

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

DHamilton

NCPC File No. 6315



**EISENHOWER EXECUTIVE OFFICE BUILDING
17TH STREET BUILDING MODERNIZATION
PRELIMINARY AND FINAL SITE AND BUILDING PLANS
Pennsylvania Avenue and 17th Street, NW
Washington, D.C.**

Submission by the General Services Administration

September 25, 2003

Abstract

The General Services Administration (GSA) has submitted a proposal to modernize the 17th Street (west) side of the Eisenhower Executive Office Building (EEOB). The improvements include providing central air conditioning, replacing electrical and mechanical systems, providing blast proof windows and hardening the roof. The 17th Street side of the EEOB has been vacant since September 11, 2001. The proposal would allow the 17th Street portion of this building to be reoccupied.

Commission Action Requested by Applicant

Approval of preliminary and final site and building plans pursuant to 40 U.S.C. § 8722(d) and Section 5 of the National Capital Planning Act (40 U.S.C. § 8722(b)(1)).

Executive Director's Recommendation

The Commission **approves** the preliminary and final site and building plans for the 17th Street modernization of the Eisenhower Executive Office Building, Pennsylvania Avenue and 17th Street, NW, Washington D.C., as shown on NCPC Map File No. 1.32(38.00)41239.

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BACKGROUND AND STAFF EVALUATION

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

GSA has submitted a proposal for the modernization of the 17th Street side of the EEOB in northwest Washington, DC. The EEOB is bounded on the north by Pennsylvania Avenue, on the south by State Place, on the east by West Executive Drive, and on the west by 17th Street. The building was constructed in four phases between 1871 and 1888. The western section of the building was constructed in 1888, and is the focus of the current proposal. This portion of the building (191,000 gross square feet out of a total of 691,000 gross square feet) has been unoccupied since September 11, 2001. Eventually, the entire building will be modernized. The proposal is centered around several actions that include:

- Providing central air-conditioning and removing the existing window A/C units.
- Replacing the electrical distribution system, switchgear and transformers, plumbing systems and telecommunications infrastructure.
- Hazardous material abatement and containment.
- Providing a utility vault in the North courtyard to house new electrical switchgear, transformers, and chiller equipment that will serve the 17th Street wing of the EEOB. The new service will be distributed via the basement and designated spaces on the fifth floor. Existing horizontal and vertical chases will be used to extend utilities services between floors.
- Replacing the existing windows with blast and ballistic resistant windows and hardening the mansard roof.
- Returning interior offices to their original historic layout as well as restoring damaged historic materials.
- Handicapped accessibility upgrades and fire and life safety improvements.

All of the proposed activities are intended to bring this portion of the EEOB up to contemporary building standards.

DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

Applicant: General Services Administration
Architect: SmithGroup
Cost: \$60 million.
Schedule: Anticipated construction start in Spring 2004 and occupancy in June 2006.

EVALUATION

Staff recommends approval of the preliminary and final site and building plans:

- The provision of central air-conditioning in conjunction with blast resistant windows would both improve security as well as remove the unsightly window A/C units.
- The new vault and associated transformers and chillers would not be visible to the public because they would be located and screened in the North courtyard.
- All piping, electrical, and telecommunications lines would use existing horizontal and vertical chases, thereby eliminating the need to extend new chases through the interior of the building.
- The modernization would result in the restoration of original office configurations as well as repair of damaged historic architectural fabric.
- The overall hardening of the building would operate in conjunction with recent security improvements along 17th Street and result in this portion of the EEOB being reoccupied after several years of vacancy.

COORDINATION

Coordinating Committee

The Coordinating Committee reviewed the proposal on September 10, 2003. The Committee forwarded the proposal to the Commission with the statement that the project has been coordinated with all agencies participating. The participating agencies were NCPC; the District of Columbia Office of Planning; Fire Department; the Department of Housing and Community Development; the District of Columbia Department of Transportation; the General Services Administration; and the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority.

CONFORMANCE

National Historic Preservation Act

The EEOB is part of the White House and its grounds and is therefore exempt from the provisions of Section 106, as stated in Section 107 of the National Historic Preservation Act. Thus, the project was not required to be submitted to the D.C. State Historic Preservation Officer for review.

The EEOB, originally the State, War, and Navy Building, was designed by Alfred B. Mullett and built between 1871 and 1888. It was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1971 and is also a contributing structure in the Lafayette Square Historic District.

The proposed security improvements include the replacement of the existing wood sash windows, which are not original to the building, with aluminum sash that is designed to be as historically accurate as possible while also providing blast resistance. The muntin profile and configuration of the sash will be replicated in aluminum. The reinforced sash will be installed with the existing cast iron window surrounds. In addition, the roof will be reinforced from the interior and the skylights protected.

National Environmental Policy Act

Staff review of the GSA action has determined that the proposed project qualifies as a Categorical Exclusion in accordance with GSA's regulations under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The proposal entails much interior renovation work and only minimal exterior site impacts. The few exterior features established by the project are enclosed or screened from any potential views by the public and would not affect any off-site areas.

Minimal short-term construction phasing may require limited traffic lane closure of the east side of 17th Street during certain construction periods. A District of Columbia temporary traffic closure permit would be sought to implement that aspect of the construction.

Comprehensive Plan

The proposal is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital. The Federal Facilities Element designates the EEOB as part of facilities of the Executive Office of the President. The proposal would allow the 17th Street portion of this building to be reoccupied.

Urban Design and Security Plan

The proposal is consistent with the National Capital Urban Design and Security Plan. The proposal does not include any perimeter security elements that are external to the building, such as bollards. The reoccupation of the 17th Street portion of the building and the removal of unsightly window A/C units will enhance the quality of the public space along 17th Street.