Commission Action

February 6, 2020

PROJECT
Suitland Collections Center Master Plan
Suitland Collections Center
4210 Silver Hill Road
Suitland, MD

SUBMITTED BY
Smithsonian Institution

REVIEW AUTHORITY
Advisory
per 40 U.S.C. § 8722(a) and (b)(1)

NCPC FILE NUMBER
MP135

NCPC MAP FILE NUMBER
3205.11(05.00)45040

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 for the Suitland Collections Center (SCC) in 1993 and smaller facilities on the site between 2008-2010, and that the long-term needs of the Smithsonian Institution for the SCC have changed.

Notes that the draft Master Plan for the SCC was developed to achieve the following goals:

- Reinforce a singular identity
- Maximize shared amenities
- Foster pan-institutional collaboration
- Create a welcoming and connected campus

Site Plan

Supports the proposed layout of the new warehouse buildings arranged around a common open space that connects with the other administrative buildings on the campus.

Finds the site plan meets the Institution's needs for warehousing, docking and loading, while also providing a more human scale design for employees and visitors to enjoy.

Notes the Smithsonian will implement the plan in several phases which are tied to other Smithsonian museum projects over the next few decades.

Security

Notes that the SCC is a unique campus of facilities that house important collections to the Smithsonian Institution.

Notes the draft Master Plan cites previous issues with thefts and break-ins and that the location of the SCC adjacent to Suitland Parkway with minimal staff is a security and safety challenge.

Supports the draft Master Plan proposal to replace the existing chain-link and barbed wire fence along Silver Hill Road with a decorative metal fence that will improve their public street frontage aesthetic. The new fence will be 10 feet in height – the same height as the existing chain-link fence.

Finds the height of this fence is on average two feet taller than similar fences at other federal campuses facing a street.

Notes that the draft Master Plan also includes approximately 3,750 feet of new fence throughout the woodland area to the north of the campus, in addition to a 25-foot total clearance around the fence, a jeep trail, lighting and video surveillance.

Finds that while the clearance area and lighting are similar to other high security federal campuses adjacent to woodlands, the Smithsonian has not submitted a security threat analysis to support the proposed fence. The Commission needs to better understand the threat assessment to see if the environmental impacts are warranted.

Requests the Smithsonian submit a security threat analysis with the next submission to address the need for the clearance area and lighting for the woodland fence and the 10-foot fence on Silver Hill Road.

Requests the Smithsonian submit additional information regarding tree and vegetation removal and the proposed lighting in the 25-foot clearance zone.

Requests that if the clearance zone in the woods and the 10-foot fence on Silver Hill Road are warranted, the Smithsonian submit a robust landscape plan to mitigate for any loss of contiguous habitat in the wooded area and the impacts of the night-time lighting, and to improve the streetscape aesthetic along Silver Hill Road.

Parking and Access

Notes that the current parking ratio onsite is 1:1.2 for the 300 employees and that the draft Master Plan commits to achieving a 1:2 parking ratio and reduces the overall number of parking spaces on site over the initial 20-year planning horizon.

Finds there are some inconsistencies in the data that need to be clarified in the next submission.

Notes the Comprehensive Plan Ratio for the SCC site is 1:3 because of the campus' proximity to the Suitland Metro Station; however, the walk is currently dangerous and potentially unsafe, requiring three slip lane crossings. A large portion of the campus is also up to 1.2 miles from the station.

Requests the Smithsonian develop a detailed plan to reduce employee parking with clear milestones and strategies for attaining the 1:3 goal over the next 20 years. The Commission will assess the need for a deviation from the targets on a project by project basis, recognizing a near-term reduction may not be possible given the current infrastructure challenges.

Requests that the Smithsonian submit timing information on the bicycle and pedestrian improvements for the portion of Silver Hill Road that is within their jurisdiction.

Notes that the Smithsonian has agreed to convene to a meeting with NPS, Maryland State Highway Administration, GSA on the proposed improvements.

JULIA KOSTER Digitally signed by JULIA KOSTER
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Julia A. Koster
Secretary to the National Capital Planning Commission