



Executive Director's Recommendation

Commission Meeting: December 3, 2015

PROJECT Installation of Three Backup Power Generators Jamie L. Whitten Federal & South Buildings, United States Department of Agriculture 1400 Independence Avenue, SW Washington, DC	NCPC FILE NUMBER 7695
SUBMITTED BY United States Department of Agriculture	NCPC MAP FILE NUMBER 1.71(38.00)44191
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 U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has submitted preliminary and final site plans for the installation of Backup Power Generators at the Jamie L. Whitten Federal Building and South Building, located within the USDA headquarters complex adjacent to the National Mall. The first generator will be located in Court 1 of the South Building, and will provide standby power for the computer room and emergency power for life safety systems in the surrounding building wings. The second generator is located in Court 6 of the South Building, and will provide emergency power for life safety systems in the surrounding building wings. Neither generator will be visible from public rights-of-way.

The third generator is located adjacent to the Whitten Building and existing Central Plant, and will provide emergency power to the facility. A full enclosure, designed to match the Central Plant, is proposed to be constructed of concrete, stucco and a vegetative roof. The Commission has previously approved a preliminary site plan for the area, known as the West Multipurpose Court, to be flexible programming space with new landscaping. The court is presently used for parking.

KEY INFORMATION

- The USDA headquarters complex includes the Jamie L. Whitten Building and South Building along the National Mall.
- The USDA is upgrading its emergency electrical generating capacity at the installation with three new generators. The project supports an overall program to improve energy reliability and security for mission critical and life safety loads where backup power is currently not available.
- The submission materials provided show that two of the proposed generators will be located in central courts and will not be visible from surrounding streets. The third

generator will be located adjacent to the existing central plant and screened in a manner architecturally similar to the plant.

- The Commission previously approval preliminary site development plans for the People's Garden site improvement and security improvements on June 5, 2014. This current proposal revises a portion of the West Whitten Multipurpose Court by integrating a generator and enclosure into the landscape.

RECOMMENDATION

The Commission:

Approves the preliminary and final site development plans for the installation of backup power generators at the USDA headquarters complex, including the Jamie L. Whitten Federal Building and South Building, at 1400 Independence Avenue SW, in Washington, DC.

Notes that this approval is for the location and placement of the three generators, construction of base concrete pads, screening and associated site and utility work.

Requires that Generator #3 be incorporated into the final site plans for the People's Garden when they submitted for review. Additional landscaping should be contemplated for screening purposes, and further details on the proposed vegetative roof should be provided.

PROJECT REVIEW TIMELINE

Previous actions	June 5, 2014 - The Commission approved preliminary site development plans for the People's Garden site improvements and perimeter security
Remaining actions (anticipated)	Approval of final site development plans for the People's Garden

PROJECT ANALYSIS

Executive Summary

The United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) headquarters complex includes the Jamie L. Whitten Building and South Building adjacent to the National Mall within the monumental core of Washington, DC. The Whitten Building is located south of the National Mall at 14th Street and Independence Avenue, SW. The South Building is located to the south of the Whitten Building between Independence Avenue and C Street, SW.

USDA is upgrading their emergency electrical generating capacity at the installation with three new generators. The project supports an overall program to improve energy reliability and security for mission critical and life safety loads where backup power is currently not available.

Staff recommends the Commission approval the preliminary and final site development plans for the installation of the proposed generators. Further, staff recommends that the Commission require the applicant incorporate Generator #3 into the final site plans for the People's Garden when they submitted for review, at which time additional landscaping should be considered for screening purposes, and further details on the proposed vegetative roof should be provided.

Analysis

The USDA headquarters complex, including the Whitten and South Buildings, serves as the national headquarters of the USDA, a Presidential Cabinet-level agency responsible for "providing leadership on food, agriculture, natural resources, rural development, nutrition, and related issues based on sound public policy, the best available science, and efficient management." The Whitten Building, originally named the Administration Building, was completed in 1930 and contains grand ceremonial spaces. It is the only USDA building, and the only Cabinet-level office, located on the National Mall.

The South Building is the largest building of the USDA complex and is the third largest federal office building after the Pentagon and the Ronald Reagan Building and International Trade Center. The South Building consists of seven north-south wings connected by building segments along Independence Avenue and C Street. Completed in 1936, the South Building features two pedestrian bridges over Independence Avenue that each connect to the Whitten Building. Both the Whitten and South Buildings were constructed for the USDA. The United States General Services Administration owns both the Whitten and South Buildings, and the National Park Service maintains jurisdiction over the north lawn of the Whitten Building.

The project proposal includes three backup power generators. The first generator will be located in Court 1 of the South Building, and will provide standby power for the computer room and emergency power for life safety systems in the surrounding building wings. The Court is presently used for surface parking, and the installation of the generator will result in the loss of nine parking spaces. Vehicular circulation will not be impacted. The 1,200 kW generator is approximately 10 feet wide, 40 feet long, and 10 feet tall, with sound-reduction housing and diesel fuel tank on a concrete pad with vibration isolation. Feeders will connect from the generators to the electric room, and will include a transformer, main distribution panel and automatic transfer switches. The emergency generator is surrounded by an enclosure along with bollards for protective purposes.

The second generator is located in Court 6 of the South Building, and will provide emergency power for life safety systems in the surrounding building wings, including an auditorium, TV studio and training center. The Court is presently used for surface parking, and the installation of

the generator will result in the loss of six parking spaces. Vehicular circulation will not be impacted. The 1,200 kW generator is approximately 10 feet wide, 40 feet long, and 10 feet tall, with sound-reduction housing and a diesel fuel tank on a concrete pad with vibration isolation. Feeders will connect from the generators to the electric room, and will include a transformer, main distribution panel and automatic transfer switches. The emergency generator is surrounded by an enclosure along with bollards for protective purposes.

The third generator is located adjacent to the Whitten Building and the existing Central Plant, and will provide emergency power to the facility. The 1,000 kW generator will sit on a concrete pad with vibration isolation. A full enclosure measuring 17'-6" wide by 35'-5" long, designed to match the Central Plant, will be constructed of concrete, stucco and a vegetative roof. The location has been selected to provide a direct connection to the Central Plant and permit sufficient air intake and exhaust. Furthermore, the enclosure will be integrated into the existing sloped berm to reduce the visual impact. The enclosure will match the height of the adjacent Central Plant.

Generators #1 and #2 are located within interior courtyards and will not be visible from surrounding streets. Generator #3 has been located adjacent to the existing Central Plant and is intended to be screened in an architecturally-compatible manner. Previously, the Commission approved a preliminary site plan for the area, known as the West Multipurpose Court, to include new landscaping. The court is presently used for parking. The generator has taken into account this previous approval, but it should be incorporated into the final site plans for the People's Garden when they submitted for review, at which time additional landscaping should be considered for screening purposes, and further details on the proposed vegetative roof should be provided.

CONFORMANCE TO EXISTING PLANS, POLICIES AND RELATED GUIDANCE

Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital

The proposal is not inconsistent with policies in the *Federal Elements of the Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital*.

National Historic Preservation Act

In compliance with the National Historic Preservation Act, the USDA concluded Section 106 consultation with the DC State Historic Preservation Office (DC SHPO) on March 4, 2015. The DC SHPO concurred with the USDA that the undertaking will have no adverse effects on historic properties.

Given its approval authority over the project, NCPC also has an independent responsibility to satisfy the regulations implementing Section 106 of the NHPA. NCPC designated the USDA as lead agency for Section 106 purposes related to the approval actions regarding the generators.

National Environmental Policy Act

Pursuant to the regulations implementing the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the USDA determined on October 29, 2015 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 would require an environmental assessment or an environmental impact statement under NEPA, and as such, the proposed action qualifies as a Categorical Exclusion.

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, along with CEQ regulations. Based on a review of the information provided by USDA, staff has determined that the proposed action meets the criteria of NCPC's Categorical Exclusion 8(C)(1), which states "Repair, replacement and routine installation of onsite primary or secondary electrical distribution systems." Prior to applying this categorical exclusion, NCPC staff determined that no extraordinary circumstances were present.

CONSULTATION

Coordinating Committee

The Coordinating Committee reviewed the proposal at its August 12, 2015 meeting. The Committee forwarded the proposal to the Commission with the statement that it has been coordinated with all participating agencies. The participating agencies were: NCPC; the District of Columbia Office of Planning; the State Historic Preservation Officer; the District of Columbia Department of Transportation, the General Services Administration; the National Park Service and the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority. The representative for GSA noted that comments will be provided to USDA on this project.

US Commission of Fine Arts

The US Commission of Fine Arts (CFA) has reviewed the proposed site improvements. During the most recent review on June 18, 2015, CFA approved the final design.

ONLINE REFERENCE

The following supporting documents for this project are available online:

- Project Design Drawings
- Project Information

Prepared by Matthew J. Flis
11/24/2015

POWERPOINT (ATTACHED)

United States Department of Agriculture Headquarters

Installation of Backup Power Generators

Jamie L. Whitten Federal Building & South Building
1400 Independence Ave, SW
Washington, DC

Submitted by the United States Department of Agriculture

Preliminary & Final Site and Building Plans

Commission meeting date: December 3, 2015

NCPC review authority: Federal Projects within the District, 40 U.S.C. § 8722 (b)(1) and (d)

Applicant request: Final approval of site and building plans

Delegated / consent / open / executive session: Consent

NCPC Review Officer: M. Flis

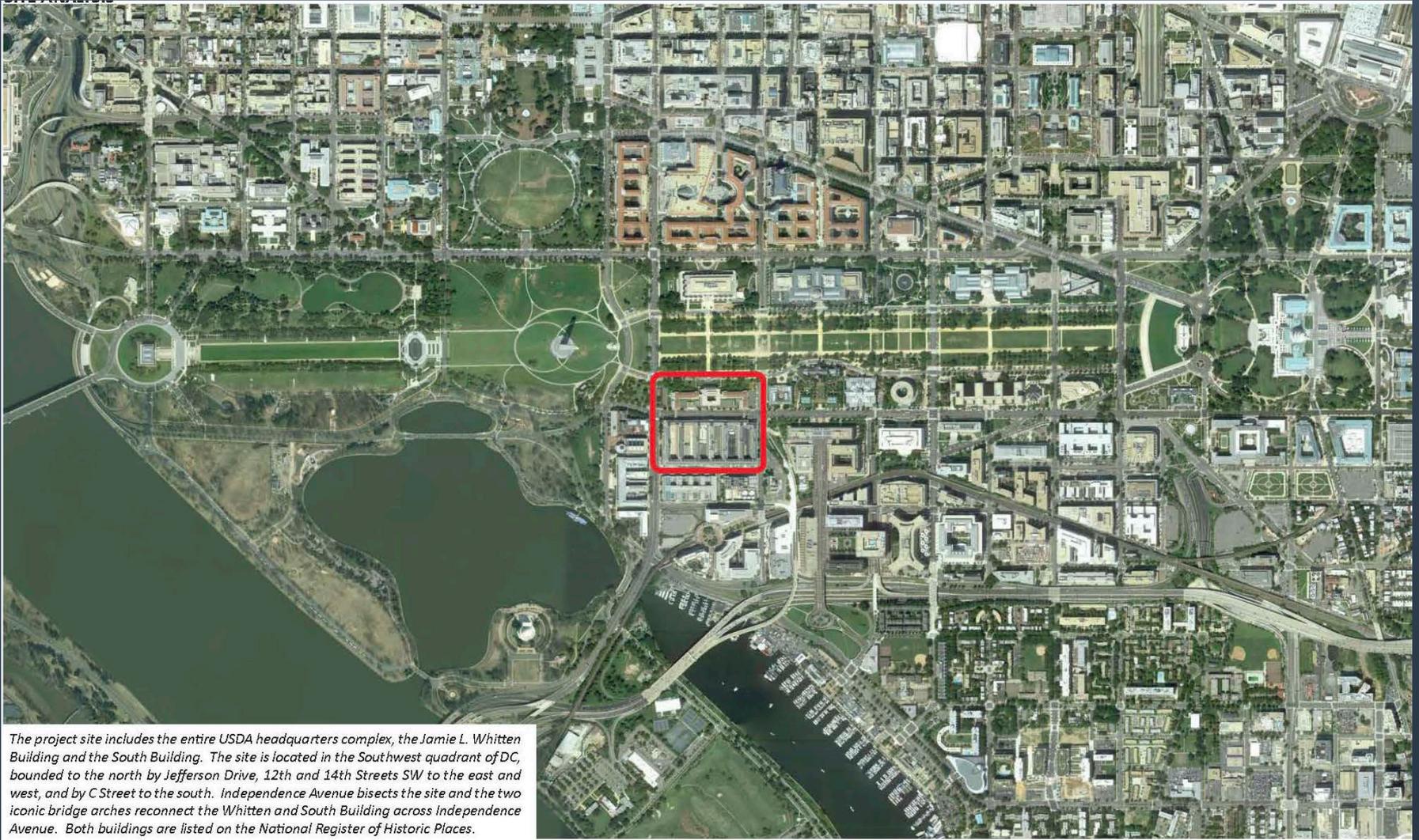
NCPC File number: 7695

Project summary:

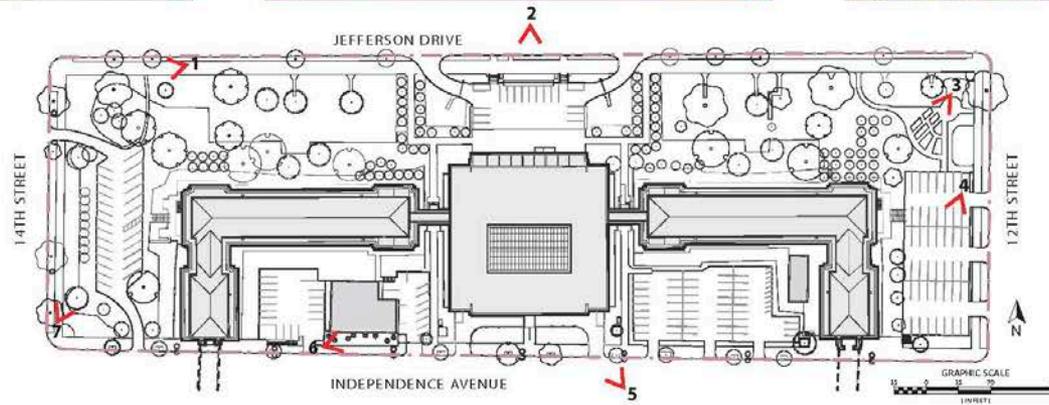
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The proposal includes three backup power generators and one enclosure. The first generator will be located in Court 1 of the South Building, and will provide standby power for the computer room and emergency power for life safety systems in the surrounding building wings. The second generator is located in Court 6 of the South Building, and will provide emergency power for life safety systems in the surrounding building wings. Neither generator will be visible from public rights-of-way. Further, the generators will result in the loss of fifteen (15) parking spaces.

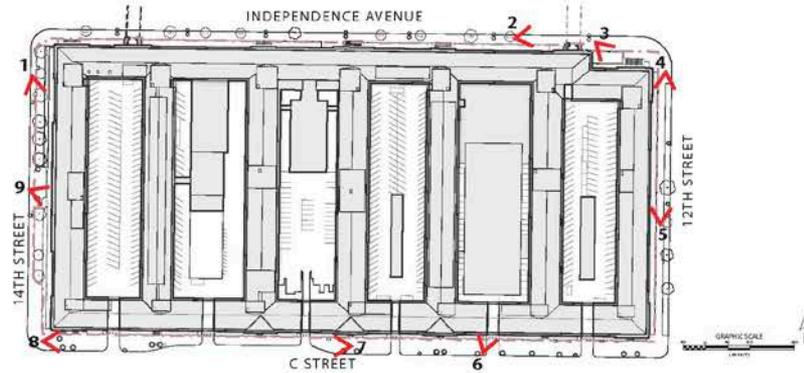
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The project site includes the entire USDA headquarters complex, the Jamie L. Whitten Building and the South Building. The site is located in the Southwest quadrant of DC, bounded to the north by Jefferson Drive, 12th and 14th Streets SW to the east and west, and by C Street to the south. Independence Avenue bisects the site and the two iconic bridge arches reconnect the Whitten and South Building across Independence Avenue. Both buildings are listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

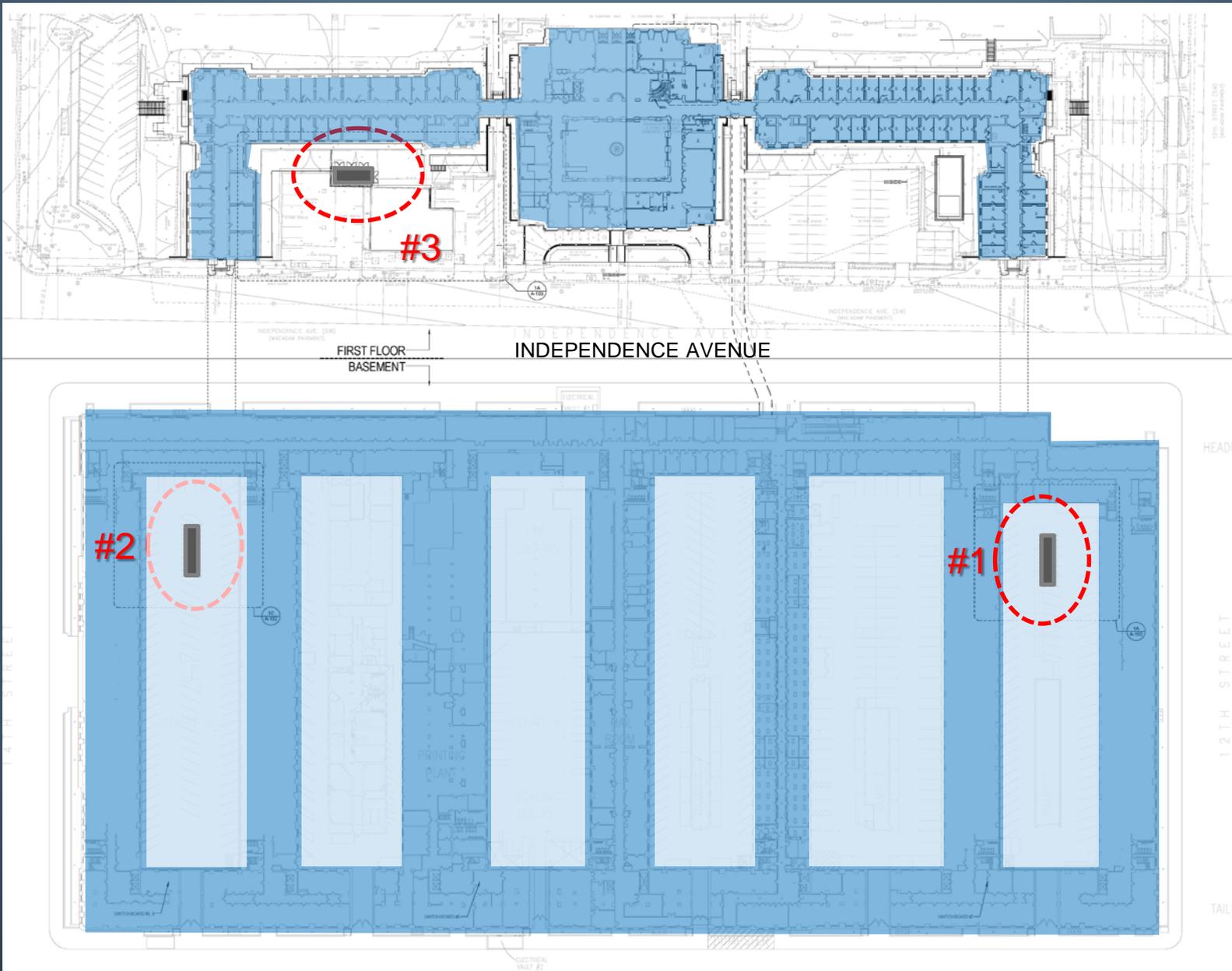


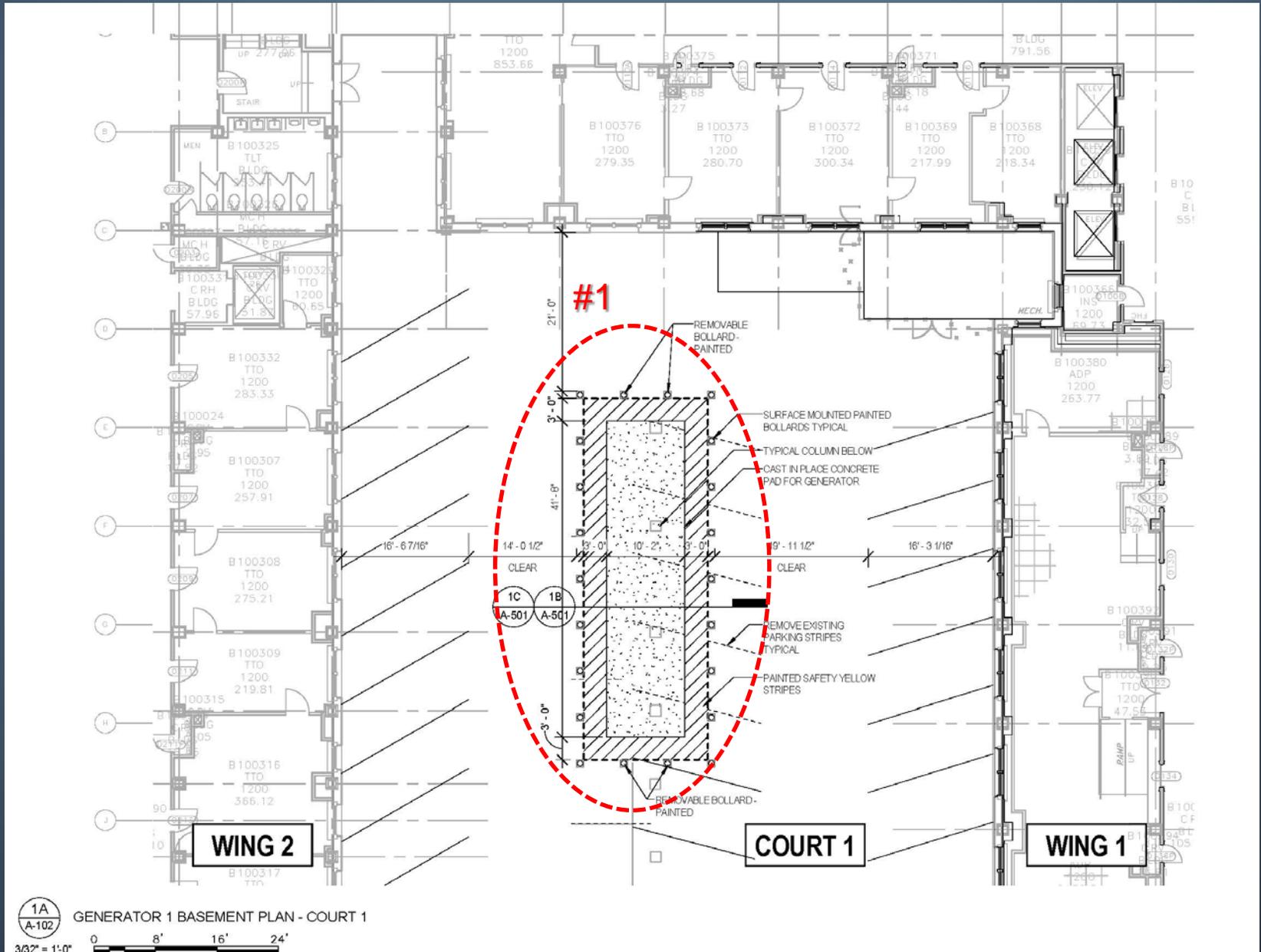
EXISTING CONDITIONS: WHITTEN BUILDING

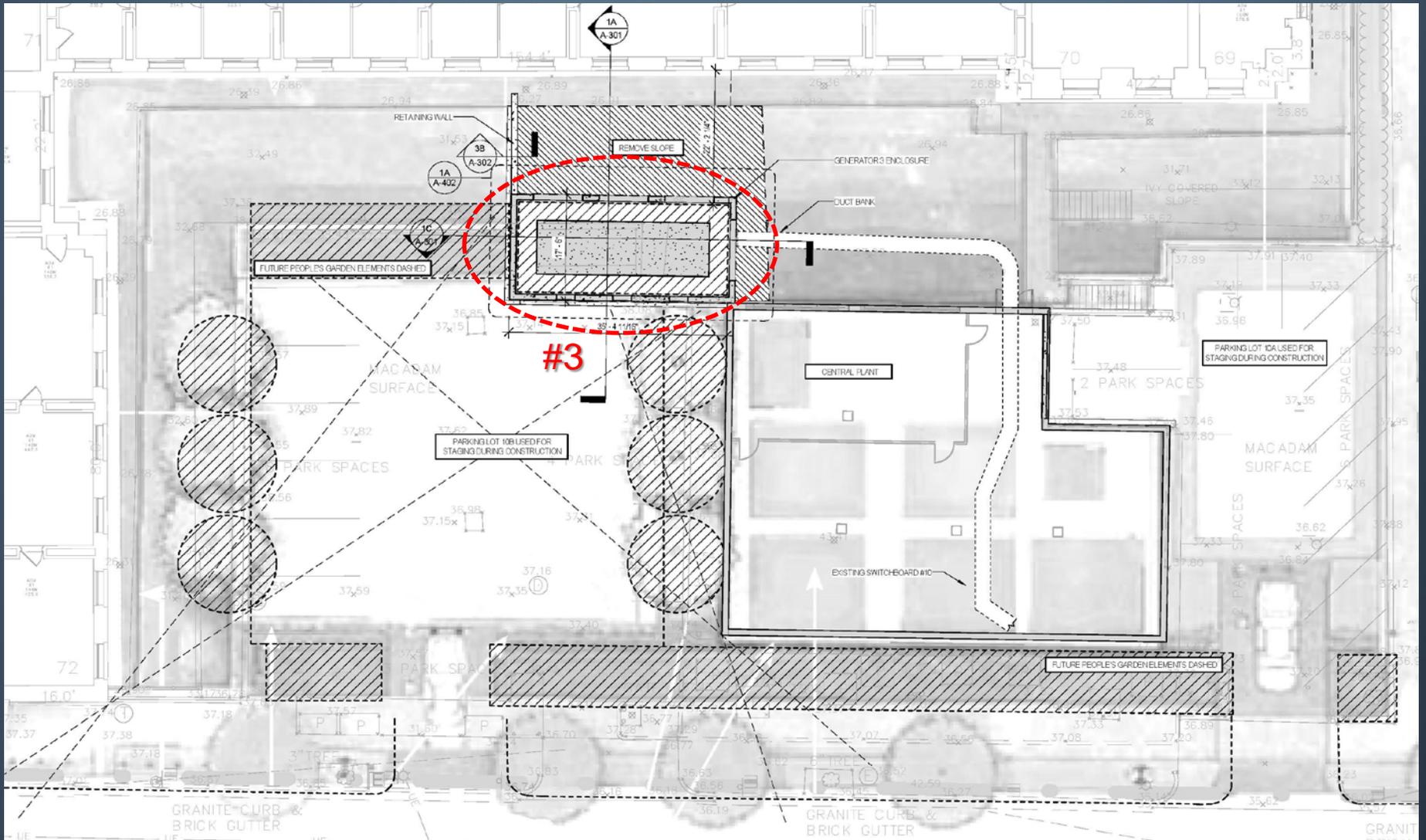


EXISTING CONDITIONS: SOUTH BUILDING

Proposed Generator Locations







Whitten – West Multipurpose Court

