

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

C. Saum

NCPC File No. 6929



DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY U.S. COAST GUARD HEADQUARTERS

St. Elizabeths West Campus
2700 Martin Luther King Jr. Avenue, SE
Washington, D.C.

Submitted by General Services Administration

April 30, 2009

Abstract

The General Services Administration has submitted the U.S. Coast Guard Headquarters building and the West Ravine Parking Garage, both of which are part of Phase 1 as identified in the approved master plan. Gate 4 and the proposed access road between Gate 4 and Firth Sterling Avenue, the power plant, and a security fence are also part of Phase 1 but are not included in this submission. The Headquarters building is a 1.170 million square foot office building that will house approximately 3,900 employees. The parking garage, which will be built in two phases, will provide space for approximately 2,000 cars, half for employees of the U.S. Coast Guard and half for staff of the Department of Homeland Security Headquarters, to be located in the historic Center Building. The submission is consistent with the approved master plan. A Record of Decision and a Programmatic Agreement were completed and included in the submission for approval of the final master plan, and consultation regarding the current submission as well as subsequent phases is ongoing in accordance with the Programmatic Agreement.

Approval of the Final Master Plan was contingent upon GSA's ability to construct the west access road connecting Firth Sterling Avenue, SE to the modified Malcolm X Avenue, SE / I-295 Interchange, through the Shepherd Parkway, but since the current submission does not request an official action for approval, it is thus not subject to this or any other conditions of the master plan approval.

Commission Action Requested by Applicant

Comments on the concept design, pursuant to 40 U.S.C. § 8722(b)(1) and (d).

Executive Director's Recommendation

The Commission:

Comments favorably on the concept design for the U.S. Coast Guard Headquarters Building and parking garage as Phase 1a of the Department of Homeland Security Headquarters at St. Elizabeths West Campus, as shown on NCPC Map File No. 83.10(64.00)42754

Notes that approval of the Final Master Plan is contingent upon the General Services Administration's ability to construct the west access road connecting Firth Sterling Avenue, SE to the modified Malcolm X Avenue, SE/I-295 Interchange, through the Shepherd Parkway

Recommends that in further development of the design for Phase 1, the General Services Administration

- Conduct further study of building façades, with particular attention to the northern façade, to provide a level of depth and detail that will reduce the potential for monotony
- Preserve the variety and size of plant materials shown in the concept for the landscape design
- Conduct additional Section 106 consultation to evaluate the feasibility of placing the cemetery inside the secure perimeter of the West Campus, and **notes** the need for resolution of this issue before the security fence is submitted for approval

Strongly encourages the General Services Administration to build one or more additional levels of the West Ravine Parking Garage underground, thus reducing its height and bulk

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PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Site

The site of the proposed U.S. Coast Guard Headquarters Building (USCG HQ) is in an area of the St. Elizabeths West Campus identified in the Final Master Plan as Parcel 4. The site includes the western slopes of the plateau on which St. Elizabeths was built. It is west of the Center Building, south of the existing cemetery, and east of the Shepherd Parkway. The site is currently occupied by a non-contributing warehouse building that was built in the 1950s, and by secondary succession growth woodland. The site slopes 36 meters (118 feet) from top to bottom and is visible from Haines Point and from Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport.



Approved Master Plan showing U.S. Coast Guard Headquarters Building and West Ravine Parking Garage

Background

The *Master Plan for the U.S. Department of Homeland Security Headquarters Consolidation at St. Elizabeths* was approved by the Commission on January 8, 2009. The Master Plan will be implemented in phases over a period of eight years. Phase 1, for which FY 2009 construction funds have been appropriated, includes all the necessary functional spaces and infrastructure to fully support the operations of the U.S. Coast Guard Headquarters (USCG HQ), including an office building to accommodate 3860 employees and parking for 983 vehicles belonging to USCG employees in the West Ravine Parking Garage. It also includes core components of the campus infrastructure for both utilities and security for the entire campus. Those infrastructure components include basic perimeter security for the site, a power plant to serve the entire campus, Access Gate #4 and an access road connecting Gate #4 to Firth Sterling Avenue. The current submission includes the USCG HQ and the West Ravine Parking Garage.

Proposal

The current submission includes the USCG HQ and associated parking in the West Ravine Parking Garage. The USCG HQ will be housed in a 1.170 million square foot office building to be built on a steep embankment just west of the historic Center Building and south of the historic

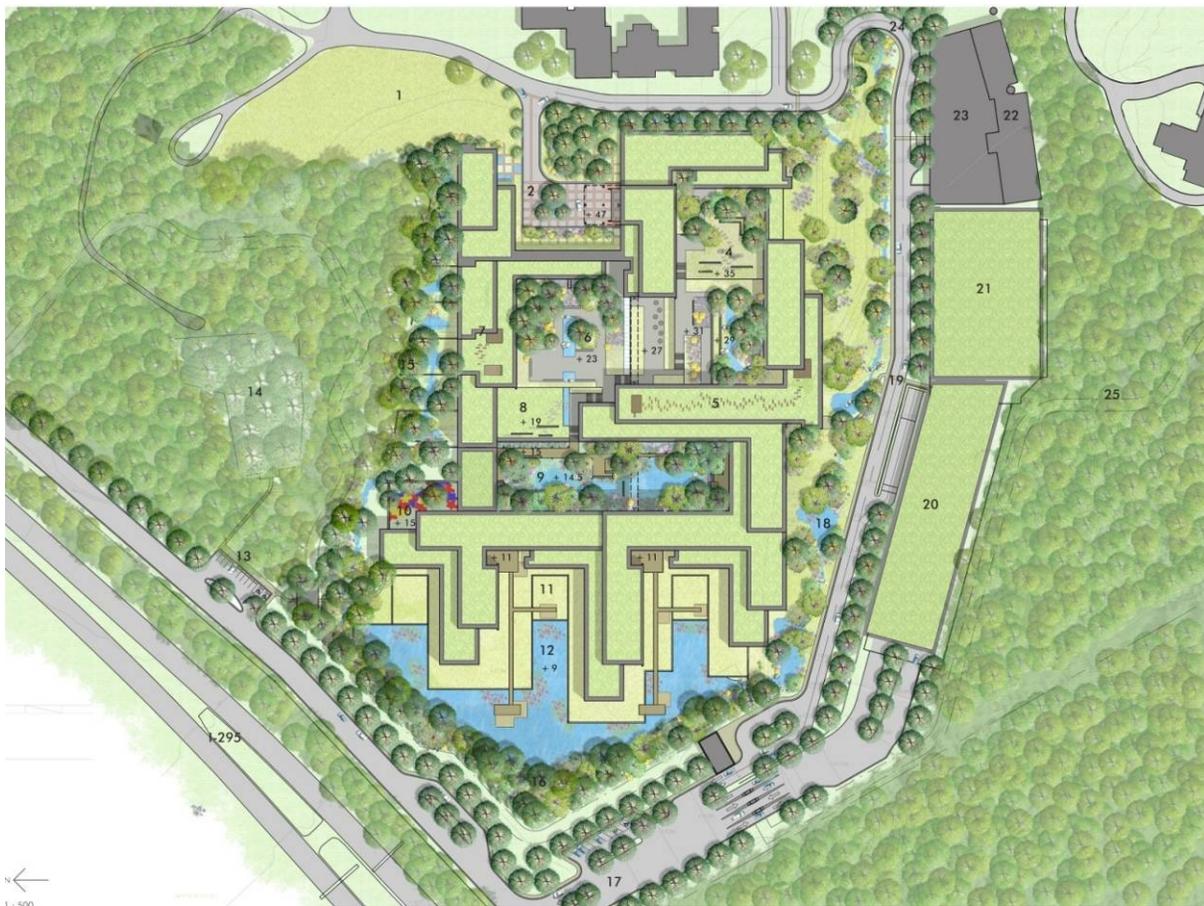
cemetery. The USCG HQ building's entry courtyard occurs at the top of the plateau, across from the west wing of the Center Building. The courtyard serves an entrance canopy and a two-story lobby. Additional elements of the building step down the hillside and frame a series of courtyards that are designed to accommodate a variety of activities. These building elements are two to three stories high along the perimeter of the site, and three to five stories high facing the courtyards. The building massing is designed to allow the building to blend into the city's "green bowl" and the façades are designed to recall the historic buildings that form the context for the site, but in a more modern and abstract way. Façade materials include brick, native stone, glass, metal and vegetation.



Aerial Photo of St. Elizabeths West Campus showing concept for USCG HQ and West Ravine Parking Garage

Two-thirds of the rainwater that falls on the West Campus drains through the USCG HQ site, and the landscaping is designed to contain rainfall for up to a 15-year storm event on-site through a series of rain gardens that step down the hillside along the building's perimeter. These rain gardens will dissipate the energy of a storm event and filter the water as it moves through the system, thus improving water quality while relieving pressures on the city's combined storm and sanitary sewer system. Landscaping within the building's courtyards is inspired by the geomorphology of the Chesapeake Bay watershed, with the entry courtyard mimicking plant materials and land forms found in the mountains of the Blue Ridge, mid-level courtyards mimicking areas of the Piedmont, and the lowest areas mimicking tidal wetlands and coastal plains.

The West Ravine Parking Garage is designed to accommodate 1,973 cars, 983 for staff of the USCG HQ, and 990 for staff of the DHS HQ. The parking garage will be built in two phases, with the portion closest to the power plant being built first. It is anticipated that 70 percent of the employees arriving by car will approach the campus via a new access road that will run parallel to I-295 and pass through a security checkpoint at Gate #4 before accessing the garage. The garage building itself has seven levels, with five levels above grade and two levels below grade. Two vertical circulation elements containing stairs and elevators located on the north side of the garage will allow people to move from the parking garage to entrances at the lower levels of the USCG HQ building. Both north and south façades will be covered with a “green wall” system that will support trailing plants. Green roof systems will completely cover both the USCG HQ building and the parking garage.



USCG HQ building and West Ravine Parking Garage concept

Development Program

The USCG HQ building and West Ravine Parking Garage will be constructed using a design-build process. GSA anticipates that the bid package for the design-build contract will be complete by the end of May 2009. This submission is intended to provide the Commission with

an opportunity to provide comment on the design concept before the bid package is complete. It is anticipated that final approval for the project will be sought in January 2010.

PRIOR COMMISSION ACTION

As noted above, the Master Plan for the U.S. Department of Homeland Security Headquarters Consolidation at St. Elizabeths was approved by the Commission on January 8, 2009. The Commission noted that approval of the Final Master Plan was contingent upon GSA's ability to construct the west access road connecting Firth Sterling Avenue, SE to the modified Malcolm X Avenue, SE / I-295 Interchange, through the Shepherd Parkway, and required the following as conditions for further approval:

That GSA submit to NCPC for review and approval, an Amendment to the Final Master Plan for the Interchange/Access Road Improvements that includes the following:

- An environmental document that complies with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), including a Record of Decision by the Federal Highway Administration with regard to the Malcolm X Avenue, SE / I-295 Interchange, and the National Historic Preservation Act, and that includes NCPC as a Cooperating Agency.
- Any modifications to the *Transportation Management Plan* resulting from ongoing analysis of the Interchange/Access Road Improvements.
- Any revisions to the concept design of the modified Interchange or Access Road as a result of NEPA or Section 106 consultation.

That GSA take the following actions prior to commencement of construction to implement Phase I of the Final Master Plan. These actions are consistent with NCPC's Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital, GSA's mission and goals for this project as stated in the Final Master Plan, and GSA's Programmatic Agreement executed on December 9, 2008 to conclude Section 106 review for the Final Master Plan:

- Document that those portions of the Shepherd Parkway required for implementation of Phase II of the Undertaking are available for use; and, in collaboration with DHS and the National Park Service, initiate Section 106 consultation for roadway design in accordance with the Stipulations set forth in the Programmatic Agreement.
- Verify that it has submitted a Phase II prospectus authorization and funding request to Congress, consistent with federal requirements, in accordance with Stipulation I.B.1.c of the Programmatic Agreement, acknowledging that rehabilitation of historic buildings and landscapes in Phase II is essential to mitigate adverse effects to the National Historic Landmark.
- Establish a schedule for ongoing Section 106 consultation with Consulting Parties addressing the East Campus and any Phase I projects currently funded.
- Identify and implement, in collaboration with signatories of the Programmatic Agreement, opportunities and means for the public to have regular access to the Point, the Cemetery, and Hitchcock Hall.
- Collaborate with Consulting Parties and District of Columbia agencies to explore traffic, access and design alternatives for the setting at Gate #1, including follow-on Section 106

consultation in accordance with Stipulation III.C of the Programmatic Agreement; and continue to explore alternatives that designate Gate #2 as the primary entrance to the West Campus.

- Conduct additional Section 106 consultation to evaluate the feasibility of placing the Cemetery inside the secure perimeter of the West Campus, in accordance with Stipulation III.C of the Programmatic Agreement and in response to access concerns expressed by Consulting Parties.

That GSA submit to NCPC for review and approval, an Amendment to the Final Master Plan for the East Campus portion of the DHS Headquarters Consolidation that includes the following:

- An environmental document that complies with the National Environmental Policy Act and the National Historic Preservation Act, and that includes NCPC as a Cooperating Agency. Evaluations shall include an assessment of the cumulative effects of the proposed plan in addition to other reasonably foreseeable development for the site and adjacent neighborhood.
- Any modifications to the *Transportation Management Plan* related to ongoing analysis of the East Campus portion of the Plan.
- A *View Shed Analysis* of the impacts of East Campus development, including road widening, on views to the East Campus from Martin Luther King Jr. Avenue, SE and from the Suitland Parkway.
- A *Summary of Planned Amenities*, describing shared use facilities that would be included in the East Campus portion of the proposed federal development that would also be available to the general public.
- A *Construction Staging Plan* that describes the timing, location, and impacts of construction staging areas on the East Campus.

Staff notes that the work above is ongoing and that since the current submission does not request an official action for approval, it is thus not subject to these conditions.

PROJECT ANALYSIS

Executive Summary

Staff is generally **supportive of the concept design** submitted for the USCG HQ and the west ravine parking garage. The USCG HQ will be the most visible new construction on the site, and its success as a design rests significantly on its ability to conform to the design guidelines developed for the West Campus. Staff finds that the design is in conformance with the Final Master Plan and with the St. Elizabeths West Campus Preservation, Design & Development Guidelines, and reflects comments made by the consulting parties during ongoing 106 consultation. The following comments reflect staff's understanding that design development is ongoing and are intended to highlight elements of the design that it believes are essential to the ultimate success of the project.

Design Issue 1: USCG HQ Building Façades and Massing

The massing for the USCG HQ building represents a significant improvement over what was shown in the Final Master Plan. Building heights are generally lower than what was allowed under the master plan, courtyards are larger, and building elements are more in keeping with the scale of existing buildings on the West Campus site. This was accomplished in part by expanding the overall building footprint. The site area for Phase 1 as defined in the Master Plan was 28 acres. The site area for Phase 1 as defined in the current submission is 30 acres but the buffer between the building site and the cemetery has increased. Staff finds the trade-off that increases built area in exchange for a lower overall building height to be worthwhile as it will reduce visibility of the project from both inside and outside the site. This trade-off also allows the USCG HQ building height in the area of its main entrance to be significantly reduced, thereby reducing adverse impacts on the Center Building.



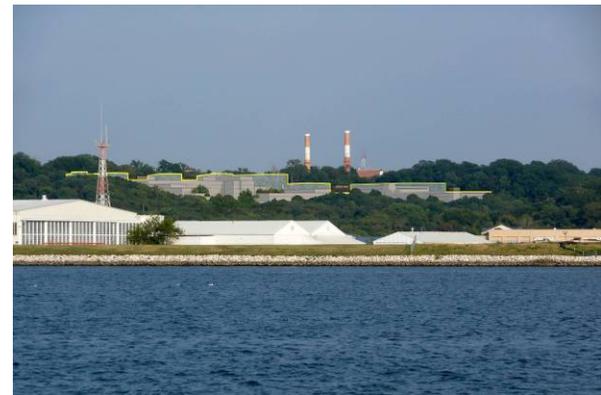
Comparative massing showing view of entry area



Comparative massing showing view from cemetery



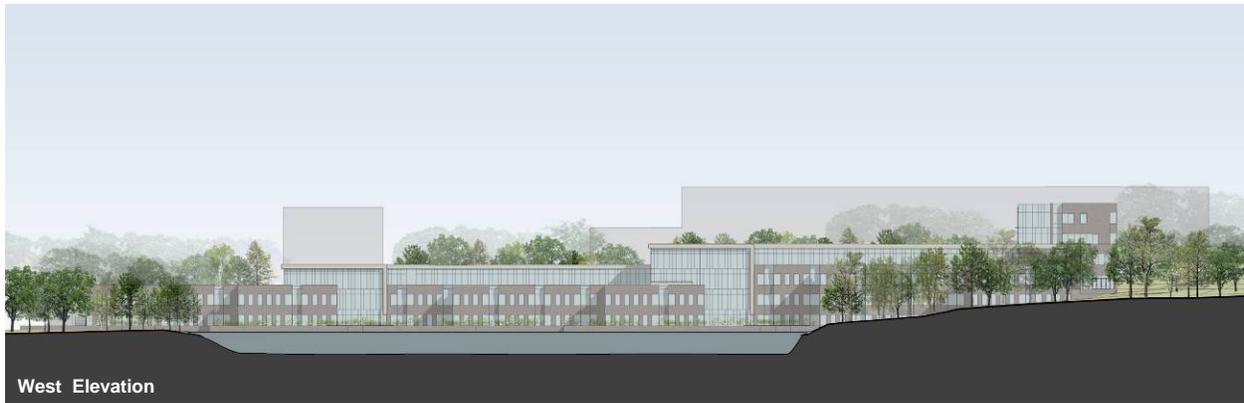
Comparative massing showing view from I-295



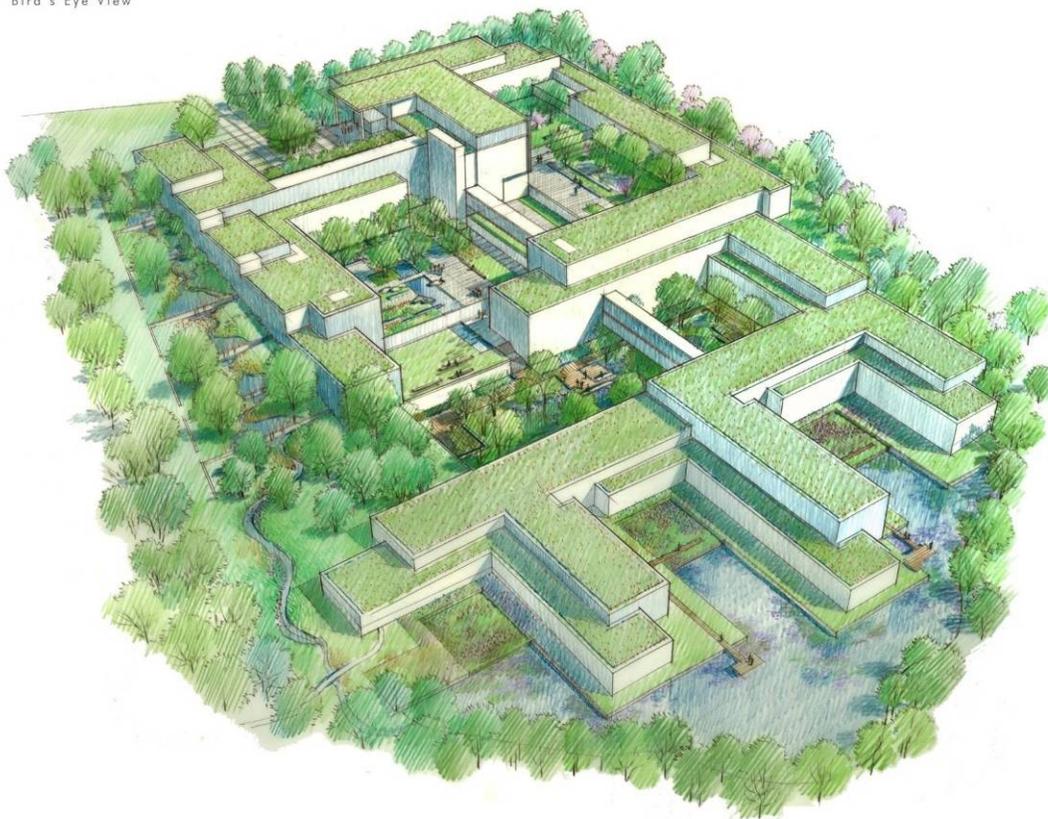
Comparative massing showing view from Hains Point

Staff is concerned, however, that the simple brick skin with punched windows, particularly along the northern façade of the building facing the historic cemetery, appears to be limited in depth that would create shadows and does not yet show the level of detailing that would keep the façade from being flat and monotonous. The *Preservation Design and Development Guidelines* adopted as part of the master plan state that windows should be vertically proportioned and recessed from the face of the wall. **Staff therefore recommends that the applicant conduct further study of building façades, with particular attention to the northern façade, to provide a level of depth and detail that will reduce the potential for monotony.**





Bird's Eye View



Birds eye view showing landscaped courtyards

Design Issue 2: USCG HQ Building Landscape Design Concept

As a result of the reduced building heights described above, the size of the interior courtyards has been expanded and the height of surrounded walls has been decreased. The increased daylight that will result from the lower building height, and the fact that portions of the courtyards are at existing grade, will allow future development of a tree canopy consistent with a design concept intended to mimic native arboreal landscapes. As these trees reach maturity, they will grow above the surrounding building walls and become visible from a distance. This will allow the building to blend into the surrounding wooded landscape of the Topographic Bowl.

Staff is concerned, however, that “value engineering” during the design-build process could result in a reduction in the variety of plant materials necessary to fully implement the design concept, and a reduction in the caliber of tree materials needed to provide the desired tree canopy within a reasonable period of time. **Staff therefore recommends that during the design-build phase, the applicant preserve the variety and size of plant materials shown in the concept for the landscape design.**

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Design Issue 3: West Ravine Parking Garage

The height of the West Ravine Parking Garage as shown in the current submission is consistent with the guidelines included in the Final Master Plan, and a green wall is proposed for the north and south facades to help the building blend into its surroundings. [Elevations of these facades have been shown at the Commission of Fine Arts and during consulting party meetings, but were not included in the submission material.] Staff notes, however, that it may be difficult to establish sufficient vegetative coverage, particularly on the north side of the building facing the USCG HQ, to adequately reduce the impact of this massive building. Staff has been informed that up to two floors of the structure could be built underground at a cost of approximately \$8 million per floor, thus reducing the height and bulk of the building, but that the ability to do this is limited by the amount of funds available. **Staff strongly supports reducing the height and bulk of the parking garage, and therefore recommends that the applicant seek the funding necessary to accomplish this goal.**

Design Issue 4: Impact on the Historic Cemetery

In its analysis of the Final Master Plan, staff noted the need for ongoing consultation regarding the impact of the USCG HQ building and the perimeter security fence on the historic cemetery. The programmatic agreement calls for safe and secure public access to the cemetery, including an adjacent parking area. The current submission shows a shift in the location of the USCG HQ building site away from the cemetery. The increased distance and the reduced height appear to reduce the negative impact that this building will have on the cemetery and its environs. However, staff notes that ongoing concerns regarding the location of the security fence among the consulting parties that have yet to be resolved. The current location of the fence will require that most visitors approach the cemetery from the parking area at the bottom of the hill. Because the headstones face uphill and the current entry gate to the cemetery is at the top of the hill, this will have a significant effect on the visitor experience. In addition, creation of a cleared buffer between the two lines of fencing will require removal of vegetation, including trees that are noted in the *Preservation, Design and Development Guidelines* as being especially important in maintaining the parcel’s character. **Staff therefore repeats its recommendation for additional Section 106 consultation to evaluate the feasibility of placing the cemetery inside the secure perimeter of the West Campus and notes the need for resolution of this issue before the security fence is submitted for approval.**

CONFORMANCE

Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital

Staff has evaluated the concept for the USCG HQ for conformance with five of the seven Federal Elements of the Comprehensive Plan: the Federal Workplace, Transportation, Parks and Open Space, Federal Environment, and Preservation and Historic Features elements. In summary, staff finds the project to be in conformance with the goals and policies associated with each Element.

Federal Workforce Element: The Federal Workplace Element encourages the federal workforce to be located within the District of Columbia to enhance the efficiency, productivity, and public image of the federal government; to strengthen the economic well-being and expand employment opportunities of the region and the localities therein; and to encourage federal agencies and communities to work together to improve operational efficiency and productivity of federally owned and leased workplaces and the economic health and livability of communities within the region. The construction of the USCG HQ will retain approximately 4,000 federal employees currently working in the District of Columbia by relocating them from leased to federally owned space. This project is therefore in conformance with this Element.

Transportation Element: The Transportation Element promotes a balanced, multi-pronged strategy to maximize federal employees' and facilities' access to the region's extensive transit system. The policies of this element address parking at federal facilities, impacts to the local and regional traffic/transit networks, and transportation management. The Final Master Plan submission conformed to the *Parking*, *TMP*, and *TDM* policies of the Comprehensive Plan by including a fully developed Transportation Management Plan, including commitments for extensive use of public transportation (35% Metro to 42% commuter bus – Metro combination). The USCG HQ will conform to the Comprehensive Plan parking ration of 1:4 by providing approximately 1,000 parking spaces for approximately 4,000 employees.

Parks and Open Space Element: The Parks and Open Space Element establishes policies to protect, enhance, and expand the region's parks and open space system, and to protect the forested ridgelines of the topographic bowl that surrounds the District. By reducing the above-ground development and limiting building heights, the Final Master Plan strives to reduce the impacts to important green spaces and the visual qualities they provide. The Design Guidelines included with the Final Master Plan were written to improve conformance with this element. Concept designs for the USCG headquarters building exhibit GSA's commitment to preserve open space and the green topographic bowl as much as possible by reducing the monolithic appearance of the building and by integrating the structure into the wooded hillside to a greater degree than that depicted in the Final Master Plan; and by keeping the roofs below the ridgeline.

Federal Environment Element: The Federal Environment Element promotes the federal government as an environmental steward and identifies the Commission's planning policies related to the maintenance, protection, and enhancement of the region's natural environment. The USCG HQ includes measures for stormwater management techniques to reduce or eliminate runoff into the local rivers. Building plans would incorporate green roofs, local materials, and other sustainable materials and methods to achieve at least a LEED Silver certification.

Preservation and Historic Features Element: The Preservation and Historic Features Element helps to strengthen the significant architectural and planning character that makes the national capital a unique place, including protection of the topographic bowl (see Parks and Open Space Element above). There are several measures identified in the Programmatic Agreement, which concluded Section 106 consultation for the master planning phase of the project, that are consistent with the objectives of the Preservation and Historic Features Element of the Comprehensive Plan as well as with Section 110 (f) of the National Historic Preservation Act (see *National Historic Preservation Act* section, page 40).

The Final Master Plan includes extensive rehabilitation and preservation of nearly all of the contributing buildings and a large number of contributing landscape features extant on the site. Nevertheless, GSA has determined that the undertaking would cause adverse effects to the National Historic Landmark. Staff has concurred with this determination throughout the Section 106 consultation process. The executed Programmatic Agreement is intended to address these adverse effects as carefully and comprehensively as possible, and recognizes the need to balance the project's operational requirements with appropriate treatments of the NHL; but the proposed alterations to the setting of the National Historic Landmark mean that the policies of this Element would not be fully met.

Federal Capital Improvements Plan

The Federal Capital Improvements Program for 2009-2014, adopted by the Commission on September 4, 2008, shows the St. Elizabeths Hospital West Campus DHS Consolidation project as requiring additional planning coordination. Since then, the requirements of NEPA and Section 106 of NHPA have been met and the Final Master Plan approved. It is anticipated that the project recommendation will be amended in the FCIP for 2010-2015. The project received \$346 million in the FY 2009 Congressional budget, and will receive \$650 million through the Economic Recovery Act of 2009.

Relevant Federal Facility Master Plan

Staff has determined that the current submission is in conformance with Final Master Plan for the DHS Consolidation at the St. Elizabeths West Campus. Building heights and density conform to the standards for new construction included in the *Preservation, Design and Development Guidelines*, and the programmatic requirements regarding gross square footage and number of employees conform to the master plan. The landscape design conforms to the goals identified in the master plan of removing alien invasive plants and reestablishing biodiversity, and stormwater will be managed in conformance with the master plan's principles.

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)

Pursuant to the requirements of NEPA, GSA, in cooperation with DHS, NCPC, FHWA, and the District Department of Transportation, prepared an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the St. Elizabeths Final Master Plan. The Final EIS (FEIS) was issued by GSA on November 7, 2008 and, following receipt of public comments that were due on December 8, 2008, GSA issued

its Record of Decision on December 16, 2008. The current proposal for the USCG HQ is consistent with the Environmentally Preferred Alternative as identified in the FEIS.

The EIS included consideration of alternatives for the USCG HQ and associated projects and their impacts on the 176-acre federal campus. GSA made the draft EIS available to the public for a 90-day public comment period and circulated the FEIS for a 30-day review period starting November 7, 2008. GSA completed a review of comments and concluded its NEPA work on December 16, 2008 with a Record of Decision (ROD).

NCPC is a federal agency with its own NEPA obligations set forth in its Environmental and Historic Preservation Policies and Procedures. NCPC participated as a Cooperating Agency in GSA's development of its EIS, and NCPC provided comments on the draft and final documents. The FEIS was also made available to the Commission members. NCPC's Executive Director adopted GSA's FEIS under NCPC and Council on Environmental Policy procedures, and in conjunction with this report, has satisfied NCPC's independent NEPA obligations.

NCPC is, in this EDR, using the GSA Final EIS for the St. Elizabeths Final Master Plan to inform its review of and recommendations for the USCG HQ. NCPC is also monitoring GSA's implementation of its impact mitigation commitments through its review under the National Capital Planning Act. A summary of the environmental considerations, as required by NEPA Regulations, 40 CFR 1505.2, and NCPC's conclusions regarding the Final Master Plan, including the USCG HQ, was included in the Executive Director's Recommendation for the Final Master Plan dated December 31, 2008.

National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA)

The Secretary of the Interior designated St. Elizabeths a National Historic Landmark (NHL) in 1990 for its significance and exceptional value in illustrating the history of the United States. St. Elizabeths is also significant for its association with figures of national importance, and for its architecture. The NHL includes 82 contributing buildings, 62 of which are on the West Campus. Important viewsheds within the campus, as well as into and out from the campus, are also integral to the significance of the property. The site for the USCG HQ and the associated parking garage will be built on a portion of the West Campus currently occupied by a non-contributing warehouse building and secondary succession growth woodland.

A Programmatic Agreement (PA) for the Final Master Plan was executed on December 9, 2008. The PA stipulates mitigation measures and addresses the processes and goals for future consultation on individual projects or project phases. Because the campus is an NHL, Section 110(f) of the NHPA is invoked and requires that "the federal agency official, to the maximum extent possible, undertake such planning and action as may be necessary to minimize harm to any National Historic Landmark that may be directly and adversely affected by an undertaking." Since it has approval authority for the proposed undertaking under the Planning Act, the National Capital Planning Commission shares this requirement and responsibility with GSA.

NCPC's principal objective throughout the definition and development of this Undertaking, and throughout the Section 106 consultation since it commenced in 2005 has been to minimize harm

to the National Historic Landmark to the maximum extent possible, as the Commission is obligated to do under Section 110 (f) of the National Historic Preservation Act.

The PA contains many exhibits that will be used in concert with the stipulations in the PA. Perhaps the most significant PA exhibit for the implementation of future projects on the campus is also the primary mitigation for the adverse effects resulting from the redevelopment of the campus. That is the “Preservation, Design, and Development Guidelines” (Design Guidelines) which require that all rehabilitation work be carried out in compliance with the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties, and that design professionals also meet stringent qualification standards. GSA developed the Design Guidelines specifically for the significant historic properties on the St. Elizabeths West Campus. If applied as written, they are the primary mitigation for the adverse effects of the Undertaking on the National Historic Landmark. The Design Guidelines describe and define the appropriate rehabilitation of the historic buildings and historic landscape, treatment of potential effects to archaeological resources, and preservation of contributing viewsheds. The designs for the USCG HQ and parking garage are being developed in accordance with the Design Guidelines, although further consultation is anticipated to avoid, minimize or mitigate adverse effects of this project.

CONSULTATION

Coordinating Committee

The Coordinating Committee reviewed the proposal on April 15, 2009, and forwarded it to the Commission with the statement that the project has been coordinated with all participating agencies, except the District Department of Transportation. The representative for DDOT requested additional time to coordinate with other DDOT staff, but did not identify any substantive concerns. Staff will continue to coordinate with DDOT as the project design evolves. The participating agencies were NCPC; the National Park Service; the General Services Administration; the District of Columbia Office of Planning; and the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority.

Commission of Fine Arts

The Commission of Fine Arts reviewed the proposal on April 16, 2009. Although lacking a quorum, the Commission members present recommended approval of the overall site planning and general configuration of the proposed building and landscape, and requested the development of the design in a revised concept submission. This recommendation will be placed on the agenda for confirmation at the Commission’s next meeting of 21 May.

In their discussion, the Commission members commented that the proposed design represents an improvement over the master plan, particularly in the revised massing, the more spacious configuration of the building footprint, and the integration with the landscape, but recommended further study of the scale of the building and landscape elements as informed by how the building population inhabits and moves through the complex. A copy of the Commission’s letter to the General Services Administration dated 24 April is attached.