



## Executive Director's Recommendation

Commission Meeting: March 1, 2018

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### PROJECT

**Amendment to the Development Controls for the Chancery Section of the International Center** - to increase the maximum allowable height of the perimeter fence on Lot 14, Embassy of Singapore 3501 International Place NW Washington, DC

### SUBMITTED BY

United States Department of State

### REVIEW AUTHORITY

The International Center Act (Public Law 90-553, amended by Public Law 97-186)

### NCPC FILE NUMBER

0706

### NCPC MAP FILE NUMBER

72.10(38.00)44704

### APPLICANT'S REQUEST

Adoption of Amendment to the Development Controls for the Chancery Section of the International Center

### PROPOSED ACTION

Adopt Amendment to the Development Controls for the Chancery Section of the International Center

### ACTION ITEM TYPE

Consent Calendar

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## PROJECT SUMMARY

The U.S. Department of State has requested an amendment to the Development Controls for the Chancery Section of the International Center to increase the maximum allowable height of the perimeter fence on Lot 14 from six and half feet (6'-6") to nine feet ten inches (9'-10") above the final grade. The purpose of this amendment is to enhance perimeter security at the Embassy of Singapore and match the existing fence height of the adjacent Embassy of the People's Republic of China. This amendment is related to a perimeter fence alteration project at the Embassy of Singapore that has been submitted concurrently to the Commission (NCPC project # 7952). The Development Controls were originally adopted by the Commission on June 3, 1971, and have been amended ten times to accommodate both campus-wide revisions and those applicable to specific lots. The most recent amendment was on October 5, 2000 to allow the construction of the Embassy of the People's Republic of China. The amendments provided for the combination of three lots (11, 12, and 13) into a single lot #12, and increased building height, floor area ratio, building area, setbacks, and fence height of the combined lots.

## KEY INFORMATION

- There are 20 Lots at the International Chancery Center (ICC) today. The ICC is home to 18 chanceries and a Federal Office Building, which houses the Department of State's Office of Foreign Missions and the Bureau of Diplomatic Security.
- The ICC is almost built out. Lot 10 is the only undeveloped lot on the ICC campus.

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- The Department of State and NCPC created the Development Controls to guide the development of the chanceries in a manner consistent with the Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital and the revised master plan for the International Center approved by the Commission on March 1, 1984.
  - This amendment is necessary to allow a nine feet ten inches (9'-10") fence around the Embassy of Singapore.
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## RECOMMENDATION

The Commission:

**Supports** the Department of State's request for an amendment to the Development Controls for a maximum perimeter fence height of nine feet ten inches (9'-10") at Lot 14 at the International Chancery Center, occupied by the Embassy of Singapore.

**Notes** that the fence height standard for United States Embassies worldwide is ten feet for security purposes. The Department of State is allowing this fence height based on reciprocity agreements with other countries that grant the same development standards for chanceries in the US.

**Notes** that the United States Embassy in Singapore has a ten-foot tall perimeter security fence.

**Notes** that the Commission approved an amendment for a nine feet ten inches (9'-10") tall perimeter fence in October 2000 for the Embassy of the People's Republic of China, located immediately to the west of the Embassy of Singapore.

**Adopts** the following amendment to the Development Controls for the Chancery Section of the International Center in the District of Columbia regarding Fences and Retaining Walls on Lot 14:

611.11 The top of such fences may be no higher than six and one-half feet (6' -6") above the final grade and the average height on any such retaining wall may be no higher than seven and one-half feet (7'-6") above the final grade; except on Lot No. 12 *and the adjacent Lot No. 14*, the top of such fences may be no higher than nine feet ten inches (9' -10") or three (3) meters above the final grade, as measured from the exterior of the lot.

**Notes** that in the future, if additional lots within the International Chancery Center will require an increase in fence height beyond what is currently allowed in the Development Controls, the Department of State will need to prepare an environmental analysis to evaluate broad visual, aesthetics, and cumulative impacts.

*Italics* Language added

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## PROJECT REVIEW TIMELINE

<b>Previous actions</b>	<p><b>October 5, 2000</b> – Adoption of amendments to the Development Controls for the Chancery Section of the International Center for combined lots 11, 12, and 13 (Lot 12) to allow the construction of the Embassy of the People's Republic of China on Lot 12.</p> <p><b>July 24, 1997</b>– Adoption of Amendments to the Development Controls for the Chancery Section of the International Center to increase the employee parking ratio and limit the number of residential units on all lots.</p> <p><b>October 25, 1990</b> – Adoption of Amendment to the Development Controls for the Chancery Section of the International Center to eliminate the restriction against an access drive across the east lot Line of Lot No. 14 (Singapore Embassy).</p>
<b>Remaining actions</b> (anticipated)	– none

## PROJECT ANALYSIS

### Executive Summary

Staff analysis focuses on urban design and security considerations. The proposed amendment will allow the Embassy of Singapore to enhance its perimeter security within the International Chancery Center by providing a fence that is nine feet ten inches in height (9'-10"). The fence height will be compatible with other fences along Van Ness Street, NW including the adjacent Chinese Embassy and also the Embassy of Israel. Staff believes that it is possible to meet the security standards while providing a fence that is compatible with the ICC campus and the adjacent neighborhood.

### Analysis

The Chancery Section is located in the Northwest section of the District of Columbia and is bounded by private property on the north, Tilden Street on the south, the University of the District of Columbia and the International Telecommunications Satellite (INTELSAT) headquarters on the east, and Reno Road and 36th Street on the west.

The Development Controls were designed to guide the development of the Chancery Section in a manner consistent with the Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital; the revised master plan for the International Center approved by the Commission on March 1, 1984; the special character and development potential of the Chancery Section; and the character and quality of surrounding areas. The objectives of the Development Controls are to:

1. Establish uniform guidelines for the design and construction of Chanceries on Lots within the Chancery Section;
2. Insure that development of the Chancery Section is consistent with the use of the adjacent site for the new headquarters building of the International Telecommunications Satellite Organization ; and
3. Establish and maintain a unique "character and high quality" of development for all Lots in the Chancery Section.

Staff finds that the requested amendment to the Development Controls is justified given the fence height standard for US Embassies worldwide is ten feet for security purposes. The US Embassy in Singapore has a ten-foot tall perimeter security fence. **The Department of State is allowing this fence height based on reciprocity agreements with other countries that grant the same development standards for chanceries in the US.** In addition, the Commission approved an amendment for a nine feet ten inches (9'-10") tall perimeter fence in October 2000 for the Embassy of the People's Republic of China, located immediately to the west. The 9'-10" tall fence at the Embassy of Singapore would create some consistency between the two buildings.

## **CONFORMANCE TO EXISTING PLANS, POLICIES AND RELATED GUIDANCE**

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

This amendment meets basic goals of the Comprehensive Plan. In particular, the Urban Design Element includes policies that encourage federal agencies to design security barriers (placement, height, spacing, structural integrity, and other physical characteristics) to respond to the identified threats as well as specific building and site conditions. The design of perimeter security should respect the building's use, significance and location in the community.

### **National Historic Preservation Act**

The Department of State has determined that the proposed amendment is not subject to further review under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) because the buildings within the ICC are not eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, as documented in the previous EIS documents. Due to its approval authority over the associated fence alteration project, NCPC has an independent responsibility to comply with Section 106. On February 8, 2018, NCPC initiated consultation with the District of Columbia State Historic Preservation Officer (DC SHPO) regarding the proposed fence alterations at the Embassy of Singapore. NCPC determined that no identified historic properties would be affected by the proposed project within the Area of Potential Effect (APE). Constructed in 1984, INTELSAT was determined eligible for the National Register of Historic Places in 2014. NCPC determined that the proposed fence alterations at the Embassy of Singapore should not pose any adverse effect to the National Register-eligible INTELSAT Building. On February 12, 2018, the DC SHPO concurred with NCPC's delineation of the APE and its determination of no effect on historic properties.

The ICC site has the potential to yield unidentified archeological resources, related to history or prehistory, because of its geographic location, as well as being the site of the former National Bureau of Standards (NBS), constructed in the early 1900s. Moving forward, the DC SHPO is requiring that the DOS prepare an archeological assessment with a GIS analysis, and an evaluation of the above ground built resources. Both of these components (below and above ground resources) will inform the Determination of Eligibility (DOE) for the entire ICC campus to be submitted to the DCSHPO. The goal of obtaining the DOE concurrence by the DCSHPO is to streamline the review process for any future projects within the ICC.

### **National Environmental Policy Act**

Both DOS and NCPC have a National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) responsibility for this project. DOS is relying on the 1976 and 1981 Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) documents. The Development Controls for the ICC were adopted by the Commission in 1971 and analyzed in the associated EIS documents. As the project does not comply with the Development Controls, NCPC determined that further environmental analysis was required. NCPC staff found that the project meets NCPC's categorical exclusion §601.12(a)(2) of the Commission's recently adopted NEPA Regulations 82 FR 45421 (September 29, 2017), 82 FR 48609 (October 19, 2017), which pertains to "approval of the installation or restoration of minor site elements, such as but not limited to identification signs, sidewalks, patios, fences, curbs, retaining walls, landscaping, and trail or stream improvements. Additional features include water distribution lines and sewer lines which involve work that is essentially replacement in kind." Before applying this categorical exclusion, NCPC staff determined that no Extraordinary Circumstances were present as required by the Commission's NEPA Regulations §601.11 (b)(1) through (11).

**Staff notes that in the future, if additional lots within the International Chancery Center will require an increase in fence height beyond what is currently allowed in the Development Controls, the Department of State will need to prepare an environmental analysis to evaluate broad visual, aesthetics, and cumulative impacts.**

## **CONSULTATION**

### **Coordinating Committee**

The Coordinating Committee reviewed the project on February 7, 2018. Without objection, the Committee forwarded the proposed amendment to the Commission with the statement that the proposal has been coordinated with all participating agencies. The participating agencies were the NCPC; the National Park Service; the General Services Administration; the District of Columbia Office of Planning; the District of Columbia Department of Transportation; the District State Historic Preservation Office; the District Department of Energy and Environment; and the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority.

### **U.S. Commission of Fine Arts**

The Commission of Fine Arts (CFA) reviewed the final plans at its meeting on February 15, 2018. The project was included in the consent calendar agenda. As part of the recommendation CFA noted: "No objection to the installation of a perimeter security fence with a vehicular cable barrier at the Embassy of the Republic of Singapore compound in the International Center, provided that the top of the individual fence pickets are vertically straight and not curved, and that the new fence and/or the fence-wall combinations are no taller than ten feet maximum in height."

### **ONLINE REFERENCE**

The following supporting documents for this project are available online:

- Submission Package

Prepared by Vivian Lee  
02/22/2018

### **POWERPOINT (ATTACHED)**

## NCPC File # 0706

# Amendment to the Development Controls for the Chancery Section of the International Center in the District of Columbia

(to increase the maximum allowable height of the perimeter  
fence on Lot 14 - Embassy of Singapore)

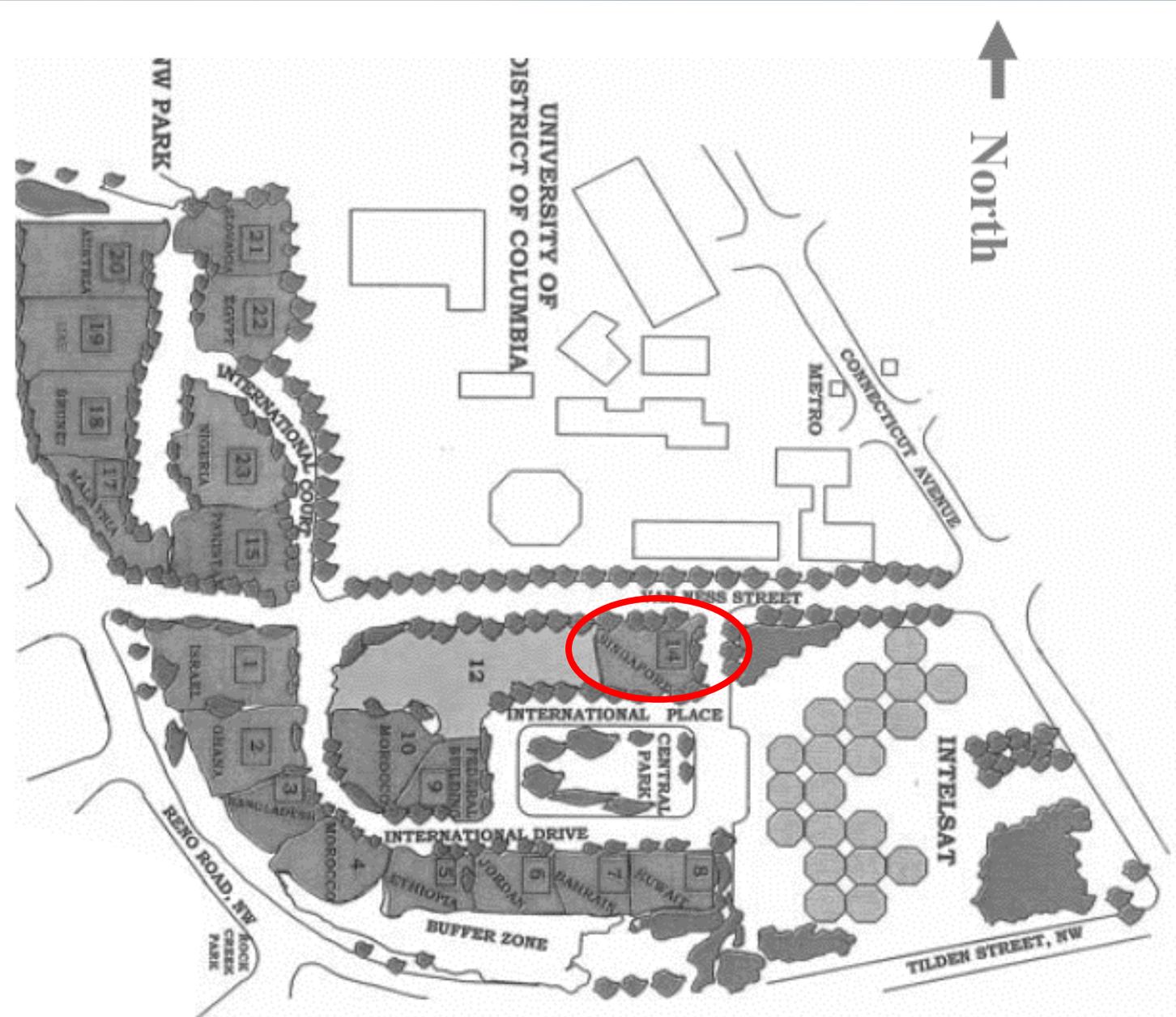
International Chancery Center  
3501 International Place, NW,  
Washington, DC 20008

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United States Department of State

Preliminary and Final

# The Chancery Section: Lot 14 Embassy of Singapore





*RetiredAndTravelling.com*



## **610.00 Fences and Retaining Walls**

**611.00** Fences and retaining walls may be constructed on Lot lines and within setback areas and building lines. provided that:

**611.11** The top of such fences may be no higher than six and one-half feet (6' -6") above the final grade and the average height on any such retaining wall may be no higher than seven and one-half feet (7'-6") above the final grade; except on Lot No. 12 *and the adjacent Lot No. 14*, the top of such fences may be no higher than nine feet ten inches (9' -10") or three (3) meters above the final grade. as measured from the exterior of the lot.

**611.12** No fences or retaining walls or other construction shall be located within five feet of Van Ness Street or within any building restriction line indicated on the plat subdivision; and

**611.13** All surfaces of fences or retaining walls shall be finished and designed in such a manner as to harmonize with the design and materials used in the construction of the Chancery and shall present no objectionable characteristics to adjacent Lots.