



Executive Director's Recommendation

Commission Meeting: November 1, 2012

PROJECT Electric Generating Equipment and Utility Yard Improvements Joint Base Myer – Henderson Hall, Fort Leslie J. McNair 4th and P Streets, SW Washington, DC	NCPC FILE NUMBER 7238
SUBMITTED BY United States Department of Defense Department of the Army	NCPC MAP FILE NUMBER 24.40(38.00)43656
REVIEW AUTHORITY Federal Project in the District 40 U.S.C § 8722(b)(1) and (d)	APPLICANT'S REQUEST Preliminary and final approval of site development plans
	PROPOSED ACTION Approve with conditions
	ACTION ITEM TYPE Consent Calendar

PROJECT SUMMARY

The Department of the Army has submitted a project to install one new emergency electrical generator at Fort McNair. The proposal is to install one generator on the west side of Building 60 (the Officer's Club). The generator installation will require reconfiguring equipment inside an existing utility yard and enlarging the area, and replacing the existing brick screening wall with a similar wall. The proposal also relocates dumpsters, which are currently within the adjacent 1st Avenue right-of-way, to within the utility area, where they will also be screened by the new brick wall. A generator will temporarily be placed within the 1st Avenue right-of-way during reconstruction of the utility yard. The present proposal replaces a project approved by the Commission on December 1st, 2011. That project located the proposed generator on the grounds of Building 15, a General Quarters adjacent to Building 60.

KEY INFORMATION

- Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall, the command unit for Fort Myer, is upgrading the emergency electrical generating capacity at the installation with multiple new generators. In combination with multiple existing on-site generators, the project supports an overall program to improve energy reliability and security for mission critical operations and services at both Fort McNair and Fort Myer. Sites for the generators were chosen for their adjacency to existing utility connections and proximity to existing electrical switchgear.
- The Commission previously approved site development plans for this proposed generator, on the grounds of Building 15 and adjacent to Building 60, at its December 1st 2011 meeting. This current proposal revises that scheme by incorporating and redeveloping an existing utility yard into the site development plans; the current proposal also reflects a plan initially proposed by staff of NCPC and the Commission of Fine Arts during early consultations with the Army.

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- Submission materials provided by the Army show the proposed location of the new generator and other utility equipment and the reconfigured utility yard; however, designs for the proposed screening wall and a landscape plan were not included.
 - The Commission previously approved the location of six (6) other new generators at Fort McNair at its October 1st, 2011 and April 5th, 2012 meetings.
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RECOMMENDATION

The Commission:

Approves the preliminary and final site development plans for the installation of one electric generator and utility yard improvements adjacent to Building 60 at Fort Leslie J. McNair, at 4th and P Streets, SW, in Washington, DC.

Notes that this approval is for the location and placement of the generator and the reconfiguration and reconstruction of the utility yard.

Requires that by October 2013 the Department of the Army submit final site development plans and a construction timeline for the screening wall and associated landscaping.

Requires that the Department of the Army notify the Commission by October 2013 if it cannot provide the final site development plans and a construction timeline for the screening wall, as required, and/or if funding cannot be identified, so that further consultation on possible solutions can be conducted.

PROJECT REVIEW TIMELINE

Previous actions

October 1, 2011 – The Commission approved preliminary and final site development plans for the installation of four (4) electric generators at Fort McNair. This approval was for the location and placement of the generators, construction of base concrete pads, and associated site and utility work, not for any proposed screen walls. The Commission also:

- Required that within two years the Department of the Army submit final site development plans and a construction timeline for screening of the equipment at the four sites.
 - Required that the Army notify the Commission within two years of the approval if it cannot provide the final site development plans and a construction timeline, as required, and/or if funding cannot be identified, so that further consultation on possible solutions can be conducted.
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- Noted that per the Memorandum of Agreement between the Army and the District of Columbia Historic Preservation Officer, construction of the screening walls and associated landscaping is to be complete no later than August 30, 2013.
- Required that future submissions for new and replacement generators be accompanied with complete site development plans for screening walls and landscape.

December 1, 2011 – The Commission approved the location for one additional generator and associated screening within the yard of Building 15 adjacent to the existing utility yard at Building 60 in Fort McNair.

April 5, 2012 – The Commission approved preliminary and final site development plans for the installation of two (2) electric generators at Fort McNair. This approval was for the location and placement of the generators, construction of base concrete pads, and associated site and utility work, not for any proposed screen walls. The Commission also:

- Required that by October 2013 the Department of the Army submit final site development plans and a construction timeline for screening of the equipment at one of the sites.
- Required that the Army notify the Commission by October 2013 if it cannot provide the final site development plans and a construction timeline, as required, and/or if funding cannot be identified, so that further consultation on possible solutions can be conducted.
- Noted that the District of Columbia State Historic Preservation Office determined that the undertaking would have no adverse effect on historic properties conditioned upon the generators being placed in the locations and with the screening specified, and also noted that additional generators within the historic precinct at the installation may be problematic.

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I. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Site

Fort Lesley J. McNair is located in the southwest section of the District of Columbia and is bounded on the north by P Street, SW, on the south by the confluence of the Anacostia River and the Washington Channel of the Potomac River, on the east by 2nd Street, SW, and on the west by the Washington Channel. Fort McNair is designated in the L'Enfant Plan as a military installation and one of the 16 original focal points of the plan. In 1903 the post was redesigned by the renowned architectural firm of McKim, Mead, and White into the Beaux-Arts campus setting that is visible today with its strong emphasis on building patterns. The site for the proposed electric generator and utility yard improvements is adjacent to Building 60 (the Officer’s Club), which is adjacent to the Washington Channel.

Background / Project

Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall (JBM-HH) is the command unit of Fort McNair. JBM-HH maintains a contract with Dominion Virginia Power (DVP) to distribute power within the installation. DVP is also responsible for the operation, monitoring and maintenance of numerous existing emergency generators at the installation and to ensure consistent compliance with regulations.

To make certain sufficient energy is available and secure for mission critical operations and services at Fort McNair, JBM-HH has entered into a design/build contract with DVP to upgrade the emergency electrical generating capacity at the base with multiple new generators.

The submitted project to install one new generator adjacent to Building 60 (the Officer’s Club) is part of the first phase of this overall upgrade of electrical generating capacity at Fort McNair. The first phase included the installation of five total new generators and the removal of two existing generators. The Commission approved the installation of four of these new generators on October 1st, 2011. The Commission then approved the installation of the final new generator, this proposed generator, on the grounds of Building 15 and adjacent to Building 60, at its December 1st 2011. The Commission then approved two additional new generators at Fort McNair, making up phase two of the overall project, at its April 5th, 2012 meeting.

The sites for the new generators in the upgrade program were chosen for their adjacency to existing utility connections and generators, and proximity to existing electrical switchgear. The specific generator size and required setbacks vary among the sites. The site for the new generator and utility yard improvements is identified in Figure 1.

The proposed new generator under consideration for this site will be 800KW; it will provide back-up power to the Officer's Club as well as a number of General Quarters. In addition to the installation of this new generator, within the utility yard improvements an existing chiller, switch gear box, and transformer box will be replaced. An existing garbage dumpster and wood screening wall located within the 1st Avenue right-of-way will also be relocated within the utility yard.

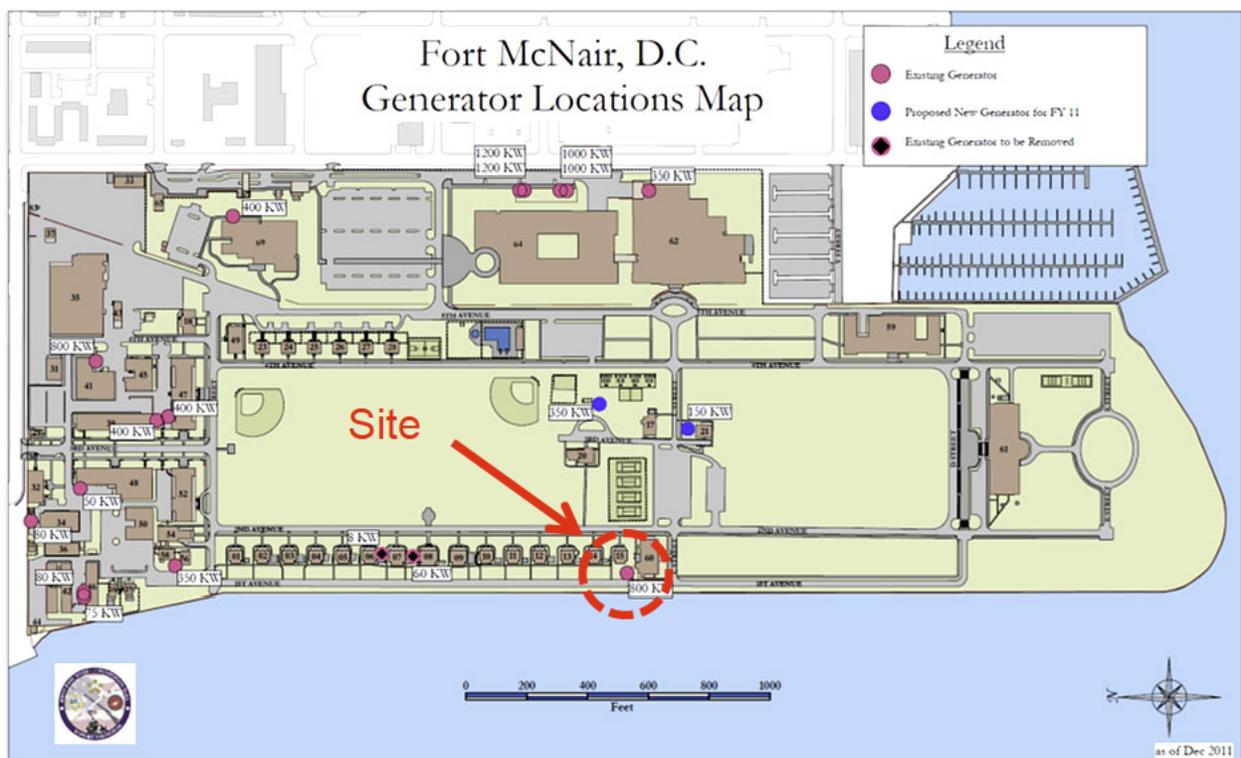


Figure 1: Proposed generator locations at Fort McNair

The new generator will run on diesel and operate only during maintenance and power failure emergencies. Operation of the generator is not expected to exceed the average of 150 hours per year. Pollution and noise levels from the new generator will be less than or equal to existing site generators.

\$7,953,538 in funding for phase one of the project has been in place since Fiscal Year 2010. This funding is for a total of 16 new generators at both Fort McNair and JBM-HH.¹

II. PROJECT ANALYSIS/CONFORMANCE

Executive Summary

Staff recommends that the Commission approve the preliminary and final site development plans for the installation of the new electric generator and utility yard improvements adjacent to Building 60 (the Officer's Club) at Fort McNair.

However, staff recommends that the Commission require the Army to submit by October 2013 final site development plans and a construction timeline for screening of the equipment at the site. Staff also recommends that the Commission require the Army to provide notification by October 2013 if it cannot provide the final site development plans and construction timeline for this screening, and/or if funding cannot be identified, so that further consultation on possible solutions can be conducted.

These recommendations are further described below.

Analysis

The current proposal to make improvements to the exiting utility yard and place a new generator within this reconfigured area is a significant improvement over the previously approved proposal to place the new generator within the yard of Building 15, adjacent to the existing Building 60 utility yard.

As noted above, the site for the new generator was chosen for its adjacency to existing utility connections and proximity to existing electrical switchgear. The generator also needs to be located near the buildings it will serve. Within early consultation with the Army, NCPC staff asked the Army to explore alternative locations for this propose generator due to the sensitive location of site in the Fort McNair Historic District and its relationship to the Officer's Club and the Washington Channel. NCPC staff also noted its concerns at the time regarding the health of the large oak tree that is directly adjacent to the site and how the tree may be impacted by the installation of the generator.

On October 27, 2011, NCPC staff, CFA staff, and the Army met on the site to discuss the project. CFA staff suggested the Army coordinate the installation of the generator with the other mechanical equipment located behind the Officer's Club, including the existing chiller and transformer vault. NCPC and CFA requested that the Army consider if there was a way to combine all of the mechanical equipment, plus the trash dumpster located within 1st Avenue, into one area in order to contain the equipment and reduce visual impacts. The Army explored

¹ Eleven new generators at Fort Myer were reviewed separately by the Commission. See NCPC File No. 7242.

siting the generator in 1st Avenue adjacent to the trash dumpster, however this location poses additional planning issues and would not noticeably reduce the visual impacts. The Army also considered locations further away from the buildings the generator will serve, such as a location near the tennis courts across 2nd Avenue. These locations were determined to be infeasible and would have other visual impacts on the Fort McNair Historic District. Ultimately, the Army concluded the best location was the site originally identified adjacent to Building 60 on the grounds of Building 15, and the Commission reviewed and approved this configuration at its December 1, 2011 meeting. Figure 2 shows the site plan for this configuration. Figure 3 shows the existing condition of the utility yard and dumpster.

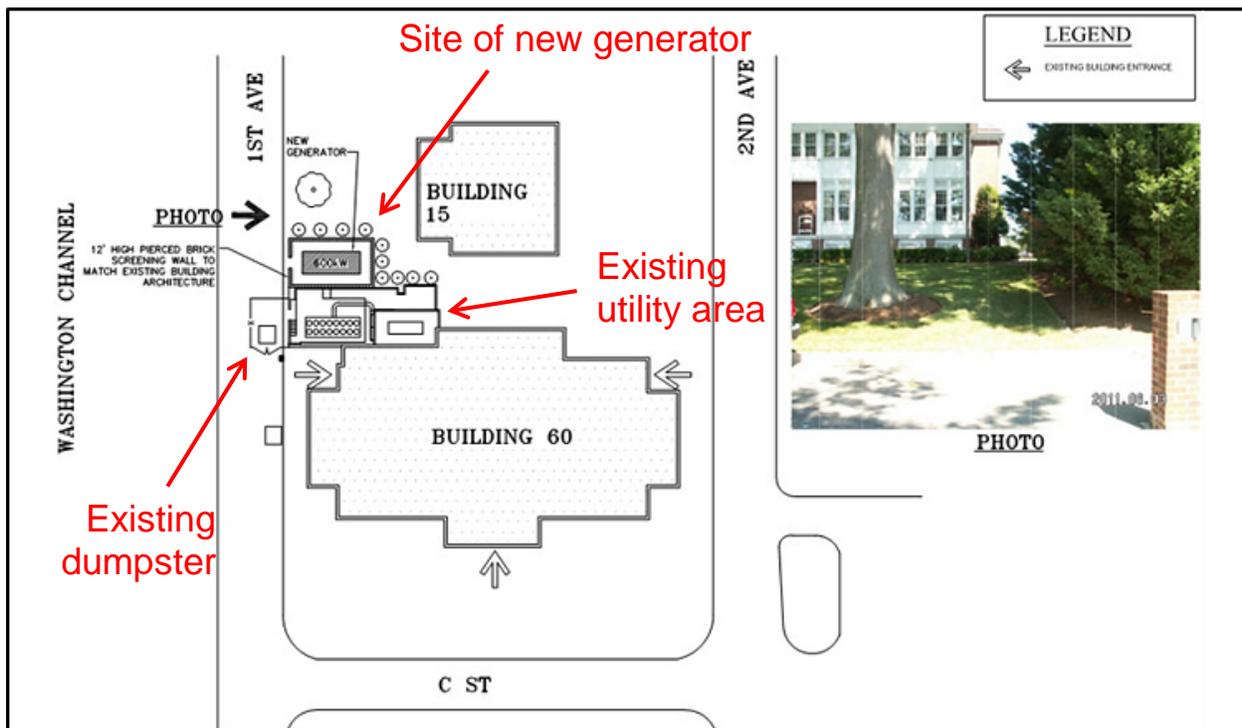


Figure 2: Site plan of new generator within the yard of Building 15—approved by the Commission December 1, 2011



Figure 3: Photos of the existing condition of the site

The current site development plans reflect the request by NCPC and CFA staff that the Army consider a way to combine all of the mechanical equipment, plus the trash dumpster located within 1st Avenue, into the existing utility area. This scheme will greatly improve the existing condition of the utility yard and reduce its visual impacts, including significantly improving 1st Avenue by removing the trash dumpster from within its right-of-way.

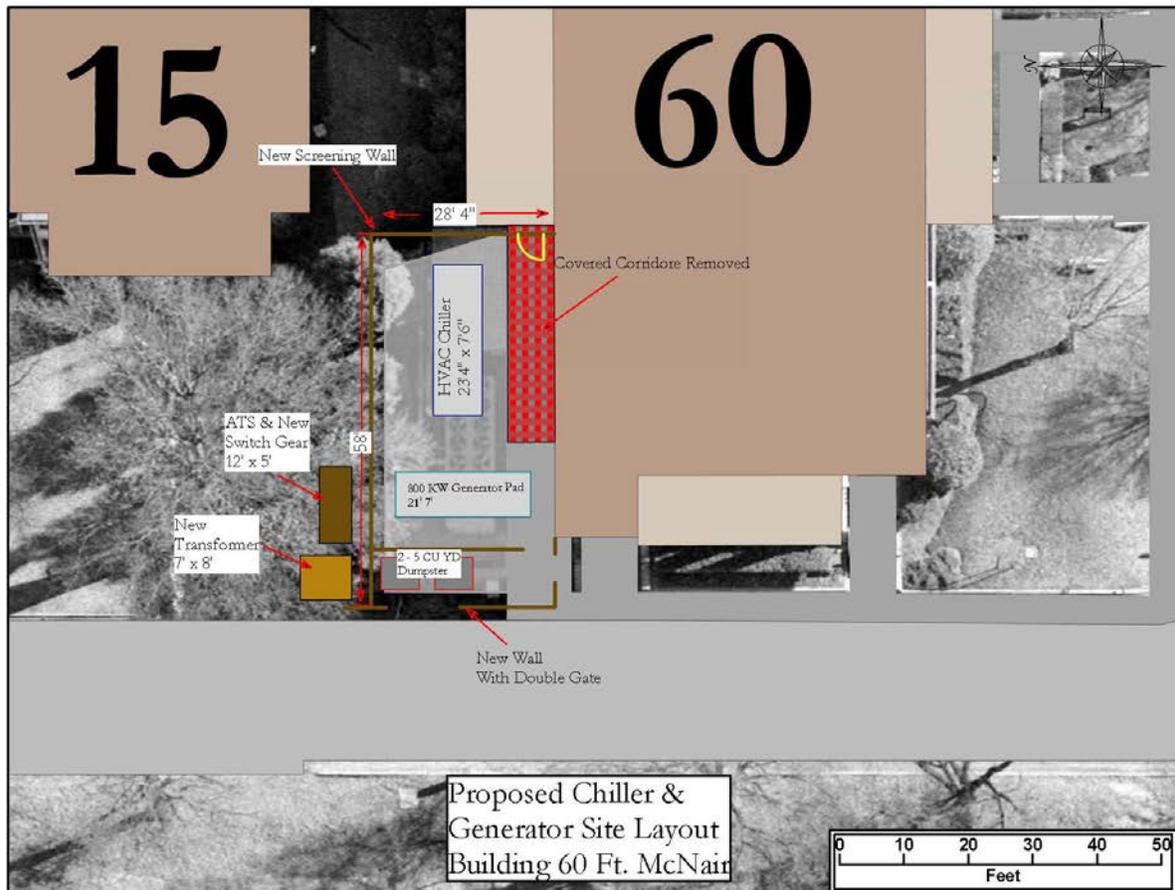


Figure 4: Current proposed site plan

Because of the needed redundancy in energy supply for mission critical operations and services at Fort McNair, and the siting requirements for the new generators, including their adjacency to existing utility connections and proximity to existing electrical switchgear and buildings for which they are to serve, **staff recommends that the Commission approve the preliminary and final site development plans for the installation of the one electric generator and utility yard improvements adjacent to Building 60 at Fort McNair.**

Staff notes that on August 30, 2011 the Army entered into a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the District of Columbia Historic Preservation Officer (DC HPO) to mitigate adverse effects of the new generators to the Fort McNair Historic District. The MOA stipulates that the Army

provide a brick screening wall and landscaping at the Building 60 site to mitigate the visual impacts of the generator in the Fort McNair Historic District. However, the Army has not provided staff nor the with sufficient plans for the screening walls or any proposed landscaping.

As such, and to ensure that JBM-HH returns to NCPC with a plan to install the screening walls and landscaping, **staff recommends that the Commission require the Army to submit by October 2013 final site development plans and a construction timeline for the screening wall at the site. Staff also recommends that the Commission require the Army to notify the Commission by October 2013 if it cannot provide the required final site development plans and construction timeline and/or if funding cannot be identified, so that further consultation on possible solutions can be conducted.** Staff is recommending October 2013 as this coincides with the timeline the Commission required of the Army to submit to the Commission final site development plans and a construction timeline for the screening walls previously approved by the Commission in October 2011.

Within this previous approval, the Commission required future submissions for new and replacement generators at Fort McNair be accompanied with complete site development plans for screening walls and landscape. Since the screening wall for this site will be designed and constructed under a separate contract from that for the new generators themselves, staff recommends that the Commission rescind this requirement for this review of the proposed generator at this site and as noted above require plans for the screening wall be submitted for review by October 2013.

Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital

The proposal is not inconsistent with the policies of the federal elements of the Comprehensive Plan.

Relevant Federal Facility Master Plan

The proposed improvements are consistent with their adjacent land uses. Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall has provided staff a draft master plan for review (dated January 2012). The draft document currently identifies the need for the new generators at Fort McNair but does not identify the specific sites; however, the sites proposed do not negatively impact any proposed changes in land use within the draft master plan.

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)

Pursuant to the regulations implementing the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the Department of the Army, on September 5, 2012, determined that the proposed action would not be expected to individually or cumulatively have significant effects on the human or natural environment, that no environmentally controversial changes to existing environmental conditions would be expected, and that no circumstances exist that would require an environmental assessment or an environmental impact statement under NEPA, and as such, the proposed action qualifies as a Categorical Exclusion under 32 CFR Appendix B Part 651 (c)1.

Given its approval authority over the project, NCPC also has an independent responsibility to satisfy the requirements of NEPA in accordance with NCPC's environmental policies and procedures and CEQ's regulations. Based on a thorough review of the information provided by JBM-HH, staff has determined that the proposed action meets the criteria of NCPC's Categorical Exclusion 8(C)(1), which reads as follows: "Repair, replacement, and routine installation of onsite primary or secondary electrical distribution systems."

National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA)

Pursuant to the regulations implementing the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), The Department of the Army concluded Section 106 consultation with the District of Columbia Historic Preservation Officer (DC SHPO) with the DC SHPO determining that the undertaking would visually diminish the integrity of the historic district thereby causing adverse effects to properties on Fort McNair. As such, JBM-HH and the DC SHPO entered into a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) in August 2011 that stipulated that screening walls and landscaping be installed to reduce visual impacts on the historic district. The DC SHPO reviewed the revised plans for this generator and concurred with the new site plan in May 2012.

Given its approval authority over the project, NCPC also has an independent responsibility to satisfy 36 CFA 800 (the regulations implementing Section 106 of the NHPA). NCPC designated the Army lead agency for the Commission's Section 106 responsibility related to approval actions associated with the generator equipment.

III. CONSULTATION

Coordinating Committee

The Committee reviewed the proposal at its October 10, 2012 meeting, and forwarded the proposed preliminary and final site development plans to the Commission with the statement that the proposal has been coordinated with all participating agencies. The participating agencies were NCPC; the District of Columbia Office of Planning; the District Department of Transportation; the General Services Administration; the National Park Service; and the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority.