



MCPB
Item # 5 & 6
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THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION
February 4, 2004

MEMORANDUM – MANDATORY REFERRAL

TO: Montgomery County Planning Board

VIA: John A. Carter, Chief, Community-Based Planning Division *JAC*

FROM: Kristin O'Connor, Senior Planner *KO*
Bethesda-Chevy Chase/North Bethesda Team (301-495-2172)

SUBJECT: 1. Forest Conservation Plan: Perimeter Security Enhancement Plan, Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Marinelli Road and Rockville Pike, North Bethesda, TS-M Zone, North Bethesda-Garrett Park Master Plan

2. Mandatory Referral No. 04201-NCPC-1: Perimeter Security Enhancement Plan, Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Marinelli Road and Rockville Pike, North Bethesda, TS-M Zone, North Bethesda-Garrett Park Master Plan

This combined staff report provides recommendations on the Forest Conservation Plan, and the Mandatory Referral for perimeter security enhancements for the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC).

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Forest Conservation Plan

The staff recommends approval of the Final Forest Conservation Plan.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Mandatory Referral No. 04201-NCPC-1

The staff recommends the approval of the Mandatory Referral, and the following comments should be transmitted to the National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC):

1. Provide additional landscaping to buffer the residential community from the inspection activity along the eastern shared property line. The additional landscaping would include a double row of trees, two 7'-8' Nellie Stevens Holly and one 4½" Willow Oak, along the residential buffer area facing the proposed drive isle on Lot #4. Provide understory tree planting, including tall grasses in the planting area to provide additional screening of the project's fence and concrete knee wall. In addition, the increased landscaping will screen the resident's view of the new truss canopy, guard booths, and vehicular lights from cars exiting the NRC property.

2. Coordinate with the Montgomery County Department of Public Works and Transportation (DPWT) and the Montgomery County Department of Permitting Services (DPS) regarding the site access points/curb-cuts and pedestrian accommodations along Marinelli Road as shown on the current plan.
3. Revise the Parking Reduction Agreement dated October 17, 1991, and Traffic Mitigation Agreement dated October 18, 1991, to reflect the proposed security-related parking and pedestrian access.
4. Continue to participate in the North Bethesda Transportation Management District (TMD) to assist in achieving and maintaining trip reduction goals.
5. Consider using locally sourced sustainable or renewable materials, recommended by the U.S. Green Building Council standards for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED), in the construction of the guardhouses and canopy structure.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The General Services Administration (GSA) has submitted preliminary and final site development plans for perimeter security enhancements at the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) Headquarters in Rockville, Montgomery County, Maryland. The proposed improvements will replace temporary vehicle restrictions, in the form of jersey barriers, put in place after September 11, 2001.

The project would add a variety of landscape features, vehicular access controls, and 26 surface parking spaces, including 2 handicap spaces, for visitors. Like most federal facilities, prior to September 11, 2001, the NRC was open to the public. After the events of September 11, temporary vehicular barriers and access controls have been installed. The proposed security project has been modified significantly since it was first presented to the M-NCPPC staff.

Site

The property is located on the White Flint North site, zoned TS-M and known as "Area 10" in the *North Bethesda-Garrett Park Master Plan*. The NRC headquarters facility is located in two modern office buildings – one government owned and one leased – on Rockville Pike and Marinelli Road in Rockville, Maryland. Approximately 2,400 employees work at the facility. In addition to its two street frontages, NRC is adjacent to a stormwater retention pond and other property not under U.S. Government control, including an undeveloped parcel known as Lot #4 to the northeast and a restaurant and commercial development to the south. The GSA acquired the adjacent vacant lot to the east (Lot #4), which is located between the retention pond and Marinelli Road. The perimeter of the site is generally open on the west and north, and bordered by a fence on the east and the south. The perimeter is now protected with temporary jersey barriers on both public roads, supplemented by various planters. Three staffed guard positions are located on the perimeter.

Proposed Perimeter Security Measures

The proposed perimeter security enhancements are intended to provide the necessary vehicular stand off distances, while still maintaining a visually open campus. The enhancement includes augmenting the landscaping berms on Rockville Pike and planters on Marinelli Road with additional berms, internal reinforcement, and large stone boulders. The earth berms will feature a mix of canopy and ornamental trees as well as shrubs, grasses and ground cover. Existing fencing will remain along the east and south, but cable barriers (hidden by shrubbery) are proposed behind the fence.

Pedestrian access to the site is generally open, though all visitors are screened through the entrance at Two White Flint North. Visitors parking on Lot #4 must walk around the buildings along the sidewalks of Marinelli Road to the western secured access points. A sidewalk connection would be provided between Lot #4's visitor parking and Marinelli Road's sidewalk. Marinelli Road will remain a four-lane, business street, with an 80-foot right-of-way and a Class 2 bikeway. No changes will be made that will affect the existing external pedestrian and bikeway facilities.

A variety of landscape solutions and vehicular access controls are proposed and they include:

Rockville Pike

Along Rockville Pike, and portions of Marinelli Road, both boulders and trees will be added within the existing planted and bermed areas, and some slopes will be re-graded to provide the necessary security. The existing entrance to the facility from Rockville Pike will become an employee-only exit. A small guardhouse and retractable bollards will be installed at this exit.

Marinelli Road

Along Marinelli Road an existing concrete planter will be strengthened with additional landscaping and boulders. The existing vehicular entrance will be closed to vehicular traffic and retractable bollards will be installed. This entrance will be used for emergency access and for additional employee passenger screening under elevated threat levels.

New Passenger and Truck Entrance – Marinelli Road

A new passenger and truck entrance is proposed at Lot #4 to remove the inspection operation from the public right-of-way as currently performed and onto the site. There will be a dedicated commercial vehicle lane in addition to a two-way employee entrance. There will be a four-person guard booth and a second facility which will house restrooms and storage space. The new entrance will be covered with a truss canopy in the same design vocabulary as the guard booths. A concrete knee wall with a mesh fence will surround the perimeter of the new property. Landscaping, including vines, will be planted to obscure the face of the new wall and fence. Staff is requesting more attention to the east side of Lot #4, specifically in an unplanted area, on the eastside of the new visitor parking area. In this area, staff is recommending a mix of ornamental trees, grasses, and groundcover to buffer the views from the adjacent residential building.

Southern Perimeter

On the south property line, NRC proposes to install a cable barrier hidden within shrubbery.

Eastern Perimeter

The existing eight-foot metal fence will remain next to the stormwater management pond because the existing steep grade and the pond provide effective vehicular standoff. Additional landscaping will be planted on the slope of the stormwater management pond.

Guard Booths

The proposed guard booths would be constructed of stainless steel panels, with a curved standing seam steel roof. The single person guard booth will measure six-and-a-half feet by four-and-a-half feet, and the larger, four-person guard booth will measure seven feet by nine-and-a-half feet. All of the guard booths will be eleven feet in height.

Bollards

Simple stainless steel bollards are proposed at the NRC. The 10-inch diameter bollards will be located four feet on-center and would be 36 inches in height. At some of the vehicular entrances the bollards will be hydraulically operated.

ANALYSIS

Master Plan Findings

The security of this facility is not discussed in the *North Bethesda-Garrett Park Master Plan*. In the post-September 11 era, federal agencies have been mandated to control site access and limit intrusion. Physical security measures have been mandated for the safety of all federal facilities.

The approved and adopted Master Plan recommends that the White Flint Area “develop policies to ensure a lively pedestrian environment” (p. 51). Pedestrian movements will remain available on the public sidewalks along Rockville Pike and Marinelli Road. Only pedestrian access to the NRC buildings will be controlled. A sidewalk connection would be provided between Lot #4’s visitor parking and Marinelli Road’s sidewalk.

Previous Regulatory Action

In accordance with previous approvals, Lot #4 was limited only to residential development, of up to 200 multi-family units. (See Attachment I, for a regulatory history.) Prior to the recent federal purchase and acquisition of Lot #4 in 2003, the residential use for that parcel was approved so that the development would meet the mixed-use requirements of the TS-M Zone and the Master Plan (Preliminary Plan No. 1-92059, White Flint North, August 24, 1994). In an agreement dated September 23, 2003, the Montgomery County Planning Board amended the agreements related to Lot #4 to allow for the federal government to enhance the security around the NRC complex.

Transportation Findings

A traffic study is not required to satisfy Local Area Transportation Review as a result of the relocation of the security access point from Lot #1 to Lot #4. This change will not alter the number of peak-hour trips generated by the existing NRC buildings during the weekday morning peak period (6:30 to 9:30 a.m.) and the weekday evening peak period (4:00 to 7:00 p.m.).

This site is within the boundary of the North Bethesda TMD. If the County Council adopts the reestablishment of the annual Transportation Management Fee, the applicant of this non-residential development should pay the fee to the North Bethesda TMD. Pending legislation may re-implement the recommendation in the North Bethesda-Garrett Park Master Plan and the requirements under County Code 42A-25, Ridesharing. The applicant of new non-residential development would be required to submit a traffic mitigation plan for the North Bethesda TMD (see Attachment G for more details).

Environmental Findings

A Natural Resource Inventory/Forest Stand Delineation (NRI/FSD) and Forest Conservation Plan (FCP) have been submitted and approved for Lot #4 of this application. A FCP for Lot #4 was approved in 1992 when development of 200 residential units was proposed. The new FCP for this Mandatory Referral for Lot #4 protects an existing forest stand in the northwest corner. Shrub and understory tree planting in this forest stand is required to fulfill Forest Conservation. The Nuclear Regulatory Commission is concerned that any additional understory planting within the existing forest stand would hamper security by blocking views to the main buildings. To accommodate security concerns, Environmental Planning staff recommends that no shrub or understory trees be included in the Landscape Plan. Furthermore, to maintain the integrity of a forest stand, no lawn or seating should be created in the forest area.

There are no wetlands, floodplains, stream buffers, or other environmental buffers applicable to this site. This site is not in a Special Protection Area or the Primary Management Area.

The U.S. Green Building Council's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) standards are partially achieved in this application. The applicant uses design standards for the site promoted by the LEED standards. The proposed application conserves and restores a damaged forest area that will provide a habitat for wildlife and promote biodiversity. This preserved forest, along with additional landscaping provided in the plan, helps to reduce heat islands in highly urban environments. Staff recommends using locally or regional sourced building materials in the construction of all security structures (including the guard stations and the canopy).

Community Concerns

Staff at the M-NCPPC recognize that NRC has been given the federal directive to establish perimeter security for its facility. Staff recognizes that every effort was made to preserve the open movements along Rockville Pike and Marinelli Road for pedestrians and consideration was made to landscape. In addition, after the purchasing of Lot #4, NRC will have an even greater responsibility as a neighbor to the residential community to its east. Staff encourages NRC to work with Strathmore Court and the future residents of the North Bethesda Town Center -- especially during times of high alert when area residents and visitors may be inconvenienced the most.

CONCLUSION

The M-NCPPC is aware that certain physical security measures have been mandated for the safety of all federal facilities and recommends approval of the mandatory referral with the comments listed at the beginning of this report. The applicant has agreed to incorporate the comments into the project.

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Attachments

- Attachment A: Vicinity Map
- Attachment B: Site Plan
- Attachment C: Site Plan Details for Lot #4
- Attachment D: Landscape Plan
- Attachment E: Landscape Plan Details for Lot #4
- Attachment F: Planting Details
- Attachment G: Transportation Planning Memo
- Attachment H: Environmental Planning Memo
- Attachment I: Prior Regulatory Actions