

# STAFF RECOMMENDATION



NCPC File No. 6442

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## EAST SIDE PUMPING STATION REHABILITATION

Anacostia Park  
Southeast Washington, DC

Submitted by the District of Columbia Water and Sewer Authority

April 29, 2004

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### Abstract

The District of Columbia Water and Sewer Authority (DC WASA) has submitted a proposal to demolish the existing East Side Pumping Station in Anacostia Park and construct a new East Side Pumping Station adjacent to an existing sewage swirl facility, also located in Anacostia Park. The site is federal property under the control of the National Park Service.

### Commission Action Requested by Applicant

Approval of preliminary and final site and building 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:

**Approves** the preliminary and final site and building plans for the East Side Pumping Station rehabilitation in Southeast Washington, DC, as shown on NCPC Map File No. 80.00(38.00)-41351.

**Reminds** the District of Columbia Water and Sewer Authority of the requirement to submit plans for modifications to the main sewage pumping station located in the Southeast Federal Center to the Commission for review.

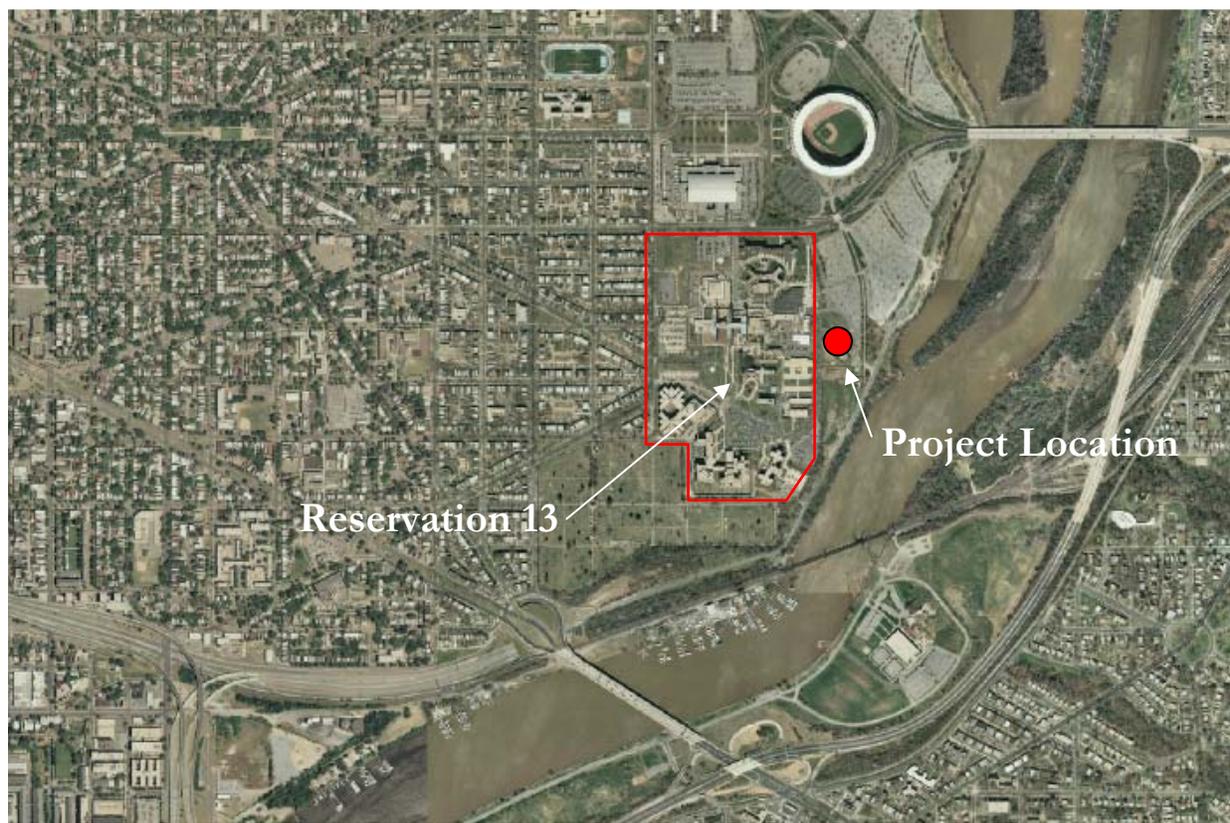
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### PROJECT SUMMARY

This project is being undertaken as part of a series of improvements to reduce sewage overflow into the Potomac River in accordance with a 2003 consent decree. The project includes demolition of an existing underground pumping station and restoration of the site; as well as construction of a new above-ground pumping station with new landscaping, parking, and access

road improvements. The project will result in a smaller overall footprint for the pumping station facility. Project components are:

1. Demolishing the existing pumping station and perimeter fence
2. Restoring the existing pumping station site
3. Constructing a new 8, 540 square foot pumping station on 1.3 acres of land
4. Constructing a new 42 inch force main
5. Constructing a five-space surface parking area adjacent to the pumping station
6. Improving the existing access road
7. Landscaping the new pumping station site



Project Location

### Site Description

The project is located in Anacostia Park on National Park Service lands along the west bank of the Anacostia River, within the southeast quadrant of the District of Columbia. The site is adjacent to the eastern edge of public reservation 13, and is surrounded by an existing sewage swirl facility and the old D.C. General Hospital to the west, access roads and parking areas for R.F.K. Stadium to the north and east, and the existing sewage pumping station to the south. The project lies between two future redevelopment areas and will ultimately lie between a neighborhood and a refurbished park; however, the surroundings are currently characterized by

open asphalt parking areas, abandoned buildings and unutilized open space. The site has been used a sewage pumping station for several decades.



Existing Site Conditions

### Background

The District of Columbia Water and Sewer Authority (DC WASA) is required by the Environmental Protection Agency to maintain a 45 million gallon per day (MGD) long-term reliable pumping capacity at its East Side Pumping Station in Anacostia Park. The existing below-ground pumping station at the site, constructed 40 years ago, is flood-prone and has numerous mechanical problems due to its age.

### Previous Commission Action

The Executive Director approved the schematic plans for this project under delegated authority in February of 2004. The District of Columbia Office of Planning (DCOP) expressed objections to some of the design details of the project at that time, and Commission staff met with the applicant and DCOP in April in an attempt to develop a consensus regarding DCOP proposed design changes. Following this meeting, both DC WASA and the National Park Service have indicated that they are opposed to the majority of DCOP's requested design changes.

### Proposal

The District of Columbia Water and Sewer Authority (DC WASA), on behalf of the National Park Service, has submitted preliminary and final site and building plans for a new East Side pumping station within Anacostia Park along the west bank of the Anacostia River. The project will construct a new 8,540 square foot pumping station on 1.3 acres of National Park Service land. The project includes a new parking area for five vehicles, an improved access road, landscaping and utilities. Additionally, the project will construct a new 42" force main to connect the new pumping station to existing sewer lines in the area. As part of the project, DC WASA will demolish the existing below-ground pumping station to the south of the project site and restore the area around the demolished facility to conditions acceptable to the National Park Service (NPS). The project has been approved by NPS, which will issue a Special Use Permit to allow construction to proceed. The project is necessary to conform to current regulatory requirements.

The pumping station will be constructed of concrete block, clad in a combination of smooth and sand-blasted precast concrete panels. A decorative aluminum gate will be placed at the courtyard on the east side of the facility. A coiling overhead metal door will enclose the trash dumpster area on the southwest corner of the building. The building's flat roof will be covered with a bituminous membrane roofing system. The building will be located adjacent to the existing sewage swirl facility. The project includes landscaping of the facility and its grounds.

The new pumping station will be located on the southeast side of the existing WASA swirl facility, which will screen it from view to the northwest.



Rendering of Proposed Project

## PROJECT ANALYSIS

### Executive Summary

Staff is recommending approval of the project submission without changes. Upon consideration of concerns expressed by the DC Office of Planning, staff does not consider these concerns relevant to the Commission's jurisdiction. The project will not be visible from Reservation 13, and will therefore not negatively impact any federal interest in reservation 13. Although the project will be visible from Anacostia Park and from the proposed Park Drive depicted in the Anacostia Waterfront Initiative report, staff does not share DCOP concerns that the pump station building must be of greater architectural significance or of higher architectural design to be compatible in a park setting. The applicant has already gone to greater expense than would normally be incurred in order to clad the building in decorative precast panels. The property owner, the National Park Service, indicates that it requires the building to be low-key so that it blends into the park and does not become an attractive nuisance. When Anacostia Park is improved in accordance with AWI, additional landscaping responsive to the design of Anacostia Park can be incorporated to further screen the facility from view.

### Building Design

Although the pumping station is a utilitarian building, the applicant has incorporated upgraded architectural elements and finishes into the design to improve the attractiveness of this building due to its park setting. The use of decorative precast panels on exterior walls, brick accent panels and an ornamental gate at the building's courtyard demonstrate that the applicant has taken steps above and beyond normal design procedures that will result in improved aesthetics. The color of the selected precast panels has been carefully coordinated with the National Park Service and the Commission of Fine Arts to affect a muted, natural-tone finish that the Park Service considers appropriate to blend into the Park. A trash enclosure, incorporated into the building footprint, is covered by a roll-down door. The architecture is purposely understated.

### Site Design

The project site is landscaped with naturally-occurring plant species to help the facility blend into the park. The building is sited very close to the existing sewage swirl facility to minimize the total impact area of the operation. Surface parking is kept at a minimum; a five-space surface lot will be constructed adjacent to the building using pervious pavers to allow storm water to pass through and be filtered by the soil below. The existing access road will be modified slightly to serve the new building and includes a small area that serves the building's trash enclosure. The building's site directly behind the existing sewage swirl facility obscures it from view of public reservation 13. The building will not be visible from the planned development area.



### Site

1. Type and extent of landscaping, including greater use of native species, larger tree calipers, and furthering the park-like setting of the site
2. Further reduction in pervious surfaces designated for parking, including a consideration of eliminating the parking area entirely
3. Adding Low Impact Development (LID) techniques to the project, such as a green roof, rain gardens, rain barrels and swales
4. Removing the fence between DC WASA facilities and surrounding uses

### Building

1. Chamfering the corners of the roof parapet
2. Using a darker, richer color for the exterior precast panels
3. Maximizing the use of brick accents
4. Considering using brick masonry in the courtyard walls
5. Emphasize the intake and exhaust monitors as more prominent architectural features
6. Leave blank reveals to accept exterior decorative tiles to be provided later by a third party

### National Park Service Response to DCOP Comments

The National Park Service (NPS) summarily objects to requests from DCOP to redesign elements of the proposed project building and site. Specifically, NPS opposes the addition of LIDs due to the requirement for additional maintenance that their inclusion will present. Additionally, NPS will not permit WASA to remove the fence between DC General Hospital and RFK Stadium for security reasons. NPS states that removal of the fence must coincide with redevelopment activities on Reservation 13 and only then with the concurrence of the DC Sports and Entertainment Commission and other agencies with jurisdiction in the area. WASA has agreed, however, to meet NPS requirements that the fences surrounding their facilities be removed upon completion of the pumping station project, so that the pumping station and swirl facility become structures within a park setting. NPS is also opposed to any changes in the site plan that make the facility more visible to the park and to building design changes that might result in the building becoming an attractive nuisance. The NPS objective is to have a “background building” compatible with its park setting, precluding any inclusion of exterior decorative tiles or other architectural embellishment that will call attention to the structure.

### WASA Response to DCOP Comments

With only two exceptions, WASA indicates it is unable to accommodate most of the building and site changes requested by DCOP due to design, budget and schedule constraints. Additionally, WASA indicates that it has already modified the design significantly, including reducing paved areas, adding landscaping including more naturally-occurring species, and utilizing LIDs such as pervious ground surfaces and storm water filtering. The two changes that WASA is willing to consider are:

1. The color of exterior precast panels, chosen from a palette pre-approved by the Commission of Fine Arts (CFA), and
2. Increasing the size of exterior brick banding from 8 inches to 12 inches.

WASA indicates that other changes will jeopardize the project schedule, require them to return to CFA for approval, adversely impact the project functionally, and conflict with NPS requirements.

## PROJECT CONFORMANCE

### Anacostia Waterfront Initiative

The District of Columbia's Anacostia Waterfront Initiative (AWI) proposes to improve Anacostia Park in the vicinity of the proposed project to include a new Park Drive, restored park landscaping, and other park amenities. AWI assumes that the pumping station and adjacent swirl facility will remain in the long term. The proposed Park Drive passes directly in front of the site for the new pumping station, and the pumping station is likely to be visible from the road. The applicant has incorporated landscaping into the project to screen the pumping station from the existing access road. Additional landscaping can be added concurrent with future improvements to Anacostia Park and the construction of Park Drive.

### Reservation 13 Master Plan

The project location is depicted in the District of Columbia Office of Planning's Reservation 13 Master Plan, reserved for the proposed use. Because the existing sewage swirl facility will remain after the new pumping station is constructed, the pumping station itself will not be visible from Reservation 13. When WASA initiates construction of the planned Combined Sewer System Long-Term Control Plan, the swirl facility will be removed. At such time, additional landscaping can be added to further screen the west side of the pumping station from future development, although the west side will be clad in the same decorative precast panes and brick accents as the rest of the building. WASA estimates that construction of the Long-Term Control Plan is at least 10 years out, depending on available funding. In any case, the pumping station will not be visible from Massachusetts Avenue, the Monument Circle or within the vista of any street planned for Reservation 13.



### National Environmental Policy Act

NCPC staff has analyzed, in conformance with the requirements of NEPA, the prepared Environmental Assessment (EA) completed by the National Park Service and DC Water and Sewer Authority (DCWASA) in January 2003. Staff has prepared a Finding of No Significant Impact based on adoption of the EA, concluding that the analysis is sufficient and demonstrates no significant environmental impacts from the planned action. The Commission staff has reviewed the action for extraordinary circumstances as sanctioned by NEPA and recommended to the Executive Director adoption of the prepared EA as provided in Section 1500.4 (n) of the Council on Environmental Quality's NEPA regulations, and a determination of a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) in accordance with the Commission's procedures.

### National Historic Preservation Act

NPS and WASA have consulted with the DC SHPO concerning the potential for archaeology in the area and have determined that the land is fill and that there is no potential for National Register-eligible sites being uncovered. Section 106 consultation for this project has been completed.

## CONSULTATION

### Coordinating Committee

The Coordinating Committee reviewed this item at its meeting on February 11, 2004 and forwarded the proposal to the Commission with the statement that the project has been coordinated with all participating agencies, except the District of Columbia Office of Planning. The representative for DCOP withheld coordination and requested a joint meeting with the applicant and NCPC to discuss concerns about the circulation, lack of landscaping, the facade, lack of coordination with the Master Plan for Reservation 13, and the Anacostia Waterfront Initiative. The participating agencies were: NCPC; the District Department of Transportation; the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority; and the General Services Administration. Subsequent to the meeting, DCOP concurred in the coordination of this project.

### Commission of Fine Arts

The Commission of Fine Arts approved the final design for the East Side Pumping Station at its January 2004 meeting.

### District Department of Transportation

The project is located on federally-owned land that is already used by the applicant for a sewage pumping station. There are no new access, traffic or parking issues that affect DDOT-controlled roadways.

## STAFF CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

Staff concludes that the applicant has strived to create a design that is appropriate for and sensitive to its setting. The land owner, the National Park Service, is satisfied that the design fits well within Anacostia Park. Staff recommends that the Commission approve the applicant's submission without changes. The applicant has upgraded the exterior of the new pumping station and the surrounding landscaping above and beyond what would normally be expected for a sewage pumping station and has met the requirements of the National Park Service, the land owner. Additional landscaping can be added as part of the design for future Anacostia Park improvements. Staff recommends that DCOP's requested design improvements, although desirable, should not be imposed upon the applicant by the Commission.