Paths of Reflection

Spaces and pathways of rememberance, healing, and community

The ripple effects of May 31, 2019 impacted families, friends, loved ones, colleagues, communities, our city, and our country. The process and path of healing and reflection is different for everyone. Inside the memorial grounds, these varied paths allow the memorial to be experienced by visitors at their own pace, in their own time, and in their own way, to heal, reflect, and to remember.

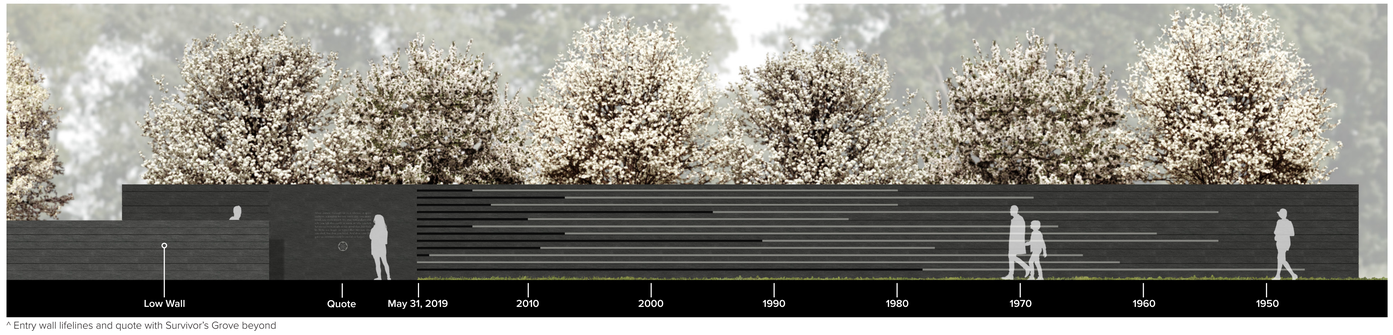
As we walk these paths, we witness rejuvenation in the landscape, healing in the water's reflection, we see it in the cathedral of trees shining light on our journey, in the blooming of a flower, in the strength of a tree, and in a path eventually worn over time by all those tied to this sacred place.

These pathways move in and around flowering meadows, quiet resting places, and the old trees of the woodland. Eventually we are led by reflection along a long pool, by the soft patter of the water gently falling, and we arrive at the memorial space honoring the beautiful lives of the vicitims. In that Memorial Glade we see their names with our reflection in that same water. We are there with them, where we can gather in love and respect for those lost.

VIRGINIA BEACH
5/31 MEMORIAL

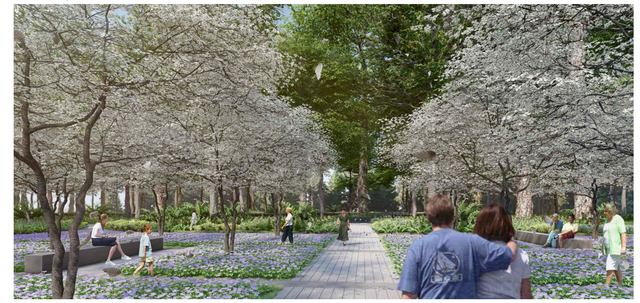
^ Night view from the overlook across the water to the Memorial Glade

^ Overall Site Plan



^ Entry wall lifelines and quote with Survivor's Grove beyond

^ View of Entry Walls



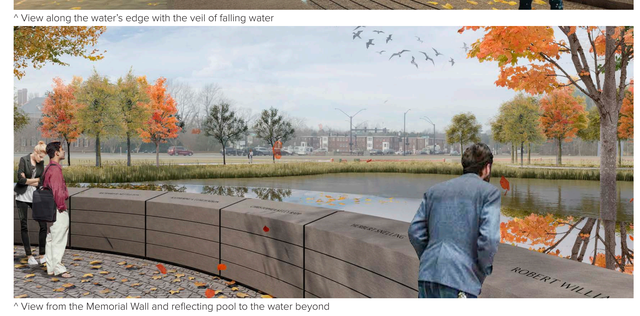
^ View through the Survivor's Grove to the Hero Tree

^ View to the Hero Tree and reflecting pool

^ View along reflecting pool towards Memorial Glade

^ Inside the Memorial Glade with benches and memorial wall

^ View along the water's edge with the veil of falling water



^ View from the Memorial Wall and reflecting pool to the water beyond

Entry Walls

Two granite walls pass each other to form the threshold to the memorial grounds. The higher wall's stone joints reveal timelines, lives marked in stone. These lines represent the twelve lifetimes of those lost, every foot of length being one year. The lines reflect the breadth of life and the span of public service.

The lifelines begin at right, collect and travel with the time of public service, they gather together, and then they stop. The lines stop at the entry and threshold to the memorial, they stop at the date this memorial began, May 31, 2019. Our memorial begins in this moment, in this place, with those that were lost, and we carry the line with us as we enter.

At that threshold, we read a quote before entering. A quote about silence, quiet reflection on their lives that were lived, and how we honor them by their memory, that we will not forget.

This quote and the forget-me-not symbol are carved into the stone.

The Survivor's Grove

After passing through the entry walls, one enters the Survivor's Grove. Near the front wall, a bench sits in wait, centered on a place dedicated for the Homage Stones. So many individuals brought stones in homage for those lives lost, stones in homage to the survivors, for each other, for those that carry on in their absence.

The Survivor's Grove is dedicated to the direct survivors, the colleagues, friends, families, communities, and for a city so greatly affected. As the entry space of the memorial grounds, the Survivor's Grove greets and invites all visitors into this place of rememberance and healing.

A grove of white flowering dogwoods sits above a planted meadow, welcoming visitors to a space for individuals and for gatherings. Forget-me-not flowers help to fill the meadow, and pathways with resting places allow for quiet reflection.

The Hero Tree

A single tree stands as the tallest and largest in the woods, providing cover and protection for those below. The Hero Tree is dedicated to the brave first responders who risked their lives for the safety of others.

Naturally aligned with the memorial entry through the Survivor's Grove and the Memorial Glade, the Hero Tree stands watch and receives visitors while anchoring the begining of the reflecting pool at its southern end.

The Hero Tree sits centered in a space bound by reflection, it accompanies the reflecting pool as it winds its path through the memorial. Benches and stone dedication markers sit adjacent to the Hero Tree and to the pathways, reflecting pool, and the sound of falling water.

Paths of Reflection and Light

Pathways line the sides of the reflecting pool. Here all our senses are present, the smell of the woodland and flowers, the patter sound of the falling water and gentle crush of stone underfoot, the sunlight scattering on the water and through the trees, and the feel of cool water and stone enlivened by movement along the pool's edge.

Winding Pathways and Reflecting Pool

The winding and interconnected pathways allow visitors to experience the memorial on their own terms, and at their own pace. These pathways and reflecting pool turn in response to the large mature trees, their canopy, and the natural clearing they create.

This natural cathedral of trees, and the sunlight through its canopy, is reflected in the winding pool below.

The curving form of the memorial paths and reflecting pool preserve these mature trees, allow for spaces of rest and reflection, and act as a guide to lead visitors through the memorial grounds, opening windows to new views with each different path experienced.

At night the pool glows at its base, lifting to the lights above. There are 150 canopy lights through the woods and along the paths, representing the combined 150 years of public service from those lives lost.

The Memorial Glade

The reflecting pool's path turns as it reaches the edge of the woodland and becomes a room, the memorial space. Along the pool's outer edge, the ground gives way and gently slopes down to the pond below. The falling water at the pool's edge is now tall, a veil of sound and sparkling light.

The experience here is water on both sides, a direct connection to falling water as a symbol of healing, and a reconnection of the memorial to the city. Visitors below are out of view from those in the Memorial Glade above, creating privacy for both.

A resting wall follows the path below, providing a place to sit, gather, and reflect. The path slowly rises again as it continues alongside the falling water, ascending back to the ground level of the Memorial Glade.

Pathways and Water

The pathways connect and gather along the water's edge, the reflecting pool above, and with the sound and feel of falling water. The presence of moving water, the veil and sound of the falls, and the immediacy of its touch, connects each visitor to the memorial directly.

The intimacy of the memorial experience is enhanced by the use of the our senses, and these paths provide the opportunity to reflect and contemplate this connection as a part of our collective rememberance.

Here, water is symbolic of healing, of rejuvenation, and rebirth. Water becomes the path we follow and the space of reflection. Used this way, water becomes the building material we use to create the memorial as the sacred placeholder of memory.

Inside the Memorial Glade and the Memorial Wall

The reflecting pool surrounds this space, it envelopes it. Mature trees stand alongside benches following the arc of the wall. Here the falling water at the pool's edge finally gives way to stone. 12 engraved stone names top the wall and line the reflecting pool's edge.

Benches line the center of this space and allow room for gathering, sitting with a loved one, or resting alongside a friend lost. Standing at the memorial wall, visitors watch the reflecting pool water fall from its far edge, vanishing to the path below, visually joining the water of the reflecting pool and the pond beyond.

The center of the Memorial Wall, aligned from the Hero Tree, looks directly West so that each evening the setting sun lowers and fills the Memorial Glade with the last light of the day.

Dills Architects **swa**