

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

NCPC File No. 6727/6728



NEBRASKA AVENUE COMPLEX
BUILDING 61 REPLACEMENT and GENERATOR ENCLOSURE FACILITY
Nebraska Avenue, NW at Massachusetts Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C.

Submitted by the General Services Administration

January 25, 2007

Abstract

The General Services Administration (GSA), on behalf of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), has submitted preliminary and final site and building plans, for replacement of existing Building 61 with above and below grade components, and concept site development plans for a generator enclosure facility, both located at the Nebraska Avenue Complex (NAC).

Commission Action Requested by Applicant

Approval of preliminary and final site and building plans for replacement of Building 61, and approval of concept site development plans for a Generator Enclosure Facility, pursuant to 40 U.S.C. § 8722 (a),(b)(1) and (d).

Executive Director's Recommendation

The Commission:

Approves preliminary and final site and building plans for replacement of Building 61 (6727) and approves concept site development plans for a Generator Enclosure Facility (6728), as shown on NCPC Map File Nos. 10.03(38.00)42170 and 10.03(38.00)42173 respectively.

* * *

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Site

The Nebraska Avenue Complex (NAC) is a 38-acre site located in the northwest quadrant of Washington, DC east of the intersection of Nebraska Avenue and Massachusetts Avenue. The site is bounded by the WRC-NBC television station to the north and east, Grover-Archbold Park to the east, and residential communities to the south. American University is west of Nebraska Avenue.

Background

In April of 2005, the NAC was transferred from the Department of the Navy (DON) to the General Services Administration (GSA) to accommodate the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and “to allow the DHS to consolidate headquarters staff at the Complex for the foreseeable future”. DHS is currently the sole tenant at the NAC.

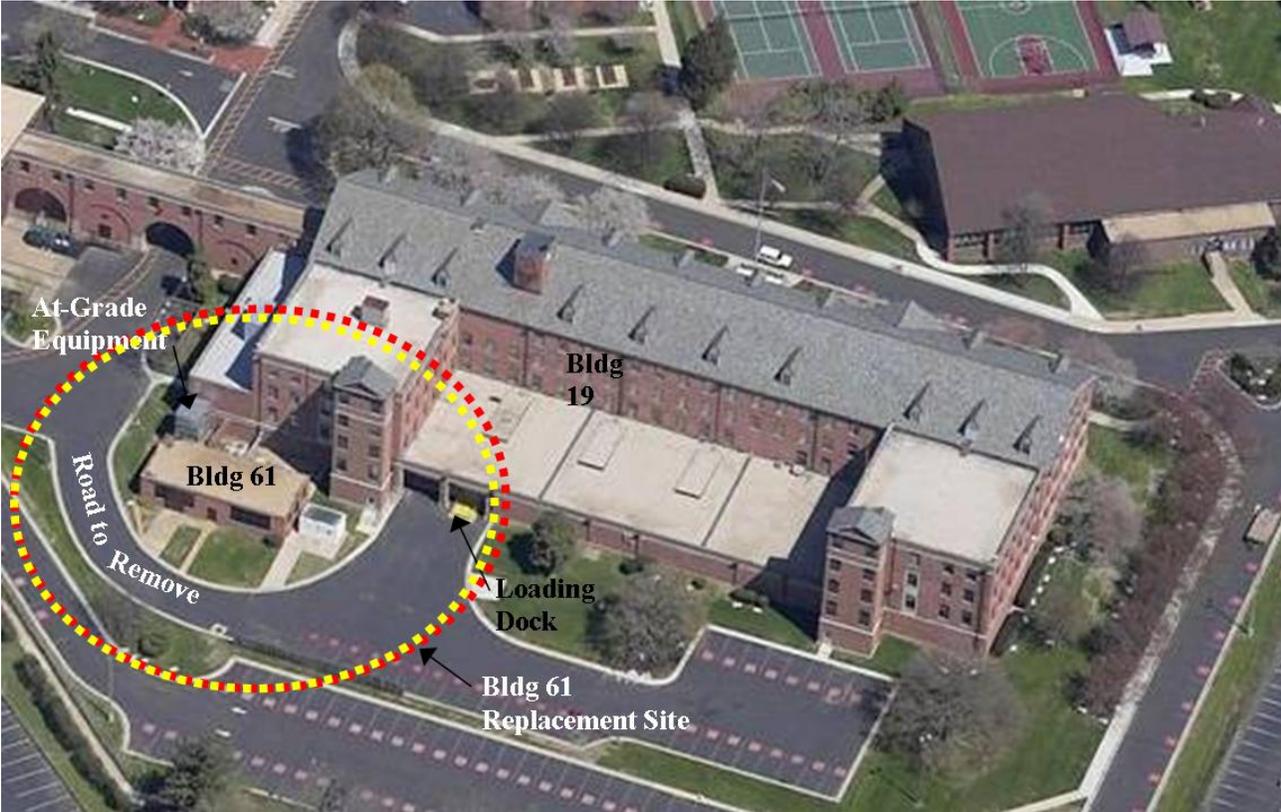


NAC Site Vicinity & Project Locations

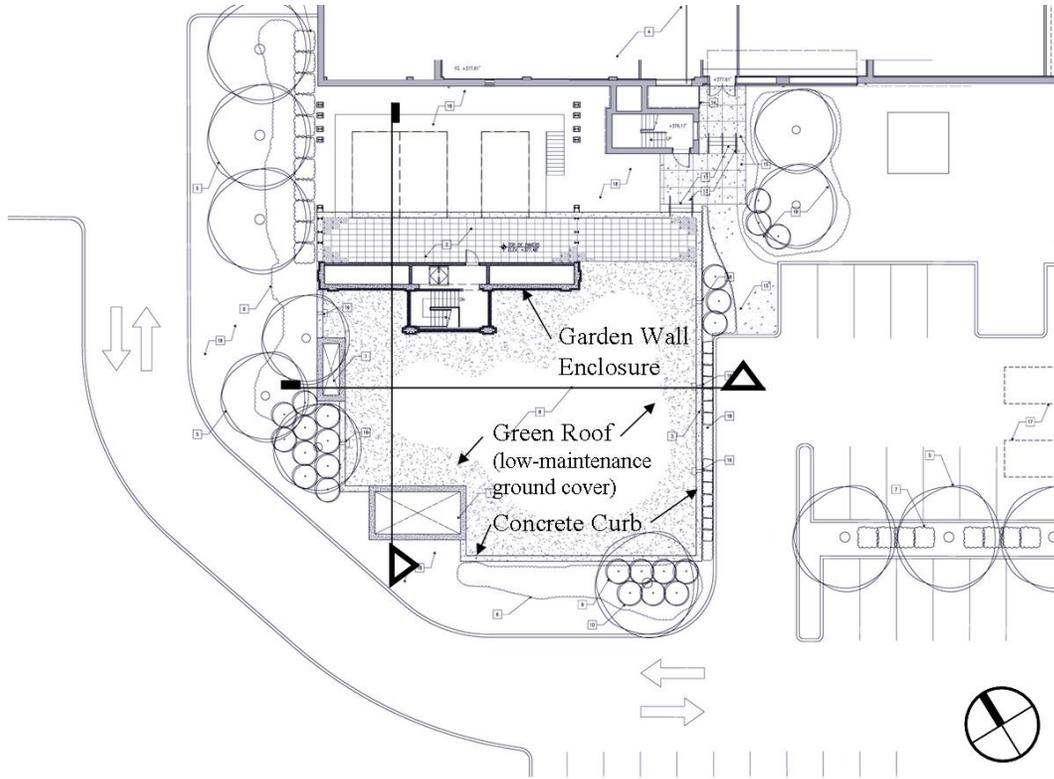
Proposal

Building 61 Replacement and Building 19 Exterior

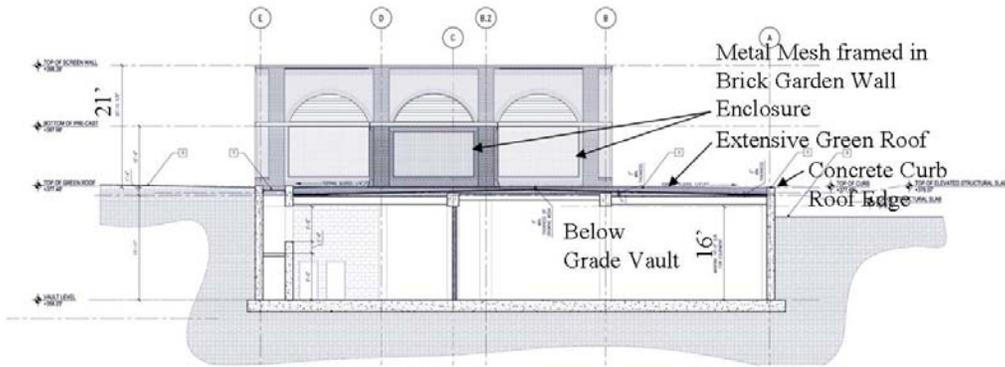
At grade level, the existing 1-story mechanical Building 61 associated with Building 19 would be demolished and replaced by 20-foot high garden wall enclosure. Existing at-grade equipment located between Buildings 61 and 19 would be replaced and upgraded to cooling towers. The walls will screen three new cooling towers, conceal the stair leading to an underground vault, and screen additional mechanical equipment. Brick faced garden walls with masonry arched openings will frame metal louvers and rectangular openings will frame metal mesh screens on the south. The stairway will be in the projecting middle bay of the enclosure facing Massachusetts Avenue to the south. On the east and west, at-grade cooling towers will be screened by metal trellis screen walls to allow air circulation and landscaping. Equipment upgrades will support conversion of Building 19’s basement from storage to office space with a data center. Changes to the exterior of Building 19’s exposed basement south face will consist mainly of bricking in a former loading dock area and adding an emergency exit. The new Building 61 will include an underground vault to house the chiller plant and electrical equipment with an at-grade extensive green roof over the vault. The green roof’s low-maintenance drought-tolerant ground cover will be enclosed by a concrete curb at its edge. A road southwest of Building 61 will be realigned farther southwest to allow for the underground footprint.



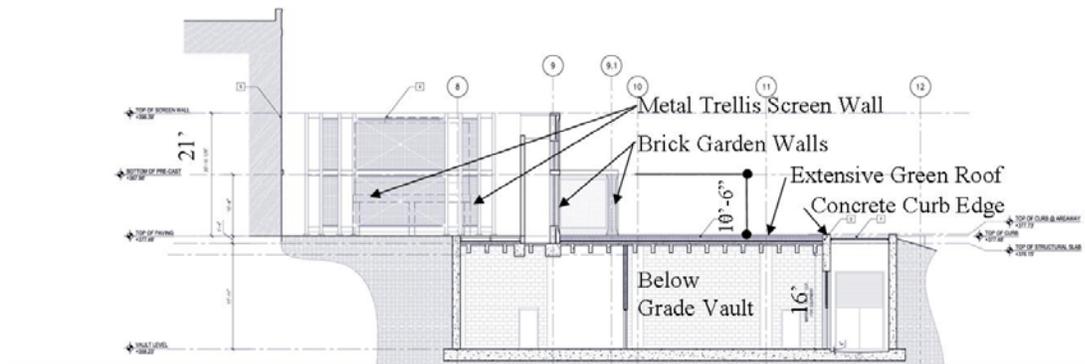
Existing Building 61 Site



New Building 61 Landscape Plan: Garden Wall Enclosure and Green Roof



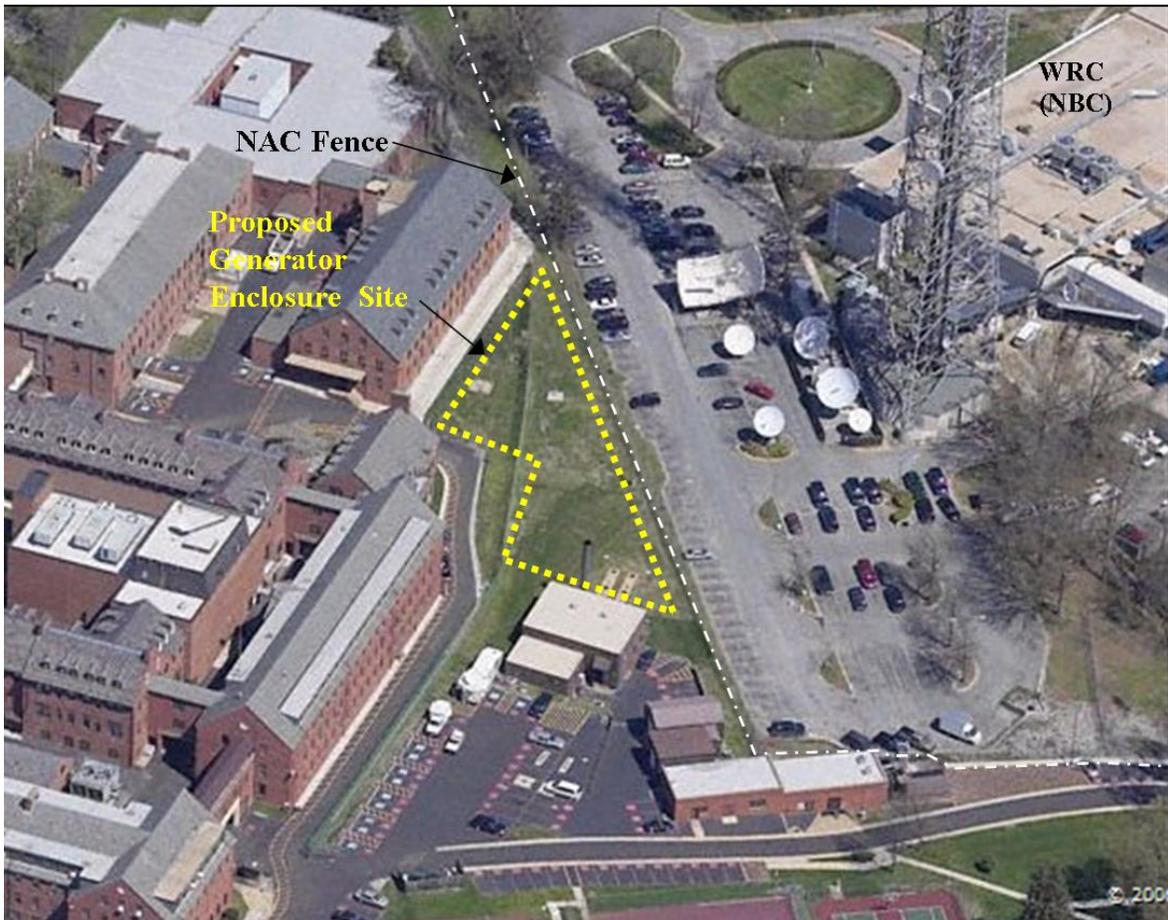
Building 61 Section Through Vault Looking North at Elevation



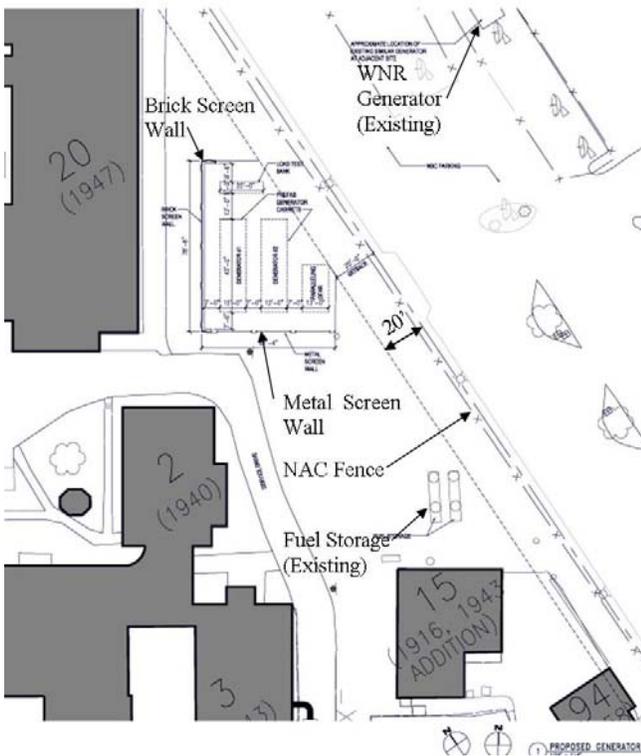
Building 61 Section Looking East



View of Screen Walls Looking Northeast



Proposed Generator Enclosure Site



Generator Screen Wall Location Phase I



Landscape Concept Phase I

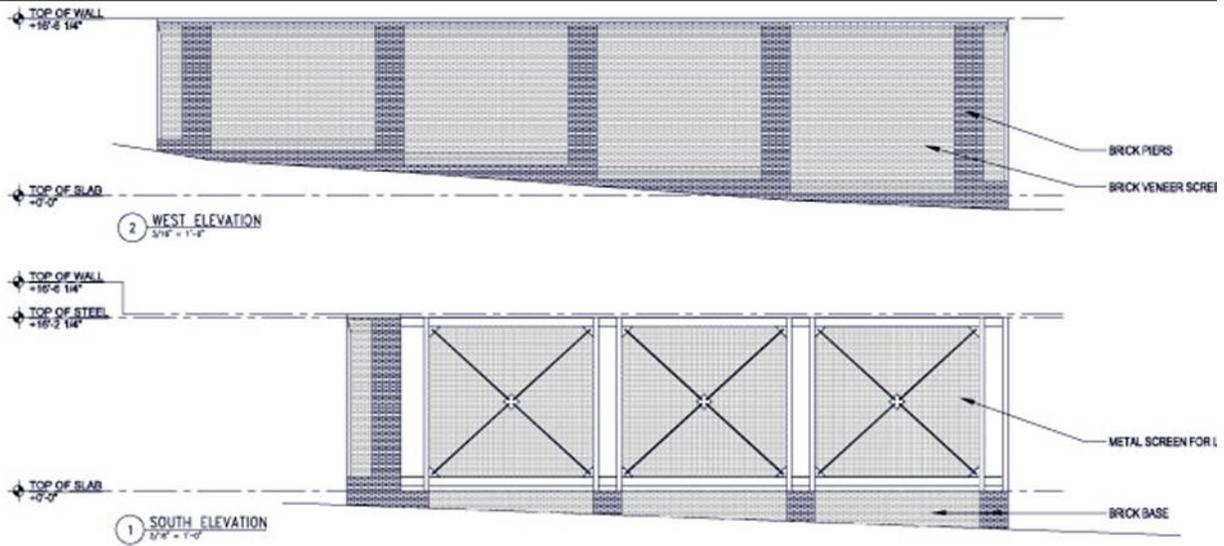


View Northeast

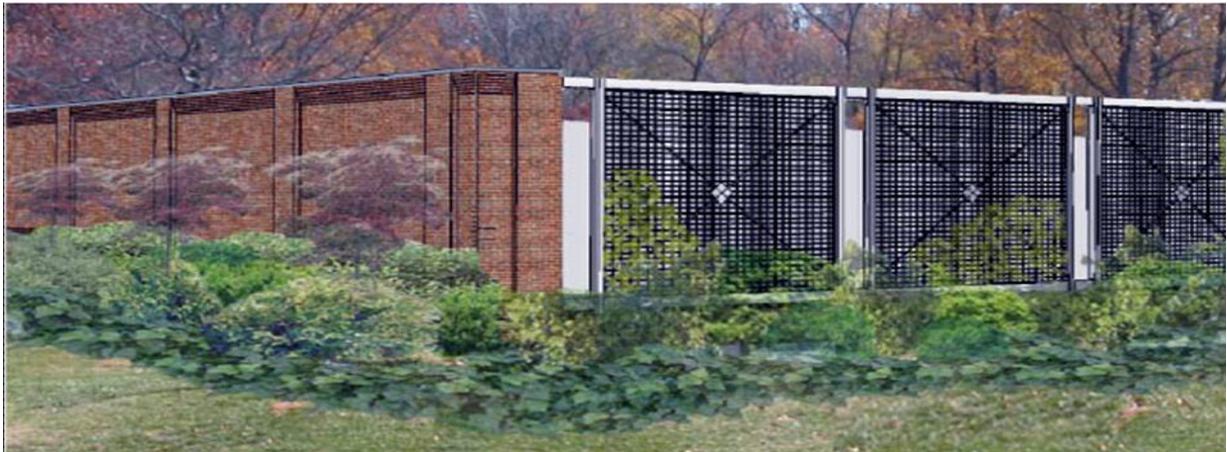
Generator Enclosure Facility

The project involves adding two new emergency generators and associated equipment enclosed within prefabricated acoustically-rated cabinets that would serve the electrical needs for the campus. Two additional generator locations are identified as Phase II in anticipation of the future need for additional power. Generators would be located on the northeastern edge of the campus adjacent to the TV station in a layout that continues the orthogonal grid of the adjacent

campus buildings 20, 2 and 15. Equipment would be concealed by a 16.5-foot high brick garden wall on the northeast side of the site where additional trees and shrubs would be planted. A metal screen wall approximately 16 feet high would separate the service road from the generators on the southwest side of the generator cabinets. Here, metal screen walls are intended to be used as trellis walls by allowing plants to grow along the screen. A tall deciduous shrub would be planted facing WRC's rear parking lots in order to screen views in both directions and a 20' wide grass buffer would be located between the equipment and the fence. Phase II is shown to follow a similar pattern, located directly south and adjacent to existing fuel storage.



Generator Screen Wall Elevations



View East

Development Program

Applicant: General Services Administration
Architects: MTF Architecture Inc.

Building 61 Replacement:

Originally, the applicant intended to co-locate and screen equipment for both projects as part of the Building 61 replacement facing Massachusetts Avenue, where the structure would be visible from outside of the complex. After working with staff, the applicant was able to reduce the height and mass visible from Massachusetts Avenue by locating generators separately on a different site with their own screen wall enclosures. This effort led to reduction in height of the structure from 30 to 21 feet high. Further, the applicant's design team layered and staggered the garden wall facing Massachusetts Avenue in order to reduce the scale of the new enclosure wall, and its visibility from off the complex even further. Staff commends the applicant's use of an at-grade green roof system to conceal most of the mechanical equipment in the below grade vault.

Generator Enclosure Facility:

The applicant initially intended to propose a single prefabricated building to house all four generators. The design team proposed an alternate design to enclose individual generators and equipment in individual prefabricated acoustically-rated cabinets on the site. This will allow unbroken mass to be reduced by grouping generators individually and better integrating them on the site by extending the geometry and orthogonal grid of buildings and open space. Staff has recommended and the applicant has agreed to clarify entry and circulation in the next submittal.

CONFORMANCE

Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital

Staff has determined that proposed projects are consistent with the *Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital; Federal Elements*; in particular the Federal Workplace Element policies for Locating Federal Workplaces under Existing Facilities and Resources and Regional Distribution.

Relevant Federal Facility Master Plan

Although NCPC has not reviewed a master plan for the site from the current submitting agency, NCPC did review and approve a master plan for it under the Department of the Navy, on May 31, 1990. Proposed land use for the Building 61 Replacement is replacement in kind and by locating utilities underground, is consistent with the 1991 approved master plan. At this time, , GSA has not adopted the Navy's master plan, or submitted a land use modification to coordinate consistency between the proposed project locations and the 1991 land use plan.

A DHS National Capital Region Housing Master Plan dated October 2006 acknowledges that over the longer term it is likely that the NAC can serve as a site for certain "back-office" support functions that can utilize facility improvements. However, until DHS determines the type and percentage of its overall facility space needs within the region that should be backfilled at the NAC, GSA believes that it would be premature to develop a NAC master plan. Until that time, DHS does not plan to add permanent facilities to house employees at the NAC, but only to provide necessary power and utility infrastructure to sustain current operating capability.

According to NCPC's Submission Guidelines for Master Plan Submission Requirements, "Ordinarily, the Commission will not approve, or recommend favorably on, project plans for an installation for which there is no approved master plan unless the agency provides an explanation satisfactory to the Commission as to the agency's reasons for not submitting a current master plan, or modification thereto, for the installation." Furthermore, "the Executive Director of the Commission may extend, modify, or waive any requirement pertaining to the scope and content of a master plan on sites where such requirements cannot be met because of the unique or special character or quality of the installation affected." Based on the prematurity of developing a master plan for the NAC site prior to finalizing the specific component distribution of space requiring backfill in the region, staff recommends approval of the Building 61 Replacement and Generator Enclosure Facility as submitted.

National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA)

GSA has determined that the action to construct a replacement of structure for Building 61 to house utility equipment to support Buildings 18 and 19 meets requirements for its agency's categorical exclusion 5.4(b). NCPC staff has determined that the project qualifies as a categorical exclusion as specified at § 8 (21) of the Commission's Environmental and Historic Preservation Policies and Procedures. Staff commends the applicant for using an "environmentally green roof system" to conceal its below-grade vault housing electrical and mechanical equipment.

National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA)

The NAC is a historic district with National Register eligibility. Building 61, a utility building dating from 1959, was identified as a non-contributing structure in a previously submitted "Site Capacity Study", and as a result could not become a contributing structure in the eligible NAC Historic District. GSA has concluded that the rebuilding of 61 should not adversely effect viewsheds from the surrounding neighborhood; as most views are shielded by trees or fences. As a result, GSA finds that the project will not have an adverse effect on those qualities allowing this property to be eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places. The DC SHPO concurred with GSA's determination of no adverse effect on December 22, 2006.

CONSULTATION

Coordinating Committee

The Coordinating Committee at its January 10, 2007 meeting reviewed the proposals for both projects 6727 and 6728 and forwarded them to the Commission with the statement that the project has been coordinated with all agencies represented. The participating agencies are: NCPC, the District of Columbia Office of Planning, the National Park Service and GSA.

Commission of Fine Arts

Commission of Fine Arts staff recommendations during consultation helped shape the design submittal as proposed. CFA approved the project at its January 18, 2007 Commission Meeting.