

STAFF RECOMMENDATION



NCPC File No. MP03

SOUTHEAST FEDERAL CENTER MASTER PLAN

1st Street and Tingey Streets, SE
Washington DC

Submitted by the General Services Administration

May 27, 2004

Abstract

The General Services Administration has submitted a development plan for the Southeast Federal Center (SEFC). The plan was developed by Forest City Washington (FCW) and selected by the General Services Administration from responses to a Request for Proposals issues in 2003. The plan is based on the GSA Southeast Federal Center Plan, which was reviewed by the Commission in January, 2004. The Commission's role in this agenda item is to consider the FCW Development Plan as an updated Master Plan for the Southeast Federal Center and to provide consultation comments to the General Services Administration for further planning and design for the development of the site.

Commission Action Requested by Applicant

Approval of comments to the General Services Administration pursuant to Section 3(f) of the Southeast Federal Center Public-Private Development Act of 2000 (Public Law 106-407)

Executive Director's Recommendation

The Commission:

Accepts the Forest City Washington Plan (FCW Plan) as the updated Master Plan for the Southeast Federal Center, as shown on NCPC Map File No. 41.11(05.12)-41376.

Recommends that the General Services Administration include or maintain the following elements in the Forest City Washington Development Plan:

- A commemorative work site, in a location consistent with the Memorials and Museums Master Plan

- Allées of trees that focus pedestrian views to the waterfront from M Street along New Jersey Avenue and 5th Place, SE

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PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The General Services Administration has submitted for review and comment by the Commission the Forest City Washington (FCW) Development Plan for the Southeast Federal Center (SEFC). The Southeast Federal Center Public-Private Development Act of 2000 (the Act) authorizes GSA to enter into agreements with a private entity for the redevelopment of the SEFC, in consultation with the National Capital Planning Commission. In implementing the Act, GSA issued a Request for Qualifications in 2002 and a subsequent Request for Proposals (RFP) in 2003. In 2004 GSA selected the FCW Development Plan from those submitted in response to the RFP, and has now submitted it to the Commission for consideration as the updated Master Plan for the SEFC and for consultation under the Act.

Site

The Southeast Federal Center site, as defined in the Act, consists of 55 acres in Southeast Washington, DC. It extends from Issac Hull Avenue on the east to 1st Street on the west, and from M Street on the north to the Anacostia River on the South. This submission applies only to 42 acres of the site, as an 11-acre parcel along M Street between New Jersey Avenue and 4th Street, SE is being developed under separate agreement as the new headquarters for the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT).

The 42-acre site includes six historic buildings, all of which will be retained under the FCW Development Plan. The site is immediately adjacent to the Washington Navy Yard and the historic Main Pumping Station, operated by the Washington Area Sewer Authority (WASA). Renovations are proposed for the Main Pumping Station and a zoning action for this renovation is currently pending before the District of Columbia Zoning Commission. Attachment 1 shows the overall Southeast Federal Center site including the DOT portion.

Background

In January of 2004, the Commission reviewed two submissions regarding this project. The first was a referral from the District of Columbia Zoning Commission, for federal interest review, of the Southeast Federal Center Overlay Zone for the 42 acre SEFC site. Zoning is required for government land that is redeveloped for private use. The second was a referral from GSA for consultation on the SEFC Plan under the Southeast Federal Center Public-Private Development Act of 2000. Attachment 2 shows GSA's SEFC Plan and proposed zoning. The Southeast Federal Center Overlay Zone and the FCW Development Plan were based on the guidelines identified in the SEFC Plan.

NCPC staff is currently working with GSA to develop a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that defines NCPC's role in further refinements to the FCW Development Plan.

Attachments to the MOU include materials that were part of the RFQ/RFP, including the GSA SEFC Plan as well as Urban Design Guidelines (Attachment 3) and Minimum Phase Performance Design Standards (Attachment 4).

Proposal

The FCW Development Plan outlines a general vision for the Southeast Federal Center. Attachment 5 is an Illustrative Plan showing the overall development concept proposed by FCW. Additional plans were provided for staff review but will not be made public until the development agreement is made public. Those plans included a land use plan showing the location of different uses throughout the site, a landscape plan, a site circulation plan, a parking plan, a construction phasing plan. Also, an urban design plan framework plan was provided that displayed allowable building height and FAR. The information included in these plans is summarized below.

The Illustrative Plan displays the overall SEFC design concept of a mixed-use neighborhood where the higher density and intensity of use is concentrated along M Street, SE and 5 acres at the water's edge is reserved for use as a waterfront park. Another significant open space depicted on the illustrative site plan is a landscaped plaza located north of the WASA pumping station, at the terminus of New Jersey Avenue. GSA is currently negotiating with WASA to incorporate this feature in the SEFC development. The Illustrative Plan shows building configurations and the general locations of open courts and rooftop structures, along with a marina and docking facilities in the waterfront park. A modified version of the Illustrative Plan shows the adaptive reuse of all historic buildings within the site for either residential, retail or cultural purposes.

The Land Use Plan illustrates the location and types of uses being developed on the site. The land uses recommended for the site include residential, office, mixed-use with commercial and residential, cultural/community, retail, and open space. These uses are planned as follows:

- **Office Uses.** These uses are concentrated along M Street, SE, from First Street to Fourth Street.
- **Mixed-Use Residential and Office.** These mixed-use areas are located on First Street, SE between N ½ Street and N.
- **Residential Use.** Residential development is located along M Street, SE on the eastern portion of the site, along Canal Street between N ½ Street and N Place, and at the center of the site between Water and Tingey Streets.
- **Retail Uses.** The only structure being utilized solely for retail use is historic Building 167. Ground floor retail uses are recommended throughout the site, particularly along the western portion of M Street, SE, New Jersey Avenue, and the residential squares in the interior of the site. No ground floor retail is located on the eastern portion of M Street, SE or along First Street, SE at the western boundary of the site.

- **Cultural/Community Uses.** The FCW Development Plan does not clearly define cultural/community uses but does refer to provisions for theater and other performing arts programs. These uses are to be located in a historic building within the waterfront park. Several smaller sites for cultural/community use are shown at the south end of 5th Street SE and at the west end of Tingey.

The Site Landscape Plan provides a general landscape concept for the SEFC site. The plan shows the location of street trees and water features throughout the site. The main pedestrian access points of New Jersey Avenue, Fifth Street, SE, M Street, SE and Water Street are augmented by double allées of street trees. These allées focus pedestrian views toward the water from M Street along New Jersey Avenue and 5th Place, even though the street alignment is irregular, to accommodate historic buildings. Water features are shown along New Jersey Avenue, 5th Street SE, at the edge of the waterfront park, and at various street intersections throughout the site.

The Site Circulation Plan highlights the sidewalks and alley ways, bicycle network, as well as the Anacostia Riverwalk and Trail. The Anacostia Riverwalk and Trail is planned to run from the National Arboretum to the Southwest Waterfront. The plan also shows primary pedestrian thoroughfares into the site from M Street SE at New Jersey Avenue and 5th Street.

The SEFC development plan calls for the provision of approximately 4,047 parking spaces. According to the Parking Plan, these spaces will be provided in one and two-level below grade parking structures located throughout the site. Approximately 140 spaces will be provided in a parking structure which will be constructed within the building façades of Building 202, at the corner of 5th Place and Tingey. No surface lots are proposed.

The Urban Design Plan Framework shows the maximum building height and Floor-to-Area Ratio (FAR) of each square. The maximum building height is 130 feet, on parcel A at New Jersey and M Street. Building heights step down closer to the river. The plan shows the width of street rights-of-way that have yet to be dedicated. The specified width is 90 feet for all new streets except for New Jersey Avenue which is 160 feet in width.

The Phasing Plan which shows that the project will be implemented in three major phases. The first phase of construction consists mainly of the residential and retail space within the interior of the site as well as the office component on the eastern side of the DOT Headquarters on M Street, SE. The second phase is the waterfront park and remaining residential components. The third phase consists of office, mixed-use and residential space situated on the western boundary of the site.

The report provided in the submission discusses three “character zones” which define architectural character and use of buildings throughout the site. No map or plan has been provided to illustrate where these zones are located within the 42 acres, but GSA has informed staff of their general locations. The three zones are summarized as follows:

- **Industrial Character Zone.** This zone will consist of rehabilitated historic buildings with new buildings being designed to complement the historic character. The submission states that massing, materials, forms, and detailing will be compatible with the industrial character of this zone. The submission further states that this zone will consist of residential, office, and retail use. Most of the site consists of this zone.
- **New Business Zone.** According to the submission, the New Business Zone will serve as a complement to the styles seen in the industrial character of the historic Navy structures, the new DOT headquarters, the WASA Pumping Station and private development. The zone is also described as an attractive and flexible setting for business within the SEFC site. This zone is located along M Street at New Jersey Avenue, adjacent to the new DOT headquarters.
- **Waterfront Zone.** This zone is located south of Canal Street, at the southern edge of the site. The only design details described for this zone are that this zone will include the Lumber Shed, which is historic Building 173 located south of Canal Street between 4th and 5th Streets SE, and a large public park adjacent to the Anacostia River.

Urban Design Guidelines

The Urban Design Guidelines were included in the RFP/RFQ to provide broad guidance on the overall design concept for the new Southeast Federal Center and also some detailed design guidelines for the Waterfront Area.

For the overall Southeast Federal Center design concept, the guidelines call for the preservation of views and vistas to and from the waterfront, as well as to federal monumental buildings. The guidelines also state that high-density residential is encouraged and that plazas and open space destinations are provided. Further, the guidelines recommend an appropriate mix of neighborhood and waterfront-oriented retail, service and cultural uses located at ground level along major streets and buildings which face onto the Waterfront Park.

The more detailed recommendations for the Waterfront Area, which includes the park and adjacent development, recommend the following:

- A publicly accessible waterfront park should be provided along the Anacostia River, with a wide variety of active and passive recreation uses.
- A continuously publicly accessible river-walk esplanade, including designated walkways and bicycle lane, should be provided.
- Land uses that activate the waterfront, such as cafes and specialty retail, are encouraged. Proposed waterfront-oriented retail, service and cultural uses are to be provided at ground level.

- Land uses and the siting and design of buildings, infrastructures, and plazas which improve the natural ecology, or which interpret the importance of natural systems, and/or the historically important maritime context of the site, are encouraged.
- The ground level of all buildings fronting onto the Anacostia River and Waterfront Park shall maximize uses that open to, overlook, and activate the public park and esplanade.
- The siting and design of all buildings and structures should maximize and enhance views of the Anacostia River.

The guidelines also provide a “vision statement” for the Waterfront Park. The statement is as follows:

The waterfront park is envisioned as a key public space resource for the overall Near Southeast and Capitol Hill neighborhoods as well as a citywide and regional destination. With expansive views of the Anacostia River and the Potomac, the waterfront park can be the setting for a variety of active cultural and retail uses. Maritime uses should be promoted and activities in the upland areas should encourage public use during all four seasons. Buildings and land uses surrounding the park should play an integral role in creating the identity and context for park activities and should reinforce the active nature of this key public destination.

Development Program

Applicant: General Services Administration

Completion Date: Ground breaking and first phase of construction to begin in 2005.

PROJECT ANALYSIS

Staff supports the current vision for the Southeast Federal Center as implemented by the FCW Development Plan as it supports the vision outlined in NCPC’s Extending the Legacy Plan. Legacy contemplated the future of southeastern Washington and recognized the planning efforts to reactivate the Southeast Federal Center and the Washington Navy Yard. Specifically, the Legacy Plan envisioned a redeveloped SEFC with an active and easily accessible Anacostia Waterfront Park that would anchor an economically viable and pedestrian friendly M Street corridor. Legacy tied this vision to the greater redevelopment of the South Capitol Street corridor with activity spilling over to Poplar Point and Anacostia. With the ground floor retail along M Street, SE and its planned Waterfront Park, the FCW Development Plan advances this overall vision. Further, this project will be the impetus of new development activity along M Street, SE which will progress towards the greater South Capitol Street area, assisting in its revitalization.

Previous Commission Action

In the previous Commission action on this project, the Commission made the following recommendations to GSA:

- The Southeast Federal Center's selected development plan should reflect the reestablishment of the historic rights-of-way to the greatest extent practicable.
- The federal government should retain ownership of the streets with jurisdiction transferred to the District of Columbia.
- Parcel P should accommodate a commemorative work as recommended in the Commission's 2001 Memorials and Museums Master Plan.
- The development plan should ensure public accessibility to and along the Anacostia Waterfront and its adjacent open space.

It is staff's position that the FCW Development Plan generally satisfies three of the four recommendations. Although the original L'Enfant Plan is ambiguous in its treatment of the Southeast Federal Center site, the FCW Plan reflects an extension of the historic rights-of-way in a manner that increases access, but is also sensitive to the preservation of historic buildings on the site. As the FCW Development Plan reestablishes these streets, it increases the accessibility to the Anacostia Waterfront- satisfying an additional Commission concern. The FCW Development Plan also provides for pedestrian and bike connections throughout the site. In terms of ownership of these streets, the FCW Development Plan does not provide recommendations in this area as it deals with planning and design and not ownership. Land ownership and jurisdictional issues are still being decided and GSA is reminded of the Commission's recommendation on this issue.

One recommendation that has not been fully addressed deals with the commemorative work which was recommended by the Commission for Parcel P. Parcel P was the area designated along the Anacostia Waterfront in GSA's SEFC Plan (Attachment 2) and is now the Waterfront Park and adjacent retail area depicted in the FCW Development Plan. NCPC's Memorials and Museum's Master Plan (2M) recommends a commemorative work on this site, which is specifically identified as Site 37 in the 2M Plan. The FCW Development Plan does reflect a cultural/community use on this site, but the submission describes the use of this as being theater and other performing arts uses. It is staff's position that a commemorative work should be incorporated into the FCW Development Plan, but that there are several areas that would be appropriate for such a site. This commemorative work should reflect the 2M recommendation and be incorporated in an area that captures a site line and vista from one of the planned through streets. Therefore, **staff recommends that GSA ensure that the FCW Plan include commemorative work site in a location consistent with the Memorials and Museums Master Plan.**

Consultation Recommendations

In addition to evaluating the submission's compliance with the previous Commission action, staff offers the following consultation recommendations in regards to the new FCW Development Plan.

Staff appreciates the general design guidelines that have been submitted with the FCW Development Plan. However, staff believes that one of the crucial design elements for the success of the Southeast Federal Center is the preservation and enhancement of sight lines and vistas throughout the site to the waterfront. The double rows of trees that frame pedestrian views from M Street to the waterfront along New Jersey Avenue and 5th Place, SE are critical to the preservation of sight lines, because the street alignment itself is irregular to preserve historic buildings. Therefore, **staff recommends that GSA ensure that the FCW Development Plan maintain the allées of trees that focus pedestrian views to the waterfront from M Street along New Jersey Avenue and 5th Place, SE**

Master Plan

The previous Master Plan was revised and approved by the Commission on May 30, 1985 and subsequently modified on July 22, 1992. The 1992 Master Plan envisioned the SEFC as an office complex for 30,000 federal employees that would integrate the SEFC into the fabric of the remainder of the city. The Master Plan called for 8.4 million square feet of office space, 200,000 square feet of retail space, an "industrial character" zone between M Street and Tingey Street west of 4th Street, an urban waterfront at the Anacostia River edge and an urban square at the intersection of New Jersey Avenue and Tingey Street. The Master Plan also concentrates the tallest buildings (130 feet) around the urban square, with heights diminishing towards the edges of the site at M Street, SE and the Anacostia River. Attachment 6 is the vision established in the 1992 Master Plan.

The General Services Administration has submitted the FCW Development Plan for consideration as the new Master Plan for the Southeast Federal Center. The FCW Development Plan is consistent with several themes established in the 1992 Master Plan. These include, but are not limited to the following:

- The reconnection of the Southeast Federal Center into the fabric of the city with improved access to the Anacostia River
- The development of open space throughout the site, particularly at the New Jersey Avenue terminus and at the edge of the Anacostia River
- The implementation of the three character zones known as the Industrial, New Business and Waterfront Zones

The FCW Development Plan also differs from the 1992 Master Plan in several areas:

- The uses recommended in the FCW Development Plan are predominately residential and ground floor retail with some areas designated for office and cultural use. The

1992 SEFC Master Plan envisioned the site as a federal enclave with federal office space as the dominant use with limited retail opportunities.

- The FCW Development Plan concentrates building heights along M Street, SE with heights stepping down towards the water. The 1992 SEFC Master Plan concentrated heights around an urban square on New Jersey Avenue with heights stepping down towards the edges of the site.
- The FCW Development Plan provides for more open space along the water's edge. The 1992 SEFC Master Plan illustrates a small open space area along the river's edge with a "Riverside Drive" for vehicular access to the water.

Given the new direction for the Southeast Federal Center, it is staff's position that the FCW Development Plan is an acceptable amendment to the 1992 SEFC Master Plan. The FCW Development Plan retains and builds on several key themes developed in the 1992 SEFC Master Plan including reconnecting the SEFC site and the Anacostia River to the city, and providing open space areas on New Jersey Avenue and the waterfront. Staff also supports the retention of the three character zones, but the submission lacks sufficient detail in determining if these zones will be implemented in a similar manner with the 1992 SEFC Master Plan. Further, it is staff's position that the FCW Development Plan is an improvement from the 1992 SEFC Master Plan. The design concept of stepping down building heights towards the water as a transition to open space is more appropriate for a mixed-use waterfront neighborhood. **Staff recommends that the Commission accept the Forest City Washington Development Plan (FCW Development Plan) as the updated Master Plan for the Southeast Federal Center.**

CONFORMANCE

National Environmental Policy Act

The General Services Administration issued a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the Southeast Federal Center Redevelopment project on October 3, 2003 and a public hearing on the DEIS was held on October 29, 2003. In response, NCPC staff issued a comment letter dated November 10, 2003 and will review GSA's forthcoming Final Environmental Impact Statement.

National Historic Preservation Act

GSA has initiated Section 106 consultation with the D.C. SHPO, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, and other parties, including NCPC, and has developed a draft Programmatic Agreement (PA) for the SEFC redevelopment. The draft PA is still the topic of discussion for future 106 consultation meetings and has not yet been signed.

The SEFC includes six historic structures—Buildings 74, 160, 167, 173, and 202 as well as the historic Navy Yard wall—and sites with the potential for archeology. In addition, the site includes street rights-of-way that can serve as public spaces providing access, long axial

views, and the opportunity for vistas to the waterfront or the Capitol dome. Staff has commented to GSA on the draft PA, asking that GSA consult with the DC SHPO in the identification of street rights-of-way as historic properties and in developing design guidelines to protect those rights-of-way.

CONSULTATION

Coordinating Committee

The Coordinating Committee reviewed this item at its meeting on May 12, 2004 and forwarded the proposal to the Commission with the statement that the project has been coordinated with all agencies participating, except the District of Columbia Office of Planning. The representative for DCOP requested additional time to coordinate its comments on the project. The participating agencies were: NCPC; the District Department of Transportation; the Department of Housing and Community Development; the General Services Administration; and the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority.