

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

D. Levy

NCPC File No. 5853



E. BARRETT PRETTYMAN U.S. COURTHOUSE ANNEX
ROTUNDA PERIMETER SECURITY
333 Constitution Avenue, NW
Washington, DC

Submitted by the General Services Administration

August 30, 2004

Abstract

Submission of a proposal for perimeter security elements, consisting of bollards, at the E. Barrett Prettyman U.S. Courthouse Annex rotunda along Constitution Avenue, NW to control vehicular access and to provide a vehicular stand-off for the courthouse annex.

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:

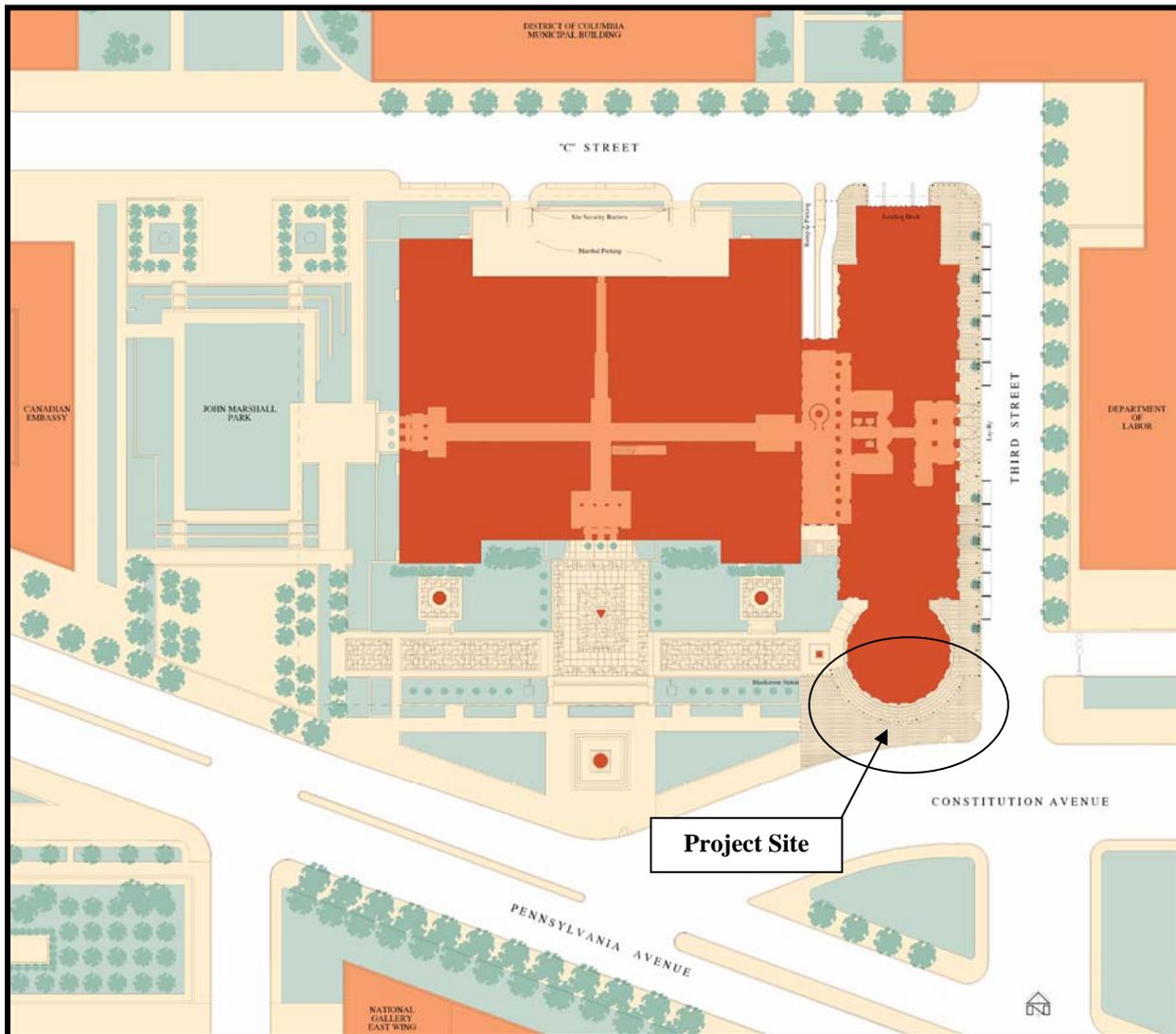
Approves the preliminary and final site development plans for perimeter security at the E. Barrett Prettyman U.S. Courthouse Annex rotunda (at the northwest corner of 3rd Street, NW and Constitution Avenue, NW) in northwest Washington, DC, as shown on NCPC Map File No. 1.24(38.00)-41432.

* * *

PROJECT SUMMARY

Site Description

The project is located at the northwest corner of the intersection of 3rd Street, NW with Constitution Avenue, NW. The project site is adjacent to the newly-constructed E. Barrett Prettyman U.S. Courthouse Annex. To the east, across 3rd Street is the U.S. Department of Labor headquarters. To the south are Constitution and Pennsylvania Avenues, and to the north across C Street is the District of Columbia Municipal Building. The site is urban in character.



Site Plan

Background

October 10, 2001

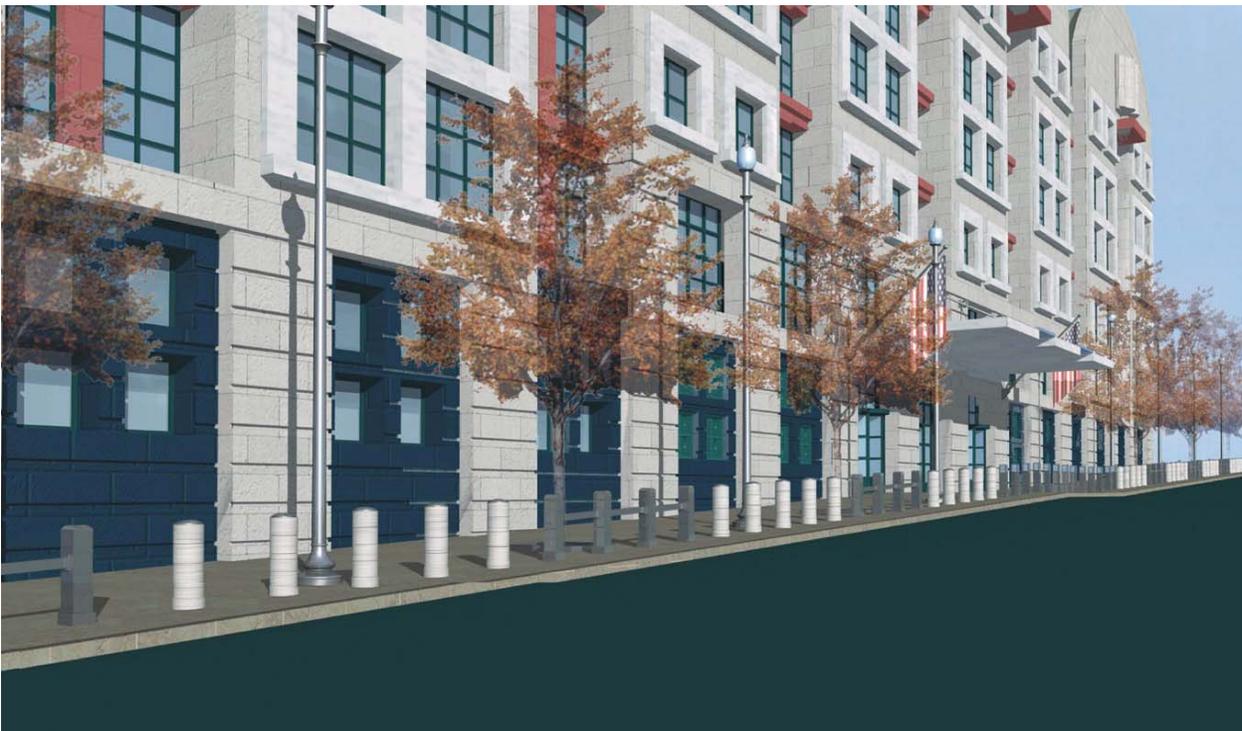
The Commission approved the design of the E. Barrett Prettyman U.S. Courthouse annex on October 10, 2001, but excepted approval of the proposed perimeter security concept, which consisted of a continuous line of bollards surrounding the perimeter of the building. The Commission expressed concern over the use of long lines of bollards in general, and cited the fact that NCPC's Urban Design and Security Plan (UDSP) was just getting underway. The Commission directed the applicant to resubmit its perimeter security plan in accordance with the guidelines established by the UDSP upon the plan's completion.

January 2004

The General Services Administration (GSA) resubmitted the perimeter security plan to staff in December of 2003 for the January 2004 meeting. The new submission differed only slightly from the design rejected by the Commission in October of 2001, and staff advised GSA to withdraw the project until February so that NCPC and GSA could work together to improve the perimeter security design. Over the next several weeks, staff worked with the applicant in an attempt to incorporate other streetscape elements into the design in accordance with the UDSP. When a mutually agreeable design solution was not achieved in time to meet deadlines for the February meeting, the applicant withdrew the project once again.

March 2004

In March of 2004, the applicant submitted a revised design to the Commission for approval. The design included not only bollards, but also post and rail fence elements in front of each of the street trees along 3rd Street. Two different types of bollards were used to visually break up the perimeter. The Commission approved the portion of the design along 3rd Street, NW and C Street, NW, but excepted the portion of the design around the building's rotunda and directed the applicant to return with a design for the rotunda area that better incorporated the perimeter into the building architecture. The Commission directed the applicant to specifically consider a design solution that incorporated a plinth wall around the rotunda.

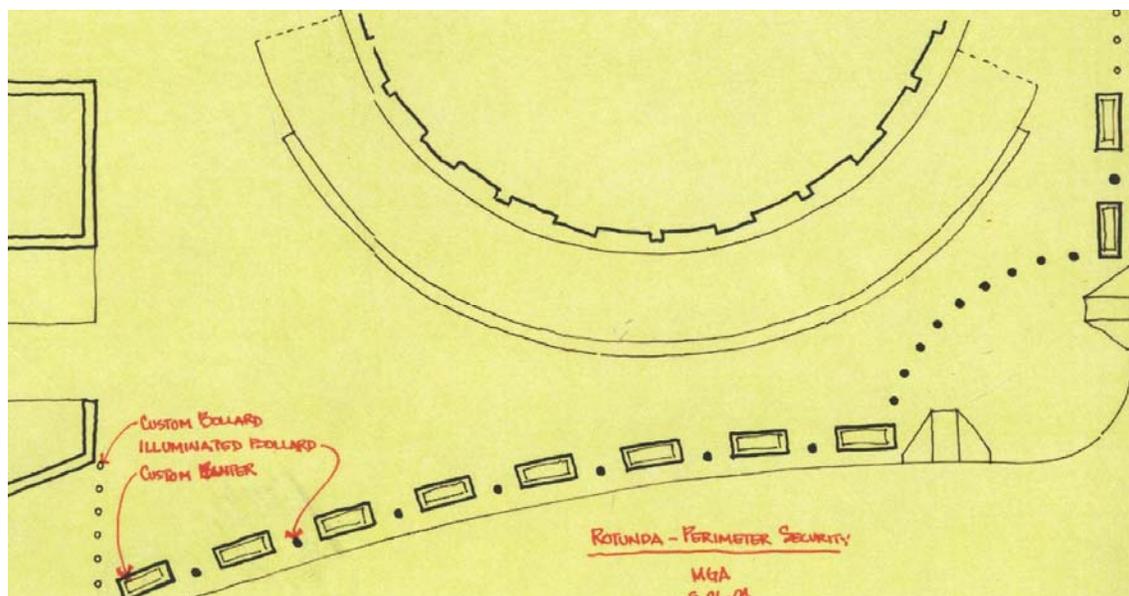


Approved scheme along 3rd Street, NW facing northeast

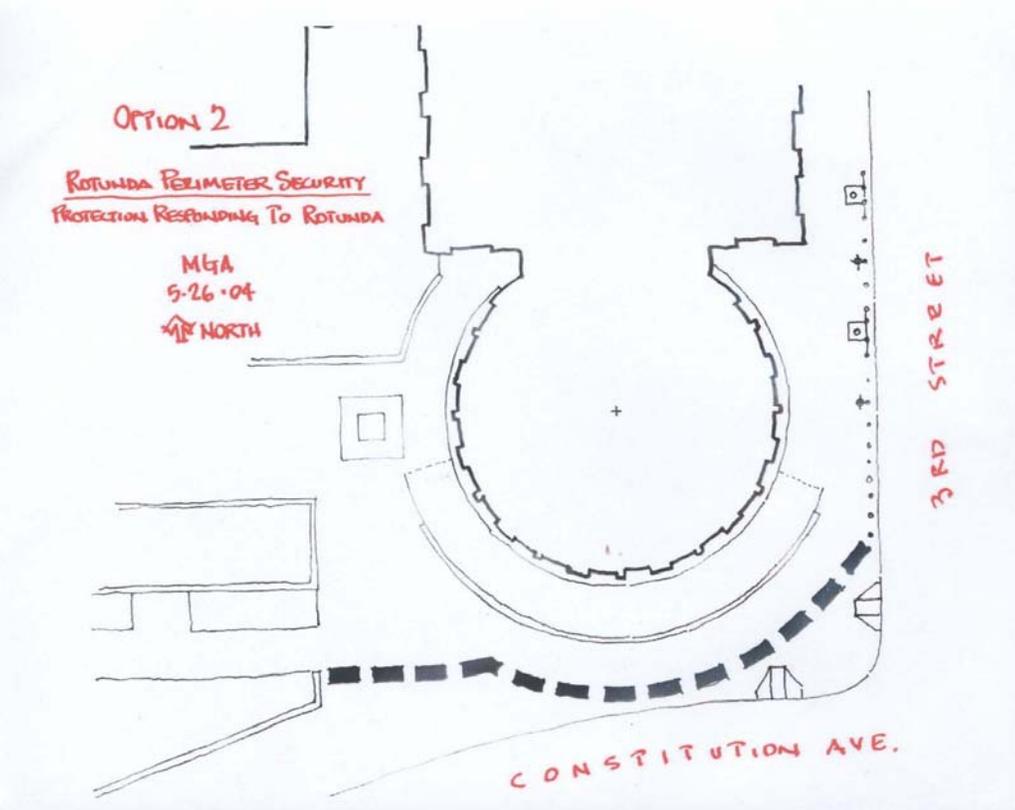
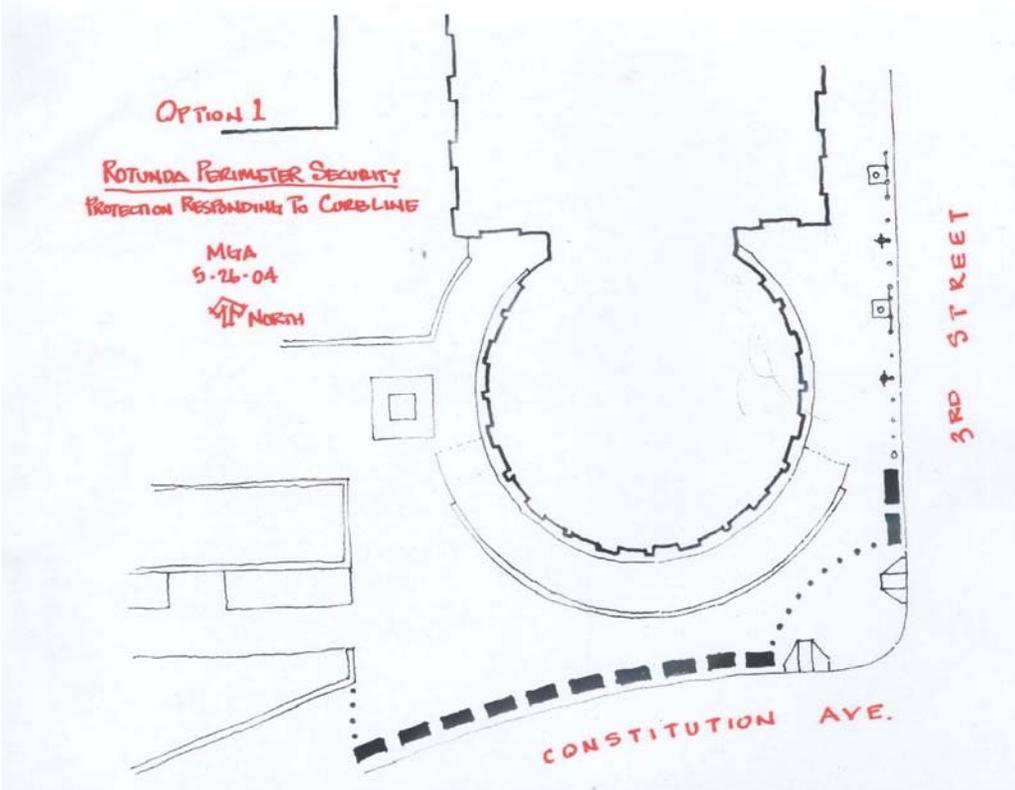
March 2004-September 2004

Following the March 2004 submission, the applicant met several times with NCPC staff to consider solutions for the rotunda area of the courthouse annex. During this time period, GSA also met with the U.S. Marshals Service and with the Department of Homeland Security to further refine the threat assessment for the entire Prettyman Courthouse complex. Through this process, the Department of Homeland Security raised the threat assessment for the complex from “medium” to “high” and recommended that the secure perimeter at the rotunda be moved outward to the curb to provide an increased standoff distance. GSA and NCPC staff met again to consider other solutions that would blend more appropriately into the urban landscape. These included the use of raised planters, planter and bollard combinations, bollards only, and bollard/post and rail solutions.

After careful examination, staff concluded that raised planters or plinth walls were inappropriate at the curb, and recommended that the applicant design this portion of the perimeter to blend with the solution approved by the Commission along 3rd Street, NW, using a combination of bollards, post and rail elements and landscaping. The applicant objected to the use of street trees in front of the rotunda because it would visually intrude on views to and from the building along the Pennsylvania Avenue, citing the fact that the rotunda was designed specifically to respond to the U.S. Capitol, the Ronald Reagan Building, and other prominent buildings located along the Avenue. Staff visited the site and determined that since there were no street trees in front of the existing courthouse, street trees should not be required in front of the Annex. Instead staff asked the applicant to incorporate planters flush with the sidewalk that would contain plantings similar to those to be used at the adjacent existing courthouse building. The resulting design proposal responds to staff recommendations. The Commission of Fine Arts requested that the bollards and post and rail elements be designed in a single color, rather than repeat the alternating colors used for these elements along 3rd Street, NW.



Curb Line Planter and Bollard solution considered by GSA and NCPC staff



Alternate Curb Line planter solutions considered by GSA and NCPC Staff

Proposal

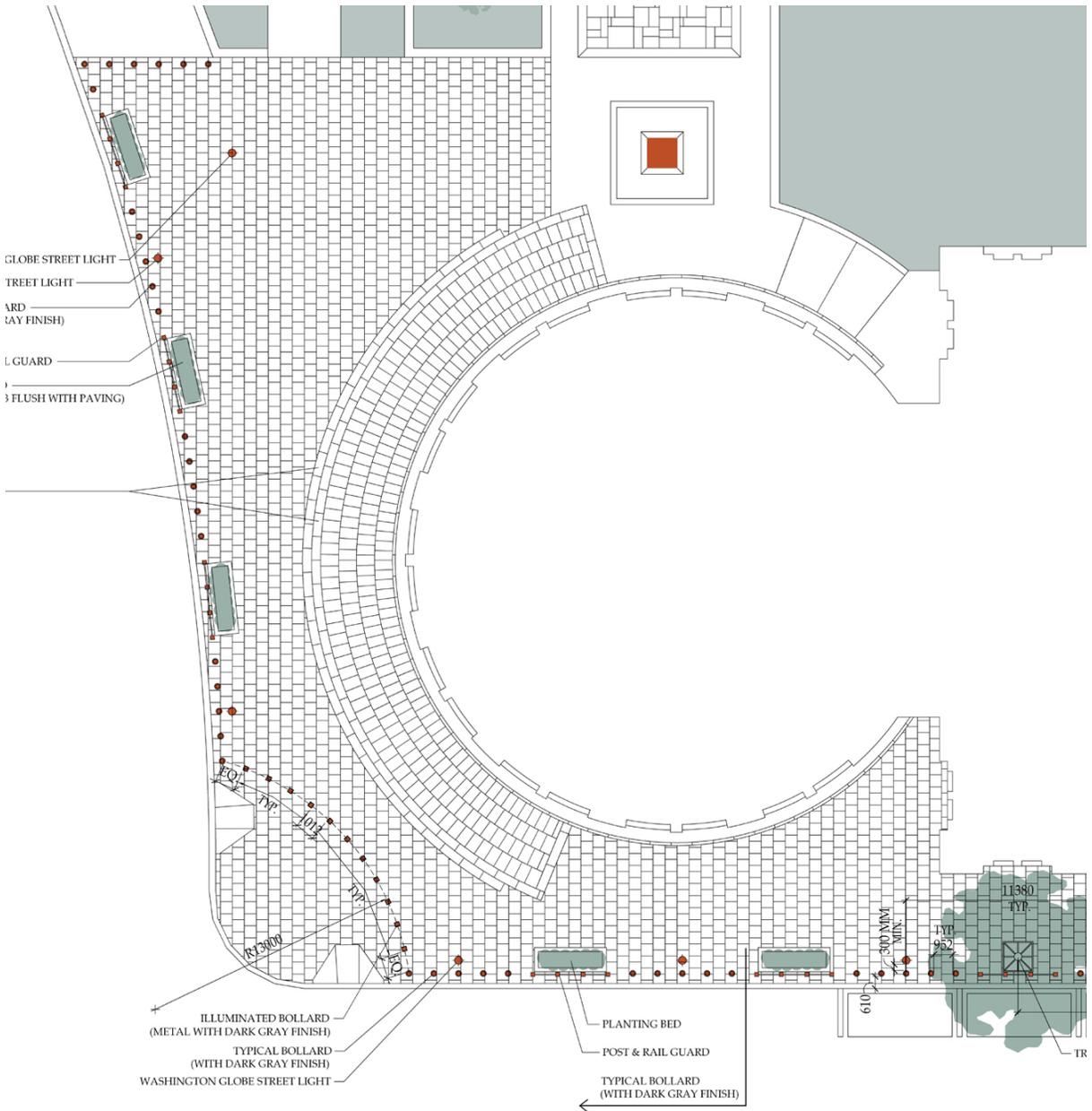
The applicant proposes to construct a line of bollards set back 24 inches from the curb line at the corner of Constitution Avenue, NW and 3rd Street, NW to provide setback and protection for the courthouse annex rotunda. The bollard line will extend the previously approved line of bollards along 3rd Street, NW. A permanent perimeter security solution for the adjoining main courthouse building to the west has not yet been developed. The proposed bollard line will abut the existing temporary security at the main courthouse. The proposed bollard line at the rotunda incorporates both plain and illuminated bollards in metal sleeves finished to match the Washington Globe street light fixtures used on the site. The finish of these bollards will also match the metal-sleeved bollards approved for 3rd Street, NW.

At five locations along the curb, post and rail fences will be used in lieu of bollards. The fences will abut planters set flush into the adjacent sidewalk. The planters will be utilized in lieu of street trees and will contain seasonally blooming plants that coordinate with plantings used at the main courthouse. The finish of the post and rail fences will match that of the bollards, creating a coordinated solution for this prominent corner. The bollard line will be pulled back from the corner itself to allow disabled persons to use the handicapped ramps located at each of the crosswalks. Illuminated bollards will be used along the corner.

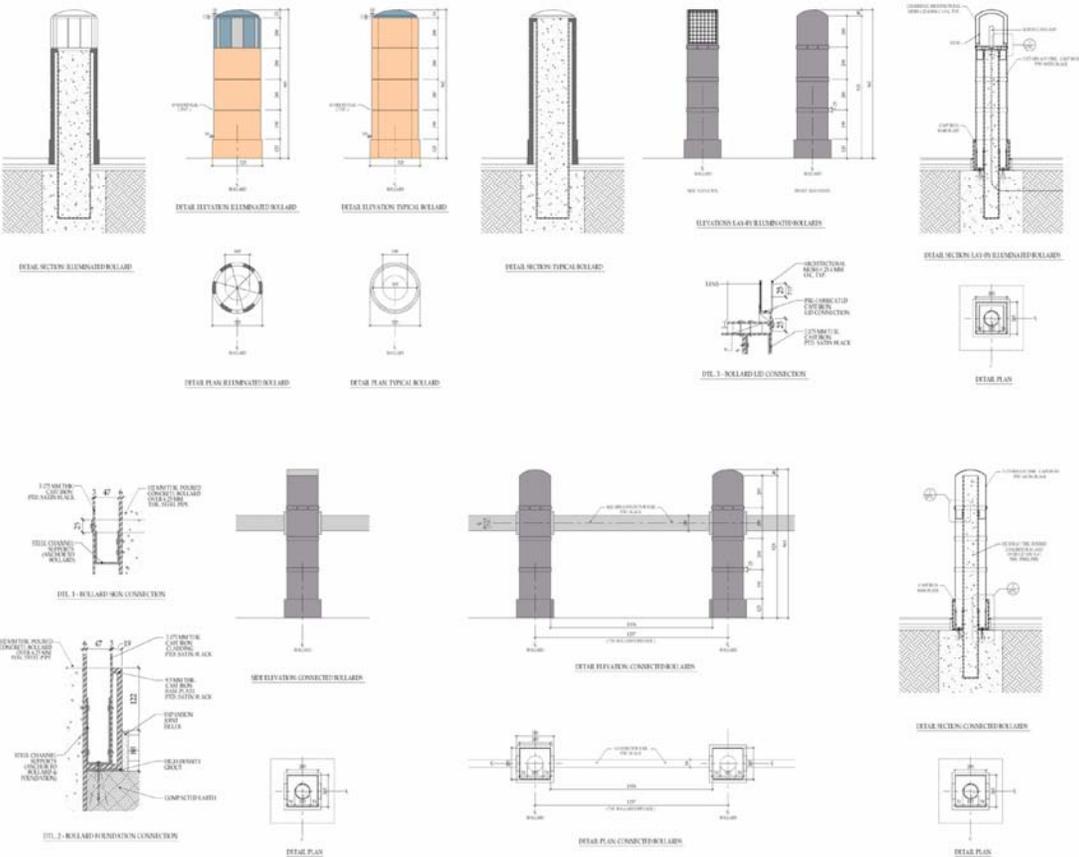
The perimeter security line has been relocated from the previous submission based on recommendations contained in an updated threat assessment, dated August 4, 2004. The revised threat assessment ranks the facility as “high” rather than “medium.” The revised threat assessment carries with it a greater stand-off distance requirement.



Proposed Perimeter Security Design at Rotunda: Perspective



Proposed Perimeter Security Design at Rotunda: Plan



Details of proposed bollard and post-and-rail types

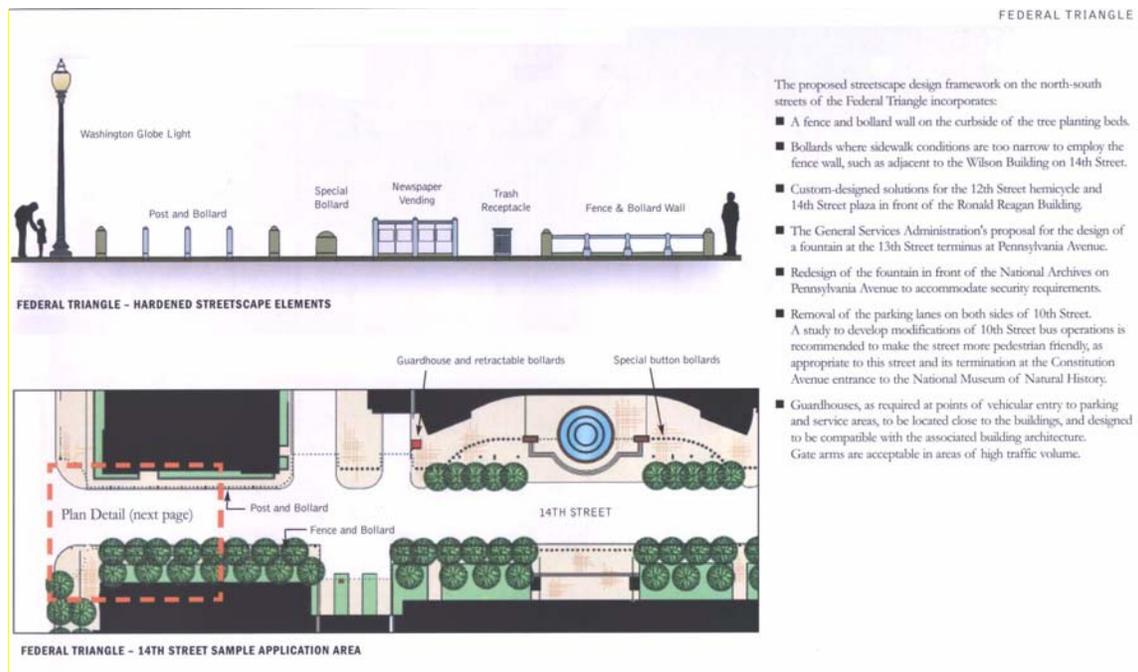
PROJECT ANALYSIS

Staff has concluded that the standoff distance in the current proposal is consistent with the revised threat assessment. Staff also has concluded that raised planters in the curb area would obstruct pedestrian movement, and that bollards and post and rail fences are therefore appropriate in this area. The proposed solution is consistent with that approved for the adjacent 3rd Street, NW façade while providing adequate room for pedestrian passage along the sidewalk. The planting beds will soften the appearance of the security elements while helping to blend the grounds of the Annex with the landscape of the courthouse complex as a whole. **Staff recommends that the Commission approve the proposed project.**

National Capital Urban Design and Security Plan

The applicant has worked at length with staff to develop a project that conforms to the guidelines and recommendations of the Commission’s Urban Design and Security Plan (UDSP). Although the Prettyman Courthouse annex lies within the area denoted by the UDSP as “Downtown,” its setting is more similar to the “Federal Triangle” zone. In fact the project site sits adjacent to the east end of the Federal Triangle zone, as defined in the UDSP. The UDSP recognizes the limitations imposed by narrow sidewalks in the zone and recommends fence and bollard solutions along those streets where sidewalks are too narrow to include other types of street furniture. Fence solutions are recommended to be utilized in front of planted areas, with bollards used in other locations. The UDSP depicts the incorporation of several complementary bollard types into a perimeter security scheme.

Staff concludes that the project design is consistent with the guidelines of the UDSP for the Federal Triangle zone.

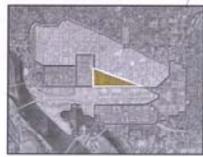


Design Framework

Streetscape designs for the Federal Triangle reflect the hierarchy of Pennsylvania Avenue, Constitution Avenue, and the north-south streets in this precinct. The designs distinguish the avenues from the streets. Design concepts respond to the historic site and architectural character while enhancing the pedestrian experience.

The Federal Triangle design concept incorporates a uniform streetscape design for the majority of the north-south streets. Specific design solutions are applied to the special conditions that exist on these streets, including: custom design of the hemicycle on 12th Street, the terminus of 13th Street, and the 14th Street entry plaza of the Ronald Reagan Building and International Trade Center.

Security components proposed for the Federal Triangle include several bollard designs, a street fence design, and modifications of existing plinths and retaining walls. The typical north-south streetscape design incorporates a fence and bollard wall located on the curbside of the existing tree planting beds (typically two trees in length). Where breaks in this element exceed security requirements, a bollard or other hardened streetscape component is incorporated. While not proposed as a component of this security barrier, hardening of the street light poles is also an option. Bollards are used on corners and where the sidewalk is too narrow to incorporate street trees and the associated fence wall.

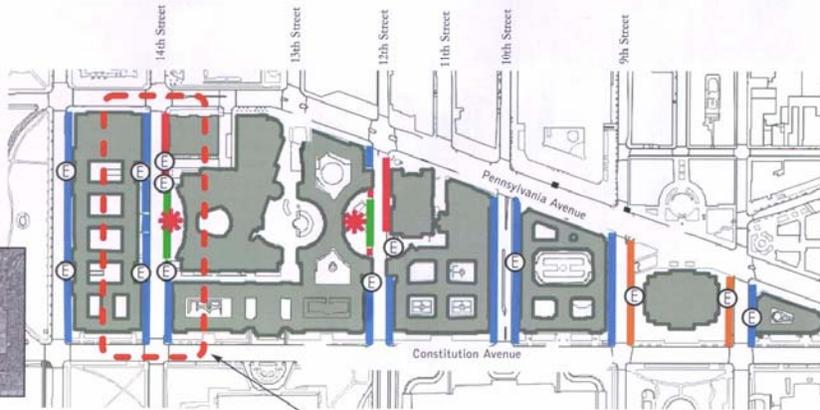
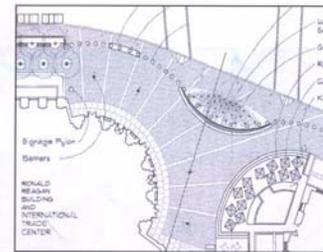


FEDERAL TRIANGLE KEY PLAN

LEGEND

- █ Post and Bollard
- █ Fence and Bollard
- █ Plinth Wall
- █ Special Bollard
- E Vehicle Entrance
- ✱ Special Projects
- Sample Application Area

The Plan endorses the General Services Administration's proposal for the design of a fountain at the 13th Street terminus at Pennsylvania Avenue.



Approved Scheme for 3rd Street, NW and C Street, NW

Bollards

All of the bollards used in the project are approximately 38 inches high, spaced four feet on center, and set back 24 inches from the face of the curb. The set back conforms to regulations imposed by the District Department of Transportation (DDOT), and the four foot spacing between bollards allows for easy access by pedestrians. The bollard height is consistent with other submissions for perimeter security bollards that have been reviewed by the Commission. The various decorative finishes utilized on the bollard exteriors are designed to complement the building architecture and the required Washington Globe street lights. Illuminated bollards are utilized both to enhance the prominent rotunda on Constitution Avenue and to provide additional lighting at the 3rd Street entrance, and to draw attention to the entrance along the building's façade. Post and rail elements used in front of street trees along 3rd Street serve to break up the bollard line, protect the trees from impact, and differentiate these landscape elements from the surrounding hardscape.

Building Entrance

Previous Commission comments focused on the fact that the 3rd Street entrance to the Courthouse Annex did not stand out visually along the building's 3rd Street façade. The Commission requested additional architectural features or other means to emphasize the entrance. The project employs a change in bollard appearance at the building entrance, so that it is visually obvious along the street that something different is happening at this location. The

dark color of the bollards against the light colored finish of the building creates a visual “opening” in the bollard line, indicating that this is a place to pass through the perimeter security elements. Additionally, these bollards are illuminated at night, providing even greater focus at the building entrance.

Loading Dock

At the C Street loading dock and parking garage entrance, the applicant proposes to install retractable stainless steel bollards. These bollards are a logical choice for the function of these two areas; the bollards will sit within the overall bollard line.

Connection to Prettyman Courthouse Perimeter Security

The bollard line employed around the Prettyman Courthouse Annex will abut the existing temporary perimeter security system in use at the adjoining Courthouse building. GSA is in the process of completing a threat assessment for the existing Courthouse and will submit a permanent perimeter security plan for the existing Courthouse at a later date.

Street Trees

The applicant has designed a special post and rail element for use in front of the eight street trees that line the 3rd Street side of the building. The post and rail elements match the finish of the bollards in front of the 3rd Street building entrance as well as that of the Washington Globe street lights. The vertical posts are identical in size and shape to the entry bollards. The horizontal rail complements the vertical post design and serves to prohibit movement from the street to the sidewalk at this location. When viewed along the street from a distance, these elements appear as voids in the bollard line because of their dark color, helping to break up the appearance of the overall perimeter security design. The bollard line appears to be punctuated by the trees.

Street Light Fixtures

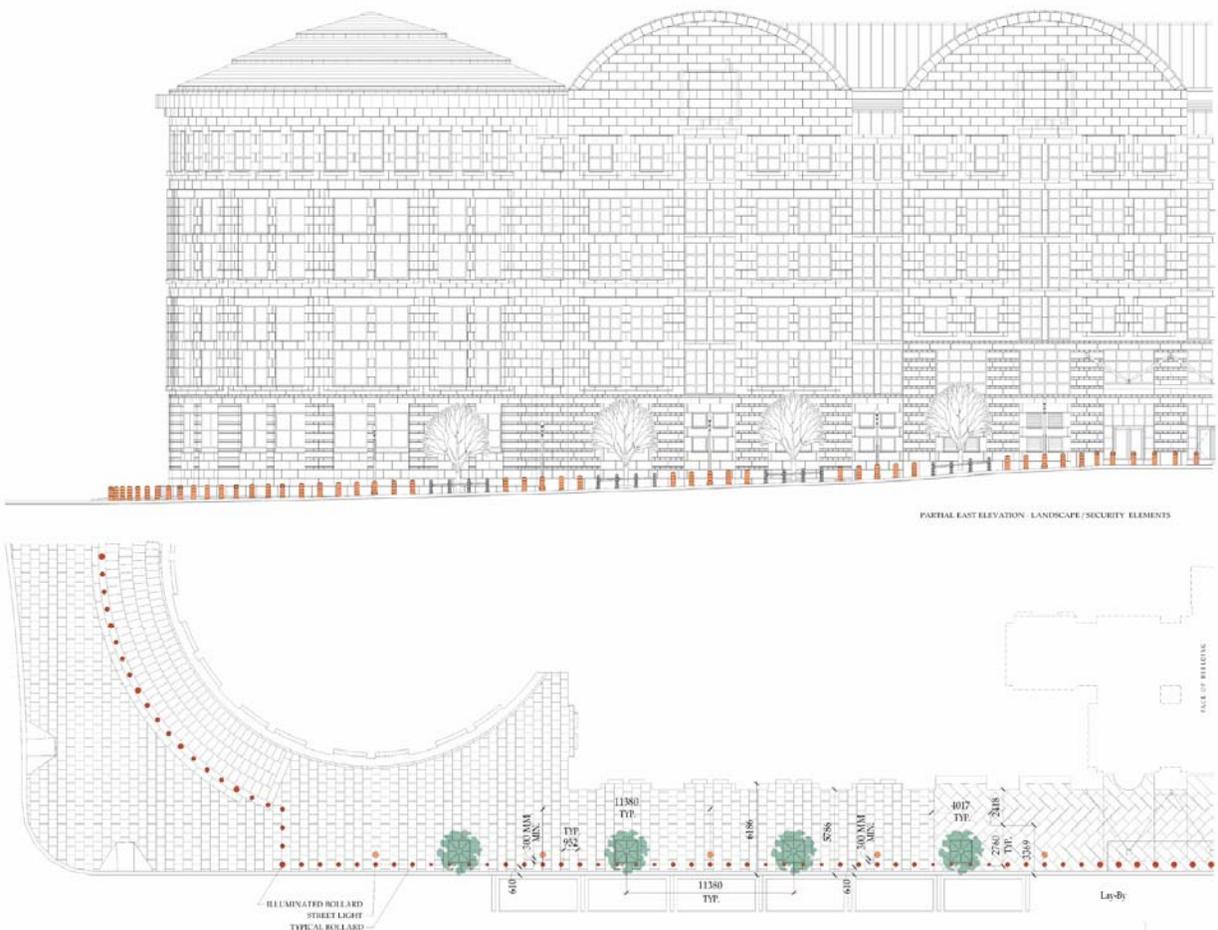
Standard Washington Globe street lights will be installed along the sidewalk in the vicinity of the Courthouse Annex. Originally, the applicant placed these street lights within the bollard line, hardening them as part of the perimeter security design. The incorporation of streetscape elements such as street lights is recommended by the Urban Design and Security Plan. Upon further consideration of the visual impact of incorporating these fixtures into the bollard line, the applicant has decided to move them back behind the bollards and place them in between the street trees. Because the project has evolved to include three different types of bollard elements along 3rd Street, the applicant and staff decided that incorporation of the street lights into the bollard line resulted in visual clutter.

Corner Conditions

The project includes perimeter security elements at two street corners. These are the northwest corner of 3rd Street, NW and Constitution Avenue, NW and the southwest corner of 3rd Street, NW and C Street, NW. The placement of bollards at these two locations is responsive to the specific conditions at each corner location. At the corner of 3rd Street and C Street, the bollard

line is pulled back behind the wheelchair ramp at that location. The space created on the far side of the bollard line may not allow adequate room for pedestrians waiting to cross the intersection. The bollards should be pulled back at this location.

At the corner of 3rd Street, NW and Constitution Avenue, NW, the bollard line becomes integral to the architecture of the building rotunda. This condition allows for plenty of room for pedestrians to gather near the corner and incorporates the perimeter security elements into the overall architectural design of the project, a goal of the Urban Design and Security Plan.



March 2004 Proposal: Corner Condition at 3rd Street, NW and Constitution Avenue, NW

Threat Assessment

The applicant has provided a threat assessment outlining potential threats and indicating the facility's assigned threat level. The threat assessment supports the type and placement of the proposed perimeter security elements for the rotunda of the courthouse annex.

PROJECT CONFORMANCE

Federal Capital Improvements Program

The Prettyman Courthouse Annex perimeter security project is part of the E. Barrett Prettyman U.S. Courthouse Annex project, included in the Federal Capital Improvements Plan for Fiscal Years 1999-2003, adopted by the Commission at its meeting on July 9, 1998.

National Environmental Policy Act

GSA has determined that the project qualifies as a categorical exclusion under its National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) compliance procedures at GSA Order PBS 1095.4C and the GSA NEPA Compliance Guide.

National Historic Preservation Act

The General Services Administration (GSA) consulted with the D.C. State Historic Preservation Office and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation from 1998 through 2001 on the design of the Prettyman Courthouse. The bollard line was shown on the final set of drawings on which the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) was based. The consultation and the stipulations of the MOA focused primarily on the proposed interior alterations to the historic courthouse, the opening of the east wall of the building, the design and footprint of the addition, and the alterations to the setting. GSA has completed its Section 106 responsibilities.

Draft Judiciary Square Master Plan

The site for the subject project lies within the overall study area for the draft Judiciary Square Master Plan dated June 6, 2003; however, it lies outside of the master plan site area. Master plan recommendations will be limited to the master plan site area. The plan recognizes that the Prettyman Courthouse annex is currently under construction, and does not indicate that the submitted perimeter security project is inconsistent with the overall master plan.

Judiciary Square Transportation and Security Study

The ongoing District Department of Transportation (DDOT) Transportation and Security Study for Judiciary Square will examine transportation-related security concerns of the Judiciary Square area's various tenants. The Study will focus on issues such as traffic congestion, loading operations and parking to determine the impact that such activities have on the security of various buildings in the area. The Prettyman Courthouse and Courthouse annex are bounded on the north by C Street, NW, which has been identified as a major area of traffic congestion in Judiciary Square. Loading and parking operations at the Courthouse Annex should be coordinated with the recommendations of this study.

Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital

The proposal is not inconsistent with the Federal Elements of the Comprehensive Plan.

CONSULTATION

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.

Commission of Fine Arts

The Commission of Fine Arts (CFA) reviewed and approved the final plans for this project at its May 18, 2000 meeting; however, the design of the perimeter security elements has been modified since that time. At their July 15, 2004 meeting, CFA approved the modified design for the project represented herein, citing their desire for the perimeter security elements at the rotunda to be all of one color, matching the finish of the Washington Globe streetlight fixtures.

District Department of Transportation

The District Department of Transportation (DDOT) requires that entities desiring to place perimeter security elements in public space comply with DDOT's Public Space Security Policy and obtain a public space permit. The removal or reassignment of on-street public parking spaces along the 3rd Street side of the Courthouse annex will also need to be coordinated with DDOT.