Executive Director's Recommendation

Commission Meeting: January 7, 2021

PROJECT
Humphreys Engineer Center Battalion Operations Facility
7910 John J Kingman Road
Fort Belvoir, Virginia

SUBMITTED BY
United States Department of Defense
United States Army Corps of Engineers

REVIEW AUTHORITY
Federal Projects in the Environs
per 40 U.S.C. § 8722(b)(1)

NCPC FILE NUMBER
8216

NCPC MAP FILE NUMBER
2204.00(38.00)45247

APPLICANT'S REQUEST
Approval of final site and building plans

PROPOSED ACTION
Approve the final site and building plans with comments

ACTION ITEM TYPE
Consent Calendar

PROJECT SUMMARY

The United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) has submitted final site and buildings plans for a new three-story, 43,100-square-foot secured compartmented information facility (SCIF) for training and support purposes at the Humphreys Engineer Center (HEC) in Fairfax County, Virginia. The proposed Battalion Operations Facility (BOF) is part of a small cluster of buildings required by the Special Operations Command (SOCOM) at the Humphreys Engineer Center. The project would add national security and training spaces to accommodate a variety of functions for the agencies in the immediate vicinity. The Commission last reviewed the project at the November 2020 meeting and provided comments as part of the preliminary approval. In response to those comments, USACE has submitted a revised landscape plan and additional information related to parking and pedestrian accessibility.

The BOF is proposed at the eastern end of the campus, near the end of John J. Kingman Drive. The existing site was previously disturbed and is currently vacant and clear of any trees or vegetation. No new parking is proposed as part of the project. The USACE has indicated that this facility, along with the proposed Training Support Facility and existing Hall Building and a future BOF, will create a cluster of secure buildings for the same working groups, allowing them to work in close proximity without needing to interact with the remainder of the campus. Most importantly, the USACE is in the process of updating the prior HEC master plan, and staff is working with them to review the master plan in 2021.

KEY INFORMATION

- At the November 2020 meeting, the Commission requested improvements to the pedestrian access around the site, parking information, and updates to the landscape plan, all of which

the applicant has provided. In particular, a sidewalk and crossing will be provided along the north side of Kingman Drive to the project site.

- The Humphreys Engineer Center is a 583-acre civil works USACE installation established in 1983.
- The USACE is proposing to construct a three-story, 43,100-square-foot security and training support facility in a cluster with other buildings to support SOCOM.
- The HEC campus does not have a current master plan, but one is currently being developed with an anticipated review in 2021.
- As the proposed BOF building will be a fully secure building being constructed to support a high security work force, the building is designed to face the existing Hall Building and parking lot, not John J. Kingman Road.

RECOMMENDATION

The Commission:

Approves the final site and building plans for a new three-story, 43,100-square-foot battalion operations facility at the Humphreys Engineer Center campus in Fort Belvoir, Virginia.

Notes the applicant has responded to comments at preliminary review by providing improved pedestrian access to the site. In particular, a new sidewalk along the north side of Kingman Road will connect the project site to the rest of the campus.

Finds the staff request to add a sidewalk on the south side of Kingman Road is not feasible given planned stormwater facilities in that area, but the proposed sidewalk along the north side is sufficient as it connects to the existing campus pedestrian network.

Notes the Battalion Operations Facility and adjacent buildings are secured compartmented information facilities designed in a cluster to support the Special Operations Command. Future buildings will have similar purposes.

Recommends that the US Army Corps of Engineers prioritize pedestrian accessibility in the design of future buildings on the site including the second Battalion Operations Facility, to ensure walkability to and around the facilities cluster.

Requests the US Army Corps of Engineers submit the master plan for Commission review and approval prior to initiating the design of additional buildings on the campus outside this cluster.

Recommends the new master plan be flexible enough to meet current and future tenant needs, while achieving good planning and urban design principles and addressing campus-wide issues such as access and parking provided in accordance with the Comprehensive Plan.

Notes that while the current parking ratio of employees to spaces of 1:17 around the proposed building does not yet meet the Comprehensive Plan goal of 1:2, no parking is being added with the project and existing parking spaces were converted to accessible spaces, further reducing the existing parking supply.

PROJECT REVIEW TIMELINE

Previous actions	**November 2020 –** Preliminary site and building plan approval
Remaining actions (anticipated)	– Draft Master Plan review

PROJECT ANALYSIS

Executive Summary

NCPC staff has reviewed the final submission for the construction of a new secure battalion operations facility (BOF) at the Humphreys Engineer Center. The project would add no new parking on campus as the facility would house employees working elsewhere on the campus. The building and planned adjacent buildings were designed as a cluster of secure facilities with the existing Hall Building around the existing parking lot to support the Special Operations Command. The design complements the style of existing facilities and sets a modern precedent for future facilities. The design utilizes an existing disturbed location, eliminating the need to remove trees and has no impact on area waterways. Pedestrian access, parking, and landscaping details and changes were requested at the preliminary submission, and these have been addressed by the applicant. Therefore, staff recommends that the **Commission approves the final site and building plans for a new three-story, 43,100-square-foot battalion operations facility at the Humphreys Engineer Center campus in Fort Belvoir, Virginia.**

Analysis

In 1971, Fort Belvoir granted USACE a permit to operate the Coastal Engineering Research Center on 187 vacant acres for experiment testing. The Kingman, Cude, and two Wave Tank buildings were constructed within the next year, comprising a small campus then referred to as the Kingman Complex. In September 1980, the Secretary of the Army transferred a portion of Fort Belvoir land, from Army land inventory to Civil Works Accounts of USACE. At that time, the buildings operated as an autonomous entity, loosely affiliated with Fort Belvoir. In November 1982, the Kingman Complex was designated Humphreys Engineer Center in honor of Major General Andrew Atkinson Humphreys. Approximately one year later, USACE established the U.S. Army Humphreys Engineer Center Support Activity (HECSA) as a distinct Field Operating Agency of USACE to operate and maintain the facility in support of all USACE activities located on the 583-acre installation. The last master plan reviewed and approved by the Commission was in 1998,

though the campus does have a master plan from 2006. The USACE has been working closely with staff to update the master plan and staff recommends that the **Commission recommends the new master plan be flexible enough to meet current and future tenant needs, while achieving good planning and urban design principles and addressing campus-wide issues such as access and parking provided in accordance with the Comprehensive Plan.** The USACE has three projects planned for this area of the campus in the near future, not including the current application and staff recommends that the **Commission requests the US Army Corps of Engineers submit the master plan for Commission review and approval prior to initiating the design of additional buildings on the campus.**

Currently, HEC is comprised of a series of building clusters nestled in the heavily wooded secure campus. The main road, John J. Kingman Road, provides access to the existing facilities from the main gated, access control point (ACP) on Leaf Road at Telegraph Road. The BOF is proposed at the eastern end of Kingman Road, on an existing empty field. This end of Kingman Road consists of one large existing building (Hall) with an existing parking lot, a cluster of industrial buildings, and a restricted access drive to an electric substation.

The BOF is proposed south of Kingman Road, across from the existing Hall Building, and is oriented with the front of the building facing the existing parking lot. The front entry opens onto a small outdoor plaza that will be shared with the adjacent building's entry. The new BOF will support operations, training, and deployment of forces into real-world exercises and conventional and unconventional, special, and irregular war scenarios. Current facilities are undersized and poorly configured to support the administration, operations, and storage functions of the 1st CIG (Airborne). The administration and operations of the 1st CIG Brigade Headquarters and Company headquarters is currently severely hindered in their extremely undersized space. This project moves the battalion and company out of existing space on the HEC campus so that their organizations have necessary space for communications infrastructure and modern data and information systems, as well as to accommodate cybersecurity measures and staff recommends the **Commission notes the building and the other adjacent buildings are secured compartmented information facilities designed in a cluster to support the Special Operations Command. Future buildings will have similar purposes.**

The project includes a driveway for delivery access and loading dock at the rear of the building on Kingman Road. The proposal includes updating the parking lot with new accessible parking spaces. No additional parking is included. Staff for the building will come from existing, overcrowded facilities at HEC. At the November 2020 preliminary review, the Commission requested additional parking details and that the master plan update include sufficient information to determine compliance with the parking ratio of 1:3. The current parking ratio goal for the site is 1:2 and the applicant has provided information indicating a parking ratio of 1:1.7. The parking ratio for the building is based just on the immediate parking lot, buildings and employees given the facilities are clustered to support SOCOM and have little impact on the other areas of the campus. As such, staff recommends that the **Commission notes that while the current parking ratio around the proposed building of 1.17 does not yet meet the Comprehensive Plan goal of 1:2, no parking is being added with the project and existing parking spaces were converted to accessible spaces, further reducing the existing parking supply.** The deficiency in the

parking ratio should be addressed in the draft master plan so that the campus-wide parking and staffing levels can be balanced to achieve the parking ratio goals of the Comprehensive Plan.

The design demonstrates a desired security standoff distance around the building, except for Kingman Road. The site plan includes a stormwater retention basin to the north of the building, adjacent to Kingman Road to collect and treat stormwater runoff. The landscape plan indicates that the entry plaza between the two buildings will be planted with a variety of shade trees and evergreen shrubs as well as, ping pong tables, tiered seat walls, tables and chairs, benches, and a metal bar ledge with stools. The submission has also been updated to include the tree-lined, pedestrian promenade described in the preliminary submission and requested by the Commission.

The preliminary submission stated that pedestrian access was a priority but provided few sidewalks and pedestrian connections. The Commission requested that the applicant consider a sidewalk along the south side of Kingman Road and a direct connection to the proposed building. Unfortunately, the various stormwater management features for the BOF and adjacent buildings preclude a sidewalk on the south side of Kingman Road. The applicant has committed to extend the existing sidewalk on the north side of Kingman Road, that ends at the entry drive to the parking area, south toward the proposed BOF site. In addition, a pedestrian connection was added that exits the shared entry plaza and connects through the delivery area to the new extended sidewalk. While the proposed connection is someone circuitous, it does improve access to the campus, connection to Kingman Road and crosswalks will be provided for safety. As such, staff recommends that the **Commission finds the staff request to add a sidewalk on the south side of Kingman Road is not feasible given planned stormwater facilities in that area, but the proposed sidewalk along the north side is sufficient as it connects to the existing campus pedestrian network**.

While the applicant has committed to installing the sidewalk extension, the schedule and funding have yet to be determined. The design of the facilities at the HEC campus should always include sidewalks, not just around the building, but connections to the larger campus. The USACE should coordinate the timing of these improvements to ensure they are available for staff as buildings are completed. For example, as the second BOF building moves into the design phase, it is critical that pedestrian accessibility is prioritized from the outset to ensure it is incorporated appropriately and changes are not needed late in the design. As such, staff recommends that the **Commission recommends that the US Army Corps of Engineers prioritize pedestrian accessibility in the design of future buildings on the site including the second Battalion Operations Facility, to ensure walkability to and around the facilities cluster.**

The architecture of the building is intended to be a modern facility that will complement the existing buildings and set a design precedent for future HEC facilities. The architecture is a mix of masonry and metal cladding including precast concrete on level 1, and metal panels and glazing on levels 2 & 3 with limited additional fenestration due to the secure nature of the facility. The entry corner of the building has a wall of windows on all three floors. The proposed design is consistent with the existing facilities on the campus

CONFORMANCE TO EXISTING PLANS, POLICIES AND RELATED GUIDANCE

Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital

As noted above, the proposal includes no tree removal, no impact to protected areas and is proposed on a previously disturbed site. Staff believes the BOF generally meets the Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital except for limited pedestrian access and insufficient parking ratio information as noted above.

National Historic Preservation Act

The USACE coordinated with the Virginia Department of Historic Resources (VDHR) on Section 106 review and as there are no archaeological or historical sites eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places, and the site was previously heavily disturbed, VDHR determined that no historic properties would be affected by the project. NCPC exercises an advisory review role for projects in the region and therefore does not have an NHPA responsibility.

National Environmental Policy Act

The USACE drafted an Environmental Assessment (EA) for public review and determined there was a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI). The Commission does not have independent responsibility under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) for projects in the environs because its authority over these projects is advisory.

CONSULTATION

Staff has had several meetings with both the USACE and their consultant teams on the project.

ONLINE REFERENCE

The following supporting documents for this project are available online at www.ncpc.gov.

National Capital Planning Commission

Humphreys Engineer Center Battalion Operations Facility

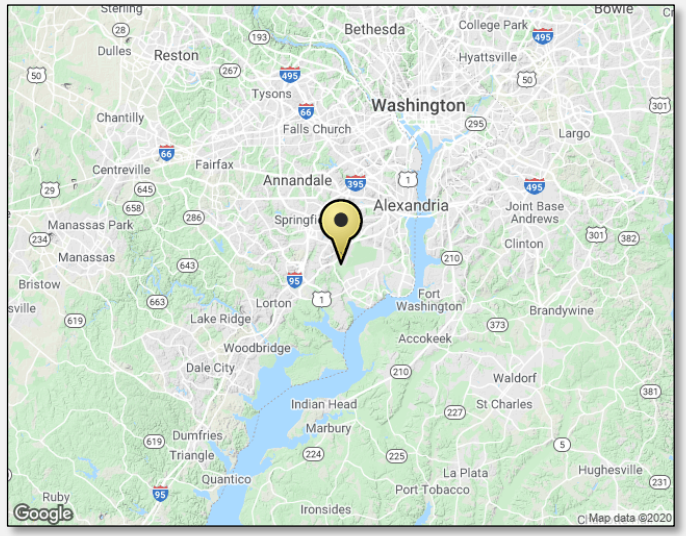
7910 John J Kingman Road, Fort Belvoir Virginia

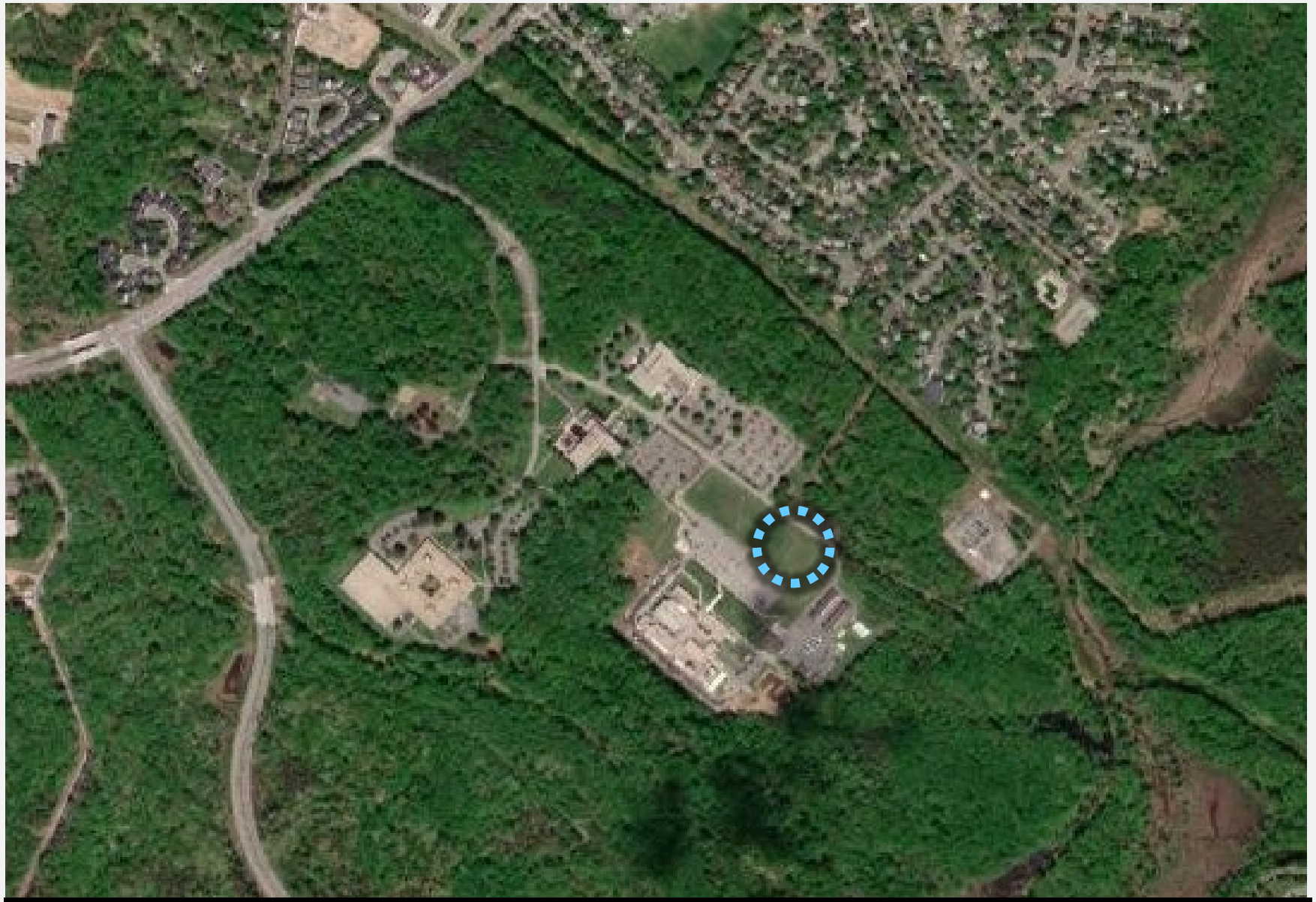
Approval of Final Site and Building Plans

United States Department of Defense

January 7, 2021 | File: 8216

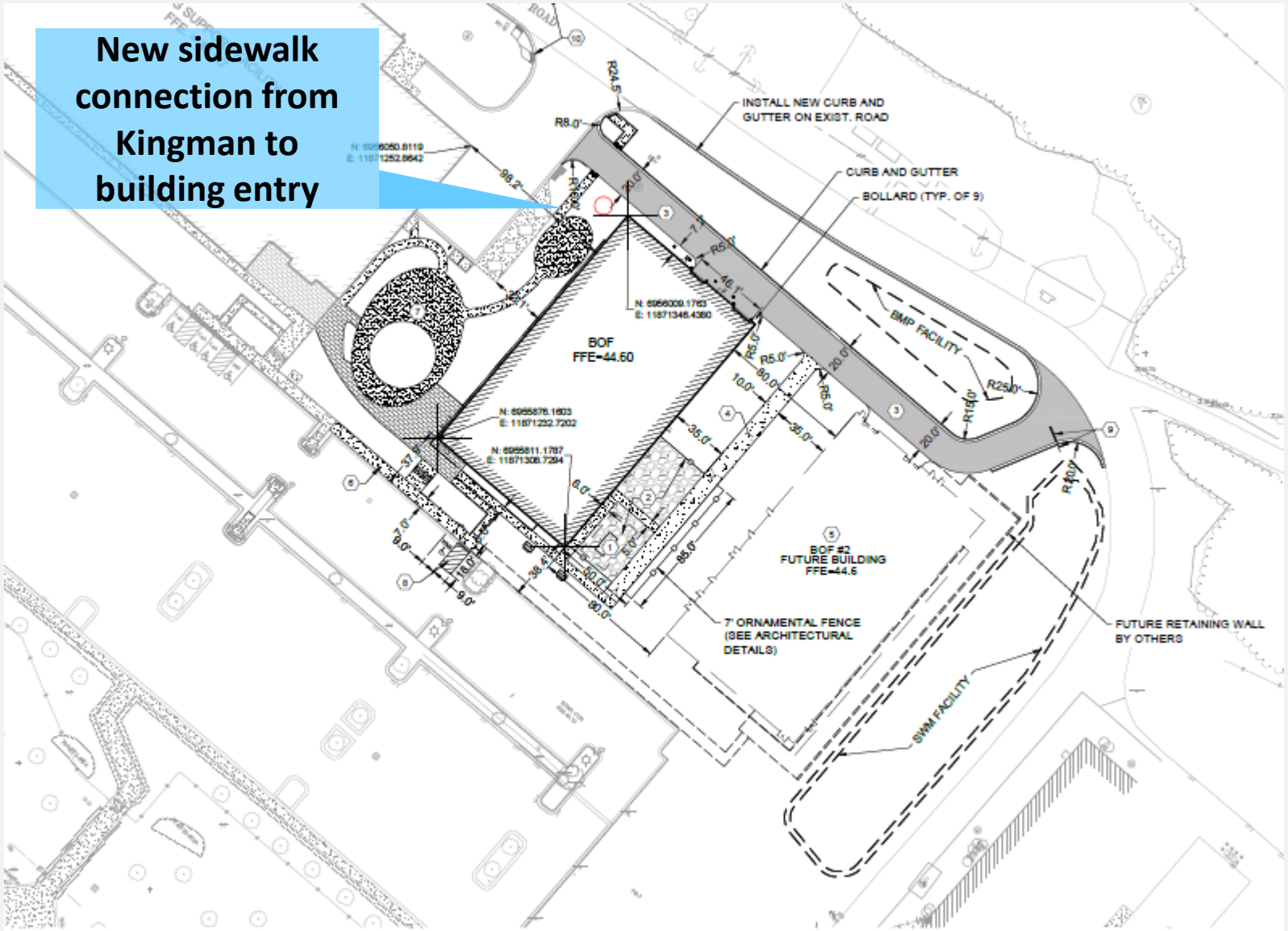
Site Location





Location Map

Humphreys Engineer Center – Battalion Operations Facility



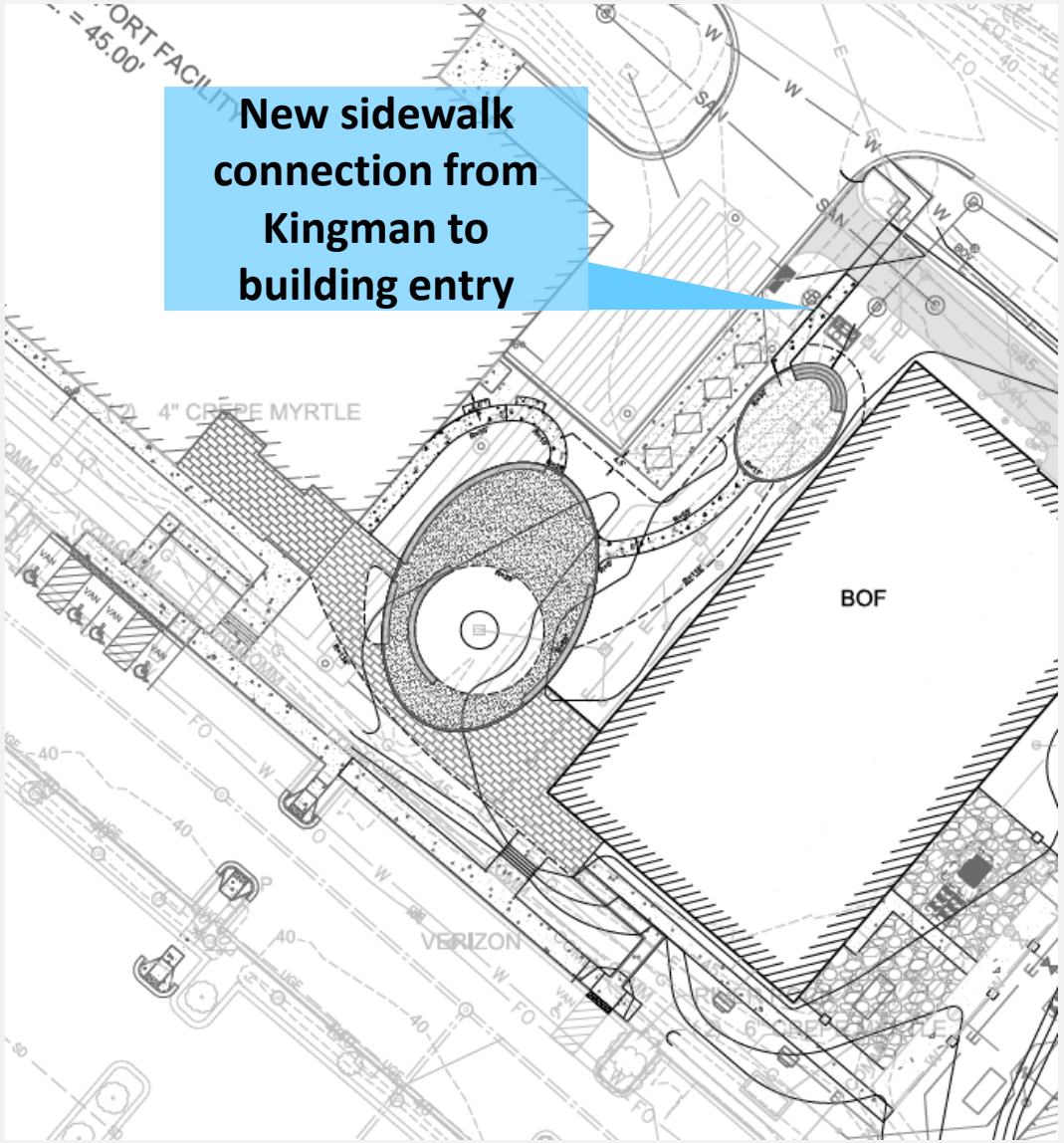
Proposed Site Plan

PARKING TABULATION:

STANDARD SPACES	386
HANDICAP ACCESSIBLE	16
TOTAL	402

NOTE: NO NEW PARKING IS ADDED AS A RESULT OF THIS PROJECT

Humphreys Engineer Center – Battalion Operations Facility

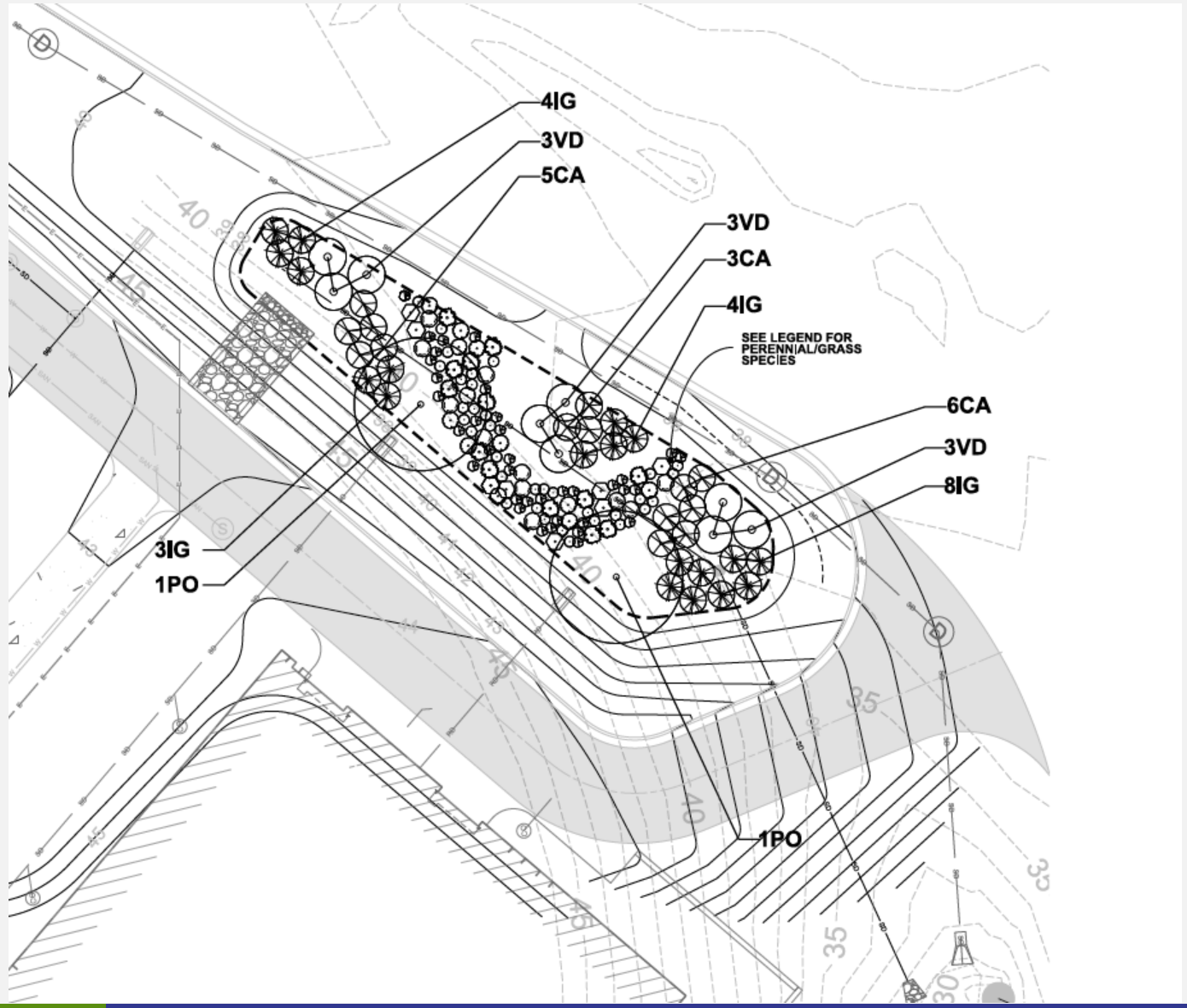


Proposed Site Plan Detail

Humphreys Engineer Center – Battalion Operations Facility

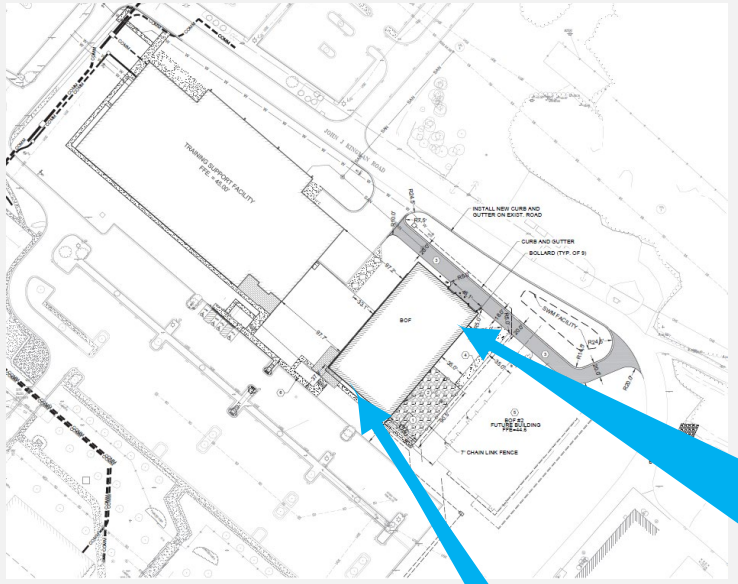
New Pedestrian Access Details

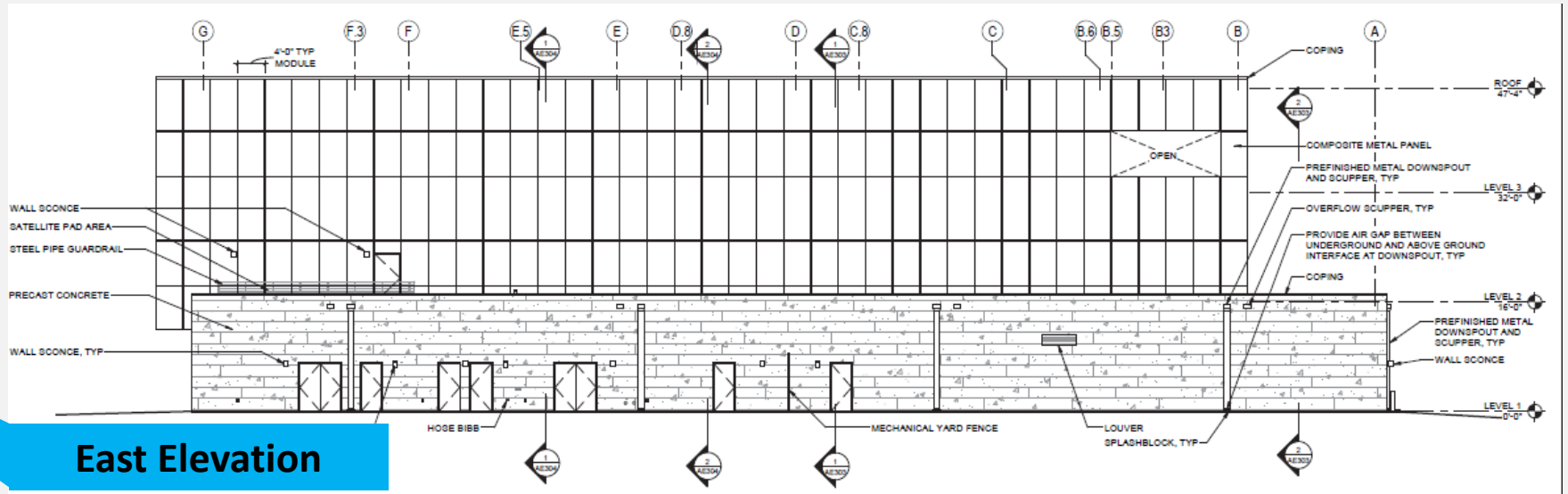
Humphreys Engineer Center – Battalion Operations Facility



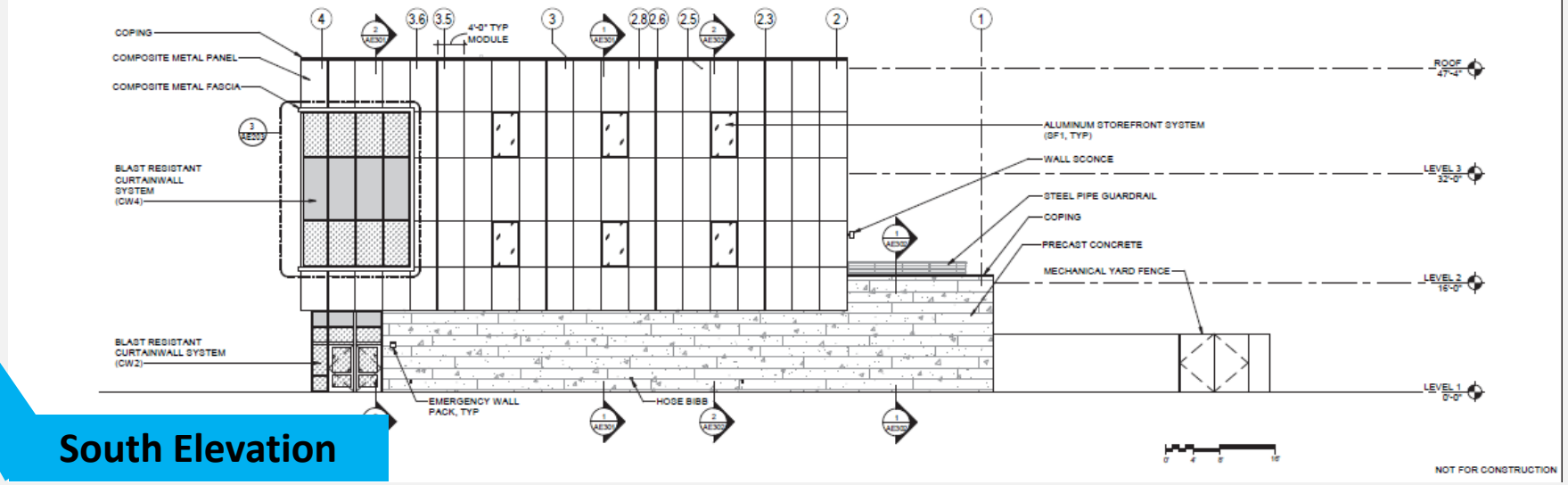
Proposed Stormwater BMP Landscape Plan

Humphreys Engineer Center – Battalion Operations Facility



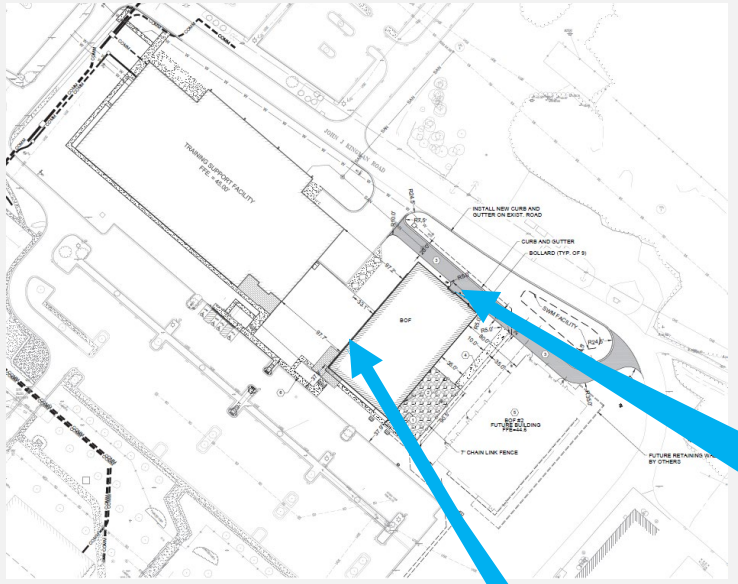


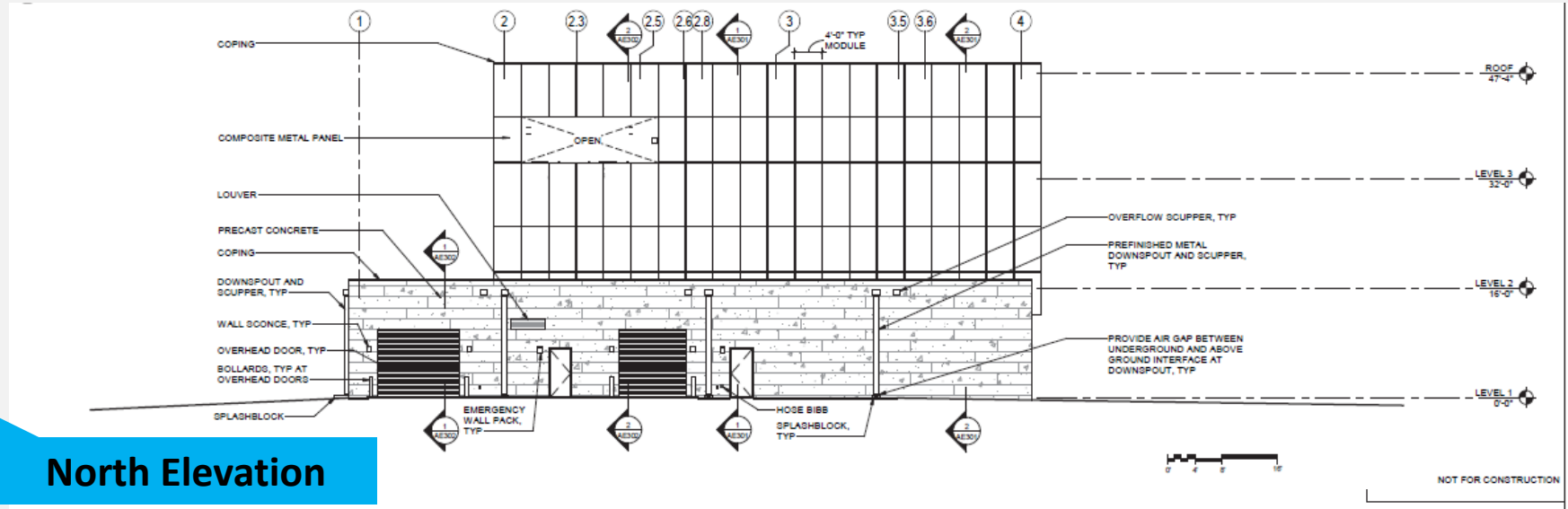
East Elevation



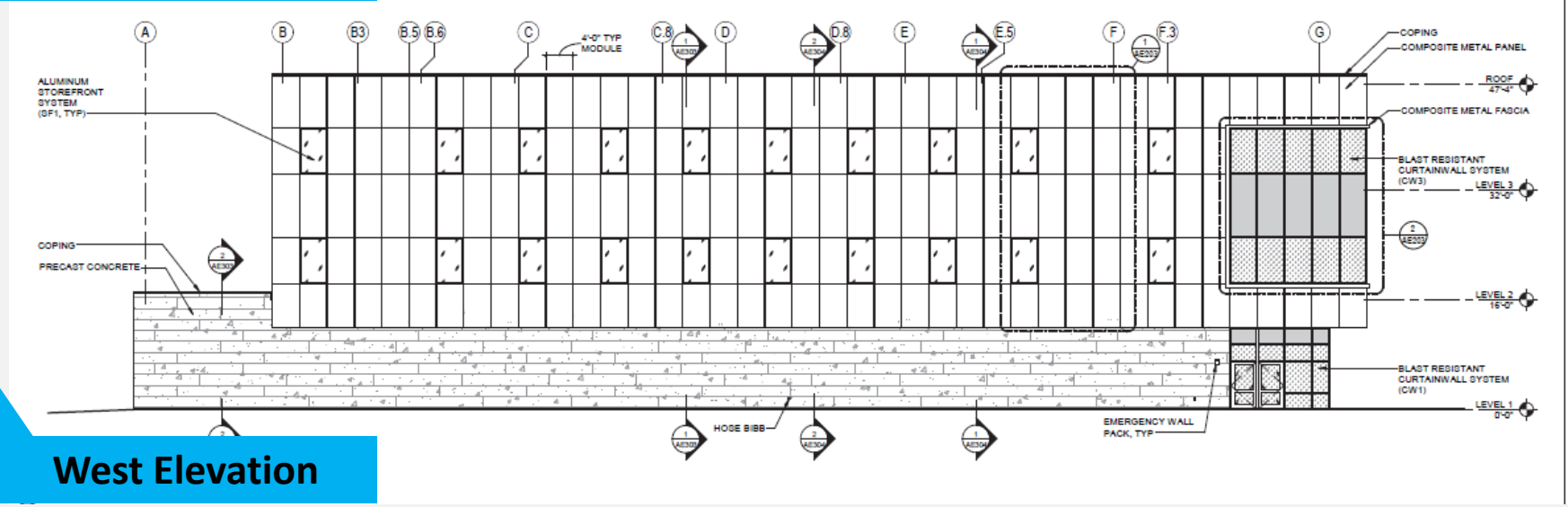
South Elevation

Humphreys Engineer Center – Battalion Operations Facility





North Elevation



West Elevation

Humphreys Engineer Center – Battalion Operations Facility

Architectural Renderings

West view to entry

Southeast view

North view to entry plaza

View to entry and parking