



## Executive Director's Recommendation

Commission Meeting: March 5, 2020

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<b>PROJECT</b> <b>Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences Education and Research Building</b> Naval Support Activity, Bethesda 8901 Wisconsin Avenue Bethesda, Maryland	<b>NCPC FILE NUMBER</b> 7987
<b>SUBMITTED BY</b> Naval Facilities Engineering Command Washington	<b>NCPC MAP FILE NUMBER</b> 3101.30(38.00)45071
<b>REVIEW AUTHORITY</b> Federal Projects in the Environs per 40 U.S.C. § 8722(b)(1)	<b>APPLICANT'S REQUEST</b> Approval of final site and building plans
	<b>PROPOSED ACTION</b> Approve final site and building plans as requested
	<b>ACTION ITEM TYPE</b> Staff Presentation

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### PROJECT SUMMARY

The U.S. Department of the Navy has submitted for Commission review final site and building plans for the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences (USUHS) Education and Research Building at the Naval Support Activity (NSA) Bethesda in Bethesda, MD. This is the fourth time that NCPC has reviewed the Education and Research Building. The Commission provided comments on the concept design in June 2018 and approved the preliminary site and building plans in September 2018. The Commission deferred action on revised preliminary plans for the project in June 2019 as the Navy sought to address Commission concerns regarding the lack of landscaping on the main plaza area east of the proposed building and the northwest steps. The applicant is submitting a final design that reflects changes to the main plaza east of the building, the northwest steps, and the southwest steps resulting from further project development. The Navy has addressed the Commission's concerns while maintaining the applicant's operational needs and taking into account site constraints.

The project consists of the construction of a 477,966 square-foot, multi-story education and research laboratory addition to the USUHS campus. It will serve as a connector between the Armed Forces Radiobiology Research Institute to the west and the USUHS campus to the east through pedestrian bridges and will include a multi-level underground parking facility that will accommodate 250 parking spaces. The applicant has indicated that the height of the building will be in proportion to its neighbors, and that the building exterior will be compatible with the current campus and installation architectural compatibility guidance.

The application will demolish two non-historic buildings and an existing surface parking lot. Because of the footprint of the proposed development, there will be a net increase of 50,878 square feet of impervious surface, though stormwater impacts would be managed through site design and the implementation of low impact development features, such as bioretention, micro-bioretention,

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rain gardens, and rooftop disconnection. Any trees that are removed as part of the project will be replaced at a 1:1 basis, with a majority of the replacement occurring at off-site locations that will be coordinated with NSA Bethesda. The proposed final plaza design will feature benches, covered tables with seating, planters/stormwater management. Plantings including nearly 40 understory and canopy trees have been added to the design since the last review of the preliminary design in June 2019.

This project, including both the building and associated parking facility, was identified as a short-term planned project in the NSA Bethesda master plan, which was approved by NCPC in November 2013 (NCPC File # MP059).

## KEY INFORMATION

- The USUHS project includes the construction of a 477,966 square-foot, multi-story education and research laboratory addition to its campus at NSA Bethesda. The project also includes a large plaza that will form a quadrangle with USUHS buildings to the east.
- The building is oriented to address the USUHS campus to the east, both programmatically and through design. Office and work areas are provided along the east side, which is designed with a brick composition consistent with the adjacent campus buildings. The west façade houses labs and research space, and provides additional daylighting, consistent with the goals identified by USUHS staff.
- The quadrangle is the primary pedestrian entrance to the facility, as most users will be coming from the adjacent portions of the USUHS campus to the east. Off-campus pedestrians will primarily approach and access the complex along South Palmer Road, and onto the main plaza.
- The facility will include a multi-level underground parking facility that will accommodate 250 parking spaces, which falls within the 1:3 parking ratio approved for the facility.
- Two non-historic buildings and a surface parking lot will be demolished as part of the project, with a net increase of 50,878 square feet of impervious surface. Stormwater impacts will be managed through site design and low impact development features.
- The height of the building would be proportionate to its neighbors and would follow all established architectural design standards for the facility.
- The proposed final plaza will include landscaped areas and green spaces, which have been expanded since previous reviews. Planting areas for a few larger shade trees have been incorporated into the design despite a radiological laboratory being planned under the plaza level. This below-grade facility limits planting depth.

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## RECOMMENDATION

**Approves** the final site and building plans for the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences Education and Research Building at the Naval Support Activity Bethesda.

**Notes** the Navy has responded to the Commission's comments regarding reducing the hardscape in the plaza and improving the northwest stair from the June 2019 meeting.

**Notes** the Navy has added a significant amount of new landscape elements to the plaza and the northwest stair including benches and covered tables. The final design includes 39 new trees, 71 shrubs and 8,600 groundcover plants.

**Notes** the northwest stair is required for egress purposes and the Navy has evaluated several options for its placement and configuration, but decided the proposed design was preferred since it would have the least impact on the parking garage and would not impact a proposed stormwater management site.

**Notes** the Navy has also improved the northwest stair with terraced planters and incorporated a green wall on the western side of the stair.

## PROJECT REVIEW TIMELINE

<b>Previous actions</b>	<b>June 2018</b> – Approval of comments on concept design <b>September 2018</b> – Approval of preliminary site and building plans <b>June 2019</b> – Deferred action on the revised preliminary design
<b>Remaining actions (anticipated)</b>	None

## PROJECT ANALYSIS

### Executive Summary

Staff has evaluated the final site and building plans and finds that the submission addresses the previous Commission action as well as additional comments provided during previous reviews, while continuing to provide enhanced laboratory and support space to help the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences (USUHS) effectively meet its mission. The project team has revised the landscape plan by incorporating more trees and groundcover in the plaza and the stairs to the north and south of the building. In addition, the applicant has provided detailed responses to Commission comments, and has indicated that the proposed design changes reflect a better understanding of operational needs and site constraints. Staff acknowledges the challenges of the existing site, and the applicant's need to accommodate and integrate complex program elements

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into the existing campus. Accordingly, staff recommends that the Commission **approves the final site and building plans for the USUHS Education and Research Building at the Naval Support Activity (NSA) Bethesda.**

### **Analysis**

Since the June 2019 meeting staff has conducted a site visit and met with the applicant concerning the issues raised by the Commission. The Navy has reduced the hardscape in the plaza and improved the northwest stair making both more natural and welcoming.

**Notes the applicant has responded to the Commission's comments regarding reducing the hardscape in the plaza and improving the northwest stair raised during the June 2019 meeting.**

#### *Landscaping and Plaza*

The preliminary landscaping plan for the plaza in June 2019 meeting consisted of nine medium sized trees (Japanese Maples) and eight shrubs. Some groundcover was also included in this design as well. During the meeting, the Commission commented on the preliminary plaza design as being sparse and insufficient for this campus.

After reviewing this submittal staff believes this final design is an improvement over the previous designs in several ways: the Navy has added a significant amount of new landscape to the plaza and the northwest stair including covered tables and benches. The final design includes 39 new trees, 71 shrubs and 8600 groundcover plants.

The pedestrian connection from the vehicular drop-off area provides a sense of arrival and includes more vegetation by incorporating four upper story trees (American Yellowwood), additional understory trees (Autumn Brilliance Serviceberry), large shrubs (Northern Bayberry and Oakleaf Hydrangea), and extensive ground cover (Variegated Liriope). The four American Yellowwood trees with the other landscaping helps to frame this pedestrian entrance.

In the preliminary design, the main pedestrian connection leading from the western portion of Naval Support Facility Bethesda campus to the USUHS site was a set of steps located south of the proposed building that lead from a sidewalk up to the proposed plaza. While these steps didn't include any landscaping in the preliminary design, the final design includes a landscaped terrace area with seven understory trees and groundcover. These new trees will provide shade and a softer edge on the steps as pedestrians enter the plaza from the sidewalk.

**Notes the Navy has added a significant amount of new landscape elements to the plaza and the northwest stair including benches and covered tables. The final design includes 39 new trees, 71 shrubs and 8,600 groundcover plants.**

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*Northwest Stair*

Regarding the northwest stair, the preliminary design consisted of a plain stair that ended at a parking lot. This stair is necessary for emergency egress from the building to the north. The Navy explored four optional locations for this stair: placing them within an enclosure, moving them within the parking garage, and placing them partially inside and partially outside the building. After reviewing these options, the Navy has concluded this stair needs to remain in the proposed location because each of the alternative options explored would adversely impact the parking garage or a stormwater management area near the proposed building. In an effort to improve the view of these stairs, the Navy has incorporated landscaping on the stairs in the form of terraced planted areas and a green wall on the western side that incorporate climbing vines. Staff finds that these stairs are more visually appealing than what was proposed with the preliminary design.

**Notes the northwest stair is required for egress purposes and the Navy has evaluated several options for its placement and configuration, but decided the proposed design was preferred as it would have the least impact on the parking garage and would not impact a proposed stormwater management site.**

**Notes the Navy has also improved the northwest stair with terraced planters and incorporated a green wall on the western side of the stair.**

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

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

NCPC staff has reviewed this proposal for compliance with relevant guidance and has determined that it is not inconsistent with the policies established in the Federal Elements of the *Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital*. In particular, the project is supported by policies in the Federal Workplace, Federal Environment, and Urban Design Elements.

### **National Historic Preservation Act**

While there are a few archeological sites at NSA Bethesda, none of them are within the boundaries of the proposed project. The adjacent AFRRI is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. The applicant has indicated that consultation was initiated with the Maryland Historical Trust (SHPO) under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) to determine any potential effects on AFRRI or any other historic properties. The Navy issued its determination of no adverse effect and the SHPO concurred with that determination on February 6, 2019. This SHPO determination was included with the final submission. NCPC does not have an independent responsibility with respect to the NHPA as its review of projects in the environs is advisory.

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## **National Environmental Policy Act**

The proposed project was analyzed in the environmental impact statement that was prepared for the facility master plan in July 2013, and no adverse conditions were identified as a result of the project. Changes to the project scope had necessitate supplemental National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) compliance, which has been completed through an environmental assessment (EA). The Finding of No Significant Impact, signed on January 6, 2019, has been provided with this final submission. NCPC does not have an independent responsibility for NEPA as its review of projects in the environs is advisory.

## **ONLINE REFERENCE**

The following supporting documents for this project are available online at [www.ncpc.gov](http://www.ncpc.gov):

- Submission Package

Prepared by Carlton Hart  
02/27/2020

## **POWERPOINT (ATTACHED)**

# Naval Support Activity Bethesda Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences Education and Research Building

8901 Rockville Pike  
Bethesda, Maryland

Approval of Final Site and Building Plans

Naval Facilities Engineering Command Washington

# Project Summary

**Commission Meeting Date:** March 5, 2020

**NCPC Review Authority:** 40 U.S.C. § 8722(b)(1)

**Applicant Request:** Approval of Final Site and Building Plans

**Session:** Staff Presentation

**NCPC Review Officer:** Carlton Hart

**NCPC File Number:** 7987

## Project Summary:

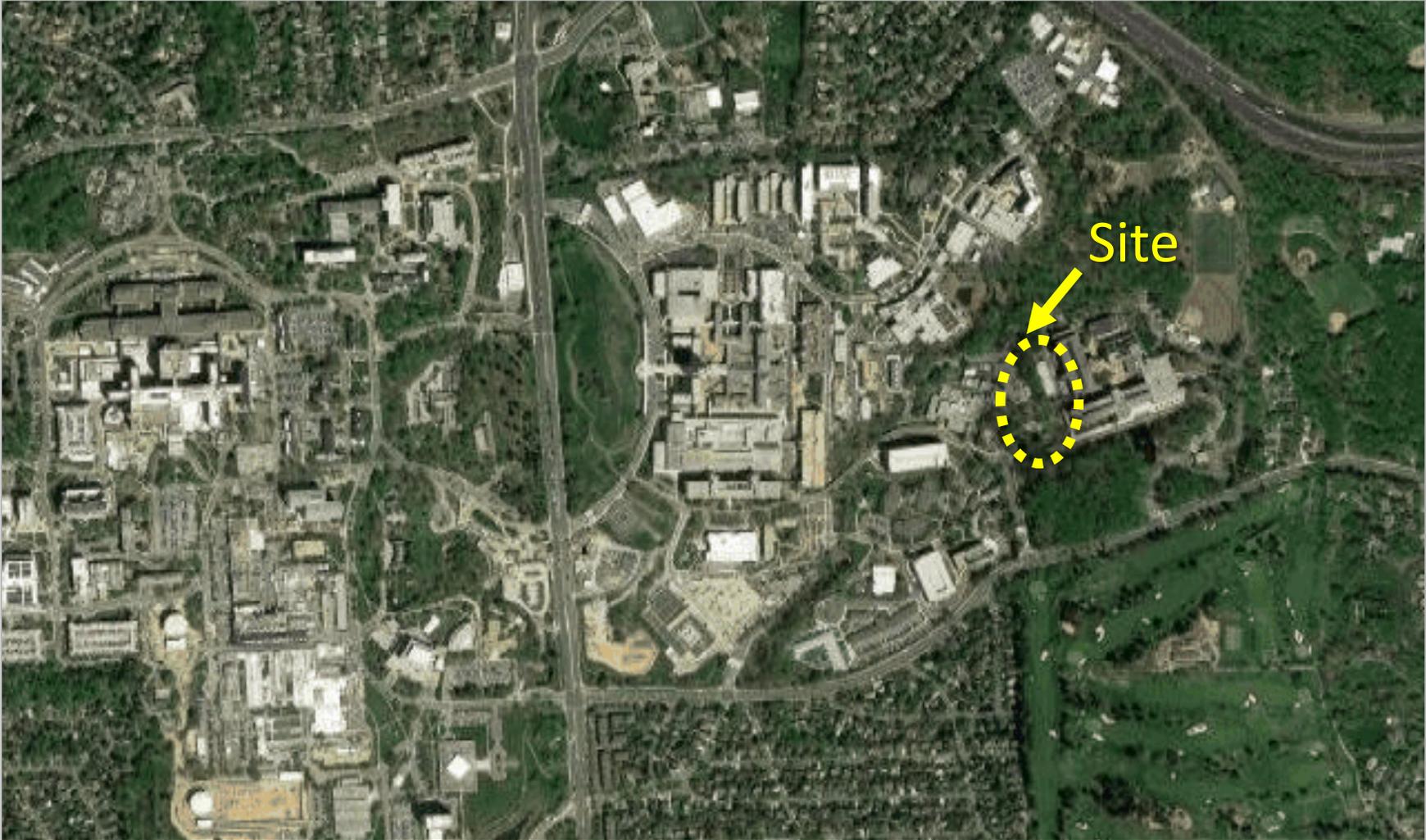
The U.S. Department of the Navy has submitted for Commission review final site and building plans for the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences (USUHS) Education and Research Building at the Naval Support Activity (NSA) Bethesda in Bethesda, MD. The project was reviewed as a concept in June 2018 and received preliminary approval in September 2018, though the Commission indicated outstanding concerns with the design at that time. The applicant developed a revised preliminary submission in June 2019 which it believed responded to the Commission's concerns.

Since the June 2019 review the Navy has worked with staff to improve the plaza on the west of the building by adding landscaping and trees, improve the northwest stair, and make the southern entrance more pedestrian friendly. As was indicated in the preliminary and revised preliminary level, the Navy's plans include the construction of a 477,966 square-foot, multi-story education and research laboratory addition to the USUHS campus. It will serve as a connector between the Armed Forces Radiobiology Research Institute to the west and the USUHS campus to the east through a pedestrian bridge. It will include a multi-level underground parking facility that will accommodate 250 parking spaces. The applicant has indicated that the height of the building will be in proportion to its neighbors, and that the building exterior will be compatible with the current campus and installation architectural compatibility guidance.

# Project Summary

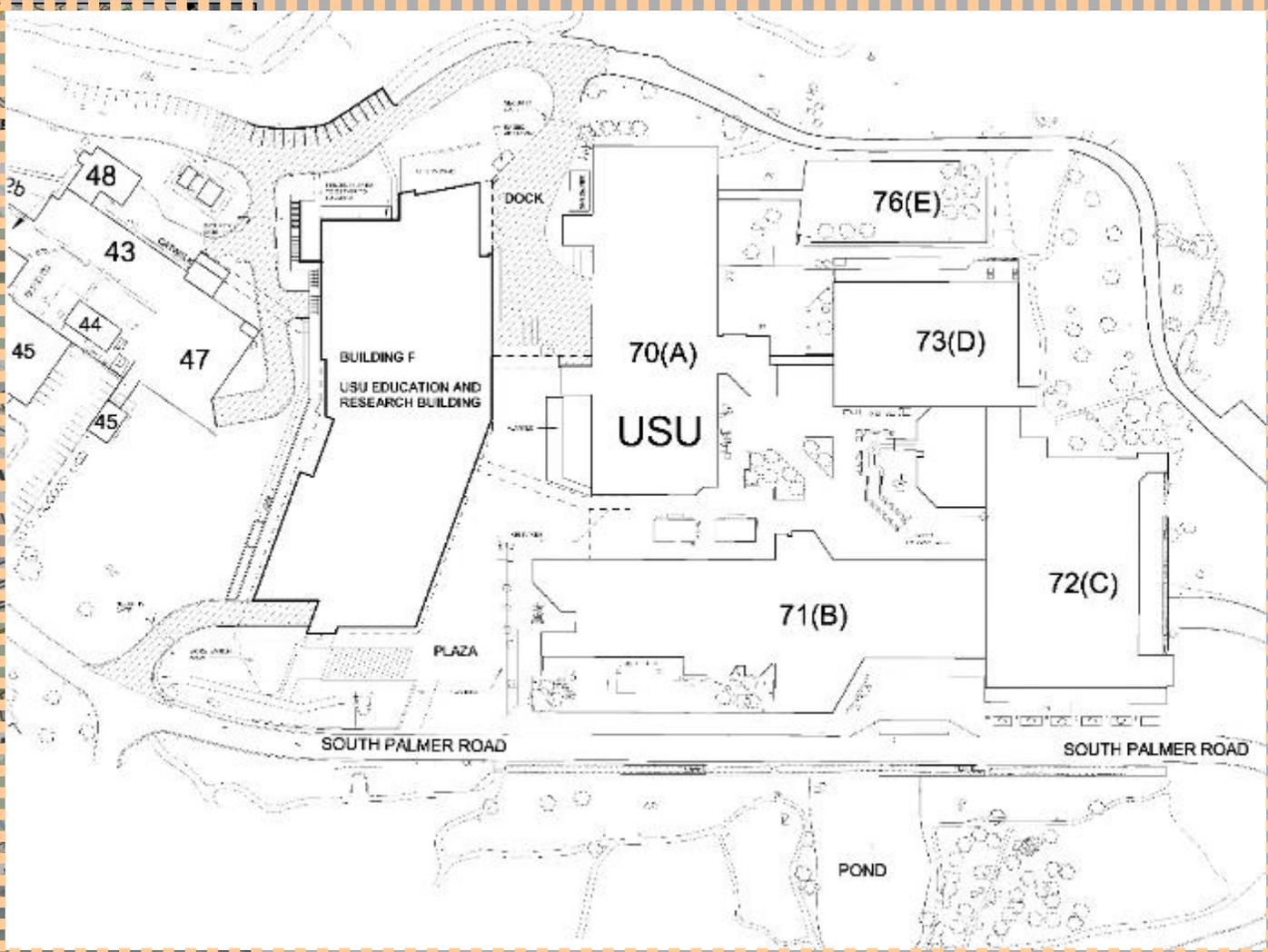
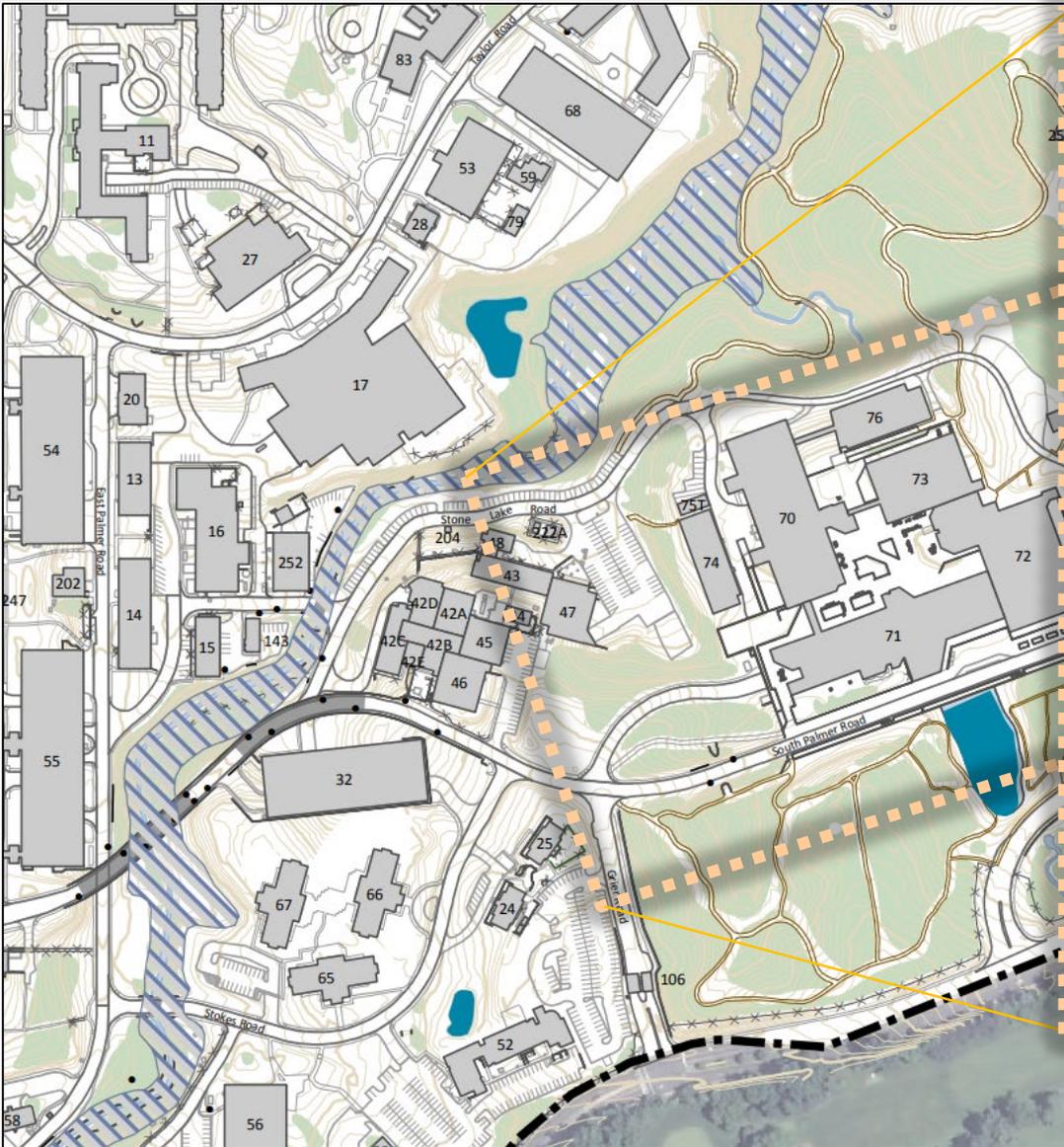
Two non-historic buildings will be demolished as part of the project, as will an existing surface parking lot. Because of the larger footprint of the proposed development, there will be a net increase of 50,878 square feet of impervious surface, though stormwater impacts would be managed through site design and the implementation of low impact development features. The proposed plaza design will feature benches, covered tables with seating, planters/stormwater management, and vegetative plantings including nearly 40 understory and canopy trees which have been increased since review of the preliminary design in June 2019. The northwest stair also includes plantings and a green screen wall as an aesthetic improvement.

# Site Location

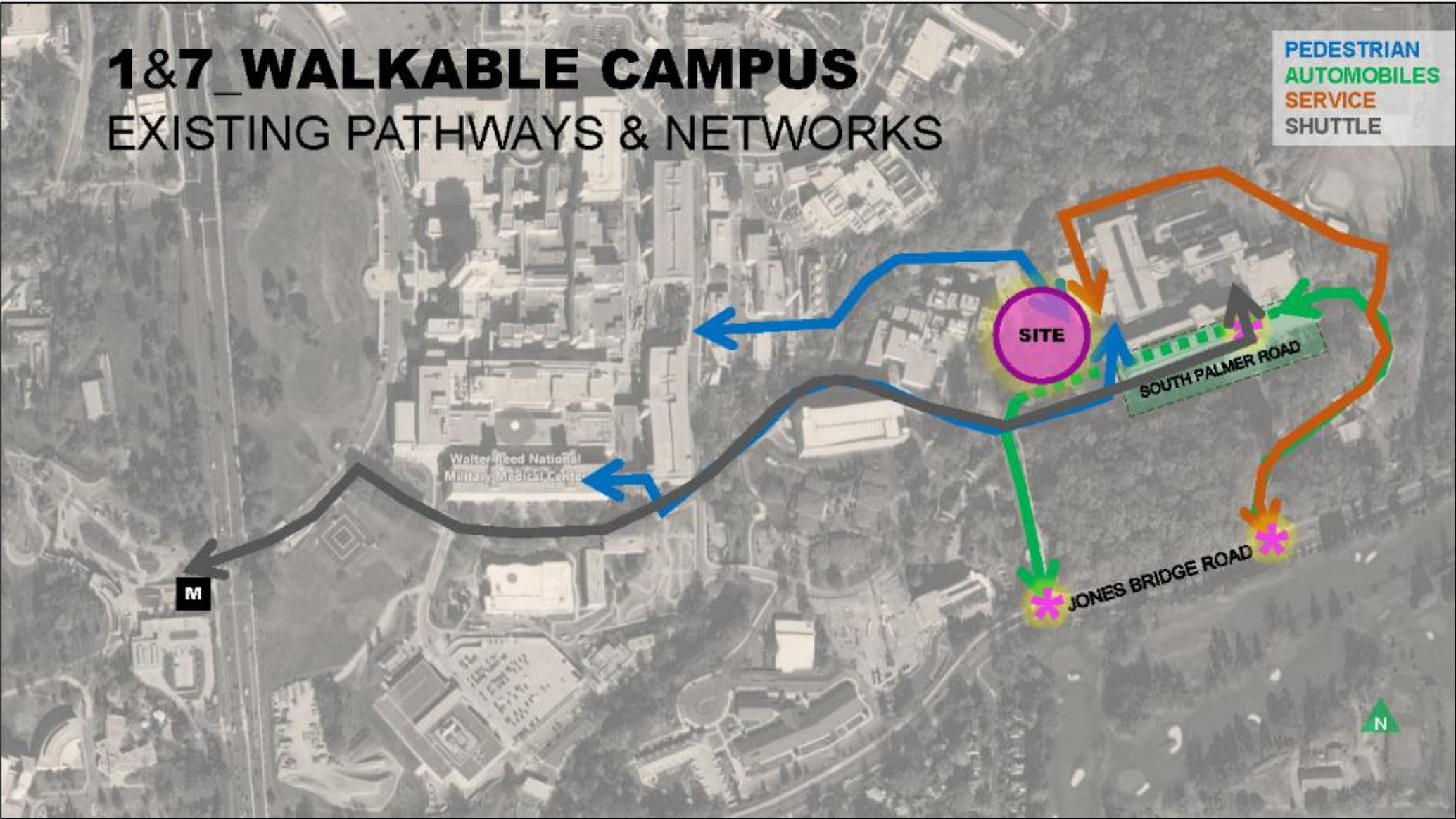


Location Map

# Existing Conditions and Site Plan



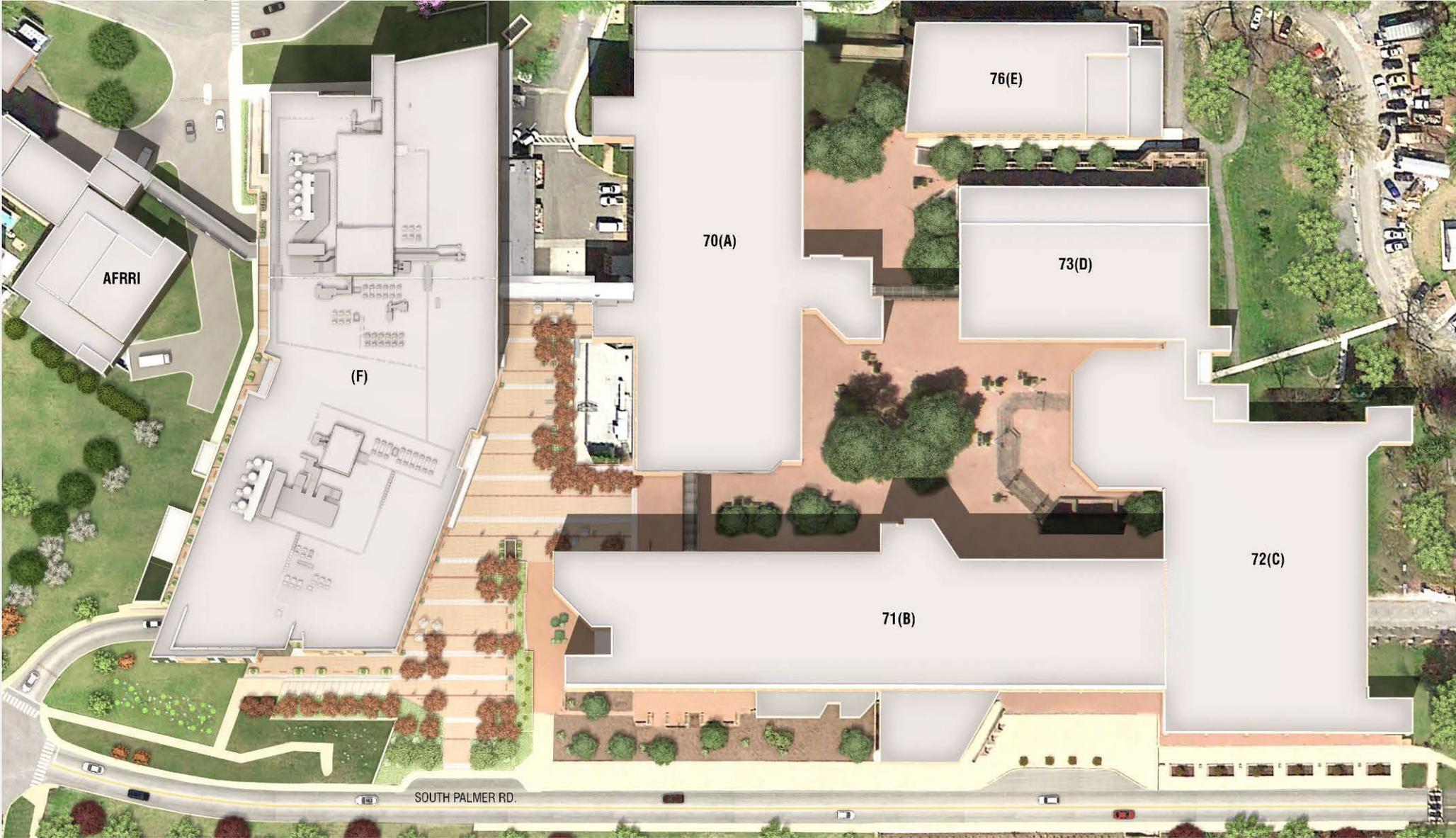
# Pathways and Networks



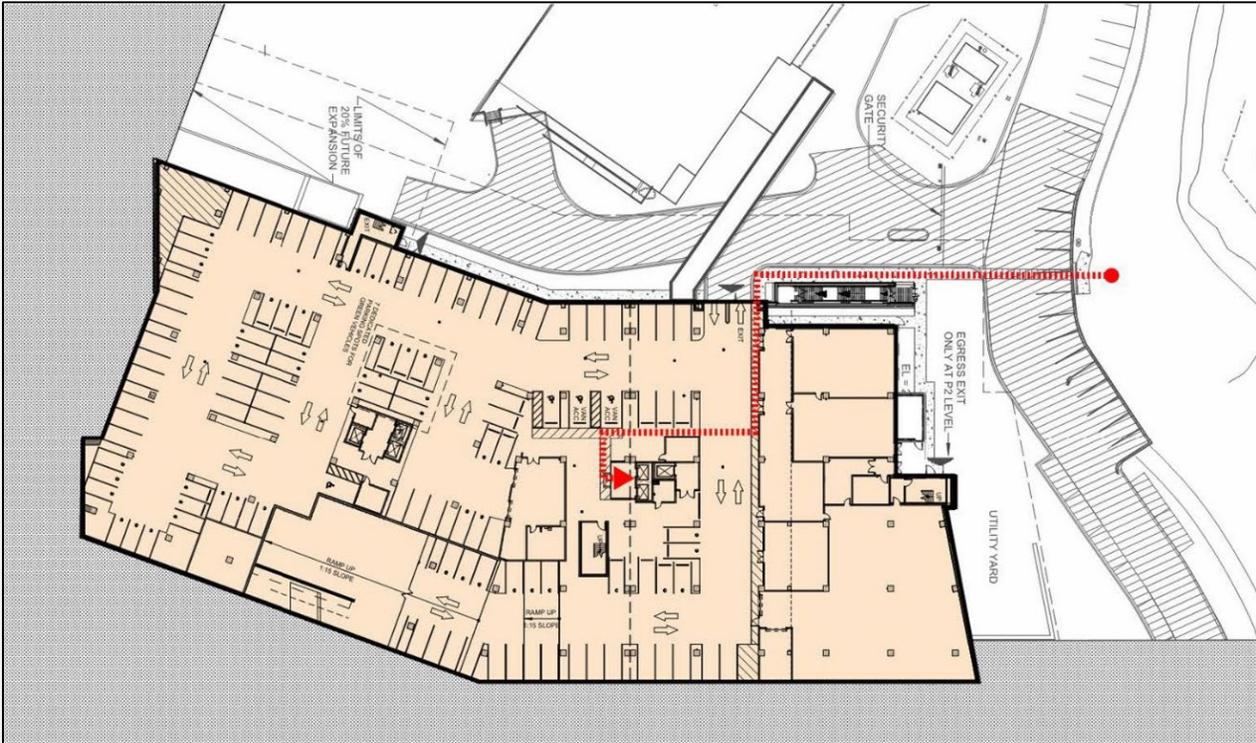
# Pathways and Networks (Area)



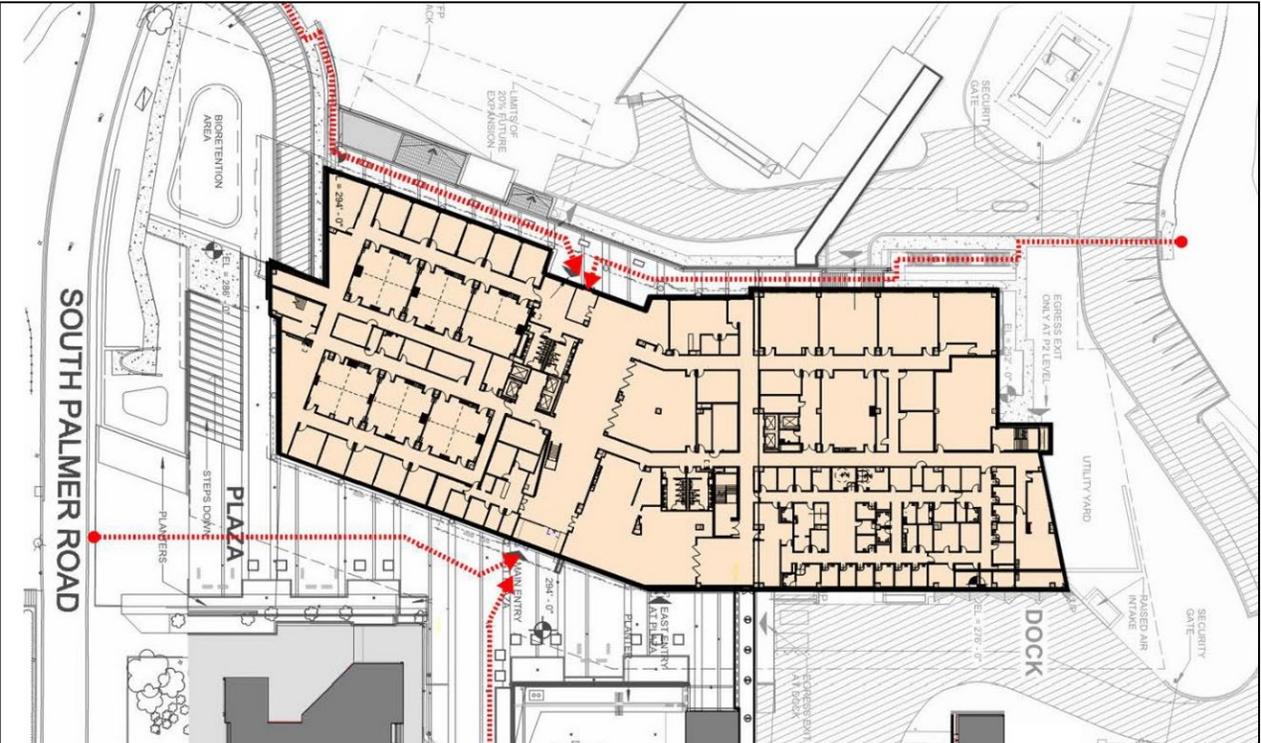
# Final Landscape Plan Within Sub-Area



# Pedestrian Access



**P2 Level (Parking)**

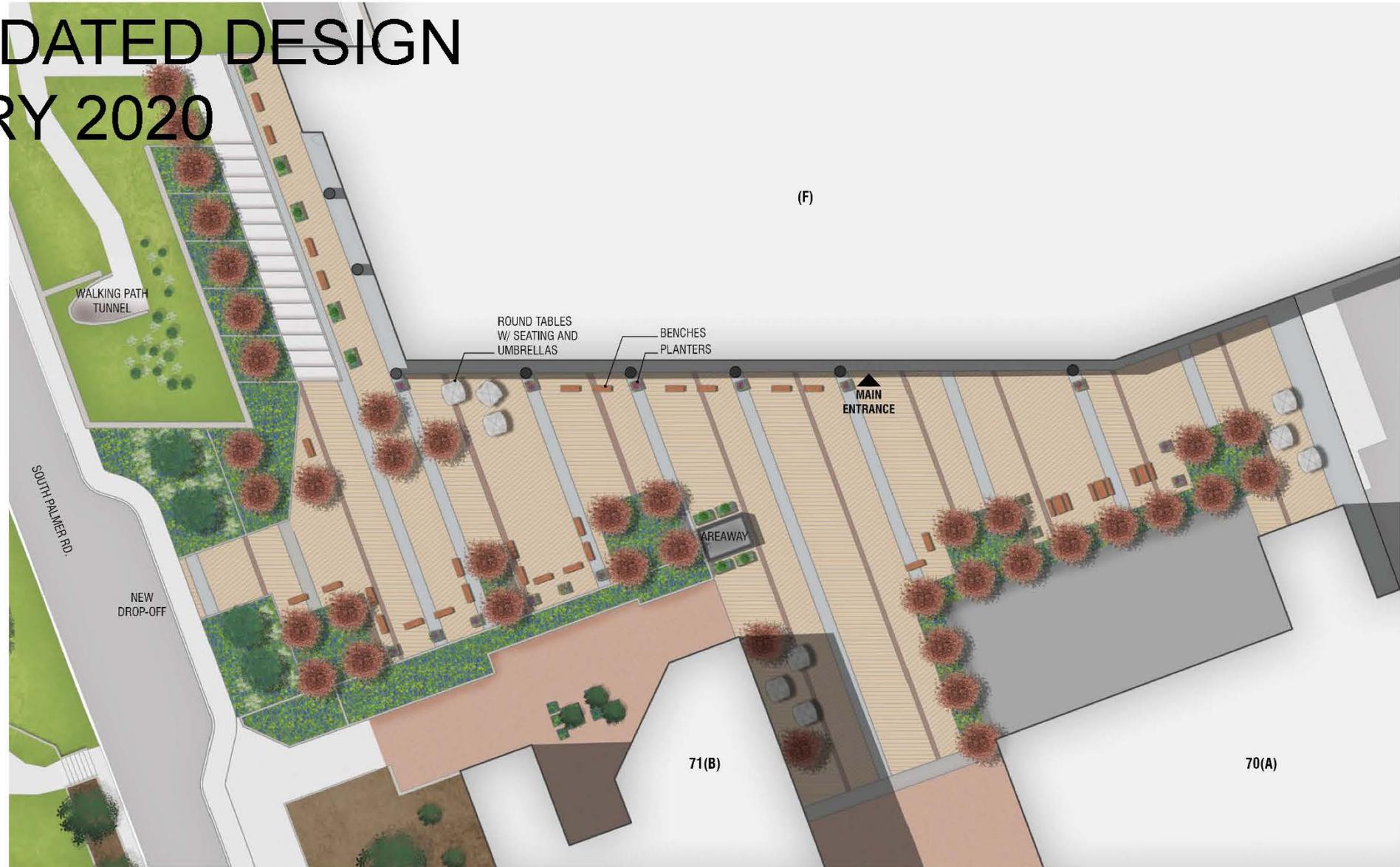


**Plaza Level**



# LANDSCAPE ON PLAZA

65% UPDATED DESIGN  
JANUARY 2020



# 65% EXTERIOR APPROACH ON S.PALMER

**JUNE 2019**



# 65% UPDATED EXTERIOR APPROACH ON S.PALMER

# JANUARY 2020



**JUNE 2019**



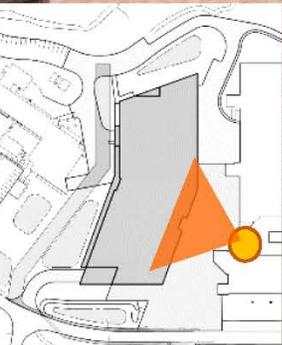
**65% EXTERIOR  
PLAZA ON S.PALMER**

# JANUARY 2020

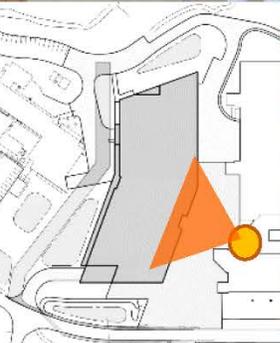
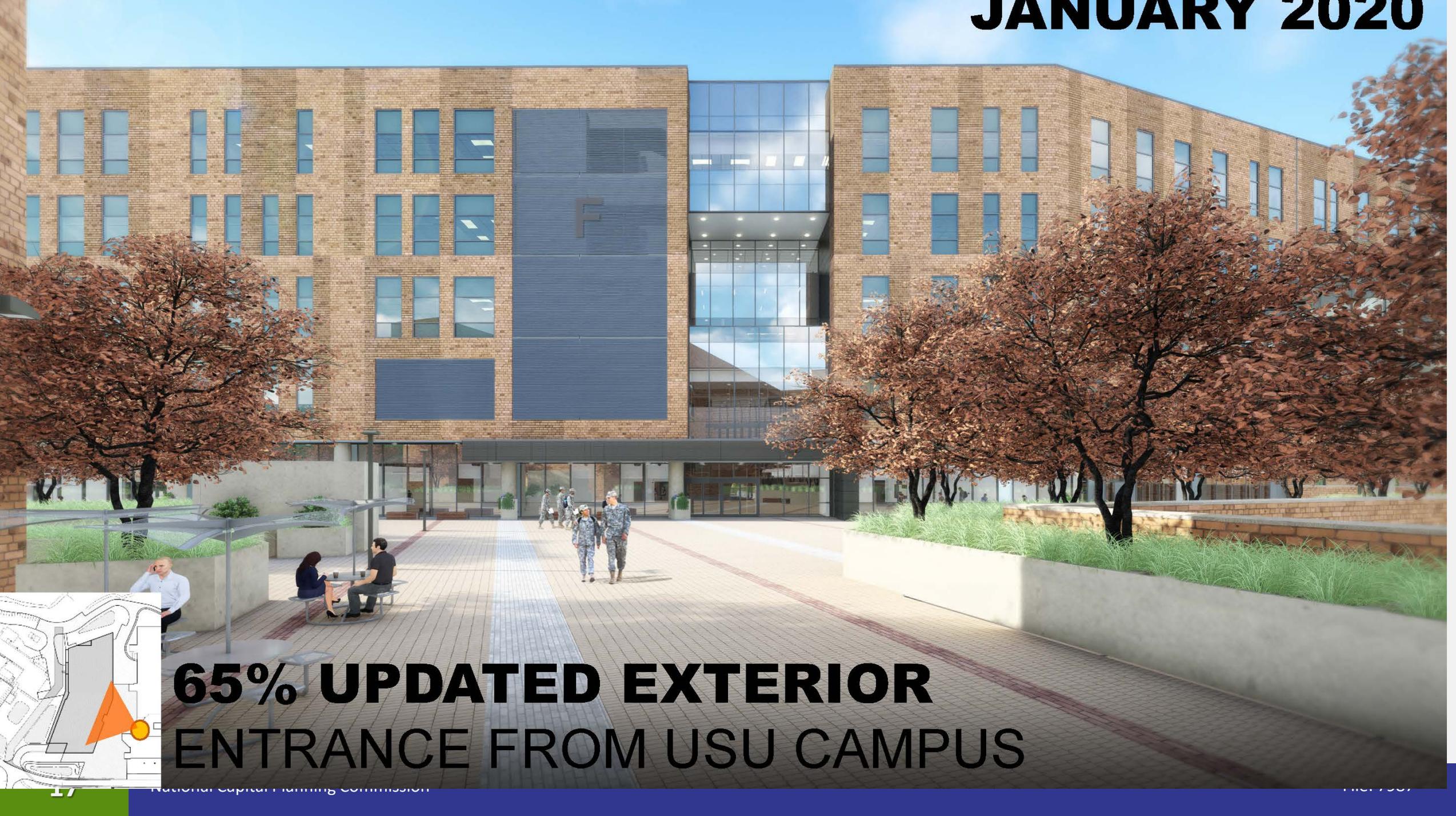


**65% UPDATED EXTERIOR  
PLAZA ON S.PALMER**

**JUNE 2019**



**65% EXTERIOR  
ENTRANCE FROM USU CAMPUS**



**65% UPDATED EXTERIOR  
ENTRANCE FROM USU CAMPUS**

**JUNE 2019**



**65% EXTERIOR  
VIEW ON STONE LAKE RD**

**JANUARY 2020**



**65% UPDATED EXTERIOR  
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