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**HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD  
STAFF REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION**

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Landmark/District: **Kingman Park Historic District** (x) Agenda  
Address: **Kingman Park Triangle Park**  
**(21<sup>st</sup> Street, Oklahoma Avenue and D Street NE)**

Meeting Date: **July 29, 2021** ( ) Addition  
Case Number: **21-0471** (x) Concept

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The applicant, Friends of Kingman Park (FOKP), is seeking the Board’s comments on its proposal for a sculptural installation (SWEPT YARD) for the triangle park at 21<sup>st</sup> Street, Oklahoma Avenue and D Street NE within the Kingman Park Historic District. The applicants have applied for a grant from the DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities (CAH) to fund the design and construction of the installation; as part of that process, CAH requires a letter of support from the Office of Planning/Historic Preservation Office. Proposed art installations in public space are reviewed by the Public Space Committee and do not typically come before the Board. This project is being brought to the Board because, as presented, the proposal involves the erection of a structure (bench and markers) which requires a building permit and because of stated opposition to the project by a community organization, the Kingman Park Civic Association (KPCA).

**Park**

The triangle park in Kingman Park is a flat and grassy open space with a sidewalk running along the Oklahoma Avenue side of the park, benches at the northern and southern ends, a brick sign identifying the park as Kingman Park towards the center, and a sculpture of a colorful panda bear south of the sign. A few mature and maturing trees are located at the ends of the park and on the outer edges, along with a Bike Share bike rack. The triangle park is included within the boundaries of the Kingman Park Historic District and is complementary to it; however, the open space itself is not classified as a “contributing site.”

**Proposal**

Artists Curry Hackett (Wayside Studio) and Patrick McDonough have developed proposed drawings for a sculptural activation—SWEPT YARD—for the triangle park. The installation, which is meant to encourage gathering, interaction and contemplation, consists of three elements that “pay homage to the past, present and future of Kingman Park.” The three elements are: a gateway, seating element, and historical “portals.”

The gateway, an arched opening located near 21<sup>st</sup> and D Streets, marks an entry point to the park from the neighborhood. The seating consists of a pair of curved and tiered metal benches that face each other across the existing Kingman Park sign. This tiered seating is intended to reference the architectural and social aspect of the front porch in Kingman Park. A series of historical “portals” or upright panels, proposed to include stories of Kingman Park as told by

residents, will be interspersed along the seating. The stories will be etched onto the surface of the geometric shapes of the upright portals. All the elements will be constructed of a combination of powder coated steel, stainless steel, high density polyethylene (HDPE) and aluminum.

### **Evaluation**

In evaluating the proposed project, HPO considered the character-defining features of the historic district and the relationship of the park and proposed installation to that character. Kingman Park is a rowhouse neighborhood defined by its uniform collection of two-story rowhouses, their one-story open front porches, and planted, unfenced front yards that offer long, open views up and down the streetscapes. The triangle park is a simple, open space which, like the front yards of the houses, allow for views over and across it.

In concept, HPO supports an art installation at Kingman Park and believes that the installation could succeed in activating a space which is currently underused for gathering. However, the three elements of SWEPT YARD, together, introduce a visually sizeable structure to the park that interrupts the long views characteristic of the neighborhood's streetscape. In plan, the seating element curves gently across the grassy area in an unintrusive manner and introduces a desirable community amenity to the park. In elevation, though, the tiered seating—meant to symbolize porch steps—is quite tall and detracts from the flat, open quality of the park and will diminish the ability to see through it. A previous submission illustrated the seating as a single, un-tiered bench, an arrangement that would be more visually compatible with the open space of the park and historic district. The historical “portals” interspersed along the benches, are similarly quite tall and numerous and, taken together, impinge upon the open quality of the park. The addition of the gateway at the western end of the park is not in itself intrusive but seems superfluous; visitors may well walk around rather than through the gateway since the open space is welcoming itself. To that end, it may be worth considering whether this gateway could be designed to serve the purpose of the historical portals, allowing those features to be eliminated from the bench. Alternatively, reducing the height and number of portals should be considered.

### **Recommendation**

*HPO recommends that the Board approve, in concept, the introduction of an art installation at Kingman Park and delegate further review to staff with the recommendation that 1) the seating area revert to its single, un-tiered, configuration; 2) the number and height of the historic “portals” be reduced or eliminated; and/or 3) the gateway be re-purposed as historical portal or be eliminated.*