

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

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NCPC File No. 6759



WALTER REED NATIONAL MILITARY MEDICAL CENTER MEDICAL FACILITY ADDITIONS – BUILDINGS A AND B

8901 Rockville Pike
Montgomery County, Bethesda, Maryland

Submitted by the United States Department of the Navy

May 29, 2008

Abstract

The United States Department of the Navy has submitted preliminary and final site and building plans for new medical facility additions at the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center, located at 8901 Rockville Pike in Bethesda, Maryland. The project will include renovation of existing facilities as well as construction of two new buildings to accommodate the medical service expansion required by the 2005 BRAC recommendations. The new buildings include a new outpatient facility (Building A) and expansion of Building Nine (Building B) to accommodate diagnostic and critical care functions, as well as utility/site upgrades related to the expansion.

Commission Action Requested by Applicant

Approval of preliminary and final site and building plans pursuant to 40 U.S.C. § 8722(a) and (b)(1).

Executive Director's Recommendation

The Commission:

Approves the preliminary and final site and building plans for the new medical facility additions (Buildings A and B) at the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center, Bethesda, as shown on NCPC Map File No. 3101.30(38.00)42548.

Commends the applicant and their design team for a well developed, sophisticated, and complementary addition to the campus that will enhance the appearance of historic Building One as well as the overall image of the Medical Center.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Background

As a result of the 2005 Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) recommendations, the existing Walter Reed Army Medical Center (WRAMC) located in Washington, D.C. will be closed and military medical services in the National Capital Area (NCA) will be realigned between two primary facilities serving the northern and southern portions of the NCA. The southern NCA will be served by a new hospital at Ft. Belvoir, Virginia, and the existing National Naval Medical Center (NNMC) in Bethesda, Maryland will be expanded and renovated to serve the northern NCA. All existing tertiary (sub-specialty and complex care) medical services currently provided at WRAMC will be relocated to Bethesda. The expanded NNMC will be renamed the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center, Bethesda (WRNMMC) and is the location of the current project. As a funded project associated with BRAC, work is required to be completed by September 2011.

The Navy has completed an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the expansion, and is currently in the process of updating the Master Plan, including a Transportation Management Plan (TMP), for the campus. Due to the ambitious timeline to implement BRAC recommendations, the project site and building plans have been referred to affected agencies through the Maryland State Clearinghouse ahead of the Master Plan; all of the affected agencies have identified the proposed project as generally consistent with their plans, programs, and objectives. The Master Plan for the WRNMMC is currently being developed and is expected to be submitted in early June for Commission review.

One of the early phases of the BRAC action is to construct two new buildings at Bethesda to accommodate the medical services expansion. The new Buildings A and B will create 638,000 square feet of medical space. Building A will be located to the north of Building One on the current "A" Parking Lot and will house a new Outpatient care facility. Building B will be an expansion of Building Nine to the west to accommodate inpatient diagnostic and critical care functions. The insertion of new buildings into the core complex of the Central Tower Block and its neighboring structures is a sensitive matter. Construction of the Medical Additions will impact the Central Tower Block, Building 3, and Building 5. Building One, the central tower block, is the prime landmark structure of the existing National Naval Medical Center due to its architectural distinction and association with President Franklin D. Roosevelt, as well as with achievements in the practice of military medicine. Buildings 3 and 5 are slightly later ancillary structures in a similar architectural style, also designed under the supervision of the Tower Block's architect, Paul Philippe Cret and drawing significance from the same contexts. Building One is listed on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), while the other two buildings have been determined contributing elements of an historic district eligible for the NRHP. In practice, all three are given equal standing under Section 106 of NHPA, which requires federal agencies to take into account the effect of their undertakings on historic resources.

Site

The gradually sloping landscape and terraces of the Medical Center were also designed by Paul Cret as part of the original construction. The tower and wings of Building One are centered on a circular drive (Wood Road) that spans between the north and south gates marking the Campus entry points from Rockville Pike. Wood Road, along with the north and south retaining walls that extend 215 feet from the central terrace, defines the edge of the semicircular central terrace that extends 130 feet from the building entrance.

In the center of the front lawn lie a granite and bronze flagpole and base, together reaching a height of 90 feet. Two large nautical anchors rest to the north and south of the flagpole, and on the western side of the base there are three steps leading down the hillside.

Prior Commission Action

The Commission approved the Concept design for the Medical Facility Additions – Buildings A and B at its October 4, 2007 meeting. The Executive Director’s Recommendation (EDR), which was adopted by the Commission, noted that, “The Maryland Historical Trust (MHT) accepted the concept design with regard to location, footprint, and massing; and requested Section 106 consultation to move forward with fenestration design, materials selection, and other design and planning details.” The action also required the following be included in subsequent submissions:

- Revised elevations indicating a more compatible fenestration pattern, and including dimensions and material notations.
- Information regarding the buildings’ related site features, including lighting (proposed fixtures, locations, and foot-candle levels).
- Samples of the proposed finish materials.
- Completed Environmental Impact Statement, Master Plan, and Transportation Management Plan for the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center.
- A summary of planned staffing and related parking accommodations, as will be determined by the completed Environmental Impact Statement, Master Plan, and Transportation Management Plan (*see “Consultation” section, page 8*).
- Completed Section 106 consultation for the project and a final determination of effect from the Maryland Historical Trust.

The background information included in the EDR also detailed several design parameters that evolved from the discussions by NCPC and MHT staffs:

- The buildings must be symmetrical around Building One.
- The adjacent front planes of Building A (Outpatient Care Pavilion) and Building B (Inpatient Addition) cannot be forward (west) of the front of the wings of Building One.
- The view shed west of Building One is to remain unobstructed.
- The west footprints of Buildings A and B, along Wood Drive, are to step away from the wings of Building One.
- The front walls of Buildings A and B cannot be higher than the wings of Building One.
- Building heights may be permitted to be higher than the wings of Building One provided that their front walls are stepped back to minimize visibility from within the site.
- The overall heights of Buildings A and B are to be the same.
- New construction should respect, and enhance where possible, the historical importance of the other buildings and courtyards on the site.

Proposal

The United States Department of the Navy has submitted preliminary and final site and building plans for additions and site/utility improvements to the medical facility at the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center (WRNMMC) at Bethesda; the proposal is the result of thorough assessment of the BRAC requirements and subsequent master planning (*see “Consultation” section, page 8*).

The proposed design of Buildings A and B retains the footprint, scale, and massing approved by the Commission at the Concept design review; extensive evaluation and design development of the building elevations has been undertaken as a result of the Commission action from Concept design. The new buildings’ elevations have been refined to better relate to the stripped classical/art deco aesthetic of existing Building One, including the following:

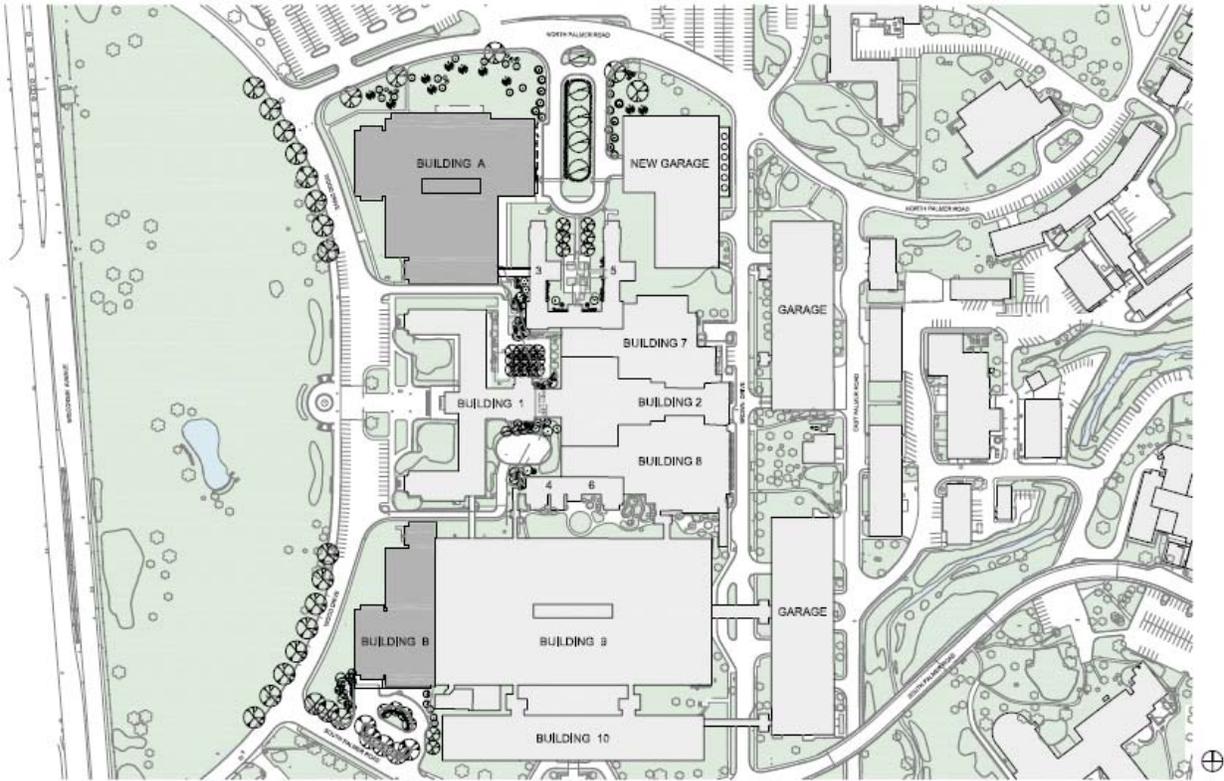
- A distinct base, middle, and top
- A repetitive, columnar look
- Solid elements, such as the base, building ends, vertical corners, and top
- Dark spandrels that give a vertical appearance to the fenestration
- Capping of vertical base openings with a square opening in the floor above

The project will include renovation of 261,000 square feet of the existing medical facility, construction of a new six-story building (Building A) of 533,000 square feet, and construction of a four-story addition (Building B) of 157,000 square feet. The new buildings will flank existing Building One, each with symmetrical facades and footprints around Wood Drive.

The historic Building One is clad with precast panels containing exposed aggregate of white quartz; the quartz gives the building a very white, sometimes shimmering effect. The rough texture of the precast, however, tends to collect dirt, muting and darkening the appearance of the original material. The material selected for Buildings A and B will work with the current “patina” of Building One precast, not a cleaned building; to differentiate new from historic, the precast cladding of Buildings A and B will be slightly darker, but of the same hue, as Building One, and will be lightly sand-blasted or heavy acid-washed (to expose very modest aggregate).

The window frames of Building One are a dark green bronze, the spandrels are serpentine (a dark green stone), and the window glass is clear. From afar, the vertical window and spandrel areas appear to be very dark slotted window openings. The mullion detail and variations in stone can only be seen at close range. The vertical fenestration of Buildings A and B will have the same aesthetic, with metal window frames and spandrels painted dark green and clear glass (with a Low-E coating for high energy performance) appearing as when viewed from Rockville Pike. This design approach will also serve to camouflage the different floor heights of the two buildings.

Site improvements related to the new buildings will include landscaping and utility/infrastructure improvements to the central equipment plant. As initially stated at the concept design stage, the historic courtyards to the rear of Building One will be preserved; neither construction from this project, nor from future projects anticipated as part of the pending Master Plan update, will alter the existing courtyard configurations or materials, and any landscaping that is disturbed will be replaced in-kind. Also planned is the addition of eight Willow Oak trees in front of each hospital addition to reestablish the significance of this tree specie on the campus and to frame Building One as the visual centerpiece of the Medical Center.

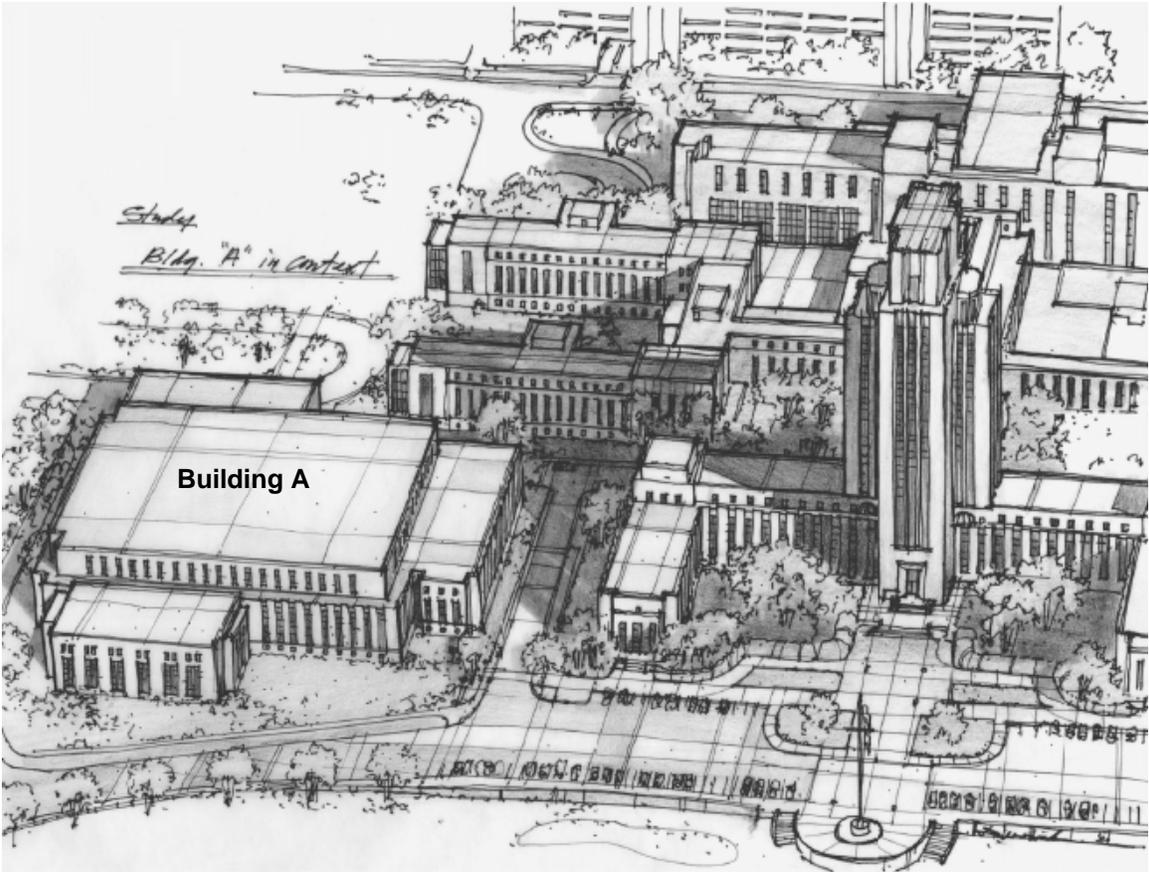


SITE/LANDSCAPING PLAN

In summary, the design of the proposed buildings are planned to be sympathetic yet deferential to the historic building. The scale and massing are as previously approved by the Commission, with their west footprints symmetrically stepping away from Building One, their primary cornices aligning with the existing building, and the view shed to the west preserved.



WEST ELEVATIONS – BUILDINGS A and B



AERIAL PERSPECTIVE – ARCHITECT’S RENDERING



BUILDING A - APPROACH ON WOOD DRIVE

PROJECT ANALYSIS

Staff finds that the proposed building additions meet the design parameters that were formulated during consultation with NCPC and MD-SHPO staffs with regard to footprint, building frontage/setbacks, symmetry, building heights, and preservation of view sheds and historic landscapes. Additionally the scale, massing, and material selection for the new buildings are well developed and appropriate additions to the WRNMMC medical facility; the applicant and design team are to be commended for their ongoing consultation and responsiveness to NCPC and MD-SHPO staffs, including site and building development that is well developed, sophisticated, and complementary to the appearance of historic Building One, while enhancing the overall image of the Medical Center.

In response to the Commission Action at the Concept design review, the applicant has revised the elevations to include more compatible fenestration patterns, and has provided additional information with regard to the building's overall size and height, landscaping, and proposed finish materials. The building will not have exterior accent lighting and will not detract from the nighttime appearance of Building One.

The Master Plan for the campus is currently being updated, and the project has therefore been referred to affected agencies for review; while the prior Commission action anticipated completion of the Master Plan prior to this submission, the need to meet the established BRAC timeline necessitated this alternate approach (*see "Consultation" section, page 8*). A summary of planned staffing has been provided with the submission, and related parking accommodations for the proposed buildings (to be identified in the Master Plan update and in related future projects) will be reviewed against the parking ratios established in the Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital.

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 Federal Workplace Element since it will enhance the efficiency, productivity, and public image of the federal government.

Federal Capital Improvements Program

This project is not included in the current list of projects included in the FCIP for the WRNMMC. The applicant is expected to add this project to the 2009-2014 version of the FCIP.

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)

An Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) has recently been completed for the WRNMMC campus. There are no anticipated adverse impacts resulting from the building additions, however related traffic increases are expected to result in adverse impacts. These impacts are expected to be mitigated with the implementation of the Transportation Management Plan, currently under development as part of the ongoing Master Plan update. NCPC does not have independent NEPA responsibility for federal projects outside the District of Columbia.

National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA)

The Navy has consulted extensively with Commission staff and the staff of the Maryland Historical Trust (MHT), which has resulted in a determination of no adverse effect by the Navy and concurrence by the MHT. NCPC does not have independent Section 106 responsibility for federal projects outside the District of Columbia.

Building One was listed in the National Register of Historic places in 1977. Constructed during the administration of President Roosevelt and based on a design concept originated by the president (he sketched a rough plan and elevation for the new Naval hospital on White House stationery), it is significant for its association with Roosevelt, World War II era military development, and the association with architect Paul Philippe Cret and the Navy architectural staff under Fredrick W. Southworth. A striking and architecturally significant building, the integrity of the tower remains intact as a highly visible landmark and the key defining element of the campus.

CONSULTATION

The Navy has completed an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the expansion related to the 2005 BRAC recommendations, and is currently in the process of updating the Master Plan, including a Transportation Management Plan (TMP), for the campus. Due to the ambitious timeline to implement BRAC recommendations, the project site and building plans have been referred to affected agencies through the Maryland State Clearinghouse ahead of the Master Plan. The following agencies have determined the proposed project to be generally consistent with their plans, programs, and objectives:

- Maryland National Capital Park and Planning Commission in Montgomery County
- Maryland Department of Transportation
- Maryland Department of Planning
- Maryland Department of Business and Economic Development
- Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments

Maryland Historical Trust (MHT)

The MHT finds that the project will have no adverse effect provided that material samples, once available, are provided for review and approval by the MHT. They have also requested that the U.S. Navy ensure that no significant historic landscape features will be permanently damaged.

Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE)

The Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) has determined that the proposed project is generally consistent with MDE plans, programs, and objectives; qualifying comments were also provided that addressed traffic and parking; hazardous materials and waste; construction materials and methods; energy sources; and emissions. The Navy has committed to coordinate construction activities and master planning efforts to address the MDE comments.

Maryland Department of Natural Resources

No comments were received from the Maryland Department of Natural Resources.