

# STAFF RECOMMENDATION



S. Dettman  
NCPC File No. 7100

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## **SITE IMPROVEMENTS AND PERIMETER SECURITY MARY E. SWITZER BUILDING**

330 C Street, SW  
Washington, DC

Submitted by the United States General Services Administration

June 1, 2011

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### **Abstract**

The United States General Services Administration has submitted preliminary and final site and building plans for site improvements and perimeter security at the Mary E. Switzer Building, located at 330 C Street, SW. The proposal replaces the existing surface parking lot located along the north side of the building with a fully landscaped plaza containing sloped lawn panels, a children's play area, outdoor vendor area and seating, and several sustainable design elements. Two pavilion structures containing a glass canopy and bench seating will also be constructed within the landscape plaza and will be used to mask existing ventilation equipment associated with existing underground mechanics. Perimeter security is proposed on all four sides of the building, and is located within the building yard or inside the sidewalk along the north, east, and west sides, and at the curb along the south. The proposed perimeter security utilizes a variety of hardened street furnishings such as benches, bike racks, bollards, streetlights, garden walls, newspaper boxes, and trash receptacles. Extensive landscaping along all four sides of the building has been proposed in order to help soften the appearance of the security elements, as well as minimize and mitigate their effect on the historic L'Enfant Plan. This project is being carried out in conjunction with GSA's modernization of the Switzer Building which was approved by NCPC in March 2005.

### **Commission Action Requested by Applicant**

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

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### Executive Director's Recommendation

The Commission:

**Approves** the preliminary and final site and building plans for site improvements and perimeter security at the Mary E. Switzer Building, located at 330 C Street, SW, as shown on NCPC Map File No. 1.72(05.00)43311.

**Notes** that the District Department of Transportation (DDOT) supports GSA's plans to utilize the north curb of D Street, SW as the sole means of providing space for CDC pick-up and drop-off. In its report, DDOT has indicated its commitment to working with GSA to make any and all modifications to signage in order to "facilitate smooth operations of the child care center and of D Street, SW."

**Notes** that GSA also plans to work with DDOT on the design and installation of a speed bump near the existing mid-block crossing along D Street and will also permanently assign a security guard to monitor and enforce peak-hour parking restrictions, facilitate the movement of vehicles, and assist parents as necessary in front of the CDC entrance.

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### PROJECT DESCRIPTION

#### Site

The Mary E. Switzer Building is a five-story federal office building that occupies an entire city block within the Southwest quadrant of Washington, DC. The building is listed in the National Register of Historic Places and is currently occupied by the U.S. Department of Education, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and the U.S. International Broadcasting Bureau, and a child development center. The area in which the building is located is commonly referred to as the Southwest Federal Center or Southwest Rectangle. The site is bound by C Street on the north, D Street on the south, and 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Streets on the east and west, respectively. The building is set back approximately 75 feet from its northern property line creating a front yard area that currently serves as a 114 vehicle surface parking lot. The two main pedestrian entrances to the building are located along C Street; an additional entrance along D Street exists primarily for use by the child development center. An exit ramp to an underground parking garage and loading dock is located in public space at the northeast corner of the site along C Street. Access to the garage is gained via a similarly situated ramp on the north side of C Street. The site improvements proposed in this project encompass the Switzer Building site and extend to the sidewalk along the north side of C Street.



Figure 1: Aerial image showing Mary E. Switzer Building and surrounding context

The area immediately surrounding the project site includes numerous mid-rise federal office buildings including the Wilbur J. Cohen Building, the Hubert Humphrey Building, headquarters to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), the Lyndon Baines Johnson Building, headquarters to the Department of Education, Federal Office Building 8 (FOB 8), and the Ford House Office Building (Figure 1). Also surrounding the site is the Washington Design Center and the Federal Center

Plaza which also contain federal office space as well as some street-level commercial and retail businesses. Also within close proximity to the project site are the U.S. Capitol, the National Mall, and the future sites of the American Veterans Disabled for Life Memorial and Dwight D. Eisenhower Memorial. The entrance to the Federal Center Southwest Metrorail station is located directly south of the Switzer Building, the L'Enfant Plaza Metrorail station is located approximately two blocks to the west.

## Background

On March 3, 2005 meeting, the Executive Director approved the final site and building plans for the modernization of the Mary E. Switzer Building by way of delegated action. The modernization, which is currently underway, includes the conversion of the existing penthouse into new office space and the installation of vegetative roofs on a portion of the building.

## Proposal

The proposed site improvements and perimeter security include the replacement of a surface parking lot with a landscaped plaza, and extensive landscaping along all four sides of the building both within the building yard and in public space. All improvements to public space have been coordinated with the District of Columbia and meet or exceed local guidelines and regulations. This includes the choice of paving material, tree box dimensions, sidewalk width, street furnishing design, and sustainable requirements. The perimeter security has been successfully integrated into the proposed site improvements. Along C, 3<sup>rd</sup>, and 4<sup>th</sup> Streets, where the building yard is greater than 20 feet, the security elements have been located inside the sidewalk. Along D Street, where the building yard measures less than one foot wide, security elements have been located along the curb. The proposed perimeter security plan avoids the repetitive use of one security element. Instead, the plan employs a variety of streetscape

furnishings such as perforated garden walls, benches, bike racks, bollards, streetlights, newspaper boxes, and trash receptacles. Bollards within this particular perimeter security plan are 3'3" in height, 8" in diameter, and spaced 5'0" on-center. The proposed bollard spacing provides 4'4" of walking clearance between elements.

The key element of the site improvements is a new landscaped plaza along C Street. The design of the proposed plaza is based upon the applicant's larger concept to create a unified open space precinct between the Switzer and Cohen Buildings (Figure 2). The concept employs an elliptical plan that is centered on C Street and extends into the Switzer Building's north building yard, and the south building yard of the Cohen Building which is also currently used as a surface parking lot. This elliptical plan served as the foundation for the design and orientation of the proposed site improvements, and the location of proposed perimeter security. Although the current proposal only extends from the Switzer Building to the north sidewalk of C Street, to establish the aforesaid open space precinct the elliptical concept is likely to be used by the applicant in future site improvements at the Cohen Building.

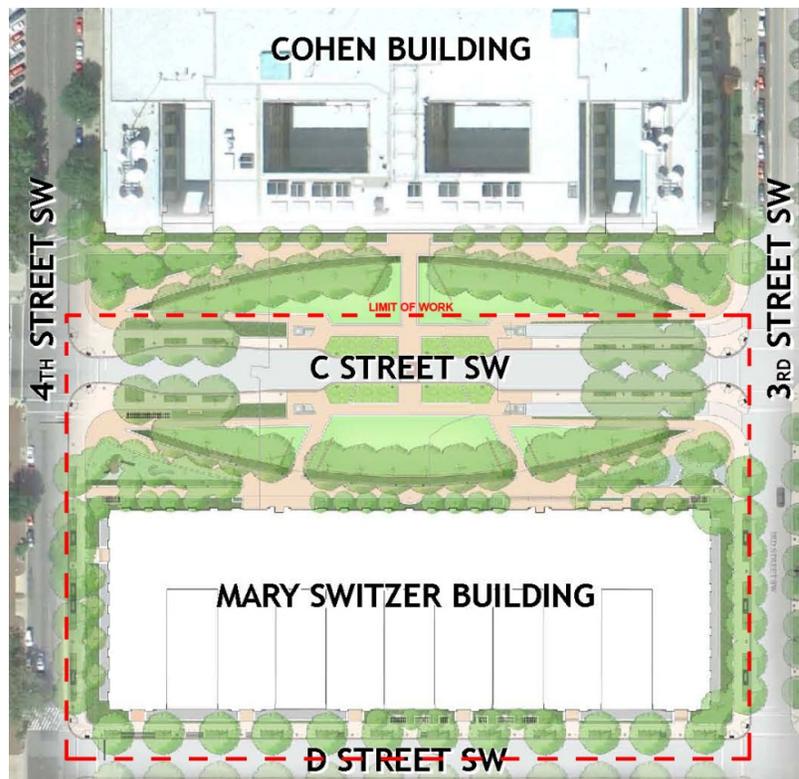


Figure 2: Illustration showing proposed site plan of Switzer Building site improvements and concept of unified open space precinct between Switzer and Cohen, (limit of proposed site improvements and perimeter security shown in dotted red outline)

The plaza will replace an existing 114 vehicle surface parking lot and serve as a welcoming entry forecourt to the Switzer Building (Figure 3). The plaza will contain a sloped lawn area that is divided into three sections by diagonal pathways that lead from a new midblock crossing on C Street to the entrances of the Switzer Building. These areas will slope toward C Street and provide informal seating and gathering space as well as opportunity for programmed events. To the southeast and southwest of the sloped lawn panels are two areas that will provide opportunities for programming. A landscaped area along the 4<sup>th</sup> Street side of the plaza is identified as a potential children's play area. The play area would be publicly accessible and would also provide recreation opportunity for the child development center that currently operates in the Switzer Building. On the 3<sup>rd</sup> Street side of the plaza, a paved area will provide movable seating and an area for future portable vendor carts or performances. Utilities such as electrical power and water service will be installed to support this multiple use space.

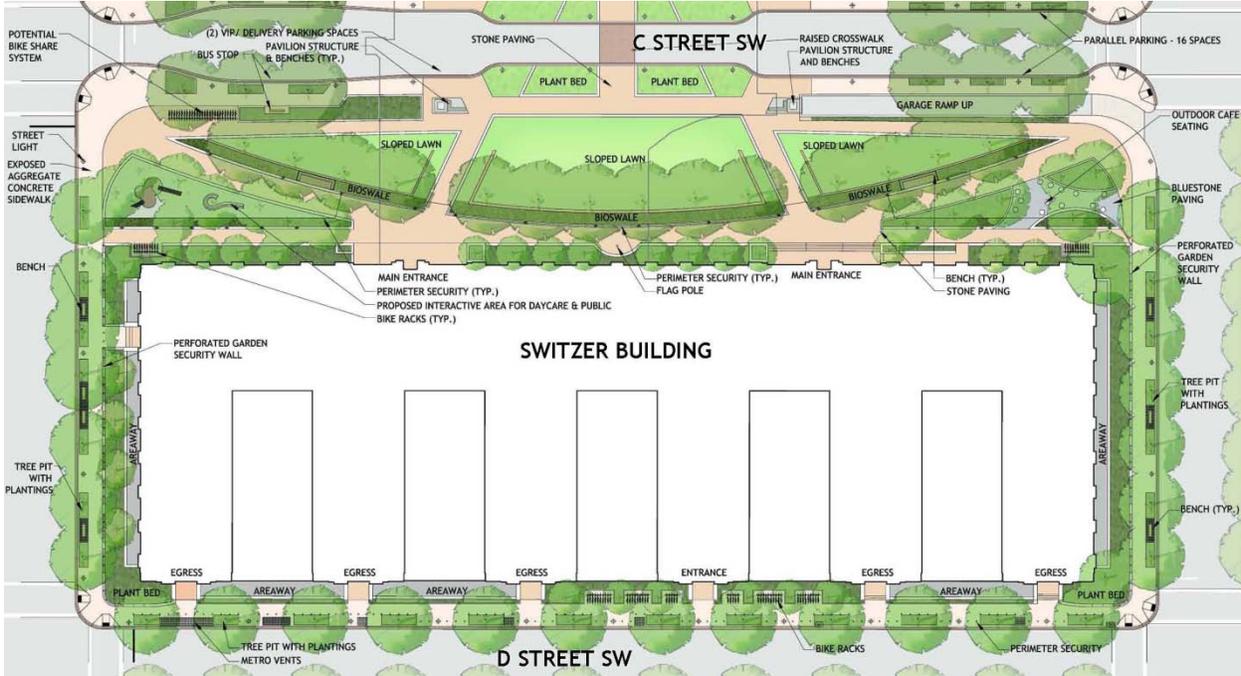


Figure 3: Site plan of proposed site improvements and perimeter security at the Mary E. Switzer Building



Figure 4: View of building entrance from C Street with proposed pavilion in foreground

Four new pavilions will be constructed along C Street and will serve as places to sit and gather (Figure 4). The pavilions will be constructed of stone with a metal and glass canopy. Light panels will be incorporated into the elevations of the pavilion’s masonry piers. The two pavilions on the south side of C Street, on the north edge of the Switzer plaza, will serve a dual role. In addition to providing seating and shade, they will function as an effective method for encapsulating the air vent structure that

is currently located within the existing sidewalk. In addition to the new pavilions, other features of the proposed landscaped plaza include bicycle parking and a possible Capital Bikeshare station, bioswales, installation of an underground ground source heat pump that will service the building, native plantings, sustainable irrigation through a grey water capture and cistern system, opportunities for public art, and opportunities to provide information on green building and design.

Along C Street, new pedestrian pathways / public sidewalks will be created in part by the proposed narrowing of the street (Figure 5). The narrowing will allow for the installation of a continuous sidewalk along the north and south sides of the street and will eliminate the pedestrian obstruction created by the existing vent shafts. The width of the street will be reduced to one travel lane in each direction; “bulb-outs” at each end of the block and a mid-block



Figure 5: View looking southeast across C Street towards Switzer Building

crosswalk are proposed to be installed. The bulb-outs and midblock crossing will serve as traffic calming measures and improve pedestrian safety. A landscaped bump out will serve as a visual cue for the mid-block pedestrian crossing. All new pathways onsite and within public space will be exposed aggregate concrete per local standards.

The design and location of the proposed perimeter security has been integrated into the proposed site improvements and surrounding urban landscape. Perimeter security along C, 3<sup>rd</sup>, and 4<sup>th</sup> Streets is proposed to be located within the existing building yard, or inside the sidewalk, and has been designed to relate to the

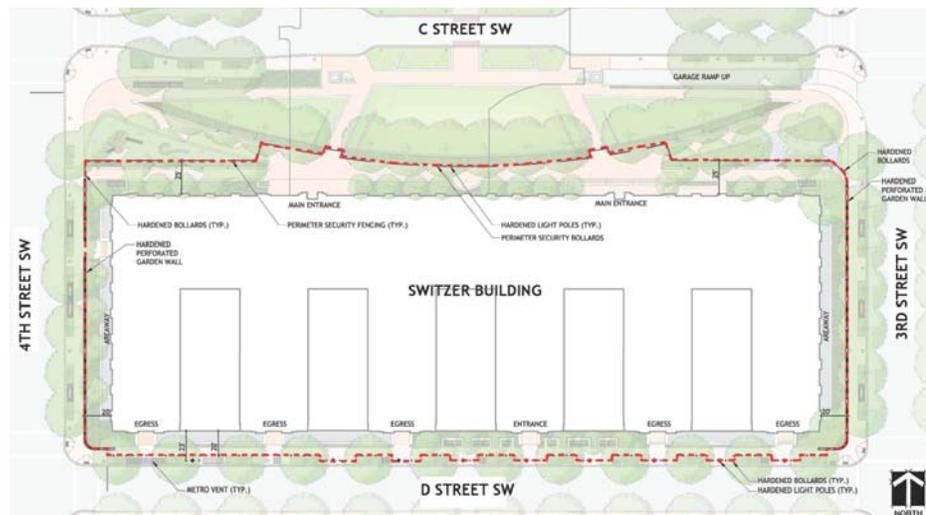


Figure 6: Illustration of proposed perimeter security proposal showing location of security elements

architecture of the Switzer Building. Along C Street, the perimeter security will be located approximately 25-feet from the north face of the Switzer Building, within the landscaped plaza and well within the property line (Figure 6). It will run along the back edges of the sloped lawn areas and paved seating area, and consist of a hardened fence composed of dark gray metal bollards and decorative metal fencing atop a similarly colored granite curb (figure 7). The granite curb will contain drainage inlets to allow stormwater to flow into the bioswales.

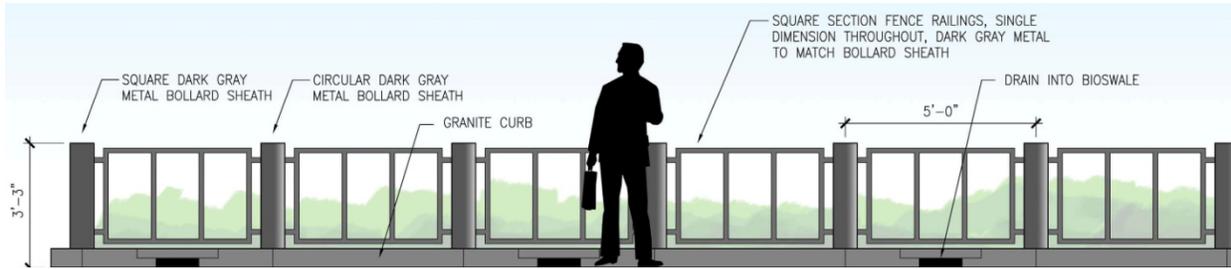


Figure 7: Illustration of proposed security fence for within the C Street landscaped plaza

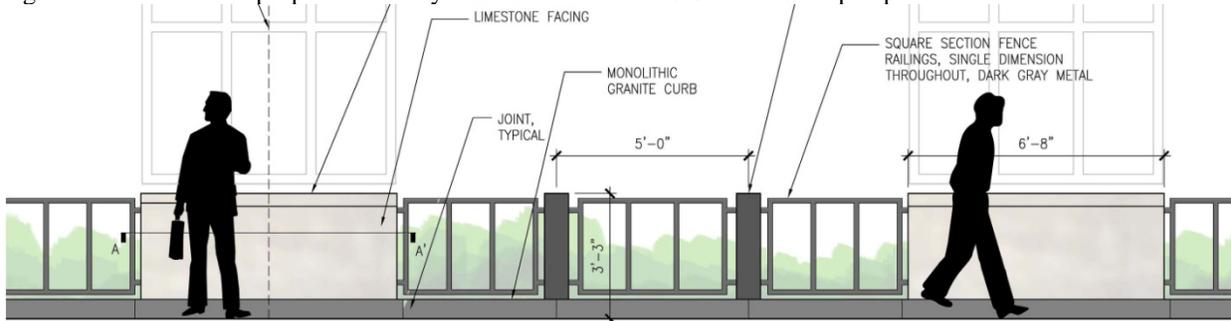


Figure 8: Illustration of proposed security fence for 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Streets

Similar to C Street, the security elements along 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Streets are located within the building yard and have been designed to relate to the architecture of the building. A hardened perforated garden wall will be placed along the existing inside edge of the sidewalk for the entire length of the east and west building facades. Similar to the C Street plaza, the garden wall sit upon a granite curb and be constructed of dark gray square metal bollards and fencing (Figure 8). However, along 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Streets the metal fencing will be punctuated with 6'8" sections of limestone facing that give the appearance of a masonry block. These sections of the wall will be

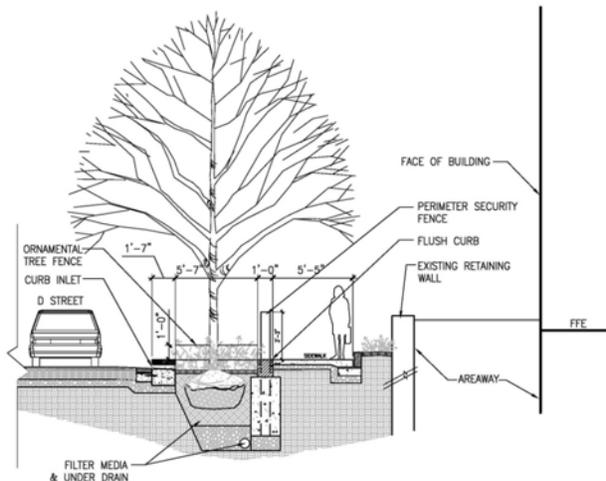


Figure 9: Typical cross-section along D Street showing perimeter security along outside edge of sidewalk

aligned with the window panels on the building. The building yard and the public space along these two streets will be completely rebuilt and vegetated including the installation of specially designed tree boxes that contain curb inlets for stormwater infiltration. The installation of perimeter security along 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Streets will not result in a change to the existing width of the sidewalks.

Due to the lack of a building yard, the perimeter security along D Street is proposed to be located along the curb (Figure 9). Where 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Streets intersect with D Street the location of the security elements will transition from the building yard to out along the curb. Slightly wider tree boxes at these corners will prevent the need to have a bollard located in the middle of the sidewalk at these transition points. The security elements on D Street will modulate along the length of the curb in an effort to reduce their visual intrusion on the public space. Consistent with

local regulations, security elements located closest to the curb will be set back approximately two feet from the edge in order to allow motorists to open their vehicle doors. Where there is an existing Metrorail vent or proposed tree box, the perimeter security will step back from the edge of the curb and run along the back side of these features. The security elements along D Street will consist of hardened streetscape furnishings such as benches, bollards, bike racks, and lamp posts. Since these elements are located within public space they have been designed to relate to the surrounding urban context and will be of a consistent dark color to help blend in with the extensive landscaping proposed.

## PROJECT ANALYSIS

### Executive Summary



Figure 10: View looking east through C Street plaza

Staff has analyzed the proposed site improvements and perimeter security at the Mary E. Switzer Building and recommends that the Commission approve the project. Overall, the landscaped plaza, additional plantings around the building, and extensive vegetation within the surrounding

public space will be a significant improvement to what currently exists on the project site. The landscaped plaza will provide a welcoming entry forecourt to the newly modernized office building, and provide a place where people can sit and relax perhaps during a lunch break, or as they make their way between buildings or nearby attractions such as the sites of the future Eisenhower and American Veterans Disabled for Life Memorials (Figure 10). However, the elimination of the existing surface parking lot does require the Child Development Center pick-up and drop-off operation to be relocated entirely to D Street. While this location is the most proximate to the CDC entrance, it also requires the entire operation to take place along the curb. Staff has reviewed the results of the applicant's transportation study, as well as conducted site visits on six occasions (three morning peak, three afternoon peak), and finds that the measures taken thus far by the applicant to ensure a safe and efficient CDC pick-up and drop-off operation seem to be working. These measures include gaining commitment from the District Department of Transportation (DDOT) for the acquisition of three dedicated, and an additional four morning and afternoon peak hour, CDC pick-up and drop-off parking spaces<sup>1</sup>; installing a speed bump

<sup>1</sup> On May 25, 2011, DDOT submitted a report indicating its support for GSA's plans to utilize the north curb of D Street, SW as the sole means of providing space for CDC pick-up and drop-off. In its report, DDOT indicated its commitment to working with GSA to make any and all modifications to signage in order to "facilitate smooth operations of the child care center and of D Street, SW."

near the existing mid-block crossing on D Street; and permanently assigning a security guard to monitor and enforce peak-hour parking restrictions, facilitate the movement of vehicles, and assist parents as necessary in front of the CDC entrance.

Staff's review of the proposed perimeter security finds that it strikes an appropriate balance between providing building protection and maintaining the openness and accessibility of the surrounding public space to the greatest extent possible, and is consistent with the Commission's policies pertaining to the location and design. The security elements along 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and C Streets are located within the building yard, or inside the sidewalk, and have been designed to relate to the architecture of the building. In contrast, the security elements that are located at the curblines along D Street have been designed to relate to the streetscape and surrounding urban context. In addition, extensive landscaping within the public space and building yard, and the use of a variety of hardened streetscape furnishings, will assist in reducing the impacts of the proposed security on visual and historic resources in the area.

### Perimeter Security



Figure 11: View along D Street looking west towards 4<sup>th</sup> Street



Figure 12: View of 3<sup>rd</sup> and D Streets showing transition of perimeter security from the building yard to the curblines

Staff's review of the proposed perimeter security relied upon NCPC's policies governing perimeter security. The impact of the security plan on public space has been reduced to the greatest extent possible due to its location, material make-up, and design of the individual elements. Along the C, 3<sup>rd</sup>, and 4<sup>th</sup> Street sides of the building, where the building yard is greater than 20 feet, GSA located the perimeter security inside the sidewalk in accordance with Commission policy. Due to the general lack of a building yard along the entire length of D Street, the security elements will be located on the outside edge of the sidewalk and along the edge of the curb (Figure 11). The location of perimeter security elements along D Street will have a degree of adverse impact on the aesthetic and functional qualities of public space, and the historic L'Enfant Plan, which will be mitigated through the proposed design.

At the intersections of 3<sup>rd</sup> and D Street, and 4<sup>th</sup> and D Street, where the proposed perimeter security transitions from inside the building yard to along the curb, the provision of slightly wider tree boxes will prevent the need to locate a bollard in the middle of the sidewalk. Despite the slightly narrowed sidewalk condition, staff finds that this will not adversely impact the flow of pedestrians along this side of D Street, and will have less visual impact than having a bollard

in the middle of the sidewalk (Figure 12). The use of a variety of hardened streetscape furnishings will reduce the visual presence of these elements in public space, and help integrate them more into the urban context. In addition, the extensive plantings at the base of the building, and especially within the tree boxes, will further reduce the aesthetic impacts of these elements.

#### Child Development Center Pick-up and Drop-off

Currently, four spaces in the existing surface parking lot are reserved for Child Development Center (CDC) pick-up and drop-off in addition to three curbside spaces along D Street that are available for 15 minute CDC parking during the morning and afternoon peak hours of 7:00 – 9:00 am and 4:00 – 6:00 pm. The proposal to replace the parking lot with a landscaped plaza will require the CDC to relocate its pick-up and drop-off operation entirely to the curbside along D Street adjacent to the CDC entrance. GSA's plan to eliminate the existing surface parking lot has resulted in NCPC staff receiving several letters and emails from CDC parents expressing concerns related to the safety of curbside pick-up and drop-off. In addition, formal letters have been received from the U.S. Department of Education and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the primary users of the CDC, as well as from the President of the CDC Board of Directors, expressing similar concerns.

As a supplement to the transportation analysis included in its July 2010 Environmental Assessment, GSA conducted additional analysis to address questions raised by DDOT related to specific roadway and traffic considerations, as well as to specifically analyze the impacts of the proposal to CDC access, parking, and pick-up and drop-off. In addition, over the last two months, GSA has been working with DDOT and the CDC to develop a safe and efficient plan that will provide adequate curbside space to accommodate the CDC's pick-up and drop-off needs. Beginning on May 2, 2011, GSA closed the surface parking lot and initiated a pilot project to test the effectiveness of a series of curbside measures and parking restrictions, including:

- Provision of three full-time parking spaces available only for CDC pick-up and drop-off.
- Installation of signage and special pavement markings to designate four to five new parking spaces for CDC parking during morning and afternoon peak hours.
- Distribution of special permits to CDC parents to be displayed in their vehicles.
- Assigned security guard to monitor and enforce parking restrictions during morning and afternoon peak hours

GSA's supplemental transportation analysis contains observations related to the usage, operation, and effectiveness of the measures listed above. According to the report, the pick-up and drop-off operation functions efficiently and safely. Despite the 15 minute restriction on CDC parking spaces, the average dwell time for vehicles was eight minutes in the morning and twelve minutes in the afternoon. During the times in which GSA's traffic consultant collected information during the peak hours, no more than four vehicles occupied the seven available pick-up and drop-off spaces at any one time. The consultant observed that traffic volumes along D Street were relatively low, approximately 150 - 160 vehicles per hour, and that an existing mid-block crossing helped to control travel speeds.

During the morning and afternoon peak hours on May 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup>, and 31<sup>st</sup>, NCPC staff conducted site visits to observe the CDC pick-up and drop-off operation and the effectiveness of the measures taken as part of the pilot project. In general, staff made the same observations that are contained in GSA's supplemental traffic study. During the morning peak hours of 7:30 – 9:00 am, traffic volume on D Street is low as is the overall utilization of the CDC parking spaces. In fact, much of the traffic volume on D Street at this time appeared to be CDC-related. Non-CDC motorists looking to park along D Street appear to abide by the signage that is in place, and a security guard was present at all times to enforce the restrictions, if necessary. Parents appeared to be able to load and unload safely from both sides of the vehicle and the proximity to the CDC entrance helped to facilitate the turnover of vehicles. Staff made the same observations during the afternoon peak hours as well. Although traffic volumes along D Street were a bit heavier, due to the entrance to I-395 one block east, it did not appear to create any adverse or unsafe conditions for the CDC. CDC and non-CDC motorists continued to respect the signage that is in place and the security guard was present at all times. One observation that staff did make during this time period was the tendency for parents to idle alongside occupied parking spaces when it wasn't apparent that a space was available slightly down the road. This occurred only two or three times during six separate site visits (three morning peak and three afternoon peak) and never resulted in traffic backing up given the two travel lanes along this section of D Street.

## CONFORMANCE

### Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital

Overall, the project conforms to the policies of the Federal Elements of the Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital, and in particular those contained in the Federal Workplace, Transportation, and Federal Environment Elements. These policies encourage the federal government to modernize, repair, and rehabilitate existing federal workplaces within the monumental core; promote alternative modes of transportation and pedestrian activity; and provide welcoming, publicly accessible, sustainable places to work and visit. The proposed site improvements, together with the modernization of the existing building, will satisfy each of these areas. The renovation and modernization of the Switzer Building will provide additional high-quality federal office space within the monumental core, while the proposed site improvements will provide a comfortable outdoor space for the workers within the building and throughout the surrounding area. In addition, the reuse of the existing building and proposed site improvements will offer a wide-range of sustainable design techniques such as a LEED rated building, significant decrease in impervious surface, low impact stormwater management and reuse, transit-oriented development, added tree canopy, bicycle parking and greater pedestrian mobility, and new public amenities such as public art, interpretive elements, children's play area, and an outdoor concessionaire / vendor area. In addition to conforming to the policies of the Comprehensive Plan, the items listed above also successfully meet the goals of Executive Order #13514, Federal Leadership in Environmental, Energy, and Economic Performance, and the stormwater requirements of the Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007.

Finally, the proposed perimeter security is consistent with the Federal Workplace policies pertaining to the design and location of physical building security. Security has been

incorporated into the design of the building and perimeter security elements have been located within the building yard where possible. The security elements that will be located in public space have been designed to be consistent with local streetscape standards and located so as not to restrict pedestrian mobility.

#### National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)

NCPC and GSA each have an independent responsibility to comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA); NCPC's responsibility stems from its approval authority over the project. In accordance with the Council on Environmental Quality's rules for implementing NEPA, and the Commission's Environmental and Historic Preservation Policies and Procedures, GSA prepared an Environmental Assessment (EA) for the project, to which NCPC was a cooperating agency. The EA analyzed three design alternatives as well as a no action alternative, and 16 environmental impact topic areas. These topic areas are generally categorized as: planning policies, public space, cultural resources, visual resources, stormwater management, geophysical resources, transportation, parking, energy use and sustainability, utilities, air quality, and noise. Following the necessary procedures for analysis, public comment, and response to public comments received, GSA initially selected "Alternative B" and issued a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) for this alternative on July 6, 2010. However, on April 1, 2011, following revisions to the project design, and further consultation with review agencies, consulting parties, and local government agencies, GSA issued a revised FONSI selecting "Alternative A" on the basis that it more fully meets the purpose and need for the action.

Of the environmental topic areas analyzed, staff's analysis of the EA focused primarily on the potential impacts to historic and visual resources, public space, pedestrian circulation, and transportation. Staff focused on these areas given the impacts that perimeter security can have on the integrity of historic features, especially the L'Enfant Plan, and on the quality and accessibility of the public realm. Staff's analysis of the transportation topic area focused mainly on the impacts of the project on CDC pick-up and drop-off. On May 30, 2011, the NCPC Executive Director issued a FONSI for "Alternative A" stipulating that the project will not have a significant impact on the human environment, and that impacts caused by the proposed perimeter security will be successfully mitigated through its location within the existing building yard on C, 3<sup>rd</sup>, and 4<sup>th</sup> Streets, and through the utilization of a variety of hardened streetscape furnishings along D Street. The impacts caused by the perimeter security will be further mitigated through the use of extensive landscaping and through the design's consistency with local public space guidelines and regulations. Finally, with respect to the impacts of the proposal on the CDC access, parking, and pick-up and drop-off operation, based on the analysis contained in the EA and supplemental transportation study, comments received, and staff site visits, the Executive Director agrees with GSA's finding that the impacts would be minor in intensity. The measures that GSA has taken thus far, its commitment to continue working with DDOT and the CDC to further refine the D Street pick-up and drop-off plan, and its commitment to installing a speed bump near the existing mid-block crossing will effectively mitigate the minor impacts caused by the project.

#### National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA)

GSA has concluded Section 106 consultation with the District of Columbia State Historic Preservation Office (DC SHPO) through a Memorandum of Agreement dated April 7, 2011. GSA and the SHPO have determined that the perimeter security elements along the D Street curb will have an adverse effect on the L'Enfant Plan, and that the hardened garden wall within the existing building yard along 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Street will have an adverse effect on the Switzer Building. Furthermore, it was determined that the potential architectural and/or public art element(s) along C Street could have an adverse effect on the Switzer Building, the Cohen Building, and the L'Enfant Plan, depending on their height and mass. Finally, SHPO and GSA determined that the installation of the ground source heat pump has the potential to disturb previously undisturbed archaeological resources onsite.

In order to minimize the adverse effects of the proposed perimeter security along C, 3<sup>rd</sup>, and 4<sup>th</sup> Streets, each contributing L'Enfant rights-of-way, the MOA stipulates that the location of the security elements will be kept back from the curb and placed within the building yard, as is proposed. The effects of the perimeter security along D Street will be minimized through the use of a variety of hardened elements such as benches, bollards, bike racks, and lamp posts, similar to the perimeter security elements that are currently under construction one block east at FOB 8. The MOA also includes a series of mitigation measures that are intended to further address the effects of the proposed site improvements and perimeter security. These measures include: an extensive revegetation program for the building yard and adjacent public spaces; widening of sidewalks and elimination of pedestrian obstructions; use of Low Impact Development measures; further coordination on the design of public architectural elements with relevant review agencies; and required archaeological evaluation throughout construction of the ground source heat pump. These mitigation measures have been incorporated into GSA's revised Finding of No Significant Impact issued in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act.

## CONSISTENCY

### 3<sup>rd</sup> and C Street Urban Design Guide

GSA developed the 3<sup>rd</sup> and C Street Urban Design Guide to help inform its four building modernization projects located at the intersection of 3<sup>rd</sup> and C Streets, SW, and to address several long-standing issues regarding the quality of the urban spaces surrounding these buildings. Examples of these issues include: the large expanses of surface parking lots that detract from the urban environment, increased surface runoff and ambient air temperatures, impact on pedestrian connectivity; poor condition of pedestrian pathways; and a non-descript mixture of uncoordinated landscaped areas. In addition, the magnitude of the four projects was also seen as an opportunity to revitalize this corridor through a consistent streetscape design that provides public seating, public amenities, and settings for fine art under GSA's "Art in Architecture" program. Finally, GSA recognized that these four modernization projects presented the added opportunity to resolve the problem of unsightly security barriers by integrating barriers into a uniform streetscape design that maintains the openness, accessibility, and attractiveness of the public realm.



Figure 13: View from C Street plaza looking toward Cohen Building

The conversion of the surface parking lot to a welcoming public plaza will add much needed open space to this area of the city and provide an area where people can sit and relax (Figure 13). The vendor / concession and public play areas will also provide welcomed amenities. Finally, the extensive landscaping, increase in the number of street trees, and improved pedestrian facilities such as the widened C Street sidewalk will greatly improve the visitor experience and connections between the two nearby future memorial sites.

### Monumental Core Framework Plan

The project site is located within the Southwest Rectangle precinct of the Monumental Core Framework Plan (Framework Plan). One of the plan's key goals within this area is to repair the urban fabric lost over time due to the construction of superblock buildings, highways, and railroad infrastructure by restoring the street grid, decking over highways, and redeveloping superblocks to integrate open space and improve the public realm. In addition, the Guiding Themes section of the Framework Plan promotes a collection of non-area specific strategies that can be applied to the project site, and its surrounding public space, in order to overcome barriers, improve connections, strengthen the public realm, and advance sustainability in the urban environment.

The proposed site improvements will contribute to repairing the urban fabric of this area by significantly improving the accessibility and attractiveness of the project site as well as the public realm. The replacement of the surface parking lot with a landscaped plaza will help to soften an area that is lacking in useable open space. In addition, the extensive landscaping within the building yard, and within the public space along 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and D Streets, will help to improve pedestrian connectivity. Together with the site improvements currently underway at FOB 8, this increased connectivity will be important to successfully linking the future Eisenhower Memorial with the future American Veterans Disabled for Life Memorial.

Additionally, the project will do much to advance sustainability in the urban environment. The large reduction in impervious surface on the project site and use of low impact development (LID) techniques such as bioswales, tree box inlets, and stormwater cisterns will decrease runoff and ease pressure on the city's infrastructure. The increase in the number of street trees and other landscaping will contribute to reducing the urban heat island effect, help reestablish the tree

The proposed site improvements and perimeter security at the Switzer Building have been designed to be consistent with the "3<sup>rd</sup> and C Street Urban Design Guide." Extensive landscaping proposed within the C Street plaza and surrounding public space successfully integrates the proposed security elements while at the same time improving the overall setting of the building. The

canopy, and restore native habitats. Finally, the extensive landscaping proposed along the streetscape and within the plaza will assist in creating a connected system of parks and open space throughout this area of the city, and encourage more environmentally sustainable modes of transportation such as walking and biking.

### National Capital Urban Design and Security Plan Objectives and Policies

Overall, the project is consistent with the National Capital Urban Design and Security Plan Objectives and Policies. Adopted by the Commission in May 2005, these objectives and policies address planning and design issues associated with risk management strategies that impact the public realm, primarily physical perimeter security for explosives delivered by bomb-laden vehicles. They are intended to balance the need for perimeter security with the need to protect the openness and accessibility of public space. Specifically, there are two objectives that directly apply to the proposed perimeter security at the Switzer Building. These objectives strive “to protect the design principles inherent in DC’s historic plan and its historic resources and minimize the physical and visual intrusion of security barriers into public space” and “to strike a balance between perimeter security for federal buildings and the vitality of the public realm.”



Figure 14: View along 3<sup>rd</sup> Street



Figure 15: View along 4<sup>th</sup> Street looking north towards C Street

The proposed perimeter security is consistent with these objectives, and with all policies pertaining specifically to the location and design of security elements. First, NCPC’s policy states that for existing buildings in urban areas, perimeter security barriers should be located within the building yard when the size of the yard is greater than or equal to 20 feet. The placement of barriers within public space is generally discouraged, and should only be considered if the width of the building yard is less than 20 feet. For this project, GSA is proposing to locate perimeter security on-site, or within the existing building yard, on the north east, and west sides of the building (Figures 14 and 15). Along D Street, where the building yard measures less than one foot wide for the entire length of the south facade, the proposed security elements have been placed along the curb.

Also consistent with NCPC’s policies, the perimeter security design employs several strategies to minimize the physical and visual on the quality and accessibility of the site and its surroundings.

The architectural style of the security elements differ based on where they are located. The elements located within the building yard are treated as a part of the building and incorporate materials that match or complement the building's exterior finishes. The security elements located at the curb are treated as a part of the street furnishings and thus are detailed in a manner different from those in the building yard. For example, the form and color of these particular elements have been designed to be consistent with local streetscape guidelines and regulations, and to blend in more with the vegetation that is proposed within the public space.

### CapitalSpace

The project is consistent with the "Six Big Ideas" contained within CapitalSpace, namely those pertaining to enhancing urban natural areas, center city parks, and transforming small parks. The significant decrease in impervious surfaces and the use of LID will extend the city's network of green infrastructure. The new public open space along C Street will provide a much needed public amenity in this area of the city and increase the carrying capacity of the park system. The aforementioned LID features and other greening techniques also offer an opportunity for public education. The proposed site improvements will also facilitate pedestrian mobility and bicycle use and safety by improving the overall quality of the walking environment, and by providing abundant bike parking, including a possible on-site Capital Bikeshare station.

## CONSULTATION

### Coordinating Committee

Staff presented the proposal to the Coordinating Committee on two occasions. The Committee's first review took place on April 13, 2011, in which it forwarded the proposal to the Commission with the statement that the project had been coordinated with all participating agencies. The participating agencies were NCPC; GSA; the National Park Service (NPS); the District of Columbia Office of Planning (DCOP); and the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA).

The Committee's second review of the proposal took place on May 11, 2011. Following staff's presentation, the Committee forwarded the proposal to the Commission with the statement that the project has been coordinated with all participating agencies, except NCPC. The representative for NCPC withheld coordination pending receipt of a letter of endorsement from DDOT. The participating agencies were GSA; NPS; DCOP; DDOT; and WMATA.

### U.S. Commission of Fine Arts

The U.S. Commission of Fine Arts (CFA) reviewed the proposed site improvements and perimeter security on four separate occasions. At its July 15, 2010 and September 16, 2010 meetings, CFA reviewed a design proposal that would have replaced the C Street parking lot with a landscaped plaza that also included a small parking area for use by senior government officials and for CDC pick-up and drop-off. CFA ultimately recommended against this proposal and requested a new design. Following a February 17, 2011 review of a new concept design, on April 12, 2011 CFA provided a favorable review of the current proposal and delegated further review of the design details to its staff. CFA members commended GSA for its commitment to

developing a high-quality landscape for the enjoyment of federal workers and the general public, and recommended several design refinements to be finalized at the staff level. These refinements include changes to amount and design of seating within the C Street plaza, modifications to the canopies associated with the masonry vent shafts, and adjustments to the selected planting scheme for the central lawn.