

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

D. Hamilton

NCPC File No. 6430



**GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE
PERIMETER SECURITY
PRELIMINARY AND FINAL SITE AND BUILDING PLANS
Headquarters Building, 441 G Street, NW**

Submission by the General Accounting Office

February 26, 2004

Abstract

The General Accounting Office has submitted preliminary and final site and building plans to enhance perimeter security around its Headquarters Building at 441 G Street, NW. The building also houses the headquarters of the Army Corps of Engineers. The building occupies nearly the entire block between G, H, Fourth and Fifth Streets, NW, and is on the National Register of Historic Places.

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:

Commends the General Accounting Office for its success in conforming to the goals and policies of the National Capital Urban Design and Security Plan.

Approves the preliminary and final site and building plans for perimeter security enhancements, General Accounting Office Headquarters Building, 441 G Street NW, as shown on NCPC Map File No. 1.22(38.00)41313.

Advises the General Accounting Office that it is not in favor of the proposed closing of G Place.

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BACKGROUND AND STAFF EVALUATION

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSAL

The General Accounting Office (GAO) has submitted preliminary and final site and building plans for site improvements to enhance perimeter security at its headquarters building. The building also serves as the headquarters for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Site

- The GAO building, located in northwest Washington, is bounded on the north by H Street, on the south by G Street, on the east by Fourth Street, and on the west by Fifth Street. An office building and church are located on the northwest corner of the block and fronts along portions of H and Fifth Streets.
- The GAO building is immediately north of, and faces, the Pension Building to the south. The Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority headquarters building is diagonally adjacent to the southwest, and Judiciary Square is south of the Pension Building between Fourth and Fifth Streets.

Perimeter Security Plan

The proposed perimeter security includes four major elements:

- An existing plinth wall would be reinforced and extended around the entire building. It would follow the existing property line, within the building yard and not within the public space around the building. The wall height would be approximately 26 inches, and the depth would be 14 inches. The wall would be clad with Cold Springs “Royal Sable” granite to match the existing plinth wall and building’s base.
- Stainless steel bollards would be placed in line with the plinth wall in front of the G and H Streets main pedestrian entrances as well as along the two pedestrian emergency exit walkways along 4th Street. The bollards at the driveway entrance along 4th Street would be retractable and located at the curblin.
- Delta barriers would be installed on all ramps to and from the parking garage so that they will not be visible from the street. The barrier at G Place, which serves as the entrance to the loading dock, would be placed at the beginning of this entry drive.
- A guard booth would be located on each side of the building next to the driveway entrances (a total of four).
- G Place is currently a dead-end public street used for service access for GAO and a church adjacent to the site. Perimeter security in this location would consist of a pop-up barrier and guard booth at the edge of the building yard. GAO is petitioning the City to

permanently close G Place and restrict access for use by GAO and the adjacent church only.

PREVIOUS COMMISSION ACTION

At its February 5, 2004 meeting, the Commission approved the design concept for the perimeter security enhancements, General Accounting Office Headquarters Building, except for the fixed bollards along Fourth, Fifth and H Streets, NW. The Commission recommended that, in the preparation of preliminary and final site and building plans, the General Accounting Office:

- Replace fixed bollards at the curb along Fourth and H Streets with a plinth wall at the edge of the building yard, as shown along G Street.
- Replace black bollards proposed at the H Street pedestrian entrance, at the emergency exits on Fourth Street, at the vehicular entrance to the loading dock on Fourth Street, and around the guard booth at G Place with stainless steel bollards, similar to those shown at the G Street entrance.
- Replace black bollards along Fifth Street with black steel cable incorporated in the hedgerow around the daycare area, and stainless steel bollards at the daycare entrance.
- Simplify the design of the guard booth roof structure by maintaining the decorative steel banding while eliminating the decorative appliqué, and reducing the overhang.

Although it was not part of the proposal, the Commission advised the General Accounting Office that it is not in favor of the proposed closing of G Place.

EVALUATION

Staff recommends approval of the preliminary and final site and building plans because the proposal has been refined and is responsive to the previous Commission Action:

- A plinth wall is now encircling the entire building and the bollards along the curb line have been removed from the proposal. The plinth wall is confined to the GAO property line.
- All bollards at the emergency pedestrian exits and the driveway entrance on Fourth Street, and at the main entrances on G and H Streets are stainless steel and will match the metal portions of the GAO building.
- The guard booths have been simplified in design by maintaining the decorative steel banding, reducing the roof overhangs, and removing all decorative appliqué.

While the closure of G Place is not part of this submission, it would come before the Commission as a street closing referral. Staff therefore believes that it is appropriate to continue to advise GAO that the proposed security enhancements will provide the desired restriction of

unauthorized vehicles. The proposed taking of public land is therefore unnecessary, and staff will not support it if it comes before the Commission in the future.

CONFORMANCE

Comprehensive Plan

The proposed concept is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital. The Federal Facilities Element designates the site of the GAO Headquarters Building for Executive Branch Administrative Facilities.

Commission on Fine Arts

The proposal received concept approval by the Commission on Fine Arts (CFA) at its October 16, 2003 meeting. Subsequently, at its January 15, 2004 meeting, CFA requested that the design of the guard booths be refined and that GAO provide elevations of the guard booths.

National Capital Urban Design and Security Plan

The proposed concept is consistent with the Urban Design and Security Plan (UDSP) which calls for the use of plinth walls, hardened street furniture, bollard fences and bollards in this area. The primary use of the plinth wall works well with the existing building design.

COORDINATION

Coordinating Committee

The Coordinating Committee reviewed this item at its meeting on February 11, 2004 and 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; the District Department of Transportation; the General Services Administration; and the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority.

National Environmental Policy Act

The GAO advises that they do not anticipate any permanent adverse impacts to the environment, with the development of the proposal, and is in the process of securing a Categorical Exclusion pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act.

Historic Preservation Act

The GAO Building is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. GAO has completed its Section 106 review of the proposal.