



Commission Action

June 7, 2018

PROJECT US Food and Drug Administration Headquarters Consolidation at the Federal Research Center, White Oak Campus, Silver Spring, Maryland - Draft Master Plan 10903 New Hampshire Avenue Silver Spring, MD	NCPC FILE NUMBER MP201
SUBMITTED BY United States General Services Administration	NCPC MAP FILE NUMBER 3104.00(05.00)44720
REVIEW AUTHORITY Advisory per 40 U.S.C. § 8722(a) and (b)(1)	APPLICANT'S REQUEST Approval of comments on draft master plan
	ACTION TAKEN Approved comments on draft master plan

The Commission:

Notes that the Commission last approved a master plan and transportation management plan update for the US Food and Drug Administration at the White Oak Federal Research Center in 2009.

Notes that due to the recent *FDA Reauthorization Act of 2017*, FDA is now projecting a 64 percent increase in employees (from 10,987 to 18,000) over the next 15 years and is seeking to add approximately 1.6 million square feet of office and special use space to the current 3.8 million square feet of laboratory and office space.

Finds that FDA has successfully maintained the campus character and urban design framework that was established since the original 1997 master plan even as the campus has continued to evolve over time. A hierarchy of open spaces help organize low-rise buildings. Buildings frame a series of small courtyards arranged around a large east-west central commons area which provides expansive views to the existing forest to the east of the campus. A secondary axis rotated seven degrees to the south widens the opening of the commons to reinforce this visual connection.

Notes that the Main Administration Building (Building One) is the front door of the FDA campus. Constructed in 1945, the three-story building contributes to the US Naval Ordnance Laboratory Historic District, which was determined eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places in 1997.

Finds that the historic view of Building One from New Hampshire Avenue has been maintained since the 1940s by gradually placing new buildings (ranging from 3 to 6 stories) further to the east in relationship with the topography to avoid projecting above the historic building.

Notes that there are several existing high-rise residential buildings in the area surrounding the campus, ranging from 19-22 stories. In addition, this area is growing rapidly due to the rezoning implemented as a result of the *Montgomery County's 2014 White Oak Science Gateway Master Plan* which allows for high-density development with heights up to 220 feet.

Notes that the site is environmentally constrained with a total of eight streams running through the site, including the Paint Branch Creek and its tributaries. Other constraints include stream valley buffers, steep slopes, and forested areas.

Finds that the applicant has provided three action alternatives with differences in urban design and campus character, historic preservation, environmental impacts and program.

"Smaller Twin Towers" – Alternative C, total of five new office buildings: two 14-story buildings (218 feet), a six and a seven story building, and a two-story conference center.

Notes that Alternative C proposes 1,573,124 additional square feet with two 14-story office buildings, and a seven-story building around an enclosed courtyard located on the east side of the commons. It also includes a six-story office building surrounding a two-story conference center on the northwest, and four new parking structures.

Supports Alternative C because it results in a balanced approach that generates the least amount of adverse environmental impacts, extends the original character and urban design framework of the FDA campus, minimizes adverse effects to its historic setting, and responds to the surrounding context.

Recommends that the applicant make the following changes to improve the design:

- Refine the massing of the proposed 14-story buildings to open up the east vista and provide a more pedestrian friendly scale at the ground level.
- Provide a visual and pedestrian connection from the commons to the newly proposed courtyard at the eastern end of the campus.
- Consider programming, landscape, public art, and streetscape elements to activate the space between the two towers, and frame the east view.
- Eliminate the proposed sky bridge between the towers to preserve the view toward the east of the campus if feasible, since the buildings are already connected below the plaza level.
- Further study the view of the proposed buildings from New Hampshire Avenue and complement the symmetry and main architectural elements of Building One.

"Mid-Rises" – Alternative A, total of five new office buildings up to 10-stories tall (137 feet)

Notes that Alternative A proposes 1,589,161 additional square feet with three ten-story office buildings around a courtyard on the eastern end of the commons; an eight-story office building on the southeast, a two-story conference center on the northwest, and four new parking structures.

Does not support Alternative A because even though it maintains the historic viewshed of the campus from New Hampshire Avenue, it has the most significant impact on the environment, lacks

an efficient and compact layout, and is not consistent with the FDA campus original urban design framework and character.

“Large Tower” – Alternative B, total of four new office buildings: one large 20-story tower (298 feet), two mid-rises, and a two-story conference center

Notes that Alternative B proposes 1,748,834 additional square feet with a 20-story office tower, and an eight-story courtyard building located on the eastern end of the commons. It also includes a six-story office building around a two-story conference center on the northwest quadrant, and three new parking structures.

Finds that Alternative B significantly changes the character of the campus and surrounding community by providing a tall architectural icon. Alternative B has greater adverse environmental and historic viewshed impacts than Alternative C, and provides the largest program of the alternatives.

Requests that, if the applicant wants to pursue Alternative B as the preferred alternative, the following information must be provided at final review:

- An explanation whether the additional square footage (approximately 165,000 square feet) could be accommodated in the other alternatives and the benefits of the single tower approach.
- Additional visual studies from Columbia Pike (Route 29), and the Capital Beltway, taking into consideration the proposed future development in the area, to better understand the visual impacts in the larger context.

Comments Applicable to all Alternatives

- The location of the dining pavilion in Alternative C within the commons (which can be accommodated in any of the alternatives) is preferable because it will further activate this large open space, promote informal interaction, and frame the viewshed toward the forested areas to the east.
- The proposed conference center surrounded by an L-shape office building, as shown in Alternatives B and C, is preferable because it takes advantage of an already disturbed site.
- The location of the distribution center below the newly extended plaza is preferable, as shown in Alternatives A and C, because this location consolidates loading areas, and is closer to the buildings and commons, yet separated from pedestrian circulation.
- Locating parking below the proposed buildings would help to reduce environmental impacts.

Parking and Transportation

Notes that in 2009 the Commission required the applicant to conform to a parking ratio of one space for every 1.5 employees by the end of construction in 2012, limiting the number of employee parking spaces to 5,926, based on the projected campus population of 8,889, and 1,000 additional parking spaces for visitors, for a total of 6,926 parking spaces.

Finds that today FDA is exceeding the approved parking ratio because two garages were not built. The campus has a total parking capacity of 6,817 parking spaces (including 475 spaces for visitors), which equates to a parking ratio of one space for every 1.7 employees based on the existing campus population of 10,987.

Notes that the 2018 master plan includes a total on-site parking capacity of 11,709 spaces, including 10,094 employee parking spaces (based on the projected campus population of 18,000), plus 1,615 visitor parking spaces.

Notes that the proposed parking ratio of one space for every 1.8 employees (1: 1.8) is within the 1:1.5-1:2 range established by the *Transportation Element of the Comprehensive Plan*.

Notes that Montgomery and Prince George's counties have identified traffic as their main concern because the area is already congested and will grow worse in the future based on a significant increase in density around the FDA campus.

Encourages FDA to set a long-term goal of one parking space for every two employees (1:2) by the end of construction in 2035, limiting the number of employee parking spaces to 9,000.

Finds that the proposed parking garage with approximately 2,000 spaces to be built in Phase 4 (~2030) located at the east end of the campus adjacent to the reconfigured East Loop Road encroaches into the sensitive stream valley buffer and requires a large amount of forest removal.

Finds that reducing the footprint and number of parking spaces in half (to 1,000 spaces) would reduce environmental impacts and result in a 1:2 parking ratio.

Notes that the Commission defers support for the proposed footprint and number of parking spaces for this garage until it is able to evaluate improvements to the local/regional network and an update of the Transportation Management Plan (TMP) closer to the time of design and construction.

Requests that the TMP for the final submission include the following information and mitigation measures:

- Submit additional justification to support the proposed increase in visitor parking spaces from 1,000 to 1,615 spaces.
- Coordinate with Montgomery and Prince George's counties to improve and maximize connections to Bus Rapid Transit, Purple Line, proposed bicycle network and trails.
- Provide continuous sidewalks, and multi-use trails within the campus connecting to the surrounding off-site network, in particular to nearby transit stations, including Lockwood Drive.
- Consider allowing the regional Paint Branch Trail to continue through the FDA campus along the Paint Branch Stream Valley Buffer, working with FDA security staff to determine appropriate access points, pathways and hours of operation.
- Consider a 10-foot wide multi-use trail within the historic green buffer that connects to the existing bicycle lane along New Hampshire Avenue and explore recreational uses.

- Coordinate with Maryland Department of Transportation to provide bike share stations and allow dockless bikes on campus, and establish an internal bike-share system throughout the FDA campus.
- Expand shuttle service to adjacent mixed use developments, such as Viva White Oak.
- Consider nearby commercial parking space available in private or public facilities, such as White Oak Shopping Center.

General Comments

Requests the applicant provide the following information with its submission for final review:

- Responses to any comments provided by the full Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC), Maryland Department of Environment (MDE), Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT), the Maryland Department of Transportation State Highway Administration (MDOT SHA) and Montgomery County Council.
- A campus-wide stormwater management plan and narrative identifying environmental site design opportunities, prepared in accordance with the Commission submission guidelines, Section 438 of the Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007 (EISA), and the Maryland Department of the Environment Stormwater Management Guidelines.
- A landscape and tree preservation plan for the entire campus that addresses policies related to tree canopy and vegetation in accordance with the Federal Environment Element of the Comprehensive Plan.

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Secretary to the National Capital Planning Commission

