



## Executive Director's Recommendation

Commission Meeting: September 6, 2012

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**PROJECT****USO Bethesda Warrior and Family Center**

Naval Support Activity Bethesda  
8901 Rockville Pike  
Bethesda, Montgomery County, Maryland

**NCPC FILE NUMBER**

7384

**NCPC MAP FILE NUMBER**

3101.30(38.00)43591

**SUBMITTED BY**

United States Department of Defense  
Department of the Navy

**APPLICANT'S REQUEST**

Preliminary and final approval of site  
and building plans

**REVIEW AUTHORITY**

Advisory  
per 40 U.S.C. § 8722(b)(1)

**PROPOSED ACTION**

Approve with condition

**ACTION ITEM TYPE**

Consent Calendar

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### PROJECT SUMMARY

The Department of the Navy has submitted preliminary and final site and building plans for the construction of a USO (United Service Organizations) Warrior and Family Center at Naval Support Activity Bethesda, in Montgomery County, Maryland. The USO Warrior and Family Center and associated Healing Gardens are dedicated to the mission of supporting the wounded, ill, and injured and their families throughout the rehabilitation process. The facility is designed to provide places for USO Warrior and Family Care programs and activities that promote physical health and recreation; family strengthening; positive mental health; and education, employment and community reintegration.

### KEY INFORMATION

- The USO Warrior and Family Center is sited on 2.1 acres in the northeast portion of the installation. The site is centrally located between the current Wounded Warrior barracks (Building 62) and the future NCPC approved Sanctuary Hall. The facility will primarily serve soldiers in residency in these two facilities.
- As the site for the facility currently consists of green lawn and mature trees, the facility's layout and landscape were designed to retain the area's existing park-like feel and to minimize tree loss.
- The facility is designed as a single story building with a gross area of 16,217 square feet; patios, gardens, play areas, and sidewalks, as well as other site elements have an area of 20,366 square feet.
- The project will be staffed by private USO employees and volunteers. It is estimated that one to five USO employees and approximately four volunteers will be at the facility on a usual basis (however, there may be special events where this number is higher). No Department of Defense personnel will be employed at the facility.

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- A drop-off for the installation's shuttle and other vehicle use is proposed. No additional parking is proposed with the project.
  - The facility is within the installation's historic district. The Maryland Historic Trust, within their Section 106 review, has found that the project will have "no adverse effect" on historic properties provided that some of the proposed rusticated stone on the facades be replaced with precast concrete elements to better match the architectural character of other installation structures. The facility's exterior treatment is currently under redesign to conform to this requirement.
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## RECOMMENDATION

The Commission:

**Approves** the preliminary and final site and building plans for the United Service Organizations Bethesda Warrior and Family Center at the Naval Support Activity Bethesda in Montgomery County, Maryland, contingent on a redesign, to the satisfaction of the Maryland Historic Trust, of portions of the building facades to include a reduction of the use of rusticated stone and the introduction of precast concrete elements to better match the architectural character of other installation structures. The applicant has agreed to this change.

## PROJECT REVIEW TIMELINE

Previous actions	None.
Remaining actions	None.

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Prepared by J. Hinkle  
August 30, 2012

**Figures and Maps**

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**I. PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

**Site / Background**

The Naval Support Activity Bethesda (NSAB) is located at 8901 Rockville Pike in Montgomery County, Maryland, just northeast of the Bethesda Central Business District. The campus is comprised of approximately 245 acres and is bound on the west by Rockville Pike, on the northeast by I-495, and on the south by Jones Bridge Road. Land uses in the immediate area include the main campus of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) across Rockville Pike to the west, Stone Ridge School of the Sacred Heart and medium-density residential housing to the north, Rock Creek Park and North Chevy Chase Park to the east, and the Columbia Country Club and medium-density residential housing to the south across Jones Bridge Road. The Medical Center Metrorail station is located on the western side of Rockville Pike and serves both NSAB and NIH. The installation boundaries and immediate surroundings are shown in Figure 1.

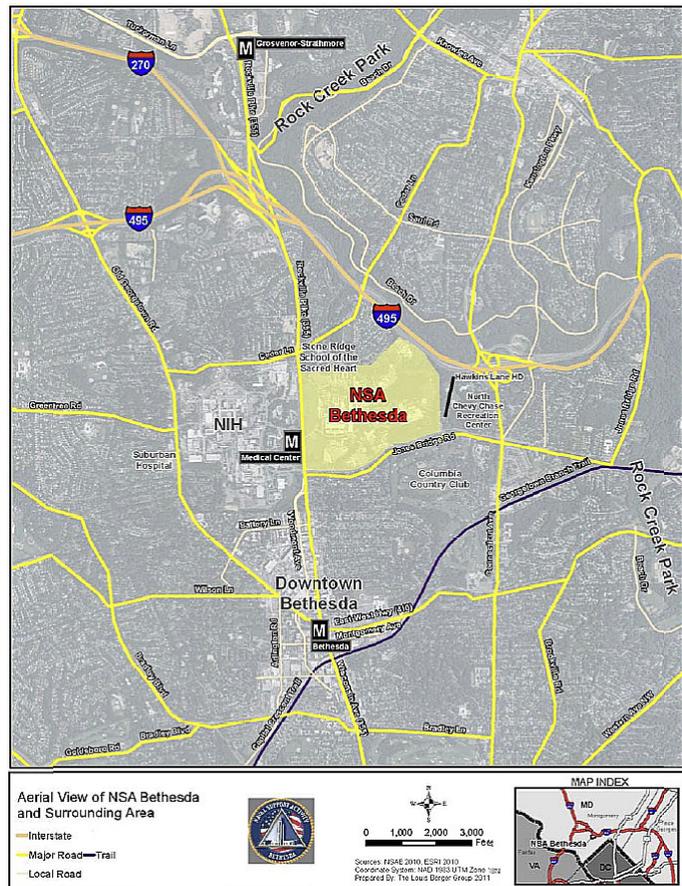


Figure 1: Naval Support Activity Bethesda location map

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The topography of the installation includes gently sloping areas where development is concentrated, and some areas of moderately steep terrain. The installation is divided into development clusters related to medical, administrative, permanent housing, temporary housing, community services, and education. Building 1, the central tower block designed by Paul Philippe Cret in the art deco style, is the prime landmark structure of the installation due to its architectural distinction and association with both President Franklin D. Roosevelt and the installation's achievements in the practice of military medicine. It is the key structure connected with the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center (WRNMMC), the primary tenant at NSAB, and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Building 1 also anchors the installation's historic district, in which the proposed USO Warrior and Family Center is sited.

The WRNMMC was founded in Bethesda in 1940 as the National Naval Medical Center (NNMC), and was originally composed of the Naval Hospital, the Naval Medical School, the Naval Dental School, and the Naval Medical Research Institute. Over the years it has undergone many expansion and renovation projects to become one of the largest medical facilities in the country. From the Medical Center's inception to May 2010, the facility was called NNMC. In May 2010, the Navy changed the management of the base from the Navy Bureau of Medicine and Surgery to the Commander of Naval Installations Command, at which time the entire facility became NSAB. The hospital continued as NNMC until August 15, 2011, when in accordance with the 2005 Base Closure and Realignment Act, tertiary (sub-specialty and complex care) medical services from the Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, D.C. were relocated to the NNMC. With the transfer and integration of these services with existing functions, the medical center was renamed the WRNMMC. WRNMMC is now the premier Department of Defense medical center offering intensive and complex specialty and subspecialty medical services for personnel from all military services and serves as the military's worldwide tertiary referral center for casualty and beneficiary care.

In addition to the WRNMMC, many other organizations reside at NSAB, including the Armed Forces Radiobiology Research Institute and the Uniformed Services University of Health Sciences.

### **Proposal**

The USO (United Service Organizations) Warrior & Family Center and associated Healing Gardens are dedicated to the mission of supporting the wounded, ill and injured (WII) and their families throughout the rehabilitation process at the WRNMMC. The facility is designed to provide places for USO Warrior and Family Care programs and activities that promote physical health and recreation; family strengthening; positive mental health; and education, employment and community reintegration—the key components of USO's continuum of care. WIIs and their families face many difficult challenges during the recovery and transition process, especially while receiving medical treatment, the facility is designed to give them a “home away from home” while they recover.

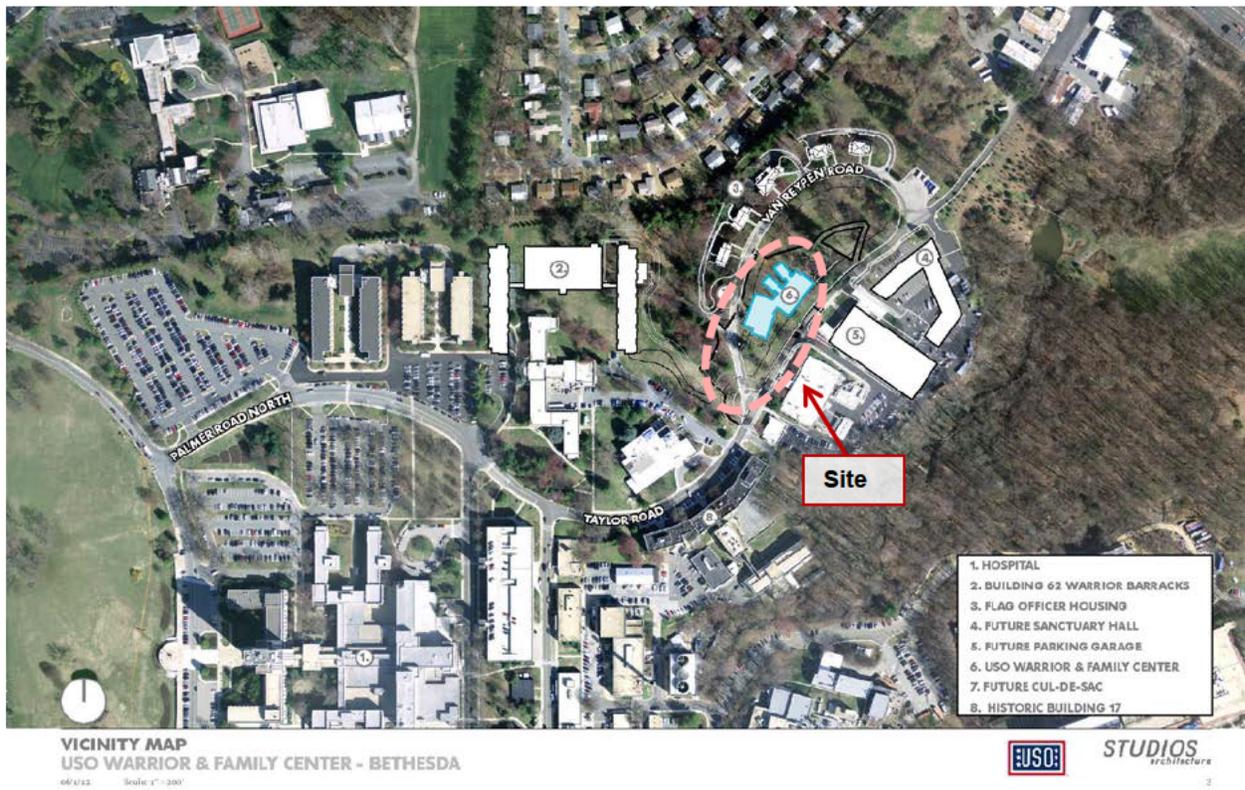


Figure 2: Aerial view of site and surroundings



Figure 3: Architectural context

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The facility is strategically located along Taylor Road, in the northeast area of the installation, directly adjacent to both the newly constructed Warrior Barracks (Building 62) and the future Sanctuary Hall. Coupled with other installation resources and services, the facility's location will allow the WIIs and their families to have easy access to a host of support services which help in the recovery process.

The facility is organized into three zones.

The first zone, recreation and normalcy, provides gathering and social spaces for WIIs and their families. These spaces include a Fireside Lounge, Kitchen and Dining, Grill Area and Patio, and a combination Sports Lounge and Gaming Center.

The second zone, respite, provides a place of quiet contemplation and retreat from the more active recreation areas. These areas include a Therapeutic Enrichment Studio, quiet seating zones, and serene landscape areas.

The third program zone, education and work, is dedicated to providing individual support and guidance as the WIIs and their families transition into the civilian workforce. These spaces will include a Life Enrichment Classroom, Business Center, and a Community Room. Many of the programs offered in this zone will dovetail with services provided through the Soldier and Family Assistance Center. The Community Room will also support the recreation and normalcy zone with activities including support groups, training programs, speakers, celebrity meet and greets, holiday events, dinners and luncheons, card and bingo tournaments, small concerts, military ceremonies, volunteer training, and other uses that serve the target population.

All three program zones are connected by a central passageway. This central passageway is designed as a transparent element that will welcome and orient users to the entire building and site. An integral part of this passageway will be a large USO Welcome Desk near the building's entrance where volunteers will greet, assist and orient visitors to USO activities going on inside or outside of the building.

During typical use, the facility will be staffed by private USO employees and volunteers. It is estimated that one to five USO employees and approximately four volunteers will be at the facility on a usual basis; however, there may be special events where this number is higher. No Department of Defense personnel will be employed at the facility. The facility will be occupied by approximately 15 people at a time, with an average of 100 people passing through the facility in a 24-hour period. Although the operational hours will vary depending on programmed events, new patient arrivals and other conditions, the facility is anticipated to typically be open every day from 6:00 AM to 10:00 PM.

The total estimated cost of construction is \$8,500,000 and the project will be entirely funded by private donations through the USO. Following construction the facility will then be proffered to the Navy. The USO also has a capital campaign to fund staffing and programming for the facility in perpetuity. General maintenance of the building and grounds will be done through the installation's Department of Public Works Maintenance Support; however, the Healing Gardens

and green roofs will be maintained through a special Landscape Maintenance Contract given the special requirements for those spaces.

Construction of the facility is planned to begin in December 2012, with completion scheduled for December 2013 and building occupancy scheduled for January 2014.

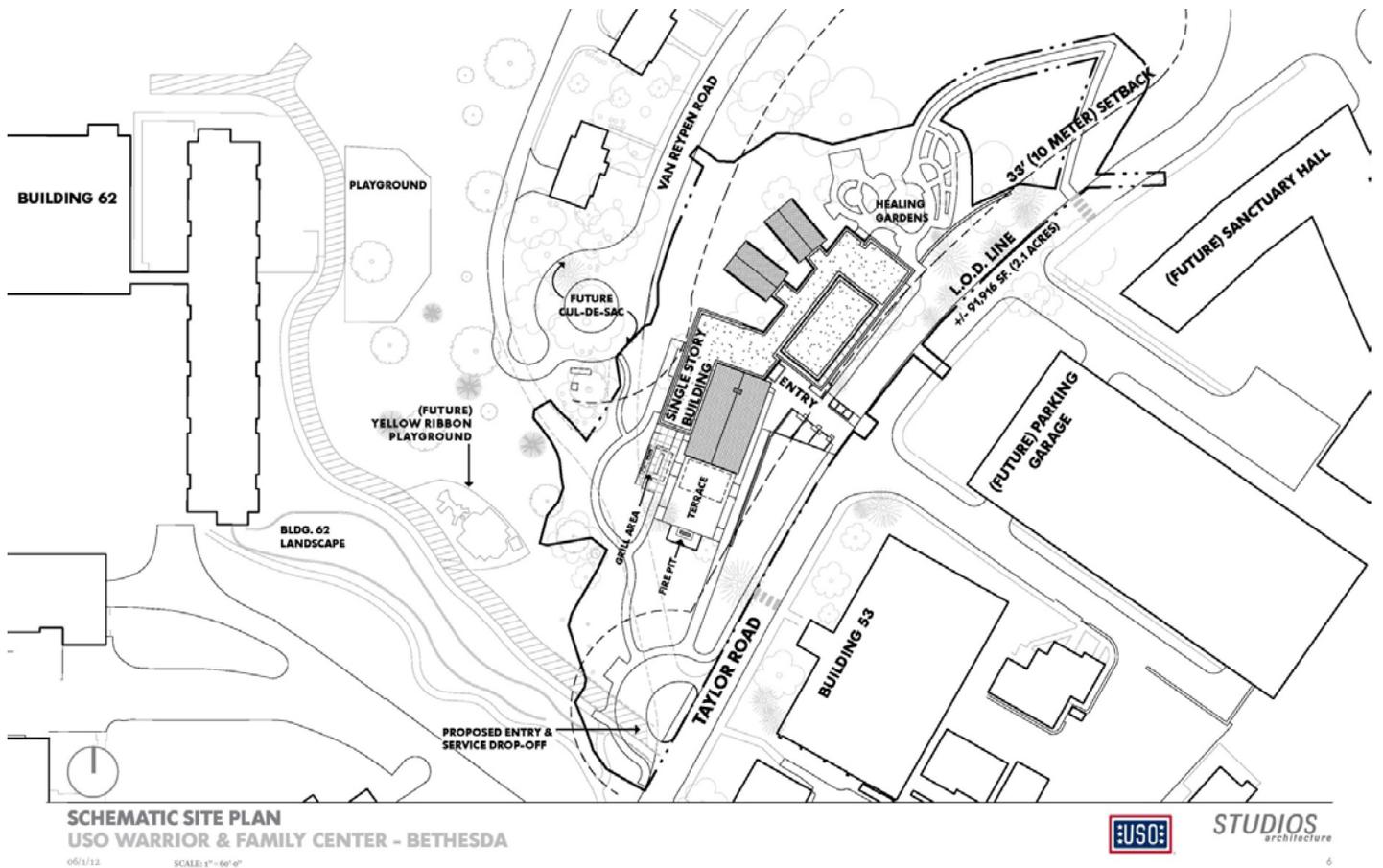


Figure 4: Site plan



Figure 5: Floor plan

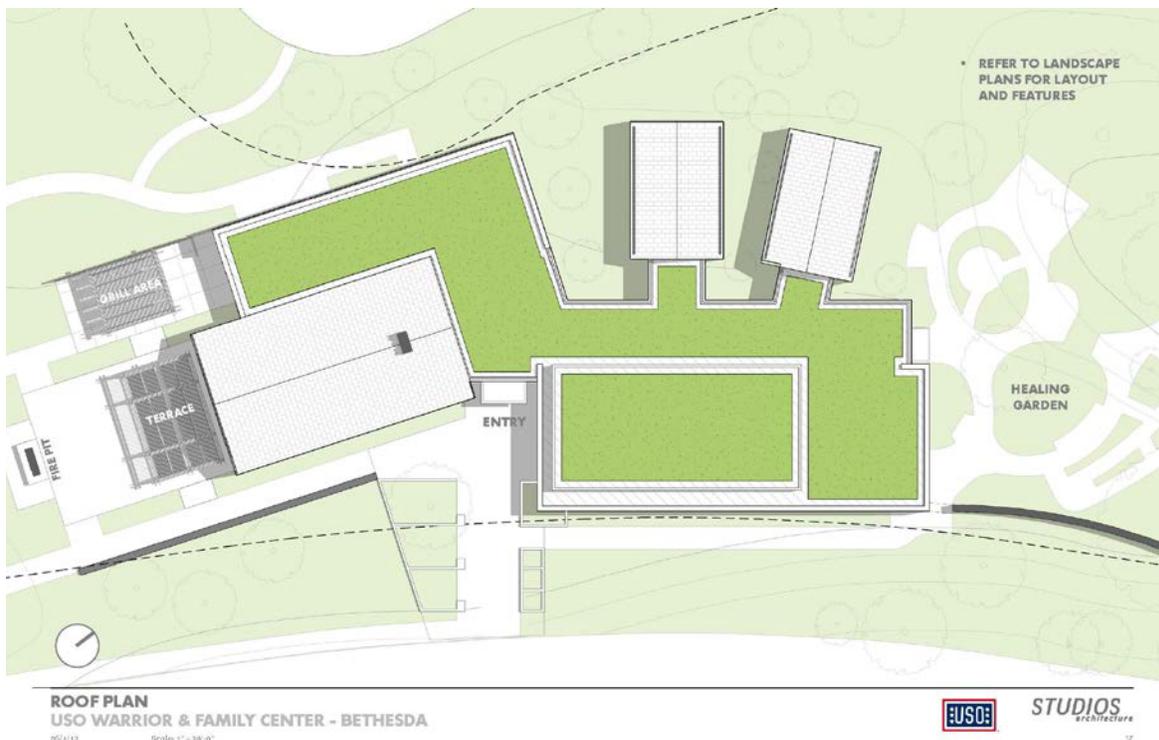


Figure 6: Roof plan showing areas of green roof



VIEW FROM TAYLOR ROAD LOOKING NORTH

WATERCOLOR RENDERING  
USO WARRIOR & FAMILY CENTER - BETHESDA  
06/13/12



STUDIOS  
architecture

Figure 7: Illustrated view from Taylor Road

## II. PROJECT ANALYSIS/CONFORMANCE

### Executive Summary

The mission of the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center at the Naval Support Activity Bethesda includes providing medical care to military personnel returning with injuries from service overseas, as well as from elsewhere. The USO (United Service Organizations) Warrior and Family Center and associated Healing Gardens are dedicated to the mission of supporting the wounded, ill and injured and their families at the WRNMMC throughout the rehabilitation process.

The project is to construct a single story building with a gross area of 16,217 square feet with associated patios, gardens, play areas, sidewalks and other site elements.

As noted below in the National Historic Preservation Act section, the Maryland Historic Trust (MHT) has concerns about the exterior material choice and has conditioned its finding that the project will have "no adverse effect" on historic properties. This condition requires a design

modification on the facades that reduces the amount of rusticated stone on the facades, to be replaced with precast concrete elements that will better connect the USO visually with the primary architectural feature of the NSA-B's historic district. The applicant is currently in the process of redesigning the facades of the facility in accordance with the MHT's condition. As such, **staff recommends that the Commission approve the preliminary and final site and building plans for the USO Bethesda Warrior and Family Center, contingent on a redesign, to the satisfaction of the MHT, of portions of the building facades to include a reduction of the use of rusticated stone and the introduction of precast concrete panels to better match the architectural character of other installation structures.**

### **Analysis**

The following is an analysis regarding the construction and operation of the proposed USO Warrior and Family Center at the NSAB in the areas of site / building design, parking / transportation, and environmental resources.

#### *Site / Building Design*

The USO Warrior and Family Center structure and overall site meet the requirements for handicap accessibility, fire safety, and life safety as well as aim to provide the easiest possible circulation and access routes. Because of the nature of the wounded, ill, and injured (WII) population that the facility will serve, accessibility is a primary concern. The building and site are designed to be inclusive to the various mental and physical injuries and disabilities of this population. As part of that design, the facility provides more generous circulation than a typical building of this size and program.

There are two main zones to the landscape design on the USO Warrior and Family Center site. The landscape zone south of the building will contain a USO operated grill area, fire pit, and covered patio. The northern portion of the landscape design will contain Healing Gardens designed to the specific needs of the WII population at WRNMMC. The design preserves existing trees and screens the gardens from the surrounding roads and Flag Officer Housing through landscape elements such as berms, raised planting beds and selected vegetation. Site elements will also include trellises to provide shade and shelter to other outdoor program areas to the south of the building and screening landscape elements to visually separate the northern façade of the building from the Flag Officer Housing. The Healing Gardens and landscaped areas will also include natural elements to screen users from the surrounding street traffic, reinforcing the pedestrian, calming, and healing goals of the landscape. All plant species selections are based on Bethesda's approved plant list and the use of native species.

Site connectivity is also an important part of the facility's landscape plan, and strong connections to the Building 62 landscape, future Sanctuary Hall, and a future Yellow Ribbon playground are included.

The USO Warrior and Family Center building and site designs conform to the NSAB Installation Design Guidelines. The architecture is conceived as three distinct “Pavilions” (gable roof masses) connected by a lower volume of stone, glazing and green roofs. The Pavilions relate to the residential scale of the Flag Officer housing on Van Reypen road and the lower volume strives to become an extension of the landscape.

The use of color on the building relates to historic buildings on campus. The three Pavilions have a dark bronze metal roof and brick walls will have a same bronze color, distinguishing them in the landscape. The exterior material on the lower volume will be natural stone to match the historic stone site walls on campus.

Through a detailed research phase, the USO learned that the key stakeholders desired the building to be fresh and not “old-fashioned”; similarly, the surveyed population asked that the architecture reveal how the building was constructed to express the workmanship of the carpenters and masons, and emphasize the use of natural, warm materials. This integration of the traditional and modern is an ideal transition between the traditional housing to the west and the more modern, art deco campus to the southeast.



VIEW FROM FLAG HOUSING

WATERCOLOR RENDERING

USO WARRIOR AND FAMILY CENTER, WASHINGTON STATE

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STUDIOS  
architecture

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Figure 8: Illustrated view from Van Reypen Road

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The building will have a significant green roof area that covers 6,150 square feet.

The existing tree canopy is an asset to the site and the landscape plan preserves and protects as many trees as possible. Only eighteen existing trees will be removed and approximately 47 new trees to be added to the site, exceeding a 1:1 tree replacement.

Removable bollards and/or natural landscape elements will be used at the building drop-off to comply with Anti-Terrorism / Force Protection requirements; no fencing would be used at the site. Given the transient nature of the facility's occupancy, the design will use conventional construction; however a minimum 33-foot standoff distance will be maintained as required for an inhabited building (during special events where higher occupancy is expected, an additional standoff may be provided through operational means).

#### *Parking / Transportation*

The project area for the USO Warrior and Family Center is off Taylor Road in the northeast area of the installation. Taylor Road is easily accessed through the installation's North Gate (Gate 1) at Rockville Pike (MD 355) and then via North Palmer Road, which becomes Taylor Road. The other installation gates will also provide access for vehicles to and from the facility.

The roads surrounding the site are being upgraded to support the installation's master plan and the adjacent Van Reypen Road will terminate in a cul-de-sac, preventing unwarranted through traffic within the Flag Officer Housing area. A turnaround is planned at the south side of the facility, off Taylor Road, to accommodate passenger drop-offs for from the installation's shuttle and other vehicles, as well as to accommodate minor deliveries. The vehicular circulation pattern and landscape connections is designed to minimize potential conflicts with pedestrians and prevent stopped vehicles along Taylor Road.

Accessible pathways between the facility and the adjacent buildings will be provided to reinforce the pedestrian orientation of the site. Due to the unique program of the USO Warrior & Family Center, proximity to adjacent existing and future parking facilities, and the constraints of the site, no additional parking will be built with the facility.

#### *Environmental Resources*

The USO Warrior and Family Center project will meet the requirements of Executive Order 13514 by using integrated design strategies, specifying total building commissioning; optimizing energy performance to reduce energy costs by 30% as compared to the ASHRAE baseline building specified in Standard 90.1-2004; protecting and conserving water through a minimum of 20% reduction in indoor water use over the Energy Policy Act of 1992's fixture performance requirements and 50% reduction in outdoor water use over conventional means; enhancing indoor environmental quality through thermal comfort, moisture control, daylighting, low-emitting materials, and protecting indoor air quality during construction; and reducing the environmental impact of materials through the use of at least 10% recycled content by cost,

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sustainable bio-based content, minimizing construction waste, and eliminating the use of ozone depleting compounds.

The facility is also being designed to meet the requirements of the Maryland Stormwater Management Guidelines for State & Federal Projects; April 15, 2010. Green roofs, microbio retention facilities, rain gardens, and bio-swales are proposed to provide water quality treatment of the site's stormwater run-off, as well as control the volume and peak runoff rate from the site. All of these design methods are in accordance with the 2000 Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) Stormwater Management Design Manual Volumes I and II; revised 2009, and the MDE Environmental Site Design (ESD) Process and Computations; July 2010. The MDE has approved the Stormwater Concept for the USO Warrior and Family Center Site.

In addition to the MDE standards, the project is designed to comply with the Energy Independence and Security Act (EISA) Section 438. EISA requires the increase in run-off between pre-development and post-development conditions for the 95th percentile 24-hour rainfall event be managed on-site through interception, infiltration, storage and/or evapotranspiration processes, before the runoff is conveyed to receiving waters (per EISA Table 1, the 95th percentile 24-hour rainfall event for the Washington DC area is 1.7"). EISA calculations have followed the methodology outlined in UFC 3-210-10N, Low Impact Development, dated April 6, 2010.

The building will also be designed to a Silver certification level under Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) v3, 2009 for New Construction. The building and site are designed such that the material, equipment and system selections work together to create an environment that maximizes energy efficiency without sacrificing comfort for a sensitive user group.

### **Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital**

The construction and operation of the proposed USO Warrior & Family Center at the NSAB would not be inconsistent with the Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital, and particularly its location and use are in conformance with the goals and policies of the Federal Workplace Element of the Plan.

### **Relevant Federal Facility Master Plan**

The Commission approved the Master Plan Update 2008 for installation, which was at the time known as the National Naval Medical Center, at its February 5, 2009 meeting. That plan does not include a site or analysis for the USO Warrior & Family Center; however, the location and use of the proposed facility is included and analyzed within the draft 2012 NSA Bethesda Master Plan, which is currently under review by staff.

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**National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)**

In compliance with the NEPA, the proposed construction of the USO Warrior & Family Center has been reviewed by the Department of the Navy and on August 23, 2012 the Navy determined that the action meets the Navy's criteria for a Categorical Exclusion per the OPNAVINST 5090.1 C, Environmental Readiness Program Manual, 18 Jul 11, of section 5.5.1 (b) 34, and can be excluded from further documentation under NEPA. Section 5.5.1 (b) 34 includes "New construction that is similar to existing land use and, when completed, the use or operation of which complies with existing regulatory requirements."

NCPC does not have an independent NEPA responsibility for federal projects outside the District of Columbia.

**National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA)**

In conformance with Section 106 of the NHPA, the Department of the Navy determined that the proposed construction of the USO Warrior & Family Center would have no adverse effect on historic resources.

On July 20, 2012, the Maryland Historic Trust, as the State Historic Preservation Office, agreed with this determination for the construction of the playground and the modification of Van Reypen Drive. In regards to the construction of the USO Warrior & Family Center the MHT determined that "in general, the undertaking will have "no adverse effect" on historic properties provided the design is modified to incorporate the following comments. The Navy has done a good job working with the USO to design a building that contributes to the character of the historic district by respecting the scale, proportion, height, massing, landscape and colors found within it. The architectural quality the Trust has concerns about is the exterior material choice. The proposed rusticated stone is very similar to the material found on campus in the historic retaining wall unfortunately; this historic material is a minor landscape element and is not a major architectural element. The use of a similar stone on the USO gives the building a very rustic feeling not in keeping with the streamlined simple vertical sentiment of the historic district. The use of the rusticated stone does not do a good job bridging the architectural character of the historic district and should be minimized. With the minimization of the rusticated stone features precast concrete elements should be incorporated to connect the USO visually with the primary architectural feature of the historic district." In response, the facility's exterior is currently under redesign to conform to this condition. As such, and as noted in the Executive Summary above, staff recommends that the Commission approve the preliminary and final site and building plans for the facility, contingent on a redesign, to the satisfaction of the MHT, of portions of the building facades to include a reduction of the use of rusticated stone and the introduction of precast concrete elements to better match the architectural character of other installation structures.

NCPC does not have an independent NHPA responsibility for federal projects outside the District of Columbia.

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### III. CONSULTATION

On June 20, 2012 the proposed USO Warrior & Family Center at the Naval Support Activity-Bethesda was referred to the Maryland State Clearinghouse (Clearinghouse) which subsequently referred the project to affected agencies for review and comment, including: the Maryland Department(s) of Transportation, the Environment, and Natural Resources; the Maryland Military Department; the County of Montgomery; the Maryland National Capital Park and Planning Commission; and the Maryland Department of Planning. Staff received the following recommendations from the Clearinghouse on August 29, 2012:

- The Maryland Department(s) of Transportation and Natural Resources found the project to be consistent with their plans, programs, and objectives; the Department of Transportation further stated that “as far as can be determined at this time, the subject has no unacceptable impacts on plans or programs.”
- The Maryland Department of the Environment found the project to be generally consistent with its plans, programs, and objectives and provided for the applicant regulatory information on managing storage tanks, construction waste, and stormwater.
- The Maryland Historic Trust provided the same comments discussed above under the National Historic Preservation Act section.
- The Maryland Department of Planning concurred with the comments of the Maryland Historic Trust.