

# STAFF RECOMMENDATION

D. Hamilton

NCPC File No. 6382



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**DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY  
SECURITY ENHANCEMENTS**  
PRELIMINARY AND FINAL SITE DEVELOPMENT PLANS  
19901 Germantown Road, Germantown, Montgomery County, Maryland

Submission by the General Services Administration

December 30, 2003

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*Abstract*

The General Services Administration has submitted preliminary and final site development plans for security enhancements at the Department of Energy in Germantown, Montgomery County, Maryland. The Commission previously reviewed and disapproved a portion of these security enhancements, and recommended that the General Services Administration provide a landscape solution that would better incorporate security elements. The current submission is a response to that recommendation.

*Commission Action Requested by Applicant*

Approval of preliminary and final site development plans pursuant to 40 U.S.C. § 8722(d) and Section 5 of the National Capital Planning Act (40 U.S.C. § 8722(b) (1)).

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*Executive Director's Recommendation*

The Commission:

**Approve** the preliminary and final site development plans for security enhancements at the Department of Energy Germantown facility in Montgomery County, Maryland campus, as shown on NCPC Map File No. 3116(05.17)41274.

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## **BACKGROUND AND STAFF EVALUATION**

### *DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSAL*

The General Services Administration (GSA) has submitted preliminary and final site development plans for vehicle security enhancements at the Department of Energy (DOE) in Germantown, Montgomery County, Maryland. The DOE Germantown facility is used to support DOE Headquarters by receiving, processing and storing highly classified and sensitive National Security information. The facility is also designated as the Department's "continuous operation location" in the event of an emergency in Downtown Washington. The proposal is being submitted in response to the Commission's previous recommendation disapproving the bollard features of these security enhancements.

### Site

The DOE Germantown facility is located on approximately 100 acres in Montgomery County, Maryland. Approximately 1,850 employees work on the Germantown campus, which was established in the late 1950s as the Atomic Energy Commission. The campus is bounded by Interstate 270 on the east, Germantown Road on the north, residential development on the west, and Millersville Road on the south. A large portion of the site is devoted to open space and the main facility is located in the center of the campus, surrounded by surface parking lots. A chain-linked fence surrounds the majority of the site, except for the north and south entrances. Since September 11, 2001, DOE has closed the south entrance. The proposal involves three areas - the north and south entrances and the eastern security wall adjacent to the main complex.

### North and South Entrances

These entrances would contain a security bollard line that is designed to prevent unauthorized vehicle intrusion into the center of the complex. The bollards would be contained within and hidden by a hedgerow landscape element. The hedgerow would contain a line of trees and under-story shrubbery. The shrubbery would be specimens found locally in the area and would be allowed to naturalize or grow undisturbed, which would eventually completely screen the bollard line. The hedgerows would vary in width from 10 to 20 feet and vary in distance from the entry roads. They would be comprised of deciduous and evergreen specimens.

### Security wall

The 36-inch high security wall would be located along the east side of the main DOE building complex. It would extend approximately 500 feet and be comprised of several sections. It would be constructed as a fieldstone wall with a rough stone core reinforced with a steel bar. The faces and ends of the wall would be finished with a thick veneer of locally quarried Carderock fieldstone, brown to grey-green in color. The inside face of the wall would incorporate seating for casual use. The wall would require the removal of a line of existing parking spaces and incorporate landscape improvements of large deciduous shade trees, low plantings, and lawn. At locations along the wall where pedestrian access or emergency and service vehicles must

approach the building, openings through the wall are protected from intrusion by fixed or removable decorative bollards.

### *PREVIOUS COMMISSION ACTION*

At its September 2003 meeting, the Commission approved the preliminary and final site development plans for the vehicular security improvements at the DOE Germantown facility except for the proposed bollards flanking the north and south entrance drives. The Commission recommended that GSA provide a landscape solution that integrated security elements as seamlessly as possible, setting the existing perimeter fence back from the roadway at the southern entrance, and creating an enhanced entrance at the north entrance to the campus which softens or obscures the security elements within natural landscaping.

### *EVALUATION*

Staff recommends approval of the proposal:

- The security of both the north and south entrance roadways have been enhanced through the use of bollards that are sensitively incorporated into a 10 to 20-foot wide landscape hedgerow that is comprised of a variety of landscape materials. As such, the bollards would eventually become invisible within the larger landscape.
- The selection of locally native plant materials would minimize the need for supplemental watering, pest and disease control; allow the under-story elements of the hedgerow to naturalize; and minimize the need for maintenance. Additionally, the selected under-story shrubbery is visually consistent with shrubbery seen throughout suburban and rural areas of Montgomery County.
- The existing perimeter fence at the southern entrance has been sufficiently set back from Middlebrook Road.
- The north entrance has been visually enhanced and formalized through the use of tree plantings.
- The security wall is developed in sections and incorporates pedestrian amenities such as benches that are augmented with shade trees.

GSA has responded successfully to the previous recommendations of the Commission.

### *CONFORMANCE*

#### Comprehensive Plan

The proposal is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital. The Federal Facilities Element designates the installation for Research, Development and Testing Facilities for scientific and technological purposes.

### Master Plan

The first DOE Germantown Master Plan was originally approved by the Commission on February 3, 1972, and subsequently modified in 1990 to accommodate the construction of a new day care facility at the campus. The proposed security improvements are consistent with the DOE master plan.

### National Historic Preservation Act

The DOE complex is not listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places and is therefore not subject to further review under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended.

### National Environmental Policy Act

Pursuant to the regulations implementing the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), GSA review of the proposed security action has determined that the proposal qualifies as a Categorical Exclusion under NEPA compliance procedures.

### Federal Capital Improvements Program

The proposal is not included in the Federal Capital Improvements Program for Fiscal Years 2004 – 2008.

### National Capital Urban Design and Security Plan

The proposal conforms to the intent of the National Capital Urban Design and Security Plan. While the DOE is located well outside the Plan's area, and its characteristics as a suburban campus environment are different than those of the federal offices and monumental spaces addressed in the Plan, the proposal is responsive to the Plan's broad goals, including:

- Providing security in the context of streetscape enhancement and public realm beautification, rather than as a separate or redundant system of components whose only purpose is security.
- Expanding the palette of elements that can gracefully provide perimeter security in a manner that does not clutter the public realm, while avoiding the monotony of endless lines of jersey barriers or bollards, which only evoke defensiveness.
- Identifying an implementation strategy that can be efficiently coordinated in the most cost effective manner.

The proposal incorporates actions that are responsive to the Plan's goals:

- A low perimeter security wall incorporates a variety of pedestrian amenities such as benches, openings for pedestrian circulation, and shade trees.
- The security bollards that flank the entry drives of the north and south entrances will be incorporated into a generous landscaped hedgerow that would contain native shrubbery that would be allowed to naturalize, and evergreen and deciduous trees and shrubbery. The hedgerow would vary in width from 10 to 20 feet and should, over time, completely screen the bollards.