

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

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NCPC File No. 6796



**WASHINGTON DULLES INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT
DULLES ACCESS ROAD MEDIAN LANDSCAPING RENOVATION**
Loudoun County, Virginia

Submitted by the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority

January 31, 2008

Abstract

The Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority is submitting preliminary and final site and building plans for the Dulles Access Road Median Landscaping Renovation Project at Washington Dulles International Airport located in Loudoun County, Virginia. The proposed landscaping will include the planting of river birch trees and ornamental groundcover over a quarter mile stretch of the access roadway median. The protection of views of the main terminal from the Dulles Access Road is important.

Commission Action Requested by Applicant

Approval of comments on preliminary and final site development plans pursuant to the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority and the National Capital Planning Commission dated November 2, 1988.

Executive Director's Recommendation

The Commission:

Comments favorably on the preliminary and final site development landscaping plans in the median of the Dulles Access Road at Washington Dulles International Airport located in Loudoun County, Virginia, as shown on NCPC Map File No. 23.01(47.20)42426.

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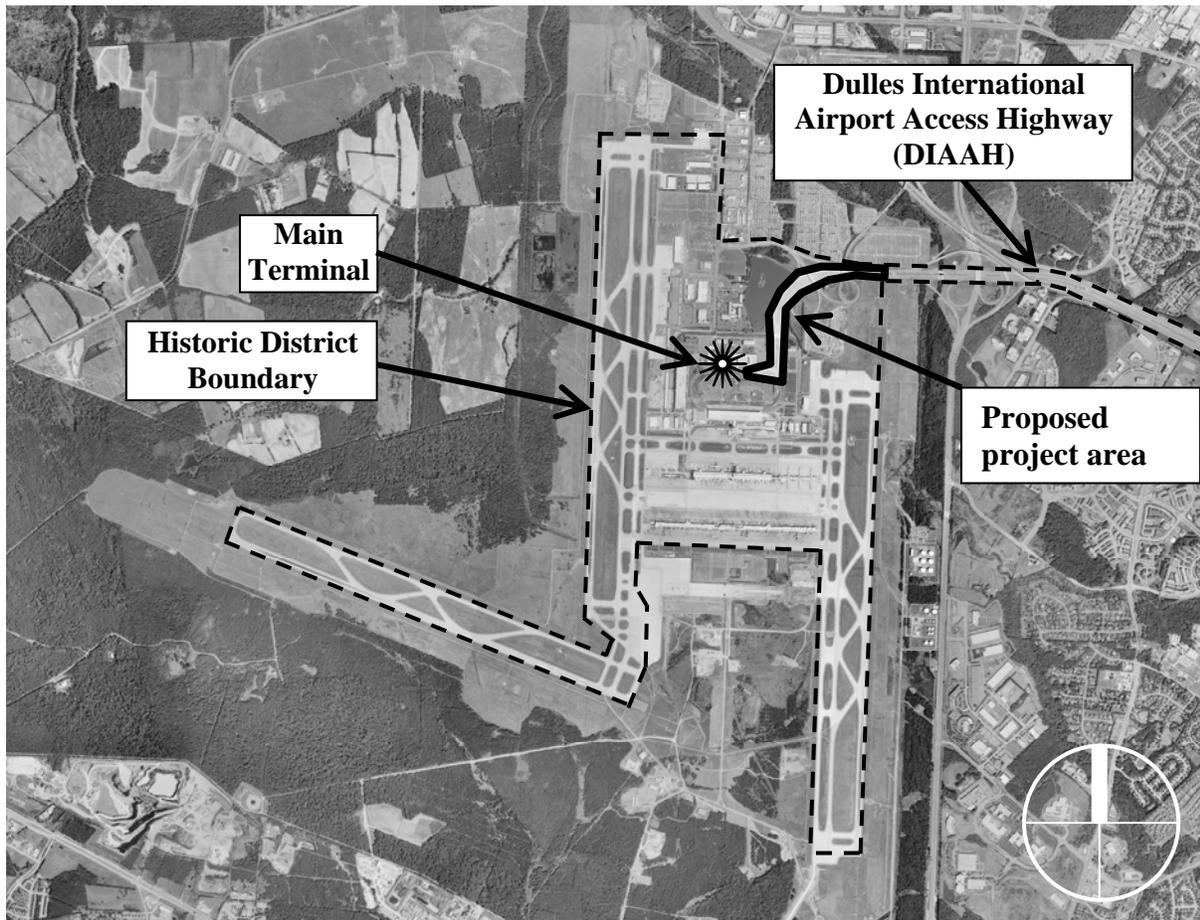
PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Site

Dulles International Airport is built on 12,000 acres situated in Loudoun and Fairfax Counties in Virginia and located approximately 26 miles west of Washington, D.C. A 16-mile Dulles International Airport Access Highway (DIAAH) provides two dedicated lanes in each direction and a direct connection to Interstate Route I-66 and the Capital Beltway.

Dulles currently serves more than 63,000 passengers a day (nearly 23 million passengers a year) and operates three runways. Public parking is available for more than 25,000 vehicles on surface lots and within structured parking facilities. The airport property is surrounded by a landscaped greenbelt that buffers it from surrounding development.

The original main terminal building, designed by Eero Saarinen and completed in 1962, was immediately recognized as one of the most important post-World War II American architectural works and as one of the most innovative airport designs. David Kiley was the landscape architect who collaborated with Eero Saarinen in the design of the airport. In 1966, the American Institute of Architects selected the main terminal for a First Honor Award. In 1978, the main terminal was determined eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.



AERIAL: DULLES INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

Background

The Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority (Airports Authority) is a public body, politic and corporate, created with the consent of United States Congress by the District of Columbia Regional Airports Authority Act of 1985 (D.C. Law 6-67), as amended, and Ch. 598, Virginia Acts of Assembly of 1985, as amended. In accordance with a 50-year Agreement and Deed of Lease effective June 7, 1987, as amended, the Airports Authority assumed operating responsibility for Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport and Washington Dulles International Airport upon the transfer of a leasehold interest in the airports from the federal government to the Airports Authority in accordance with the Metropolitan Washington Airports Act of 1986 (Title VI, P.L. 102-240, effective December 18, 1991, and P.L. 104-264, effective October 1996). The purpose of the Airports Authority is to plan, develop, promote, and safely operate both airports in the Washington region, while striving to improve efficiency, customer satisfaction, and the level of aviation service.

On November 2, 1988, the National Capital Planning Commission and the Airports Authority entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) regarding the provision of advisory planning services for Washington Dulles International Airport and Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport. Section 6009(d) of P.L. 99-591 states that the Airports Authority shall consult with the Commission before undertaking any major alterations to the exterior of the main terminal at Dulles and projects that significantly affect the appearance and views to the main terminal, particularly from the DIAAH approach sequence. The Airports Authority will submit master plan revisions, preliminary site and building plans, and final site and building plans (only required if revisions are made to preliminary submission or a submission is specifically requested by the Commission because of their potential impact on the main terminal) for the Commission's comments and recommendations.

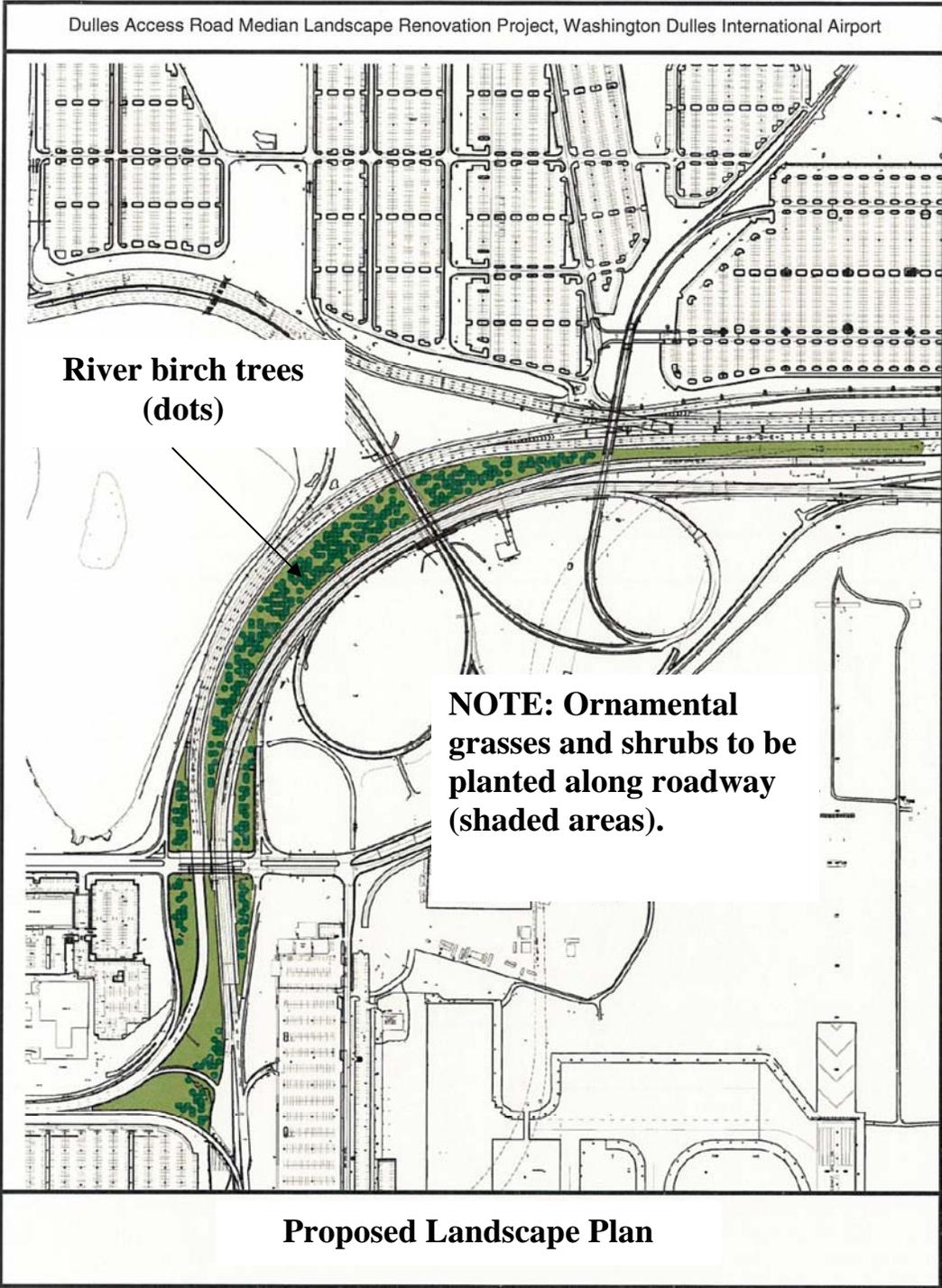
Proposal

The proposed project site is located along the DIAAH and in the area of the airport grounds where passengers enter and depart the terminal from ground transportation. The project area is approximately 12.4 acres and was originally part of that designed by Dan Kiley in the 1960s. Dan Kiley's plan called for plantings of aspen however plums trees were planted and have since died. Other plants also have failed due to the airport environment and Japanese Beetles. New plantings that are hardy and pest resistant, but reflect the character of the original design have been selected. The following are the areas and design concepts for the project site:

- Flagpole area: mound area planted with grasses and small shrubs
- Access road median: river birch trees that mirror the original Kiley design
- Ground plane: will be planted with grasses and other ground cover

This project includes the planting of the following:

- 273 large trees (Heritage river birch)
- 212 deciduous shrubs (Mt. Airy Fothergilla)
- 8909 ornamental grass plants (fountaingrass, squaw switchgrass, heavy metal switchgrass)
- 6000 groundcover plants (creeping lillyturf)



Development Program

Applicant: Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority
Cost: Approximately \$2,000,000, Funded by the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority Capital Construction Program
Schedule: Construction is anticipated to begin in spring of 2008

PROJECT ANALYSIS

Executive Summary

Staff **recommends that the Commission comment favorably** to the Airports Authority on the preliminary and final site building plans for the landscaping along the DIAAH at Washington Dulles International Airport.

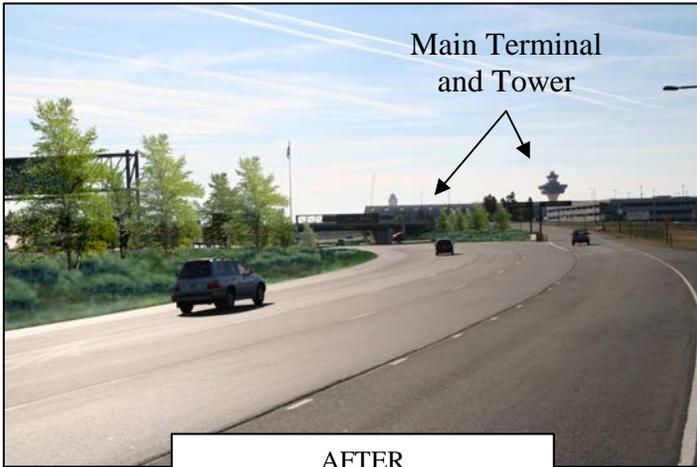
Pursuant to the MOU between NCPC and the Airports Authority, NCPC staff reviews attentive to the ramifications of any proposed changes to the Airport Master Plan, projects that significantly affect the appearance of the Main terminal, and views to the Main terminal, particularly the approach sequence views from the DIAAH.

Historically, development plans for Washington Dulles International Airport have recognized the importance of limiting the height and location of structures in the vicinity of the main terminal so that the architectural significance of the main terminal in its landscape setting would not be compromised. As the photos below show, the Airports Authority’s thorough view shed analysis clearly demonstrates that the proposed project siting will not negatively affect the visibility of the main terminal from the DIAAH approach sequence. Staff believes that the proposed landscaping will be an aesthetic improvement to the approach that will greatly enhance the DIAAH and main terminal environs.

Staff commends the Airports Authority for proposing this improvement that will be viewed by the many visitors passing through Dulles International Airport each year.



BEFORE
View of Dulles International Airport Access Highway Landscaping



AFTER
View of Dulles International Airport Access Highway Landscaping

CONFORMANCE

Relevant Facility Master Plan

The proposed project is consistent with the land use master plan and the terminal plan approved by the Commission on July 31, 1986.

Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital

Staff has determined that the proposed project is not in consistent with the *Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital: Federal Elements*, in particular, the following polices in the Stewardship of Historic Properties section of the Preservation and Historic Features Element:

5. Identify and protect both the significant design integrity and the use of historic landscapes and open spaces (p. 164)
6. Protect the setting of historic properties, including views to and from the sites where significant, as integral parts of the historic character of the property. (p. 164)

Federal Capital Improvements Program

Since the Airports Authority is not a federal agency operating with appropriations from Congress, this project is not included in the Federal Capital Improvements Program.

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)

Since the Airports Authority is not a federal agency and NCPC has advisory responsibility only, there is no NEPA requirement.

National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA)

Since NCPC has an advisory responsibility role in this project, it has no independent Section 106 responsibility. Pursuant to the MOU between NCPC and the Airports Authority, staff finds that the proposed project will not adversely impact the historic views of the main terminal from the DIAAH.

In January 16, 2008, the Virginia State Historic Preservation Office (VA SHPO) submitted a finding that concurred with the Airports Authority. This finding stated that the introduction of new landscaping was consistent with the 1987 Programmatic Agreement and “will not represent an adverse effect of the character defining attributes of this important contributing element of the Dulles Airport Historic District.” Also, this finding stated that the landscaping is located so that views of the main terminal from the DIAAH are not obstructed and that the integrity of the main terminal and its surrounding historic district are retained.