

STAFF RECOMMENDATION



S. Dettman

NCPC File No. 6558

**GSA HEADQUARTERS
BUILDING MODERNIZATION**
(Including Options for Perimeter Security, E Street Entrance, and Ground Floor Retail)

1800 F Street NW
Washington, DC

Submitted by the General Services Administration

June 28, 2010

Abstract

The General Services Administration has submitted preliminary and final building plans for the modernization of its headquarters building located at 1800 F Street NW, Washington, DC. The scope of the modernization includes a full restoration of the interior and exterior of the historic building, replacement of the building's physical plant and other mechanical systems, changes to building access and egress including an ADA accessible entrance along E Street, and the infill construction of a 120,000 gross square foot addition located within the building's courtyards. NCPC approved the concept plans for the building modernization in February 2005. In addition, GSA has submitted two concept design alternatives for the treatment of permanent perimeter security, the E Street building entrance, and possible ground floor retail also along E Street. The first alternative is inclusive of permanent perimeter security and a new E Street entrance. The second alternative does not include perimeter security and instead incorporates a new at-grade entrance and ground floor retail along E Street. Currently, GSA is working to determine whether it will implement permanent perimeter security at 1800 F Street NW. GSA is submitting the two concept design alternatives in advance of this determination due to the strict timelines associated with the project's funding through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

Commission Action Requested by Applicant

Approval of preliminary and final building plans for base building modernization, pursuant to 40 U.S.C. § 8722(b)(1) and (d).

Approval of comments on options for perimeter security, E Street entrance, and ground floor retail pursuant to 40 U.S.C. § 8722(b)(1) and (d).

Executive Director's Recommendation

The Commission:

Approves the preliminary and final building plans for the base building modernization of the GSA Headquarters Building located at 1800 F Street NW, as shown on NCPC Map File No 23.00(38.00)43092.

Comments favorably on the proposed concept for ground floor retail along the E Street side of the GSA Headquarters Building.

Comments favorably on the proposed concept for a new formal E Street building entrance and permanent perimeter security, with the exception of the bollards located at the curblines in front of the building entrances along E Street NW and 18th Street NW, because the design of the proposed security elements has been integrated into existing site features and located within the building yard.

Commends GSA for its efforts to include ground floor retail in lieu of permanent perimeter security at 1800 F Street NW, and notes the potential this project has to be a model for improving accessibility to federal buildings, and for how to incorporate ground floor retail into historic buildings.

Recommends that GSA continue to consult with NCPC staff and other interested stakeholders on the proposed perimeter security plan, and specifically on the design and placement of security elements at the building entrances along E Street NW and 18th Street NW.

Notes GSA's continuing efforts to fully coordinate its projects with interested federal and local stakeholders throughout the design process, and recognizes the benefit this has had on the overall design and review timeline of projects.

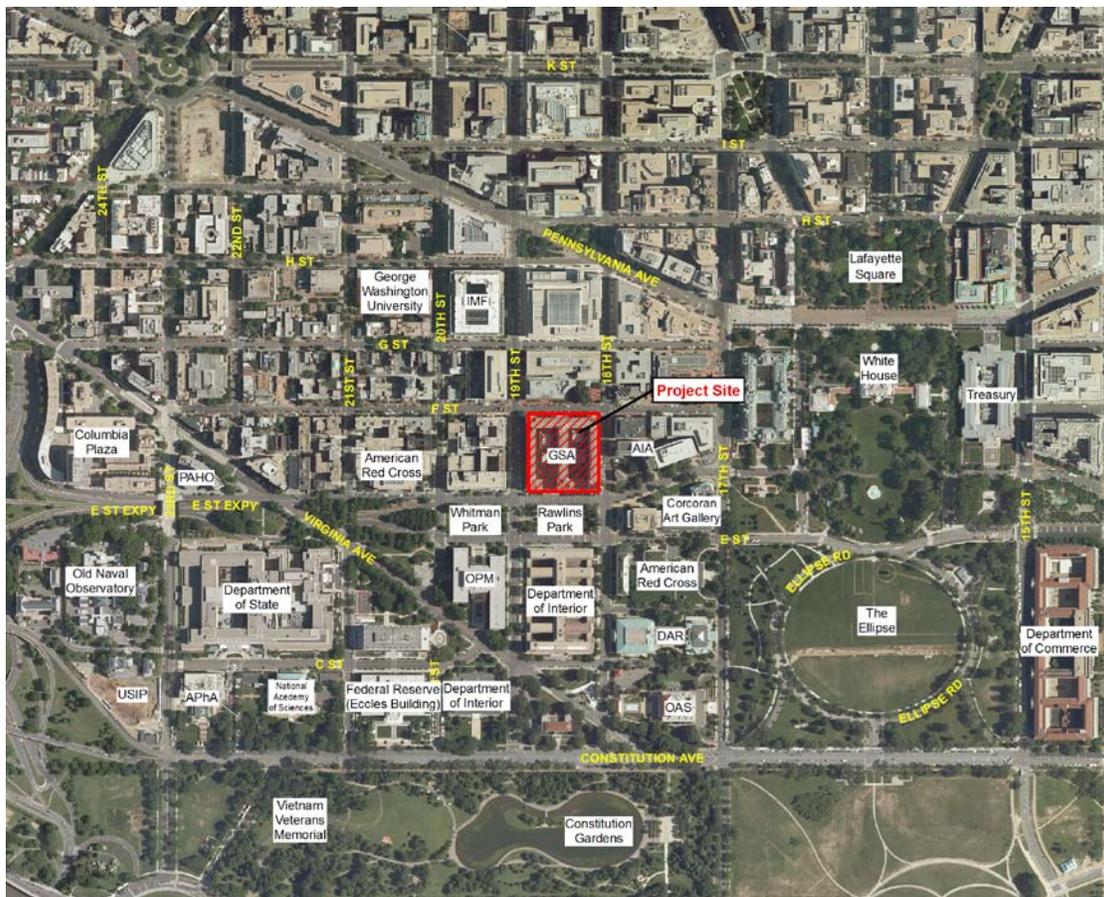
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PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Site

The General Services Administration (GSA) Headquarters building ("the project site", "the site") is located at 1800 F Street NW, in the area of Washington, DC commonly referred to as the Northwest Rectangle. The site is bounded by F Street NW to the north, E Street NW to the south, 18th Street NW to the east, and 19th Street NW to the west. The building, originally constructed in 1917 and added on to in 1934, is a nine-story high, E-shaped structure that encompasses approximately 520,000 square feet of usable office space. The building's E-shaped configuration creates two, paved open-air courtyards that are fully enclosed from the ground-floor to the

second-floor; above the second-floor the courtyards are open along the E Street side of the building. The project site is located two blocks west of the White House in an enclave of federal office buildings that was developed during the mid-twentieth century. This enclave has been determined eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places as the Northwest Rectangle Historic District. Other notable buildings and features within the area include George Washington University, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Bank Headquarters to the north; Rawlins Park and Whitman Park to the south; the headquarters of the American Institute of Architects and the Corcoran Art Museum to the east; and the American Red Cross to the west.



Vicinity map showing project site and nearby surroundings

Background

At its February 2005 meeting, the Commission approved the concept plans for the modernization of the GSA Headquarters Building. At the time, GSA indicated that it had intentions to establish a more functional and aesthetically pleasing south building entrance along E Street. As part of the proposed concept plan, GSA included three options for the south entrance which it intended

to study further. In its approval of the concept plans, the Commission concurred with GSA's proposal to create a new south entrance but excluded from its approval "the currently submitted E Street entrance designs." The Commission noted that GSA had not yet decided on an entrance design and that there were no budgeted funds for the entrance. Furthermore, the Commission



Aerial photo of project site showing E-shaped configuration of building



Photo of project site taken from the intersection of E Street NW and 18th Street NW (existing conditions)

recommended that further study of the proposed entrance designs occur prior to submission of preliminary and final site and building plans. Finally, the Commission included in its action a requirement that GSA submit a perimeter security design along with the submission of preliminary site and building plans.

Proposal

GSA has submitted preliminary and final building plans for the modernization of its headquarters building. The modernization will include a full restoration of the interior and exterior of the historic building, replacement of the building's physical plant and other mechanical systems, changes to building access and egress including an ADA accessible entrance along E Street, and the infill construction of a 120,000 gross square foot addition located within the building's open space courtyards. More specifically, work along the exterior of the building will include the demolition of two existing structures within the east and west courtyards in order to make room for the proposed infill development. The two structures that will be demolished include

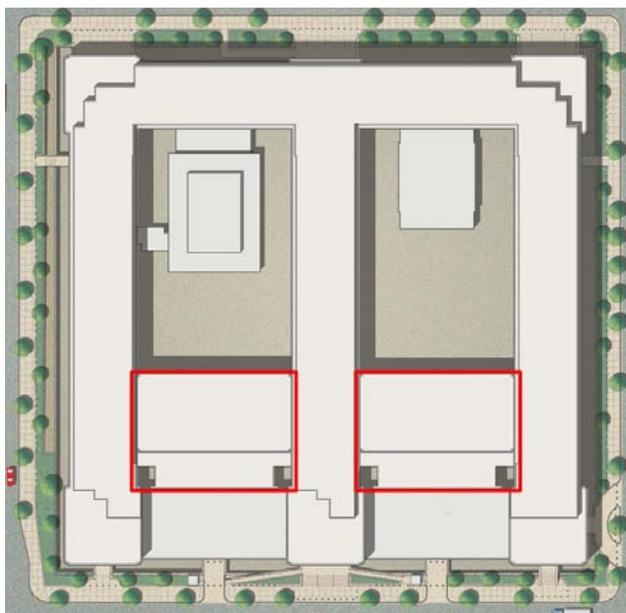
the former press room located in the east courtyard, and the former cooling tower located in the west courtyard. Other courtyard structures such as the auditorium and library will remain, though the library will be redesigned to house alternative uses including a child care center. Finally, due to the proposed infill construction, only 54 of the existing 139 parking spaces will remain in the courtyards.

As part of the proposed building modernization, the windows and stone exterior facades of the building will be substantially restored. The following is a list of the proposed exterior improvements:

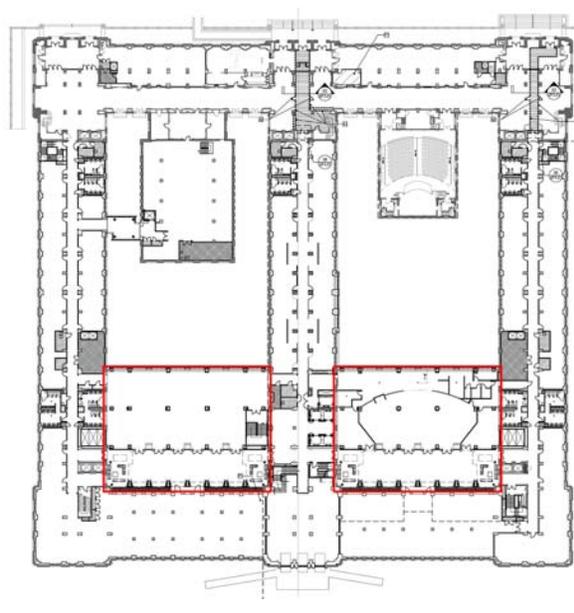
- Removal of lead-based paint around all windows, complete replacement of some windows for energy conservation purposes.
- Removal of all window-unit air conditioners.

- Abatement and disposal of asbestos.
- Cleaning and repair of exterior stone surfaces.
- Repair and painting of cast iron frames.
- Installation of fixed interior blast and single glazed storm windows on the street sides of the building.
- Installation of fixed interior single-glazed thermal windows on the courtyard sides of the building.
- Painting of all wood window sashes and frames.
- Recondition/repair of existing historic doors and frames including new hardware and security devices.
- Installation of new doors where required by ADA or building codes.

In addition to the interior and exterior improvements described above, GSA also proposes to construct a 120,000 gross square feet infill addition within the building's two existing courtyards. The proposed, seven-story addition will be oriented toward the south end of the courtyards yet still setback from the ends of the three building wings. In addition to providing additional office space, the addition will substantially improve circulation throughout the building. Currently, the E-shaped configuration of the building creates "dead ends" within the three upper wings of the building. The infill addition will resolve this by connecting the three

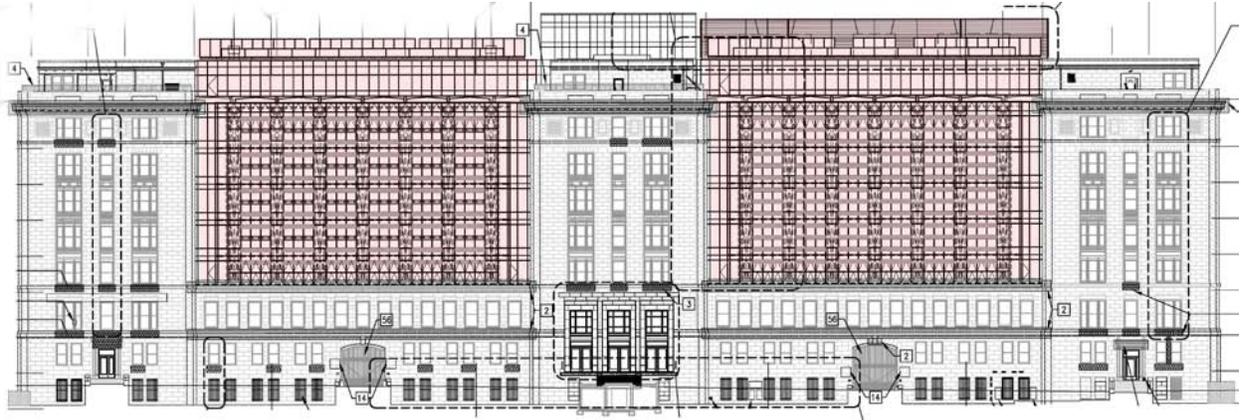


Site plan showing location of proposed infill addition

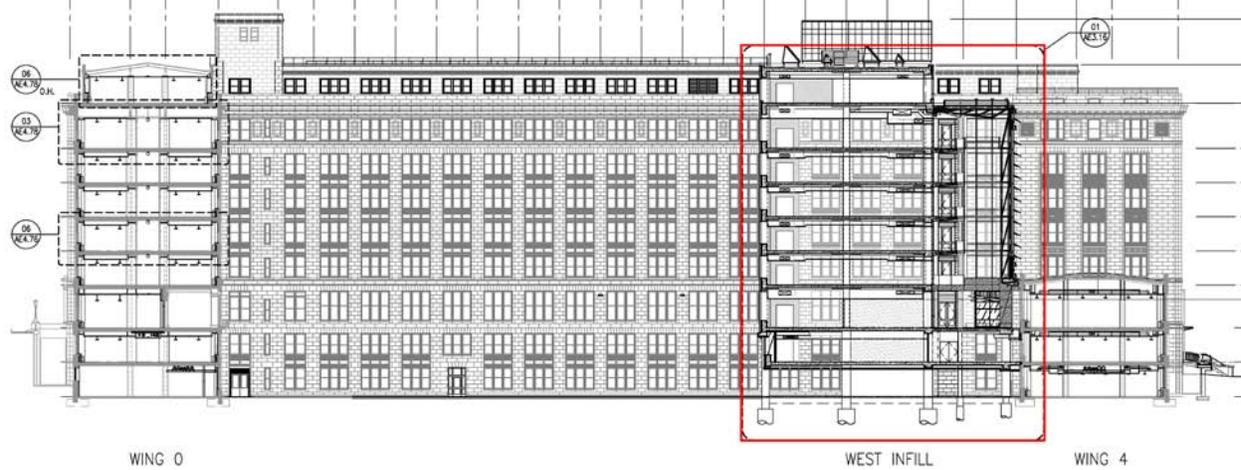


First floor plan showing proposed infill addition

building wings thereby creating a more efficient, usable, and continuous circulation pattern above the third floor of the building. The addition has been designed to contrast with the existing historic building and will be constructed mainly of glass and steel. A brises-soleil, or sunscreen, will be used to help reduce the effects of the sun on the south-facing exposure of the proposed addition. Finally, new mechanical penthouse enclosures and a solar collection system will occupy a portion of the roof above the proposed addition.



Drawing of south building elevation showing proposed infill addition



Cross section of west courtyard with infill addition outlined in red (looking east)

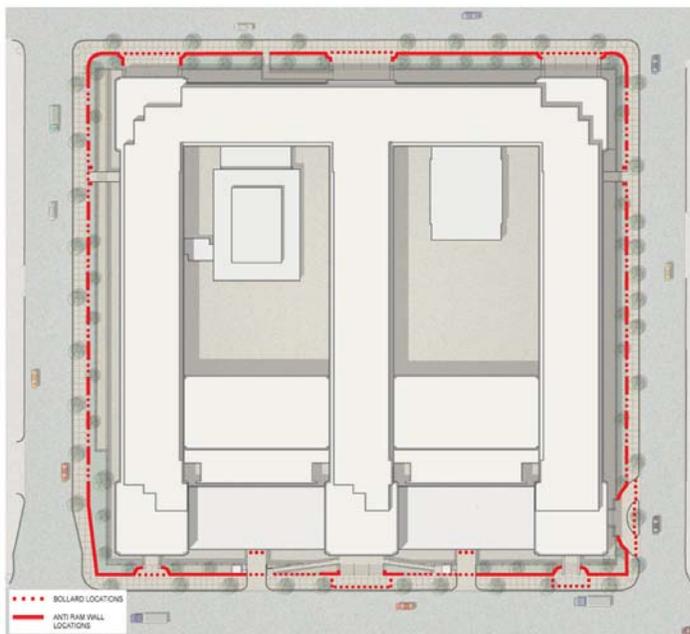


Rendering of south building elevation showing proposed infill addition



Rendering showing view of proposed infill addition from Rawlins Park

In addition to the proposed building modernization and courtyard infill addition, GSA has submitted two concept design alternatives for the treatment of permanent perimeter security, the E Street building entrance, and possible ground floor retail also along E Street. Currently, GSA is working to determine whether it will implement permanent perimeter security at 1800 F Street NW. The outcome of this determination will dictate which concept design GSA eventually submits for preliminary and final review by the NCPC. GSA is submitting the two concept design alternatives in advance of its determination regarding the need for perimeter security due to the strict timelines associated with the project’s funding through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.



Site plan for first concept alternative (also showing proposed perimeter security barrier line)

The first alternative is inclusive of permanent perimeter security consisting of a combination of hardened garden walls and three different bollard designs. This alternative also includes a new formal E Street entrance that consists of a new central staircase with flanking access ramps. The proposed perimeter security elements would consist of a combination of hardened garden walls and bollards located primarily within the existing building yard with the exception of three entry points, two on E Street and one on 18th Street. The hardened garden walls would be constructed along the existing inside edge of the sidewalk and have a stone finish. The walls would be constructed to a height of

approximately 32 inches, and a width of approximately 16 inches. In order to avoid the repetitive use of one particular perimeter security element, the hardened garden walls will be combined with bollards placed along the same alignment along the inside edge of the sidewalk. The bollards proposed for along the inside edges of the sidewalk, aligned with the garden walls, will be 36-inches high, 8-inches wide, and will be composed of cast iron that is painted black (See “Type 2” bollard design below). The spacing for these bollards is proposed to be 4’10” on-center between bollards, and 4’6” between a bollard and the edge of a hardened garden wall. Bollards located at building entryways and across the driveways will utilize a different design. At the two driveways along E Street, two rows of three retractable bollards will be utilized to create what is commonly referred to as a “sally port.” The dimensions of these bollards are proposed to be 36-inches high, 11-inches wide, with an on-center spacing of 4’10” (See “Type 3” bollard design below). Bollards placed at the building entrances will have similar dimensions and spacing as those located within the building yard but will have a stainless steel finish (See “Type 1” bollard design below). As noted above, there are three locations where the proposed perimeter security elements will not be located within the existing building yard. These locations occur at the central and eastern building entrances along E Street, and the southern building entrance along 18th Street. At these locations, bollards will be placed along the existing curbline due to the entry stairs extending past the edge of the building yard. Placement of these bollards along the curb also creates the need to locate bollards within the pedestrian pathway of the sidewalks at six locations.

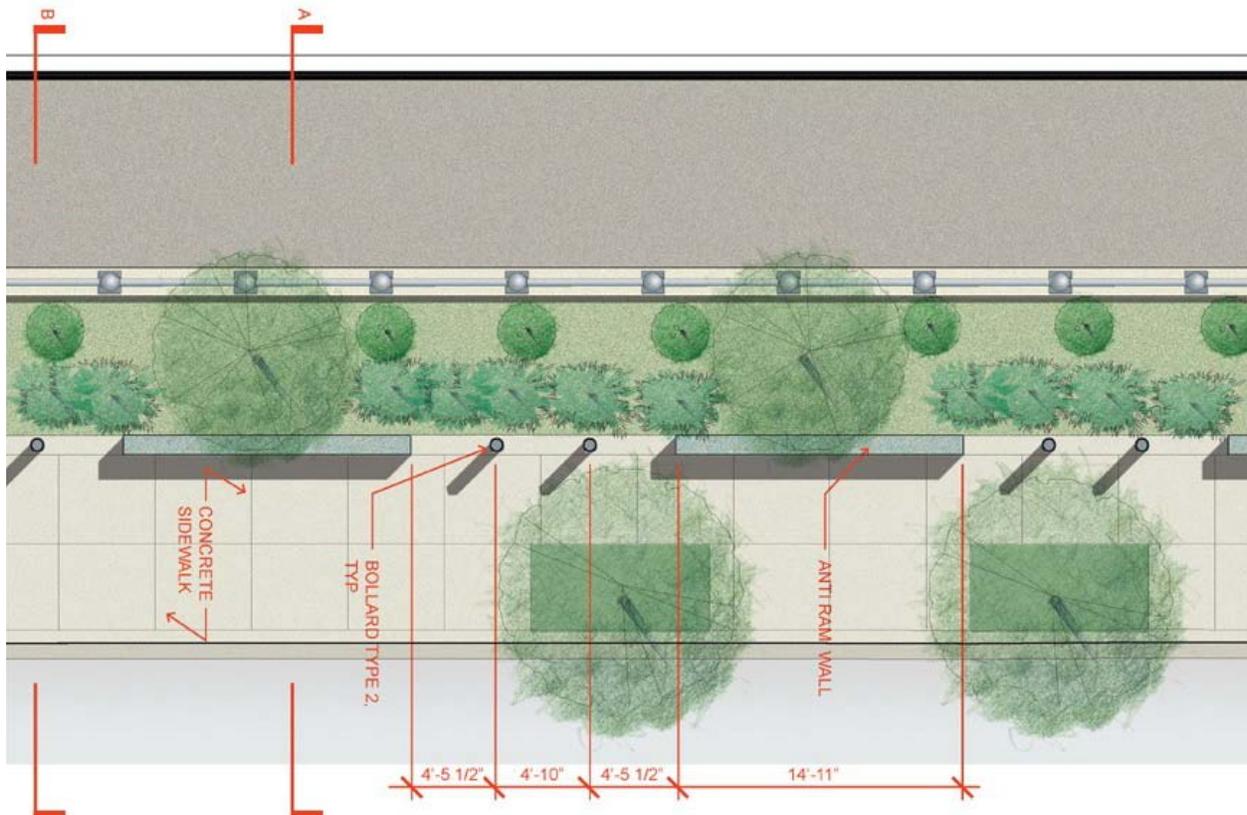
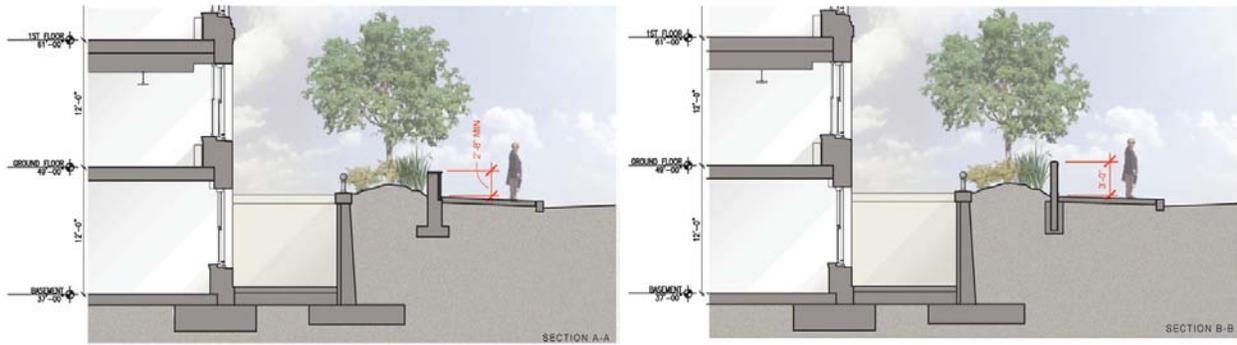
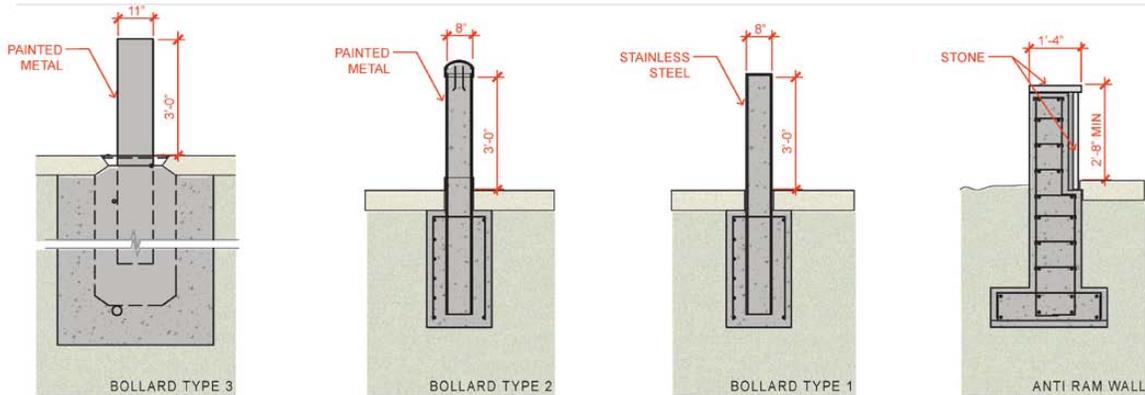


Diagram showing typical building yard perimeter security plan (See corresponding cross sections below)

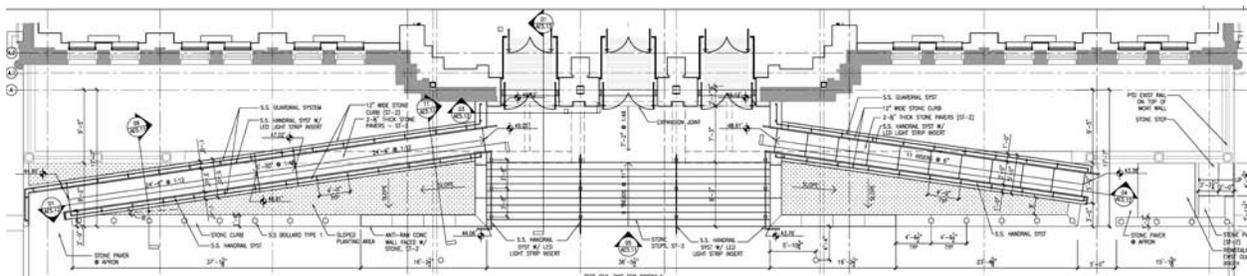


A: Typical cross section of perimeter security at garden B: Typical cross section of perimeter security at bollard wall

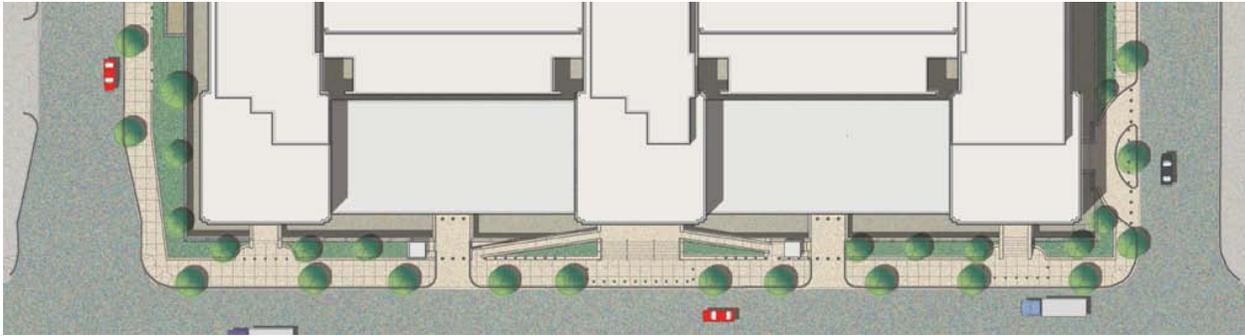


Diagrams of proposed design of bollards and hardened garden walls

The new building entrance will be located at the middle of the south building façade and will provide access to the first floor which sits approximately six feet above street level. The central stairway will have a stone finish and will be separated by two stainless steel handrails that contain LED light strip inserts. The two ADA accessibility ramps flanking the staircase will be finished with the same stone pavers and handrails.



Plan of new E Street entrance showing central staircase and flanking accessibility ramps



Site plan of new E Street entrance



South building elevation showing new E Street entrance and perimeter security



Rendering of south building elevation showing new E Street entrance and perimeter security

The second concept alternative does not include perimeter security and instead incorporates a new at-grade entrance and ground floor retail along the E Street side of the building. As indicated above, along the E Street side of the building the first floor is situated approximately 6-feet above the street level. Therefore, in order to construct the proposed ground floor retail a significant portion of the first floor slab will need to be lowered to street level. This would eliminate the need to provide the new building entrance proposed in the first alternative. A total of four retail bays are proposed, two on either side of the central entrance. As currently designed,

the bays will project approximately eight feet from the existing south façade of the building; this is approximately two-feet behind the edge of the existing areaway that surrounds the building. In addition to providing ground floor retail, this concept may potentially include additional modifications to the interior of the building in order to make the second floor cafeteria accessible to the public as well as federal employees. This would be done through the provision of a stair and elevator made accessible through one of the proposed retail bays. Finally, under this concept alternative three bollards will be located across each of the two driveways located along E Street. The bollards will be located along the property line at the south façade of the building.



Site plan of second concept alternative showing proposed ground floor retail along the E Street side of the project site



South building elevation of second concept alternative showing proposed ground floor retail and at-grade building entrance



Rendering of south building elevation showing ground floor retail and at-grade building entrance



Rendering of proposed ground floor retail (looking west along E Street NW)

PROJECT ANALYSIS

Executive Summary

Staff has completed its analysis and recommends approval of the preliminary and final building plans for the proposed building modernization and courtyard infill addition. In addition, staff also recommends that the Commission comment favorably on both submitted concept alternatives with the exception of the bollards located at the curblin in front of the building entrances along E Street NW and 18th Street NW. As discussed below, the project successfully carries out several of the goals and objectives of the Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital and the Monumental Core Framework Plan. Staff commends GSA for its efforts to modernize this building in a sustainable, historically sensitive manner, and for its efforts to increase public access. The proposed modernization and expansion will create a high-quality workplace environment for the federal employees who occupy the building. Staff is especially supportive of the proposed ground floor retail alternative and notes the potential it has to be a model for improving accessibility to federal buildings, and for how to incorporate ground floor retail into historic buildings. As noted below, **staff finds that the proposed perimeter security plan concept needs further refinement and recommends that GSA continue to consult with NCPC staff and other interested stakeholders, specifically on the design and placement of security elements at the building entrances along E Street NW and 18th Street NW.** Finally, Staff notes GSA's continuing efforts to fully coordinate its projects with interested federal and local stakeholders throughout the design process, and recognizes the benefit this has had on the overall design and review timeline of projects.

Perimeter Security and E Street Entrance Alternative

Although staff much prefers the proposed ground floor retail concept alternative, it also is supportive of the proposed perimeter security and formal E Street entrance alternative as it is consistent with NCPC's objectives and policies pertaining to the design and location of permanent physical perimeter security. Despite building yard widths of less than 20 feet, GSA has proposed to locate the security elements primarily within the building yard with few exceptions. Staff notes that the bollards proposed to be located along the curb on E and 18th Streets have the potential to impede pedestrian mobility given the narrow sidewalk condition, existence of two driveways, proximity of the bollards near the intersection, and the anticipated increase in the number of employees and visitors to the building following completion of the project. Staff sees potential to improve this by exploring ways to incorporate perimeter security into the design of the new E Street entrance or other existing building elements. Therefore, staff recommends that GSA continue to consult with NCPC staff and other interested stakeholders on the proposed perimeter security plan, and specifically on the design and placement of security elements at the building entrances along E Street NW and 18th Street NW.

Ground Floor Retail Alternative

Staff supports the proposed ground floor retail concept and finds that it would be consistent with several of NCPC's planning initiatives, such as the Legacy Plan, the Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital, the Monumental Core Framework Plan, and the recent publication entitled "Activating Federal Places." It is also consistent with GSA's Urban Development / Good

Neighbor program and other policies that support the continued use of federal historic properties. NCPC has long advocated for the inclusion of retail in the ground floors of federal office buildings as a way to improve the public realm and create a lively urban streetscape. The successful implementation of the proposed ground floor retail alternative could potentially lead to similar projects in other areas of the city where there is a substantial federal presence such as the Federal Triangle and the Southwest Federal Center.

The design of the proposed ground floor retail is both sensitive to the existing historic fabric of the building, and considerate of local regulations pertaining to public space. Although the proposed retail bays will extend into public space, they will not extend further than the existing areaway that surrounds the building and therefore should not impede pedestrian access and circulation along the sidewalk.

CONFORMANCE

Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital

Staff finds that the project is not inconsistent with the Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital (the Plan). The project conforms to several of the policies contained within the Federal Workplace, Transportation, Preservation and Historic Features, and Visitors Elements of the Plan. The project aligns with several of the Plan's policies that encourage the location of workplaces on federally owned land within established urban areas that are within walking distance to transit. Furthermore, the Plan encourages the location of federal headquarters within Washington's Central Employment Area, which this project does. In addition, the project successfully carries out the Plan's policy to give consideration to the "modernization, repair, and rehabilitation of existing federally owned facilities before developing new facilities," and does so while also satisfying several policies pertaining to environmental sustainability, historic preservation, and transportation.

GSA's two concept alternatives are also not inconsistent with the Comprehensive Plan. All though still in need of refinement, the proposed perimeter security plan is generally compliant with the Plan's policies that pertain to the design and location of perimeter security elements, and also substantially complies with NCPC's Urban Design and Security Plan Objective and Policies as further described below. The proposed ground floor retail, and GSA's overall intent to make the building more publically accessible, will successfully carry out several policies of the Federal Workplace and Visitors Elements that support the balancing of security with visitor accessibility, and the location of cultural, educational, and commercial visitor attractions within federal workplaces on public streets and other pedestrian access levels.

GSA's effort to fully coordinate the project with the community also satisfies several Comprehensive Plan policies. Through close coordination with the District of Columbia State Historic Preservation Office, the District of Columbia Office of Planning, and DDOT, GSA has been able to design a project that meets its programmatic need to modernize and expand its headquarters, while also enhancing the design qualities and vitality of the surrounding community. The proposed ground floor retail, museum space, and publically accessible cafeteria will encourage public access to, and stimulate public pedestrian traffic around, into, and through

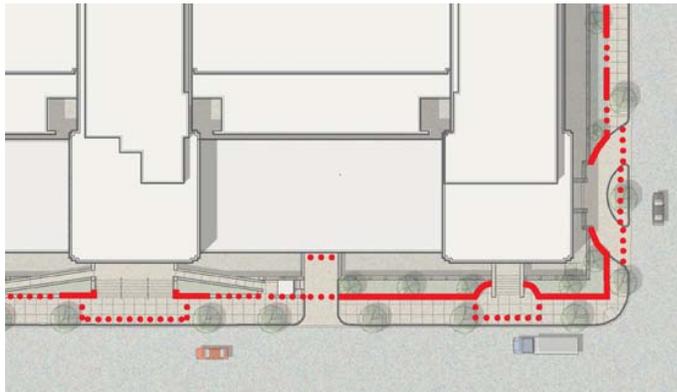
this federal building. This is directly in line with the purpose of the District of Columbia government's recent zoning text amendment that seeks to encourage the location of ground floor retail uses within this part of the city. Finally, since the proposed retail bays will project approximately eight feet into public space, GSA has worked closely with DDOT to ensure that the bays are consistent with local public space regulations. NCPC staff has been informed that DDOT has expressed support for the design of the proposed ground floor retail.

Federal Capital Improvements Plan

The modernization of GSA's national headquarters first appeared in NCPC's 2001 – 2006 Federal Capital Improvements Plan (FCIP), and has been included in each successive FCIP since. In the 2003 – 2008 FCIP, NCPC began assigning each federal capital project to one of a set of recommendations based on the project's conformity with established federal, local, and regional planning policies. Currently, this set of recommendations includes projects that are: Recommended and Strongly Endorsed; Recommended; Requiring Additional Planning Coordination; and Recommended for Future Programming. The following table is a summary of the information contained in NCPC's Federal Capital Improvements Program pertaining to the modernization of GSA's national headquarters. As the table indicates, NCPC has consistently "Recommended and Strongly Endorsed" the project. Projects given this recommendation are found to be critical to the strategic advancement and implementation of key NCPC planning policies and initiatives or important federal interests within the national capital region.

FCIP Year	Funding Requested (in millions)	NCPC Recommendation
2001 – 2006	43,516	Recommended and Strongly Endorsed
2002 – 2007	138,908	Recommended and Strongly Endorsed
2003 – 2008	142,614	Recommended and Strongly Endorsed
2004 – 2009	164,711	Recommended and Strongly Endorsed
2005 – 2010	179,657	Recommended and Strongly Endorsed
2006 – 2011	185,506	Recommended and Strongly Endorsed
2007 – 2012	185,506	Recommended and Strongly Endorsed
2008 – 2013	279,000	Recommended and Strongly Endorsed
2009 – 2014	292,700	Recommended and Strongly Endorsed
2010 – 2015	151,700	Recommended and Strongly Endorsed

National Capital Urban Design and Security Plan Objectives and Policies



Portion of proposed perimeter security plan showing bollards placed at curb along E and 18th Streets

Staff has analyzed the proposed perimeter security concept plan and finds that it complies with NCPC’s Urban Design and Security Plan Objectives and Policies. Adopted by the Commission in May 2005, these objectives and policies are intended to address important city planning and design issues in instances where it is necessary to construct physical perimeter security in urban areas, and are intended to balance the need for perimeter security with the need to protect public space by keeping it

open, accessible and attractive. Despite being less than 20 feet wide, GSA has proposed to locate a substantial majority of the perimeter security elements within the existing building yard with the exception of those elements located at two entrances along E Street, and one entrance along 18th Street. The design of the security barriers has been integrated into the project site through the use of a combination of security elements and hardening of existing landscape features. Although overall the proposed plan meets NCPC’s objectives and policies pertaining to the design and placement of perimeter security, the bollards located at the curblines have the potential to impede upon pedestrian access and circulation. **Staff recommends that GSA continue to consult with NCPC staff and other interested stakeholders on the proposed perimeter security plan, and specifically on the design and placement of security elements at the building entrances along E Street NW and 18th Street NW**

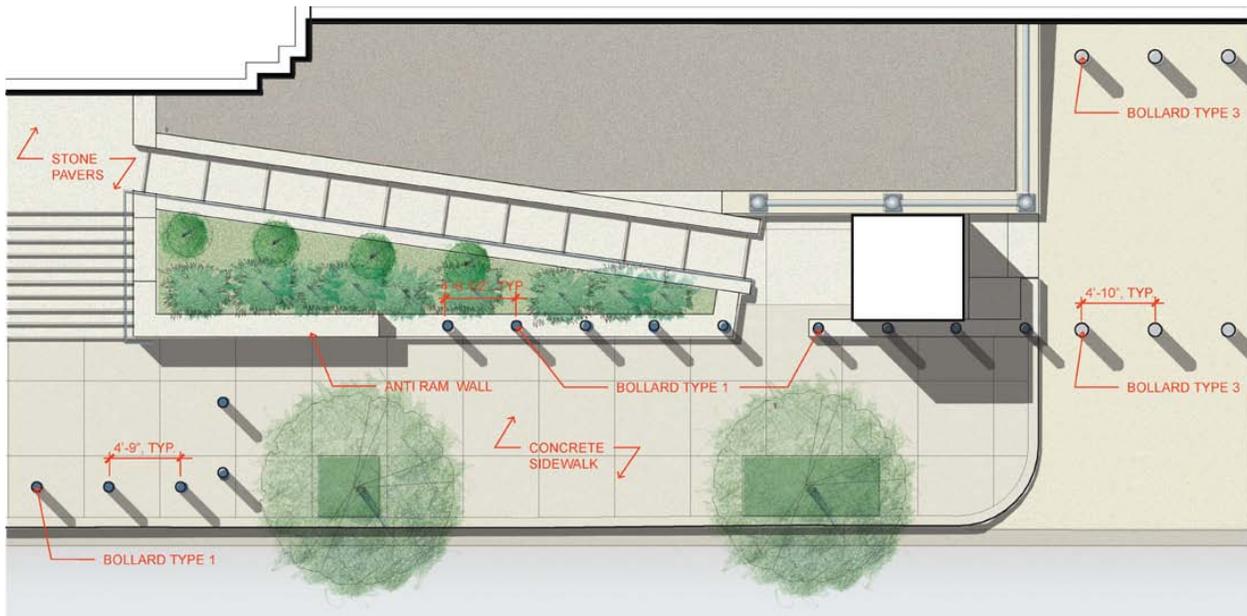


Diagram showing location of bollards along curb at E Street entrance

Monumental Core Framework Plan

The project site is located within the Northwest Rectangle precinct of the Monumental Core Framework Plan's (Framework Plan) study area. Within this area, the Framework Plan's main objective is to improve connections lost over time due to the construction of road infrastructure, bridges, and large federal office buildings. Specifically, the plan focuses on linking the Kennedy Center with the National Mall and with the White House and President's Park. The Framework Plan proposes to accomplish this latter objective by establishing the E Street corridor as a commemorative linear park with places for cultural enrichment and leisure activities. Due to its location along the north side of the E Street corridor, the proposed project will be a positive contributor to advancing the Framework Plan's recommendations for the Northwest Rectangle. The proposed base building modernization will improve the overall aesthetics of the E Street corridor through the renovation and restoration of the historic GSA Headquarters, and the construction of the modern courtyard addition. In addition, the potential for ground-floor retail at the project site will support the Framework Plan's goal of establishing E Street as a commemorative linear park by activating the edges of the park and providing amenities that park visitors can utilize.



Illustration showing project site in relation to the Framework Plan's proposed E Street Commemorative Corridor

The project is also consistent with many of the Framework Plan's guiding themes and strategies. For example, the project employs some of the Framework Plan's strategies for strengthening the public realm and promoting mixed-use development. Specifically, if GSA determines that perimeter security is necessary, the project will locate perimeter security elements primarily within

the building yard thereby maintaining free and open access to surrounding sidewalks. Conversely, if perimeter security is deemed unnecessary the project will incorporate ground-floor retail and other public amenities that will spur the transformation of the E Street corridor. Finally, the project also employs several of the Framework Plan's strategies for advancing sustainability in the urban environment. This includes, but is not limited to, the use of a green roof, stormwater collection and reuse, rooftop solar collection system, passive solar shading, provision of bike facilities, and a reduction of onsite parking. Overall, the project seeks to attain a Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) gold rating.

Executive Order #13514

On October 5, 2009, the White House issued Executive Order 13514, “Federal Leadership in Environmental, Energy, and Economic Performance” (“the Order”). The purpose of the Order is “to establish an integrated strategy towards sustainability in the Federal Government and to make reduction of greenhouse gas emissions a priority for Federal agencies.” The Order sets out policies for federal agencies to, among other things, increase energy efficiency, reduce greenhouse gases, protect water resources, and operate high performance buildings in sustainable locations. In addition, the Order establishes a policy for federal agencies to strengthen the vitality and livability of the communities in which federal facilities are located.

Several components of the project respond to the objectives of the Order, and the policies it sets out for all federal agencies. The project offers considerable environmental benefits through high-performance building design, reduced energy and water consumption; transit-oriented development; promotion of alternative modes of transportation; and the reduction of runoff through sustainable stormwater management techniques. Provided by GSA, the following is a list of some of the environmental benefits for the project:

- Replacement of windows with new operable windows with laminated-insulated glazing (as an alternate to refurbishment of the existing windows);
- Internal shading devices;
- Increased wall and roof insulation;
- Improved atrium glass, sunscreens, natural ventilation, radiant floors and other energy-conserving features;
- Photovoltaic and solar collectors for energy production and hot-water heating;
- Monitoring systems to reduce building energy use, monitor indoor air quality and improve human comfort;
- Greywater reuse, rain/storm water capturing and condensate collection systems to reduce water consumption;
- Utilization of a green roof
- Reduction of available onsite parking; and
- Provision of bicycle facilities

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)

Both GSA and NCPC have an independent responsibility to satisfy the requirements of NEPA. NCPC’s NEPA responsibility stems from its approval authority over the project. GSA has completed an Environmental Assessment (EA) for the project to which NCPC was a cooperating agency. The EA was prepared in accordance with the Council on Environmental Quality’s regulations for implementing NEPA, the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, GSA’s Public Building Service NEPA Desk Guide, and NCPC’s Environmental and Historic Preservation Policies and Procedures. In addition to a No Action Alternative, the EA analyzed two development alternatives described as “Alternative A” and “Alternative B.” Alternative A includes the base building modernization and courtyard infill construction, new E Street entrance, and perimeter security; while Alternative B analyzes the base building modernization

and courtyard infill construction, and ground floor retail. The EA analyzed each alternative's potential environmental impacts on 13 topic areas including:

- Land use
- Planning controls and policies
- Public space
- Economics
- Historic resources
- Visual resources
- Vehicular circulation
- Transit and pedestrian/bicycle circulation
- Air quality
- Noise
- Vegetation
- Stormwater
- Hazardous materials

On May 24, 2010, GSA issued a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) for both Alternative A and Alternative B stating that "the proposed modernization of the federal building at 1800 F Street, NW is not a major Federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment." GSA's FONSI also states that:

"While both Alternative A and B meet the overall purpose and need of the proposed action, Alternative B would provide public access to the building without perimeter security elements. The introduction of retail along E Street, NW would create an activated streetscape that is welcoming, inviting, and open. Retail would also attract additional visitors to the area, generate revenue from sales tax and tenant leases, and create employment opportunities."

Since the only component of the proposed project that the Commission is taking a preliminary and final action on is the base building modernization and courtyard infill construction, NCPC staff focused its review of the EA on those particular elements of the project. Staff has determined that the modernization of GSA's National Headquarters and associated courtyard infill addition will not cause significant impacts on any of the environmental topic areas analyzed in the EA. Staff notes that several of the impacts caused by the building modernization and addition will be beneficial in nature. For example, the introduction of a museum space, cafeteria, and conference room will have positive impacts on land use and the local economy by making the building more publically accessible and generating sales tax revenues. The EA identifies impacts to historic resources to be moderately adverse and long-term in duration. For the purposes of NEPA, moderate intensity impacts are not required to be mitigated. However, as a result of the Section 106 consultation process required under the National Historic Preservation Act, a Memorandum of Agreement, discussed below, has been established in order to avoid, minimize, and/or mitigate the Adverse Effects on existing historic resources caused by the project. Therefore, on June 28, 2010, after having identified no significant impacts on the human environment, the Executive Director of NCPC issued a FONSI for the proposed modernization and courtyard infill addition. NCPC's FONSI does not cover other project elements such as the proposed permanent perimeter security, E Street entrance, and ground floor retail. NCPC staff will analyze the potential environmental impacts of these elements when GSA submits them for preliminary and final approval subsequent to making a final determination of whether permanent perimeter security will be necessary at the project site.

National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA)

GSA initially concluded the Section 106 consultation process with the District of Columbia State Historic Preservation Officer (DC SHPO) through the establishment of a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) which was made effective on December 19, 2007. The signatories to the MOA include GSA, DC SHPO, and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP). According to the MOA, the scope of the Undertaking includes the “comprehensive modernization of the U.S. General Services Administration, National Office Building, located at 1800 F Street, NW, Washington, DC.” Specifically, the Undertaking includes restoration of significant interior public and executive spaces; exterior repairs; elevator upgrades; mechanical, plumbing, and life-safety improvements; perimeter security; changes to tenant spaces; and construction of an in-fill addition. In response to comments made by NCPC during its 2005 review of the modernization concept, the MOA includes stipulations that require further consultation with regard to the proposed perimeter security plan, specifically the placement and spacing of bollards within the building yard and along the curblin.

Following the execution of the MOA, the scope of the project, hence the scope of the Undertaking, was expanded to include a redesigned building entrance and possible ground floor retail along the E Street side of the building. Currently, GSA, DC SHPO, and ACHP are working to amend the existing MOA to include these additional elements, and address any additional Adverse Effects that may result. Staff notes that although the amended MOA will need to be finalized prior to GSA submitting any of the additional project components, including perimeter security, for preliminary and final review by the Commission, it does not affect the Commission’s ability to take a preliminary and final action on the proposed modernization and courtyard infill at this time.

CONSULTATION

Coordinating Committee

The Coordinating Committee reviewed the proposal at its June 9, 2010 meeting and forwarded it to the Commission with the statement that the proposal has been coordinated with all participating agencies. The participating agencies were NCPC; the National Park Service; the General Services Administration; the District of Columbia Office of Planning; the District Department of Transportation; the District of Columbia Department of Housing and Community Development; the District of Columbia Fire and Emergency Medical Services; and the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority.

Commission of Fine Arts

At its June 17, 2010 meeting, the U. S. Commission of Fine Arts (CFA) gave final approval to the proposed interior and exterior modernization and courtyard infill addition. CFA did not, however, take an action on the proposed concepts for the perimeter security, E Street entrance, and ground floor retail additions. In general, CFA was most supportive of the proposed ground floor retail additions noting that the design of the retail bays should relate more to the architecture of the courtyard infill addition. CFA also suggested that the retail bays be refined to reduce the degree to which they remove or obscure the existing historic fabric of the building.