

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

J. McIntyre

NCPC File No. 6552



NEW SAINT ELIZABETHS HOSPITAL BUILDING

Saint Elizabeths East Campus,
(Parcel 234, Lot 38)
2700 Martin Luther King Jr. Avenue, SE
Washington, DC

Submission by the District of Columbia Department of Mental Health

December 22, 2004

Abstract

The District of Columbia Department of Mental Health (DMH) proposes to construct a new 293-bed state-of-the-art mental health facility for Saint Elizabeths Hospital on the eastern portion of the Saint Elizabeths campus in Southeast Washington, DC. The 346,000-gross-square-foot facility will have three interconnected wings serving secure, non-secure and shared programmatic functions.

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 new Saint Elizabeths Hospital in Southeast Washington, DC.

Makes a related recommendation to the District of Columbia Office of Planning to submit the Saint Elizabeths framework plan for Commission review before additional projects at Saint Elizabeths are submitted for Commission action. The framework plan should include parking requirements that encourage transit use and reduce the overall amount of surface parking area.

* * *

PROJECT SUMMARY

Site Description

The project is located on the eastern portion of the historic Saint Elizabeths Campus in the southeast quadrant of Washington DC. The 336-acre campus has historically been under the ownership of the federal government and operated by the District of Columbia Department of Health and Human Services, but the 173-acre eastern campus was transferred to the District of Columbia government on October 1, 1987. The site is located in Ward 8.

The proposed new Saint Elizabeths Hospital building will be located on approximately 54.19 acres of land in the southern part of the eastern campus. The project site is accessed from Martin Luther King Jr. Avenue, SE near Pecan Street, SE and is also accessible from Alabama Avenue, SE to the south. In addition to the east and west Saint Elizabeths campuses, the site is bounded by Suitland Parkway to the north and Congress Heights, Douglass and Shipley Terrace neighborhoods. The site is irregular in shape and has substantial vacant and open areas together with the existing John Howard Forensic Pavilion and adjacent surface parking lot. This portion of Saint Elizabeths campus was developed in the early twentieth century and much of the natural vegetation was cleared for the construction for various buildings and streets. An existing secured ball field will remain as part of the project.



Aerial View of Saint Elizabeths East & West Campuses

Background

The National Capital Planning Commission, at its June 5, 2003 meeting, approved the proposed First Stage Planned Unit Development and amendment to the Zoning Map of the District of Columbia for the new Saint Elizabeths Hospital. The Commission also made the following recommendations for the second stage PUD Zoning Commission review:

- The Zoning Commission requires an extensive landscape plan which will visually enhance the site and specifically soften the proposed parking area while providing screening of the surface lot from existing and future surrounding developments.
- The Zoning Commission encourages the Department of Mental Health to minimize the amount of surface parking and take into account the existing and future public transportation opportunities on the Saint Elizabeths campus. Further, the Commission recommends that the Zoning Commission require the District of Columbia Department of Mental Health to submit a detailed Transportation Management Plan that will establish programs and policies which will reduce the need for vehicular parking spaces and will provide justification for the vehicular spaces being proposed.
- The second phase PUD will not be acted upon by the Zoning Commission until a final Saint Elizabeths framework plan document is completed so that the details of the design and planning of the new Saint Elizabeths Hospital can be assessed in light of the overall planning for the Saint Elizabeths Campus.

Staff further recommended that the Commission:

- Remind the District of Columbia Department of Mental Health that this project must be submitted to the National Capital Planning Commission for review under Section 5 of the National Capital Planning Act once the Saint Elizabeths Historic Preservation MOA is satisfied. It is further recommended that this submission be done concurrent with the second stage PUD Zoning Commission referral.

The District of Columbia Zoning Commission approved the first stage PUD on November 28, 2003.

NCPC approved the second stage PUD on December 2, 2004, and made the following comments in forwarding its approval to the Zoning Commission:

- That the District of Columbia Department of Mental Health minimize the amount of surface parking and take into account the existing and future public transportation serving the Saint Elizabeths campus.
- That the District of Columbia Department of Mental Health prepare and implement a detailed Transportation Management Plan (TMP). The TMP will establish programs and policies that reduce the demand for vehicular parking spaces and single-occupant vehicle parking.

NCPC also noted that the District of Columbia Office of Planning was required to submit the Saint Elizabeths framework plan for Commission review.

Proposal

The proposed 293 bed Saint Elizabeths Hospital will be a state-of-the-art mental health facility to serve the District's mental health needs for both non-secure and secure patients. It will incorporate the newest ideas and innovations in mental health care design to serve patients, caregivers, employees and visitors. The building, approximately 346,000 gross square feet, will have three interconnected wings serving secure, non-secure and shared programmatic functions. The building massing varies in height between one and two stories and in flat and sloped roof forms. The building will be clad primarily in masonry with precast concrete copings and punched window openings and with patinated copper sheathing, and limited precast concrete panels, granite details, and aluminum curtain wall used to distinguish special building functions and denote entry points.

The applicant proposes to expand the existing 49.4 acre site by 5.19 acres to accommodate an access roadway from Alabama Avenue, SE up to the new hospital, a two man gatehouse for vehicles and checkpoint for pedestrians coming from the Metro Station, and open space Alabama Avenue, SE. The revised site area will be 54.19 acres.

The existing five-story John Howard Forensic Pavilion (JHFP) will be demolished and replaced by the new Saint Elizabeths Hospital. The existing hospital has experienced significant deterioration over time and the aim is to construct a new facility that will absorb the current occupants in JHFP.

The site plan shows the primary vehicular entrance to the hospital through the existing entry point at Alabama Avenue, SE. An internal roadway will lead to the hospital facility and connect to the building's main entrance drop off and pick up area. Continuing to the northeast, the road will connect to several gentle curved parking bays with a total of 330 parking spaces, based upon DMH's parking demand analysis. New trees and landscape materials are designed to help soften and screen the parking areas as well as to direct vehicles and pedestrians to building drop-off and entry points. The building loading and service area will have a separate entrance from the parking area. A new pedestrian path, approximately one quarter of a mile in length, will connect the Congress Heights Metro Station to the hospital facility. The secured building wing will be surrounded by perimeter fencing and wall elements.

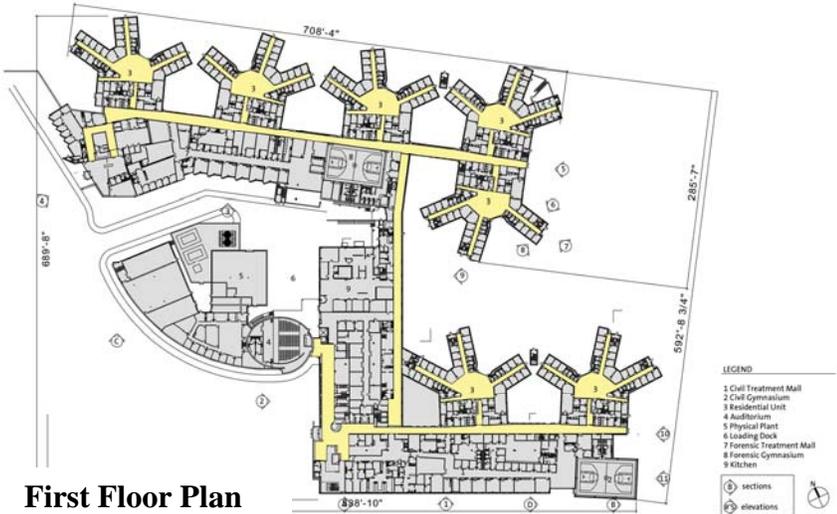


Site Plan

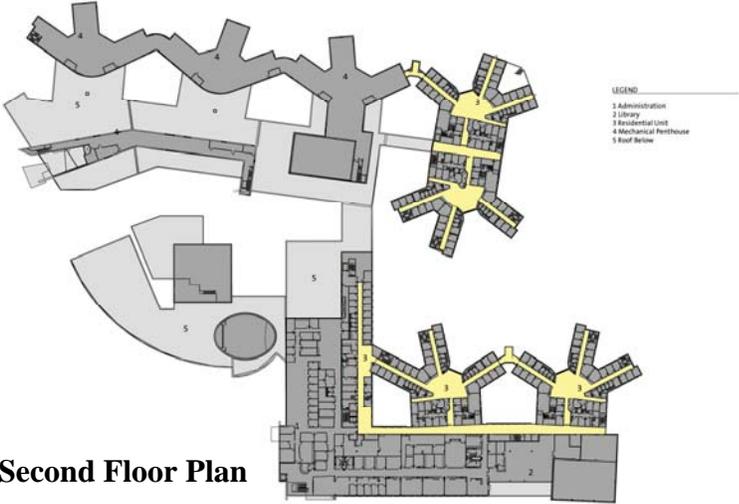
1. Hospital Entry; 2. Secure Entry; 3. Non-secure Units & Treatment; 4. Shared Services; 5. Auditorium; 6. Service Yard; 7. Engineering & Mechanical; 8. Secure Units & Treatment; 9. Secure Yard; 10. Parking; 11. Existing ct.6 & ct 7; 12. Existing RMB Building; 13. Gatehouse; 14. Congress Heights Metro Station



Aerial View of Model



First Floor Plan



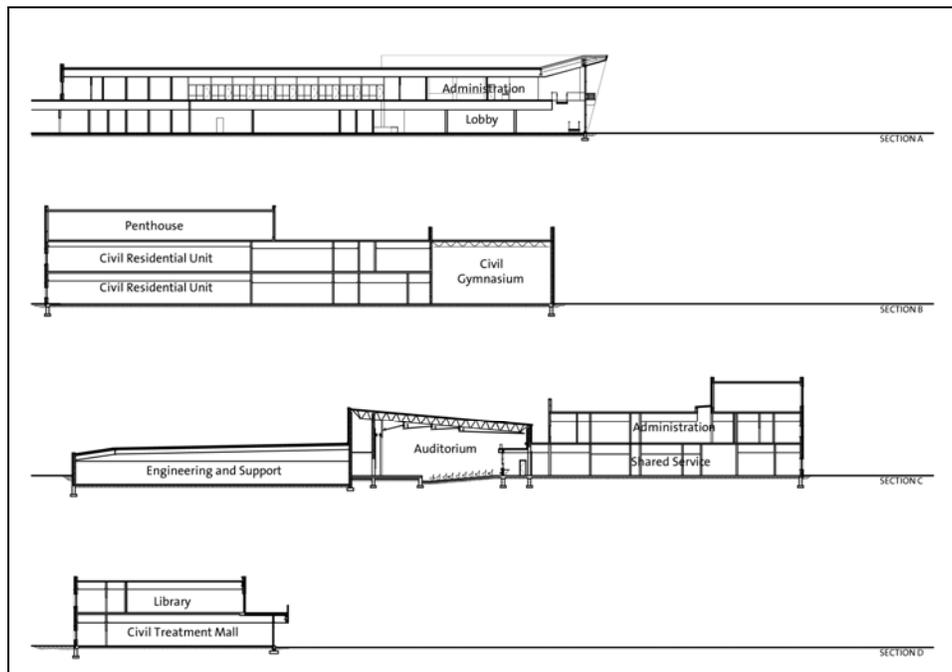
Second Floor Plan



Perspective View – Hospital Entrance



Perspective View – Secure Wing Entrance



Building Sections

PROJECT ANALYSIS

Staff commends the applicant for the inclusion of a green roof over a portion of the planned hospital facility. This innovative design technique will help reduce site run-off and contribute to improved area water quality. Staff also commends DMH for the extensive landscape plan which will visually enhance the parking area and help screen it from the existing and future surrounding developments.

Further reduction in the number of parking space (as noted below in the Parking Ratio Demand/Transportation Management Plan) and in the amount of impervious surface will provide additional opportunities for landscape design. Given the project's close proximity to Metrorail, the applicant should minimize the amount of parking provided and encourage staff to utilize transit to access the new building. The applicant should develop a detailed Transportation Management Plan (TMP) that outlines a comprehensive strategy geared toward reducing the number of employees commuting to work in single-occupant automobiles. Through such a strategy, the hospital can further contribute to improving environmental quality through the reduction in traffic congestion and associated air quality improvements, as well as reducing polluted run-off on paved areas near the hospital and along roadways leading to it.

The District of Columbia Office of Planning (DCOP) is producing an overall framework plan for the east campus of the Saint Elizabeths complex. This plan has not yet been submitted to the Commission for review. DCOP staff members have indicated to NCPC staff that the framework plan will include the current Saint Elizabeths hospital project as shown herein. The framework plan will provide an opportunity to set the overall direction for parking policy within the east campus as a whole.

Federal Interest Evaluation

An identified federal interest in this proposed Zoning Commission action is the historic Saint Elizabeths Campus. This campus is a designated National Historic Landmark, which is the subject of a framework plan. An additional federal interest is Suitland Parkway, a federal parkway under the jurisdiction of the National Park Service.

It is staff's position that this project would not adversely affect the Saint Elizabeths campus or Suitland Parkway. This action is not introducing a new use to the campus, as the mental health facility has been operating on the property from its inception. Furthermore, the existing John Howard Pavilion is obsolete in its condition and function and its removal and replacement with the proposed new hospital will not be a detriment to the historic campus. Furthermore, this proposed facility is on the southern part of the eastern campus and is located at such a distance as to not be visible from Suitland Parkway

The project does not meet the parking ratio policy established in the Transportation element of the *Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital*.

Modifications to the Stage I PUD

The following modifications were made to the project following District of Columbia Zoning Commission approval of the project's first stage PUD application in response to the Zoning Commission and recommendations to meet DMH programmatic needs:

- The redesign of the secure building wing to reduce its impact on the U.S. Navy radio buildings and allow placement of the District of Columbia antenna tower outside the secured perimeter.
- The relocation of mechanical and electrical rooms from the basement to an on-grade location adjacent to the service yard.
- The building height increased by approximately two feet to minimize site re-grading and reduce the amount of retaining walls.
- The penthouse areas were reduced and reconfigured.
- The addition of sustainable design green roofs, approximately 27,000 square feet.
- The addition of a storm water management (SWM) pond in the ravine adjacent to the Metro Station SWM pond. This eliminated significant requirements to hold subsurface storm water.
- The addition of a building wing to house shared building and public functions.
- The roadway and parking area layout were reconfigured adjacent to the building.

Parking Demand Analysis and Transportation Management Plan (TMP)

In earlier submission materials, DMH noted that the hospital employees will include administration/support staff and nursing/patient care staff, accounting for approximately 80% of the total number of employees. The nursing/patient care staff works seven days a week in three shifts which overlap with one another. Several years ago, DMH conducted a parking survey. Based on 540 patient beds there were 554 parking spaces (132 for administration and 423 for nursing/patient care) and approximately 1,100 employees. The parking demand ratio for the hospital calculated 1 parking space per .078 patient beds for the nursing/patient care employees.

DHM has provided the following updated information describing the project's parking requirements. The administration employee count will remain the same and require 132 parking spaces. Since the facility will be reduced to 293 patient beds this will lower the nursing/patient care demand to approximately 230 parking spaces. The 363 parking count subtotal is reduced by 9% (approximately 36 parking spaces) to factor in the adjacent Metro Station. The total parking count required in this scenario is 326 parking spaces. However, DMH is planning to design for a total of 339 parking spaces (13 spaces over the total noted above).

Staff has analyzed the parking demand information provided by DMH and has determined that the design appears to be approximately 1 parking space for every 1.77 employee during the peak shift overlap. The Transportation Element of the *Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital: Federal Elements*, establishes parking ratios for federal projects located outside of the Central Employment Area, but within the Historic District of Columbia boundaries, and states they should not exceed one space for every four employees. The project parking supply exceeds this policy by more than fifty percent. Staff recommends that the DMH lower their total parking count to meet this policy and to account for the proximity of the Metro Station and existing and future public transportation service.

Staff notes that DMH has not minimized the surface parking nor have they included a detailed Transportation Management Plan (TMP), as requested by the Commission during their review of prior zoning actions for this project. The TMP would establish programs and policies to reduce the need for vehicular parking spaces and would provide justification for the vehicular spaces being proposed analysis.

The District of Columbia may not be required to meet federal parking ratios, however staff recommends that the District of Columbia Office of Planning include parking requirements, that will encourage transit use and reduce the amount of surface parking area, in the Saint Elizabeths Framework Plan.

PROJECT CONFORMANCE

Master Plan

At the time of this report, the District Office of Planning (DCOP) informed NCPC that a draft Saint Elizabeths Framework Plan has just been completed. DCOP is making arrangements to meet with NCPC staff to review the draft plan. DCOP noted that the framework plan depicts the project as shown in this report.

Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital

Staff has determined that the PUD is consistent with the *Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital*, in particular the Federal Workplace Elements. The project is located adjacent to a Metro Station. The facility will provide employment and business opportunities for the local community. Staff notes that the project is not consistent with the transportation element, as noted earlier.

National Historic Preservation Act

When the East Campus of Saint Elizabeths was transferred from the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to the District of Columbia (DC) in 1987, HHS, DC, the District of Columbia Historic Preservation Office (DCSHPO), and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP) signed a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA). The MOA recognized that the transfer of Saint Elizabeths would have an effect on the historic campus and outlined future steps for preserving, rehabilitating and retaining its contributing historic, archaeological and landscape resources.

The MOA requires the submission of plans to the DCSHPO and ACHP for review and approval prior to implementation. DMH has coordinated the new hospital project in order to satisfy the terms of the MOA. The DCSHPO finds the project meets the objectives of the MOA and does not adversely affect nearby historic properties.

National Environmental Policy Act

As a District of Columbia agency project, outside of the central area of the District on non-federal property, the National Environmental Policy Act does not apply to the proposed construction.

The District of Columbia has reviewed the action and determined that it qualifies as an exempted action in accordance with the implementing rules of the District of Columbia Environmental Policy Act of 1989. The District of Columbia Department of Mental Health (DMH) is working with the District of Columbia Department of Health (DOH) on finalizing the Environmental Impact Screening Form. DMH anticipates that the document will be finished for DOH within the next month. As the action is an activity outside of the Central Area, which has been concurrently defined by the Commission and Council to include the Shaw School and Downtown Urban Renewal Areas, the action is not subject to final federal approval as defined under Commission environmental procedures. Nevertheless, staff reviewed the action for extraordinary circumstances as sanctioned by NEPA but finds no significant issues that would alter the determination of exemption.

- The project, as submitted, would not generate major impacts on cultural resources.
- The proposed exterior improvements will not generate significant adverse impacts on the natural environment.
- No significant noise impacts are anticipated because all construction activities will comply with local noise ordinance restrictions as required by the construction permitting process of the District of Columbia.

CONSULTATION

Coordinating Committee

The Coordinating Committee reviewed the proposal on December 8, 2004. The Committee forwarded the proposal to the Commission with the statement that the project has been coordinated with all agencies represented. The participating agencies were: NCPC, the District of Columbia Office of Planning, the General Services Administration and the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority.

District of Columbia Office of Planning

On April 30, 2004 the District of Columbia Office of Planning (DCOP) issued a report on a second stage Planned Unit Development (PUD) for this project and recommended that the Zoning Commission set down the proposed second stage PUD. DCOP noted the following:

- The project will allow the DMH to fulfill its responsibility of meeting the treatment needs of mentally ill patients in a hospital whose design and setting is important to its function.

- The second stage PUD provides more detailed plans that further reduce the impact on the natural environment.

Advisory Neighborhood Commission 8C

On October 12, 2004 the Advisory Neighborhood Commission 8C (ANC-8C) met with DMH to negotiate a MOA. The following is a summary of the MOA:

DMH will:

- Develop the project in partnership with the community
- Provide comprehensive community outreach and information for the Ward 8 community
- Establish employment opportunities for Ward 8 residents
- Develop and implement a reporting plan for compliance of the project

ANC-8C will:

- Work with DMH to develop and implement a comprehensive community outreach strategy
- Provide recommendations for proactive programs for employment opportunities to Ward 8 residents
- Assist DMH in establishing a process to ensure that contracting opportunities are available to Ward 8 residents
- Assist DMH in developing and implementing internship and training programs targeted for Ward 8 residents
- Participate in monitoring compliance on the development of the project

On October 13, 2004, ANC-8C held a Special Executive Committee Meeting, signed the MOA, and voted to support this zoning proposal.

Commission of Fine Arts (CFA)

CFA approved a revised concept for the new Saint Elizabeths Hospital on January 15, 2004. DMH is planning to submit the project for final CFA approval at their January 25, 2005 meeting.