

# STAFF RECOMMENDATION

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NCPC File No. 5253

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**CHANCERY OF MOROCCO**  
**INTERNATIONAL CENTER**  
International Drive and Reno Road, NW  
Washington, D.C.

Submitted by the United States Department of State

July 26, 2007

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## Abstract

The United States Department of State, on behalf of the Chancery of the Kingdom of Morocco, is submitting preliminary site and building plans for the new Chancery, located at the International Center between International Drive and Reno Road, NW. The project will include a building to serve as office space and the Ambassador's quarters, with related landscape and site modifications.

## Commission Actions Requested by Applicant

Approval of preliminary site and building plans for the Chancery pursuant to the International Center Act of 1968, Public Law 90-553, as amended by Public Law 97-186 (1982), at Section 3.

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## Executive Director's Recommendation

The Commission:

**Approves** the preliminary site and building plans for a new chancery building and related site modifications for the Chancery of Morocco, as shown on NCPC Map File No. 72.10(38.00)42294.

**Requires** that the following design modifications be considered when developing the design of the Guard Booth:

- The footprint and horizontal massing of the booth is too large, detracting from the overall image of the Chancery.
- The booth currently lacks detailing that would reduce its monolithic appearance. The incorporation of additional window openings and the subtle use of traditional Moroccan elements should be considered to refine the elevations.

**Requires** that the applicant include the following information with the final design submission for the Chancery:

- Fully developed tree planting plan, identifying the following:
  - Existing and proposed tree canopy (including street and building site trees)
  - Trees slated for demolition
  - Size/type/location of proposed new trees
- Complete evaluation to ensure that vegetative cover will be sufficient to minimize the visual impact of the rear elevation to Reno Road on a year-round basis.
- Fully developed elevations identifying dimensions of the building as well as all related fences, walls, and site/landscaping elements.
- Complete material selection and samples of wall and window materials.
- Proposed exterior building and site lighting, including proposed fixtures, locations, and foot-candle levels.
- Summary of planned staffing and related parking accommodations.

**Commends** the applicant and the design team for consultation with NCPC and CFA that has resulted in a well developed and elegant design for the proposed Chancery of Morocco.

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## PROJECT DESCRIPTION

### Site

The Chancery of Morocco is to be constructed at the International Center in northwest Washington, and is located on Lot #4 of the Center. The site is bounded by International Drive to the east, Reno Road to the west, the Chancery of Bangladesh to the north, and the Chancery of Ethiopia to the south. The site is nearly level adjacent to International Drive but has a steep slope on its west side down to Reno Road; the total change in grade is approximately 55 feet.



**PROJECT LOCATION  
INTERNATIONAL CENTER (LOT 4)**

## Proposal

The United States Department of State (DOS) is submitting preliminary site and building plans for a new Chancery of Morocco. The proposed 47,700 square foot, four-story building will have three main components: the Chancery building (offices), an Ambassador's quarters, and a multipurpose hall that will connect the public and private areas. Below grade parking will provide 50 parking spaces and there will also be ten outdoor visitor parking spaces.

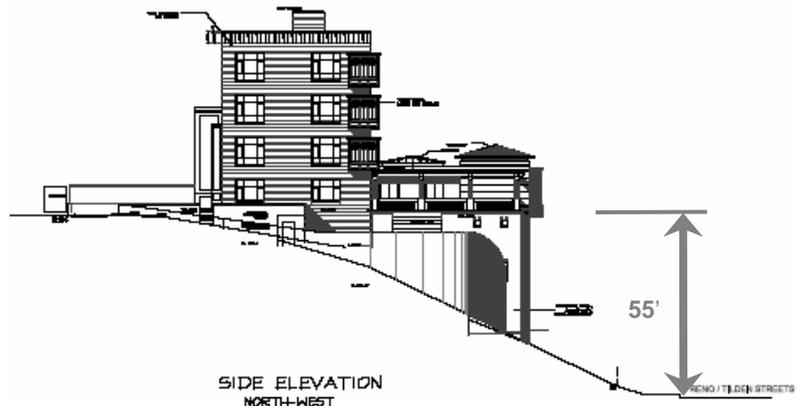
The chancery will be constructed of cast stone in a horizontal striped pattern, with a combination of punched and projecting windows. Reminiscent of the traditional art and architecture of Morocco, a variety of ornamentation is incorporated into the exterior of the building, including exterior wall texture, a main entrance portico, bas relief carvings, baked wood windows, and crenellated parapets.

Pedestrian and vehicular entry to the building will be through a paved and landscaped forecourt monitored from a simple guard booth that will be constructed of materials to match the Chancery; the forecourt will also provide an area for visitor parking.



**CHANCERY OF MOROCCO  
VIEW FROM INTERNATIONAL DRIVE, NW (RENDERED)**

Site improvements will include terraces, trellises, metal perimeter fencing, and landscaping that will retain existing topography and level of cover as much as feasible. The steep slope towards Reno Road will necessitate a large curved retaining wall on the northwest side of the lot to accommodate an entrance ramp to the parking garage below. The grade change also results in a very tall rear façade, which is divided visually by function through the use of changes in scale, window openings, and roof shapes.



**SECTION THROUGH SITE  
SHOWING GRADE CHANGE**



**CHANCERY OF MOROCCO  
REAR ELEVATION**

## PROJECT ANALYSIS

Staff commends the applicant and their design team for a well developed and elegant design for the proposed Chancery of Morocco; through ongoing consultation with NCPC and CFA staffs, the current design is welcome and appropriate addition to the International Center with regard to massing, scale, and style.

The proposed design meets the NCPC Development Controls for the International Center (Controls) with regard to site restrictions, building frontage/setbacks, open space, parking requirements, and maximum elevation (Section 521.10 limits building height to a prescribed elevation of 392' above sea level). The overall height of the structure exceeds the 48-foot building height limit by approximately four feet in order to allow for an ornamental parapet reflective of traditional Moroccan architecture, as encouraged by the Controls. Since the building height does not exceed the elevation limit established by Section 521.10 of the Controls, is set back from the building line by more than 20 feet in accordance with Section 521.30, is an uninhabitable architectural element representative of the architectural and cultural tradition of Morocco, and will not have an adverse visual or security impact on facilities in and around the International Center, staff concludes that the parapet complies with the Controls.

Staff requires the Guard Booth design be developed to better relate to the proposed chancery building and overall site improvements. The current design is too large and its horizontal massing contrasts with that of the Chancery. The design also lacks detailing that would reduce its monolithic appearance; refinement of the elevations with the incorporation of additional window openings and the subtle use of traditional Moroccan elements should be considered as the design progresses.

Staff encourages the applicant to minimize existing tree disturbance and removal for the chancery and site features and suggests that trees be replaced only if there are unavoidable conditions. Staff requires that the applicant depict the existing and proposed tree canopy, including street and building site trees, as well as other site features in their the final design submission. Additionally, staff requires additional evaluation to ensure that vegetative cover will be sufficient to minimize the visual impact of the rear elevation to Reno Road on a year-round basis; the applicant should determine if additional tree planting will be required to achieve this goal.

Staff requires that the applicant provide, with the final site and building plans, additional information with regard to the building's overall size, site features, and exterior building and site lighting (including proposed fixtures, locations, and foot-candle levels). Information and samples of the proposed finish materials should also be submitted.

A summary of planned staffing and related parking accommodations should also be included at the final design stage, in order to further evaluate the appropriateness of the proposed parking areas.

## CONFORMANCE

### Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital

Staff has determined that the proposed project is consistent with the *Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital: Federal Elements*, in particular policies in the Foreign Missions and International Organizations Element. The chancery “will demonstrate an appreciation of the architectural style and landscape of the surrounding environs while representing the finest architectural thought or the corresponding nation” and will “add visual interest and character, contribute to the cultural life, and promote diverse and lively communities.”

### National Environmental Policy Act

The original Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the International Center, prepared jointly by the US Department of State, NCPC, and GSA, included evaluation of the Chancery of Morocco on Lot 4 of the Center. Since no significant changes to the site have occurred since the original evaluation, staff has determined that the EIS is sufficient for the current decision and that no additional environmental review is required for this project.

### National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA)

The Department of State has determined that proposed actions inside the International Center are not subject to further review under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act because the buildings are not eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. Staff concurs, finding also that National Register-listed residential properties to the south of the Center would not be affected by the proposed project.

## CONSULTATION

### Coordinating Committee

The Coordinating Committee reviewed the proposal on July 11, 2007, and 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 General Services Administration; and the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority.