

# STAFF RECOMMENDATION



C. Kelly

NCPC File No. 7208

## FORT BELVOIR – SOUTH POST UNITED SERVICES ORGANIZATION FAMILY CENTER

Belvoir Road and 9<sup>th</sup> Street  
Fairfax County, Virginia

Submitted by the United States Department of Defense, Department of the Army

March 31, 2011

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### Abstract

The Department of the Army proposes to build a United Services Organization (USO) Family Center to serve the Warrior in Transition Campus at Fort Belvoir. The proposed two-level, 26, 870 square-foot facility will be constructed on the site of an existing restaurant/grill and tennis courts adjacent to the Warrior in Transition Campus. The facility will contain recreation, dining, meeting, and education spaces and amenities to support the wounded soldiers and their families.

### Commission Action Requested by Applicant

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

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### Executive Director's Recommendation

The Commission:

**Approves** the preliminary and final site and building plans for a United Services Organization Family Center at Fort Belvoir, as shown on NCPC Map File No. 2204.10(38.00)43257.

**Requires** the applicant to submit an updated master plan as required by the National Capital Planning Act.

**Notes** that the Fort Belvoir master plan was last approved in 1993 and that the Commission has issued multiple unfulfilled requests for an updated master plan that reflects the current and future growth at Fort Belvoir, and therefore due to a lack of sufficient information necessary to properly analyze projects the Commission will not approve any future proposals until such time as an updated master plan is submitted.

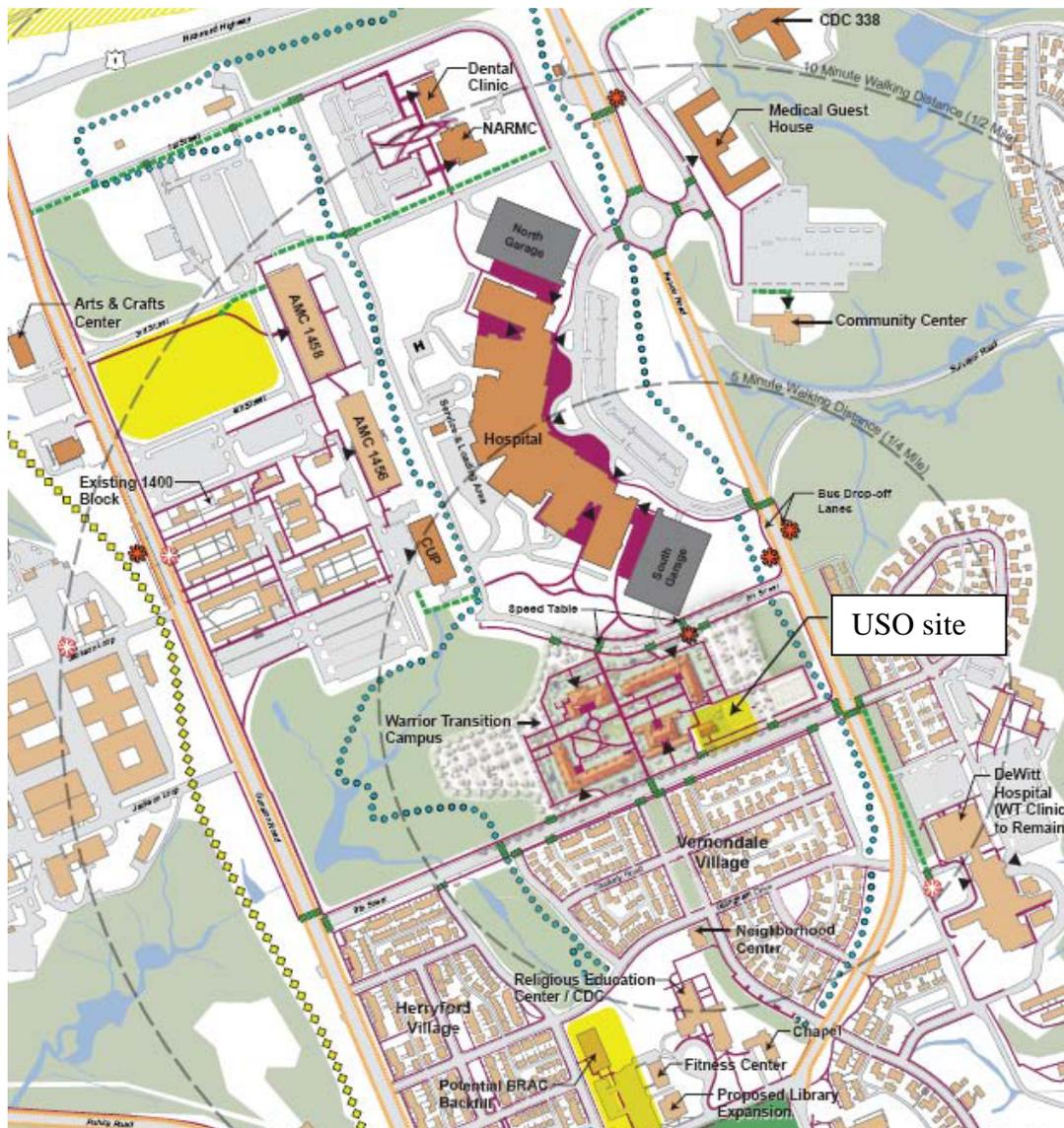
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**PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

Site

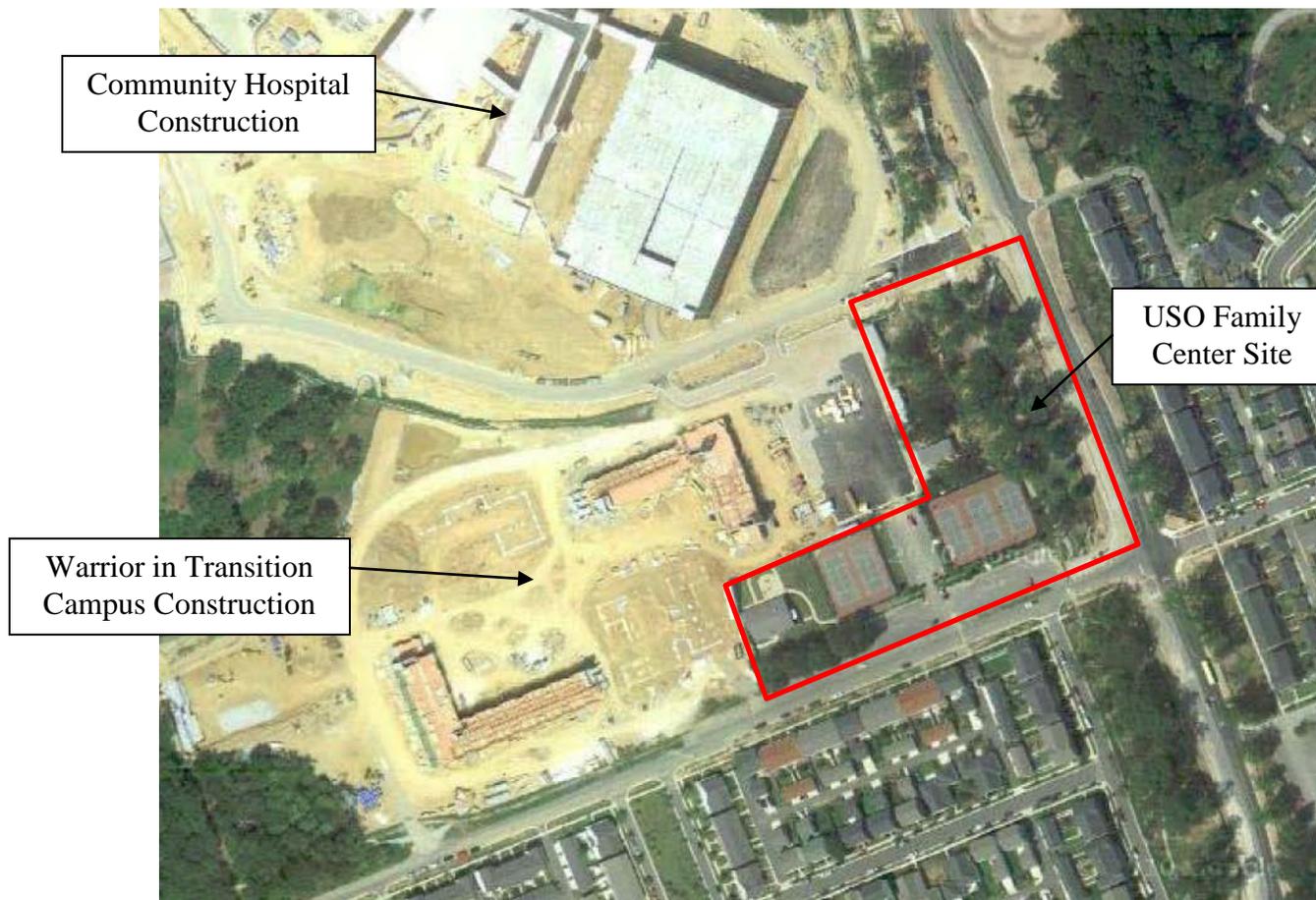
The 4.21 acre project site is located at the intersection of 9<sup>th</sup> Street and Belvoir Road on the South Post of Fort Belvoir, Fairfax County, Virginia. The site is adjacent to the new Community Hospital and the new Warrior in Transition campus. To the south is the Vernondale Village military housing development.

**Location Map**



The southern portion of the site currently contains tennis courts and a restaurant facility which will be demolished and relocated to another site on Fort Belvoir. The project area also includes undeveloped land along Belvoir Road on which the Army proposes to establish a therapeutic garden.

### Existing Aerial Photo of Project Site



### Background

On September 15, 2005, President George W. Bush approved the United States Defense Base Closure and Realignment (BRAC) Commission's recommendations. As a result of these recommendations, Fort Belvoir will receive an influx of approximately 20,000 personnel, the largest of any facility receiving BRAC agencies, by September 2011. One of the BRAC recommendations will result in the closure of Walter Reed Medical Center in the District of Columbia with operations moving to Fort Belvoir and Bethesda Naval Hospital.

To accommodate the new medical operations the Army is currently building a new Community Hospital on 60-acres of a former golf course, directly north of the project site. In July of 2008, the Commission approved preliminary and final site and building plans for the new community hospital. The hospital will contain 1.2 million square-feet of space, with 125 patient beds, clinical space and outpatient services, and 2,600 structured parking spaces. Additional ancillary

facilities will include a central energy plant, helipad, ambulance shelter, surface parking, and various utility and infrastructure services. Construction of the hospital is nearing completion.

### **Rendering of the New Community Hospital at Fort Belvoir**



To temporarily house soldiers while they are recuperating from injuries and using the Community Hospital, the Army is also building a Warrior in Transition Campus, located immediately south of the hospital and west of the proposed USO Family Center site. At its June 2010 meeting, the Commission approved preliminary and final site and building plans for the construction of the campus. The campus includes: two barracks buildings that will house 288 residents, an Administrative and Company Operations Facility, and a Solider and Family Assistance Center.

### **Warrior in Transition Campus Site Plan**



## Proposal

The Army proposes to build a United Services Organization (USO) Family Center in order to support soldiers staying at the Warrior in Transition Campus. According to the submission material, the USO Family Center and therapeutic gardens are dedicated to the mission of supporting wounded warriors and their families throughout the rehabilitation process by providing a place for recreation, respite, and long term planning. The proposed family center is intended to complement and support the functions of the Warrior in Transition Campus.

The proposed USO Family Center will be a two-story, 26,870 square-foot facility. The design locates activities geared toward recreation on the first floor, with areas dedicated to a sports lounge, dining, and a kitchen. The lower level will also house educational uses such as a learning center, a business center, a multipurpose room, and a classroom. The second level of the facility will provide a more relaxed environment with a music room, a small theater, a video game room, an art studio, and a living room. Also included on the second floor is a large lounge with a roof terrace.

### **Rendering of Proposed Family Center**



The USO Family Center will be clad in a brick and buff-colored architectural finish system with a standing seam metal roof. The color palette matches the adjacent Warrior in Transition Campus. The building will be accented with wood fascia, timber and glass trellises, and timber columns. The main entry to the facility is accented with glass with medium bronze mullions.



## Development Program

Applicant: Department of the Army

Estimated Cost: The construction cost for the Family Center is approximately \$10.4 million. Funding for the project will be provided through private donations. The building will be given to the Army upon the completion of construction and will be staffed and operated by the USO.

Architect: Studios Architecture

Construction Schedule: The Army proposes to start construction of the USO Family Center in April 2011 with completion in January 2012. For the therapeutic gardens, construction is proposed to start in April 2011 and finish in February 2012.

## PROJECT ANALYSIS

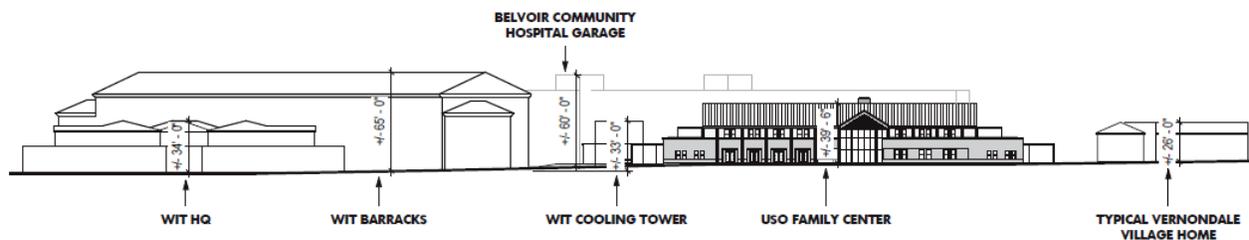
### Executive Summary

Staff recommends **approval** of the preliminary and final site and building plans for the USO Family Center at Fort Belvoir. While the recommendation is to approve this particular project, staff notes its concern regarding the continued development at Fort Belvoir without an updated master plan that reflects the current and future conditions of Fort Belvoir to rely upon. Staff has worked closely with the Army in order to reasonably accommodate the additional development demands caused as a result of BRAC and the BRAC timeline. However, the Army is now beginning to submit projects that are non-BRAC related that should be analyzed in an updated master plan and associated environmental document that looks at the installation as a whole.

### USO Project

The finishing and massing of the proposed building are in keeping with the design, scale, and visual character of the South Post and the thematic concepts and visual language of this area of Fort Belvoir, which is historically and predominantly red brick. In addition, the building design is consistent with Fort Belvoir's Installation Design Guide.

### Proposed USO Family Center in Relationship to Surrounding Buildings



### Fort Belvoir Master Plan History

In 1993, the Commission approved the Land Use Element for the Fort Belvoir Master Plan and established a master plan employment level of 21,000 employees at Fort Belvoir for the year 2015. Also at that time, the Commission urged the Army to complete the Master Plan Short Range Component and associated documents, such as a Transportation Management Plan (TMP) and an Installation Design Guide. In 1995, the Commission approved the Fort Belvoir Installation Design Guide. A TMP, however, has not been submitted for the 1993 Master Plan.

In 2002, the Commission approved the Subarea Plan for the Regional Community Support Center, and the preliminary and final plans for the replacement of the DeWitt Army Hospital. In addition to its approval of the Subarea Plan, the Commission also encouraged the Army to “immediately undertake the updating of the Master Plan for all of Fort Belvoir. New projects beyond those included for the Subarea Plan should not be submitted for consideration until the update has been completed.” Subsequently, the Army worked on updating the 1993 Master Plan and submitted it to the Commission in 2005. However, in response to the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) Recommendations of 2005, the Army withdrew its submission due to the significant changes that the recommendations would have on the installation. For instance, as a result of the BRAC recommendations Fort Belvoir is receiving an influx of approximately 20,000 personnel. This influx will increase the installation population to approximately 40,000 personnel, 20,000 more than originally planned for in the 1993 Master Plan.

Since 2005, the Commission has approved over 24 projects at Fort Belvoir, many of them directly related to the BRAC recommendations. Some of these projects include the National Geospatial Agency, the Community Hospital, the Missile Defense Agency Headquarters, and the North Atlantic Regional Medical Center. Some of these projects were indirectly related to the BRAC recommendations such as necessary infrastructure improvements and an emergency services center. In addition to the BRAC projects, the Army has also submitted other time-sensitive projects that were funded through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, such as the child development center on South Post. Periodically in its review of these projects, the Commission reminded the Army of the requirement to submit an updated Master Plan to reflect the changes at Fort Belvoir.

In April 2010, the Army submitted the draft Fort Belvoir Master Plan update for review by the Commission. In accordance with the Commission’s Procedures for Intergovernmental Cooperation in Federal Planning in the National Capital Region, staff referred the draft master plan to local and regional agencies. At that time, Fairfax County, the Virginia Department of Transportation, and NCPC staff expressed to the Army that the master plan was dated 2007 and did not accurately reflect the existing and future conditions at Fort Belvoir. As a result, the Army withdrew the submission and is currently updating the master plan to incorporate BRAC projects in the baseline existing conditions at the installation, and project future growth from that point. The Army, staff, and Fairfax County have been meeting regularly since Summer 2010 to discuss the master plan update. The Army has indicated to staff that they will be undertaking an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to satisfy the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The EIS process has not yet begun and could take up to 15 months to complete.

Since the 1993 Master Plan does not reflect the growth cause at Fort Belvoir as a result of BRAC, an updated master plan is necessary to give staff the necessary context within which to understand the planning and siting decisions being made by the Army on projects. In addition to providing context, an updated master plan will assist staff in understanding a project's impacts on Fort Belvoir as a whole. Therefore, staff recommends that the Commission **require** the applicant to submit an updated master plan in accordance with the National Capital Planning Act.

## CONFORMANCE

### Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital

The proposed project is not inconsistent with the policies of the Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital. The USO Family Center has been located on a previously developed site and in close proximity to the Warrior in Transition Campus. The project will also reduce the amount of impervious surface on site by 44 percent, meet LEED silver standards, and provide recreational amenities to personnel.

### Federal Capital Improvements Plan

The USO Family Center will be built by the USO, a private entity, without federal capital money. Therefore, the project is not included in the Federal Capital Improvements Plan.

### Relevant Federal Facility Master Plan

The project is consistent with the Land Use Element of the 1993 Fort Belvoir Master Plan. As noted above, the Army is currently updating the Fort Belvoir Master Plan and the update will continue to designate this area as "community" land use. The Army defines community uses as "land use that encourages a mix of uses. Facilities allowed include religious, family support, personnel services, professional services, medical, community, housing, commercial and recreational services. Users live both on- and off-post and may include soldiers, dependents, retirees, and other civilian personnel."

### National Environmental Policy Act

To fulfill its responsibilities under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the Department of the Army concluded that the project can be categorically excluded pursuant to its NEPA provisions, CX (c)(1), AR 200-2, 32 CFR part 651, appendix B, section ii, for a new construction project which will disturb no more than five cumulative acres of previously undisturbed surface.

Due to the project location in the environs, NCPC does not have an independent NEPA responsibility.

### National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA)

Pursuant to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, the Department of the Army submitted the project to the Virginia State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO). The Virginia SHPO concurred with the Army's determination of "No Adverse Affect" on historic properties.

Due to the project location outside the District of Columbia, NCPC does not have independent Section 106 responsibility.

### CONSULTATION

#### Referral to relevant local planning agencies

In accordance with the Commission's Procedures for Intergovernmental Cooperation in Federal Planning in the National Capital Region, NCPC staff referred the proposed project along with the proposed Fort Belvoir Post Exchange project (NCPC File No. 7096) to: Fairfax County; the Virginia Department of Transportation; the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality; the Washington Metropolitan Council of Governments; the Northern Virginia Regional Commission; and the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission.

The Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) and Fairfax County provided comments on the project; both letters are attached. VDOT indicated that the transportation network improvements being constructed to accommodate BRAC should handle the traffic resulting from the proposed PX and USO projects.

Fairfax County found the USO Family Center design direction to be "exciting" due to its sustainability features and innovative stormwater management techniques. The county made the following four points:

- They recommended using the stormwater retained in the underground storage for irrigation and water features;
- They questioned if a proposed bus stop could be located close to the USO facility;
- They questioned if bicycle storage would be provided on site;
- Lastly, they questioned the need for twenty-eight parking spaces.

The Army was provided with these comments and has since provided a response. Both the county's comments and the Army's response are attached to this report.



## COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

### DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

4975 Alliance Drive  
Fairfax, VA 22030

**GREGORY A. WHIRLEY**  
COMMISSIONER

February 28, 2011

Mr. David W. Levy, RA, AICP  
Director, Urban Design and Plan Review  
National Capital Planning Commission  
401 9<sup>th</sup> Street, NW, North Lobby, Suite 500  
Washington, DC 20004

RE: NCPC File Numbers 7096 (Post Exchange) and 7208 (USO Family Center)

Dear Mr. Levy:

Thank you for your letter of January 11, 2011, to our former District Administrator Morteza Salehi requesting the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) review the proposed plans for the construction of a new Post Exchange, Commissary, and USO Family Center at Fort Belvoir.

As you are aware, there is a great deal of activity at the post, including many transportation improvements to accommodate base realignment and closure (BRAC) changes. These improvements should provide the mitigation needed for the increased traffic from these new ancillary uses. We have completed our review and have no objection to approval of these projects.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Renée N. Hamilton".

Renée N. Hamilton  
Assistant District Administrator for  
Program and Investment Management



## County of Fairfax, Virginia

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To protect and enrich the quality of life for the people, neighborhoods and diverse communities of Fairfax County

March 21, 2010

David W. Levy  
Director, Urban Design and Plan Review  
National Capital Planning Commission  
401 9<sup>th</sup> Street, NW  
North Lobby, Suite 500  
Washington, DC 20004

Dear Mr. Levy:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the preliminary and final review submission for the Post Exchange Shopping Center (PX) and USO Family Center, NCPC File Numbers 7096 and 7208, respectively. In collaboration with the Department of Public Works and Environmental Services (DPWES) and Fairfax County Department of Transportation, the Department of Planning and Zoning has reviewed the submitted documents and offer the comments attached. Please note that these comments have not been endorsed by the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors.

### **Post Exchange**

In September of 2010, we reviewed and provided comments on the Environmental Assessment and Draft Finding of No Significant Impact for the New Commissary, Post Exchange, and Future Mixed Use Development. As described in the submission documents, the PX will consist of a 263,438 square foot one-story retail building with 3,130 square feet of exterior canopies and 1,083 parking spaces. The PX will be located on a currently undeveloped 27.4 acre site that is heavily wooded. Our previous comments focused on the amount of impervious surface created by a single-story design with surface parking, and recommended a two-story building and structured parking be considered to limit impacts on stormwater runoff, ground and habitat disturbance, Resource Protection Area (RPA) encroachment and tree removal. We are disappointed to find in this submission that those alternatives have been rejected as too costly or impractical, as was a green roof as a mitigation strategy for dealing with stormwater runoff. It appears that the project will incorporate pervious pavement in some areas, although it is unclear what percentage of the paved surfaces will be pervious materials. We encourage the developer to consider other Low Impact Development (LID) site design alternatives to reducing stormwater runoff volume and pollutant impacts from the site with the goal of "no net increase" from current conditions.

Additional details and a number of transportation-related concerns are included in the attached comments.

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**Department of Planning and Zoning**  
Director's Office  
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David W. Levy  
March 18, 2011  
Page 2

**USO Family Center**

As explained in the submission, the USO Family Center is a component of the Warrior in Transition complex, located on approximately 4.2 acres adjacent to the new community hospital on the corner of Belvoir Road and 9<sup>th</sup> Street. The USO Family Center will consist of a 26,870 square foot, two-story family center and gardens to serve Warriors in Transition stationed at Fort Belvoir. In the summer of 2009, we reviewed and supported the finding of no significant impact with the Environmental Assessment for the Warrior in Transition complex; we included in our comments a number of recommendations related to stormwater management and avoidance of impacts to nearby wetlands and waterways.

The green design of the USO Family Center represents an exciting new direction in on-post construction. We are pleased to note the significant decrease (44%) in imperviousness from the existing conditions on the site. We applaud the planned inclusion of a green roof, bioretention and other innovative stormwater BMPs. It is not mentioned in the text, but there are suggestions in some drawings that the planned therapeutic gardens may contain one or more water feature(s). Interior plantings are also mentioned. We encourage the re-use of stormwater retained in underground storage (if available) for water features and landscaping of the therapeutic gardens, and for irrigation of the interior plantings.

We find that the submission demonstrates that the proposed building and gardens will be integrated into the Warrior in Transition campus, and will be compatible with homes in the immediate vicinity as well as within the larger context of existing development on Fort Belvoir and within the Woodlawn Historic District. The therapeutic garden is incorporated into the design to provide outdoor amenities for resident soldiers, their families and visitors.

There are other issues described in greater detail within the attached staff comments.

If you have any questions about our comments, please do not hesitate to contact Lindsay Bell of my staff at [Lindsay.Bell@fairfaxcounty.gov](mailto:Lindsay.Bell@fairfaxcounty.gov).

Sincerely,

Fred R. Selden, Acting Director  
Department of Planning and Zoning

FRS: MG: LMB

Attachments: As Stated

cc: Board of Supervisors  
Anthony H. Griffin, County Executive  
Robert A. Stalzer, Deputy County Executive  
Pamela G. Nee, Chief, Environment and Development Review Branch, DPZ

**Fort Belvoir Post Commissary and USO Family Center  
Preliminary and Final Design Submissions, January 2011**

**Comments from Fairfax County Staff, March 2011**

**Staff Contact: Lindsay Bell, [Lindsay.Bell@fairfaxcounty.gov](mailto:Lindsay.Bell@fairfaxcounty.gov); 703-324-1382**

We have reviewed the Post Exchange and USO Family Center preliminary and final design submissions and offer the following comments:

**USO Family Center**

- We are pleased to note the significant decrease (44%) in imperviousness from the existing conditions on the site. We applaud the planned inclusion of a green roof, bioretention and other innovative stormwater BMPs. It is not mentioned in the text, but there are suggestions in some drawings that the planned therapeutic gardens may contain one or more water feature(s). Interior plantings are also mentioned. We encourage the re-use of stormwater retained in underground storage (if available) for water features and landscaping of the therapeutic gardens, and for irrigation of the interior plantings.
- While not located too far from the proposed USO Family Center, the bus shelter on 9<sup>th</sup> Street could be relocated from its currently planned location to be closer. It is currently located on the western edge of the Warrior in Transition Campus. Perhaps it could be located on its eastern edge, shared with the USO? Regardless, there is a bus stop located in close proximity.
- Will space be allocated for bicycle storage (racks and/or lockers)? This could be for guests or employees. It is not clear from the plans.
- With an estimated 15 full and part time employees at the USO Family Center at any given time (Project Report, NCPC Submission Package), only 9 parking spaces should be provided (based on 60%). The parking lot contains 28 parking spaces for employees and visitors. The provision of 19 visitor spaces seems excessive. Is there a rationale for this allocation? The parking lot should probably be reduced in size to better encourage alternative modes of transportation, such as walking, bicycling and transit. A parking lot located behind the building with pedestrian connections also seems reduce the need for 28 spaces at the front of the building.

3-25-11

## USO Facility, Fort Belvoir, VA

### Army Responses to NCPC and Fairfax County Comments on Preliminary and Final Submission

1. Stormwater recommendation encouraging the re-use of stormwater retained in underground storage for water features and landscaping: **Response**--stormwater retention on site for exterior and interior irrigation was considered but determined to not be economically feasible.
2. Location of proposed 9<sup>th</sup> Street bus shelter—move to be in closer proximity to the USO: **Response**—the bus shelter has been built as a part of the Warriors in Transition Campus and must remain within the site defined boundaries approved for that project. We believe its location can jointly serve the WIT site and the USO.
3. Will space be allocated for bicycle storage (racks and/or lockers)? **Response**—bicycle racks will be provided to the west of the drop-off area near the main entry. Space for 5 bicycles is currently planned. Bicycle racks will meet the IDG standards.
4. Justify the number of parking spaces—given 15 full and part time employees only 9 parking spaces should be provided (based on 60% ratio). **Response**—the building is unique and differs from an administrative use space which has a 60% parking allowance ratio limitation. The facility will support a large population and a variety of uses in support of the WIT soldiers. The occupancy will fluctuate throughout the day with more turnover than a typical office space or residential use facility. It is designed to routinely serve 50 occupants including up to 15 employees/volunteers and up to 35 Wounded Warriors and their family members. This number was used to arrive at a 60% ratio or roughly 30 parking spaces. Parking counts have been reduced during the design reviews from an initial request of 37 spaces to the current 28. The facility will support Wounded Warriors that live outside the adjacent Barracks (off post, or in housing on post), as well as family members. Based on past experiences with USO Wounded Warrior support facilities at other locations, on-site parking for family members immediately adjacent to the facility is an important factor in helping to reduce stress to family members and the soldiers themselves. In addition, during special events the facility will accommodate a much larger number of users, volunteers, staff and Wounded Warriors and their families. During these special events off-site parking and shuttle services would be provided to avoid having to build additional parking on site. The parking lot behind the USO provides parking for the adjacent Wounded Warrior barracks, Company Operations Facility, and Soldier Family Assistance Center.