

# STAFF RECOMMENDATION

E. Keller

NCPC File No. 6546



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**FORT LESLEY J. McNAIR,**  
NATIONAL DEFENSE UNIVERSITY EXPANSION, PHASE II-  
LINCOLN HALL  
4<sup>th</sup> and P Streets, SW  
Washington, D.C.

Submitted by the Department of the Army

October 27, 2005

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## Abstract

The Department of the Army has submitted final site and building plans for a new structure at the National Defense University (NDU) located at Fort McNair in Washington, DC. The Commission reviewed the preliminary site and building plans in February 2005. The new building, called Lincoln Hall, encompasses 250,900 gross square feet as a major free standing structure, north of the existing Marshall Hall, along 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue within Fort McNair. The facility is to provide educational classroom space and meeting and conference space for the NDU.

## Commission Action Requested by Applicant

Approval of final site and building plans pursuant to 40 U.S.C. § 8722(d) and Section 5 of the National Capital Planning Act of (40 U.S.C. § 8722(b)(1)).

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## Executive Director's Recommendation

The Commission:

**Approves** the final site and building plans for the National Defense University Lincoln Hall, as shown on NCPC Map File No 24.40(38.00)-41700.

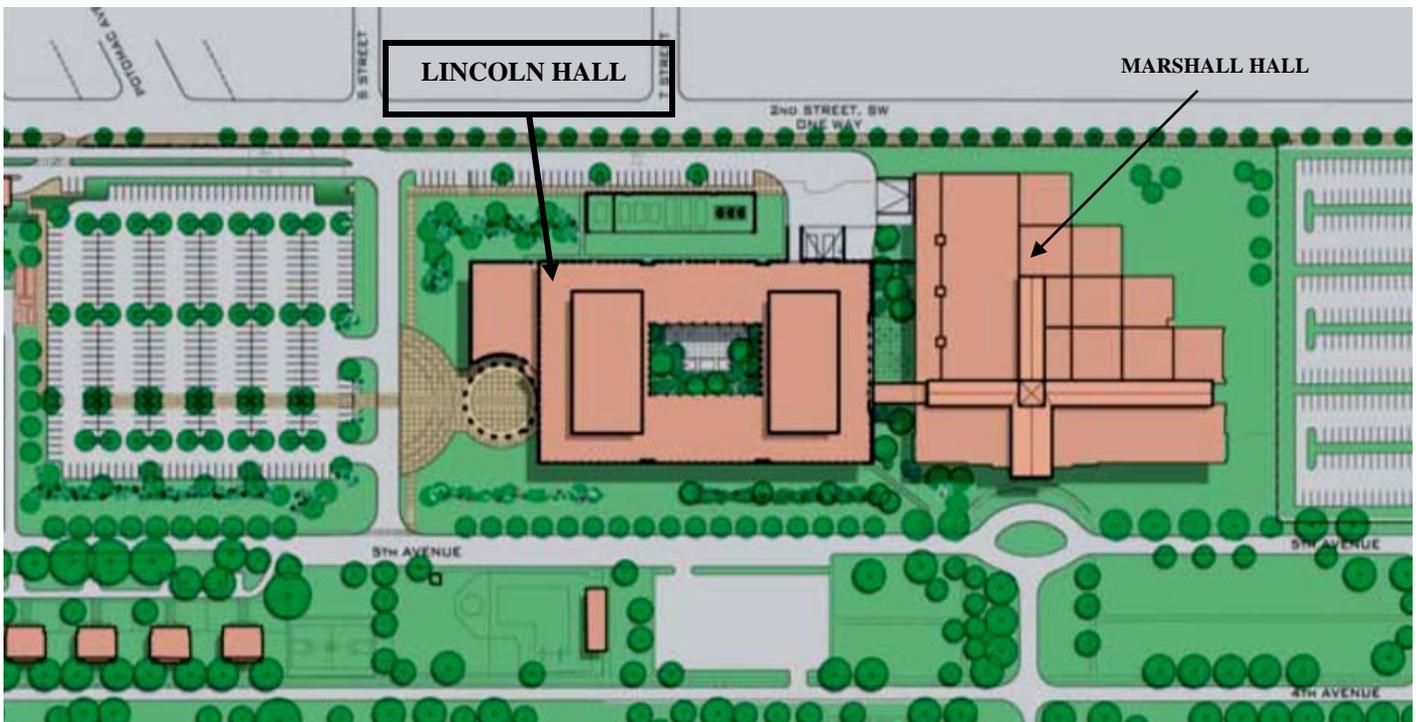
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## PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Army has submitted final site and building plans for Lincoln Hall, at the NDU. The building, consisting of 250,900 gross square feet of space, would serve as a major free standing structure north of the existing Marshall Hall complex at 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue within Fort McNair. The building would reflect current design themes of Marshall Hall and conform to the Installation Design Guidelines of the Fort McNair Master Plan. The final facility design provides educational classroom space and conference/meeting space for the NDU. Approximately 335 parking spaces are identified in the proposal.

### Site

The project location conforms to the location identified in the Subarea master plan for the NDU Expansion reviewed and approved by the Commission. Fort McNair is located in the southwest section of the District of Columbia and is bounded on the north by P Street, SW on the south by the confluence of the Anacostia River and the Washington Channel of the Potomac River, on the east by 2<sup>nd</sup> Street, SW, and on the west by the Washington Channel. Fort McNair is designated in the L'Enfant Plan as a military facility and one of the 16 original focal points of the plan. In 1903 the post was redesigned by the renowned architectural firm of McKim, Mead, and White into the Beaux-Arts campus setting that is visible today with its strong emphasis on building patterns.



**FINAL LINCOLN HALL SITE PLAN**

## Background

The final submission responds to the Commission's comments of February 2005 about the proposed building. At that time, the Commission approved the preliminary site and building plans and the final building foundation plans for the National Defense University Lincoln Hall, as shown within NCPC Map File No 24.50(38.00)-41533.

The Commission excepted from approval the concept sketch submitted for the new east gate, and requested that the Army continue to develop the plan for this element in a way that reflects an entrance design for post visitors that also provides a Potomac Avenue viewshed focal point, and that also would preserve the streetwall along 2nd Street and accommodate the Anacostia Waterfront Initiative plan for the Riverwalk.

Finally, the Commission reminded the Department of the Army to maintain some form of demarcation of the existing brick wall along 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue inside the Fort in the site design, agreed to in the concept review, in consultation with the District of Columbia State Historic Preservation Officer.

## Proposal

The final building plans maintain the development of a large three level brick structure for NDU operations which is configured to provide three basic goals for the building. These are:

- Create three new campus spaces; a main entry focal space and ceremonial area; central courtyard; and shared atrium between Marshall Hall and the new building
- Create a hierarchy of circulation and way finding
- Create flexible program space for both conferencing and educational purposes

The new construction contains classrooms, a formal auditorium, conference meeting rooms, administrative functions, dining facilities, interior courtyard, and study areas. Other final design aspects include:

- The exterior finishes of Lincoln Hall would harmonize with the finishes existing on both Marshall Hall and Eisenhower Hall at the southern portion of the campus.
- A monumental/open air entrance to the building with grand scale
- Rusticated base at all façade walls
- Laminated clear glass for window areas
- Cast stone belt course
- Placement of a central organizing corridor that connects to Marshall Hall.

Lincoln Hall will feature brick matching the major existing post buildings and fixed window openings are proposed to provide light. Larger expanses of glass will be placed at the ends of all main corridors and along outside walls to minimize building mass. The structure's windows maintain the same width as those in Marshall Hall.

The north entrance plaza and circular entrance final design also provides a symbolic reference to military cadence, rhythm, and order of tradition. It presents an entry that serves both the

conference functions and educational activity areas. The north entry circular “drum” also fully defines a ceremonial space that provides an opportunity for features such as inscribed stone memorializing, banners, and flag displays. The location will facilitate occasions for award ceremonies, a venue for press conferences, and a welcoming space for visiting dignitaries and the President that will be visibly situated near the new east entrance to the fort.

In the final submission, the entry portal has been modified to receive a glass and steel canopy that encloses the top portion of the space. The transparent canopy is not visible from outside the building, but becomes apparent as one enters through the portals into the ceremonial space. The intent of the canopy is to make the ceremonial space weatherized and available during more months of the year for large functions protecting any displays and temporary event items.

The canopy itself is a low profile overlapping glass and steel curving structure that functions with the use of a compression ring and king-pin post. This unique engineering solution allowed a shallow and very narrow framing structure for the design that maximizes the lightness and delicacy of the overhead canopy.

The second modification to the building design involves the establishment of two necessary equipment penthouses at the roof of Lincoln Hall. Final design parameters of the building’s HVAC system determined the need for larger air/fan systems, which also necessitated revisions to the distribution configurations and the provision for additional HVAC equipment. Design factors required this equipment to be centrally located and be divided, thus the need to proceed with two locations. The final mechanical equipment dimensions did allow for different sized penthouses,

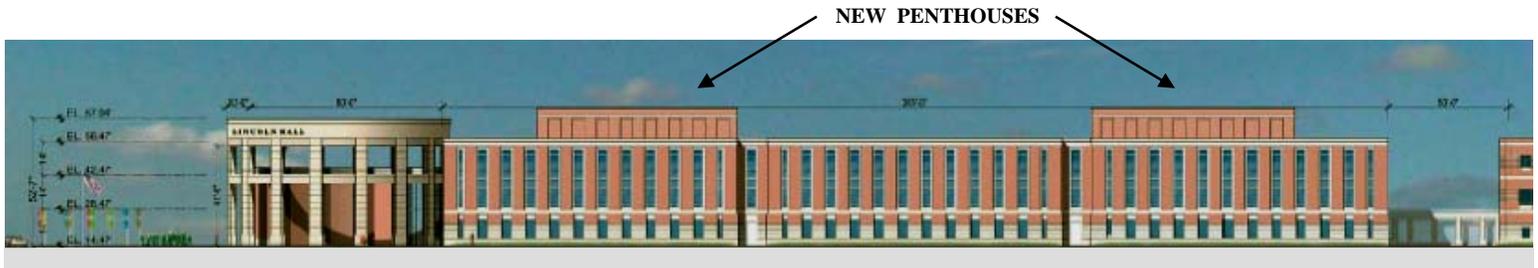


**CROSS SECTION OF ENTRY PORTAL  
'DRUM'**



**VIEW OF CANOPY INTERIOR AT THE ENTRY  
PORTAL**

however, Commission of Fine Arts (CFA) consultation meetings established a desire on the part of CFA to have equally sized penthouses and similar finishes as the main building surfaces.



### **FINAL LINCOLN HALL WEST ELEVATION**

Final site development includes the creation of surface drainage systems to address site areas involved with the project. Low-impact site drainage is demonstrated in the final design that includes:

- Surface drainage recharge beds
- Bio-swale drainage areas adjacent to pavement areas
- Vegetated surface bio-swales

Other site and building design aspects of the project are accomplished in the final design that adhere to the U.S. Army's SPiRiT building certification program. This design certification establishes the project plans as a sustainable project that scores and rates the resulting facility using the Green Building Council's (LEED 2.0)<sup>TM</sup> criteria. The project team has used the SPiRiT program to arrive at the rating level of gold for the project.

#### Development Program

Applicant: Department of the Army

Estimated Cost: A magnitude estimated of \$79,053,800.

Architect: Skidmore, Owings & Merrill in conjunction with Design-Build Contractor Turner Construction Company

Completion Date: July 2007

#### Urban Design Context

The urban planning initiatives within the District of Columbia addressing the general area of Fort McNair include the Anacostia Waterfront Initiative (AWI). Fort McNair is located between two main target areas of the plan with the Riverwalk a connecting corridor between the areas.

In the AWI plan, the Riverwalk is a street bikeway corridor located on Second and P Streets, SW. The bikeway is addressed as a pedestrian environment. Staff believes, as observed by the District Office of Planning in comments on the Fort McNair Subarea Plan, the street corridor adjacent to the proposed new Fort McNair east gate can accommodate the location and design of the desired bikeway/pedestrian walkway presented in the AWI. The Army has acknowledged the desired presence of the pedestrian/bike walkway and provides for the location of the AWI Riverwalk adjacent to the east boundary of the post. The Army has begun detailed preliminary design of the east gate and access road and has submitted a design for Commission review at its November 3, 2005 meeting.

## COORDINATION

### Coordinating Committee

The Coordinating Committee reviewed the proposal on November 10, 2004. The Committee forwarded the proposal to the Commission with the statement that the project had been coordinated with all agencies represented. The participating agencies were NCPC; the District of Columbia Office of Planning, Department of Housing and Community Development, and Department of Transportation; the National Park Service, General Services Administration; and the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority. The District Office of Planning did indicate its interest to maintain the issues expressed earlier about the Fort McNair Subarea Plan and indicated additional comment would be provided during the review period.

The District of Columbia Office of Planning (DCOP) provided comments in late November 2004 concerning the Army's Lincoln Hall site development. Points of concern included:

- The Army must consider actions that do not replicate the blank façade walls and buildings at the post along P Street. A varied and interesting street wall, with façade treatments and visual openings, would be a significant benefit.
- The emphasis that adjacent streets leading to any relocated gate be adequate to handle new traffic patterns and volumes, including pedestrian and bicycle access.
- That 2<sup>nd</sup> Street, SW, should be maintained as a segment of the Anacostia Riverwalk and Trail from P Street to the James Creek Marina at the end of 2<sup>nd</sup> Street. Any perimeter, gate entrance and base boundary realignment must accommodate the presence of the planned trail at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Street right-of-way.
- That DCOP recognizes the use of automobiles will occur to access the post, but that planning for other transit modes and the encouragement of employees and students to use alternatives should be achieved to include:
  - Pedestrian access via walkways that are safe and well planned
  - Promote the use of the transit subsidy program of federal employees
  - Provide amenities for bicycle commuting such as shower areas, changing rooms, and secure bike lockers or other storage areas.

The final project design for Lincoln Hall responds to the issues by continuing an open space character to the building's main entrance which is oriented toward and connects directly to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Street corridor and the new east gate. The building is modulated along the east façade and

provides windows and a low profile which minimizes the building's exterior wall mass as viewed from 2<sup>nd</sup> Street. Additional landscape treatments occur, at the east corner of the new structure, to provide softening of the building mass viewshed impact.

## PROJECT ANALYSIS

### Executive Summary

The current submission reflects only two major refinements to the project in comparison to the earlier preliminary plans. The revisions introduce a canopy to the circular entrance and establish two penthouses at the building roof. Both changes have been well executed and the design is compatible with the earlier approved building materials and design themes of the structure. Staff believes the modifications to the final plans are acceptable. Staff also finds the final exterior architectural design of the building facades complements the mass of existing Fort McNair buildings and maintains important elements of the visual theme of the overall campus. Consequently **staff recommends approval of the final site and building plans for Lincoln Hall at Fort McNair.**

## CONFORMANCE

### Master Plan

The final project design plans are consistent with the Subarea master plan approved by the Commission in January 2004. The Commission requested an update to the Fort McNair TMP information which was approved by the Commission on October 6, 2005. The Lincoln Hall final design adheres to the parking threshold identified in the TMP and provides for a reduction of 35 spaces compared to the initial concept design.

### Urban Design and Security Plan

The submitted plan has undergone security review and analysis by Fort McNair personnel to meet the objectives of the Department of the Army for force protection measures. Setbacks for the building have been identified and implemented in the final building plans and control points and/or inspections points for users and visitors to Lincoln Hall have been established.

One goal described in the Urban Design and Security Plan (UDSP) is to seamlessly incorporate building and perimeter security into the designed streetscapes of the city. The Fort McNair Subarea plan demonstrates this intent by providing setbacks at the street edge, the allowance for street furnishings, and the creation of building connections and security features that will not impact the public domain or adversely affect the proposed AWI Riverwalk. The Army and its design team have made a concerted effort to review, incorporate, and analyze the input of the District's Plan for the AWI in establishing a setback sought for the Second Street corridor and the AWI Riverwalk, and the east gate design that connects to Lincoln Hall will provide access to the Riverwalk. Within the post facility perimeter, the project plaza and main building entrance 'drum' incorporate security setbacks and engage the other internal campus security measures.

### National Environmental Policy Act

Pursuant to the requirements of NEPA, the Department of Army prepared and completed an Environmental Assessment (EA) of the Subarea master plan and its project implementation that included the NDU Expansion. NCPC staff analyzed, in conformance with the requirements of NEPA, the prepared EA and issued a Finding of No Significant Impact based on adoption of the EA in August 2003.

### National Historic Preservation Act

The Fort McNair Historic District (comprising a significant part of, but not all, of Fort McNair) was determined eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places in 1977. Building 61, Roosevelt Hall, was listed as a National Historic Landmark in 1972.

The Army has consulted with the D.C. State Historic Preservation Office (DC SHPO) about the Lincoln Hall building development. The DC SHPO commented about the demolition of portions of the boundary wall along 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue, supporting the practical and reasonable demolition of portions necessary for providing free passage, but urging that as much of the wall be preserved as possible. This approach is being maintained in the final site plans for Lincoln Hall.

The DC SHPO responded to the Army, by a letter dated December 3, 2004, determining the building does not create or constitute an adverse effect.

### Comprehensive Plan

The Federal Facilities Element designates Fort McNair as a National Defense Facility. No boundary changes are required in the final design of Lincoln Hall and its associated planning adheres to the following goals of the Commission's 2004 Federal Workplace Element, which include:

- Plan federal workplaces to be compatible with the character of the surrounding properties and community and, where feasible, to advance local planning objectives such as neighborhood revitalization.
- Associate federal workplaces in urban areas to their urban context and appropriately scale them to promote pedestrian activity.
- Encourage the use of federal workplaces for occasional cultural, educational, and/or recreational activities, providing suitable space and equipment for such activities.
- Use appropriate commemoration and exhibits at federal workplaces. Buildings, auditoriums, plazas, courtyards, and other features can be named in commemoration, and embellished with plaques and sculptures. Exhibits are encouraged in widely used areas such as lobbies and corridors.

(Development of Workplaces with Communities; pp. 50-51)

The proposed project employee parking standard for the facility, which is one employee parking space per four employees, was established by the approved revised TMP reviewed by the

Commission in October 2005. The final project planning provides net spaces for student-use only of about 335 spaces. This is a reduction of 35 spaces from the preliminary design.

Fort McNair is in proximity to the Waterfront Metrorail station and Metrobus service exists to Fort McNair nearby intersections. The revised TMP requires the Army provided an annual report to the Commission on implementation of a shuttle program at Fort McNair to nearby transit stations, beginning on September 1, 2006, and maintained to inform the Commission until the next full TMP update.

#### Federal Capital Improvements Program

The Lincoln Hall project was not included in the Federal Capital Improvements Program (FCIP), Fiscal Years 2006-2011 adopted by the Commission. The current project has secured FY 2002 funding reprogrammed from other sources.



**PERSPECTIVE SIMULATION VIEW OF LINCOLN HALL FINAL DESIGN AS SEEN FROM PARADE GROUND AT FIFTH STREET**



**SIMULATION VIEW OF LINCOLN HALL FINAL DESIGN AS SEEN FROM 2<sup>ND</sup> STREET, SW**