

# STAFF RECOMMENDATION



C. Hart

NCPC File No. 6903

## FORT BELVOIR BRAC 133 PROJECT, MARK CENTER DEVELOPMENT (WASHINGTON HEADQUARTERS SERVICES)

Mark Center Drive at Seminary Road  
Alexandria, VA

Submitted by the Department of the Army

December 30, 2009

---

### Abstract

The Department of the Army has submitted preliminary and final site and building plans for several buildings and parking garages on a 15.9 acre tract of land at Mark Center in Alexandria, VA. This complex is to be used to relocate approximately 6,409 personnel of the Washington Headquarters Services (WHS) and support components in the region. The purpose of the project is to provide administrative space for the units, agencies, and activities of the WHS. This proposal is a Base Realignment and Closure Act (BRAC) project that is required to be completed by September 2011.

### Commission Action Requested by Applicant

Approval of preliminary and final site and building plans for the East and West Towers, the parking garages and the remote inspection facility of the BRAC 133 Project at Mark Center, pursuant to 40 U.S.C. § 8722(b)(1).

---

### Executive Director's Recommendation

The Commission:

**Approves** the preliminary and final site and building plans for the East and West Tower buildings, the parking garages and the remote inspection facility of the BRAC 133 Project for the Washington Headquarters Services, as shown on NCPC Map File No. 2503.00(61.10)42680.

**Requires** the applicant to complete and submit a final transportation management plan (TMP) that demonstrates how the proposed modal split will be achieved.

**Notes** that the applicant has agreed to enhance the architectural expression of the North Parking Garage facade next to the Transportation Center by allowing wall space that can be used for public art.

**Supports** the applicant's commitment to add screening along the Seminary Road side of the remote inspection facility (RIF) to minimize its visual impact and a green roof to further reduce its visibility.

**Notes** that the applicant has agreed to update staff on the I-395 ramp design currently being undertaken by the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT).

\* \* \*

## PROJECT DESCRIPTION

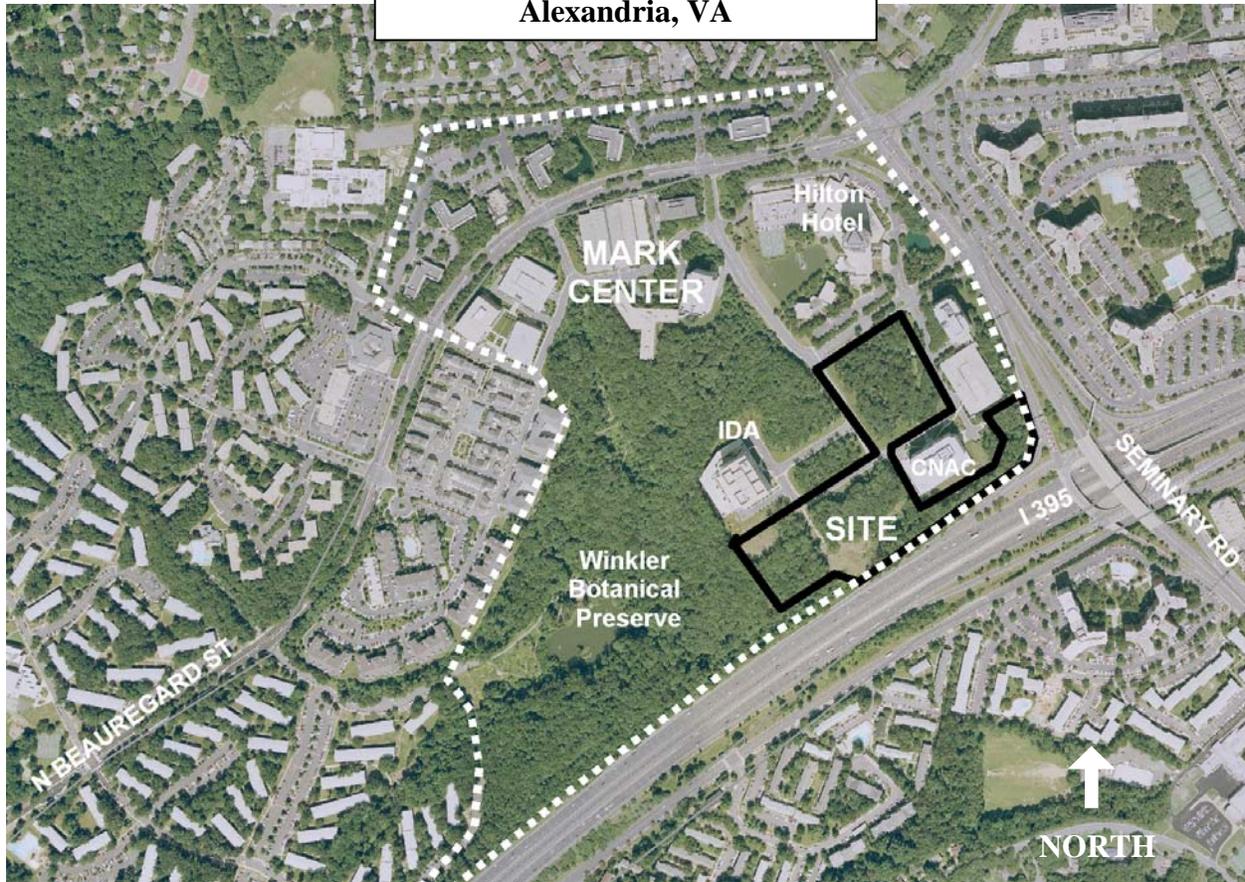
### Site

This proposal is the result of a BRAC action to separate the Washington Headquarters Services (WHS) relocation from consolidation of Army activities at the Engineering Proving Ground of Fort Belvoir. The Army selected this 15.9 acre site that is a portion of an existing office park for the WHS after an extensive review of three possible Northern Virginia locations, and completion of the Army's National Environmental Policy Act review of those, in September 2008. The WHS campus will be operated under the control of the Fort Belvoir Army Garrison at Fort Belvoir, Virginia.

The selected site is located west of the intersection of Seminary Road and Interstate Route 395 (I-395) (Shirley Highway) in the City of Alexandria, VA. It is a nearly 16-acre portion of the Mark Center development, a Class A office campus developed to preserve green space within an office building environment. Mark Center's focus is dense vertical office space, minimizing its footprint, and thus preserving more land for open space. On the west side of the BRAC 133 site is the 44-acre Winkler Botanical Preserve, a land parcel that serves as a drainage retention area and open green space.

There are two buildings in close proximity to the proposed development; the Center for Naval Analysis Corporation (CNAC) and the Institute for Defense Analyses (IDA). The CNAC building is an 8-story, 214,000 square-foot building, and the IDA building is a 10-story, 270,000 square-foot building. In addition, a third building, the Hilton Alexandria Mark Center Hotel and Conference center is located just to the north of the proposed WHS complex.

**MARK CENTER  
Alexandria, VA**



Up to five additional office buildings totaling approximately 1.35 million square feet are planned to be constructed by the Mark Center developer (Duke Realty Corporation) and have been approved by the City of Alexandria, as well as 1.3 million square feet of structured parking. The site is currently zoned for office space and is part of a larger mixed-use Mark Center development consisting of residential, hotel, retail, office, and open space.

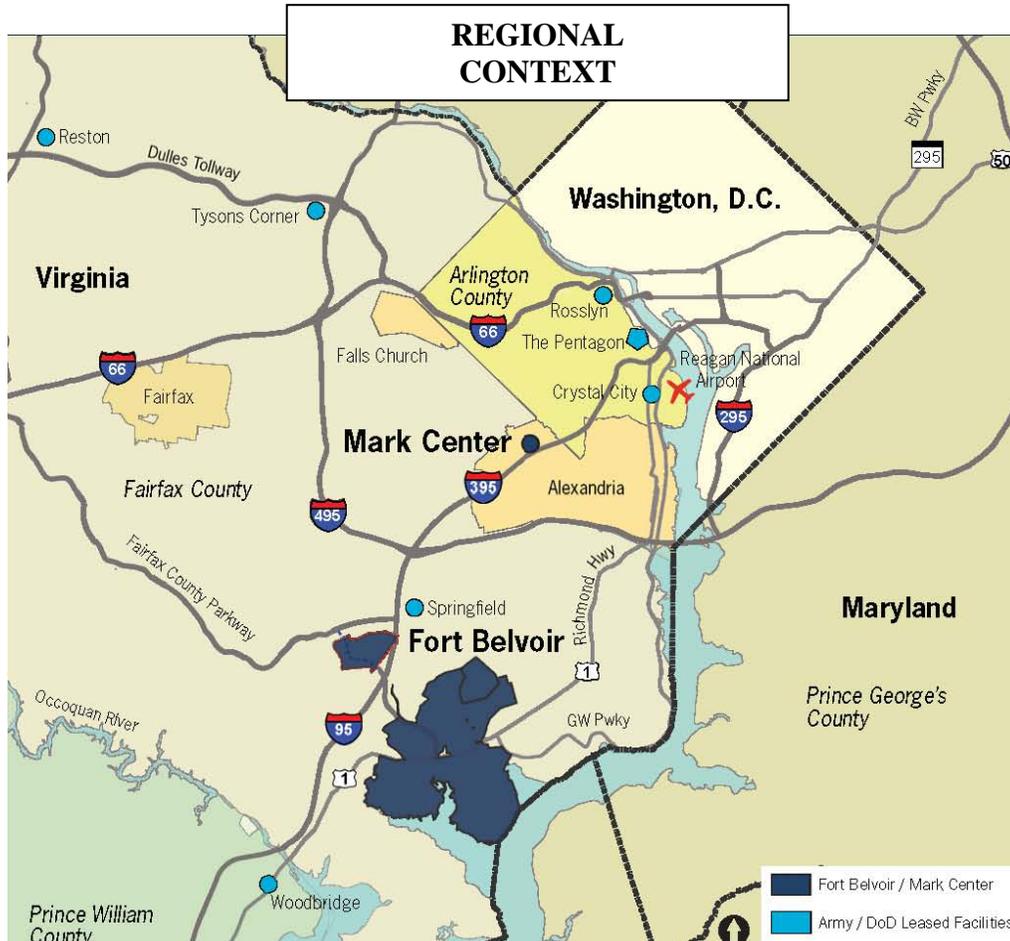
Access to the site is from Mark Center Drive, which connects to Seminary Road to the northeast and North Beauregard Street to the northwest.

This site is located approximately nine miles north of Fort Belvoir and approximately four miles southwest of the Pentagon.

### Background

Recommendation 133 of the 2005 Defense Base Closure and Realignment (BRAC) Commission, made in conformance with the provisions of the Base Closure and Realignment Act of 1990 (Public Law 101-510 as amended), required the relocation of elements currently located in leased facilities within the National Capital Region (NCR), to Fort Belvoir, Virginia.

The Army considered three sites as alternatives for the proposed action, that included a warehouse site owned by the GSA in Springfield; a privately owned office complex on Eisenhower Avenue in Alexandria, Virginia and a privately owned office complex on Seminary Road in Alexandria, called Mark Center.



In October 2008, the Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Army found the Mark Center location to be the most reasonable site for the project based on the comparison of the environmental impacts of the development at each of the three sites.

In February 2009, NCPC approved the final foundation plans for both the East and West Office Towers and commented favorably on the concept design for the office buildings themselves. There were some specific recommendations as well for the applicant before submitting the project for final approval. These included the following:

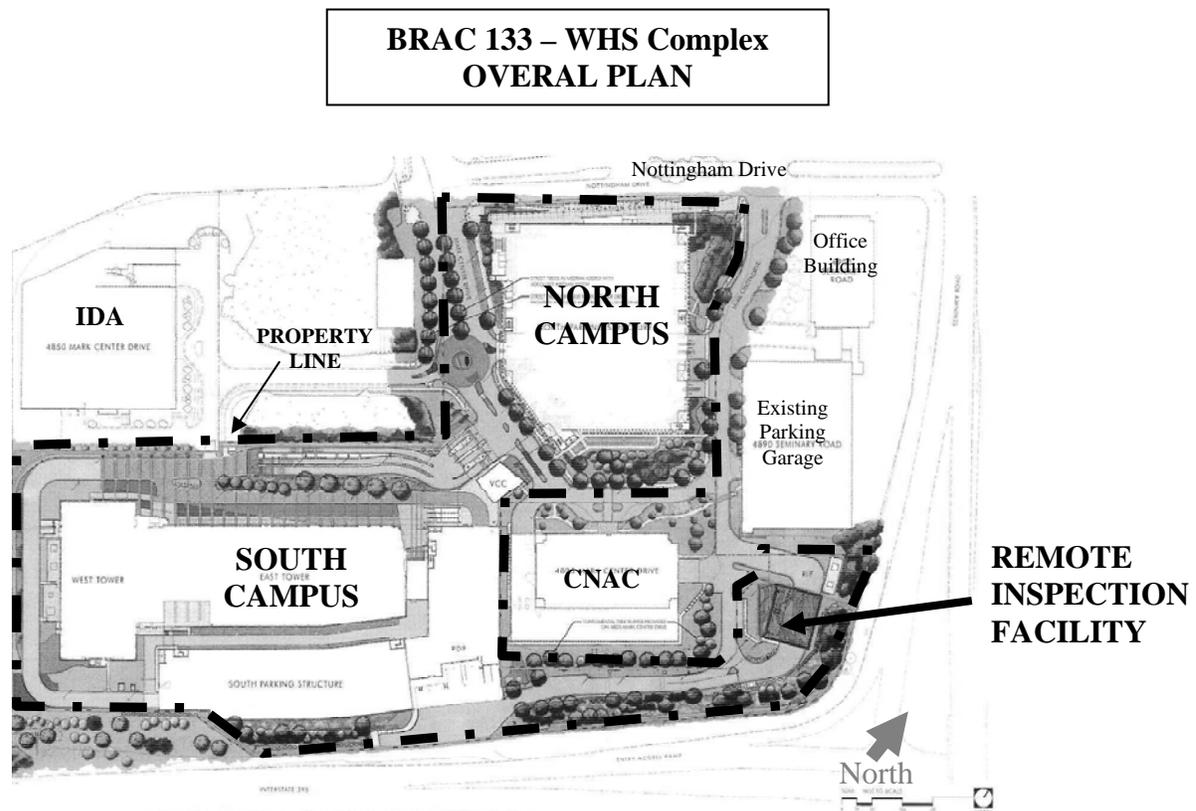
- Plan for the location of a slip-ramp to I-395 from the South Parking garage to accommodate federal employee traffic and include the final design of the ramp when the Army submits the BRAC 133 project for final review to the Commission.

- Conduct further design coordination with the City of Alexandria to address building and project design issues identified by the City and include any revisions in the future submissions to the Commission.
- Complete the National Historic Preservation Act, Section 106 process, for the North Garage location.
- Submit a revised land use plan as part of the updated Fort Belvoir master plan.
- Continue to coordinate with interested members of the public.

### Proposal

The Army proposes to relocate the 6,409 personnel under BRAC 133 from various leased offices throughout Northern Virginia into Army-owned space. The proposed site is a portion of an existing office park, and is organized into three interconnected areas: North Campus; South Campus; and a Remote Inspection Facility (RIF). A location plat for the property was approved by NCPC in February 2009.

The project area will be administered by the Fort Belvoir Garrison and will be incorporated into the Post's updated master plan which is currently being developed by the Army. The applicant has included an area development guide for this site, as it is isolated by both location and function from the main Fort Belvoir command. The land use is identified as professional/institutional for essentially all of the 15.9 acres and will contain a total of 1.7 million gross square feet federal building space.

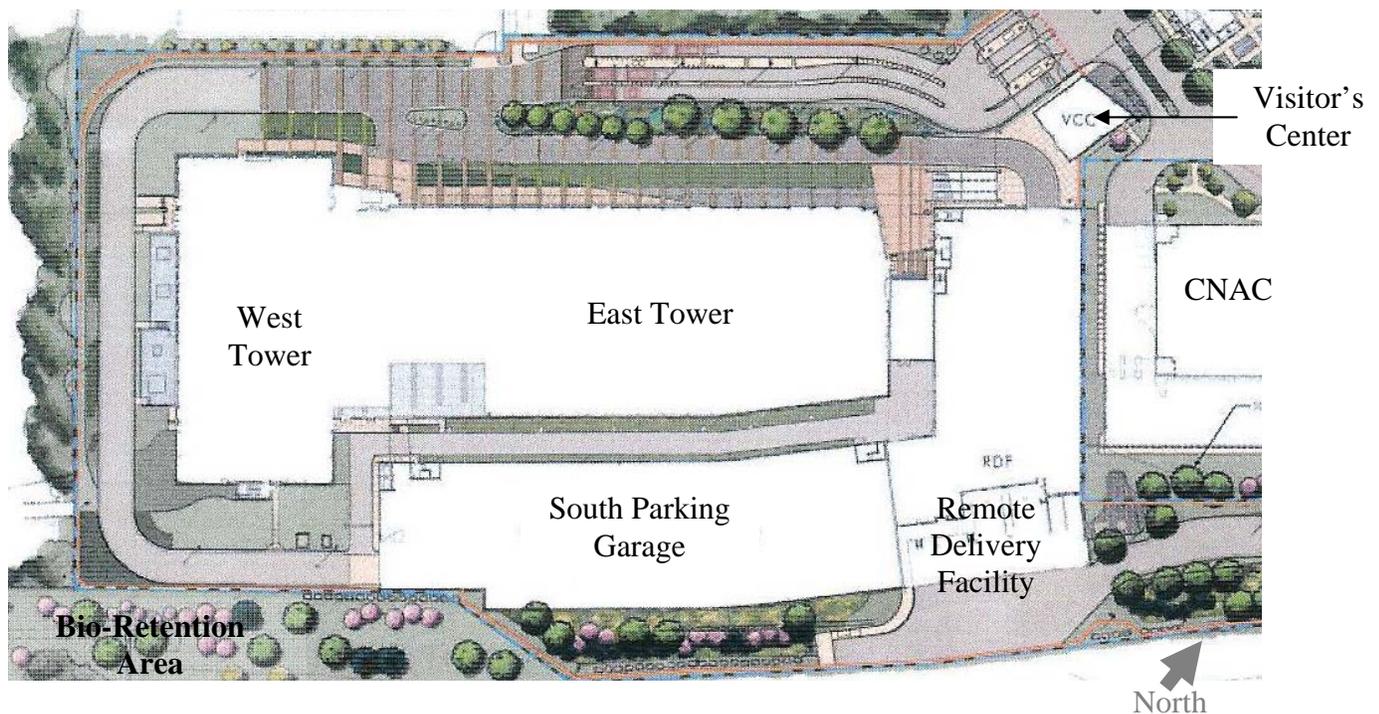


### *Mark Center Site*

The South Campus, the largest area of the site, accommodates an office tower complex. The East and West Towers have been designed as fifteen (15) stories and seventeen (17) stories respectively. The office towers are arranged in a “T” configuration and will comprise approximately 1.38 million square feet of development. These buildings will be connected on the bottom 10 floors to facilitate the sharing of common facilities such as, the cafeteria, IT infrastructure and server rooms, fitness center, and conference and training rooms.

The South Campus also includes a parking garage with 1,854 parking spaces on nine levels located adjacent to the East Tower. This is also the site of the access control point for the campus, which has been configured to allow visitors and employees at the same location.

### BRAC 133 – WHS Complex South Campus Plan

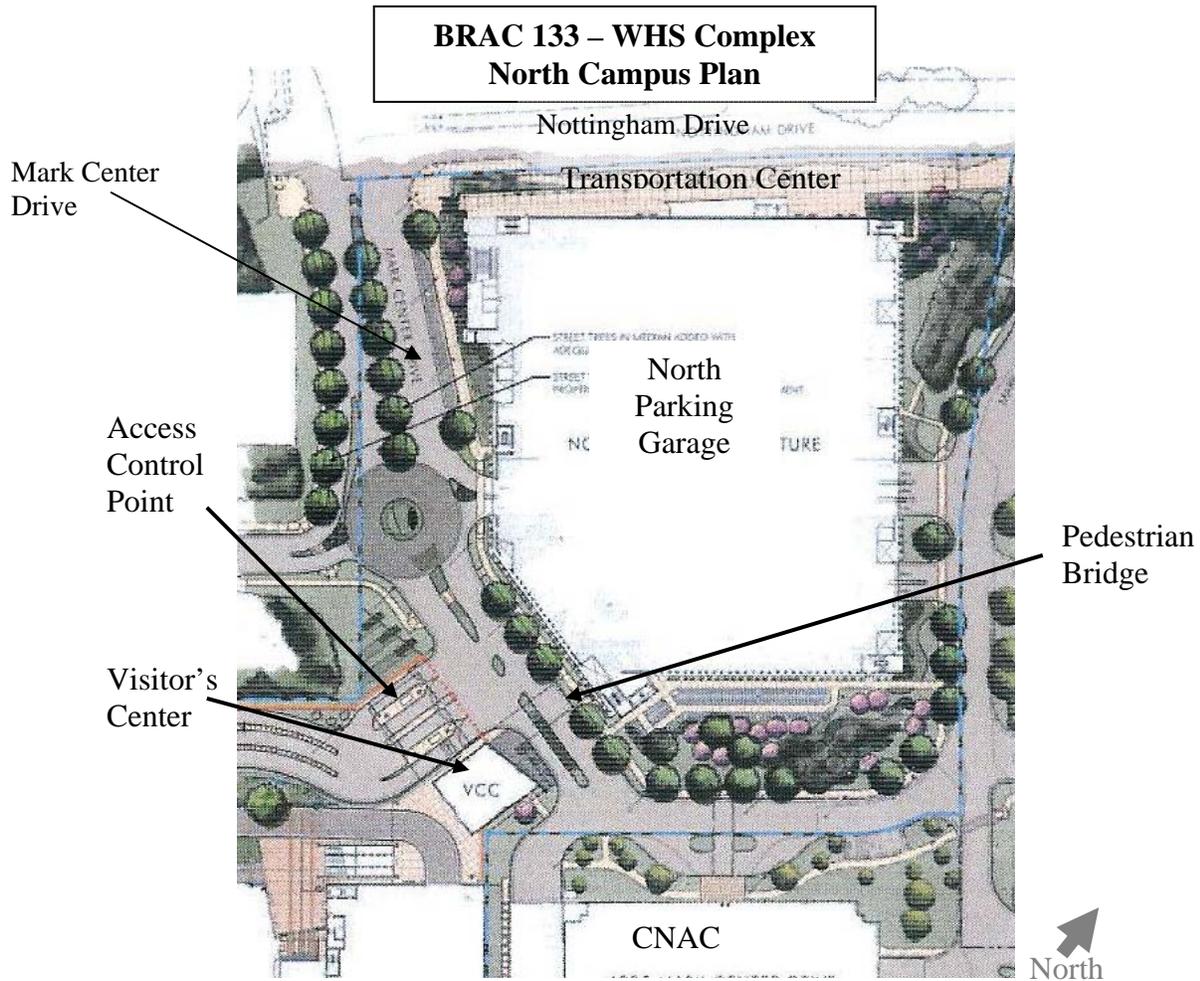


The remote delivery facility is located adjacent to the South Parking Garage and is connected to the remote inspection facility, located to the northeast, via an access road that parallels I-395.

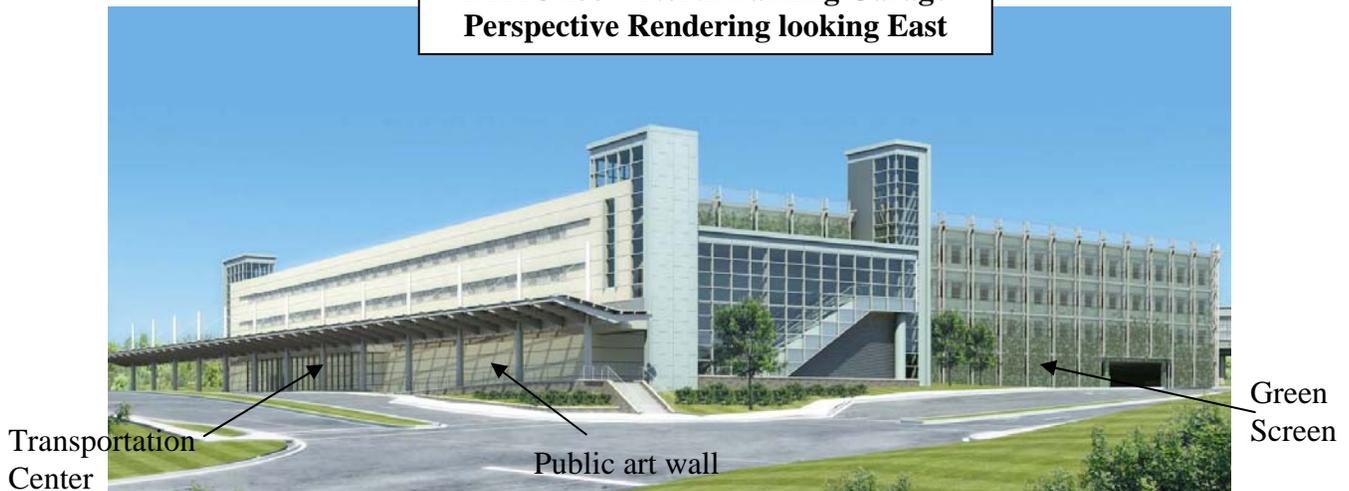
Landscaping proposed for this site is generally at the periphery of the property to accommodate Department of Defense setback and stand-off requirements.

The North Campus has been redesigned to improve the connection of the Center for Naval Analysis (CNAC) to the rest of the Mark Center campus. This is accomplished by connecting the North parking garage to the Office Towers via a pedestrian bridge. The North Parking

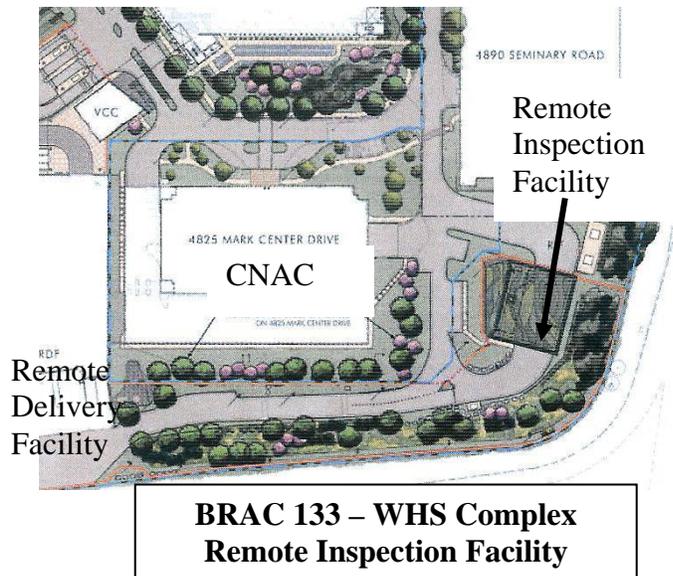
Garage, which contains parking for 2,044 spaces on seven levels is located along Nottingham Drive and incorporates the Transportation Center, which accommodates 6 bus bays. Green screens have been incorporated into the east and west and south facades of the garage. The transportation center's north façade has horizontal openings and includes vertical circulation towers on either end.



**BRAC 133 – North Parking Garage  
Perspective Rendering looking East**



The remote inspection facility (RIF) is located around the south and east sides of CNAC. This facility is for inspection of trucks. Vehicles enter onto the site and then go through a complete security scan at the RIF location and will take place at least 610 feet from the closest WHS office tower.



The vehicles enter the chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear scan machine and if problems occur during the scan, the vehicle can be routed to exit the campus. Following negotiations with the City of Alexandria, the Army redesigned the Remote Inspection Facility and now incorporates a green roof. The Army also agreed to lower the building profile to reduce its visibility at this corner of the property. There is also a dedicated link to the remote delivery facility (RDF) planned for the northeast corner of the South Campus parking garage.

#### *Site Security and Landscaping*

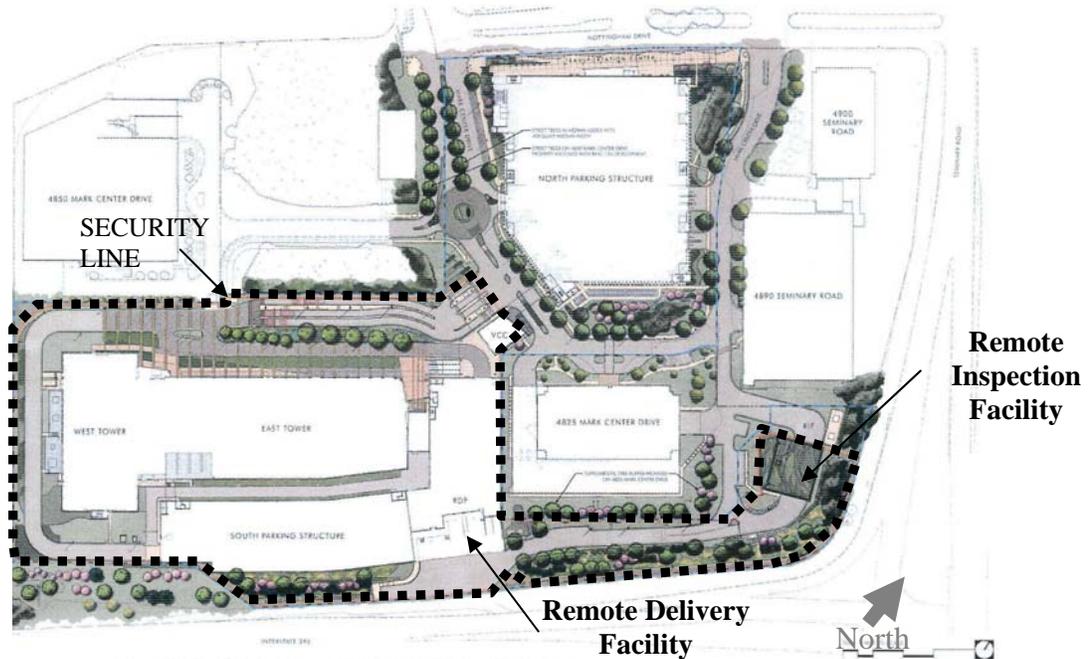
The Department of Defense guidelines require the maximum standoff distance for building facades. An eight foot high, anti-climb fence will be placed along the perimeter of the site and anti-ram protection will be provided except in locations where the terrain precludes vehicle access. Beyond the property line to the west is a protected open space reserve that is heavily wooded with steep terrain that prevents vehicle use. The deed of the open space land precludes development in the future. The threat locations are thus to the north and south of the main building complex facade. At the south façade, the use of roadway guardrails and steep terrain adjacent to the highway make it difficult for vehicles to approach close to the site. The land between the highway and the property line will not be developed in the future as it is retained in utility corridor easements and roadway easements.

To meet the requirements of the Department of Defense, a 33-foot, clear zone is proposed for all occupied buildings. This zone is intended to allow building security and building occupants to visually detect threat activities or actions occurring within this zone. Roadways inside the protected perimeter and parking for security-cleared vehicles will not be allowed within the clear zone.

As the layout of the roadways has changed, so has the location of the security line of the campus. In an effort to address some of the City's concerns about isolating the CNAC building, the North Parking Garage in the North Campus has been altered by relocating the Visitor's Center into the South Campus and bridging Mark Center Drive with a covered, pedestrian walkway which allows the North Parking Garage to be outside the security perimeter. The change allows for the

security perimeter to encompass the South Campus and the RIF completely without encircling the CNAC Building.

**BRAC 133 – WHS Complex  
PERIMETER SECURITY**



*Transportation*

Transportation analysis has been developed for the WHS operations at Mark Center and some preliminary targets have been established in an effort to reduce the single occupant vehicle trips to this site which is on a heavily traveled transportation corridor. The project promotes a reduction of single occupant-vehicle (SOV) trip counts by 40 percent to achieve transportation mitigation and adhere to the City of Alexandria requirements in its approvals of 2004 for Mark Center. To accomplish trip reductions, the following mode splits are identified:

Car-pooling/Ride-sharing	12 percent
Public Transit	5 – 8 percent
Shuttle Bus	20 percent
Walk/Bike/Other	1-3 percent

As part of the conditions for approval of the 2004 master plan for Mark Center, the City of Alexandria required several improvements to the transportation infrastructure in and around the location for Mark Center. The Traffic Impact Study/TMP, upon which Mark Center parcels were approved, estimated that the Center would generate 2,028 AM peak hour vehicle-trips, and 1,968

PM peak hour vehicle-trips, upon full build-out and occupancy. These estimates were treated as trip caps in the analysis of future Army project effects. In addition, the approved plans for the parcels contemplated 4,839 parking spaces on the land now being proposed for the WHS. The number of parking spaces proposed for this site, 3898 spaces, is below the maximum number of parking spaces allowed by the City of Alexandria for the Mark Center Master Plan, which Alexandria approved in 2004. The proposed parking ratio is 1:1.64, given a total population of 6,409.

The BRAC 133 project will also implement roadway improvements, to include:

- Improvements to the I-395 merge lane onto westbound Seminary Road;
- Addition of a third left-turn lane at Seminary Road onto North Beauregard Street;
- Addition of a second left-turn lane at North Beauregard onto Mark Center Drive; and
- Installation of a traffic signal or round-about at the bend in Mark Center Drive at its intersection with the western access road to the BRAC 133 site.

Additionally, the City of Alexandria requested that the Army include the possibility of a slip-ramp from the South Parking garage directly connecting to I-395 southbound. One goal of the ramp modification would reduce the number of vehicles that travelling along Seminary and North Beauregard to enter and exit the WHS by providing direct access to I-395. Access to WHS from the slip ramp to the garage would be limited to the only employee vehicles authorized to enter the BRAC 133 site. Visitor and delivery vehicles would not be allowed to use this access point, but would be required to use the entry at the Visitor's Center on Mark Center Drive and the access road leading to the Remote Inspection Facility (RIF).

The Virginia Department of Transportation, at the City's request, has begun preparing an Interchange Justification Report (IJR) to request the modification to the south bound ramp from Seminary Road to I-395. This study is expected to be completed and submitted to the Federal Highway Administration by May 2010. Once accepted by FHWA, VDOT will then begin a more in-depth study of the alternatives. The Army has begun initial steps for requesting that the slip-ramp be included as part of the Defense Access Road (DAR) budget.

### *Building Design*

The applicant has coordinated the design of the project with City of Alexandria Planning and Zoning Department. As was stated earlier, the Army designed the two towers of the WHS project to allow shared functions to be located on the lower 10 stories and the office agency administrative spaces located on the upper floors. The envelopes of all occupied buildings meet the stringent security and safety requirements specified for force protection.

The Transportation Center at the North Campus will include six arrival/departure bus bays which will be accessible for Metro Bus, DASH, Pentagon Shuttles, Kiss and Ride slugging and car pooling. This transportation hub will be covered to provide protection during inclement weather, and this hub will connect, via a pedestrian bridge over Mark Center Drive, to the Visitor's Center, now relocated to the South Campus.



**BRAC 133 – WHS Complex  
Pedestrian Bridge, Visitor’s Center and Access Control Point**

The Visitor Center features elements to attain a LEED® “Gold” certification for sustainable design. The lobby is large enough to stage visitors and can receive large numbers at one time. There will be seating and public restrooms. After processing at any of the check-in and credentialing stations, visitors will proceed through the inspection/scanning points and then enter the campus through the security turnstiles.

The North Garage contains 2,044 cars on seven levels (two sub-grade levels and five above grade levels). The design of the North Garage incorporates the façade of the Transportation Center in the front. A covered, open-air walkway guides all visitor and employees to the Visitor’s Center. Along the east, south, and west sides, a vegetated “green wall” is located that will allow the structure to enhance the campus and reduce hard-edged building forms to the entry-corridors of the campus.

The second garage, the South Garage, is located on the South Campus and is adjacent to the combined office tower complex and provides 1,854 spaces. Access to this garage is located in two areas at each end of the structure. The façade of the South Garage is designed to complement the adjacent towers, and appear as a base element of the office towers when viewed from the south.

The remote inspection facility (RIF) is located in a secure area of the east campus, over 610 feet away from the office towers. This facility has been designed to blend in with the surrounding campus buffer area as it is now partially sub-grade and incorporates a green roof. It will feature covered drive lanes for dog inspection of vehicles, indoor kennels, and office/support space for security personnel. The image to the right is a rendering of the project as it is imaged now.



**BRAC 133 – WHS Complex  
Remote Inspection Facility**

### Development Program

Applicant: Department of the Army

Estimated Cost: An estimated cost range of \$480 – 750 million

Design Team: Combined Design/Build Team - HKS and Wisnewski Blair & Assoc.,  
Landscape - Studio 39  
Civil - Walter L. Phillips, Inc.,  
Structural - Cagley & Associates  
Clark Design and Construction and Duke Realty Corporation

## PROJECT ANALYSIS

### Executive Summary

In October 2008, the Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Army found the Mark Center location to be the most reasonable site for relocating the Washington Headquarters Services. Staff understands that the Department of the Army has made design changes to improve the project since the concept design was approved by the Commission in February 2009. The following is a description of the last Commission action, comments from the City of Alexandria and the changes the Army has made and has agreed to make at the Mark Center. Staff recommends that the Commission **approve the preliminary and final site and building plans for the East and West Tower buildings, the parking garages and the Remote Inspection Facility of the BRAC 133 Project for the Washington Headquarters Services, as shown on NCPC Map File No. 2503.00(61.10)42680.**

#### *Commission Action – February 2009*

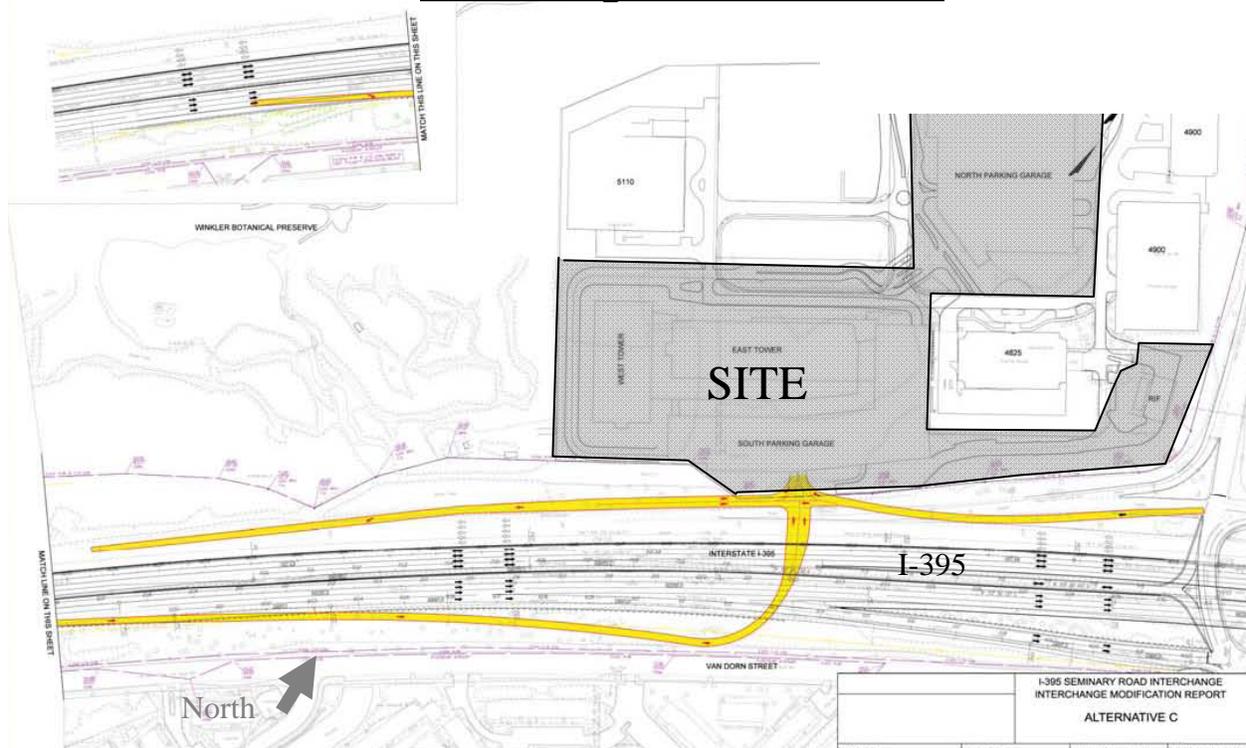
In February 2009, the Commission reviewed and approved the final foundation plans and concept plans for the towers and south parking garage. The following are the conditions included in the approval of the concept design of the project that have not been completed:

- Plan for the location of a slip-ramp to I-395 from the South Parking garage to accommodate federal employee traffic and include the final design of the ramp when the Army submits the BRAC 133 project for final review to the Commission.
- Submit a revised land use plan as part of the updated Fort Belvoir master plan.

The Commission requested that the Army develop a plan for a slip ramp that would allow WHS employees to connect onto I-395 via the existing Seminary Road access ramp. The Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT), at the City's request, has begun preparing an Interchange Justification Report (IJR), a feasibility study that explore various options for improving both automobile access to the Mark Center and bus and shuttle access to the Transportation Center.

As VDOT is in the process of studying this issue, they are exploring many alternatives. Some these alternatives connect I-395 directly to Mark Center Drive and the Transportation Center while others only connect to the WHS campus. VDOT will work with the City of Alexandria to choose the preferred alternatives (one alternative is shown below) that will be submitted to the Federal Highway Administration for preliminary approval. Once FHWA approves the IJR, a National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process will begin. VDOT anticipates that the NEPA process will take 12-18 months and be completed by the end of 2011. Staff **notes that the applicant has agreed to update staff on the I-395 ramp design currently being undertaken by the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT).**

### Interchange - Alternative C



Finally, the Commission requested that the Army provide a land use plan for the site that shows it in context with the rest of Fort Belvoir. The Army is currently developing a master plan for Fort Belvoir that includes the WHS site. As the final Fort Belvoir Master Plan is not complete the Army has submitted an area development guide that discusses this project in this context and determines that because Fort Belvoir is nearly 9 miles away and doesn't share any services with the WHS site, that local zoning and land use plans are the primary guide for development and land use at this site. Staff finds that the proposal conforms to the local zoning and master plan for the site.

#### *City of Alexandria Comments*

The Army has met with the City of Alexandria over the past 10 months to address concerns that the City raised over this development at the Mark Center. Through this process, the Army has

changed the design of the campus and altered the building designs to reflect the comments and issues the City raised.

While the Army has changed this project since the Commission took action on it in February 2009, the City of Alexandria submitted a letter dated November 30, 2009 that includes several issues, including: the relocation of the remote inspection facility to another site, the design of the top of the building towers and the north parking garage, and the inclusion of additional site landscaping.

The City of Alexandria has noted its strong recommendation that this facility not be located at the Mark Center. While the Army has determined that this facility needs to be located at the Mark Center with the WHS, Alexandria has requested that the facility should at least be appropriately screened with landscaping and berms to minimize its visual impact. The Army has made an effort to add a landscaping screen and berms, and Alexandria has also recommended increased use of bermed walls, a channel section planter beam for better integration of the structure into the landscape and the simplification of security perimeter and possibly the use of field stone walls. Given the location of this facility, staff **supports the applicant's commitment to add screening along the Seminary Road side of the remote inspection facility (RIF) to minimize its visual impact from the road and a green roof to further reduce its visibility.**

A second concern is with the architectural design. The City of Alexandria states the tops of the office towers and facades of the North Parking Garage need additional architectural refinement. Specifically, the City suggested a different architectural element at the top of the office towers than what is now proposed. The City prefers the rooftop architectural element to incorporate a smoother curve. In addition, the City of Alexandria has requested that the Army make design improvements to the North Parking Garage since it fronts along Nottingham Drive, one of the main entrances to the Mark Center. The changes requested include adding public art and more architecturally appealing façade expressions with the use of horizontal elements to enhance the pedestrian and vehicular experience. Staff **notes that the applicant has agreed to enhance the architectural expression of the North Parking Garage facade next to the Transportation Center by allowing wall space that can be used for public art.**



Concept Design



Final Design

The City has also requested the following changes for the North Parking Garage:

- Use more glass for the stair and elevator towers on the western elevation of the North Parking Garage as these will be used by visitors and employees to gain access to the pedestrian bridge and into the office towers in the South Campus. The design of these elements will be the main experience for many visitors to this facility.
- Incorporate green roofs on the parking garage for environmental and aesthetic reasons.
- Articulation of the pedestrian walkway on the façade.

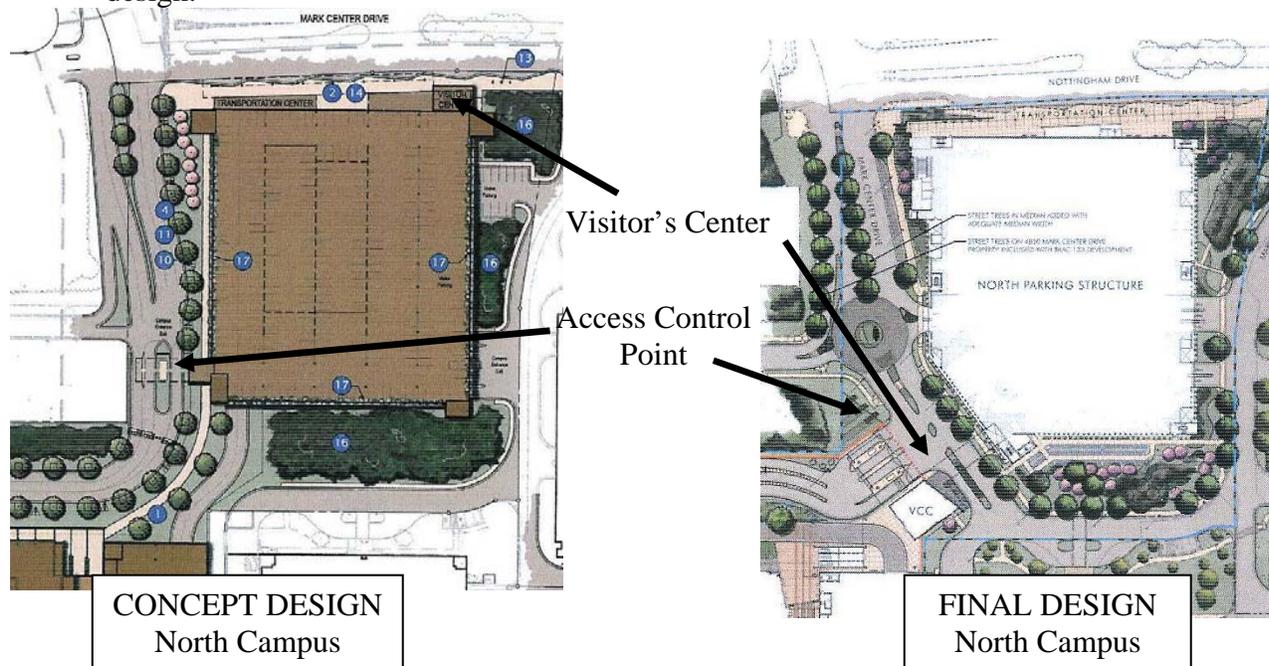
The City also requested additional site landscaping and screening along Seminary Road and I-395 to ensure the remote inspection facility is not visible and more street trees on the internal streets to provide a greener pedestrian experience for site users.

*Design Changes*

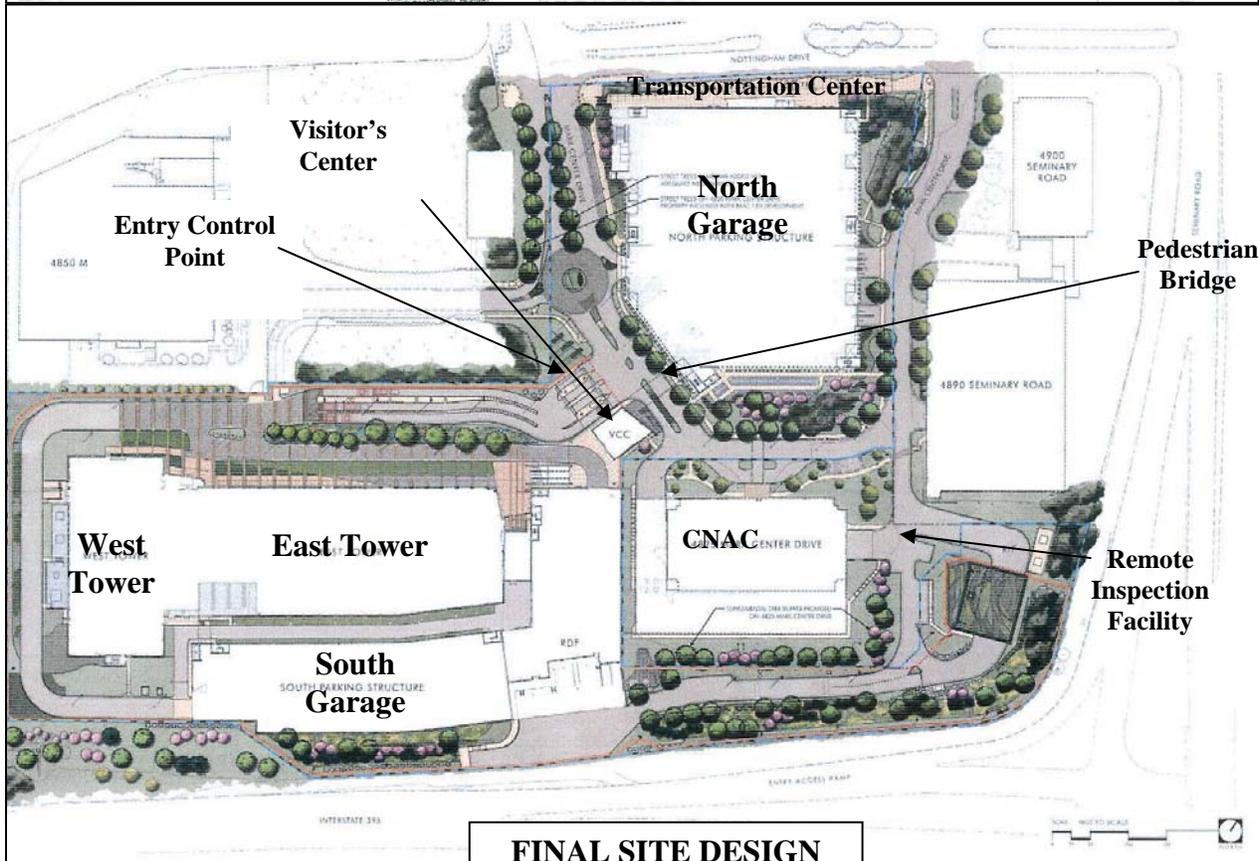
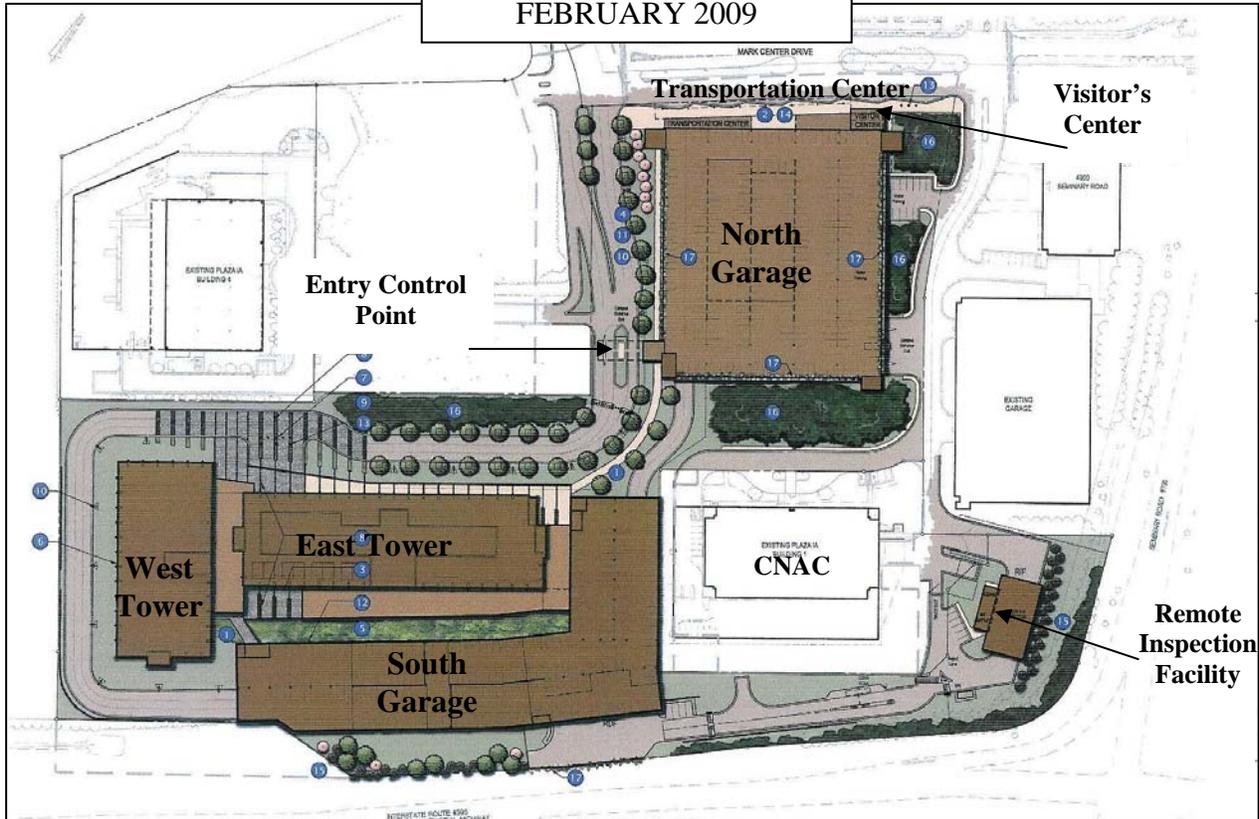
The Army has met with the City of Alexandria since the concept design was approved by the Commission in February 2009 to further improve the project design. The following is a detailed description of the changes that have been made to the project.

This project includes a redesign of the site layout and staff finds these changes are improvements that facilitate both vehicular and pedestrian movements within the site and allowing the CNAC Building to be less isolated on the campus. Most of these changes are the direct result of consultations with the City of Alexandria. The site layout changes include the following:

- Changing the location of the main access control point, North Parking Garage geometry and connecting road design to enhance vehicle and pedestrian circulation on the Mark Center campus internal street system.
- Revising the design of the remote inspection facility to include berming, step-terraced landscaping and green roof to help it blend in the with the landscaping
- Adjusting roads widths and sidewalks to create landscaped medians
- Integrating a landscaping bio-retention feature into the site’s access control roadway design.



**CONCEPT SITE DESIGN  
FEBRUARY 2009**



**FINAL SITE DESIGN  
DECEMBER 2009**

The Army also incorporated a number of design changes to the office tower. Staff finds that the changes are improvements to the overall design of the building and are generally supported by the City of Alexandria. The changes include:

- Enlarged all tower punched windows to enhance the “lightness” of the buildings appearance
- Revised the tower’s precast concrete patterning design
  - Altered the base to correspond to the tower height
  - Vertical precast patterns changed
  - Eliminated horizontal banding
  - Adjusted stair tower
- Modified tower’s top areas and design profile
  - Relocated West Office Tower top feature
  - Glazing pattern changed on West Office Tower
  - Altered the East Office Tower top feature
  - Top of building element is now curved
  - Made changes to the stair towers, punched windows, and fin elements

**CONCEPT DESIGN**  
FEBRUARY 2009



**FINAL DESIGN**  
DECEMBER 2009

In addition, the Army has included several changes to the parking garage structures. These changes were made to improve internal campus traffic movements and to improve the aesthetic appearance of the facades.

- Revised the South Parking Structure
  - Revised the base and enhanced the visual appearance
  - Taller precast window element creates a break in south façade
  - Vertical detail added to precast panel patterns
  - Cornice added to top of structure
- Revised the North Parking Structure/Transportation Center
  - Relocated elevators
  - Moved Visitor's Center closer to East Office Tower
  - Redesigned façade above Transportation Center with horizontal elements
  - Added green screen and public art to façade to enhance visual appearance



## CONFORMANCE

### Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital

The proposal before the Commission is generally consistent with the Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital. The siting of this project was determined by the Army and is not include in this evaluation.

While the Army has not submitted a formal transportation management plan (TMP), it has submitted transportation and traffic impact analysis and set forth some transportation related goals for the WHS project. The Army is currently developing a transportation management plan (TMP) that is to be used to mitigate the regional transportation impacts to the maximum extent possible. Staff recommends that the Commission **require the applicant to complete and submit a final transportation management plan (TMP) and include how it will meet the proposed parking ratio of 1:1.64.**

### Federal Capital Improvements Plan

The recently approved 2010-2015 Federal Capital Improvements Plan (FCIP) included the WHS project as a *Project Requiring Additional Planning Coordination*. Many details of the proposal remained unresolved at that time.

In the FY2009-2014 FCIP the cost of the total project was estimated as \$821,561,000. The FY 2010-2015 FCIP now lists the total cost of the project at \$834,039,000 – an increase of over \$12,000,000. The anticipated total cost of the project is \$1.2 billion.

### Relevant Federal Facility Master Plan

A master plan for Fort Belvoir is presently underway which will incorporate the WHS project area into that plan. An area development guide for Mark Center has been provided to the Commission and demonstrates urban form and land use compatibility with the city's planning goal for this area. The Army anticipates that the Fort Belvoir master plan will be submitted to NCPC in mid to late 2010.

### National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)

The Army has reviewed the action pursuant to its environmental regulations and completed an Environmental Assessment (EA) and Finding of No Significant Impact determination for the proposed action. The Finding was signed by the Army officials on September 25, 2008.

The project is a proposal outside the District of Columbia and consequently the Commission does not have an independent NEPA responsibility for this project because it has an advisory role for projects in the environs.

### National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA)

The Army, as lead federal agency for NHPA responsibilities, reviewed the proposal for compliance with the National Historic Preservation Act, Section 106 procedures, and has reviewed with the City of Alexandria and the Commonwealth of Virginia cultural and historic resources.

The City of Alexandria has concurred that no archeological or historic elements are present, and the Virginia State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) has reviewed final Army information of the building locations and design.

The VA SHPO issued a concurrence letter on February 25, 2009 stating that no historic properties will be affected by the proposed relocation of the WHS to the Mark Center.

The project is a proposal outside the District of Columbia and consequently the Commission does not have an independent NHPA responsibility for this project because it has an advisory role for projects in the environs.

### CONSULTATION

#### Referral to relevant local planning agencies

The Army supplied plans to, and has continued to review the plans with, the City of Alexandria planning staff. On December 8, 2009 the City of Alexandria City Council approved comments about the project, which were forward to the Commission in a letter dated December 28, 2009 (see attachment 1). Referenced in that letter is correspondence from Congressman Moran and Senators Warner and Webb to Jerry Hansen, the Acting Assistant Secretary of the Army, dated July 15, 2009 (see attachment 2). The concerns raised by the City of Alexandria are included in the staff analysis section of this report.

**ATTACHMENT 1**

*William D. Cuille*  
*Mayor*

*City of Alexandria, Virginia*  
*301 King Street, Suite 2300*  
*Alexandria, Virginia 22314*



*City Hall: (703) 838-451*  
*Home: (703) 836-2680*  
*Fax: (703) 838-6433*  
*alexvamayor@aol.com*

December 28, 2009

Mr. L. Preston Bryant, Jr.  
Chairman  
National Capital Planning Commission  
401 9<sup>th</sup> Street, NW  
North Lobby, Suite 500  
Washington, D.C. 20004

Re: NCPC Final Submission  
BRAC-133 Office Complex  
Mark Center  
Alexandria, Virginia

Dear Mr. Bryant:

In February 2009, the National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC) directed the Department of Defense (DoD) to work with the City of Alexandria to refine the site and building design of the BRAC-133 office complex. While there has been progress in some areas, the City still has concerns about design elements of this project. The enclosed position paper, which the Alexandria City Council unanimously concurred with at its December 8 meeting, reflects the City's views regarding the final design of the BRAC-133 office building, the north parking garage and the remote inspection facility (RIF), and is based on the final submission to NCPC by DoD of December 4, 2009. Because of the height, scale and impact of the proposed facilities, the recommendations included in the enclosed paper should be endorsed by NCPC in order to minimize impacts to the surrounding neighborhood and the City. The primary areas which require additional design refinement include:

- Design of the north parking structure;
- Design/treatment of the remote inspection facility (RIF);
- Site landscaping; and
- The building top.

*"Home Town of George Washington and Robert E. Lee"*

Mr. L. Preston Bryant, Jr.  
Chairman  
National Capital Planning Commission  
December 28, 2009  
Page 2

In addition, we continue our opposition to the RIF facility being located at the BRAC-133 site. Congressman Moran and Senators Warner and Webb also concur that the RIF should not be at this site (see enclosed letter). We, therefore, request that NCPC direct DoD to not construct the RIF facility at the BRAC-133 site and undertake the delivery inspection at another DoD facility.

Finally, we ask that NCPC request that DoD proceed with all deliberate speed to plan for, advocate, and to seek funding from Congress for the planning and implementation of to-be-determined alternative access to the BRAC-133 office site from the adjacent I-395 roadway.

We hope that NCPC's actions on the BRAC-133 site will incorporate the City's recommendations. In addition, we recommend that NCPC direct DoD and Duke Realty to continue to work collaboratively with the City to implement these recommendations.

Sincerely,



William D. Euille  
Mayor

Enclosures: City of Alexandria Position Paper – BRAC-133  
Letter dated July 15, 2009, to Acting Assistant Secretary Jerry Hansen from  
Congressman Moran and Senators Warner and Webb

cc: The Honorable Members of City Council  
Members, BRAC-133 Advisory Group  
James K. Hartmann, City Manger  
Mark Jinks, Deputy City Manager  
James Banks, City Attorney  
Faroll Hamer, Director of Planning and Zoning  
Richard Baier, Director of Transportation and Environmental Services  
James Spengler, Director of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities

**CITY COMMENTS TO THE NATIONAL CAPITAL PLANNING COMMISSION  
(NCPC) ON PROPOSED BRAC-133 AT THE MARK CENTER SITE AND BUILDING  
DESIGN**

**Adopted December 8, 2009**

The Alexandria City Council is recommending that NCPC incorporate the City's design and site layout recommendations for the BRAC-133 project as discussed in this position paper. In addition, it is strongly recommended that the Remote Inspection Facility be moved offsite.

**Background:** The conceptual approval of the site and building design and final approval for the building foundations for the BRAC-133 project was approved by the National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC) on February 5, 2009. Subsequent to that approval, the City of Alexandria (the "City") established a 16-member BRAC-133 Advisory Group to assist in the review of the proposal. The primary focus of the BRAC-133 group has been on transportation issues. This recommendation by the City to NCPC is limited to the site and building design. The review of the Transportation Management Plan by NCPC which is under development by the Department of Defense (DoD) is expected to occur no earlier than the first quarter of 2010 and will require a separate action by City Council, and a letter from the City to NCPC at a later date.

**Design of the Northern Parking Structure**

The five-level above-grade northern parking structure will be one of the most visible of all the buildings on the proposed BRAC campus and will be the building first experienced by most of the visitors. Unlike most of the parking within the City, which is located below-grade, this facility is a five-level above-grade structure with two levels of underground parking. While the City generally does not support above-grade parking structures, because of the limited City review authority over federally-owned projects such as this, the northern parking structure is proceeding as part of this DoD facility. The City is recommending that the north parking structure be designed to better integrate into the campus setting of the Mark Center, and also express the transportation function housed within the building.

As the roof of this structure will be visible from most of the surrounding office buildings and hotel, staff requested at Council's direction and at the request of the BRAC-133 Advisory Group that the parking structure incorporate a green roof on the uppermost deck level. After much discussion, it was determined by DoD in its view that it was not financially feasible to provide for the entire garage to have a green roof. For a \$1.1 billion construction project, a green roof would not represent an overall material cost addition to this project. However, it was discussed that some green elements be incorporated into the design of the top level of the garage. The City requests that NCPC indicate to DoD that the applicant should study this issue further looking at possibilities such as a trellis structure that could support some landscaping elements, or alternatively, the use of a lightweight shade structure, such as a fabric tensile solution, that could provide both shade for the parked cars, as well as an attractive feature for the buildings that will look down at this large roof area. Creating a green roof is consistent with the LEEDs Silver (minimum) or Gold (desired) plan of DoD.

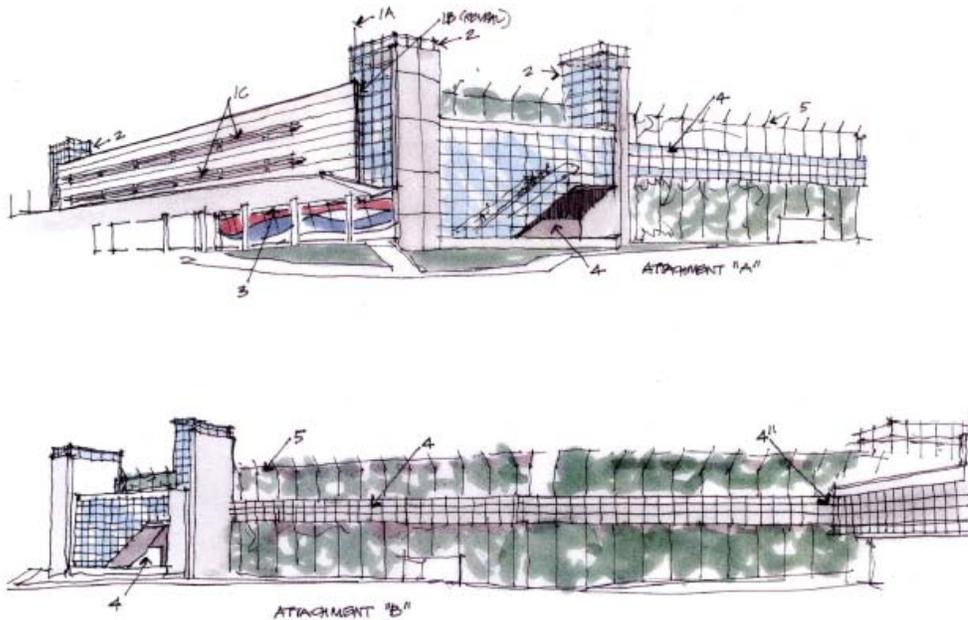
To accomplish these objectives, the City has been working towards utilizing a landscaped green-screen for portions of the building facade internal to the campus. The front façade facing Mark Center Drive is a greater challenge because it is a five-level parking structure facing Mark Center Drive. While the parking structure does have a small transit facility on the ground level, most of the ground level will be inactive use (garage) adjacent to the bus stops. Duke Realty, the project developer, and the Army have worked with the City to improve the design of the facility and are continuing this effort. To address the remaining design concerns, the City is recommending the following:

- Incorporation of public art on the ground level referencing aspects of the history or prehistory of the site. This art work should be required to be installed prior to completion of the building.
- The use of color and metal accents to enhance the horizontal expression and reduce the perceived length of the Mark Center Drive façade.
- Integration of signage into the overall design.
- Refinement of the stair towers and other pedestrian circulation elements.
- Incorporation of green elements into the roof design such as a trellis structure, landscaping, or comparable elements.

#### Current Proposal



### Staff Recommended Changes



#### **Remote Inspection Facility (RIF)**

It is the City's continuing strong recommendation that the RIF facility not be located on this site. This opinion is shared by the City's Congressional delegation, Senator Jim Webb, Senator Mark Warner and Congressman Jim Moran as stated in their letter (enclosed) to Jerry Hansen, Acting Assistant Secretary of the Army, dated July 15. In spite of the Congressional delegation's support of the City's anti-RIF decision, DoD is proceeding with plans for the RIF facility at Mark Center.

Given the fact that the Army is requiring location of the RIF at Mark Center, the City is recommending that the facility be designed to be minimally visible from the adjoining roadways through berming, grading, landscaping and using a planted green roof. The strategy proposed by the City is to design the RIF as an earth-sheltered structure that would be virtually invisible from Seminary Road or I-395. The City is also recommending that the proposal be revised to maintain a larger portion of the existing tree canopy-buffer adjacent to Seminary Road.

The City is recommending that the RIF design continue to be restudied to accomplish the following:

- Greater use of bermed walls, particularly on the Seminary Road and I-395 faces, to reduce the perceived height of the structure, and reduce its overall visibility.
- Incorporation of a channel section planter beam for the perimeter of the roof, to achieve better integration of the structure into the landscape.
- Simplification of security fencing and site walls, including the use of more field stone walls, to better integrate the design into the vocabulary of the Mark Center campus.

### **Site Landscaping – Site Layout:**

At the City's urging earlier this year, Duke Realty and the Army have worked extensively with the City to improve the vehicle circulation through the site, which provides significantly more connectivity for pedestrians, as well as better circulation for buses and cars than the previous DoD proposal. Many of the site circulation concepts depicted on the following drawing originated from the City



While the revised site plan is not ideal, the proposal maintains as much of the integrity of the original street grid, street trees and sidewalks as possible given the considerable security requirements. The City is recommending the following to the site plan and circulation:

- Additional street trees and landscaping adjacent to the internal street.
- Additional landscaping (evergreen and deciduous) screening adjacent to Seminary Road and I-395, including within the VDOT right-of-way if feasible.

**Building Top:**

Because of its 272-foot height, this building will be one of the most visible landmarks in the western portion of the City, and along I-395. Therefore, the City has spent a considerable amount of time refining the building design and in particular the top of the buildings.

The City has worked with the BRAC design team to continually refine the expression of the top floors of the BRAC-133 towers. Starting with modification of the original roof form proposed by the applicant, the City helped develop a curved wing that addresses the long-distance views of the building from I-395, giving both towers a strong and distinctive, yet integrated skyline presence. This feature will also help to minimize the visual impact of the large mechanical penthouses that were required for both towers. The City also worked with Duke Realty and DoD to refine the expression of the top floors of the building to create a stronger vertical expression, and enhancements to the building tops on the sides facing the Mark Center campus.



Original Building Design



#### Refined Building Design with Additional Glazing and Curved Roof Canopy

The City is recommending that the top expression be refined to provide the following:

- The top metal expression be revised to be curved rather than segmented as currently proposed. This is consistent with the City's position as part of the conceptual approval and what until recently the City thought Duke and DoD were going to proceed with. However, City staff recently learned that DoD is not proceeding with refined roof design, so NCPC needs to be aware of this and urged to approve the City roof design recommendation.
- Lighting be incorporated as an integral element of the building-top design.
- Because of the visibility of the mechanical penthouses, they shall be designed as extensions of the building and utilize materials (architectural precast concrete or metal) consistent with the exterior treatment of the buildings.

The City's BRAC-133 Advisory Group has periodically reviewed the building design, site design and RIF issues and has contributed to this effort over the last year, including to this report and recommendations.

## **SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS:**

### **Design of the Northern Parking Structure**

- Incorporation of public art on the ground level referencing aspects of the history or prehistory of the site. This art work will be required to be installed prior to completion of the building.
- The use of color and metal accents to enhance the horizontal expression and reduce the perceived length of the Mark Center Drive façade.
- Integration of signage into the overall design.
- Refinement of the stair towers and other pedestrian circulation elements.
- Incorporation of green elements into the roof design such as a trellis structure, landscaping, or comparable elements.

### **Remote Inspection Facility (RIF) - Remove the RIF from the site, but if the RIF remains:**

- Greater use of bermed walls, particularly on the Seminary Road and I-395 faces, to reduce the perceived height of the structure, and reduce its overall visibility.
- Incorporation of a channel section planter beam for the perimeter of the roof, to achieve better integration of the structure into the landscape.
- Simplification of security fencing and site walls, including the use of more field stone walls, to better integrate the design into the vocabulary of the Mark Center campus.

### **Site Landscaping – Site Layout**

- Additional street trees and landscaping adjacent to the internal street.
- Additional landscaping (evergreen and deciduous) screening adjacent to Seminary Road and I-395, including within the VDOT right-of-way if feasible.

### **Building Top**

- The top metal expression be revised to be curved rather than segmented as currently proposed. This is consistent with the City's position as part of the conceptual review.
- Lighting be incorporated as an integral element of the building-top design.
- Because of the visibility of the mechanical penthouses, they shall be designed as extensions of the building and utilize materials (architectural precast concrete or metal) consistent with the exterior treatment of the buildings.

ATTACHMENT 2**Congress of the United States**

Washington, DC 20515

July 15, 2009

Mr. Jerry Hansen  
Acting Assistant Secretary of the Army (I&E)  
Department of the Army  
110 Army Pentagon, Room 3E464  
Washington, D.C. 20310

Dear Mr. Hansen:

Thank you for your continued service to our nation and the men and women in the United States Army.

We are writing to express our concerns with the current design of the 2005 Base Closure and Realignment (BRAC) Commission Recommendation 133, the relocation of the Washington Headquarter Service (WHS) personnel. Specifically, we question the suitability of the planned location for the Remote Inspection Facility (RIF) at the corner of the property adjacent to Seminary Road and Interstate-395. This RIF is designed to be a point of inspection to prevent damage caused by potential explosive or other hazardous material. While security for those who work and live around the Mark Center location is critical, we believe the functions performed at the RIF would be better suited for an off-site location for the following reasons:

- **Adjacent Facilities.** The current RIF location is in close proximity to many homes and businesses. An explosion or other incident at the RIF could cause extensive damage and injury within a one-mile or greater diameter, thereby potentially affecting thousands of individuals, families, and commercial enterprises in the local vicinity.
- **Adjacent Traffic Interchanges.** Because of the RIF's planned adjacent location to I-395 and Seminary Road, an explosion or hazardous material incident would also adversely affect one of the major traffic arteries for northern Virginia and a national strategic mass evacuation route within the National Capital Region. This interchange is already undergoing a major expansion for HOV lanes and additional Bus Rapid Transit lanes, so its importance as a critical mass transit node in the region is growing. Any damage or other adverse impact to this interchange would seriously degrade vehicular and mass transit transportation to and from the nation's capital and other locations.
- **Preventing Additional Traffic Patterns.** The City of Alexandria and the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) have identified the current RIF location as a potentially viable option for a direct access point from I-395 to serve the Mark Center. This direct access will help alleviate traffic from I-395 and minimize the gridlock during rush-hour commutes.

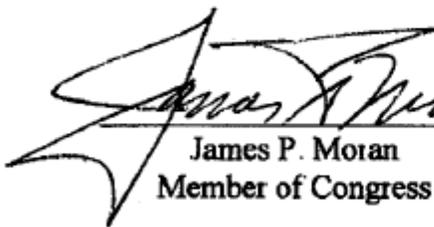
The RIF's current location puts the region's citizens at possible risk and has the potential to degrade a regional transportation system that is already operating at maximum capacity. These issues affect not only the local community, but also other federal agencies in the area. For these reasons, we maintain that the RIF should be placed in an alternate location and not in the heart of critical public and commercial infrastructure.

We understand that an alternative to the current design would be to locate the RIF at an off-site location, which has precedent at other regional Department of Defense facilities. For instance, both the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency and the Office of Naval Research, located in nearby dense urban areas, use off-site RIF facilities to meet their security needs. Moving the RIF off-site would resolve the concerns we have identified and also offer the advantage of enabling pre-screened vehicles to enter the remote receiving facility more efficiently. Land would then be available to build a direct access road for WHS personnel that would help to mitigate current rush-hour delays.

As the design continues for the Mark Center location, we strongly urge you and the Army to reconsider the plans for on-site RIF. Though an off-site location may not provide for the most expeditious vehicle deliveries to the Mark Center site, it is a preferable alternative given the potential consequences should a hazardous incident occur at an on-site location.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

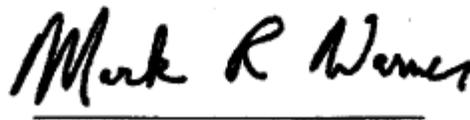
Sincerely,



James P. Moran  
Member of Congress



Jim Webb  
United States Senator



Mark R. Warner  
United States Senator

Cc: The Honorable Ashton B. Carter, Under Secretary of Defense (AT&L)  
The Honorable Wayne Army, Dep. Secretary of Defense (I&E)