

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

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NCPC File No. 1841



**CHANCERY OF ISRAEL BUILDING ADDITION
INTERNATIONAL CENTER
Van Ness Street and Reno Road, NW
Washington, D.C.**

Submitted by the United States Department of State

August 30, 2007

Abstract

The United States Department of State, on behalf of the Chancery of Israel, is submitting final site and building plans for expansion of the Chancery, located at the International Center at the intersection of Van Ness Street and Reno Road, NW. The expansion will include a building addition to serve as the Ambassador's residence and related landscape and site modifications.

Commission Actions Requested by Applicant

Approval of final site and building plans for the Chancery addition pursuant to the International Center Act of 1968, Public Law 90-553 as amended by Public Law 97-186 (1982), at Section 3.

Executive Director's Recommendation

The Commission:

Approves the final site and building plans for a building addition and related site modifications to the Chancery of Israel, except for permanent perimeter security along Van Ness Street, NW, as shown on NCPC Map File No. 72.10(38.00)42320.

Notes that the applicant will coordinate with the NCPC staff during construction to review lighting schemes for the Chancery addition.

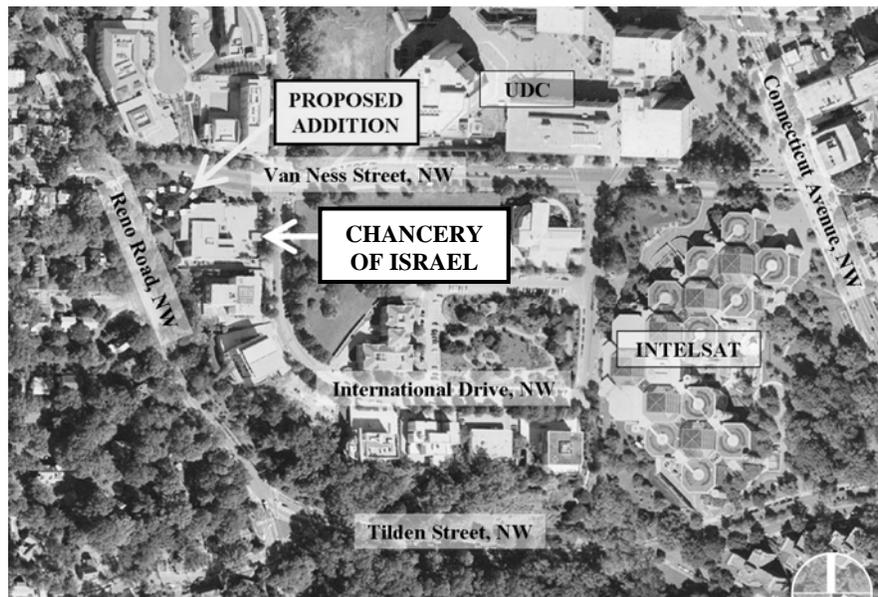
Notes that the applicant will submit designs for permanent perimeter security along Van Ness Street, NW at a later date; and that related work within the public right-of-way will be coordinated with the D.C. Department of Transportation.

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PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Background

The Israeli Chancery was the first chancery to be constructed at the International Center in 1980, and occupies one of the smallest lots. Since that time the overall mission and security needs of the Chancery have evolved, and an addition is needed to provide additional working area as well as a residence for the Ambassador. By combining the residential function within the Chancery, it will allow the Department of State to provide the type of security that is required at one central location rather than at two separate locations.



PROJECT LOCATION

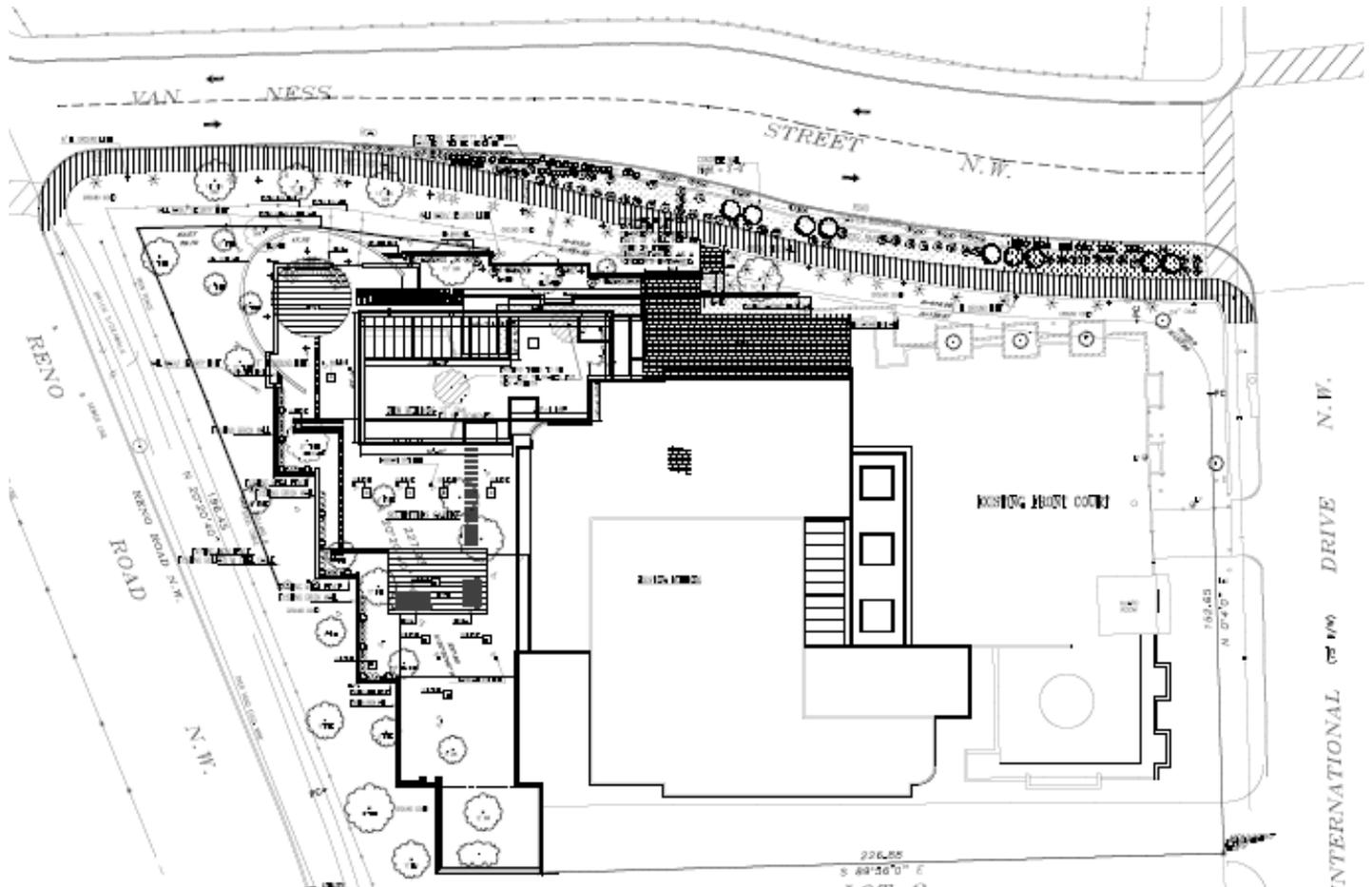
Site

The Chancery of Israel is located on Lot 1 of the International Center in northwest Washington, and is bounded by Van Ness Street to the north, International Drive to the east, Reno Road to the west, and the Chancery of Ghana to the south. The site is generally flat, with a gentle slope down from west to east.

Proposal

The United States Department of State (DOS) is submitting final site and building plans for a building expansion to the Chancery of Israel. The proposed 2,767-square-foot, three-story addition will provide an Ambassador's residence and reception hall, and connect to the existing Chancery at its northwest corner. The goal and program of the proposed addition is to provide a secure space to accommodate the current needs of the Chancery in a single location, while also creating architecture that complements the existing building and reflects the image of present day Israel. The addition will be constructed of cast-in-place concrete clad with internally illuminated glazed skin that will be etched and sandblasted with tree designs. Access to the new portions of

the Chancery will be from the current building or through the existing secure courtyard; a secondary entrance off of Van Ness Street, NW will provide pedestrian access for the Ambassador or emergency egress should an evacuation be necessary. The project will also include site improvements such as a sculpture garden, landscaping, and replacement of the corner segments of the existing brick security screen wall with a curved metal wall; the curved wall will be placed over a foundation plan at the ground plane representational of an ancient temple.



**SITE PLAN
TREE COVER, GARDEN DESIGN, AND PAVING**

At the preliminary design submission, the Commission required more information with regard to tree cover, including retention, removal, and new plantings. The final site plan includes the removal of one tree and the relocation of four existing site trees; the remainder of existing site trees has been incorporated into the site plan for the addition and garden designs.

The glass walls of the addition will be lit internally and operated with a dimmer system. The dimmer system will be programmable so that preset schemes with timing and illumination levels coordinated with the seasons and daylight hours can be developed; illumination levels are expected to range between three and five foot-candles and final schemes will be determined through on-site mock-ups that will include review by NCPC and the Commission of Fine Arts.



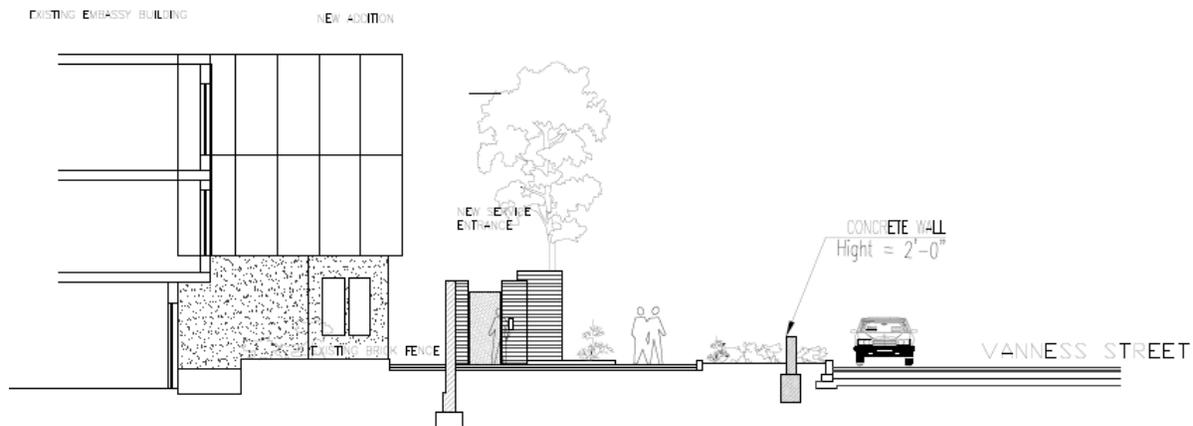
PROPOSED CHANCERY ADDITION – NIGHTTIME VIEW
(View from Van Ness Street, NW - Looking East)

Samples of the curved metal wall and etched glass have been submitted, as required by the previous Commission action. The wall material is Corten steel and will be embellished with inscriptions of palm trees and biblical quotations in Hebrew and English; the design intent of the wall is to enhance the western gateway to the International Center.



EXISTING CHANCERY AND PROPOSED ADDITION
(View from Van Ness Street, NW - Looking West)

The Commission also required additional information with regard to the relationship of new construction with the existing building and streetscape. A section through the site illustrates the vertical and horizontal relationships that will result from the proposed work. Perimeter security elements, such as a concrete wall, are depicted on the site section but are only conceptual; ongoing coordination with the D.C. Department of Transportation is planned to complete a design for elements within the public right-of-way and will be submitted for review at a later date.



SITE SECTION

PREVIOUS COMMISSION ACTIONS

At its March 30, 1979 meeting, the Commission approved the final site and building plans for the Chancery of Israel in the International Center, as shown on NCPC Map File No. 72.10(38.00)28606. The Chancery of Israel was the first facility built in the International Center.

At its December 6, 2001 meeting, the Commission approved the preliminary and final site development plans for the security wall at the Chancery of Israel in the International Center, as shown on NCPC Map File No 72.10(38.00)40971.

At its May 4, 2006 meeting, the Commission approved the concept design for the building addition. In its Action at that meeting, the Commission also required the applicant to submit justification and waivers for items that did not comply with the Development Controls, permission for construction on DOS property, information regarding exterior lighting, documentation of compliance with environmental policies, and additional information about the pedestrian entrance on Van Ness Street; all the requested information was provided as part of this Preliminary Design submission.

At its July 12, 2007, the Commission approved the preliminary site and building plans for the Chancery expansion, and required a fully developed site plan identifying trees and site features, additional detailed plans and elevations, and material samples of the curtain wall glazing and metal security wall.

PROJECT ANALYSIS

Staff continues to support the proposed addition to the Chancery of Israel and finds that the proposed final design is compatible with the existing Chancery with regard to both massing and scale. The introduction of new building materials and site elements will conceptually serve as an interesting new gateway to the western entrance of the International Center. The site plantings, tree cover, terrace and garden elements, and private entry to the residence have been designed appropriate to the existing building and to the site, preserving the majority of existing tree cover.

Staff finds that the proposed site and building lighting is appropriate to the design, and will not adversely affect any neighboring properties. Staff is also supportive of the site and landscaping design, and commends the applicant for minimizing removal and disturbance of existing site trees. Ongoing consultation with NCPC should continue in order to develop designs for permanent perimeter security along Van Ness Street, NW; and related work within the public right-of-way should also be coordinated with the D.C. Department of Transportation.

The material samples provided for the glass curtain wall and metal security wall appear to be of a high quality and are also aesthetically compatible with the existing chancery. Fabrication and/or installation of the etched glass, however, will need to consider methods for preventing dirt to accumulate in recessed areas on the back face; the design team is encouraged to continue their investigations into the use of “self-cleaning” glass and also to consider alternative lighting systems (such as fiber optics) that may allow for the cavity between the concrete and glass walls to be sealed.

CONFORMANCE

Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital

Staff has determined that the proposed project is consistent with the *Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital: Federal Elements*, in particular policies in the Foreign Missions and International Organizations Element. The addition “will demonstrate an appreciation of the architectural style and landscape of the surrounding environs while representing the finest architectural thought or the corresponding nation” and will “add visual interest and character, contribute to the cultural life, and promote diverse and lively communities.” The landscape design will “promote a beautiful and healthy environment by preserving the tree canopy and avoiding the destruction of mature trees.”

National Environmental Policy Act

The site and building plans for the Chancery building addition have been reviewed by the Department, which states that the work is consistent with the policies and objectives of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969. NCPC Staff has reviewed the original Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the International Center and has determined that no additional environmental assessment is required for the building addition. Staff has reviewed the waiver requests submitted by the Department of State, and determined that the addition of less than 3,000 square feet and some additional landscape improvements would not be a significant change requiring further assessment.

National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA)

The Department of State has determined that proposed actions inside the International Chancery Center are not subject to further review under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act because the buildings are not eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. The staff concurs, finding also that National Register-listed residential properties to the south of the Center would not be affected by the proposed project.

CONSULTATION

Coordinating Committee

The Coordinating Committee reviewed the proposal on June 13, 2007, and forwarded the proposal to the Commission with the statement that the project has been coordinated with all agencies represented. The participating agencies were: NCPC, the District of Columbia Office of Planning, the District Department of Transportation; the Department of Housing and Community Development; the General Services Administration and the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority.