

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

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NCPC File No. 6611



FEDERAL OFFICE BUILDING 8 BUILDING MODERNIZATION 200 C Street, SW Washington, DC

Submitted by the General Services Administration

September 1, 2005

Abstract

The General Services Administration (GSA) has submitted a concept design for the modernization of Federal Office Building 8, located at 200 C Street, SW. The project will convert the primary building use from laboratory to office space, replace the existing facade with a glass curtain wall, and transform a surface parking area to a public plaza. When modernized, the building may house one or more federal agencies, all with medium-level security requirements. Although a design option for perimeter security is presented with the concept submission, GSA will develop it further and complete the perimeter prior to submitting it with the next phase of project review (preliminary site and building plans). The GSA has determined that an Environmental Assessment is not required, and believes that Section 110 documentation will suffice in lieu of Section 106 review; as the building has been determined not eligible for listing on the National Register.

Commission Action Requested by Applicant

Review of and comment on the concept design for site and building plans pursuant to 40 U.S.C. § 8722(d) and Section 5 of the National Capital Planning Act of (40 U.S.C. § 8722(b)(1)).

Executive Director's Recommendation

The Commission:

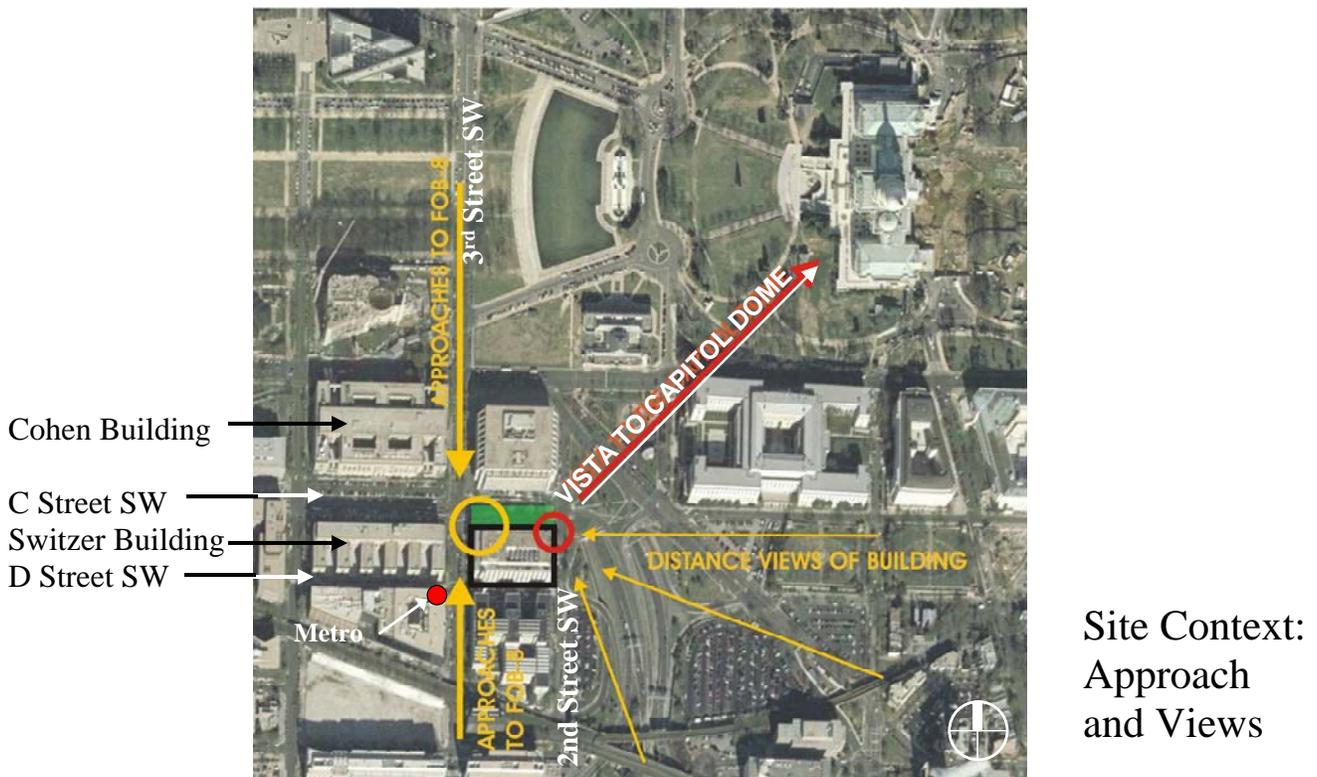
Comments favorably on the concept plans for the modernization of Federal Office Building 8 at 200 C Street, SW, as shown in NCPC Map File No. 1.72(38.00) 41669.

Recommends that clear, untinted glass be used at the ground floor level to allow maximum visual access to the building interior, and that mirrored or highly reflective glass not be used at any level of the structure;

Recommends that the applicant consult with staff in developing a concept for perimeter security that is integrated with the landscape; and

Defers comment on the landscape until more information on perimeter security is included.

* * *



PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Site

The Federal Office Building 8 (FOB) 8 is located southwest of the Capitol and one block south of Independence Avenue and the National Mall in the Southwest Federal Center area/enclave. FOB 8 fronts on C Street with views of the Capitol dome through open space to the northeast (the site for the future American Veterans Disabled for Life Memorial). The rectangular building is set back from C Street. The set back in front of FOB 8 also includes a ramp to underground parking, accessed from 2nd Street, and surface parking. The limestone faced building (windowless for most of its east and west elevations), has 6 levels above grade.

Background

GSA plans to modernize the building comprehensively, after which its use will be converted from 70% laboratory to office space. It will remain as a federal building, although the agencies to occupy it are not known at this time. GSA proposes to reconfigure interior space for lobby and entry atria as well as the exterior facade, in order to maximize the amount of daylight to the interior of the building. The new exterior would be composed of mainly glazed curtainwall, with vertical angled corners on the east and west ends, punctuated by small amounts of limestone, and would give the reconfigured building a distinctly contemporary character.



Existing Building: Corner of 2nd and C Streets, SW

Proposal

Building alterations propose to include:

- Conversion of laboratory to offices, common office functions, and public amenities.
- Reconfiguration of interior space for lobby and entry atria to maximize amount of daylight to interior of the building and effectively channel heat load.
- Reconfiguration of exterior facade to maximize the most effective amount of daylight.
 - Glazed curtainwall with transparent low iron glass punctuated by full height vertical “columns” of existing limestone to remain; vertical angled corners on east/west ends.
 - Metal scrim panels angled at roof level to screen roof equipment.

- Brises-soleil, or sunscreens, used in conjunction with glazing to mitigate the effect of the sun on the east and west facing exposures.
- Protection for exterior walls, windows and frames to meet medium level security.
- New and upgraded building systems, including mechanical penthouses on the roof.



Rendering: Corner of 3rd & C Streets, SW

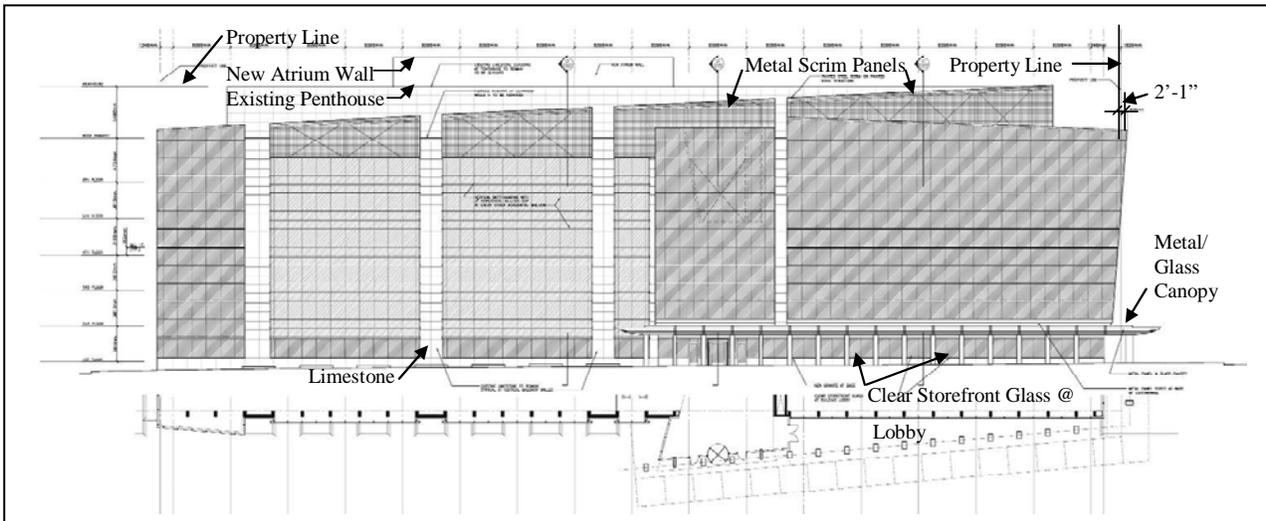
Site and landscape alterations are shown in concept submission but anticipated to be developed further with submission of preliminary site and building plans:

- Transformation of paved parking to public plaza with green open space and public art.
- Perimeter security design integrated into landscape design on all sides of the building.
- Canopy-covered arcade at ground level for use by pedestrians en route to and from Metro.

PROJECT ANALYSIS

The staff commends GSA and its design team for a striking design that establishes a new architectural expression for the building, and makes better use of its setback to improve the urban design. The front building set back depth will enable medium level security to be achieved through required building standoff distance. Atria at the entry lobby and interior of the building will maximize the amount natural daylight to the interior of the building. Each atrium is engaged with circulation flow through the building from front to back. Allowing views into the lobby

atrium through clear glass will improve its connection with the street and pedestrians. The staff comments favorably on **the concept design** for the building reconfigurations, and makes the following comments:



North Elevation



Rendering of North Facade

Glazing at Curtainwall and Storefront at Street Level

Staff Recommends that clear, untinted glass be used at the ground floor level to allow maximum visual access to the building interior, and that mirrored or highly reflective glass not be used at any level of the structure.

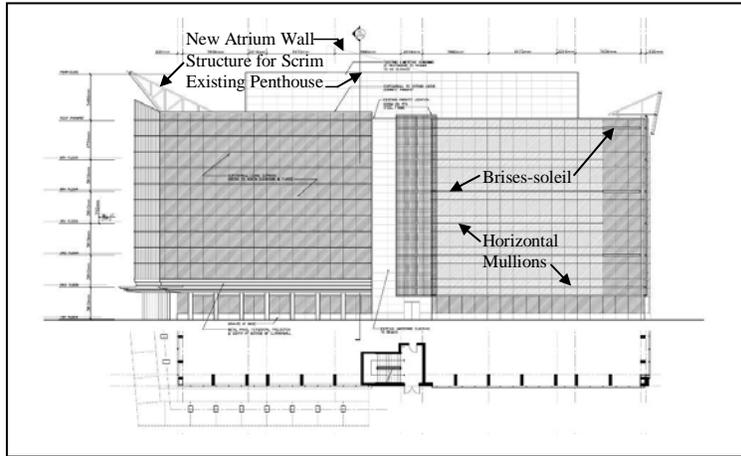
With several exceptions, the renderings provided give the impression that much of the building facade is a smooth continuous highly reflective or mirrored surface with little pattern to break down or indicate scale. Discrepancies exist between building elevations and renderings, which lack clarity of detail that staff expects will be refined in the preliminary site and building plans.

The current proposal calls for the use of clear glass to allow views into public spaces and at ground level storefront. Staff strongly supports this, since reflective glass reduces visual engagement and sense of scale at the pedestrian level. In fact, District zoning regulations, which GSA buildings are required to comply with to the maximum extent possible, were modified to define clear glass to ensure its use with the intent of allowing pedestrians to easily see into the preferred use spaces on ground floor commercial areas to facilitate ground-floor activity. Staff also recommends that the

applicant locate public use areas such as cafeterias and exhibition halls at the street level storefront in order to enliven the plaza and the street for pedestrians, in keeping with GSA's own Facilities Standards to collocate these spaces near the lobby.



Rendering of West Facade



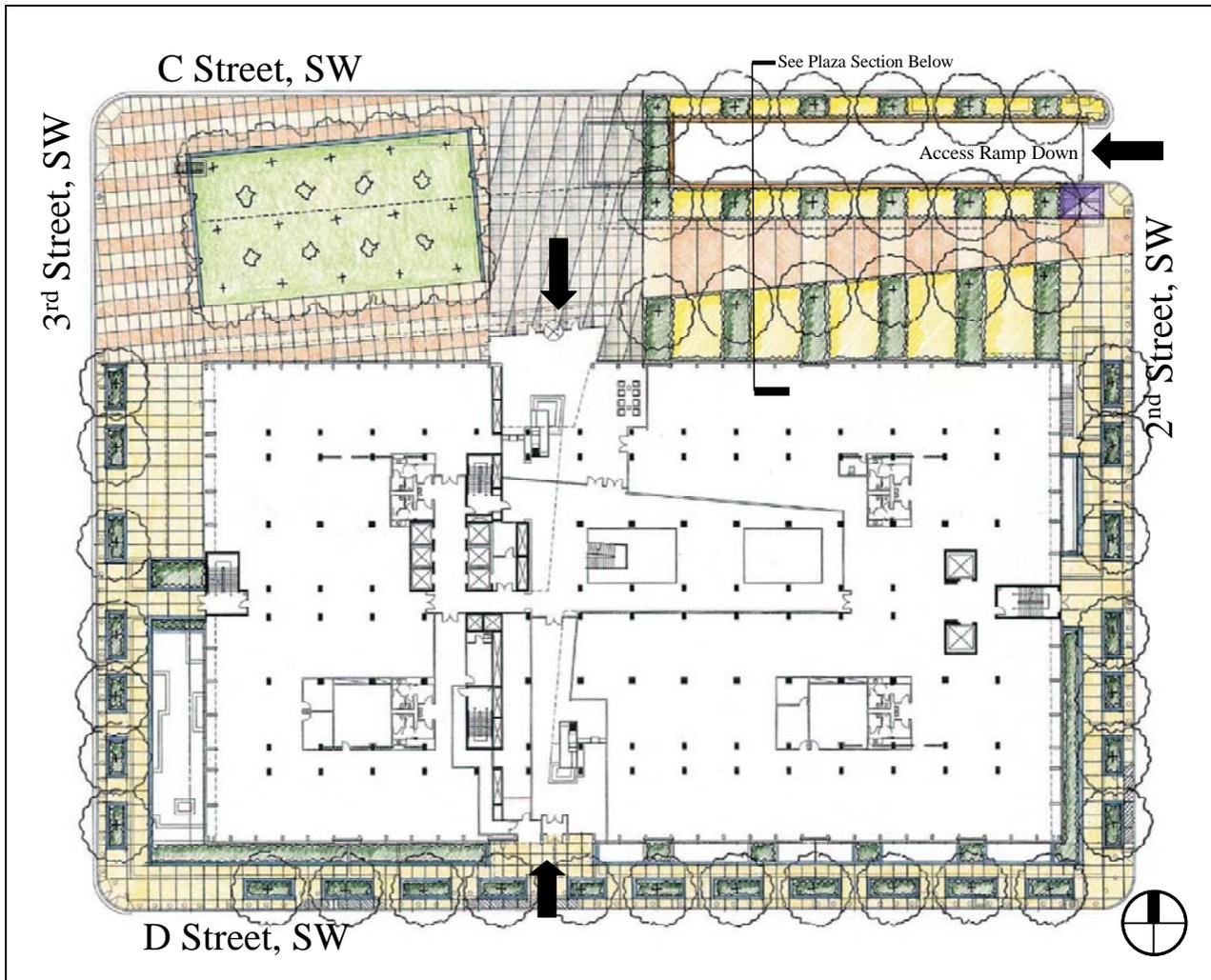
West Elevation

In addition, angled curtainwall at east and west corners viewed with metal scrim angled forward as a backdrop on the north facade serves as a trompe l'oeil to the rectangular box. The angle of the curtainwall causes it to extend slightly beyond the building's property line; however, the applicant has indicated that the overhang is still under design. Staff hopes to see further clarification of glazing articulation, including clear distinction between types, in the next submission.

Perimeter Security

Information on perimeter security elements is insufficient for staff to comment on this time. Bollard placement in rendered plans and elevations is inconsistent, and no security elements are shown at the entry area on C Street. Staff urges GSA to further study and refine the perimeter security design on the three streets with limited setback, (2nd, 3rd and D Streets), by varying the use of the single planter element and introducing other elements of street furniture as encouraged in NCPC's Urban Design and Security Plan Objectives and Policies.

Staff understands that GSA has waited to design perimeter security at the plaza entrance in order to integrate public art into the plaza design and paving pattern before developing the remaining protection for the perimeter. Staff recommends further study to develop the design for submittal of preliminary site and building plans both for location and design of perimeter barriers and their interplay with sculpture, seatwalls and signage. Staff **recommends** that the applicant consult with staff in developing a concept for perimeter security that is integrated with the landscape, and **defers** comment on the landscape until more information on perimeter security is included.

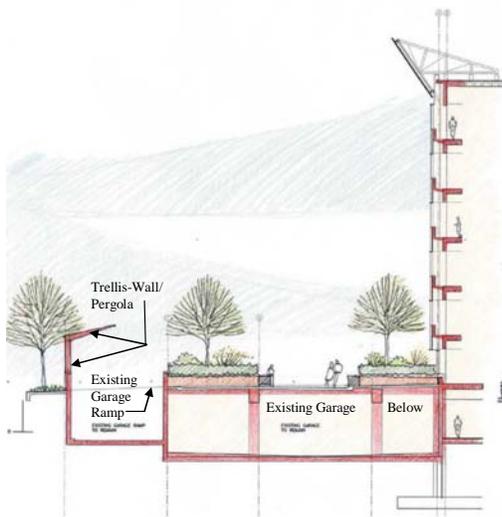


Perimeter/Landscape Design – Plaza Plan

COORDINATION

Coordinating Committee

The Coordinating Committee reviewed the proposal on August 17, 2005. The Committee forwarded the proposal to the Commission with the statement that the project has been coordinated with all agencies represented, the participating agencies were: NCPC; the District of Columbia Office of Planning; the District Department of Transportation; the Department of Housing and Community Development; the Fire Department; the General Services Administration; and the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority.



Perimeter/Landscape: Plaza Section CONFORMANCE

The National Capital Urban Design and Security Plan Objectives and Policies

Staff finds that the project as submitted is not yet consistent with relevant policies, including Policies 16 and 20. Policy 16 states that perimeter security barriers in public space should incorporate decorative tree wells, planters, light poles, signage, benches, parking meters, trash receptacles and other elements and public amenities typically found in a streetscape. Policy 20 states that perimeter security design should avoid relying on repetitive use of single elements, such as continuous rows of bollards or planters.

Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital

Staff finds that the proposed project would not be inconsistent with relevant policies in the Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital, largely due to GSA's demonstrated efforts to:

- Modernize and rehabilitate existing federally owned facilities in the monumental core for federal workplaces before developing new facilities, to
- Protect and enhance the vistas and views, both natural and designed, that are an integral part of the national capital's image, and to
- Protect the settings of historic properties, including views to and from the sites where significant, as integral parts of the historic character of the property.

National Environmental Policy Act

The current submission, as a concept design proposal, does not require the Commission to complete its NEPA determination at this stage of project review. However, based on the information supplied by the General Services Administration (GSA), that agency has identified the action as a Categorical Exclusion determination in accordance with GSA requirements and NCPC review requirements. NCPC staff review finds the proposal adheres to the Commission Section 8 (C) criteria of the exclusions cited at item 21 of the Commission's environmental and historic preservation procedures.

National Historic Preservation Act

GSA has evaluated the property and found that the building does not meet the minimum age criteria to be eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. Therefore, GSA determined to address Section 110 responsibilities for evaluation it had undertaken rather than to initiate Section 106 consultation under the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA). The submission does in fact include a letter from GSA to NCPC's Executive Director copied to the DC SHPO stating its position. Although staff believes that the building would not be eligible for listing at this time; a formal process to request concurrence from the DC State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) was not initiated. In addition, the area of potential effect (APE) has not been formally documented for the project. Although a diagram of views to and away from the

site has been included, formal analysis of eligible properties and vistas that would be affected by the undertaking has not been initiated. Staff encourages GSA to initiate Section 106 consultation prior to GSA's submission at the next stage of NCPC review.



Proposed Modernization: Corner of 2nd and C Streets, SW