



**KENNEDY CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS
KENNDY CENTER EXPANSION**

2700 F Street, NW
Washington, DC

June 30, 2015

Finding of No Significant Impact

Pursuant to Section 102(2)(C) of the National Environmental Policy Act, the Council on Environmental Quality Regulations (40 CFR, Parts 1500-1508), and the National Capital Planning Commission's Environmental and Historic Preservation Policies and Procedures, I have evaluated the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts (Kennedy Center) building expansion project located in Northwest, Washington, DC, as shown on NCPC Map File No. 3.10(64.00)43898; and the Kennedy Center Expansion environmental assessment (EA) prepared by the National Capital Planning Commission. Based on the foregoing, I have determined that Alternative B will not have a significant impact on the human environment.

Purpose and Need

The purpose of the proposed action is to expand the Kennedy Center's existing facilities by adding additional classrooms, rehearsal rooms, event spaces, and offices adjacent to the Kennedy Center. Additionally, the Kennedy Center envisions improving multimodal access to and from the Kennedy Center, the National Mall, the Rock Creek Paved Recreation Trail, the Potomac River waterfront, and the surrounding vicinity.

The project is needed because the Kennedy Center currently has no dedicated classrooms, a limited number of rehearsal rooms, and no dedicated event space. The Kennedy Center offers more than 30 different educational programs in the areas of performance, teaching and learning, partnerships, and career development for young artists. However, with no dedicated facilities, these programs are currently conducted in make-shift spaces designed for other purposes. Multifunctional rooms, such as the Atrium and Foyers, conference rooms, hallways and rehearsal rooms, currently serve as event space, classrooms, exhibition space, and circulation and storage areas.

Proposed Action

The Kennedy Center proposes to expand the existing building to provide approximately 72,000 square feet of additional space for classrooms, rehearsal rooms, event spaces, and offices. In addition, the Kennedy Center is studying how to improve visitor access to and from the Kennedy Center, the National Mall and Memorial Parks (NAMA), the Rock Creek Paved Recreation (RCPP) Trail, the Potomac River waterfront, and surrounding areas. The Kennedy Center notes it will analyze a new connection to the trail and waterfront in another EA.

Alternative B: Three Land-Based Pavilions - This alternative has been identified as the preferred alternative and will include the construction of three land-based pavilions connected below grade that will be the site for rehearsal spaces, offices, classrooms, lecture halls, multipurpose space, performance space and a cafe.

Under Alternative B, the Kennedy Center proposes to expand the building to the south with the construction of three land-based pavilions. The expansion includes new rehearsal spaces, offices, classrooms, lecture halls, and multipurpose space. Pavilion 1 would have a footprint of 3,300 square feet and Pavilion 2 would have a footprint of approximately 6,200 square feet and approximately 31 feet above grade. The Kennedy Center notes that this alternative also includes a third pavilion, with a footprint of approximately 3,500 square feet, built on the south side of the Kennedy Center. This third pavilion would provide space for small performances or function as a café. This pavilion would be approximately 18 feet above grade.

This design includes a new landscape design for the entire south end of the site consisting of plantings that would enhance the appearance of the plaza. This designed landscape also includes two new reflecting pools. Alternative B would require removing a small section (approximately 2 feet square) of the existing building cladding to provide an opening for a projector in the south façade. This window opening would allow for simulcasts of live performances to be displayed on the façade of Pavilion 2. Alternative B would also include the addition of a 10-foot high canopy walkway between the existing building and the proposed pavilions at the south end of the West Terrace to provide access into the pavilions.

The Kennedy Center will construct a new vehicular entrance on the south end of the site. Vehicles may access the parking garage directly from RCPP on the western side of the site. Buses and shuttles would also be able to access the site from this entrance. Parking for buses and shuttles would be provided in a new area in an underground facility located directly under Pavilion 3.

Other Alternatives Evaluated

In addition to the preferred alternative described above, the EA analyzed the following alternatives: 1) Alternative A: No Action and 2) Alternative C, Option 1 and 2: Two Land-Based Pavilions and a River Pavilion.

Alternative A: No Action - The No Action Alternative represents a continuation of the existing conditions, operations and maintenance of the Kennedy Center, the RCPP, and the Rock Creek Paved Recreation Trail. The Kennedy Center would not be expanded to the south. Multifunctional rooms, such as the Atrium and Foyers, the Millennium Stage, conference rooms, hallways, and rehearsal rooms would continue to serve as event space, classrooms, exhibition space, as well as circulation and storage areas. This alternative was not selected because it does not meet the project's purpose and need to provide additional classrooms, rehearsal rooms, event spaces, and offices.

Alternative C, Options 1 and 2: Two-Land Based and a River Pavilion - This alternative consists of the two-land based pavilions and includes a third pavilion (the River Pavilion), located on a floating pier on the Potomac River. Under this alternative, two land based pavilions would be the

same as Alternative B, and the River Pavilion would consist of a two-story structure with a footprint of approximately 3,900 gross square feet. The first floor will provide interactive learning space, which will function as an engaging environment where the public can explore and directly participate in the performing arts. The second floor will consist of a café. This alternative included two options for connecting the trail to the expansion project: (1) an at-grade pathway or (2) a pedestrian bridge that connected to the floating pavilion. The floating pavilion would also connect to the trail. This alternative was not selected due to operational and programming concerns and potential impacts related to flooding.

Standard for evaluation

Under NEPA, the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations, and NCPC Environmental and Historic Preservation Policies and Procedures, an EA is sufficient and an Environmental Impact Statement need not be prepared if the EA supports the finding that the major federal action will not significantly affect the human environment. The EA for this project was prepared in accordance with this standard.

Potential Impacts

Water quality, visitor use and experience, and human health and safety will experience both beneficial and adverse impacts as a result of implementing the preferred alternative. Floodplains, rare, threatened, and endangered species, cultural resources, operations and management, and traffic and transportation will experience adverse impacts as a result of implementation of the preferred alternative. However, no significant impacts were identified that will require analysis in an EIS. Mitigation to address impacts on affected resources is summarized as follows:

Water Quality: The preferred alternative will result in short term minor adverse impacts to water quality due to construction activities. The use of sediment and erosion controls during construction will be provided in accordance with DC regulatory requirements. Long-term benefits to water quality will occur from the implementation of stormwater practices, such as green roofs and reflecting pools which will use stormwater, which will reduce the amount of stormwater runoff.

Floodplains: The preferred alternative will result in short-term and long-term negligible adverse impacts to floodplains due to ground disturbance during construction and placement of the pavilions on the floodplain. The addition of structures will result in very little change to the ability of the floodplain to convey floodwaters and will not contribute to flooding. The parking garage will provide temporary, on-site storage of floodwater during a flooding event. The Kennedy Center is waterproofing the underground portion of the project up to 18.5 feet to prevent water damage to the finished areas.

Rare, Threatened, and Endangered Species: The preferred alternative may result in short-term minor adverse impacts to threatened and endangered species due to disturbances during construction from sedimentation. During construction of the pavilions, exposed soils could result in erosion and release of sediments into the Potomac River, which may affect the Atlantic and short-nosed sturgeons. However, erosion and sediment controls and various other BMPs such as silt fencing, sediment traps, and vegetative stabilization will be employed to minimize soil erosion and the release of sediments into the Potomac River.

Cultural Resources: The preferred alternative will result in a long-term minor adverse impact to cultural resources within the Area of Potential (APE).

NPS and NCPC have coordinated the findings of the EA with the DC SHPO in accordance with Section 106 of the NHPA through the preparation of an Assessment of Effects report. NCPC forwarded an executed Memorandum of Agreement Amendment, dated June 6, 2015, detailing the necessary mitigation and minimization, to the Consulting Parties following a 14-day review period. No comments were received after the 14 day period.

Traffic and Transportation: The preferred alternative will result in short-term minor to moderate adverse impacts to traffic and transportation because of construction-related delays to build the expansion. The employee population of the Kennedy Center is expected to remain constant during the project. Since the performances tend to occur during the evening or on weekends and not during peak times, and this project is not intended to attract more visitors, no increase of traffic is anticipated.

Visitor Use and Experience: Impacts to visitor use and experience consist of short-term minor adverse impacts due to construction. Long-term beneficial impacts will occur because the expansion will provide new opportunities for free events to the public, new classrooms and rehearsal spaces and a designed landscape that will enhance visitor experience.

Human Health and Safety: The preferred alternative will result in short-term minor adverse impacts to human health and safety associated with contaminated soil removal during construction of the pavilions. The soils will be handled in accordance with an approved site health and safety plan. Once removed a long-term beneficial impact will result as these soils would no longer be on the site.

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Marcel C. Acosta
Executive Director