

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

NCPC File No. 6693



RONALD REAGAN WASHINGTON NATIONAL AIRPORT ADDITIONS TO PARKING GARAGES A AND B/C Arlington, Virginia

Submitted by the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority

December 28, 2006

Abstract

The Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority (Authority) has submitted preliminary and final site and building plans for the addition of one deck of parking to each of its garages at Reagan National Airport—Garage A and Garage B/C. The Commission’s review, under a 1988 Memorandum of Understanding with the Authority, concerns projects at the airport that would alter the skyline of the airport when viewed from the opposing shoreline of the Potomac River or from the George Washington Memorial Parkway. The Authority consulted with National Park Service in the design of landscape screening of Garage B/C, in particular, as viewed from the Parkway. The Commission approved Garage A and Garage B/C in 1989 and 1993, respectively, noting at the time that the top parking deck of each structure (presented in the current submission) would be constructed at a future date. The staff recommends approval of the proposal.

Commission Action Requested by Applicant

Approval of preliminary and final site and building plans pursuant to the Memorandum of Understanding between the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority and the National Capital Planning Commission dated November 2, 1988, and D.C. Code § 9-1008(d)(2)(A) .

Executive Director’s Recommendation

The Commission:

Approves the preliminary and final site and building plans for the addition of one parking level to Garages A and B/C at Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport, noting that the Commission’s approvals for the parking garages in 1989 and 1993 assumed the expansion now submitted, and noting that the planting scheme stipulated by the National Park Service will be implemented, as shown on NCPC Map File No. 2105.00(47.10)42091.

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PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Site

The parking garages are situated to the west and north of the main terminal of Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport. Garage A is the southern-most and smaller of the two parking garages and faces the historic terminal. Garage B/C is north of Garage A (formerly known as the middle and north garages) and is visible from the George Washington Memorial Parkway. The garages were situated to avoid the archaeological remains of the historic Abingdon Plantation, the site of which lies between the two garages.

Background

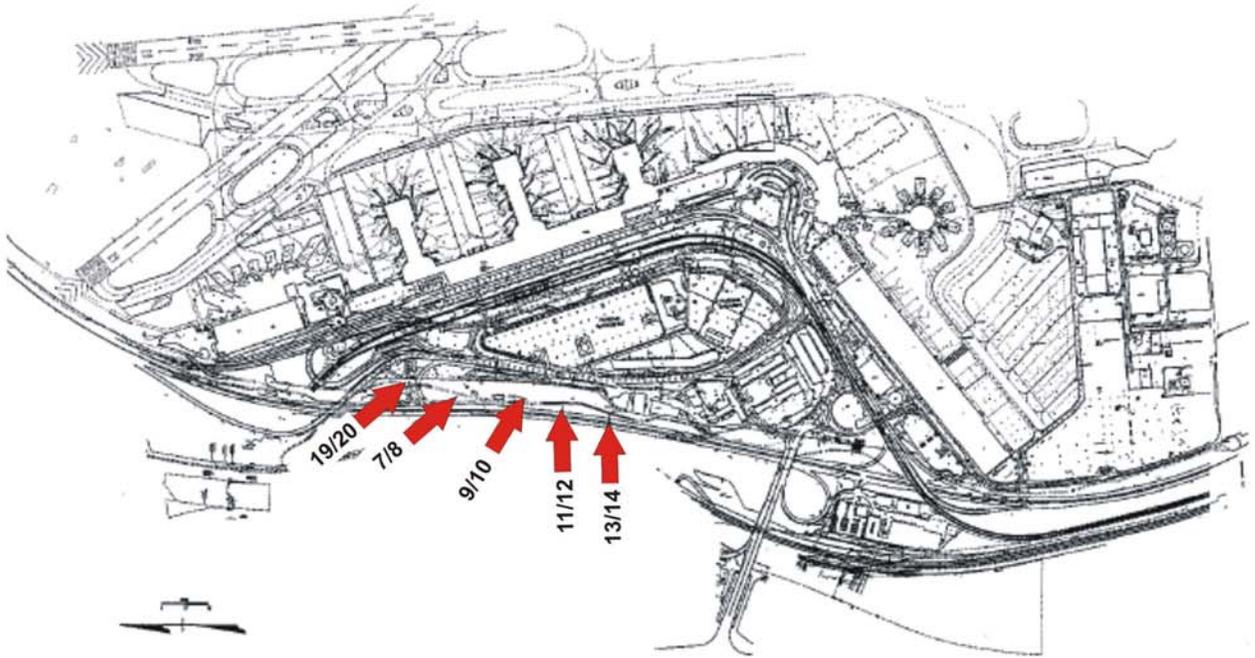
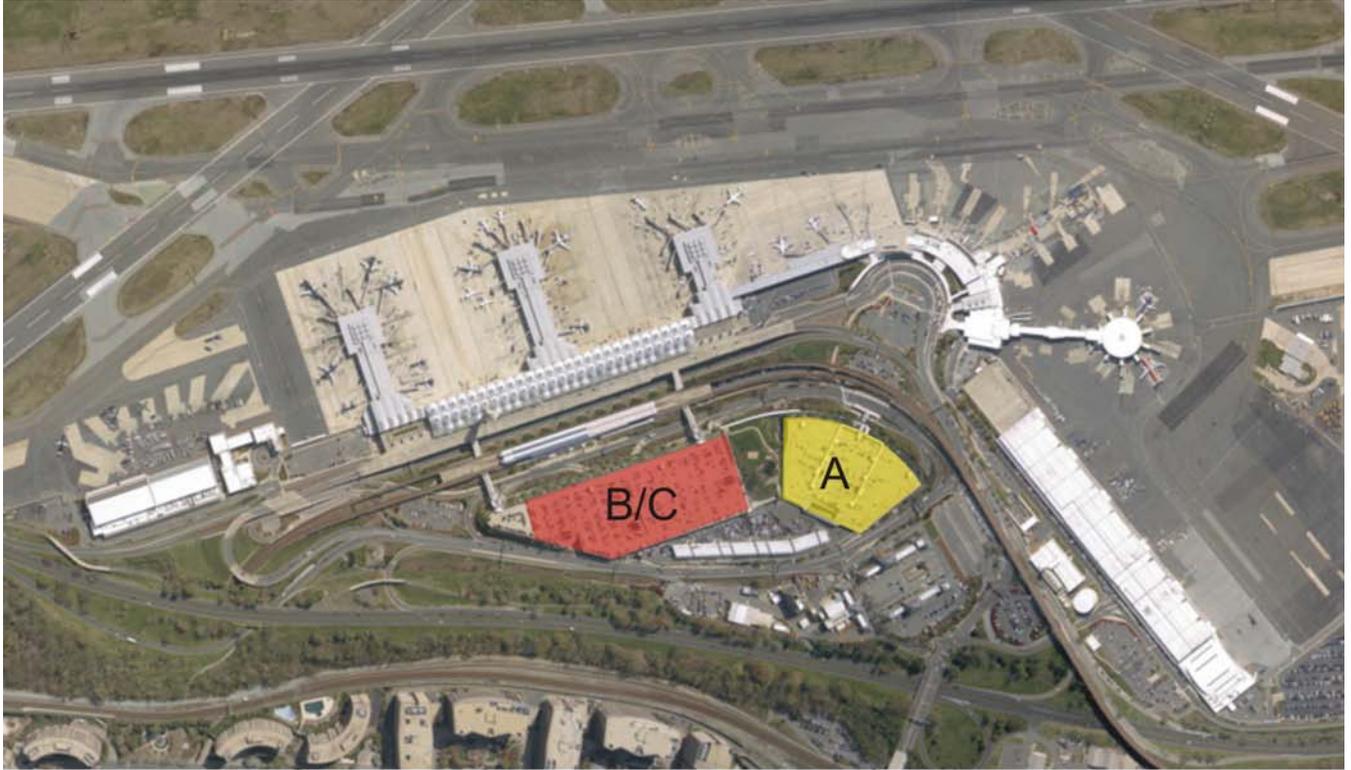
The Commission approved Garage A in 1989, commending the Authority for the high standard of its architectural and landscape design. “Planned to reach a height of 34 feet above ground level, the structure would contain three and one-half levels of parking, with provisions for an additional level in the future.”

The Commission approved Garage B/C in 1993, noting that it would eventually be a five-level parking structure and that the second phase (the top level) would be completed at a later date. The Commission noted the sensitivity of the project site in relation to the George Washington Memorial Parkway and that scenic associations between the Parkway and the airport had historically focused on the main terminal. The Commission found the project to be in conformance with Comprehensive Plan policies as a result of the tiered design of the garages, in conjunction with landscaped berms and year-round screen planting facing the Parkway.

Proposal

The proposed expansion of the parking garages will provide additional public parking at the airport. The \$30 million project proposes the addition of one level of parking to each garage, for an addition of 182,914 square feet to Garage A, and 280,882 square feet to Garage B/C, for a total of 1,380 new public parking spaces—a 25% increase in garage parking capacity. Completion is expected in the year 2009. The deck design continues the scheme of the current garages, with the new decks set back 17 feet and with hanging gardens and planter boxes. The garages are currently three and one-half to four levels. The additional deck level for each garage was structurally anticipated.

The parking garage construction is cast-in-place, post-tensioned concrete frame and deck. Garage A has cast-in-place spandrel panels and Garage B/C pre-cast spandrel panels. The proposed deck design will use the same type of construction for the top decks, and retain the color, texture, scale, and tone of both architecture and landscape design. The cladding system is cast-in-place and pre-cast; the new decks will use pre-cast members. Separate panel systems will be developed to follow the current articulation of each garage. The existing elevator towers are prominent architectural features that will be maintained as they are raised for the proposed new levels. For the new decks, the existing mast-mounted light fixtures will be removed, refurbished, and reinstalled to ensure that the quality of the lighting remains unchanged.



Areal View and Site Plan Garages A and B/C-Photo Locations



View from George Washington Memorial Parkway-Proposed

View 7



View from George Washington Memorial Parkway-Existing

View 8



View from George Washington Memorial Parkway-Proposed

View 19



View from George Washington Memorial Parkway-Existing

View 20



Existing Light Mast Configuration on Top Parking Deck (B/C)

View 21



Existing Light Mast Configuration on Top Parking Deck (B/C)

View 22

Parking Garage A is set back and landscaped on the southeast facade facing the terminal and along the southwest façade facing the airport entrance. The proposed top deck for Parking Garage B/C is set back at the northeast corner, where the planter locations and setbacks on the east are aligned with the third row of column lines. No setbacks are proposed for the south and west facades. A portion of the southeast corner facing the Abingdon Plantation will have planters.

Sightline studies from the Parkway were studied by the Authority, the National Park Service, and the Virginia State Historic Preservation Office, as well as the staff. The Authority's site plans indicate their concurrence with the National Park Service's request to plant six deciduous trees (two Redbud at 8 feet in height, two Willow Oak of 2-inch caliper, and two Red Oak of 2-inch caliper) and nine evergreen trees (four American Holly at 5 feet in height and five Eastern White Pine at 8 feet in height) between Garage B/C and the Parkway.

PROJECT ANALYSIS

The Authority developed visual simulations of the existing and proposed parking garages and conditions from different vantage points and for both daytime and nighttime conditions. Visual simulations were created from the opposite shoreline and from the George Washington Memorial Parkway. The garages are not visible behind the existing airport terminal and do not affect views from the monumental core.

From the Parkway, Garage B/C (as it exists) is visible from the Parkway. Garage A is not visible from either direction of the Parkway. In the staff's view, the new deck level proposed for Garage B/C, while visible from both the northbound and southbound lanes of the Parkway, minimally alters the perception or visual effect of the existing garage from the Parkway.

Night views of the garage showing the illumination with the new decks were also developed and have been reviewed for comparison with the current conditions. The quality, nature, and extent of the illumination are similar to the current conditions. In the staff's view, the most significant change is in the additional second story added to the glass elevator tower at the north end of Garage B/C. This is currently a deliberately strong design element that will continue to read prominently at night when it is illuminated. In the staff's view, the expansion itself of one parking level to the four-story parking garage will not significantly alter one's current perception of Garage B/C from the Parkway.

The Authority has concurred with the National Park Service's requested planting plan for the area between the Parkway and Garage B/C.

The Authority also consulted on any further effects to the historic airport and Abingdon Plantation with the Virginia Department of Historic Resources (SHPO), which concurred that there would be no adverse effects to the National Register-listed and -eligible properties.

CONFORMANCE

Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital: Federal Elements

Staff has determined that the proposed action is consistent with the Federal Elements of the Comprehensive Plan, particularly with the Parkways policies contained in the Parks and Open Space Element:

The federal government should maintain parkways as scenic landscape corridors, and protect their historic aspects.

And with the Historic Plans of Washington, DC policies contained in the Preservation and Historic Features Element:

Protect the character of the historic parkways in the region through the careful planning of public and private development within their viewsheds.

Master Plan

The existing garages and their planned expansion are consistent with the Master Plan for Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport.

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)

The Reagan Washington National Airport Additional Levels to Garages A and B/C were determined by the Washington Airports Authority, in conjunction with review by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), to be a Categorically Excluded action based upon the FAA review requirements. The proposed action is listed under FAA Order 5050.4B at Table 6-2 as an excluded action described as “vehicular parking areas”, and “garages” (cited as FAA Order 1050.1E310F and 310H). Thus the FAA did not prepare an EA.

NCPC is commenting on this action pursuant to the Memorandum of Understanding with the Airports Authority. In accordance with the Commission’s regulations implementing the National Environmental Policy Act, staff has determined in its review of the submission information that the proposal qualifies as a Categorical Exclusion at Section 8 of the Commission’s procedures, because the project involves construction meeting the following conditions:

- The structure and proposed use are in compliance with local planning and zoning and any applicable state, or federal requirements;
- The proposed use will not substantially increase the number of motor vehicles at the facility (1,380 vehicles versus an existing allotment of 5,232);
- The site and the scale of construction are consistent with those of existing adjacent or nearby buildings; and
- There is no evidence of community controversy or other environmental issues (air quality effects are maintained within *de minimis* federal conformance standards)

National Historic Preservation Act

The Authority has concluded its Section 106 review with the Virginia State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). The SHPO agreed with the Authority's determination that the project would have no adverse effect on either the airport itself or on Abingdon Plantation archaeological site, both of which are listed in the National Register of Historic Places.