

# A PRIVILEGE AND AN HONOR

by Katie Wells

Creating Northrop Grumman's 9/11 memorial site in McLean, VA differed in both process and purpose from the typical project for Structure Tone's Washington, DC staff. Like the nation, indeed the world, the Northrop Grumman organization was deeply affected by the tragic events of that September morning. To help heal and pay tribute, Northrop Grumman committed to erect a memorial.

The project was design-build and included architect Hickok Cole, granite manufacturer Kusser FountainWorks and landscaper MainScapes, as well as Structure Tone as builder. The team was honored to collaborate on the poignant assignment and a true collegial spirit infused the group throughout the 14-week project.

The design process was unique. Once Northrop Grumman selected Hickok Cole, the firm held an in-house competition for its architects to submit potential designs. After the entries were narrowed down, Northrop Grumman selected two finalists and those designs were combined to create the memorial.

"The overall design—the benches and the wall—were originally two different submissions that were combined," said Rebekah Dunbar, project architect for Hickok Cole. "The elements worked really well together, they blended and they were symbolic, which is what we were going for to connect with the people impacted by the events of 9/11."

The goal was for the site to be something that the general public would interact with, not just look at, as well as an appropriate tribute to the day. The latter was critical for everyone—Northrop Grumman, the design team and Structure Tone.



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Three sets of benches and flagpoles represent the three sites impacted on September 11, 2001.

Thus, the team stayed focused on making sure the end result captured as much of the original intent as possible.

"It was very important to both Hickok Cole and Northrop Grumman that end product is indistinguishable from the original drawings," noted Craig Esty, project estimator. "We did everything we could, working integrally with Kusser and MainScapes to have all the details on the plans in the finished piece."

**"Working with Structure Tone, and the entire team, on this project has been very rewarding. They kept the original design that we [Hickok] created, and it looks great now. The whole team wanted input throughout the process, and I was impressed with everyone's work. It captures what the original design was going for and it's just amazing to see how great it's turned out."**—Rebekah Dunbar, project architect, Hickok Cole

Three trees and benches parallel the existing three flagpoles, representing the sites of September 11: the World Trade Center, the Pentagon and Shanksville, PA. The inverted central bench represents the Pentagon, and, with the tree in the center, acts like a sundial locating the position of sunrise and sunset. The spiral wall that serves as the back of the bench blocks the light in the morning symbolizing the events of 9/11.

The benches are made of solid granite, which Kusser FountainWorks manufactured and partially assembled in Germany and shipped to the site. Structure Tone was integral to working out the details regarding placing the pieces prior to their arrival.

Rich Park, Structure Tone's superintendent for the memorial project noted "all that planning paid off. One of the biggest challenges on the job was unloading the granite off the truck. All the pieces came in two parts, and it was an unusually windy day so we had to exercise extreme caution. The pieces are finished one-of-a-kinds, all polished, and we had to make sure they were placed in pristine condition."

"I don't think that people even realize it's there until they see the polished granite up on the site," said Park, "and when they walk over, everyone seems really impressed with the whole project. It's been great, very rewarding, to be a part of something this important." ■



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An inscribed granite block adds focus to the memorial.