

## MEETING MINUTES / 4 PAGES

**Project:** St. Louis JNEM, MVVA #10001  
**Meeting Date:** 2011-February-25  
**Meeting Purpose:** **National Park Service (NPS) Meeting – Design Discussion I**  
**Distribution Date:** 2011-March-01  
**Prepared by:** James Bennett, Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates, Inc. (MVVA)

<b>Participants:</b>	<b>Title:</b>	<b>Affiliation:</b>
Tom Bradley	Superintendent	Jefferson National Expansion Memorial (JNEM), NPS
Nick Chevance	Midwest Region Environment Coordinator	NPS
Ed Dodds	Chief of Facility Maintenance	JNEM, NPS
Jim Jackson	Law Enforcement Specialist	JNEM, NPS
Frank Mares	Deputy Superintendent	JNEM, NPS
Bob Moore	Historian	JNEM, NPS
Kathryn Thomas	Cultural Resources Curator	JNEM, NPS
Randy Biallas	Assistant Director, Park Cultural Resources Program	NPS
Bill Harlow	Midwest Region Historical Architect	NPS
Marla McEnaney	Landscape Architect	NPS
Don Stevens	Senior Historian	NPS
Judith Deel	Archeologist	MO SHPO
Mark Miles	Director	MO SHPO
Kris Zapalac	Historic Preservation Specialist	MO SHPO
Louise Brodnitz	Historic Preservation Specialist	ACHP
Jennifer Sandy	Program Officer, Midwest Office	NTHP
James Mann	Director	Taylor Family Office
David Newburger	Commissioner on the Disabled	St. Louis City
Michael Van Valkenburgh	Principal	MVVA
Gullivar Shepard	Senior Associate	MVVA
James Bennett	Designer	MVVA
James Carpenter	Principal	JCDA (MVVA)
Elizabeth Meyer	Associate Professor	UVA (MVVA)
Scott Newman	Partner	Cooper Robertson (MVVA)

**Distribution:** All Participants

**Meeting Location:** Old Courthouse, South Special Exhibit Gallery  
11 N. 4<sup>th</sup> Street  
St. Louis, MO 63102  
  
9:00am-1:00pm

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### GENERAL

The purpose of the meeting was to initiate a review process evaluating MVVA's CAR 2015 proposal with regards to historic preservation. The design team presented its proposals for both the east slope landscapes and Luther Ely Smith Square, and previewed upcoming work regarding the Museum of National Expansion..

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## **DISCUSSION**

### **A. Review Procedure**

1. MVVA will provide PDFs & printouts of presented material.
2. MVVA will take & submit meeting minutes.
3. Each reviewing agency will be responsible for submitting comments within two weeks of each review.
4. It is anticipated that new issues may arise regarding topics reviewed previously. MVVA encourages reviewers to include these comments at the end of whatever set of comments are current.
5. Reviewers noted the need to engage with a broader range of interest groups in this process.

### **B. East Slope Landscapes**

1. MVVA presented a scale model & drawings of proposed ADA compliant pathways between the Riverfront and the JNEM grounds that utilize the East Slopes surrounding the existing rail vent structure.
2. These pathways are intended to create a sculptural, topographic experience while minimizing disturbance to the existing landscape. The pathways will provide both long views of the river and opportunities to observe trains moving through the grounds. Plantings will revive the nuance and variation Kiley originally intended, and enhance the overall spatial strategy of the Memorial by reinforcing the centerline through the Arch.
3. The orientation of these pathways will serve new desire lines for JNEM visitors, taking them from the legs of the Arch or the North or South Gateways, and bringing them to new destinations and amenities along the Riverfront.
4. On the upland side of the slopes, the proposed pathways meet the existing at 90 degree angles, often with views to new program or pathways across the allées. This ensures that these pathways are distinct from the Saarinen-Kiley landscape, read as an overlay. This orientation also affords the best configuration for the preservation of the allée trees.
5. The pathway itself descends into the landscape, set within two 30"-tall retaining walls. The pathways are fully ADA compliant, with slopes ranging from 12:1 and 20:1, with intermediate landings as required. Existing conditions necessitate steeper slopes located at the top and bottom of the slope.
6. The pathways climb upwards as they cross the rail tunnel, both to enable seated visitors to experience the trainspotting prospect as well as accommodate the needed height to clear the rail tunnel. Re-grading outside of the pathways does not exceed 2:1 in what is already steep terrain.
7. Reviewers noted a need for benches, given the length of the pathways. MVVA suggested, rather than being located in niches, the benches be located in "swells" on the upland side of the pathways at strategic viewing locations along the trail, such as the trainspotting prospect.
8. Reviewers noted that in order to accommodate snow removal equipment, pathways should be a minimum of 8'-0" wide.
9. Reviewers noted the need for removable bollards to keep automobiles from utilizing the pathways. Additionally, the new wall at the bottom could potentially be used as crash wall, replacing the current planters at bottom of the memorial.

10. Reviewers asked what would keep visitors from walking on the landscape outside of the pathways. MVVA noted that, in addition to the railing, planting would be used to create a disincentive. Lawn is generally seen as an invitation to walk on it. Replacing it with a more appropriate species would both reduce this, as well as eliminate the “hazardous mowing zones” that maintenance of these landscapes currently requires. The lower third of the landscape would be planted with species that could handle inundation. The April 13<sup>th</sup> review will provide a more involved discussion of planting issues across the entire project.

### **C. Luther Ely Smith Square**

1. Luther Ely Smith Square will have unique identity along the Gateway Mall as a “hinge move” connecting JNEM and downtown. The Square is intended to create a central open space flanked by shadier, intricate planted areas at the sides, making it a calm, measured space. The goal of the planting is not to block out neighbors, but to create an experiential shift from the periphery to the center, like the Arch itself. At its edges, Market and Chestnut Street become taxi and bus drop-off areas, ensuring regular activity.
2. MVVA presented a series of plan diagrams and perspective views to illustrate the spatial character of the Square. Four proposed planting schemes are described in a matrix organizing two options:
  - 2.1 Whether the scheme includes a row of trees at the inside of the central paths or not.
  - 2.2 Whether the scheme connects to the existing allées or not.
3. Reviewers expressed concern about obstructing views to the Old Courthouse. The connection between it and the Arch should be made prominent. Variation between the different perspectival planes of the view (foreground/midground/ background) could be used to help resolve this. Ending the allées at the Square is in keeping with the 19<sup>th</sup> century Midwestern courthouse tradition.
4. Reviewers expressed concern that the proposed work be evaluated not only against the existing conditions, but Saarinen & Kiley’s proposal as well.
5. The Saarinen & Kiley proposal was intended to compliment the proposed & unbuilt pedestrian bridges over the I-70 trench. Despite formal similarities in plan, the creation of a new entrance to the museum and associated deck over I-70 is a different experience, most significantly in the level of the ground plane.
6. This project is not about constructing an unrealized design, such as Louis Kahn’s FDR Memorial. While it is possible to anticipate which plans Kiley may have preferred, these plans could never be described as Kiley’s work.
7. The key issue is to understand the line between connection and distinction from the existing grounds, and not creating a project where the work of MVVA is inadvertently read as the work of Kiley & Saarinen. MVVA wants to know what is optimal.
8. MVVA has a preference for Alternative D, which features neither a row of trees at the inside of the central paths or a connection to the existing allées. This option has the most potential to create a clear distinction between the work of MVVA and Kiley. Additionally, the less ordered edge plantings allow places for smaller gatherings of families and small groups at a key point of orientation for the Memorial.
9. The selection of tree species will be a key part of the project’s success. It is about choosing something that Kiley would have approved. MVVA sees four key criteria:
  - 9.1 The species has to want to live here.
  - 9.2 The species has to look good next to the replacement species for the ash allées.
  - 9.3 The species has to be formally distinctive.
  - 9.4 The species should respond to seasonal changes distinctively as well.

10. Gingko is an interesting example. It is instantly distinct in form and color, and holds its leaves late into autumn. There may, however, be an issue with it being overly distinctive, as the goal is compatibility, not just contrast.
11. Reviewers also noted that this decision will most likely be incorporated into the educational aspect of the Memorial.
12. Reviewers requested that the material differences between existing and proposed be shown more clearly. MVVA expressed a need to discuss/draft overall principles to be taken towards preservation on this project, in order to leave a legacy of the decision making. These principles should address:
  - 12.1 Additions
  - 12.2 Systems of spatial organization
  - 12.3 Material characteristics

#### **D. Museum of Westward Expansion/JNEM Visitor's Center**

1. Scott Newman (SRP) addressed the key programmatic transformation in the proposal. The creation of a new entry allows the existing lobby to be reprogrammed with a new function, and would be transformed into Saarinen Hall, a "great hall" capable of providing new amenities.
  - 1.1 The use of the new space may need to be defined more specifically for NPS.
  - 1.2 The use of the space will have an impact on accessibility. Currently, the space is a difficult one, lacking many spatial cues.
2. The primary architectural expression will be through the preservation of existing structural elements, such as the coffered ceiling and columns, as well as the terrazzo floor. These elements were identified as the key historic elements.
  - 2.1 Although the existing exhibits were all added at a later date, there needs to be careful consideration of what is removed versus what remains. There was intent behind their initial selection that needs to be considered.
  - 2.2 The interior of the Visitors' Center is included in the Historic Structures Report on the Arch.
3. Jamie Carpenter previewed the key issues that will be addressed at the next meeting:
  - 3.1 How to establish a new identity.
  - 3.2 How to incorporate daylight.
  - 3.3 How to manage egress. Ramp/elevator combinations are seen as undesirable.
  - 3.4 The use of light in wayfinding.
  - 3.5 Guardrails and other visual impacts.

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#### **ACTION ITEMS**

1. *MVVA will revise plan diagrams to clearly show distinction between existing & proposed paths.*
2. *MVVA will create a new perspective explicitly showing the view to the Old Courthouse from the proposed museum entry.*
3. *MVVA will incorporate Kiley's 1964 scheme into the design package for comparison purposes.*
4. *Jim Jackson to provide necessary height for crash barrier.*