



Delegated Action of the Executive Director

PROJECT Kennedy Center Expansion Lightning Protection System Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts 2700 F Street NW Washington, DC	NCPC FILE NUMBER 7523
SUBMITTED BY Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts	NCPC MAP FILE NUMBER 3.10(38.00)44842
	ACTION TAKEN Approve as requested
	REVIEW AUTHORITY Approval Per 40 U.S.C. § 8722(b)(1) and (d)

The Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts submitted a new lightning protection system at the Kennedy Center Expansion project (“The REACH”) for preliminary and final review. The REACH was approved by the Commission on July 9, 2015 and has been under construction since October 2015 and is now scheduled for completion in the spring of 2019.

The purpose of this project is to provide protection from lightning strikes for the new structures of the REACH, as well as the landscaped spaces and plazas surrounding them. The Kennedy Center anticipates using these open spaces for outdoor events, concerts and education activities, but will also welcome the public to enjoy the park-like setting whenever possible. While codes do not require such a comprehensive system, the Kennedy Center believes it is highly desirable to protect the new buildings and users of the open spaces while at the same time preserving the clean, uncluttered geometric shapes of Steven Holl’s iconic design. A traditional Franklin rod system would only protect the buildings and would require dozens of spiked rods to be placed around the roof lines of each of the three pavilions, distracting from the architecture.

The proposed system utilizes early streamer emission technology which, when conditions are right for potential lightning strikes, produces ionization from special terminals mounted on masts. These terminals attract lightning and safely transmit its energy into the earth, but unlike traditional building-mounted Franklin rod systems, they provide coverage for the entire campus including lawns and open spaces, and not just the buildings. Aesthetically, these masts will negate the installation of dozens of individual spiked rods around the perimeter of each pavilion, preserving the clean lines and geometry of the REACH design.

In order to provide maximum coverage with minimal visual impact, the engineering of the system resulted in the specification of two distinct masts. One mast will be 10’ tall, made of milled aluminum, tapered from four inches at the base to three inches at the top, and mounted on the upper roof of the Kennedy Center’s original building, providing coverage to the north end of the REACH, including the plaza and upper lawn. The second mast, made of galvanized steel, will be mounted to the base of a new retaining wall at the south end of the REACH site, within the new grove of ginkgo trees. It will be 59 feet in height above the finished grade of the ginkgo grove and six inches in diameter at the base, tapering to three and a half inches in diameter at the top. This mast will protect the bulk of the REACH campus including the lower lawn and the two southernmost pavilions. The applicant notes it is positioned on the Kennedy Center property

nearest to the Theodore Roosevelt Bridge access ramp to enable it to blend in with the existing signs and lampposts.

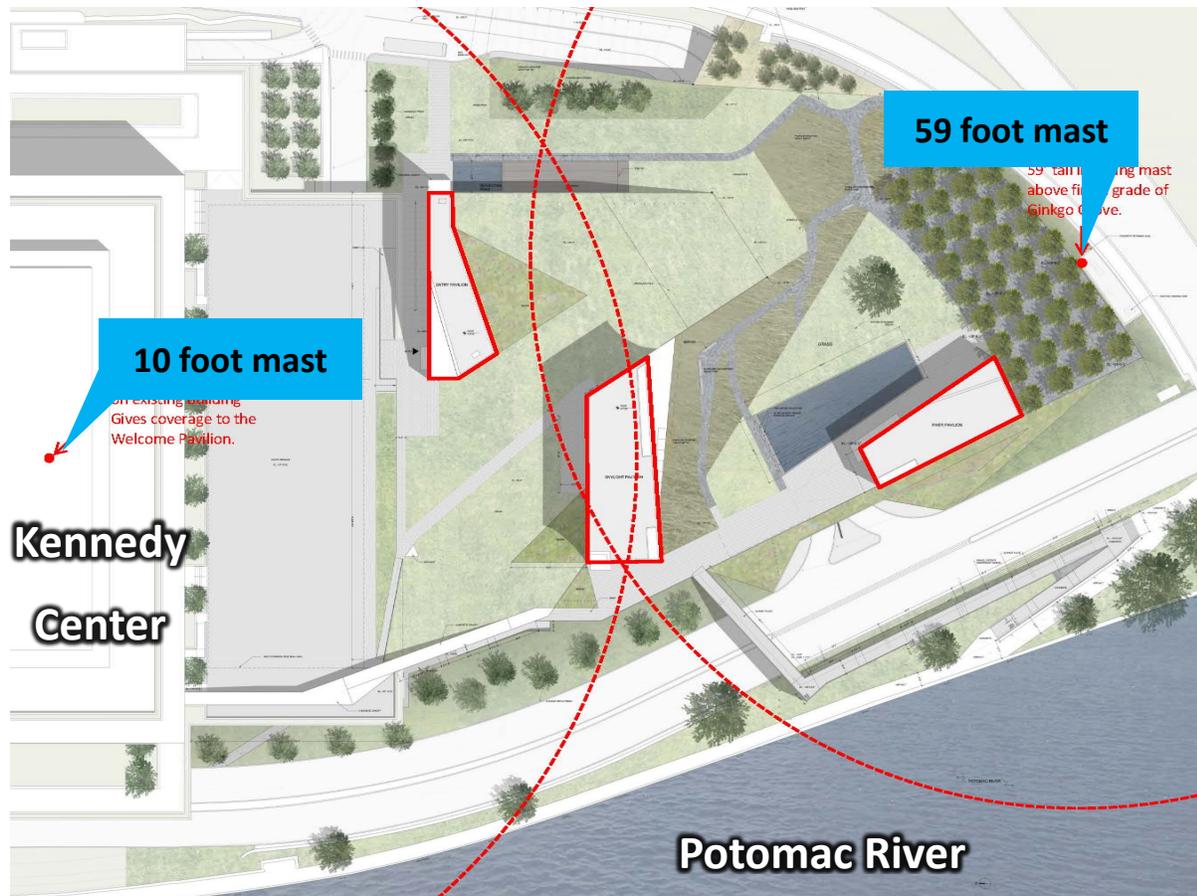


Figure 1: Site Plan of Kennedy Center Expansion with Lightning Protection masts identified

Staff has reviewed this project and finds that it is consistent with policies contained within the Transportation, Historic Preservation, and Parks and Open Space Elements of the Comprehensive Plan and would not adversely impact any other federal interest. The Kennedy Center does not have an independent responsibility under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and pursuant to the National Historic Preservation Act, the DC State Historic Preservation Office submitted a no adverse effect determination for this project. NCPC concurs with this determination. NCPC has an independent NEPA responsibility and I find that this project qualifies for categorical exclusion #6 under NCPC NEPA regulations.

The Coordinating Committee reviewed the proposal at its November 14, 2018 meeting. The Committee forwarded the proposed preliminary and final design to the Commission with the statement that the proposal has been coordinated with all participating agencies. The participating agencies were: NCPC, the DC SHPO (via email); the DDOT, the District Department of Energy and the Environment, the National Park Service; the General Services Administration and the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority.

