

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

NCPC File No. 6452



SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION
TEMPORARY MODULAR BUILDING FOR EARLY EDUCATION CENTER
Madison Drive at 12th Street, NW

Submitted by the Smithsonian Institution

March 25, 2004

Abstract

The Smithsonian Institution has submitted preliminary and final site and building plans for the construction of a modular building at the east end of the National Museum of American History (NMAH) to house an infant and toddler program of the Smithsonian Early Enrichment Center (SEEC). This is a temporary building that would contain the operation displaced by the closure of the Arts and Industries Building. Once the new permanent SEEC facility is open in the National Museum of Natural History the modular building will be removed and the site will be restored in accordance with the submitted plan.

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, for a period not to exceed five years, the preliminary and final site and building plans for the temporary building to house the Smithsonian Early Enrichment Center, as shown on NCPC Map File No. 1.41(38.00)-41338.

Requires:

- That within the specified time period above, the Smithsonian Early Enrichment Center be permanently located to the National Museum of Natural History, and
- That the Smithsonian Institution restore the site area at the National Museum of American History upon removal of the temporary modular building immediately after occupancy of the permanent facilities.

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PROJECT SUMMARY

Site Description

The submitted plans identify the project site as temporary and minimally affected by the planned building development. The building would occupy less than 4,000 square feet of land on the east side of the National Museum of American History on the site of the current SEEC playground area. The site on which the proposed temporary SEEC facility is to be located has been disturbed by major construction twice in recent history. In the 1960s the site was disturbed by the construction of the museum building. In the 1970s the site was disturbed by the construction of the Metrorail tunnel under the site.



PROJECT LOCATION

Background

The SEEC previously resided in the Arts and Industries Building (AIB) adjacent to the Smithsonian Castle. Conditions in the AIB are such that immediate measures must be undertaken to begin the process of vacating the facility. Building systems are failing and the

deterioration of roof panels has necessitated the installation of a suspended elements to catch falling debris. On going concerns about the structural integrity of the AIB roof were heightened by record snowfall during the winter of 2002-03 and a new structural survey and analysis in 2003. All information and conditions indicate a need to close the building. The design for the revitalization of AIB was halted and the remaining funds have been redirected to the relocation of its occupants and programs. The relocation of the SEEC is slated as a priority to be achieved by the fall 2004.

The Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution has directed that the AIB SEEC be permanently relocated to the National Museum of Natural History, and planning is underway to incorporate this additional SEEC facility on the ground floor of the museum. However, the timing dictated by the AIB closure cannot be accommodated by the phasing of the NMNH master reutilization plan. Therefore, a temporary facility must be constructed for SEEC to ensure the safety and security of the children and staff until such time as the permanent facility is ready.

Proposal

The submitted preliminary and final design for the temporary SEEC is a modular building consisting of five 12 feet x 60 feet modules that will be assembled onsite into a square building footprint of approximately 3,600 gross square feet. The building is a single-story 12-foot-high structure sitting on 2½-foot tall masonry piers. The main entrance located on the south elevation will have a covered entry and an at grade entrance. On the east side of the building, a 10 feet wide by 48 feet long deck will provide a raised play area and egress route for the Infants Room. The existing playground equipment currently onsite will be removed and replaced with new age-appropriate equipment and the existing perimeter fencing will be adjusted to accommodate the new building.

The project design includes the use of smooth painted cement board panels of different sizes on the modular building facade. Reveals between the panels make reference to the flush stone panel of the main museum building. The building will be painted a light beige color with light-gray roof.

The modular building as proposed will house a maximum of 18 infants, 22 toddlers under the age of two, and 16 staff Monday through Friday between 7:30 am and 6:00 pm over a projected period of no less than three years, and not more than five years. Once the new permanent SEEC facility is open in NMNH, the modular building will be removed and the NMAH playground will be restored in accordance with the current plan.

PROJECT ANALYSIS

Executive Summary

Staff review finds minimal issues with the project since the proposed project plans involve the location of previous significant disturbance to the museum and where Metrorail tunneling was undertaken. Existing site features are preserved in the careful siting of the required modular building. All fit and finish of the facility will be of a high standard which would not materially change the character of the area. The intended plant material screening that would be created at the north perimeter of the site further reduces the visual presence of the temporary structure.

Other positive aspects of the temporary building are:

- The modular assembly is very low and below the height of the mall-side retaining wall at the NMAH, which obscures the proposed structure and its site development.
- The proposed project location meets the size requirements for the SEEC facility while insuring a safe environment for the children.
- No new parking spaces are provided anywhere on the property in conjunction with this proposal.
- The use would be relocated in three to five years to a permanent offsite location.

Staff **recommends approval** of the preliminary and final site and building plans. However, staff further suggests that Commission approval should specify a time limit for the temporary location and a requirement to restore the project location to its existing condition upon removal of the temporary modular building.

Urban Design and Security Plan

On November 1, 2001, the National Capital Planning Commission adopted a report of the Interagency Security Task Force entitled *Designing for Security in the Nation's Capital*. The report recommended specific urban design strategies to improve mobility and aesthetic conditions through a coordinated prepared plan. The Plan approved by the Commission in October 2002 focuses exclusively on perimeter building security designed to protect employees, visitors, and federal functions and property from threats generated by unauthorized vehicles approaching or entering sensitive building areas.

The temporary facility location does not impact the NCPC National Capital Urban Design and Security Plan.

Smithsonian Mall-Wide Security Plan

The concept plan for the Smithsonian Institution Mall-Wide Perimeter Security Improvements at the Mall in Washington, DC, as shown on NCPC Map File No. 1.00(73.10)-41295 and approved by the Commission on February 5, 2004, is not impacted by the proposed temporary structure.

The approved Plan proposes a contextual approach to perimeter security along the sides of the museum buildings facing the Mall on Jefferson and Madison Drives, and on 4th, 7th, 9th, 12th and 14th Streets. Security elements for each block would complement the existing buildings in terms of style and materials. These elements would include a mix of freestanding walls, bollards, fence panels, hardened street furniture, and tree panels. The security features would be blended into the building fabric and sites to the greatest extent possible, taking advantage of existing elements to serve as barriers where possible, and preserving the open feeling and existing features of the Mall environment.

Specific to the location of the NMAH, the approved Plan's approach for the museum includes the reuse of existing retaining walls, the hardening of the existing post and lintel free standing wall on Madison Drive, and the incorporation of free-standing walls along the remaining north-

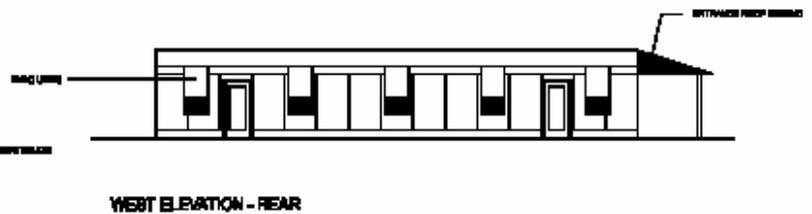
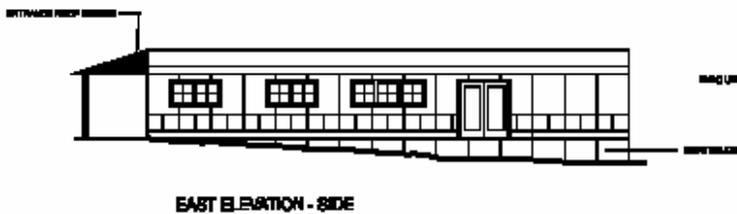
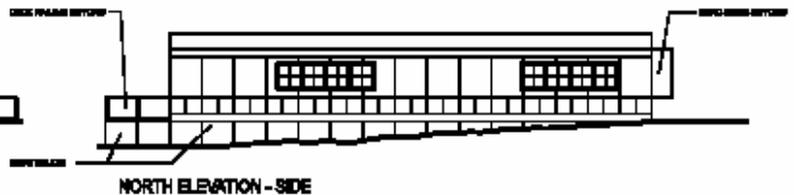
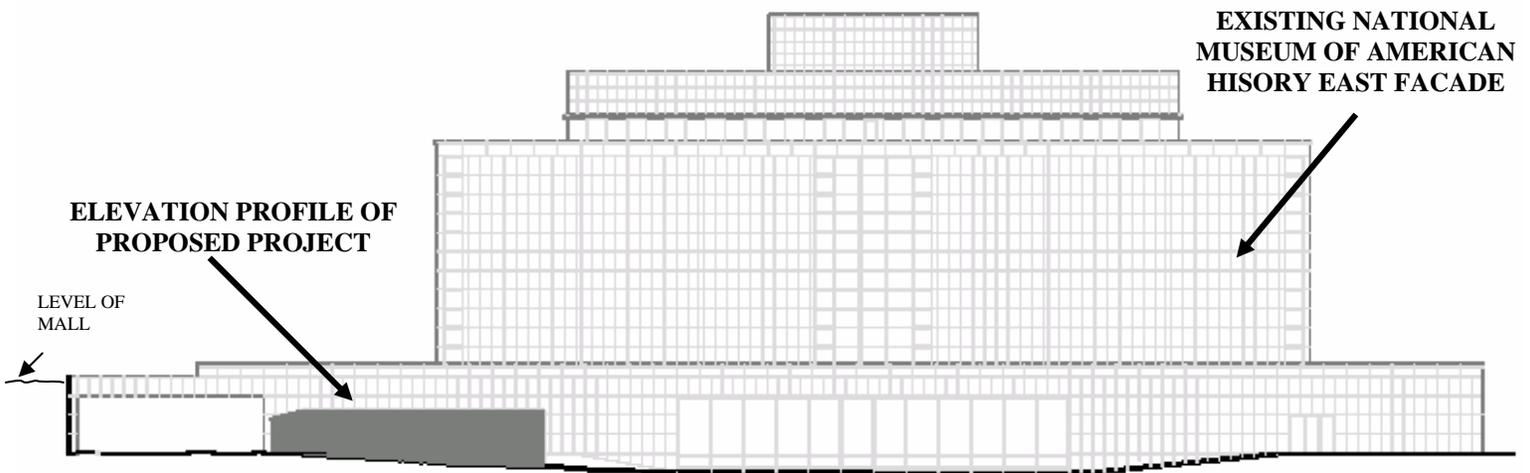
Development Program

Applicant: The Smithsonian Institution

Architect: Smithsonian Institution, Office of Facilities Engineering & Operations

Cost: Approximately \$1 million with funds available. Funding for the permanent SEEC relocation to NMNH will be part of the FY2007 budget request.

Schedule: Construction of the temporary SEEC modular building is scheduled to begin May 2004 and the building will open for the start of the 2004-2005 school year in late August 2004.



**SMITHSONIAN EARLY ENRICHMENT CENTER MODULAR BUILDING
ELEVATIONS**

PROJECT CONFORMANCE

Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital

The Plan does not specifically address location of temporary buildings. Nevertheless, the proposal is consistent with the Parks, Open Space and Natural Features Elements of the Comprehensive Plan which address features of the Mall and major viewsheds of important streets and places. Policy statements include:

- Encourage the provision of activities and facilities for both residents and visitors that serve as educational, cultural, and recreational attractions in the Region's National Capital Open Space System, while protecting natural and historic features.
- Protect and enhance the open space network and functionality of parkways, parks, squares, circles, triangles, and the landscape quality of streets and avenues, which are the legacies of the L'Enfant and McMillan Plans.

Federal Capital Improvements Program

The proposed temporary project is not specifically identified for inclusion in the Federal Capital Improvements Program Fiscal Years 2004–2009, adopted by the Commission on September 4, 2003. However, the AIB and National Museum of Natural History Smithsonian renovations are specified in the 2002-2007 FCIP adopted on July 3, 2001. Both projects were recommended in the program.

National Environmental Policy Act

NCPC staff has analyzed, in conformance with the requirements of NEPA, the prepared Environmental Assessment (EA) completed by the Smithsonian Institution in February 2004. Staff has prepared a Finding of No Significant Impact based on adoption of the EA, concluding that the analysis is sufficient and demonstrates no significant environmental impacts from the planned action.

National Historic Preservation Act

The SI initiated its Section 106 responsibilities for the temporary facility in January 2004. National Historic Preservation Act Section 106 compliance was completed and the District of Columbia Historic Preservation Office concurred in the temporary use of the museum property for the use on February 24, 2004.

CONSULTATION

Coordinating Committee

The Coordinating Committee reviewed this item at its meeting on March 10, 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 Department of Housing and Community Development; the District Department of Transportation; the General Services Administration; the National Park Service; and the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority.