

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

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NCPC File No. 2242



UNION STATION PARKING GARAGE EXTENSION 1st Street and H Street, NE Washington, DC

Submitted by the Union Station Redevelopment Corporation

July 1, 2004

Abstract

The Union Station Redevelopment Corporation (USRC) has submitted preliminary and final site and building plans for the expansion of the existing parking garage north of and behind the main building of Union Station. The improvements to the garage will include modifying the existing west elevation to make it lighter and more modulated in appearance and to create new vehicle and pedestrian entrances along H Street, NE. In total, the expansion provides 791 new parking spaces for cars and will allow the lower level of the existing and proposed structure to fully serve as bus parking, which is critically needed in the city.

Commission Action Requested by Applicant

Approval of preliminary and final site development 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:

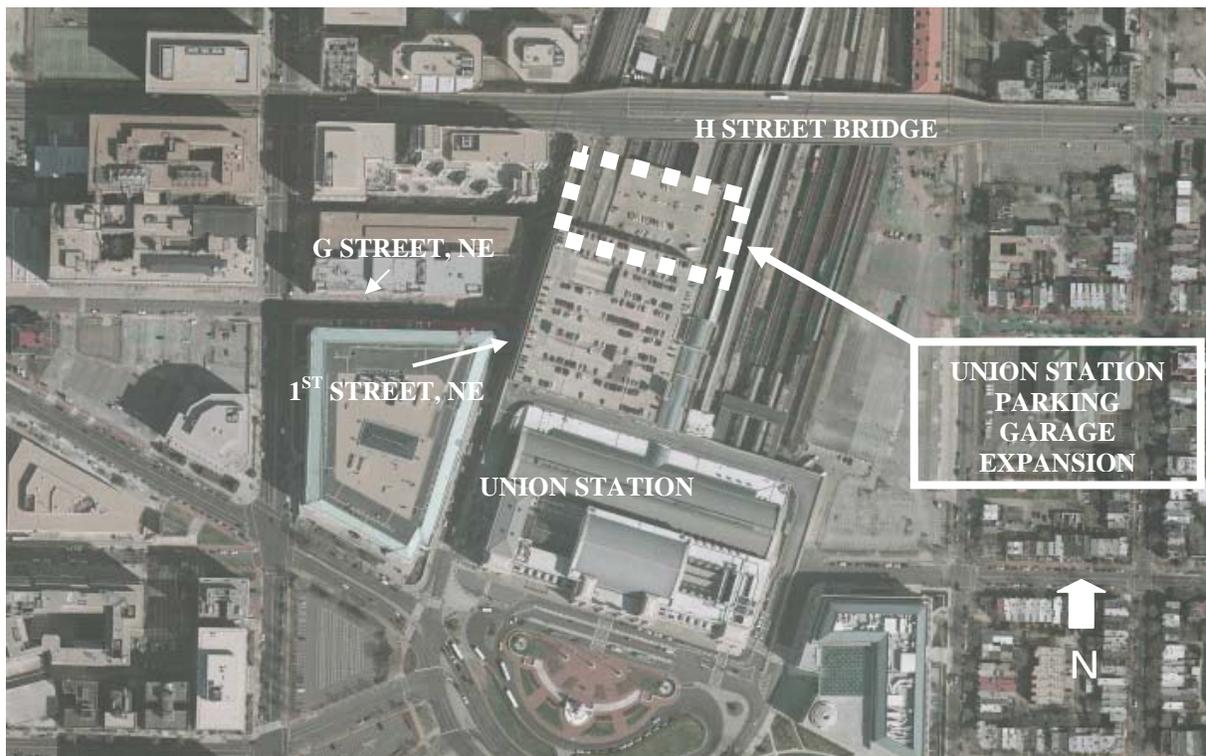
Approves the preliminary and final site and building plans for the Union Station Parking Garage Extension, as shown on NCPC Map File No. 1.11(38.00)-41380, and maintains that the garage's south façade should be improved as proposed with the applicant's acceptance of the construction bid alternate for accomplishing that work.

* * *

PROJECT SUMMARY

Site Description

The preliminary and final site and building plans detail expansion of the existing Union Station Parking Garage. The existing Union Station Parking Garage consists of a five level structure built above the Amtrak and Metrorail tracks on the north side, or the back, of Union Station. The existing first level above the tracks has been designed to accommodate the parking of transit and tour buses. This level is referred to as the Bus Deck and it reaches from Union Station on the south to the H-Street Bridge on the north in the proposed project.



PROJECT LOCATION

The submitted improvements to the garage will also modify the west elevation at 1st Street, NE. This alteration would extend from the new northwest corner south along the façade adjacent to the 1st Street corridor.

The expanse of new construction that occurs to the north connects to H Street but is no wider than the distance between the existing entry and exit ramps that are now present. Future new private construction would obscure about two-thirds of the garage expansion when that development is placed directly adjacent to the H Street Bridge, north and east of the garage, along the bridge and within the air-rights of the rail yard and loading platforms of Union Station.

Background

The purpose of the new expansion and façade modification is to merge the expansion with the existing garage in a manner that provides an image of a single unified facility consisting of slightly over 1 million square feet. The current garage structure itself, which comprises about 744,000 square feet, is not historic nor does it convey any architectural references to the historic main terminal.

With the new expansion construction, the total number of car parking spaces (including the 171 on the mezzanine and the 75 gained by reconfiguring some existing spaces) available after project completion would be 2,509. The net gain of car spaces would be 791. This number does not include any stacked parking which would result in a higher net gain of car parking spaces. With the design, there is also a net gain of approximately 65 bus parking slips.

At the Commission's February 5, 2004 meeting the Union Station Parking Garage Extension was conceptually approved as shown on NCPC Map File No.1.11 (08.21)-41299. The Commission also required that:

- The new exterior cladding proposed for the garage wrap around the southwest corner and extend inward toward Union Station along the south facade, for a limited distance, to provide continuity of the new exterior over the parking structure; and to visually enhance the façade, which is visible behind the western edge of the front façade of Union Station;
- The preliminary submission of the proposal provide definition regarding the type of exterior lighting contemplated, including all signage and its illumination, and demonstrate how exterior lighting will be established in the new garage expansion project; and
- The submission include provision for amenities near the stair tower, such as a limited seating area, if sufficient area is present.



EXISTING VIEW OF THE PARKING GARAGE FROM H STREET, NE

Proposal

The preliminary and final site and building plans maintain the objectives of the concept design approved by the Commission. The new stair tower for entrance and egress to the garage expansion will be treated as a sculptural element at H Street and now exhibits a more receptive and open pedestrian vestibule entryway. The entryway features seat walls and a connecting stair that leads directly to the bus parking deck. The stair will also give a human scale to what is one of the largest structures in this portion of the city.

The scope of the preliminary and final design also achieves obscuring the presently exposed sections of the garage so that it is sheathed to mask the current structural concrete beyond, which is unfinished in certain areas. This sheathing is comprised of thin perforated stainless steel panels that will allow the required air flow into the parking bay areas and will be combined with precast concrete panels. In plan view, the sheathing would be angled from the garage to respect the building setback along H Street and the future air rights development that will abut the northern and northeastern edge of the parking garage. On the north and east side of the new expansion area precast concrete panels and beams will comprise the exterior façade, which in the future will be covered by adjacent building construction.



FINAL DESIGN OF GARAGE EXTENSION AS SEEN FROM H STREET, NE

The interior project work consists of adding concrete parking decks to each level of the existing garage, plus a new mezzanine level for auto rental operations. The new parking levels will utilize the ramps of the existing the parking structure. With the additional parking and the auto rental mezzanine, the bus deck would be dedicated exclusively for the parking of buses. Additional scope for the entire garage includes interior circulation improvements, parking access and revenue control upgrades, parking stall improvements and aesthetic enhancements intended to provide users with a more pleasant experience when using the facility.



VIEW FROM NORTHEAST, BACK ACROSS H STREET, TOWARD THE PEDESTRIAN STAIR TOWER AND ACCESS VESTIBULE AREA OF THE PARKING GARAGE EXTENSION

The underside of the cantilevered portion of the existing garage at 1st Street, NE, is visible along that corridor. The project's refurbished bays at the new soffit area will feature a metal panel ceiling system to match the west façade. These panels will be lit with pendent light fixtures hanging below the soffit to create a new lighting effect to the structure and to better illuminate the new ramp areas of the garage (see illustration on page 7).

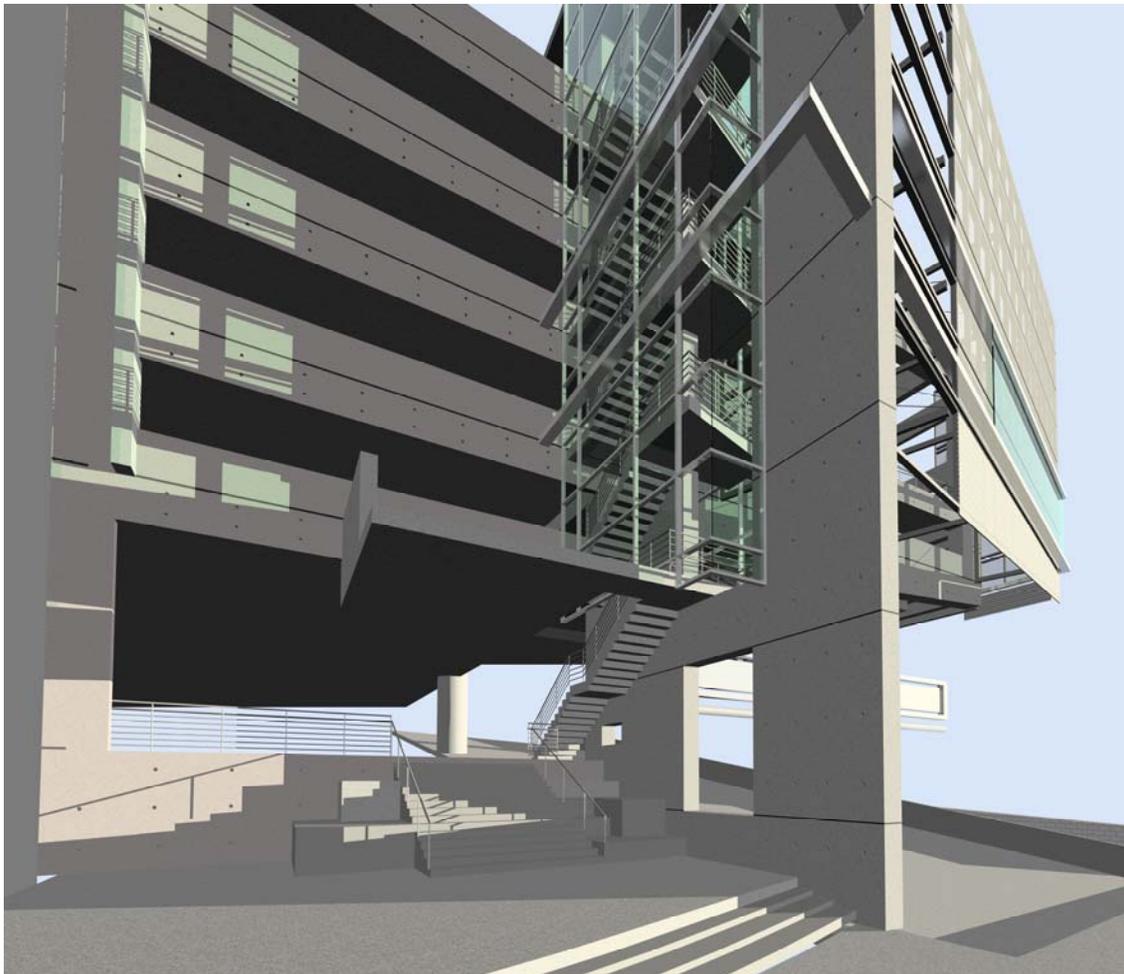
Development Program

Applicant: Union Station Redevelopment Corporation

Architect: RTKL, Washington, DC in association with Timothy Haahs and Associates, Inc. Blue Bell, PA.

Cost: Approximately \$25-30 million achieved in funding by a bond issue.

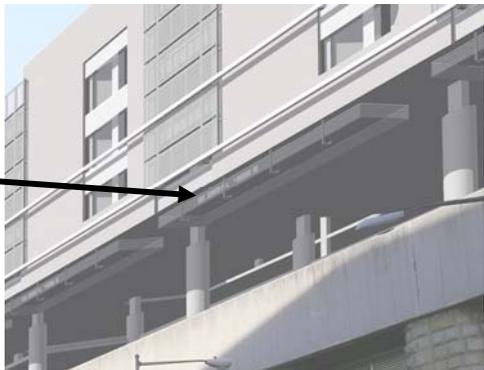
Schedule: Construction is anticipated to begin in August/September 2004 and a completion of the project is estimated for late 2005.



DETAIL VIEW OF PEDESTRIAN VESTIBULE AT STAIR TOWER



WEST ELEVATION OF PARKING GARAGE EXTENSION AT 1ST STREET NE



SOFFIT LIGHT FIXUTRES

ENLARGEMENT OF SOFFIT LIGHTING AT WEST FACADE

PROJECT ANALYSIS

Executive Summary

Staff **recommends approval** of the preliminary and final site and building plans for the parking garage expansion. The submission addresses all concerns identified by the Commission’s review of February and the final design represents an external façade treatment that successfully updates



EXISTING SOUTH ELEVATION OF PARKING GARAGE AT 1ST STREET, NE AND WEST END OF UNION STATION

and blends the expansion of the garage into a unified appearance with the existing parking structure. Moreover, the submitted final design provides an interesting yet neutral backdrop to the historic main terminal building, when viewed from the south or west, which does not overwhelm or compete with that structure.

Staff recognizes that the final submission identifies the carry-over of the façade treatment at the parking structure's south side as a construction bid alternate. However, staff review still maintains and encourages the prior Commission conclusion for a consistent exterior treatment at the south building exterior. The applicant, however, asserts the extended façade may be cost prohibitive to the project (\$300,000-\$350,000) and jeopardize its successful accomplishment within budget. Therefore, the applicant insists the additional façade material can be solicited

only as a construction alternative. Staff recommends approval of the final plans with the south façade treatment but accepts the applicant's desire to acquire the exterior finish on the south building wall as a construction alternative. NCPC staff analysis concludes the new addition and final exterior façade modifications are appropriate and are needed to accommodate the necessary changes anticipated for the USRC garage operations.



PROPOSED SOUTH ELEVATION OF PARKING GARAGE AT 1ST STREET, NE AND WEST END OF UNION STATION



CLOSE-UP VIEW OF PROPOSED PARKING GARAGE SOUTH FAÇADE

PROJECT CONFORMANCE

Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital

This proposal is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital. Union Station is a historic property, and the streets around the station are part of the historic L'Enfant Plan. The Comprehensive Plan Policies for Special Streets and Places state that:

- Special Streets and Places should be maintained and enhanced in a manner that promotes their roles as major features that help establish the images and the symbols of the National Capital in the minds of its residents and visitors.
- The integrity of the form and design of Special Streets and Places, particularly those of historic significance, should be maintained and protected to the extent feasible and as warranted by safety requirements from unnecessary traffic channelization and from new buildings into public space. The intersections of Special Streets should be carefully designed to reflect the importance of the junctures and to respect the historic plans.

- Pedestrian usage of Special Streets and Places should be encouraged by emphasizing extra widths and other special amenities of sidewalks, where feasible.

Master Plan Compliance

This proposal completes the existing plans for Union Station established in 1995-98 under its developed master plan. A portion of that plan was submitted and reviewed by the Commission in February 2001. The access and circulation plan included revisions to the bus and passenger car circulation for Union Station and identified future expansion of the existing parking garage.

Federal Capital Improvements Program

The Parking Garage Expansion improvements are not included in the Federal Capital Improvements Program, Fiscal Years 2004-2009 adopted by the Commission in September 2003, or any succeeding program. The Union Station Redevelopment Corporation is not a federal agency, and therefore is not required to submit capital improvements funding pursuant to the authorities of the Commission.

The H Street Corridor Study

NCPC staff reviewed the final project plans in the context of the District of Columbia Office of Planning's (DCOP) efforts involving the H Street Corridor Revitalization developed in 2003. The portion of the plan study area that would affect the Parking Garage is identified as the Western Gateway; the Hub area.

In the Hub area, the study advocates the following recommendations¹:

Air Rights and Station Place – The District and community stakeholders should continue to work with the developers of these significant projects to ensure they contribute to the creation of a quality pedestrian environment along the Hopscotch Bridge. This includes, but is not limited to, the provision of convenient, safe and clearly-marked connections to Union Station, the provision of streetscape amenities such as sufficient lighting, signage, hardscaping, and other street furniture, and the disposition of the proposed developments so that they engage the street at pedestrian level. New buildings should have H Street addresses with primarily entries open directly on the bridge sidewalk or onto entry courts with direct connections to the bridge. New buildings should directly abut the bridge structure with no rails or fencing between the sidewalk and the building facades. To the greatest extent possible, the bridge should appear to be an extension of the H Street streetscape.

Staff's review of the garage expansion finds the following objectives are adhered to:

- Making direct and bridge-level connections at H Street (all access points of the expansion meet H Street or provide for a future H Street connection)
- Clearly providing and marking a pedestrian connection to Union Station (the pedestrian stair tower).

¹ Page 37 of Chapter 8 of the H Street Revitalization Study

- Sufficient lighting and signage to animate and highlight the street side environment of H Street (the new garage entrances with sidewalks, the new graphic signage and garage expansion façade treatments that will be undertaken in the garage expansion at H Street).
- Setback provisions in the garage expansion to allow private air-right development to occur directly adjacent to H Street at the bridge level which would provide both retail and office space development.
- Providing a shared parking opportunity for future development of retail at this area of the H Street corridor (use of the parking garage is open to anyone paying the parking fee).

Additionally, the study's design guidelines provide the following stated parameters:

Several locations for Type III Development (Projects with parking garages) have been considered that are centrally located and can provide parking. To mitigate the impact of Type III Development along the Corridor, the structures must be fronted with ground floor uses on H Street. Mid-block structures are relieved of this requirement. In addition (see Architectural Standards) parking garages are expected to meet all the criteria of approval as other building types on the Corridor. In order to contribute to the overall quality of the Corridor, parking structures must meet the same architectural standards as other buildings. Parking deck placement requires careful coordination among developers, the City, merchants and residents to ensure that the need for public parking and the potential impacts the garages have on the surrounding areas are weighed evenly.²

Consequently, staff finds the final plans for the garage expansion are consistent with the H Street study objectives.

National Historic Preservation Act

The main terminal of Union Station is a National Register-listed property, as is the nearby Post Office. The historic street pattern around the station is part of the National Register-listed designation of the L'Enfant Plan (which includes McMillan Plan elements as well).

NCPC served as the lead federal agency for the Section 106 review, on behalf of the Union Station Redevelopment Corporation. NCPC found that the expansion and modification of the parking garage would have no adverse effect on Union Station, on the Post Office, on H Street, or on any other nearby historic properties. The D.C. State Historic Preservation Officer has concurred with NCPC's determination, which completes the Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act compliance process.

National Environmental Policy Act

The USRC prepared an Environmental Assessment (EA) consistent with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, as amended, and the Council of Environmental Quality's (CEQ) regulations implementing NEPA. The Commission staff requested NCPC be identified as a cooperating agency within the EA, which was available for public comment for thirty days prior to being adopted by the Executive Director on March 3, 2004. NCPC staff analyzed, in conformance with the requirements of NEPA, the prepared EA. Staff concluded a

² Page 6 of the H Street Design Guidelines identified at DCOP website, <http://planning.dc.gov/planning/>

Finding of No Significant Impact based on the analysis provided by the EA. No public comments or questions concerning the project were received by NCPC during the announced availability of the Finding of No Significant Impact.

The EA reviews two alternatives for implementing the garage expansion; the preferred alternative of the “Build” plan and the “No Action” alternative. The preferred alternative was evaluated by the EA and was developed in accordance with District of Columbia Environmental Act of 1989 and the requirements of NEPA. The USRC is not a federal agency and the funding of the project will not involve any federal funding source, but it is located on federal property. Consequently, NCPC is the sole lead federal agency implementing an approval role, which is required by the Planning Act (40 U.S.C. § 8722(b)(1)) and is defined by NCPC as a major federal action.

Issues of the NCPC environmental evaluation of the EA focused primarily on traffic impacts, the potential erosion and water resource impacts from construction, noise impacts, and cultural/architectural resource effects, and hazardous material detection. The possible impacts and USRC identified mitigation measures that are included in the project development address the following:

Traffic effects: The proposed garage addition would modify entrances to the current garage and alter traffic signal locations at existing parking garage driveways. The new garage entrance and exit at the east end of the facility would provide new bus entry patterns to the garage but remove the potential for right turns at this drive onto H Street. The most western entrance signal would be re-timed for traffic volume flow and dedicated for passenger vehicle and taxi use only.

Vehicle traffic volumes with the project increase on the H Street corridor, but only minimally, and all roadway intersections operate at levels of service (LOS) A through C at both morning and afternoon peak-hour volumes. Increased delays are estimated in the range of only two to four seconds.

Mitigation

The only mitigation action required is a recommended re-timing check of all current signals in the general two to five block area of the project to verify any potential for more efficient re-signalization of any existing intersection that might improve traffic volume flow.

Water Resources: The project would not impact any nearby water courses or the nearby National Park Service property at Columbus Plaza. Construction activities would temporarily disturb soil in garage footing areas, but these areas are now currently covered by existing structure. However, the implementation of the appropriate best management practices (BMPs) to control sedimentation and stormwater flow would avoid sedimentation impacts to any nearby stormwater systems. There are no wetlands in the project vicinity; therefore, wetlands would not be affected by the implementation of the project.

Mitigation

Prior to beginning construction activities, erosion and sedimentation control plans and a stormwater management plan are would be prepared and submitted to the D.C. Department of

Consumer and Regulatory Affairs (DCRA). The erosion and sedimentation control plan would include measures to prevent erosion of cleared areas and the transport of soil and sediment. The design consultant has provided preliminary erosion and sedimentation plans to NCPC. The stormwater management plan addresses runoff and pollutant discharge. Construction is not anticipated to occur in areas containing groundwater; however, dewatering measures will be implemented for subsurface construction if perched groundwater is encountered. Implementation of these mitigation measures would minimize or avoid impacts to water resources from implementation of the garage expansion proposal.

Noise Impacts: The District of Columbia limits weekday construction and demolition noise at 80 dBA Leq from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., unless granted a variance. The construction equipment expected to be used on-site may exceed this noise limit since some pile driving is required. Therefore, identified sensitive noise receptors adjacent to the site would be temporarily affected by the project construction. Pile driving noise levels are predicted to be within the variance requirements for construction activity of limited duration. The District construction permitting would specify which activities are allowed. No construction activity would occur beyond the time limits identified and would not affect sleeping activities at night. The movement of heavy trucks transporting construction materials could cause an adverse noise impact to residences if they are on or adjacent to the designated travel route. However, haul routes are anticipated to operate within the daytime construction hours specified above.

Mitigation

Short-term construction-related noise would be minimized by controlling noise at the sources through implementation of best management practices, as necessary, to meet the District noise standards. Noise barriers would be used adjacent to high level noise sources if necessary to attenuate excessive construction noise in the proximity of noise sensitive receptors. Construction specifications would require the selection of truck routes that would minimize the potential for noise impacts to residences from trucks during construction, particularly during truck delivery of construction materials including imported fill.

Historic and Archaeological Resources: Given the known presence of Native American settlements within the Washington D.C. area and the existence of early housing settlements east of Union Station, it has been determined by USRC that it is unlikely underground archaeological resources would still exist given the extent of landform modification that occurred in the late 1880s through 1900 in the project vicinity.

According to the National Register of Historic Places, Union Station is a major feature of the northeast quadrant's visual beauty of the District of Columbia. Union Station is a National Register-listed property, as is the nearby Post Office. The historic street pattern around the station is part of the National Register-listed designation of the L'Enfant Plan (which includes McMillan Plan elements, as well). Nevertheless, the preferred build alternative would be undertaken in an area that has largely been previously disturbed with all existing nearby buildings being no older than 15 years, beyond those already noted as historically important. New large construction sites are currently underway east of the proposed project location at Station Place.

Mitigation

The project plans qualify as an “undertaking” pursuant to Section 106 of the Historic Preservation Act as it applies to the Union Station property as a whole. The USRC has identified in its prepared EA that the project actions would have long-term, minimal, and potentially not-adverse effects on cultural/historic resources. Project concurrence by the District of Columbia Historic Preservation Officer was completed in June 2004 with its agreement in the determination of no adverse effect that responded to NCPC’s completion of the Section 106 review process.

Hazardous Materials: Since excavation activity related to additional foundation pilings may be pronounced, and the current site usage lends itself to deposition of hazardous materials, a research of hazardous sites was undertaken by USRC. No significant contamination was found. If a potential presence of suspect materials is discovered during construction, environmental soil sampling and testing of areas would be undertaken to reveal if any contaminant levels exist. An evaluation would then be made as to whether the levels exceed EPA health and safety thresholds. Further sampling protocols then may be required to ascertain if the soils would require remediation prior to disposal at an appropriate landfill. Should contaminants be found at any stage of foundation development, excavation and disposal efforts would be monitored by appropriate District of Columbia government officials.

Mitigation

To minimize the potential adverse impacts should any hazardous materials result from the construction stages of the garage expansion, the following measures would be provided in coordination with the District of Columbia Environmental Health Administration, Hazardous Waste Division and the District of Columbia Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs, to demonstrate a written plan:

- To remove and contain hazardous waste materials including asbestos-containing materials (ACM), lead-based materials consistent with applicable handling regulations by licensed contractors and trained personnel, and the removal of hydrocarbon hazardous substances.
- To accomplish environmental soil testing for contamination that includes analysis of soil samples by a certified lab, and development of provisions for removal and containment consistent with applicable regulations.
- To collect, transport, and dispose of asbestos- or lead-bearing waste by a specially licensed contractor in accordance with the requirements of Title 40 CFR Volume 23 Part 763.
- That addresses hazardous materials to be removed and which would be shipped, consistent with applicable transfer regulations and procedures, to a hazardous waste disposal facility. There are a number of such facilities in the surrounding states that are licensed to handle such material.
- To segregate wastes to reduce quantities of hazardous waste.
- To haul hazardous wastes by a licensed hazardous waste hauler with permanent labeling.
- To dispose of hazardous and non-hazardous waste in accordance with all federal, state, and local regulations.

Staff finds the minor environmental effects and their mitigation supportable and fully defined by the EA evaluation. The separate National Historic Preservation Act, Section 106, review and mitigation actions have been defined by the consultation process with the District of Columbia Historic Preservation Officer.

Staff believes the USRC environmental review is an ample evaluation of the effects and potential impacts of the design and development of the parking garage expansion and supports its implementation and endorses the mitigation actions.

COORDINATION

Coordinating Committee

The Coordinating Committee reviewed this item at its meeting on January 14, 2004 and forwarded the proposal to the Commission with the statement that the project has been coordinated with all agencies participating, except the District of Columbia Office of Planning. The representative for DCOP withheld its coordination pending discussions with the USRC about issues involving relocating portions of the garage. Subsequent to that discussion, the DCOP representative contacted NCPC staff on January 15, 2004, and indicated the concerns expressed at the meeting of the 14th had been resolved and that the Office of Planning was indicating full coordination on the proposal. The other participating agencies at the meeting on January 14th were NCPC; the Department of Housing and Community Development; the General Services Administration; and the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority.



PARKING GARAGE EXTENSION WEST ELEVATION

Commission of Fine Arts

The Commission of Fine Arts (CFA) approved the proposal at its June 17 meeting contingent on an on-site evaluation of the revised perforated steel panels. The Chairman expressed reservation in the use of the metal sheathing at the building's south elevation and indicated that everyone liked the design, including the idea of a transparent screen used in certain places on the garage, although preferably not on the south facade, where the structural honesty of the great truss seemed more appropriate.

NCPC staff, while noting the attributed qualities of the large truss openings of the existing south façade, finds the apparent scale differential of the large truss openings incongruous and overstated in comparison to the updated attempt to subtly transform the garage to a more unified entity. The new sheathing and concrete panels convert the scale of building detailing, which evokes shadow lines and off-setting of panels three-dimensionally, that results in a more consistent treatment to serve as a background to the historic and architecturally significant Union Station.