

STAFF RECOMMENDATION



N. Witherell
NCPC File No. 7171

JUDICIARY SQUARE
H. CARL MOULTRIE I COURTHOUSE
Addition and Perimeter Security

500 Indiana Avenue, NW
Washington, DC

Submitted by the District of Columbia Courts

October 28, 2010

Abstract

The District of Columbia Courts has submitted another in a series of projects to implement the Judiciary Square Master Plan, which was approved by the Commission in 2005. The Master Plan itself was developed in response to the 2001 Family Court Act; the Family Court is one of the court functions located in the Moultrie Courthouse. The Master Plan envisioned an expansion of the Moultrie Courthouse by adding courtrooms and related offices to the C Street (south) façade of the building. The installation of perimeter security for the courthouse was to be integrated with the architectural and streetscape design. The proposed addition is consistent in size and location with the Master Plan. The proposed perimeter security would be constructed inside the sidewalk, rather than at the curb as proposed in the 2005 Master Plan. The applicant also proposes reconstructing and re-centering the historic 38-foot width of the C Street cartway.

Commission Action Requested by Applicant

Approval of comments on the concept design for the expansion of the Moultrie Courthouse and perimeter security along C Street, NW, pursuant to 40 U.S.C. § 8722 (b)(1) and (e).

Executive Director's Recommendation

The Commission:

Comments favorably on the concept design for the expansion of the H. Carl Moultrie I Courthouse and for C Street perimeter security, including restoration of the 38-foot C Street, NW

cartway, at 500 Indiana Avenue, NW, in Judiciary Square, in Washington, DC, as shown on NCPC Map File No.1.20(38.00)43177.

Recommends that the District of Columbia Courts continue consultation with relevant agencies, including the District Department of Transportation, as the design of the courthouse addition and of the perimeter security and related streetscape improvements and realignments are developed further.

Notes that the District of Columbia Courts will submit a proposed Master Plan modification for the restoration and realignment of the C Street cartway with the next phase of project review.

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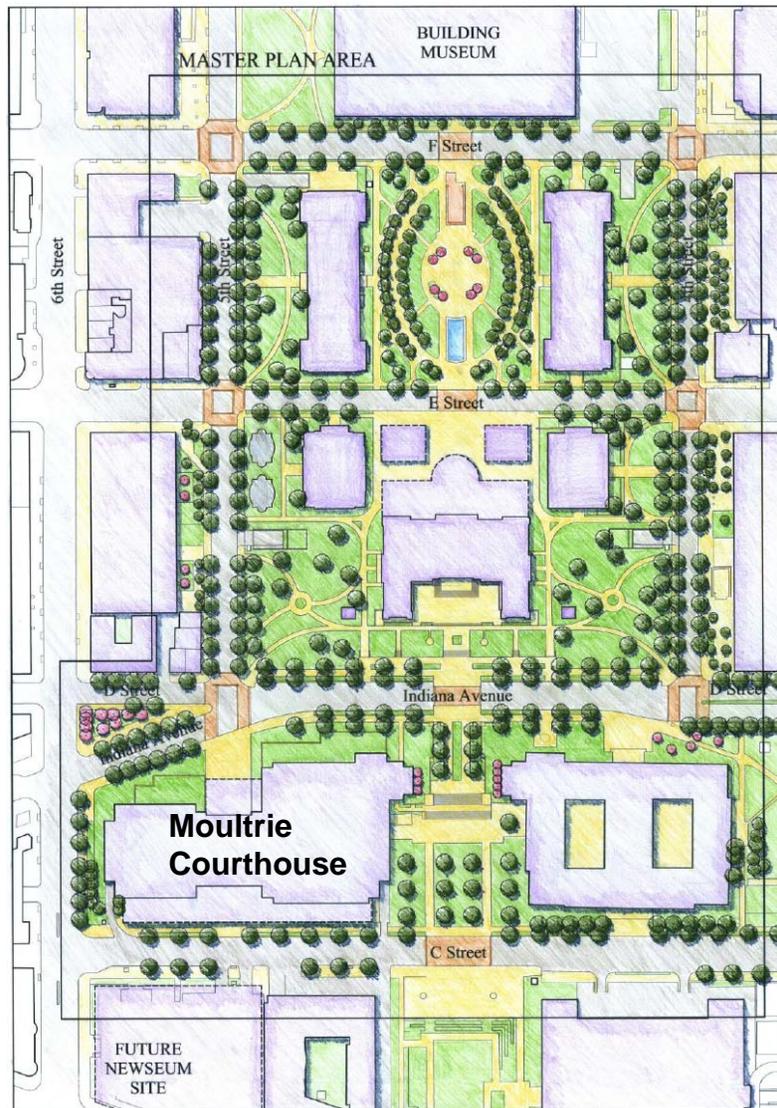
PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Site

The Moultrie Courthouse is located between Indiana Avenue and C Street, NW. The current submission proposes expansion on the south façade of the courthouse, facing C Street, NW, and a proposed security barrier line and related streetscape and landscape improvements along the courthouse's C Street frontage. The Moultrie Courthouse is located in the block immediately north of the Newseum and the Canadian Embassy and is bounded by 6th Street, NW to the west and John Marshall Plaza on 4 ½ Street, NW to the east.

Background

In 2005 the Commission approved the Judiciary Square Master Plan, which envisioned the reallocation and programming of both existing and new space for the buildings comprising the Judiciary Square courts complex; the installation of perimeter security for the court buildings; the beautification of the Square by augmenting the landscape plan and removing surface parking lots; the improvement of the pedestrian realm by reducing traffic and parking spaces for private vehicles within the Square, by widening sidewalks and adding bicycle lanes, and by making the buildings fully accessible; and the greater sustainability of the courts complex by removing impervious surfaces, planting street trees, and modernizing systems in the courthouses.



2005 Judiciary Square Master Plan, showing the planned addition to the C Street (south) façade of the Moultrie Courthouse in the gray area below the current foot print of the courthouse.

Proposal

Building Addition

The concept proposes an 111,700-gross-square-foot addition to the south façade of the Moultrie Courthouse and the interior renovation of an additional 64,100 gross square feet, for a project total of 175,800 new or renovated gross square feet. The expansion would allow for the construction of six courtrooms, associated chambers, juror amenities, related operational uses, and circulation. Moultrie Courthouse is the largest of the court buildings in Judiciary Square and

houses the District of Columbia Superior Court, Family Court, and the majority of court support functions including jurors, holding, and the United States Marshals Service.

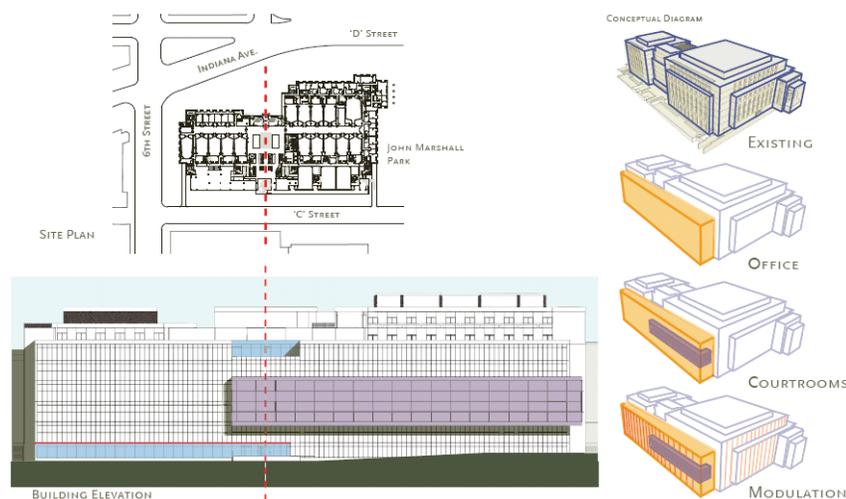
The proposed addition is on the C Street (south) façade of the courthouse. The addition is essentially a lamination, and would expand the floor plates of six stories of the limestone-clad courthouse. The proposed new construction would extend the façade southward for a distance of up to 46 feet and for a length of 425 feet along the building's east-west C Street façade. The entire addition would be contained within the courthouse's property line.

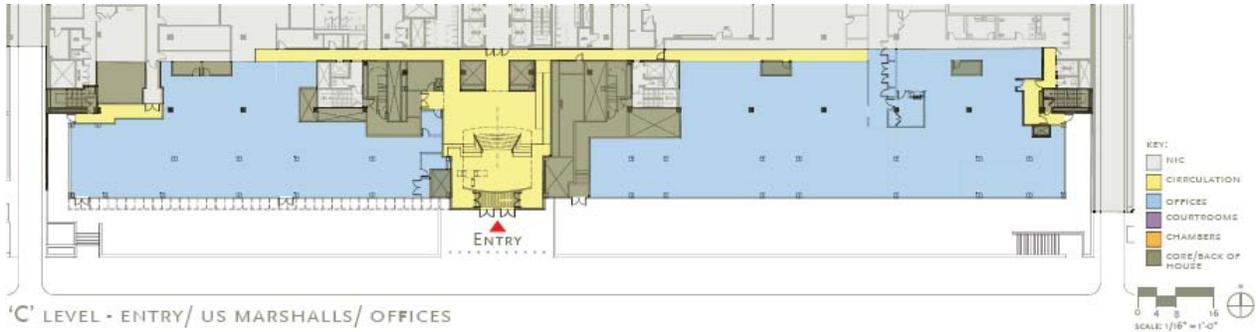
The courthouse has a lower level of offices on the C Street façade, where a significant change in grade exists across the site from east to west. This lower level is below the grade of the C Street sidewalk. The proposed addition contains a glazed lower level and a new pedestrian bridge at the sidewalk level to access the at-grade entrance to the building.

The façade fenestration is at an early stage of development. Massing diagrams and renderings of the façade indicate the intention of the District of Columbia Courts (DC Courts) and its design team to create symbolic and actual transparency for the courthouse and to allow light into the building through a curtain wall system that has limestone cladding on selected surfaces. The proposed addition and the adjacent floor area of the courthouse to be renovated together provide for the required separation of functional circulation patterns while retaining the necessary dimensions and relationships among the courtrooms and their associated chambers.

Given the prominent size and placement of the courthouse within the Judiciary Square complex and the significant axial views through the Square, the architects have designed the expansion so that it is contained within the south façade and stops short of the building's corners.

The building is being designed to meet the LEED Gold standard for new construction. The addition will have a green roof above the top floor, and other interior and exterior features that will reduce energy consumption and improve the sustainability of the courthouse will be incorporated into the design and construction.





'C' LEVEL - ENTRY/ US MARSHALLS/ OFFICES

The south entry (primarily for employees but also for the public) is a (fully accessible) sidewalk-level bridge over the sunken green garden at the lower level of the building.



Proposed C Street Elevation

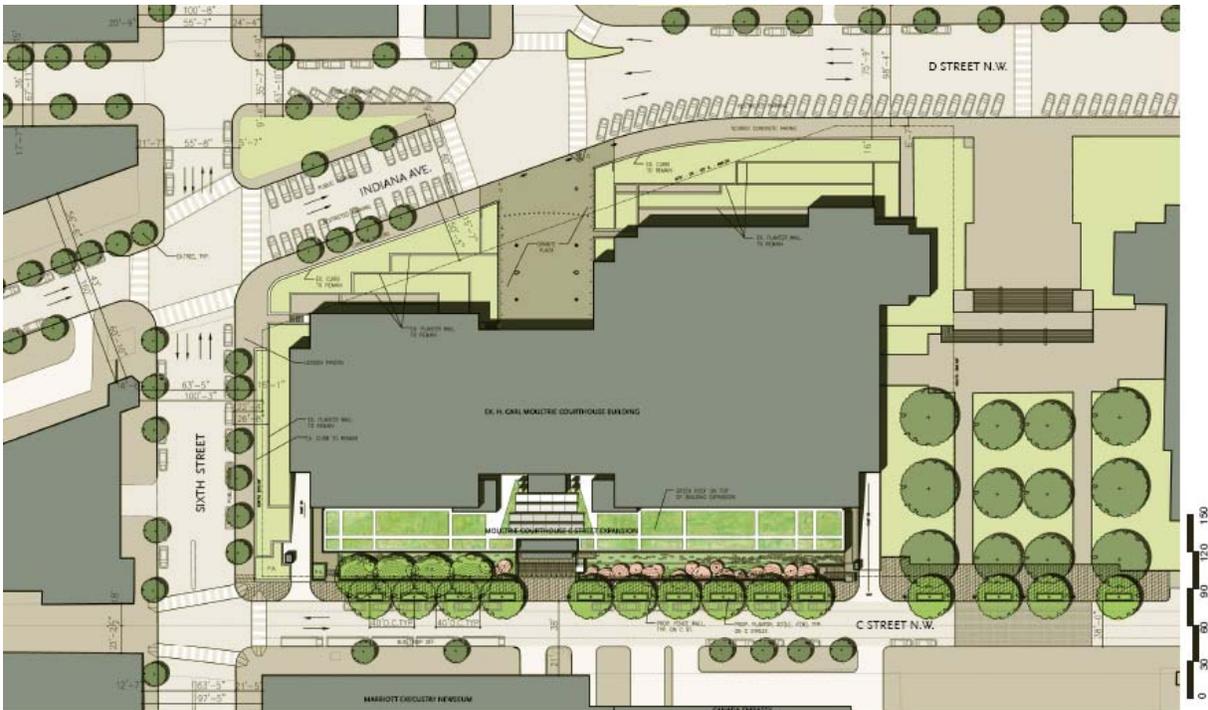
The concept design for the south façade expansion is primarily glazed, with limestone trim and will be developed further to add greater variation in scale and rhythm along C Street, NW.



Rendering of proposed addition, from C Street, NW, looking west from John Marshall Plaza.

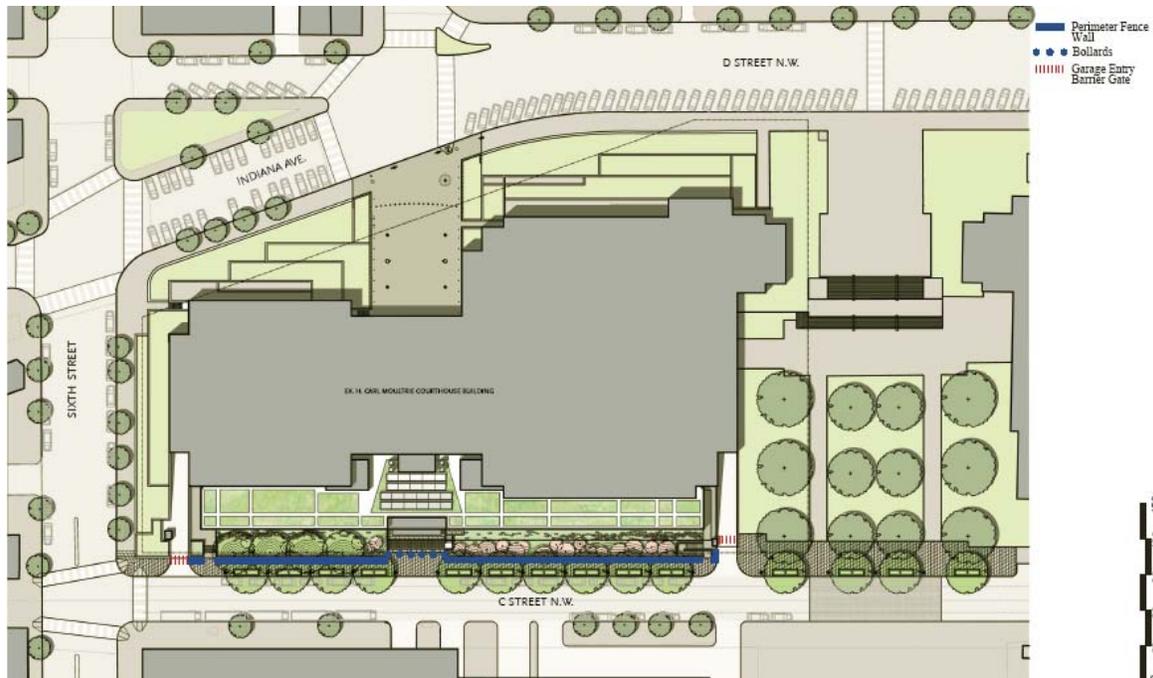
Proposed Cartway and Streetscape Alterations and the Vehicle Barrier

The proposed building addition (which projects up to 46 feet from the current south façade) would be contained entirely within the property line. A narrow green garden measuring 20 feet in depth would be established between the face of the new addition and the back of the sidewalk. This garden would embellish the green space next to the building and create an area for employees to enjoy. The garden would be designed to draw and filter stormwater run-off. In addition, the garden would occupy the 20-foot stand-off distance between the face of the building and a fence-wall that would serve as the vehicle barrier.



Proposed Site Plan, above, indicating the green roof on the addition, a 20-foot garden, the inner sidewalk edge with a fence-wall vehicle barrier, and the outer edge of the sidewalk, lined with street trees. Below, the 20-foot wide garden between the lowest level of the building façade (at left) and the higher level of the barrier fence-wall and sidewalk (at right).





Proposed Site Plan, indicating with the blue line the location of the barrier fence-wall, 5 feet to the south of the courthouse's property line, at the inside edge of the sidewalk. Retractable bollards (shown in red) would be installed at both garage entrances.

A feature of the concept design is the proposed restoration of the C Street cartway to 38 feet, a width documented on Baist Atlas Maps for C Street prior to the development of Judiciary Square and the construction of the Courthouse. This would narrow the cartway from its current dimension of 50 feet. The cartway was widened and expanded northward around the time the Moultrie Courthouse was constructed in the early 1970s. This caused the center line of the cartway to shift northward in front of the courthouse. By restoring the cartway to its original 38-foot width and the C Street right-of-way to its original 80-foot dimension and centerline, the DC Courts would realign the western portion of the block with the eastern portion of C Street, NW. C Street, NW in this part of the city is a short, three-block segment that dead-ends at the U.S. Department of Labor on the east and 6th Street on the west.

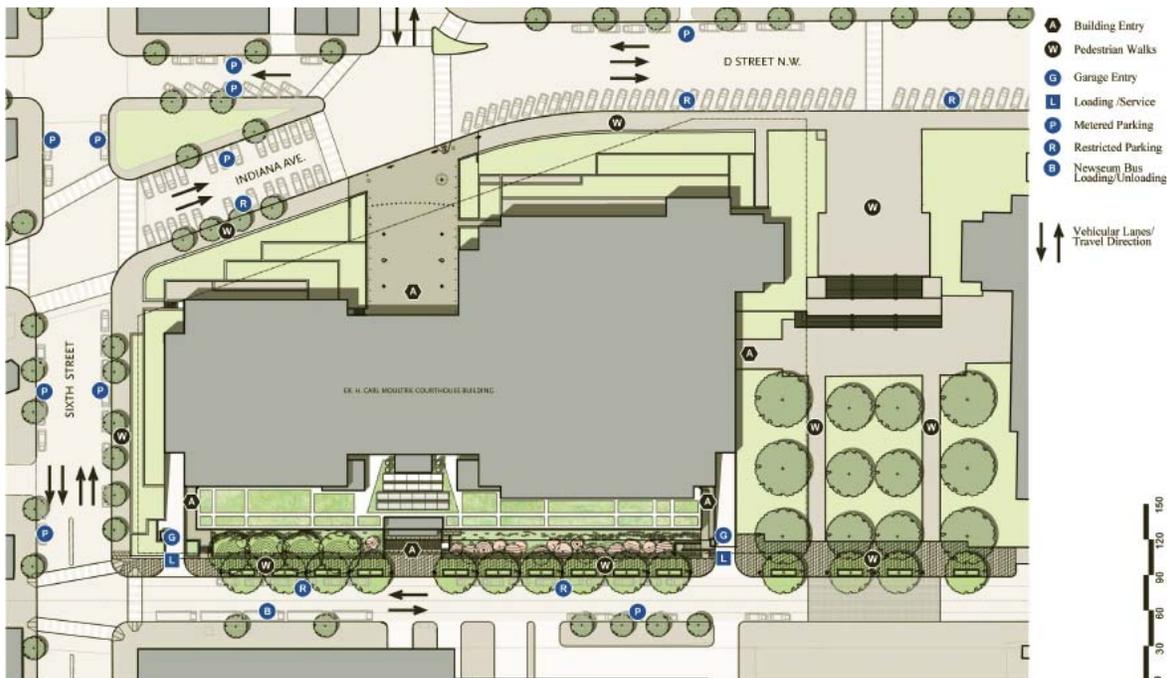
Given what the District of Columbia Department of Transportation (DDOT) has determined is limited through traffic on this segment of C Street, NW, DDOT is interested in the proposal to narrow the cartway to improve pedestrian safety. This is also a goal of the DC Courts and its Judiciary Square Master Plan. The restoration of the narrowed cartway and the location of its north curb and sidewalk is the action that would provide sufficient area for the barrier line to be located inside the sidewalk edge while still allowing a 20-foot stand-off zone for the courthouse.

The realignment of the center line of the right-of-way to its historic location would visibly improve the regularity of the cartway and curb lanes along the 3-block segment of C Street, NW. The south side of C Street – and the parking and servicing of the Newseum and the Canadian Embassy--would remain unchanged, since the south curbline was not moved in the 1970s.



1909 Baist Atlas Map indicating an 80-foot right-of-way and a 38-foot cartway. The cartway was expanded northward by 12 feet in the 1970s.

The proposed 38-foot-wide cartway would provide for two 12-foot traffic lanes (one in each direction) and two 8-foot parallel parking or drop-off zones on the north and south curbs. The proposed sidewalk width would be 10 feet clear passage, inside new street tree boxes measuring four feet in width by 20 feet in length. The sidewalk would be constructed according to the requirements of the District of Columbia Department of Transportation's Streetscape Manual, including Low Impact Development (LID) tree boxes, the use of London pavers on the sidewalk, and the recommended spacing of trees and light standards.



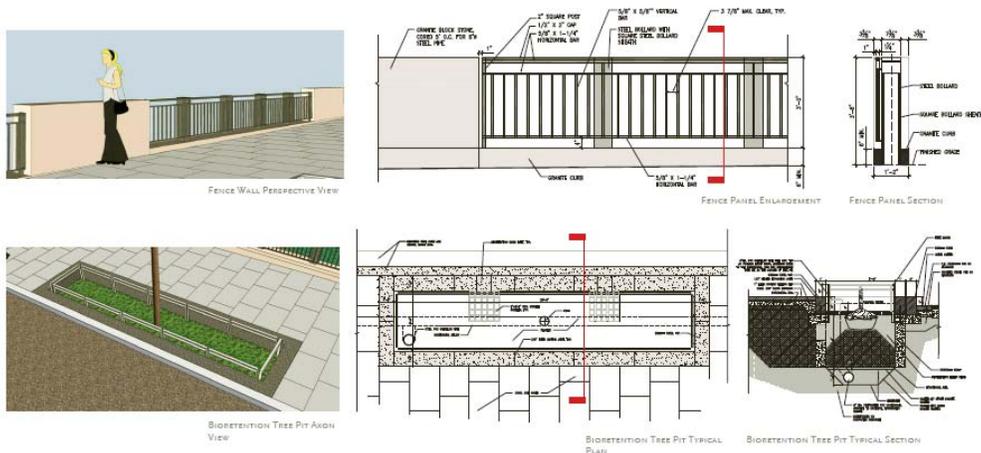
Proposed circulation plan, showing 2 traffic lanes (one in each direction) and two parking lanes on C Street, NW.

In the 2005 Judiciary Square Master Plan, the proposed security barrier line was located at the outside edge of the sidewalk, at or near the curb. In the current concept design submission, the barrier line is inside the sidewalk. This improvement is achieved through the proposed reconstruction of the original 38-foot cartway width, which provides an additional 12 feet of public space for the construction of a sidewalk and street tree boxes as well as the fence-wall vehicle barrier.

At the inside edge of the sidewalk, a 42-inch-high fence-wall serving as the vehicle barrier would be constructed at the sidewalk level. Inside of the fence wall, the 20-foot wide green garden described above would provide a green edge for the building, mediate a noticeable change in grade, and provide a 20-foot stand-off distance between the vehicle barrier and the building entrance and façade.



Rendering showing the proposed pedestrian view from the sidewalk, looking over the fence-wall and into the garden and lower level façade of the courthouse (at far left). At far right in this rendering, street trees and generous LID tree boxes would line the C Street curb. Below, the fence wall is designed with a height of 42 inches. Tree boxes would measure 4 feet by 20 feet.



PROJECT ANALYSIS

Staff recommends that the Commission comment favorably on the concept design for the building addition and for the proposed perimeter security and associated streetscape alterations and improvements, including the narrowing and re-centering of the C Street cartway.

Staff notes that the DC Courts has consulted regularly with Commission staff and other federal and District agencies in the development of the concept, and recommends that DC Courts continue consultation during design development, particularly with DDOT as the plans for the proposed streetscape alterations and perimeter security are developed. A preliminary meeting between the DC Courts and DDOT's Public Space Committee in July 2010 resulted in a constructive and positive assessment from DDOT, including acceptance of the fence-wall in public space. The barrier line is inside the sidewalk and does not impede pedestrians, although the outer face of it is five (5) feet outside the property line. The Committee supports the restoration and realignment of the narrower cartway as a measure that would improve the safety and quality of the pedestrian realm.

This is a marked improvement on the approved barrier location at the curb in the 2005 Master Plan and will result in a vehicle barrier that becomes part of the architecture of the building rather than a stand-alone feature near the curb. The DC Courts intends to submit a request for a Master Plan modification to document and analyze the restoration and realignment of C Street with the next project phase.

Staff notes that the security barrier, as proposed in this submission, extends for the length of only the C Street façade of the Moultrie Courthouse. The barrier for the west courthouse façade along 6th Street, NW is not part of this submission. The DC Courts will submit it in a future phase and plans to construct it inside the 6th Street sidewalk. The DC Courts is also consulting with staff and others, including DDOT's public space committee, on the location and design of the vehicle barrier to be proposed for the north façade of the courthouse on Indiana Avenue, NW.

The design approach of the courthouse expansion is an appropriate response, in staff's view, to the need for improved functions within the courthouse. Staff's view is that while the architects are proposing a different vocabulary and palette for the building's addition, the change and contrast are welcome. The modulation of the new elements—with greater and lesser areas of glass on the sides and front of the revised facade—helps to blend the old and new and make the addition more compatible with both the courthouse and its ensemble in Judiciary Square. Further modulation of the massing and a greater effort to incorporate elements and massing responsive to the pedestrian scale would be desirable; the DC Courts intends to incorporate these improvements during further development of the concept.

In staff's view, the proposed south façade may be seen as more compatible with C Street's south street wall as it has evolved with the construction of the Newseum, which has a glazed curtain wall on its north façade (across the street from the courthouse).

The sightlines and vistas so important to the character of Judiciary Square are retained, including the general symmetry of setback lines of the courthouse with the Municipal Building to the east. The limestone corners of the courthouse continue to be revealed and the relatively shallow projection of the addition is nominal, given the size, mass, and imposing weightiness of the Moultrie Courthouse.

Staff also commends the DC Courts for its plan to achieve a LEED Gold rating for new construction, and for the incorporation of LID principles in the garden and in the tree boxes

CONFORMANCE

Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital

The proposal is not inconsistent with the policies of the federal elements of the Comprehensive Plan, especially those regarding the image of the national capital and consistency and compatibility of new design in a historic precinct. The courthouse will convey qualities of transparency that are important to the DC Courts, will allow for an accessible entrance to the building on C Street, will respond to federal goals for sustainability, and will offer improved court functions and courtrooms, especially for the Family Court. The proposal retains the corners, setbacks, and sightlines that are part of the composition of Judiciary Square. And the DC Courts proposes the reconstruction and re-centering of C Street that will restore the historic cartway width of 38 feet.

National Capital Urban Design and Security Plan

By placing the barrier line inside the sidewalk and improving the appearance and safety of the pedestrian realm, the design for the barrier location and design is consistent with the goals and objectives of the Plan. The landscape and security plans provide a 20-foot building yard and stand-off zone.

Relevant Federal Facility Master Plan

The approved 2005 Master Plan for Judiciary Square envisioned an addition of this size and projection to the Moultrie Courthouse. The use is identical. The barrier line was in public space, but at the curb rather than inside the sidewalk. The break-through with the proposed concept design is the restoration and re-centering of the C Street cartway and right-of-way, which allows the barrier to be located inside the sidewalk. This change requires a modification of the 2005 Judiciary Square Master Plan and the DC Courts will submit the modification request and analysis with the next project phase.

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)

NCPC is serving as lead federal agency for NEPA and concluded an EIS and Record of Decision for the courts complex at Judiciary Square at the time the Master Plan was completed and approved by the Commission in 2005. The courthouse addition, perimeter security, and traffic and parking impacts were analyzed in the EIS. The 2005 analysis is still valid for the courthouse

renovation and addition, including use, number of employees, etc. As described above, the proposed alterations to C Street will require the DC Courts to analyze and submit a modification to the master plan.

National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA)

NCPC serves as lead federal agency for Section 106 review of this undertaking. The Moultrie Courthouse is not a historic structure but the L'Enfant Plan is a landmark listed in the National Register of Historic Places and Judiciary Square is a component of the Pennsylvania Avenue National Historic Site. The DC Courts and NCPC have consulted with the DC SHPO during the past year. The Executive Director has not yet made a determination of effect.

CONSULTATION

Coordinating Committee

The Coordinating Committee reviewed the proposal at its October 13, 2010 meeting and forwarded the proposal to the Commission with the statement that the proposal was coordinated by all participating agencies. The participating agencies were the NCPC; the National Park Service, the General Services Administration, the District Department of Transportation, the District of Columbia Fire Marshall, and the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority.

Commission of Fine Arts

The Commission of Fine Arts reviewed the case at its October 21, 2010 meeting, expressing concern for the scale and massing of the proposed addition as currently designed and asking for the articulation of a more human scale along the 425-foot length of the addition and an architectural expression closer to that of the limestone courthouse. CFA responded positively to the proposed garden and to the proposed location of the fence-wall barrier inside the sidewalk.