

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

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NCPC File No. 6504

**SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION MUSEUM SUPPORT CENTER
STORAGE AND LAB ADDITION (POD 5)
Suitland, Prince George's County, Maryland**

Submitted by the Smithsonian Institution

September 2, 2004

Abstract

The Smithsonian Institution has submitted preliminary and final site and building plans for a laboratory and storage addition (Pod 5) to the existing Museum Support Center at the Smithsonian's Suitland Collections Center in Suitland, Prince George's County, Maryland. The addition will house the "wet collection" of the Museum of Natural History. The addition is compatible with the existing museum support building and is consistent with the master plan for the facility approved by the Commission in 1993.

Commission Action Requested by Applicant

Approval of preliminary and final site and building plans pursuant to 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 Pod 5 storage and lab addition to the Museum Support Center at the Smithsonian's Suitland Collection Center in Suitland, Prince George's County, Maryland, as shown on NCPC Map File No. 3205.11(38.00)-41429.

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PROJECT SUMMARY

Site Description

The Smithsonian Institution's (SI) Suitland Collections Center (SCC) is located in Suitland, Prince George's County, Maryland. The facility is located west of the NPS-maintained Suitland Parkway, north of Silver Hill Road and east of Branch Avenue.

Background

The Smithsonian Institution has submitted plans for the addition of storage and lab space (Pod 5) at the Museum Support Center (MSC), an existing building at their Suitland campus. The current MSC building consists of four bays, or Pods, and serves as collection management and archived storage for several Smithsonian museums. The Pod 5 addition would house the National Museum of Natural History's (NMNH) wet specimens (specimens preserved in alcohol) now split between Pod 3 and the museum in downtown Washington.

Development Program

Applicant:	Smithsonian Institution
Architect:	Ewing Cole
Square Footage:	125,000 gross square feet
Estimated Cost:	Approximately 25 million
Schedule:	Completion date March 2007

Proposal

The proposed Pod 5 addition will be similar in size, configuration and function to the existing four Pods that make up the MSC with a lab and storage wing. The minor differences between the new addition and the existing building come from the increased height of the addition necessary to meet fire safety requirements for the alcohol-based wet collection.

The footprint of the new 125,000 square-foot addition will be similar to the other Pods, which devote a larger portion of the space to storage. The height of the building is approximately 42 feet for the storage part of the addition and 31 feet for the lab area. The lab portion of the addition will have windows to allow natural light into the work areas. The building exterior will be clad with precast concrete and the lab portion will also have regularly spaced ribbon windows.

The addition is being constructed on the eastern side of the existing MSC, approximately 150 feet from Silver Hill Road, and will result in the demolition of two parking areas and the reconfiguration of the parking access road. As a result of the addition 36 parking spaces will be lost and will not be recaptured.

PROJECT ANALYSIS

Executive Summary

Staff **recommends approval** of the preliminary and final site and building plans for the Pod 5 lab and storage addition to the Museum Support Center at the Suitland Collections Center. The addition is consistent with the 1993 master plan for the SCC. The addition will allow the National Museum of Natural History to accommodate all of its wet collections in a single state-of-the-art storage and research facility. Staff commends the Smithsonian Institution for permanently removing excess parking at the facility.

PROJECT CONFORMANCE

Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital: Federal Elements

The proposed addition is generally consistent with the Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital.

Federal Capital Improvements Program

The Museum Support Center addition is included in the draft Federal Capital Improvements Program, Fiscal Years 2005-2010 scheduled for adoption by the Commission in September 2004.

Conformance with the Master Plan

The Pod 5 addition to the MSC was included in the 1993 Suitland Collections Center master plan approved by the Commission on December 2, 1993.

National Environmental Policy Act

The Smithsonian Institution, in July 1993, accomplished an Environmental Assessment and completed a Finding of No Significant Impact on the master plan for the Museum Support Center at the Suitland Collections Center. The EA included a potential to expand the building complex in similar modular units, which is the essence of the current proposal. Given that no significant environmental changes have occurred in the vicinity of the POD 5 construction area, staff review concludes the EA analysis and findings of the 1993 document remain valid for this proposal.

National Historic Preservation Act

The Smithsonian Institution undertook a Phase I cultural resource survey when the master plan was completed in 1993; however, that study did not include the area around the existing MSC facility because it was previously disturbed by the construction of the building. Therefore, SI concluded their Section 106 responsibilities with the 1993 master plan.