

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

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NCPC File No. 6747



DEPARTMENT OF INTERIOR SOUTH ANNEX BUILDING
VERIZON WIRELESS COMMUNICATIONS-PANEL AND GPS ANTENNAS
1951 Constitution Avenue, NW,
Washington, D.C.

Submitted by the General Services Administration

May 31, 2007

Abstract

The General Services Administration has submitted plans for the installation of six transmitting/receiving panel antennas and one receiving GPS antenna for Verizon Communications at the Department of Interior South Annex Building located at 1951 Constitution Avenue, NW. The panel antennas will be installed on the building's mechanical screening wall and chimneys. The GPS antenna and other equipment associated with the panel antennas will not be visible from the ground.

Commission Action Requested by Applicant

Approval of preliminary and final building plans pursuant to 40 U.S.C. § 8722(b)(1) and (d).

Executive Director's Recommendation

The Commission:

Approves the preliminary and final building plans for the installation of six transmitting/receiving antennas, one receiving antenna, and associated equipment at the Department of Interior South Annex Building, 1951 Constitution Ave, NW, as shown on NCPC Map File No. 1.35(38.30)42234, for a period not to exceed five years.

Recommends that the Department of Interior secure access to the building roof areas and ensure that necessary radio frequency (RF) information signs are placed at all rooftop access points in a highly visible fashion.

Recommends that the Department of Interior post roof drawings on the penthouse walls and/or doorways indicating areas where the antennas are located.

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PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Site

The Department of Interior South Annex Building is bounded by Constitution Avenue NW, on the south; Virginia Avenue, and C Street NW, on the north; and 20th and 19th Streets, NW, on the east and west. This site is located north of the National Mall.

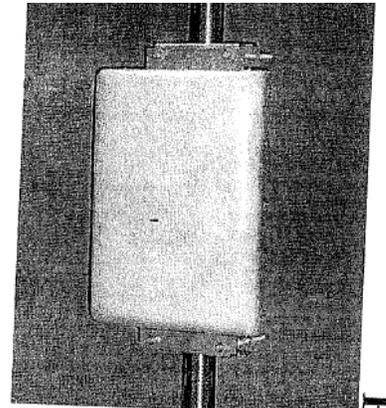


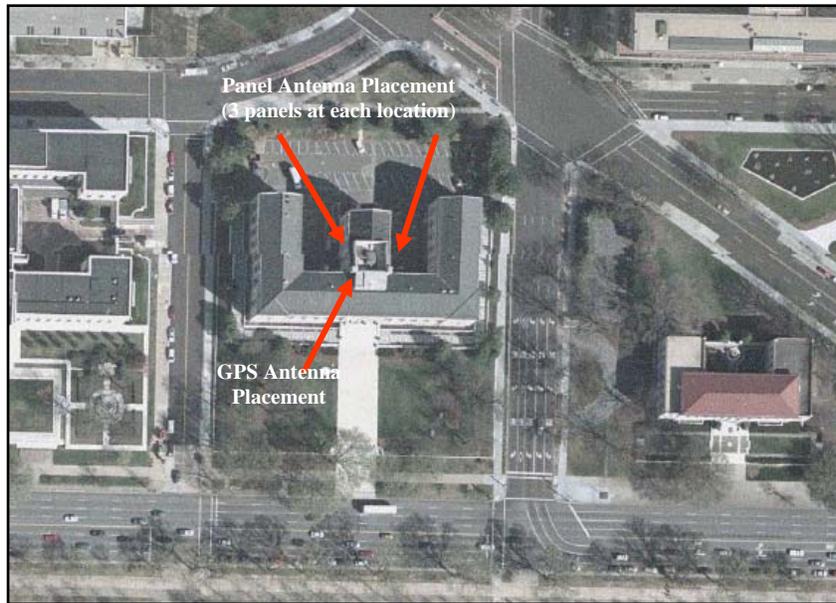
Background

The General Services Administration has submitted plans for the installation of seven Verizon Wireless telecommunications antennas. The proposed panel antennas are located at the center of the building's roof on or near the chimneys. The GPS antenna is located on the antenna equipment platform. None of the antennas or associated equipment will be visible from the ground along Constitution Avenue.

Proposal

Four transmitting/receiving panel antennas will be mounted on the building's chimneys and the two other panel antennas will be mounted on the building's rooftop mechanical screening wall. The installation will not penetrate the historic façade. The GPS receiving antenna, mounted on a new pole on the equipment platform, won't be visible from the ground. The antennas are located on the north end of the building, orientated south, northeast and northwest. The height, width, and depth of the panel antennas are 24" x 16" x 4". The GPS antenna has a 3" radius. The associated equipment will be located lower than the screening wall and will not be visible from ground level.





VA MEDICAL CENTER ROOF WITH PROPOSED ANTENNA LOCATIONS

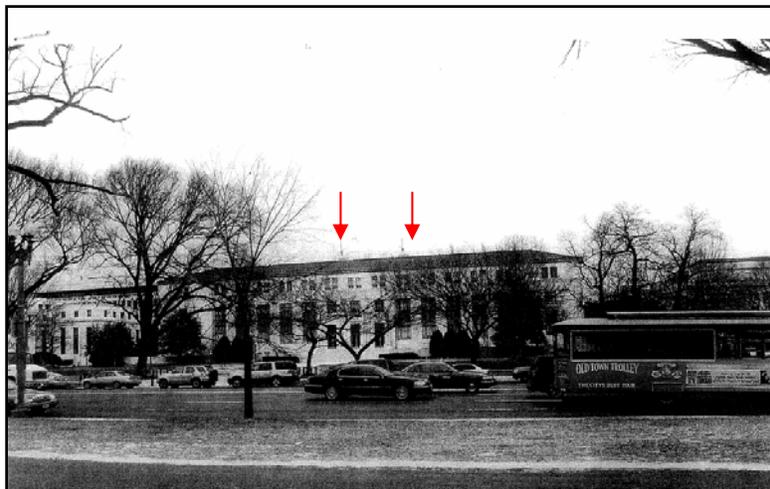


PHOTO SIMULATION: CONSTITUTION AVENUE (Not Visible)

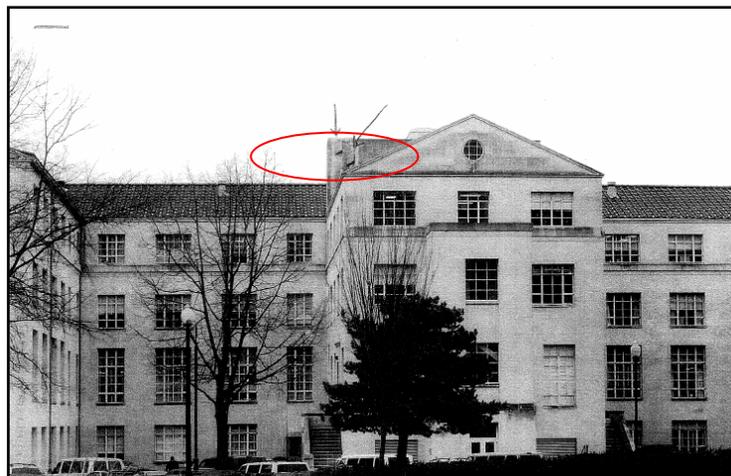


PHOTO SIMULATION: VIRGINIA AVENUE/C STREET

PROJECT ANALYSIS

Executive Summary

The **staff recommends that the project plans be approved.** The applicant will paint the panel antennas to blend into the background to minimize visual impact. The associated radio equipment will be contained by the screening wall and will not be visible from the street. The proposal is consistent with the Commission's Antenna Guidelines and with the Telecommunications Act of 1996 that encourages placement of commercial antennas on federal property. Staff recommends that the antennas be approved for a period of five years, consistent with the Commission's recommendations in the Antenna Guidelines.

Radiofrequency Radiation

An analysis determining the potential effects of radiofrequency non-ionizing radiation on the general public and occupational personnel was prepared in February 2007 for submission purposes. This analysis used a computerized evaluation program to determine the electromagnetic power surrounding the existing and proposed antennas, and measured compliance with the Maximum Permissible Exposure (MPE) limits for the general public and occupational personnel established by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC).

None of the antennas radiates frequency signals, either extending down toward the streets or outward beyond the building perimeter, which exceed 100 percent of either the general public or occupational worker exposure levels.

Cumulative effects of any exposure levels have been factored by the evaluation program and have found to be within all standards specified by the FCC requirements. Only a minimal area of approximately 15 feet by 35 feet at the roof maintains an exposure level of 100-percent of the general public exposure limit. This roof area is not accessible to the public and is elevated above the surrounding streets; that it presents no exposure concern. The analysis determined that it is extremely unlikely that any personnel would come in contact with areas that exceed the occupational MPE except in the immediate four foot area in front of the proposed antennas. Normal working procedures for antenna radiation environments on roofs is recommended to be implemented by the report's findings.

CONFORMANCE

Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital: Federal Elements

Staff has determined that the antenna installation would not have an adverse effect on other federal facilities or on L'Enfant Streets and is consistent with the Federal Elements of the Comprehensive Plan.

National Environmental Policy Act

Pursuant to the regulations implementing the National Environmental Policy Act, GSA has determined that the project is a categorical exclusion based on GSA's environmental review standards. In conformance with the Commission's Environmental and Historic Preservation Policies and Procedures, NCPC staff finds the submission qualifies as a Categorical Exclusion under §8(C)(20) of the Environmental and Historic Preservation procedures.

National Historic Preservation Act

GSA has concluded its Section 106 responsibilities for the installation of the Verizon antennas. The DC SHPO concurred with GSA that the installation would not compromise the National Register-eligible qualities of the building. After reviewing the submission documentation and visiting the site, the staff also concurs.

The Interior South Annex has been determined eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. Prominently situated on the north side of Constitution Avenue, NW in a row of distinguished governmental and institutional buildings facing Constitution Gardens, the rear façade of the E-shaped building faces Virginia Avenue, NW. The proposed panel antennas would be mounted on chimneys and screening walls on the center of the roof. The installation would be reversible and not cause any permanent alteration or physical damage to the building. The staff concurs with GSA that there would be minimal visual effect to the building or to its setting--either to Constitution Avenue and Constitution Gardens or to Virginia Avenue.

COORDINATION

Coordinating Committee

The Coordinating Committee reviewed this item on May 16, 2007, 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 General Services Administration; the National Park Service; and the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority.