led Spanish troops fighting for the United States during the Revolutionary War against Great Britain. The statue is in public space controlled by the District Department of Transportation adjacent to the Embassy of Spain at 2375 Pennsylvania Avenue NW. The location of the proposed commemorative work is in the landscaped “public

parking” area of 24th Street, between the sidewalk and building façade. The commemorative work has a total height of 90” (6’6”), including a 39” statue atop a 51” pedestal.

Because 2375 Pennsylvania Avenue is a District Landmark and the commemorative work is in public space under the jurisdiction of DDOT, the application is required to go through two additional reviews in addition to the commemorative work review process:

1. Public Space Committee; and,
2. Historic Preservation Office.

Both the Public Space Committee and Historic Preservation Office have already reviewed and approved the application.

The bronze statue depicts Gálvez in military dress standing with a sword in one hand, referencing his heroic actions in 1781 that forced the entry of the Spanish into Pensacola Bay and past British batteries at Fort Barrancas as part of efforts to force the British out of west Florida. This led to King Charles III of Spain to allow Gálvez to place on his coat of arms the words “Yo solo” (I Alone). These words are engraved on a plaque attached to the red brick pedestal that the statue is atop. The height of the pedestal is designed to elevate the statue above an adjacent fence so it is clearly visible from the adjacent sidewalk.

Gálvez was a citizen of Spain who fought in the United States Revolutionary War, risked his life for the freedom on the United States people, and provided supplies, intelligence, and military support. He helped draft the terms of a treaty that ended the Revolutionary War and commanded the Spanish war ship “Galveston.” The large city of Galveston, TX, and the small town of Galveston, LA, are named for Gálvez. The US Congress awarded Gálvez honorary US citizenship in 2014 - he is one of eight people to have been awarded this honor. An existing equestrian statue of Gálvez at the intersection of Virginia Avenue and 22nd Street NW is maintained by the National Park Service and was a gift from King Juan Carlos of Spain to the United States in honor of the United States’ bicentennial. The memorial was authorized by Congress in 1976 and dedicated in 2007.

There is no direct connection between Gálvez and the District of Columbia.

Assessment of the Application

Location and Relationship of the Subject Matter

The proposed site is appropriate considering the subject and use of the adjacent building:

- The Draft Commemorative Work Location Strategy considers using wide sidewalks and landscaped “public parking” such as the location of this statue as potential locations for commemorative works, although this specific location is not identified;
- There is a direct connection between subject and the site - a native of Spain and the Spanish Embassy;

- There is an association between the subject and the nearby statue of George Washington – Gálvez fought in the American Revolutionary War and George Washington commanded the American forces during the War;
- The commemorative work's setting within a landscaped green space locates it close to the sidewalk where it is visually accessible and entirely out of the pedestrian sidewalk;
- The small scale and size of the statue and base complements the residential scale of the adjacent, historic three-story building façade and more recent eight-story building across the 90' width of 24th Street; and,
- The 17 feet of landscaping adjacent to the building creates a green and park-like space for the small commemorative work.

Proposed Work's Compatibility with District Policies and Values

The proposed commemorative work appears to be consistent with District policies and values:

- The commemorative work is located in an area outside of the Monumental Core, a policy specified in the Comprehensive Plan;
- The subject appears to be consistent with values defined in the final report of Mayor Bowser's District of Columbia Facilities and Commemorative Expressions (DCFACES) Working Group that emphasized discouraging subjects that participated in slavery, systemic racism, mistreatment of, or actions that suppressed equality for, persons of color, women and LGBTQ communities and violation of the DC Human Rights Act;
- The subject is a native of Spain and consistent with the District's goals to encourage commemorative works that represent a diversity of culture, race, gender or gender identity, sexual orientation, or disability status; and,
- The size and scale of the commemorative work is appropriate for the RA-5 zone – a zone that permits urban residential development and compatible institutional and semi-public buildings - where it is located.

Materials Used in the Commemorative Work

The materials proposed for the commemorative work are durable and appropriate for the subject. The statue is bronze, the base is red brick, and the plaque on the base is galvanized iron. Bronze is a material that has historically been used for outdoor sculptures because of its durability.

Recommendation

The Office of Planning (OP) recommends the Commemorative Works Committee approve the application in concept with a request for further development of the application prior to final review, specifically:

- Additional information on landscape plans for the area surrounding the statue that make it the focal point of the area between the sidewalk and adjacent entrance. The application notes that additional landscape improvements around the statue will highlight the commemorative work but are not included as part of the application. Staff

recommends elements like the planters that distract from the statue and are impermanent be removed from the area, and that the landscape be designed to highlight the statue as the focal point of area between the sidewalk and entrance to the embassy.

- More information on lighting of the statue. The application notes that lighting of the statue may be added, but no specification or additional information are provided as part of the application.
- A specification for the interpretive sign panel. The application states that an interpretive sign with text explaining the importance of Gálvez and a photo of a painting, “for Spain and the King, Gálvez at Pensacola” by August Ferrer-Dalmau, will have a design like interpretive signs used by the National Park Service, but a specification for the interpretive sign has not been included as part of the application.
- Information on who is responsible for maintaining the associated website. The application states the interpretive sign will have a QR code linking to additional information about Gálvez posted online but does not include information on who is sponsoring this webpage.