

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

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NCPC File No. 6840



DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA CONSOLIDATED FORENSIC LABORATORY

401 E Street, SW
Washington, D.C.

Submitted by the District of Columbia Office of Property Management

April 24, 2008

Abstract

The District of Columbia Office of Property Management has submitted preliminary and final site and building plans for a consolidated forensic laboratory that will house the Metropolitan Police Department Forensic Laboratory, the Public Health Lab, and the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner for the Government of the District of Columbia. The site is located at 401 E Street, SW, bounded by E, 4th and School Streets, SW. The site is owned by the District of Columbia and is located within two blocks of the L'Enfant Plaza and Southwest Federal Center Metrorail stations. The site is one block north of the Southeast/Southwest Freeway.

The building design is particularly notable for its environmental sustainability features which include a vegetated roof, a water reclamation system, systems and materials to provide a 20 percent increase in energy efficiency, and low flow water fixtures. The 6-story building will open in 2011.

Commission Action Requested by Applicant

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

Executive Director's Recommendation

The Commission:

Approves the preliminary and final site and building plans for the Consolidated Forensic Laboratory at 401 E Street, SW as shown on NCPC Map File No. 24.12(38.00)42532.

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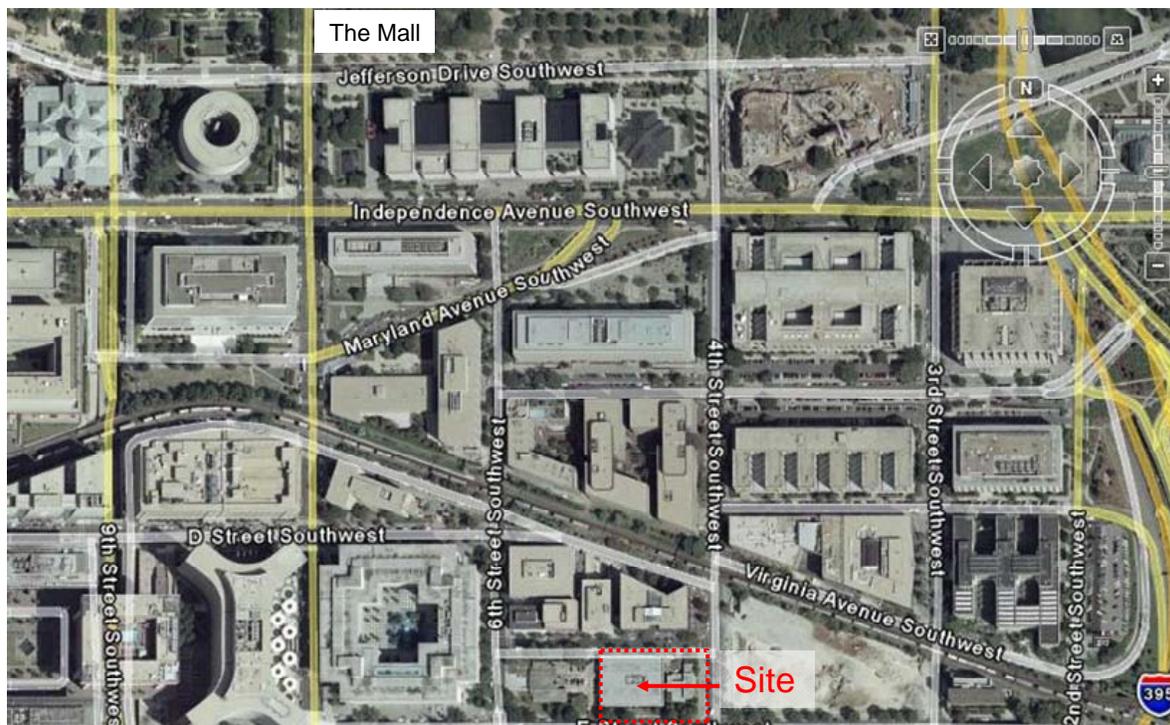
PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Background

The new consolidated forensic laboratory to be located in Southwest Washington DC will house the Metropolitan Police Department Forensic Laboratory, the public Health Lab, and the Office of the Chief medical Examiner for the Government of the District of Columbia. This project will help to achieve the Mayor's goals of improving public safety and improving public health for the benefit of District residents. The new consolidated building is intended to coordinate crime, public safety and health investigations to help law enforcement solve crimes quickly.

Site

The site is bounded by E Street SW, 4th Street SW, and School Street SW, and is currently occupied by the Metropolitan Police Department 1st District Station and the existing Fire Department Engine 13 Company. The 1st District Station will be relocated off-site and the existing building will be demolished in its entirety. The existing Engine 13 Company building at the west end of the site will remain and the property will be subdivided.



The Consolidated Forensics Laboratory will be located on Lot 28 of Square 494 which currently has a lot area of 101,957 square feet. However, the lot will be subdivided to provide a 67,721 square foot lot for the Laboratory and a 34,236 square foot lot for the existing Fire Engine #13 building.

The site is owned by the District of Columbia and is located within two blocks of the L'Enfant Plaza and Southwest Federal Center Metrorail Station. The site is also one block north of the SE/SW Freeway.

Proposal

The Consolidated Forensic Laboratory will provide modern facilities and expanded functions for its tenant agencies.



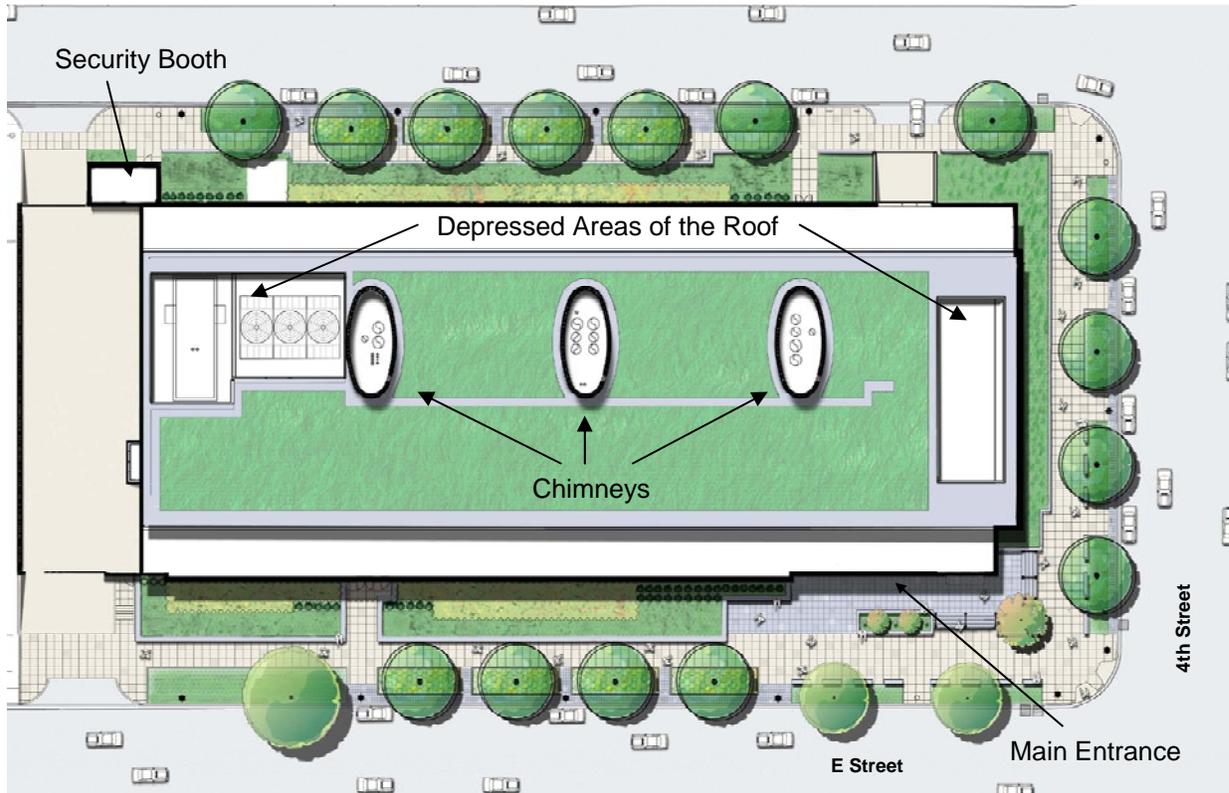
Rendering of the building looking north at the intersection of E and 4th Streets SW

The building consists of two levels below grade and six levels above grade. The below grade structure includes employee and police fleet parking, electrical and mechanical spaces, and an examination bay for vehicles that are evidence. The ground floor consists of loading bays, evidence intake, and shared spaces (such as conference rooms, lunch room, administrative office, and training rooms). The upper floors house the laboratories and related office spaces for each department. The mechanical equipment is located in the rooftop structure and the exhaust pipes are consolidated into three chimneys above the mechanical penthouse.

The program organization and façade treatment are a response to the site and solar orientation. The building is designed to meet the LEED Silver certification standard but may ultimately achieve a LEED Gold standard. The laboratories are located along the north side, allowing for good natural light without significant heat gain in these mechanically sensitive spaces. Building core and laboratory support spaces are located in the center of the building. Office spaces are located on the south side with full-height curtain walls to take advantage of the natural light, while exterior fritted-glass louvers provide solar control for the offices.

A six-story high atrium at the corner of 4th and E Streets serves as the main entry lobby and an intercommunicating space for the upper floors. The atrium reveals the communicating stair and

structure within. Shared conference rooms are organized around the atrium. The east and west facades are limestone with smaller punched windows in response to that specific solar orientation. The limestone façade wraps up to the mechanical penthouse roof to become a masonry frame for the whole building, anchoring the southern glass and the northern metal panel skin.



Roof Plan

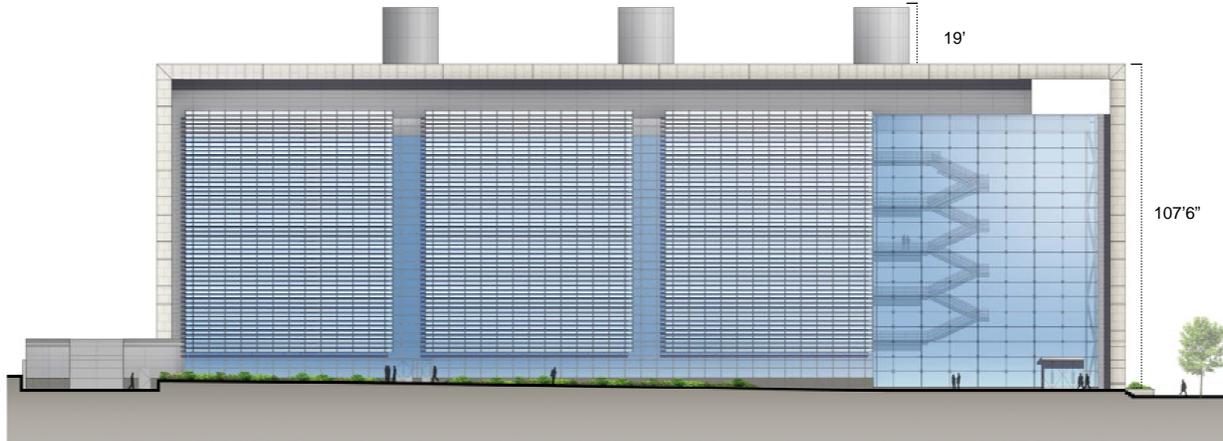
The main employee and visitor entry is located in the corner atrium. A secondary employee-only entrance is provided on the north side near the parking ramp entrance. In order to reduce the impact of the multiple loading bays required for the building, the design incorporates a walled-off loading yard on the west side. Trucks enter the loading yard through a gate off School Street or E Street, and then go into one of the six loading bays.

The property is zoned C-3-C and has a building height of 107'6". There are also three mechanical chimneys on the roof which add an additional 19' in height. The total building area is 351,000 square feet and it is anticipated that employment will be 290 people when it opens in 2011 with potential growth for up to 370 employees. There will be 160 underground parking spaces and 60 street level parking spaces mainly for visitors such as grieving families.



Perspective of the Building

The building will be a secured environment with strict access. It is setback 33 feet from the all property lines and will have landscape barriers within the building yard. There will not be any bollards around the building.



South Elevation (E Street SW)



North Elevation (School Street SW)



East Elevation (4th Street SW)



West Elevation

PROJECT ANALYSIS

Staff supports the overall site development plans and commends the development team on a high-quality sustainable design. Examples of the environmental features include:

- A vegetated roof to manage rainwater
- A water reclamation system
- Low flow fixtures
- A 20 percent increase in energy efficiency than the standard
- Recycled content materials

Staff also commends the development team on creating a secure environment through landscape barriers in the building yard as an alternative to bollards around the building. Staff notes that the final design of the building reflects changes in response to staff's recommendation to consolidate the two security booths into one and minimize its size. No bollards are proposed.

The Height of Buildings Act of 1910 allows for a height of 130' since 4th Street is 110' wide. The building height, measured from the curb of 4th Street SW, is 107'6". The three mechanical chimneys are an additional 19' in height. While they are not setback from the northern exterior walls at a 1:1 ratio respective of the building's height, all portions of the buildings including the chimneys are below the limit of height under the Act.

CONFORMANCE

Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital

The building design for the Consolidated Forensic Laboratory is consistent with the *Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital*.

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)

As a District of Columbia project outside of the Central Area, NCPC is advisory and does not have independent responsibility under the National Environmental Policy Act. The applicant is required to obtain concurrence from the District of Columbia State Historic Preservation Officer that the project will not adversely affect any historic resources.

National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA)

As a District of Columbia project outside of the Central Area, NCPC is advisory and does not have independent responsibility under the National Historic Preservation Act.

COORDINATION

Coordinating Committee

The Coordinating Committee reviewed the proposal on April 9, 2008, and forwarded it to the Commission with the statement that the project had been coordinated with all agencies

represented. The participating agencies were NCPC; the District of Columbia Office of Planning; the District Department of Transportation; the National Park Service; the General Services Administration and the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority.