

Kennedy Center Expansion

National Capital Planning Commission
Submission for February 6, 2014 Meeting
Project Report

The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts is proposing to expand the existing Edward Durell Stone building to provide approximately 65,000 square feet of additional space.

Purpose of and Need for the Project

The Kennedy Center expansion will provide space dedicated for classrooms, rehearsal rooms, event spaces, and offices. The project is needed because the Kennedy Center, with the largest performing arts education initiative in the country, contains no dedicated classrooms, a limited number of rehearsal rooms and no dedicated event space. The Kennedy Center's vision for the expansion project also includes providing greater access to the performing arts for the general public and offering a place that stimulates people's creative capacities and engagement in the performing arts.

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Description of the Project

The Kennedy Center is located at 2700 F Street NW in Washington, DC at the intersection of New Hampshire Avenue NW and the Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway. The expansion will be to the south of the existing Kennedy Center building. The project area is defined as the area between the southern edge of the existing South Terrace and Interstate 66/U.S. Route 50 (the Theodore Roosevelt Memorial Bridge) and Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway. The existing conditions of this area are a surface parking area for buses and oversized vehicles, entrances to the Kennedy Center garage and some landscaping consisting of shrubs, grasses and trees. (See slides 2 – 7 of the Power Point presentation.)

The expansion, as designed by Steven Holl Architects, will include the construction of two land-based pavilions, connected below grade. These pavilions will be the site for rehearsal spaces, offices, classrooms, a lecture hall, and multipurpose spaces. The South Terrace will be redesigned to remove a section of the concrete perimeter wall to incorporate the area into a landscaped area, including a reflecting pool. The third pavilion, approximately 8,000 square feet in size, will float on the Potomac River. Access to the river pavilion will be provided by a pedestrian crossing from the Rock Creek and Potomac Trail and a single bridge crossing over Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway to connect the Kennedy Center site to the river pavilion.

Total Area of the Site and Allocation of Land

The site affected by the project is 4.6 acres

Area of Building and Site Coverage

The expansion on the Kennedy Center site is approximately 65,000 gross square feet, comprised of the following:

Lower level: 35,359 GSF

Upper level: 28,434 GSF

Terrace level: 1,592 GSF

In addition, the following additional space is provided:

Subgrade parking: 35,618 GSF

Garage access roads: 13,853 GSF

Landscape/Gardens: 182,717 SF

The footprints of the two land-based pavilions are:

Entry pavilion footprint: 3,613 SF

Glissando pavilion footprint: 6,619 SF

The river pavilion is 6,600 GSF and has a footprint of 7,843 SF.

Existing employment and projected employment

The Kennedy Center currently employs 1,292 people, of which 584 are full time. Employment is not projected to change with the expansion over the next 20 years.

Relationship of the Project to the Kennedy Center's Master Plan

The Kennedy Center does not have a master plan. However, in advance of undertaking this project, a feasibility study was conducted to explore the viability of undertaking an expansion project within the boundaries of the Center's site. The feasibility study concluded that the location of the existing parking garage south of and contiguous with the original Edward Durell Stone building was the best option for the building expansion.

Coordination with Affected Local and State Governments

Representatives from the Kennedy Center have met with the National Park Service (NPS), the Commission of Fine Arts and the National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC) on numerous occasions to solicit input on the design criteria and alternatives for this project. The Kennedy Center presented preliminary concepts in July 2013 to the Commission of Fine Arts and in September 2013 to the National Capital Planning Commission.

The Kennedy Center is coordinating with the NPS and the NCPC in the preparation of an Environmental Assessment to identify alternatives and assess the potential impacts of the proposed project, in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act.

In accordance with Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act, consultation letters were sent to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) and District Department of the Environment on August 30, 2013. In a letter dated November 13, 2013, the USFWS stated that “except for occasional transient individuals, no proposed or federal listed species are known to exist within the project impact area.” The NMFS responded on September 10, 2013. NMFS commented that there are two known sturgeon species known to exist within the project area and that NPS and NCPC is responsible for determining whether the proposed action is likely to affect these species. The NPS and NCPC sent additional correspondence to the NMFS which stated that based on the unlikely potential for occurrence of sturgeon in the project area during construction, the nature of the proposed activities, and the implementation of conservation measures to exclude sturgeons from the project area, the expansion of the Kennedy Center is not likely to adversely affect the federally endangered shortnose or Atlantic sturgeon.

Concurrently, consultation is being conducted in accordance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. In coordination with NEPA, consultation under Section 106 was initiated with the DC Historic Preservation Office on July 12, 2013. A joint NEPA/Section 106 scoping meeting was held on July 22, 2013 during which the consulting parties were introduced to the project, presented with a draft Area of Potential Effect, and invited to comment on the proposal. A 30-day public comment period was open from July 15 to August 30, 2013. A second consulting parties meeting occurred on September 17, 2013, to present the proposed alternatives to the public, invite comment on the potential effects of the undertaking, and solicit input into ways to avoid, minimize, or mitigate adverse effects. A 14-day public comment period was open from September 20 – October 4, 2013. The NPS’s PEPC website was used as a tool to disseminate information on the project and collect public comment. Additionally, given that Indian tribes may have interest in this geographic location, on October 28, 2013 the Delaware Nation was invited to participate in Section 106 consultation for the project. NPS, NCPC, and the Kennedy Center met with the Delaware Nation on November 25, 2013. Further delineation of their interests is expected from the Nation, however none has been received to-date.

On March 14, 2013, the Kennedy Center initiated consultation with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. In a letter dated April 10, 2013, the Corps stated a permit application would need to be submitted to the Corps pursuant to Section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act and/or Section 404 of the Clean Water Act. On September 12, 2013 the Kennedy Center met with the Corps and presented the methods for anchoring the River Pavilion. The Corps is expected to provide a formal determination on their decision to issue permits once they receive the permit application, which will follow completion of the NEPA process.

On July 2, 2013, the Kennedy Center sent a scoping letter to the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) to discuss the need for obstruction lights for the River Pavilion and any additional requirements of the USCG. On October 29, 2013, the USCG provided a preliminary response via electronic mail which stated that based upon the information provided to them, the USCG would require each end of the river pavilion to be marked with day/night obstruction marks. A formal response will be provided by the USCG in response to the permitting package once submitted to the Corps.

Prior to the implementation of the project, the Kennedy Center will obtain appropriate land disturbance permits and abide by local and state erosion and sediment control standards, as well as any additional approvals and reviews required prior to construction. These include approval by NCPC and CFA, a Section 10 permit under the Rivers and Harbors Act, and/or a Section 404 permit under the CWA.

Status of Community Participation

A Public Scoping Period took place from July 15 through August 30, 2013. Advertisements were placed in the Washington Post (July 12, 2013) and Current (July 17, 2013) newspapers to announce the project and public scoping period as well as invite the public to attend an open house scoping meeting on July 22, 2013. On July 12, 2013, an email announcement and letter regarding the Scoping Period and meeting were distributed by the NPS and the NCPD to area interest groups and individual parties. In addition, a press release was issued on the Kennedy Center website and project information was posted on the National Park Service PEPC website. Members of the public were invited to submit comments on the project electronically, through the National Park Service PEPC website and by mailing written comments. The July 22, 2013 public scoping meeting provided a forum to present the project and provide an overview of the NEPA and NHPA processes. Comment forms were available to the public for written comments.

A total of 14 individuals signed in at the public scoping meeting. Five comments were received during the scoping period. These individuals were in support of the project moving forward. One commenter expressed the need for noise control during construction activities and that senior citizen access should be included in project design. Also, the commenter requested that the project design not impinge on the views of the District's scenery from nearby apartments. A second comment indicated that the proposed actions should include pedestrian and cycling access improvements to connect the Kennedy Center with other destinations, such as Georgetown. It was also suggested that an advisory committee of citizens be formed to discuss public needs associated with the Kennedy Center area. The third individual indicated that the Kennedy Center should be developed in a manner consistent with expansion of its surroundings; specifically, development should be coordinated with future reconfiguration of the Roosevelt Bridge. A fourth commenter suggested the use of existing terrace space for the expansion. Also, the first correspondence emphasized the need for a design that matches the existing architectural quality of the Kennedy Center. The final commenter called for an analysis of impacts to parking, transit and traffic resulting from the expansion project in the EA. Along with the purpose and need for the project these considerations and concerns guided the development of alternatives and contributed to the selection of impact topics identified in the EA.

In addition to public participation through the scoping process associated with the EA, the preliminary design concept for the project was presented to the ANC on May 15, 2013. It was well received at that meeting with no specific comments.

Schedule for Construction and Occupancy

In the preliminary schedule, construction demolition and enabling work will begin at the end of calendar year 2014, with a construction period of approximately two and a half years. Occupancy is preliminarily scheduled for May 2017.

Total Estimated Cost and Funding

The total estimated cost for the project, including hard and soft costs, is \$100 million. The project will be fully funded with private funds; no Federal funds will be used for the project. Ninety percent of the estimated cost has been raised to-date.

Transportation Management Program

Because the employment level will not change as a result of this project a Transportation Management Program has not been prepared.