



Executive Director's Recommendation

Commission Meeting: December 7, 2017

PROJECT New Guard Booth and Fence Augmentation Nebraska Avenue Complex, United States Department of Homeland Security 3801 Nebraska Avenue, NW Washington, DC	NCPC FILE NUMBER 7903
SUBMITTED BY United States General Services Administration	NCPC MAP FILE NUMBER 10.04(38.40)44632
REVIEW AUTHORITY Federal Projects in the District per 40 U.S.C. § 8722(b)(1) and (d)	APPLICANT'S REQUEST Approval of final site development plans
	PROPOSED ACTION Approve final site development plans
	ACTION ITEM TYPE Consent Calendar

PROJECT SUMMARY

The U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) has submitted final site development plans for a new guard booth and fence improvements at the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Nebraska Avenue Complex (NAC), located at 3801 Nebraska Avenue, NW in Washington, DC. The project scope includes construction of a new 48-square-foot guard booth, installation of 453 linear feet of new eight-foot chain link security fencing, and augmentation of existing and new chain link security fencing with three strands of barbed wire (12 inches in height).

The NAC is bounded by Massachusetts Avenue, NW to the south, Nebraska Avenue, NW to the west, the National Presbyterian School to the north, the National Broadcasting Company (NBC) Washington affiliate headquarters to the northeast, and Glover-Archbold Park and the McLean Gardens neighborhood to the east and south. The NAC is fully enclosed with four vehicular entry points: one on Massachusetts Avenue and three on Nebraska Avenue. The site is historically significant, and listed on both the National Register of Historic Places and the DC Inventory of Historic Sites.

GSA submitted preliminary and final site development plans for NCPC review in September of 2017. In its review, the Commission expressed two concerns with the project. The first was the visibility of the new barbed wire from public space at two locations, including (1) the section of fence at the northernmost edge of the campus along the driveway to NBC studios, and (2) the section of fence that is visible from the Massachusetts-39th Trail in Glover-Archbold Park. To reduce visual impacts of the barbed wire, the Commission requested that the GSA add landscaping in these two areas. The Commission also requested that GSA submit a final master plan for the NAC as a follow-up to the Commission's review of the draft master plan in May of 2011. Because of these outstanding concerns, the Commission decided to give only preliminary approval at that time.

The current submission proposes landscaping in these areas of concern, including plant species that would provide adequate cover for aesthetic purposes while allowing DHS to continue to meet campus security needs. GSA, however, has indicated that they have not submitted a final master plan at this time because future plans for the NAC campus are uncertain. A majority of DHS operations will be moving to the St. Elizabeths Campus upon its completion, at which point GSA plans to revisit future plans for the site, which may include a master plan if it should continue to operate as a federal campus.

KEY INFORMATION

- This project will address ongoing security concerns and recent perimeter security breaches.
- All work is located within the 38-acre site boundary. The improvements include:
 - Construction of a new 48-square-foot guard booth to monitor vehicle access to the secured inner campus at a point just north of the main parking lot.
 - Installation of 453 linear feet of additional chain link security fence around the main parking lot.
 - The addition of barbed wire (three strands secured to outriggers totaling 12 inches in height) to the top of the existing and new eight-foot chain link security fence.
- The site is historically significant and listed on both the National Register of Historic Places and the DC Inventory of Historic Sites.
- The DC State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) concurs with GSA's finding of no adverse effect for the project, contingent upon following Unanticipated Archeological Discovery protocols for ground-disturbing activities.
- NCPC gave preliminary approval of the project in September of 2017, and GSA is now submitting final plans for Commission review.
- To address previous Commission comments, GSA is now submitting a landscaping plan that includes plantings for areas of barbed wire fencing that are visible from the public space.
- Since a majority of DHS operations will be moving to the St. Elizabeths Campus upon its completion, plans for the NAC are uncertain. Accordingly, GSA is not submitting an updated master plan at this time, though they plan to reevaluate next steps for master planning when the future of the site has been determined.

RECOMMENDATION

The Commission:

Notes that the U.S. General Services Administration has provided a landscaping plan for the Nebraska Avenue Complex (NAC) that will effectively minimize visual impacts of the chain link/barbed wire fence that can be viewed from public space.

Finds that the completion of an updated master plan for the NAC is premature at this time, considering plans to relocate the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and uncertainty about the future of the campus.

Approves the final site development plans for the new guard booth and fence augmentation at the NAC.

PROJECT REVIEW TIMELINE

Previous actions	September 2017 – Review and approval of preliminary site development plans for the new guard booth and fence augmentation.
Remaining actions (anticipated)	– None

PROJECT ANALYSIS

Executive Summary

The U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) has submitted final site development plans for a new guard booth and fence improvements at the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Nebraska Avenue Complex (NAC), located at 3801 Nebraska Avenue NW, Washington, DC. The submitted plans include construction of a new 48 square foot guard booth, installation of 453 linear feet of new chain link security fence, and addition of barbed wire (three strands secured to outriggers totaling 12 inches in height) to the existing eight foot chain link security fence. The barbed wire proposed on the existing and proposed fencing is intended to augment existing perimeter security to bolster effectiveness.

All improvements are proposed within the boundary of the 38-acre campus. While a majority of the barbed wire fencing would not be visible from public space, NCPC noted on preliminary review that it would be visible from two points: one along Nebraska Avenue, near the National Broadcasting Company (NBC) Washington affiliate headquarters, and another from a point along the Massachusetts-39th Trail in Glover-Archbold Park. At that time, the Commission requested that the GSA add landscaping to minimize visual impacts in those locations. Because it had not seen a master plan for the facility since May of 2011, the Commission also requested that GSA submit a final master plan for the NAC.

The current submission proposes landscaping in these areas of concern, including plant species that would provide adequate cover for aesthetic purposes while allowing DHS to continue to meet campus security needs. GSA, however, has indicated that they have not submitted a final master plan at this time because future plans for the NAC campus are uncertain at this time. A bulk of DHS operations will be moving to the St. Elizabeths Campus upon its completion, at which point

GSA plans to revisit future plans for the site, which may include a master plan if it should continue to operate as a federal campus. Accordingly, staff recommends that the Commission **Approves the final site development plans for the new guard booth and fence augmentation at the NAC.**

Analysis

The submitted plans were evaluated considering issues related to urban design, historic preservation, and impact on the public realm. Overall, the proposed improvements seek to address ongoing security concerns and recent perimeter security breaches by enhancing the existing perimeter security system. GSA has identified areas of vulnerability in the existing perimeter security system that these measures specifically target.

New Guard Booth

The proposed improvements include construction of a new 48 square foot security guard/vehicle screening booth at the southeast entrance to campus. At its proposed site, the new booth would not be visible from Massachusetts Avenue, Ward Circle, Nebraska Avenue or surrounding public space. The design matches existing vehicle screening and security guard booths on campus. The new booth will control the raising and lowering of bollards at an interior drive and control vehicle access at the southeast entrance to the central campus.

New Security Fence

GSA has also proposed the installation of 453 linear feet of an eight-foot chain link security fence for the south and west perimeter of the north parking lot, between existing parking spaces and the tree line. The fence will have barbed wire (three strands secured to outriggers totaling 12 inches in height) at the top. The new fence is located entirely within the site boundary, and will not infringe on public space. At its proposed location, it would not be visible from Ward Circle, Nebraska Avenue, or surrounding public space, and would be only minimally visible from Massachusetts Avenue during winter months when there is no foliage. The proposed fence would be fabricated to match the existing black eight-foot chain link security fence that surrounds the majority of the campus. It would connect two portions of existing wood fence, and add a line of security to areas previously unsecured.

Existing Security Fence Augmentation

To further enhance the current perimeter security system, the proposed improvements include the addition of 12 inches of barbed wire (three strands secured to outriggers) to the existing eight-foot chain link fence. The barbed wire and securing outriggers would be coated in black plastic to match the existing chain link fence. This work is proposed entirely within the site boundary—limited to existing chain link security fencing. The existing palisade fence, which is the ceremonial fence along Nebraska Avenue that consists of a brick base and black steel pickets, would not be altered. The short sections of wooden fence near Ward Circle and along the campus entrance driveway off of Massachusetts Avenue, would also not be altered.

The addition of the barbed wire is intended to bolster the effectiveness of the existing chain link security fence. DHS has found that the chain link fence at its current eight feet height does not adequately deter intruders, especially at the north side of the campus along the NBC driveway.

Due to site topography and a handrail at the south sidewalk along the NBC driveway, the existing eight foot chain link fence is easily breached, and is the most vulnerable point in the current perimeter security system.

While the palisade fence (brick and steel) is the only fence located on Nebraska Avenue, the transition between the palisade fence and the augmented chain link fence along the NBC driveway is visible from Nebraska Avenue. Approximately 25 feet of the augmented chain link fencing could be seen from this area. Similarly, a small section of the augmented fence would be visible from the Massachusetts-39th Trail in Glover-Archbold Park. GSA has provided landscaping plans with this submission that propose a row of evergreen viburnum to reduce visual impacts of the fencing in both locations, which would grow to a height of ten feet at maturity. DHS has indicated that this planting configuration could still allow adequate visibility from the NAC to maintain important sightlines needed for security purposes. Staff feels that these modifications are adequate to ensure that the fence avoids negative impacts to neighborhood character and the public space, and that there are no inconsistencies with the Federal Elements of the *Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital*.

CONFORMANCE TO EXISTING PLANS, POLICIES AND RELATED GUIDANCE

Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital

NCPC staff finds that the current submission is generally not inconsistent with the policies established in the Federal Elements of the *Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital*. In particular, the revised plan adheres to relevant policies in the Urban Design, Historic Preservation, and Federal Workplace elements.

National Historic Preservation Act

The NAC Campus is historically significant and listed on the National Register of Historic Places. To ensure compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, GSA has consulted with the DC State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), and has determined that the proposed work would have no adverse effect on historic properties. The DC SHPO concurred with this finding in an email dated July 14, 2017. This determination is contingent upon the expectation that GSA will follow standard Unanticipated Archeological Discovery protocols for all ground disturbing activities.

National Environmental Policy Act

GSA has fulfilled its National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) obligations through the preparation of a Categorical Exclusion (CATEX) for this project. The CATEX, dated July 27, 2017, is included in the submission package. Because of its approval authority on this project, NCPC has its own NEPA responsibility, and is applying its own CATEX (#21) for review and approval of acquisition of occupiable space by lease acquisition, construction, or expansion, or improvement of an existing facility where all of the following conditions are met:

- (a) The structure and proposed use are in compliance with local planning and zoning and any applicable District of Columbia, state, or federal requirements
- (b) The proposed use will not substantially increase the number of motor vehicles at the facility;
- (c) The site and the scale of construction are consistent with those of existing adjacent or nearby buildings; and
- (d) There is no evidence of community controversy or other environmental issues.

CONSULTATION

Coordinating Committee

The Coordinating Committee forwarded the proposed comments on final design to the Commission with the statement that the proposal has been coordinated with all participating agencies. The Coordinating Committee agencies included NCPC, the U.S. General Services Administration; the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority; the NPS; the District of Columbia Office of Planning; the District Department of Transportation; the DC SHPO; and the District Department of Energy and Environment.

U.S. Commission of Fine Arts

The project was approved by the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts at its meeting on November 16, 2017.

ONLINE REFERENCE

The following supporting documents for this project are available online:

- Project Synopsis
- Submission Letter
- Submission Materials
- NEPA/NHPA Documentation

Prepared by John Gerbich
11/14/2017

POWERPOINT (ATTACHED)

NCPC File #7903

New Guard Booth and Fence Augmentation

**3801 Nebraska Avenue, NW
Washington, DC**

**Submitted by U.S. General Services Administration for U.S. Department of
Homeland Security**

Final Site Development Plans

Commission meeting date: December 7, 2017

NCPC review authority: Federal Project in the District (40 U.S.C. § 8722(b)(1) and (d))

Applicant request: Approval of final site development plans

Delegated / consent / open / executive session: Consent Calendar

NCPC Review Officer: J. Gerbich

NCPC File number: 7903

Project summary:

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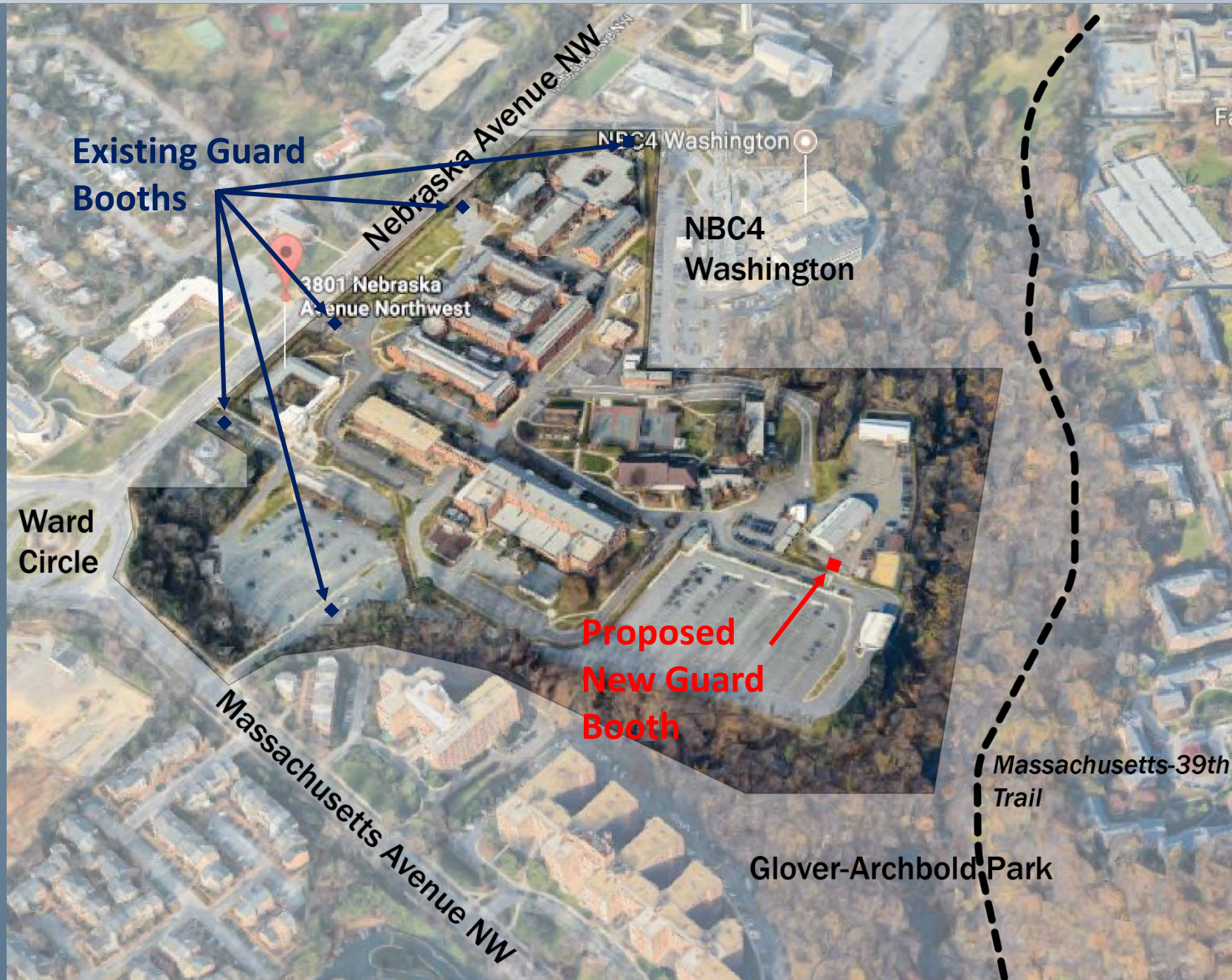
The NAC is bounded by Massachusetts Avenue NW to the south, Nebraska Avenue NW to the west, NBC's headquarters to the northeast, and Glover-Archbold Park and the McLean Gardens neighborhood to the south and east. The NAC is fully enclosed with four vehicular entry points, one on Massachusetts Avenue and three on Nebraska Avenue. The site is historically significant and is listed on both the National Register of Historic Places and the DC Inventory of Historic Sites.

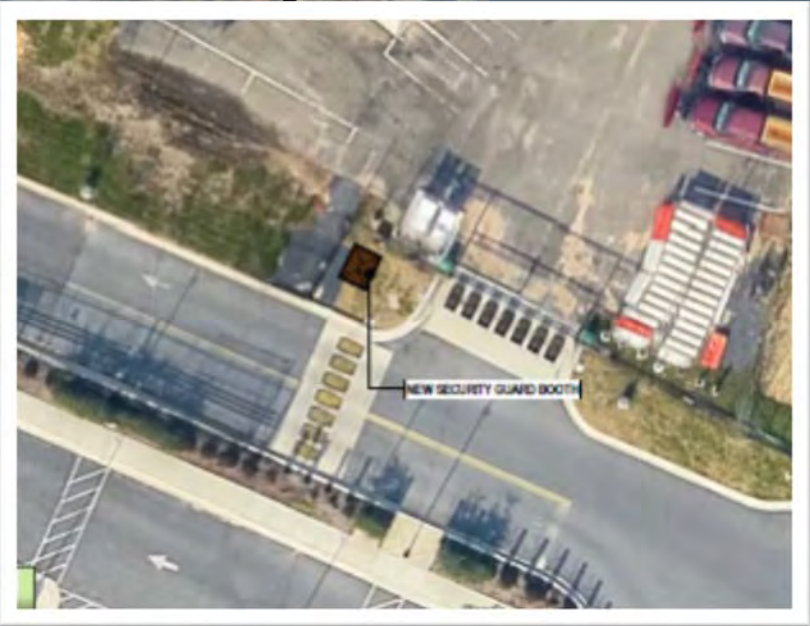
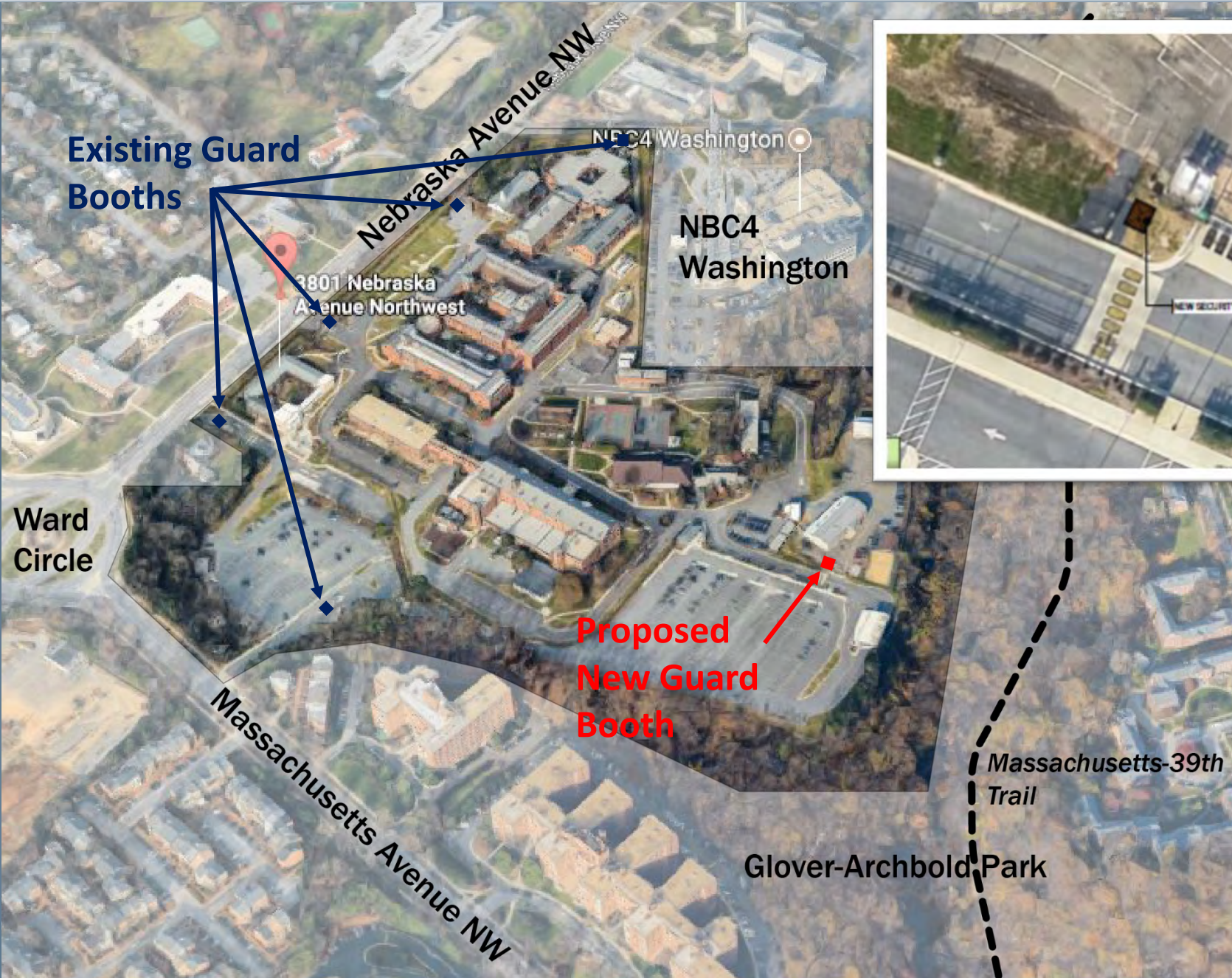
GSA submitted preliminary and final site plans for the improvements for the September NCPC meeting, but was only given preliminary approval at that time due to Commission concerns regarding the visibility of the barbed wire. The Commission requested a landscaping plan to reduce public visibility of the fencing and barbed wire in two areas: 1) at the northwestern corner of the campus near the NBC4 studios, and 2) along the eastern side of the campus that abuts Glover-Archbold Park. The current (final) submission includes site plans for landscape enhancements at these two locations, which are intended to address Commission comments.



Existing Conditions – Fencing and Guard Booths



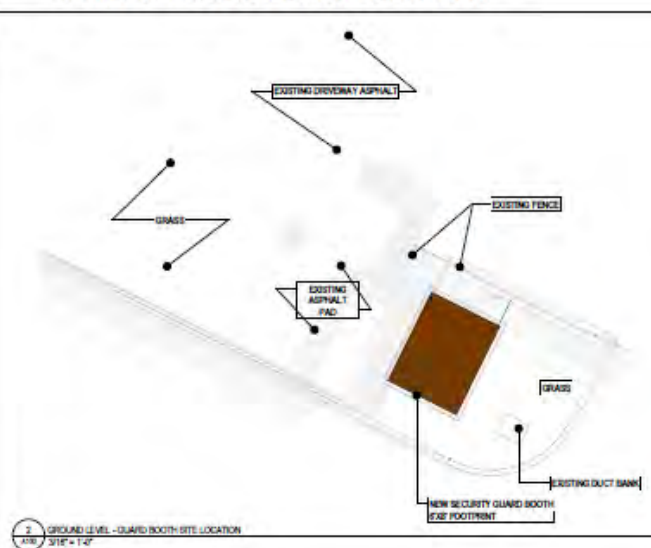




Project Proposal – New Guard Booth (Detail)



ENLARGED AERIAL VIEW OF SECURITY GUARD BOOTH

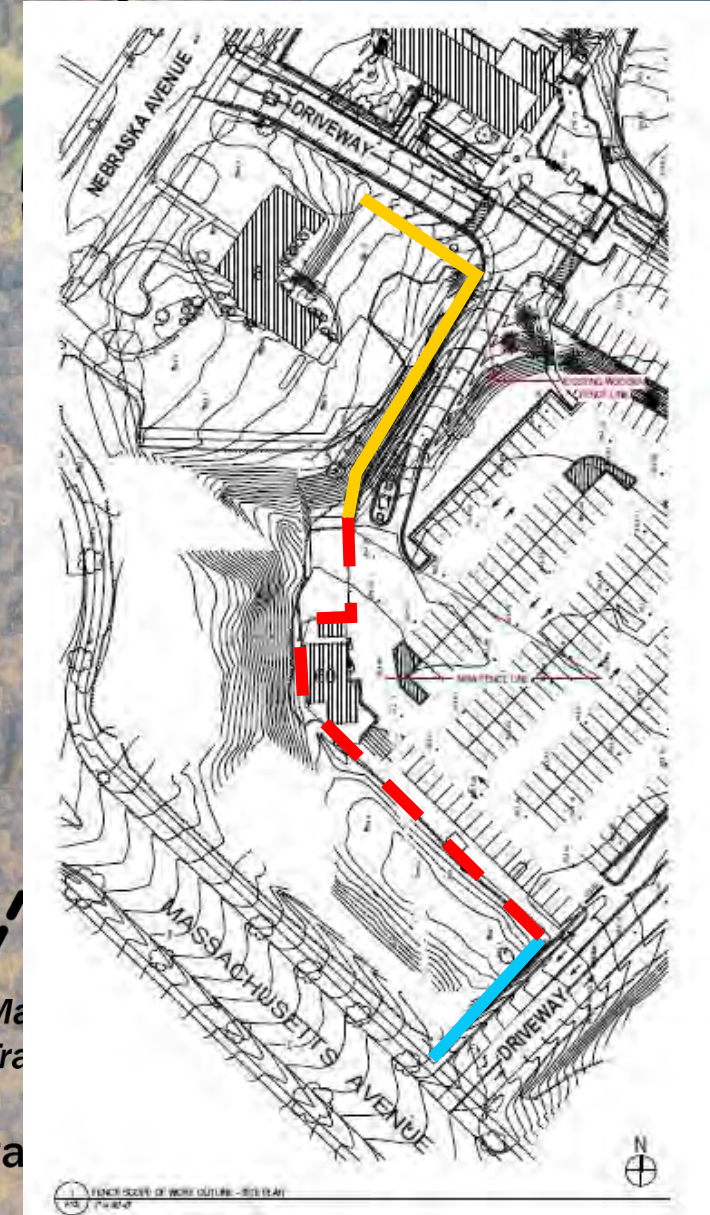


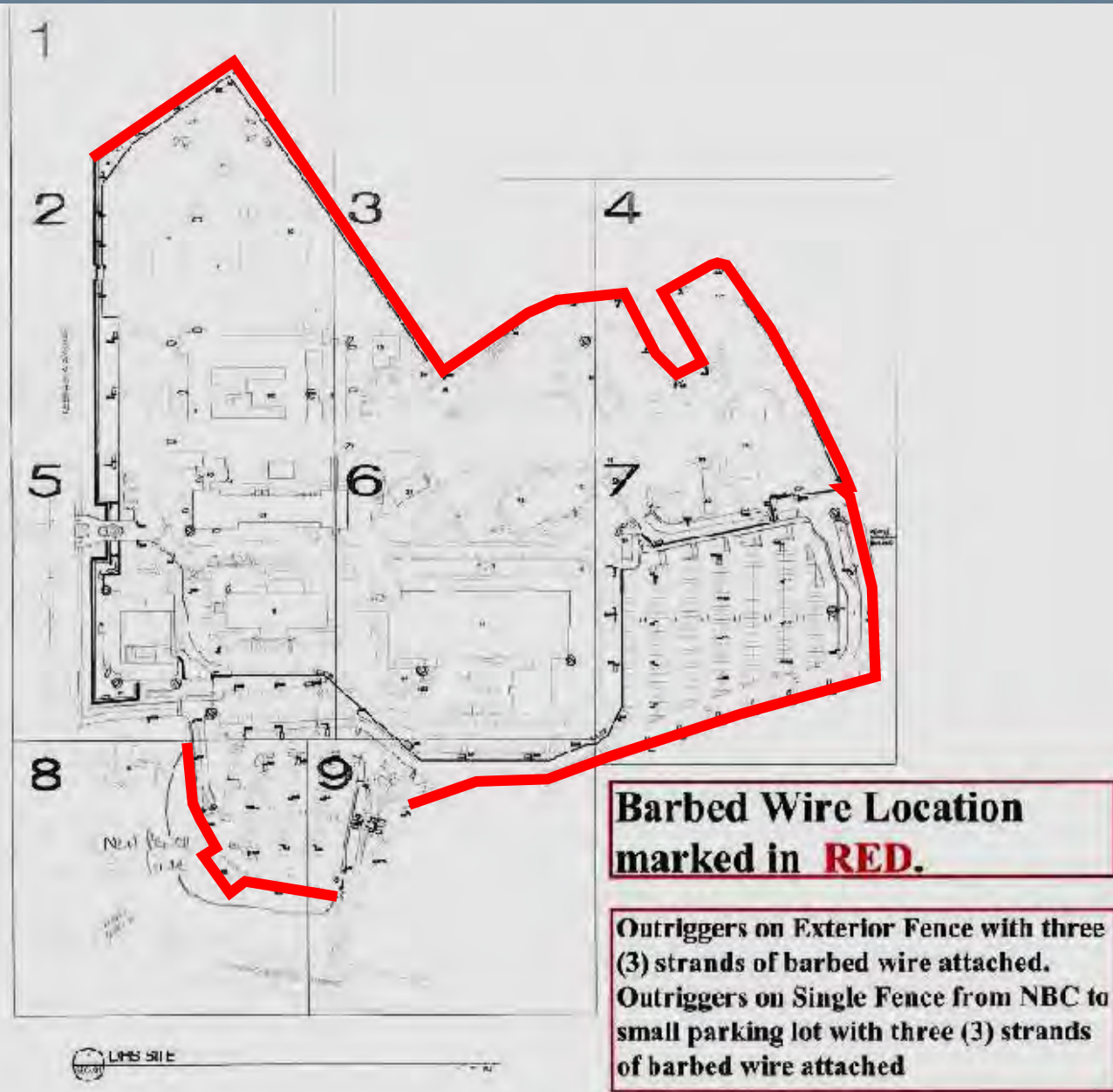


- EXISTING BRICK AND STEEL FENCE
- EXISTING CHAIN LINK FENCE
- EXISTING TALL WOODEN FENCE
- EXISTING LOW WOODEN FENCE
- ... NEW CHAIN LINK FENCE

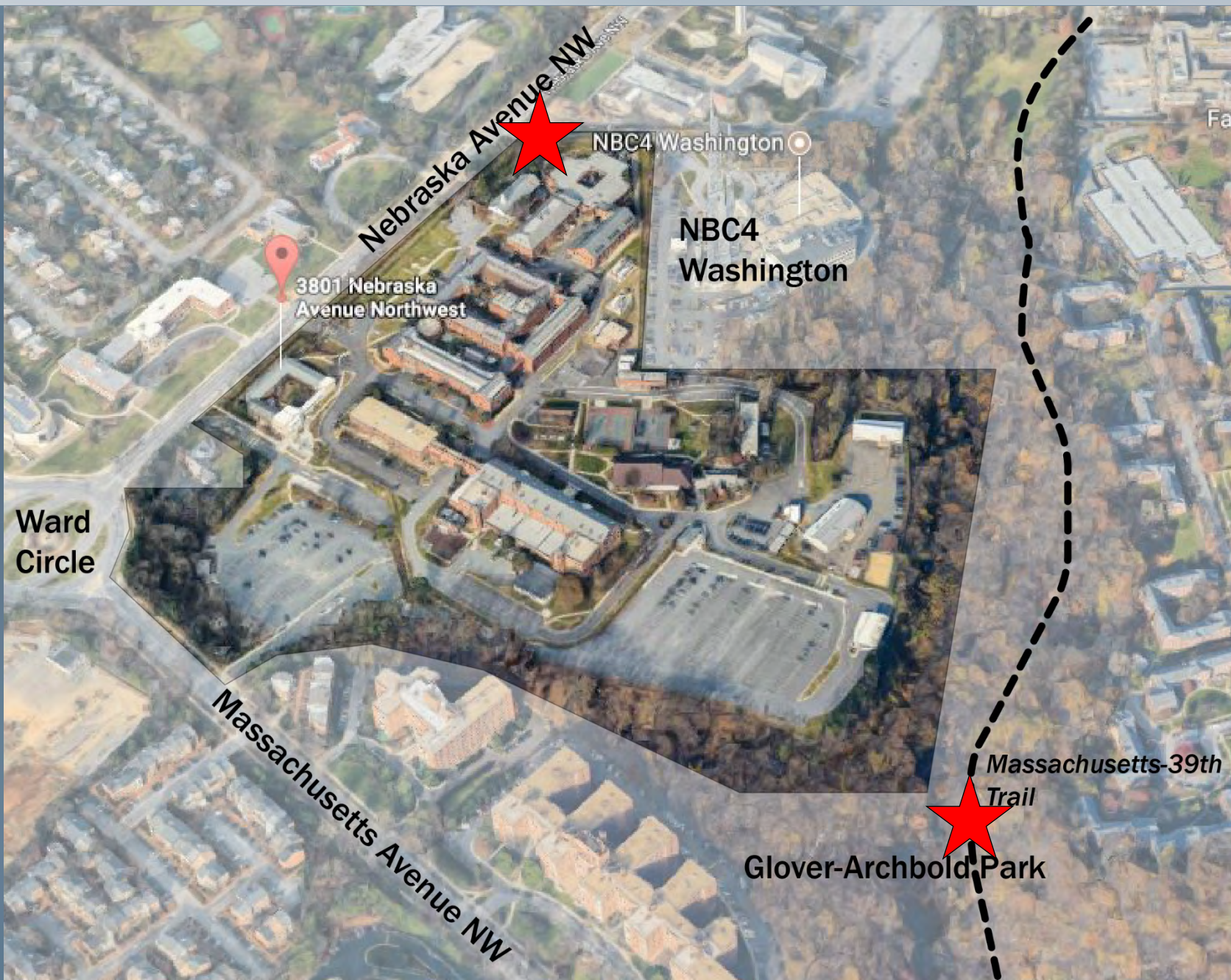


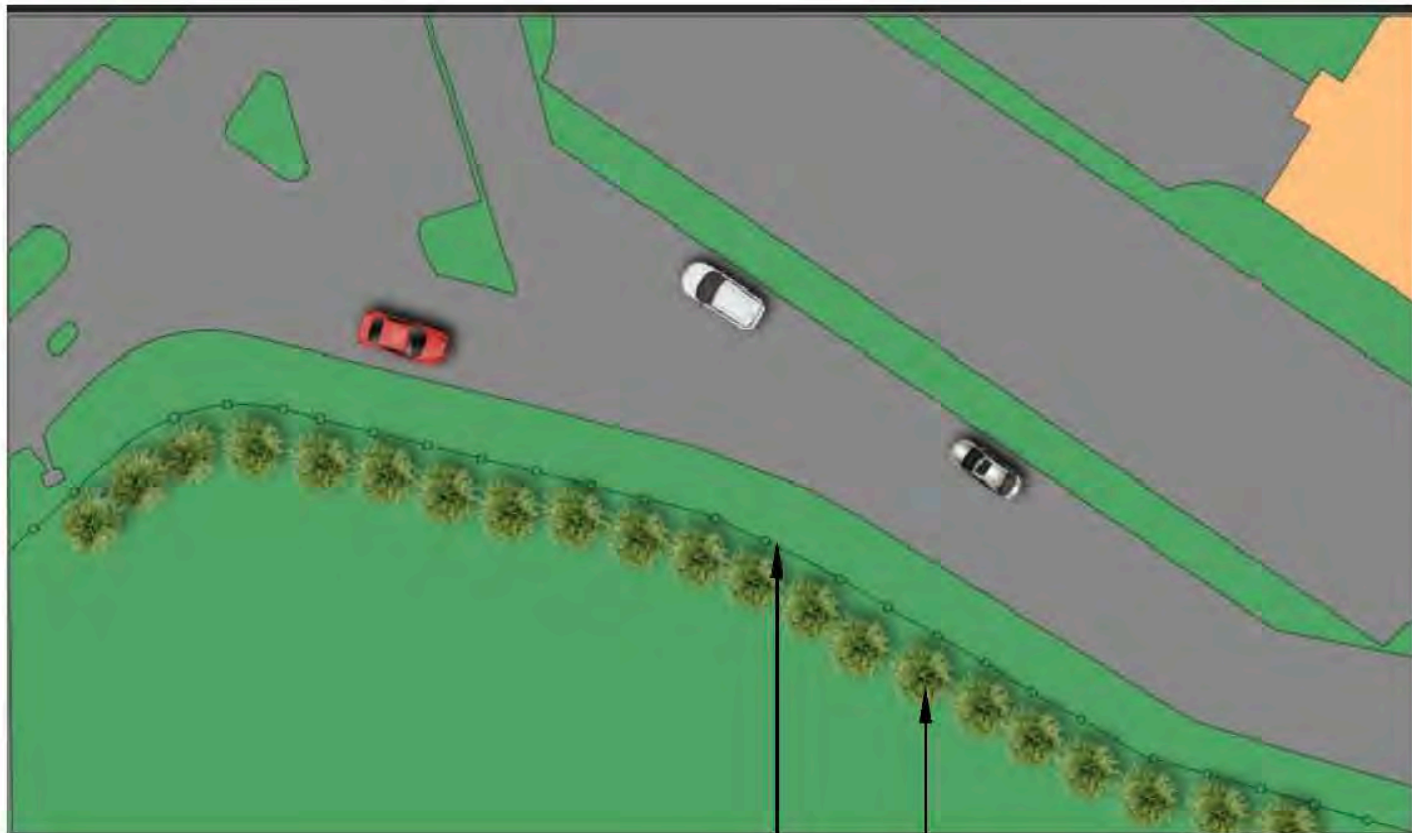
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- EXISTING TALL WOODEN FENCE
- EXISTING LOW WOODEN FENCE
- - - NEW CHAIN LINK FENCE





Example black plastic-coated chain link fence with three strands of black barbed wire





Fence line

Viburnum x
pragense



Viburnum x
pragense is a
broad - leaved,
evergreen shrub
that grows to a
height of 10' at
maturity

Note: Plant placement and quantities are approximate, final quantities and placement remain to be determined



Fence line

Viburnum x pragense

Note: Plant placement and quantities are approximate, final quantities and placement remain to be determined



Viburnum x pragense is a broad - leaved, evergreen shrub that grows to a height of 10' at maturity