

COMMISSION ACTION

NCPC File No. 1476



JOHN F. KENNEDY CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS ACCESS IMPROVEMENTS, PLAZA AND BUILDINGS

2700 F Street, NW
Washington, DC

Submitted by the Federal Highway Administration and
John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts

June 3, 2004

Commission Action Requested by Applicant

Approval of concept site and building plans pursuant to 40 U.S.C. § 8722(d) and Section 5 of the National Capital Planning Act (40 U.S.C. § 8722(b)(1)).

Commission Action

The Commission:

Approves the concept site and building plans for the John F. Kennedy Center Access Improvements, Plaza and Buildings, as shown on NCPC Map File No. 3.10(08.21)-41346.

Directs the applicants to undertake the following as design proceeds:

In general:

- Improve pedestrian connectivity to the surrounding city and throughout the project site.
- Maximize connections to the existing and historic city street grid.
- Revise the project design to better activate the proposed plaza.
- Minimize impacts to important viewsheds in the project area, including views along L'Enfant streets, views to and from the Lincoln Memorial, views to and from the Old Naval Observatory, and views along the Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway.
- Ensure that bicycle trail connectivity will be established and maintained throughout the project site if elements of the project are eliminated or delayed due to budget constraints.

In the North Project Sector:

- Investigate eliminating the planned on and off ramps between 27th Street, NW and the Potomac Freeway.

- Demonstrate that planned improvements in the north project sector will not preclude re-connectivity of the District street grid in the future, and in particular the potential connection of I Street westward to the waterfront, and the re-establishment of 26th and 27th Streets north of Virginia Avenue, NW.
- Coordinate with the District Department of Transportation in the north project sector to ensure design compatibility with changes to the Whitehurst Freeway currently under study.

In the Center Project Sector:

- Modify the water feature in the median of E Street, NW to allow a crossing at the east end of the north and south buildings.
- Modify the plaza design to reduce the number of roadway segments and the impact of vehicular traffic on active and passive pedestrian use of the space.
- Design the structural system for the proposed Potomac River overlook and associated ramps to minimize impacts to the view corridor along Rock Creek Parkway.
- Explore alternate design solutions for the proposed Potomac River overlook and ramps that better integrate the Center both physically and visually with the Rock Creek and Potomac Trail, improve access from the waterfront to the Kennedy Center's west terrace, and that do not block views of the river from the west terrace. Alternate designs considered should include ramps stretching north and south from the outer corners of the terrace.
- Demonstrate how the project addresses the major viewshed along New Hampshire Avenue, NW and investigate how the project can enhance the important pedestrian connection at this location.
- Redesign the plaza area so that it exhibits a clear hierarchy of interrelated public spaces with a central focal point.
- Investigate reducing the size of the plaza by pulling the north and south buildings in toward one another to allow future construction of other adjacent uses.
- Demonstrate that the project does not preclude the development of mixed-use buildings immediately north and northwest of the project area.
- Demonstrate that the project design does not preclude decking over other areas of the Potomac Freeway for roadway and building construction.
- Eliminate the redundant roadways that partition the green space proposed along the east front of the Kennedy Center.
- Investigate incorporating on-street parking on the roadways in front of the two new buildings that flank the plaza and reducing the size of the drop-off areas in front of the two new buildings.
- Include direct access from the plaza to the Education Building's café.
- Design the proposed bicycle and pedestrian ways along the east sides of the proposed buildings with maximum sight lines and surveillance opportunities to increase public use and public safety.
- Locate active spaces, such as rehearsal spaces, along the perimeter walls of the two buildings.
- Modify the design of the west and east façades of both buildings to create better transparency to and functional interaction with the adjacent sidewalks and trails.

- Demonstrate that the design of the Education Building is responsive to the view from the Theodore Roosevelt Bridge upon entering the city.
- Indicate how the proposed water features will be used during the winter months.
- Investigate increasing the number of tour bus parking spaces below grade to accommodate tour buses serving venues other than the Kennedy Center.
- Modify the design of the north building and/or the alignment of 25th Street, NW to provide a more direct visual and physical connection between the city street grid and the plaza, and to serve as a gateway into the performing arts complex.
- Incorporate project perimeter security requirements into the design at the earliest possible stage.
- Consider the impact of the project on security requirements of the Potomac Naval Annex (Old Naval Observatory) and the State Department headquarters.

In the South Project Sector:

- Modify the design in the south project sector to conform to major components of the District Department of Transportation's proposed Theodore Roosevelt Bridge improvements, in particular the westbound ramp connecting Constitution Avenue to the Bridge.
- Demonstrate that the design does not preclude the development of a pedestrian connection between the Kennedy Center, the Lincoln Memorial and the Mall.

Reminds the Kennedy Center and the Federal Highway Administration of the requirement to comply with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act.

Deborah B. Young
Secretary to the National Capital Planning Commission