

# STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Marjorie Marcus

NCPC File No. 6762



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**NEBRASKA AVENUE COMPLEX  
CAMPUS SECURITY UPGRADES**  
Nebraska Avenue, NW at Massachusetts Avenue, NW  
Washington, D.C.

Submitted by the General Services Administration

September 27, 2007

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## **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 campus security upgrades to include new and replacement fencing and lighting, five new guard booths and two new screening facilities at the Nebraska Avenue Complex (NAC).

## **Commission Action Requested by Applicant**

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

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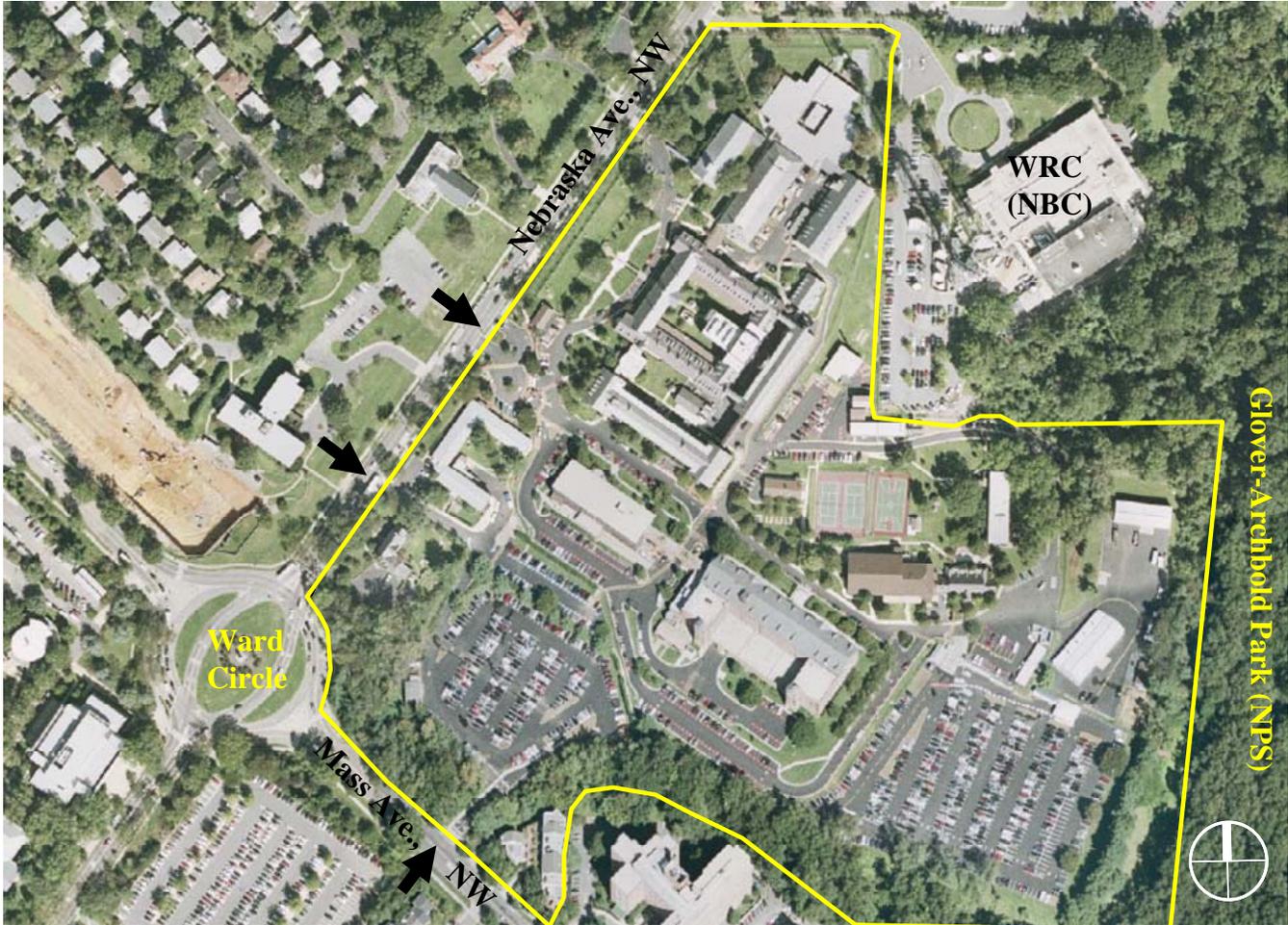
## **Executive Director's Recommendation**

The Commission:

**Approves** preliminary and final site and building plans for new and replacement fencing and lighting, five new guard booths and two new screening facilities at the Nebraska Avenue Complex (NAC) as shown on NCPC Map File No. 10.03(38.40)42301, including the supplemental lighting submission that resolves concerns staff had expressed previously about the lighting, and

**Notes** that the Site Circulation Plan submitted is adequate to clarify the shuttle bus route and to demonstrate that it will not adversely impact Ward Circle or the surrounding traffic pattern.

\* \* \*



NAC Site Aerial

## 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, a secure campus surrounded by fencing, is bounded by the WRC-NBC television station to the north and east, Glover-Archbold Park to the east, and residential communities to the south. American University is west of Nebraska Avenue. The site currently has three access points: a main visitors' entry on Nebraska Avenue also used by shuttle buses, and two entry roads leading to parking lots for employees; one from Nebraska and one from Massachusetts 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. On February 1, 2007, the Commission approved preliminary and final site and building plans for replacement of Building 61. In addition, the Commission approved preliminary and final site development plans for a Generator Enclosure Facility, concept on July 26, 2007.

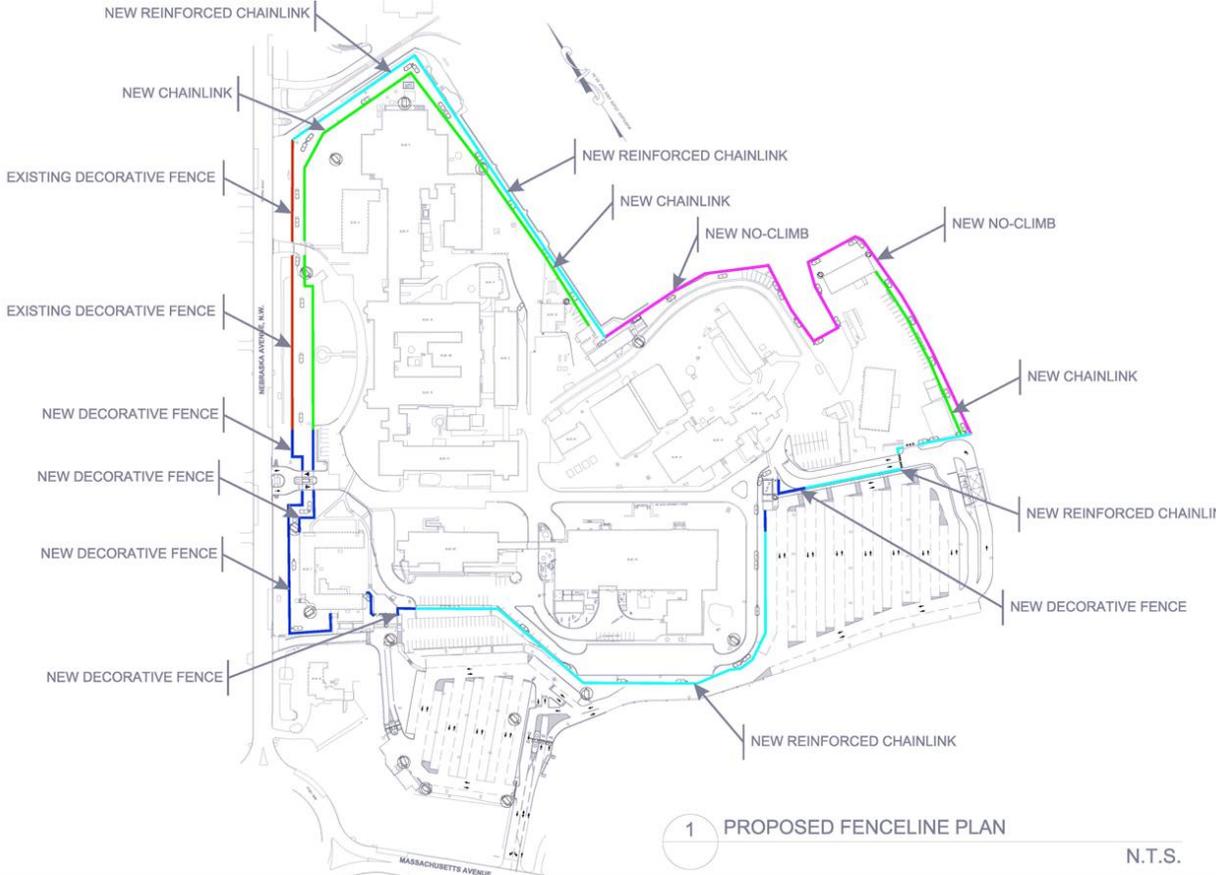
Also on July 26, 2007, the Commission commented on the concept submittal for this Campus Security Upgrades, requiring that the applicant, in the preliminary submission package to:

- Identify impacts of pole mounted cameras, site lighting, and lighting for the vehicle screening building, on Ward Circle and the Glover-Archbold Park
  - Submit visual simulations or renderings as well as technical information expressed in lumens to demonstrate any lighting spill-over beyond the property line.
- Show shuttle bus routes, wayfinding signs, and drop-off locations as well as an overall vehicle circulation plan sufficient to clarify the intention and to demonstrate that shifting shuttle bus drop-off points will not adversely impact Ward Circle or the traffic pattern, and

Advised the applicant that the additional information on lighting is required to determine whether the project would meet the Commission’s criteria for categorical exclusion under the National Environmental Policy Act.

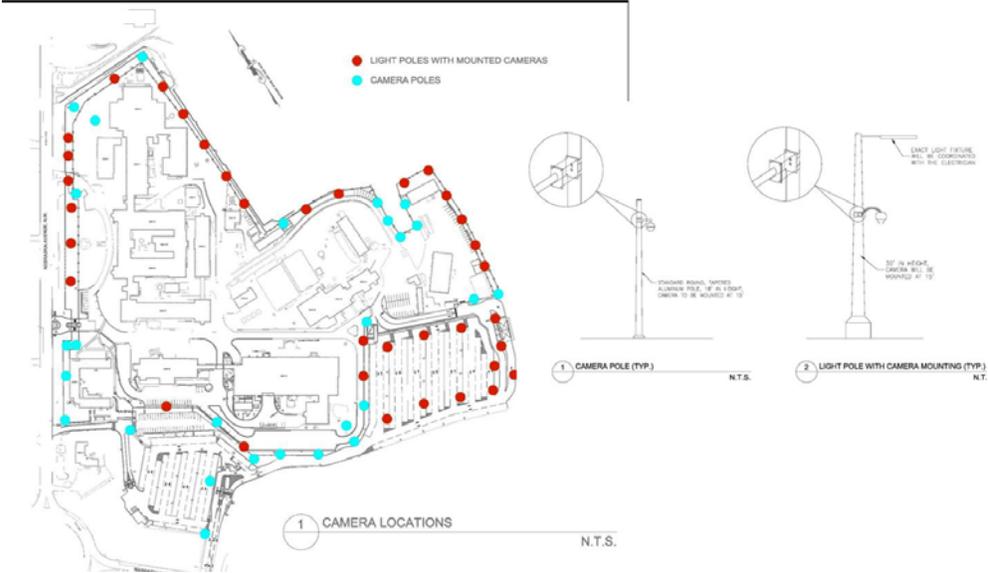
## Proposal

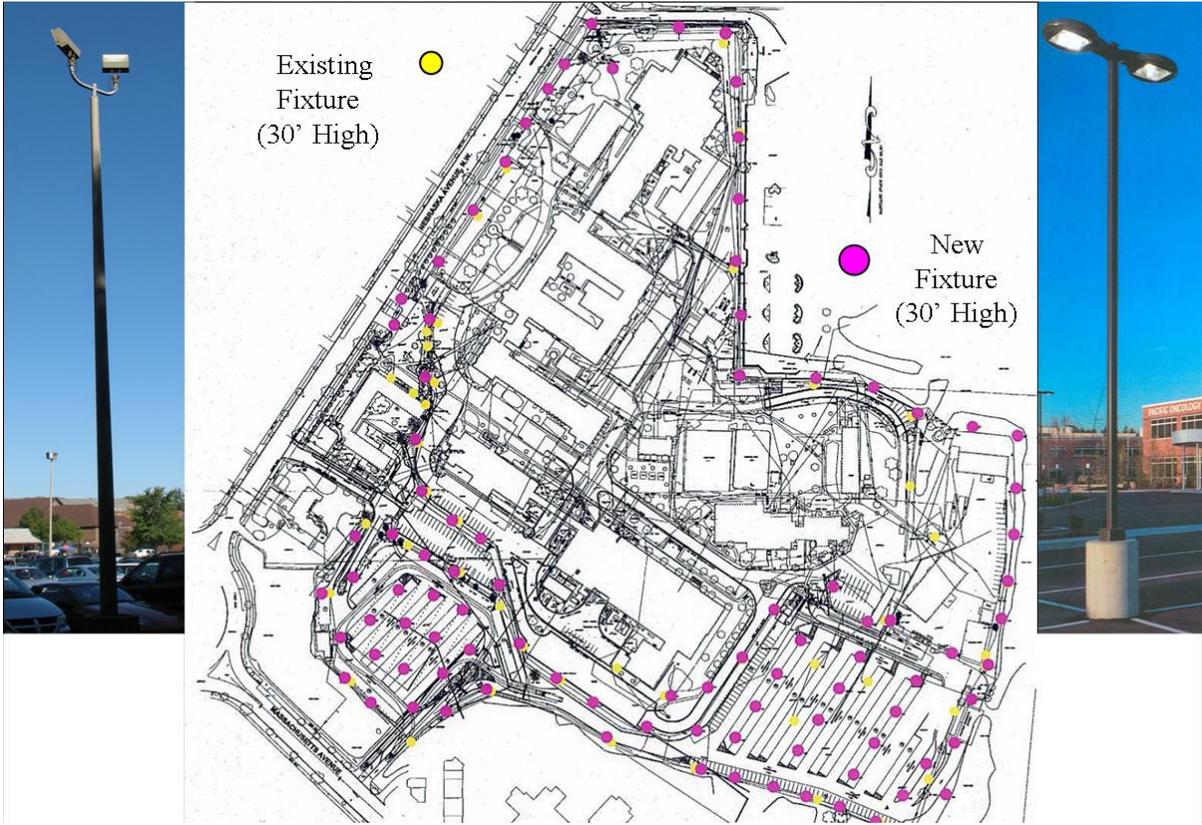
- Perimeter Fencing
  - Decorative - New perimeter fencing will replace all fencing along Nebraska Avenue except for the decorative iron fence. Decorative fencing will extend in front of Building 7 and the entire length of the NAC along Nebraska Avenue, as well as at the entrance to the Visitor Center at Building 7 and at Building 88.
  - No Climb “mini-mesh” and chain link fencing will be used at the remainder of the perimeter including the back side of the property in various combinations of double fencing with an open space between the two, and single fencing. The single fence lines and the inner fence adjacent to the decorative fence will be reinforced with cable.



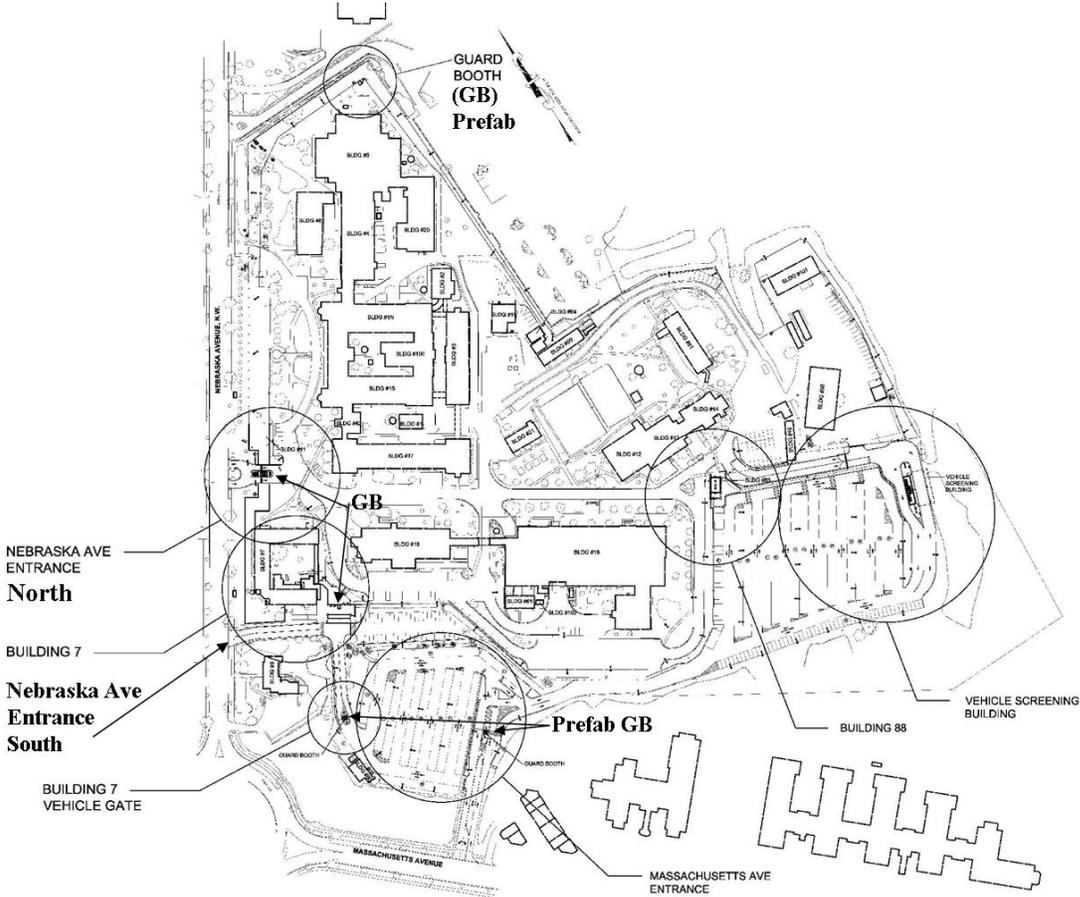
Proposed Fence Line Layout

- New cameras will be mounted at a height of 15 feet on 18-foot high poles and on 30-foot high light poles would be added along the fences, at gates, and at the perimeter, and new 30-foot high light fixtures will be added and replace existing lighting in the parking lots and at the perimeters.

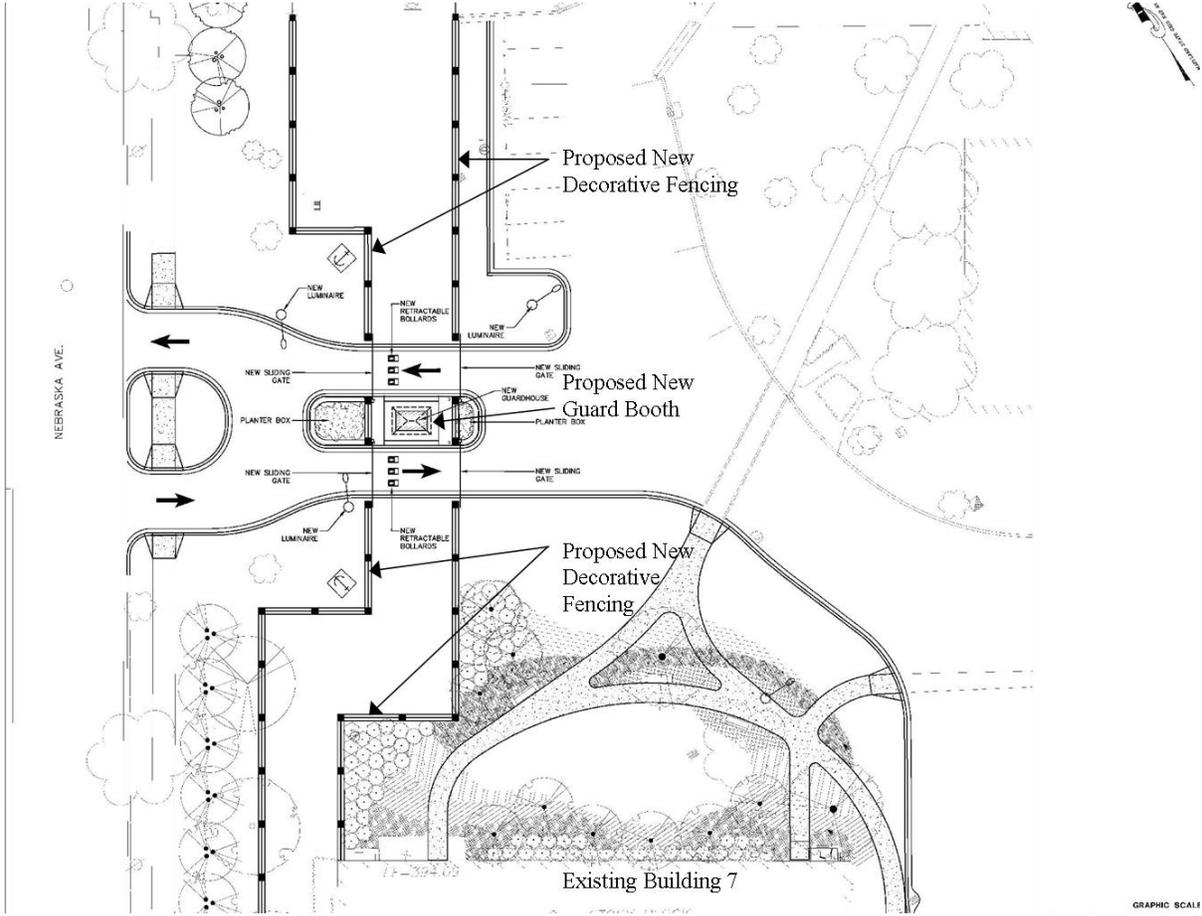




Proposed Lighting Layout (Above); Key Plan of Proposed Upgrades (Below)



- Modification of the Nebraska Avenue entrance configuration including the demolition of Building 11 and realignment of the fence.
  - The entrance for visitors including those in shuttle buses and cars will shift from the main entry on Nebraska Avenue to south of Building 7 (converted to an entry plaza), entered from the south entry road on Nebraska Avenue. The Nebraska Avenue entrance will be modified with a new central island and guard booth and sliding gates for use by VIP's and emergency vehicles only. Building 11 will be demolished and buffer space will be delineated between a double fence line. Some parking spaces will be converted to green space. A line of crepe myrtles will be added in front of Building 7 to continue those existing northwest of the main entry. Three retractable bollards are proposed inside the sliding gate crossing the lane on both sides of the island, and a planter box is shown outside the sliding gate.



Proposed Nebraska Avenue Entrance (North)

- Two buildings, Building 7 and Building 43 will be renovated.





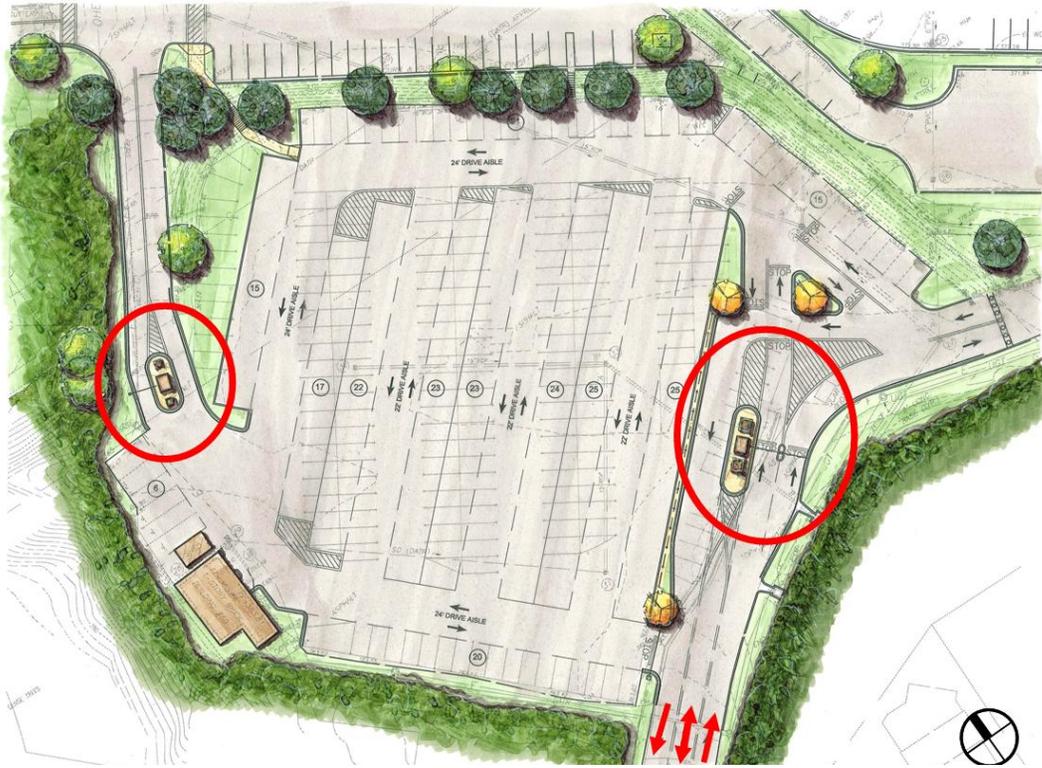
Building 7: Proposed (Southeast) Entry/Bridge Elevation



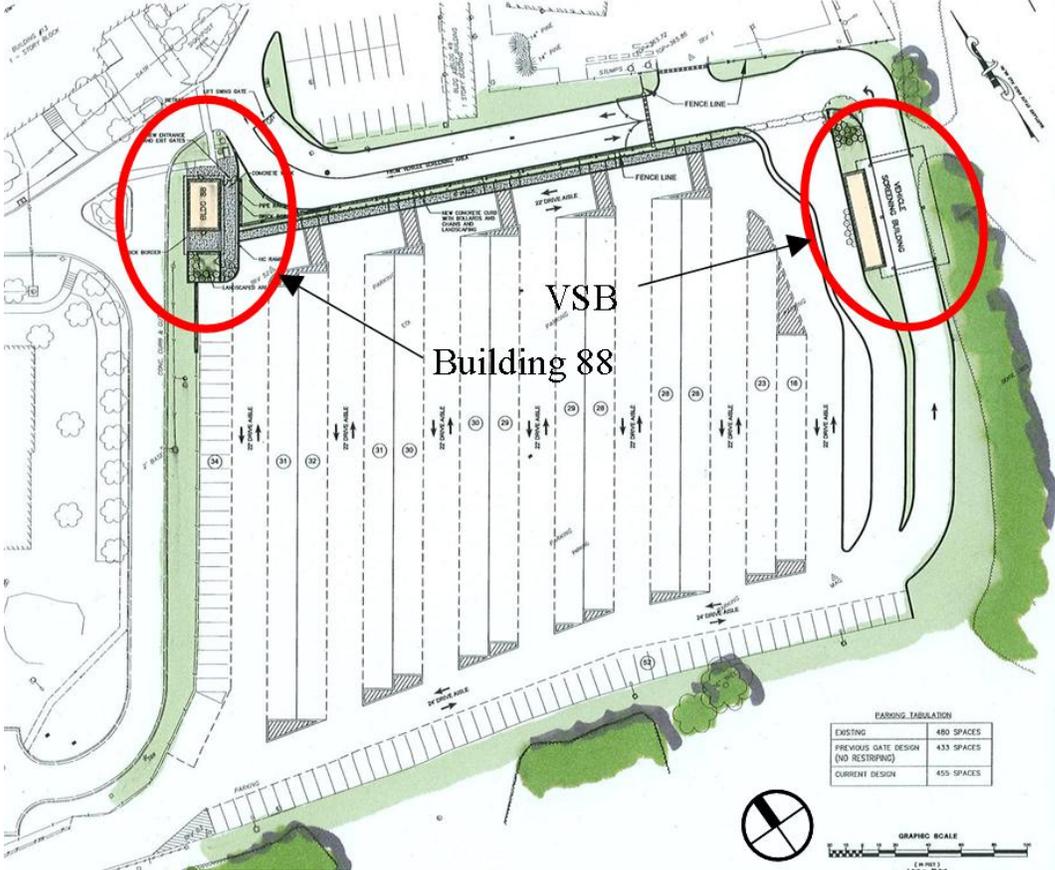
Perspective View from South

- Building 43 will have no changes evident from the exterior, but will be renovated on the interior for an electronic command center.
- Three of the five new guard booths will be prefabricated, each six feet by eight feet, and will be designed to be compatible with the existing architecture of the campus:
  - Two will flank the parking lot between Massachusetts and Nebraska Avenues;
  - One will be at the rear of Building 51 behind Bldg 5 to monitor fence line;

The other two guard booths will be located at the Nebraska Avenue Entrance and at Building 7's new plaza perimeter for badging, as mentioned in conjunction with Building 7.

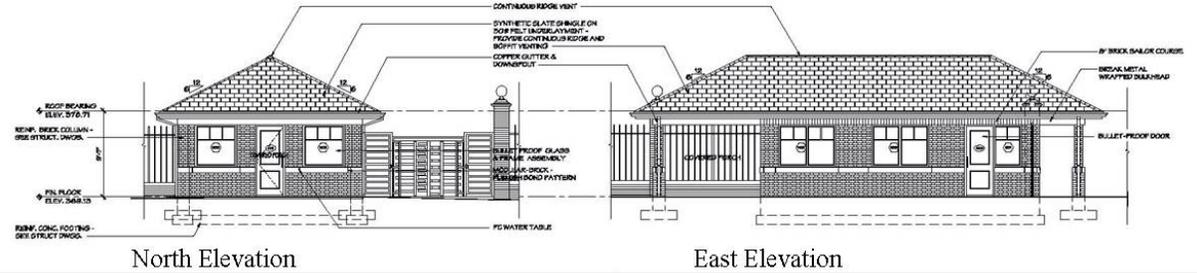


Proposed Guard Booth Locations Flanking Parking Lot

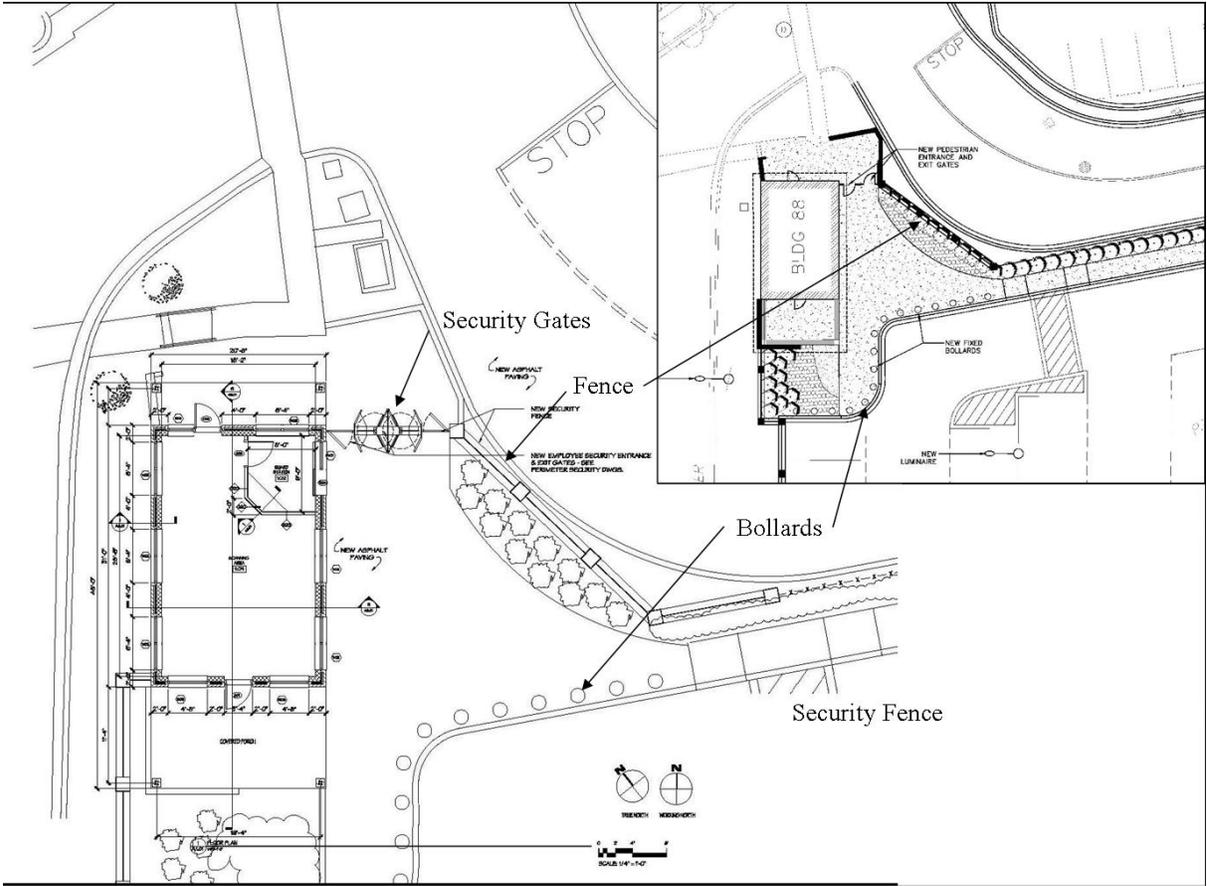


Proposed Screening Buildings

- Two new screening buildings: a replacement for Building 88 to screen staff and contractors during heightened security, and a vehicle screening building (VSB), are proposed.
  - Existing Building 88, with 280 square foot (SF), will be replaced with a 1,093 GSF facility that will accommodate new equipment and processing and have a covered exterior waiting area for weather protection. The brick pavilion with synthetic slate roof will also become part of the secure perimeter with an employee security gate and fence attached to it. Fencing immediately attached will be decorative with a brick pier.



Proposed Screening Building 88 Elevations

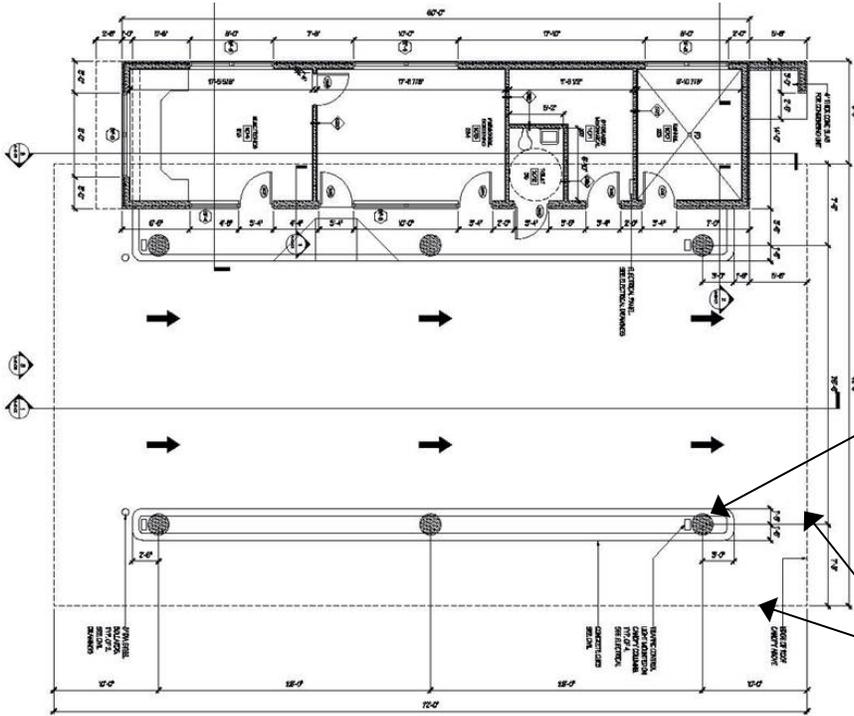


Proposed Screening Building 88 Layout

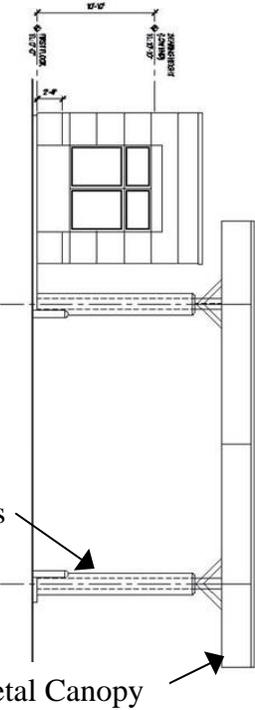
- The new VSB will replace a tent where vehicle screening is now performed, and where delivery trucks, staff and contractors who park inside the secure perimeter will be screened as warranted by the threat level. The VSB will include an exterior covered area for vehicle screening beneath a 20-foot high “floating” metal canopy “suspended” above round concrete columns supporting angled metal struts. Below, but not engaged by the canopy, an enclosed structure with a roof sloped up to 15 feet high with a metal facade and contain a guards’ office and a kennel for two dogs. Pole mounted light fixtures 30 feet high will flank the VSB canopy.



Proposed Vehicle Screening Building East Elevation



Proposed Vehicle Screening Building Plan



South Elevation

Currently, the NAC has 1,129 existing parking spaces. The proposed work will reduce the number of parking spaces to 1,059. The number of employees is proposed to increase by 200 (from 1,600 to 1,800) within five years, and to remain constant at that level for the next 15 years.

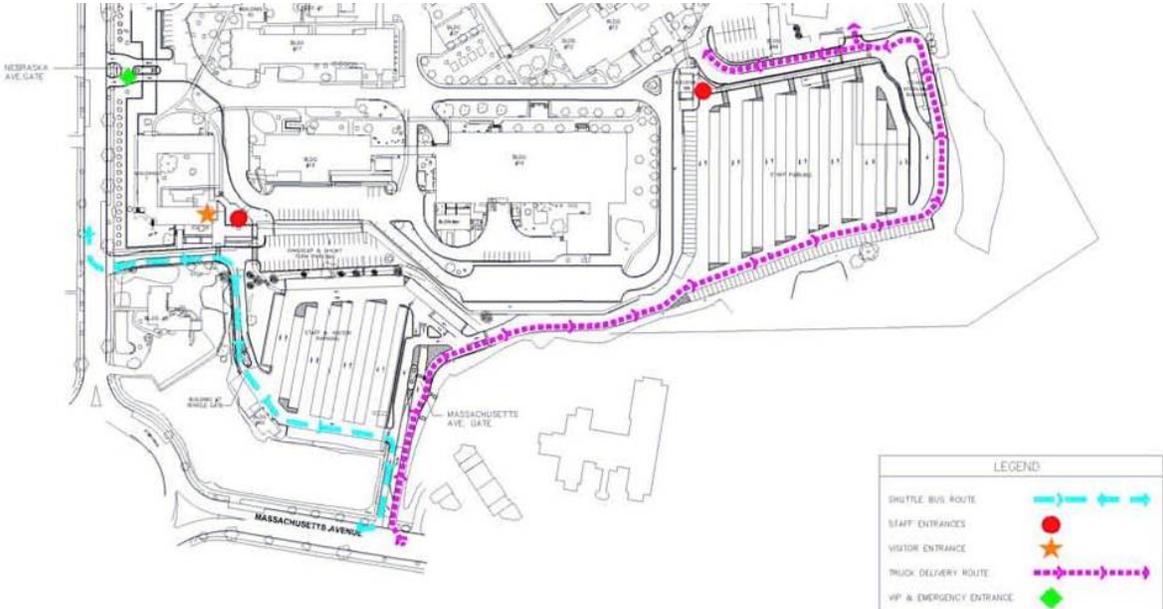
Development Program

Applicant:	General Services Administration	
Architects:	The Lukemire Partnership, Inc	
Estimated Cost:	\$13.2 M (Includes Building 43 Interior Renovation)	
Schedule:	Building 43	2007 - 2008
	Building 88	2007 - 2008
	Massachusetts Avenue Guard Booths	2008
	Bldg 7	2008 - 2009
	Nebraska Ave enhancements	2009

PROJECT ANALYSIS

Executive Summary

Overall, staff believes the proposals to upgrade campus security at the NAC represent a reasonable approach for the campus. The various projects propose reuse, repair and renovation where possible and only resort to new facilities where reuse is not feasible. The approach covers the landscape elements such as fencing, as well as buildings. Since the number of employees is proposed to increase, but by less than 500, and the number of parking spaces will be reduced, staff does not believe a transportation management plan is required with this submittal. However, staff notes that although the parking ratio will improve slightly due to the project, it will fall far short of the parking ratio required for its location within the District.



Site Circulation Plan

- Perimeter Fencing

Staff supports the continuation and extension of the decorative fencing along Nebraska Avenue to unify the appearance along Nebraska Avenue. Staff commends the applicant for converting

from chain link to decorative fencing at other personnel entrance points, as recommended in consultation. Staff further supports the use of more industrial types of fencing at the back of the NAC, as well as the use of no-climb mini-mesh fencing where there will be no visual observation of the fence line by guards. Staff understands and notes that all perimeter fencing will occur inside the property line, and not in public space.

- Modification of Nebraska Avenue entrance configuration

The applicant has indicated that the project will improve the circulation at entrances and throughout the campus. Streamlining both vehicle and pedestrian circulation (roads, sidewalks and plazas), and earmarking various entry points for use by various types of users will improve its legibility. The main (north) entrance on Nebraska will no longer be cluttered by various users or by unclear circulation such as shuttle buses that must turn around. A new traffic island will streamline one-way traffic on either side. In addition, its users will be streamlined to VIPs and emergency vehicles only. Staff supports the conversion of miscellaneous parking lots, as well as Building 11 to be demolished, into green space and plaza, which will also increase the buffer space between double fence lines. Staff further supports the drive-through routing of shuttle buses, entering on Nebraska and proceeding to exit directly onto Massachusetts Avenue without requiring turn-around space.

- Renovation of Buildings 7 and 43

Staff views the proposed design for additions and exterior renovations to or Building 7 as appropriate for the purpose and function the building will serve, and reiterates support for converting cluttered asphalt parking areas to a plaza that would serve as queuing space for visitor badging and have a green planted edge, as well as green space with new trees.

Building 43, a contributing resource to the historic district, will be treated so that the exterior will not be altered and the façade will have no changes, which staff finds appropriate.

- New guard booths

The guard booth elevations that are included in the submittal show facade materials that are compatible with the existing architecture on the campus, and have made effective use of planters in front of the guard booths. Although the low planting in them is not delineated, staff supports the use of as much additional planting around the guard booths as possible to soften these areas.

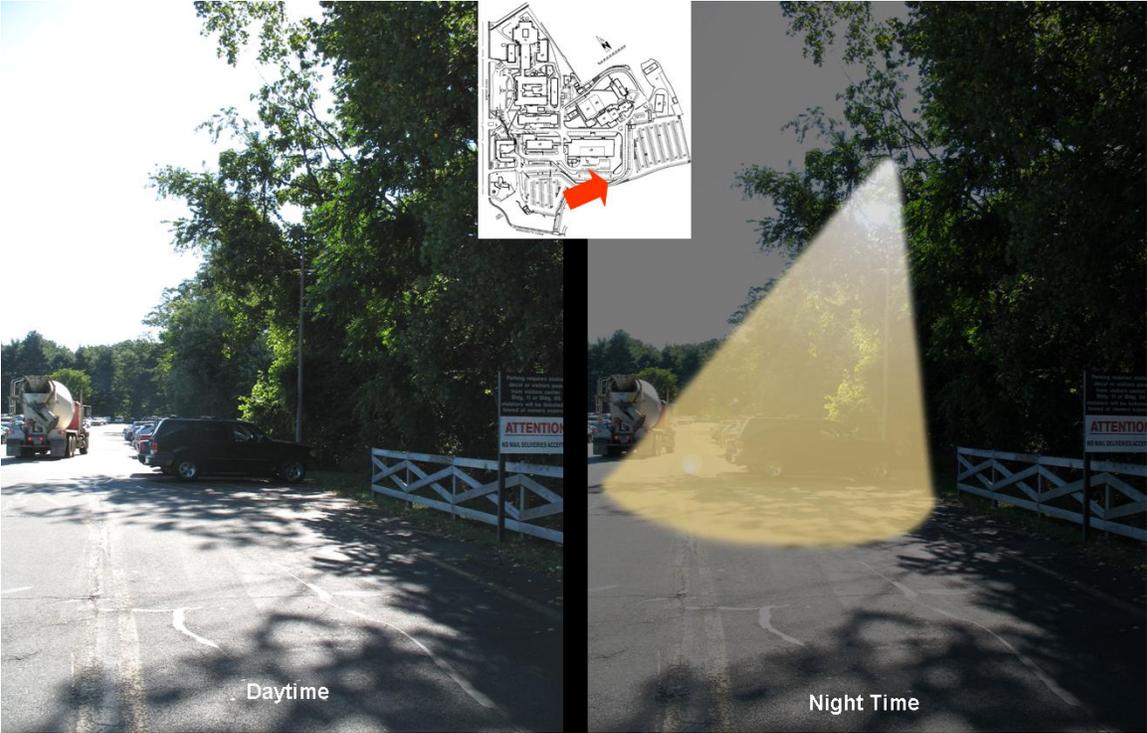
- Two new screening buildings, Building 88 and VSB

Staff views the proposed designs for both buildings as appropriate to each context. Building 88, closer to the brick structures on the campus, has taken its cues from those buildings. The façade of the VSB will relate to the new façade on Building 7, also metal and glass. As the pedestrian and vehicular entrances into the NAC, the use of similar materials and detailing will reflect a uniformly “hi-tech” image upon entering the DHS campus. Staff would support the use of as much additional planting at parking lot edges as possible to soften and screen these areas.

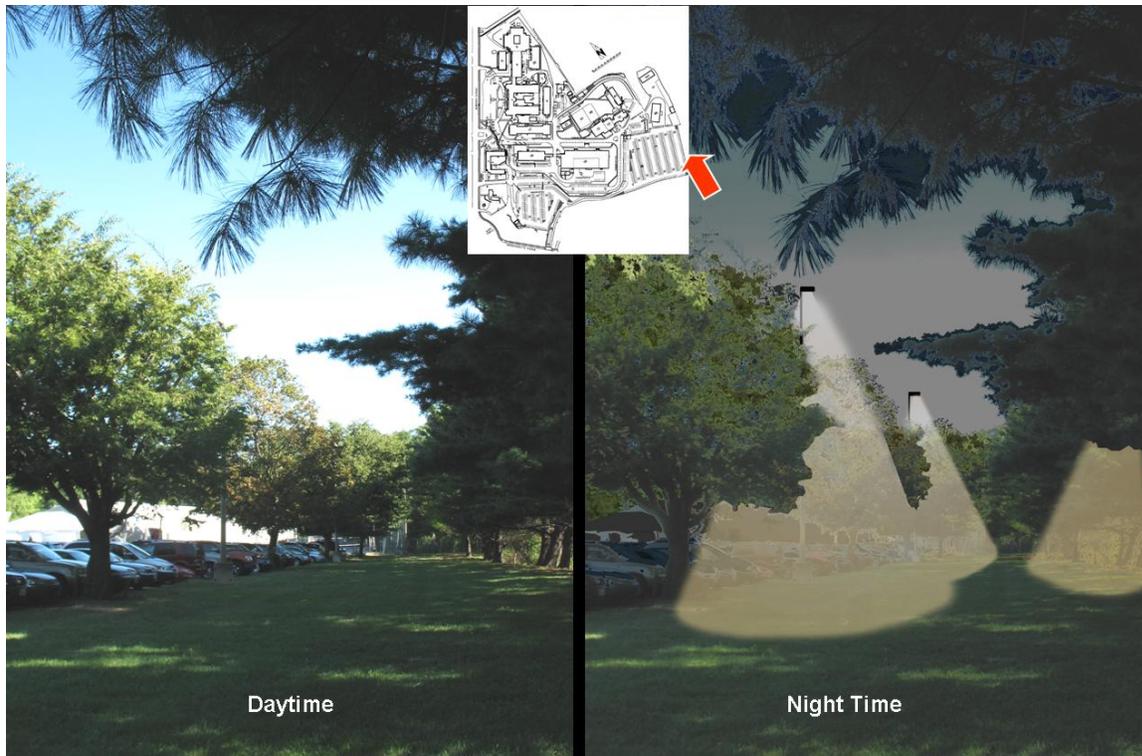


Proposed Vehicle Screening Building Elevation Night

In response to the Commission’s request at concept submittal to submit visual simulations or renderings to demonstrate any lighting spill-over beyond the property line, the applicant has submitted an elevation to simulate lighting conditions at night at the VSB. It demonstrates the improved directional lighting that will be provided to replace existing flood lighting. Even though lighting is not entirely contained on the underside of the canopy, the fixtures’ downward direction is much improved from the existing flood lighting conditions that the applicant encountered. The following images further demonstrate how the applicant’s lighting scheme at the campus perimeter will improve upon the existing by directing the light rather than flooding.



Day vs. Night Time Lighting Simulation Looking East along the South, East Perimeter



Day vs. Night Time Lighting Simulation Looking North along the East (Park) Perimeter

## 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. At this time, GSA has not adopted the Navy's master 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 Campus Security Upgrades subject to certain conditions the Commission requires.

#### National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA)

GSA has determined that the action to upgrade perimeter security for the NAC campus meets requirements for its agency’s categorical exclusion 5.4 (b). Staff review of GSA’s category 5.4(b) generally equates to NCPC’s categorical exclusion as specified at § 8 (21) of the Commission’s Environmental and Historic Preservation Policies and Procedures, together with supplemental lighting information the applicant provided have convinced staff that the project is covered by NCPC’s categorical exclusion. Information submitted indicates that the applicant’s scheme to replace existing lighting will improve any light pollution that may exist. Spillover from the Vehicle Screening Building as well as along the perimeters shown appear to be minimal, and would not trigger the need for an environmental assessment under NEPA.

#### National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA)

The NAC is a historic district with National Register eligibility. Based on a 1994 Architectural Survey Report prepared for the Navy which assessed each building at the NAC which the applicant has attached, Building 43 is the only building included in the campus security upgrade that was recommended eligible under National Register Criteria as a component of the historic Naval Communications Annex. In a letter to the DC SHPO dated June 29, 2007, GSA stated that the results of the proposed actions will not compromise those qualities allowing the site to be eligible for inclusion in the National Register, and has concluded that no adverse effects will result from the undertaking. The DC SHPO signed its concurrence with the applicant’s finding on July 16, 2007.

#### CONSULTATION

##### Coordinating Committee

The Coordinating Committee at its July 11, 2007 meeting reviewed the proposals for the NAC Campus Security Upgrades and forwarded them to the Commission with the statement that the project has been coordinated with all agencies represented.

##### Commission of Fine Arts

The Commission of Fine Arts reviewed the proposed concept at its July 19, 2007 Commission Meeting, at which time they voted to approve the concept. However, during the meeting, commissioners strongly recommended that the applicant study further the design and selection of materials for the fence line at the rear perimeters of the campus to unify its overall appearance.