

# STAFF RECOMMENDATION

NCPC File No. 6669

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**UNITED STATES INSTITUTE OF PEACE**  
NEW HEADQUARTERS AND PUBLIC EDUCATION CENTER  
23<sup>rd</sup> Street and Constitution Avenue, NW  
Washington, D.C.

Submitted by the U.S. Institute of Peace

May 25, 2006

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## Abstract

The United States Institute of Peace (USIP), acting through its Endowment, has submitted concept site and building plans for a new headquarters structure and its associated site development at the corner of 23<sup>rd</sup> Street and Constitution Avenue, NW. The USIP, at a total height of approximately 112-115 feet and featuring a dynamic roof line, will contain offices for program and administrative staff and research fellows, a research library and archives, a state-of-the-art conference center that includes classrooms and professional training rooms, and an interactive education center that is open to the public.

## Commission Action Requested by Applicant

Comment on concept site and building plans pursuant to 40 U.S.C. § 8722(d) and § 8722(b)(1).

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## Executive Director's Recommendation

The Commission:

- **Comments favorably** on the concept site and building plans for the U.S. Institute of Peace Headquarters and Public Education Center, as shown on NCPC Map File No. 1.33 (38.00)-42034.
- **Requests**, in the U.S. Institute of Peace subsequent preliminary site and building plan submission, that the following elements of the project design be examined in the project development to address the following:
  - The establishment of project site work limits and the extent and nature of the western garden site development and full project grading plan. Currently, the site grading and relationship to the building ancillary entrances appear inconsistent

and severely constrained at the west side of the structure as depicted on the submitted drawings.

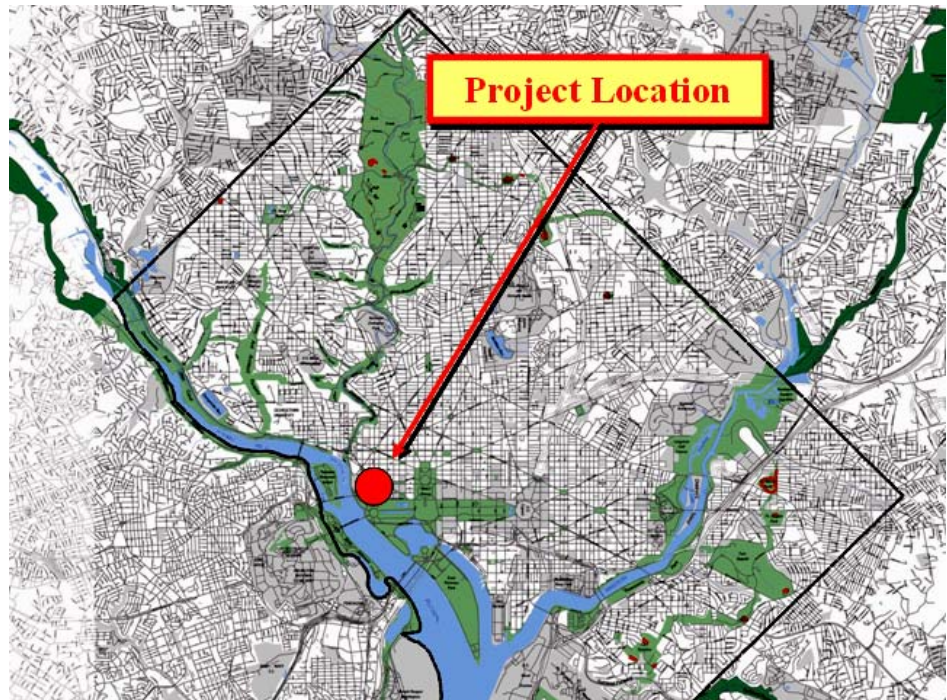
- The Institute review, analyze, and provide for a public space streetscape setback and right-of-way delineation at its site adjacent to any future revised bridge ramp west of the Institute’s planned location. Additionally, pedestrian and bikeway connections are to be clearly established and marked out at the west and south portions of the site; even if at this time the Institute’s project may precede the future development of the revised Kennedy Center Access Improvements and alteration of the Theodore Roosevelt Memorial Bridge.
  
- That added text information and further visual depiction of the building’s nighttime appearance and site lighting be submitted to indicate the intent and character of the project light enhancement (both internal and external) pertaining to its potential effect to the visual environment. This information should examine both the nearby Constitution Avenue and 23<sup>rd</sup> Street area, but also significant viewpoints from the Theodore Roosevelt Memorial Bridge, the National Mall, and Lincoln Memorial.

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## PROJECT DESCRIPTION

### Site

The submitted concept for the building and site planning involves a southeastern corner portion of the old Naval Observatory property at 23<sup>rd</sup> Street NW, now called the Potomac Annex. The site area is approximately 3.0 acres of sloping vehicle parking area that currently serves the Navy property along with the Department of State. The U.S. Institute of Peace (USIP) has been authorized by



**REGIONAL PROJECT LOCATION**

Congress to acquire the naval property as a direct transfer of the land from the Navy, once all required federal review approvals are obtained.



**AERIAL VIEW OF PROJECT SITE LOCATION**

### Background

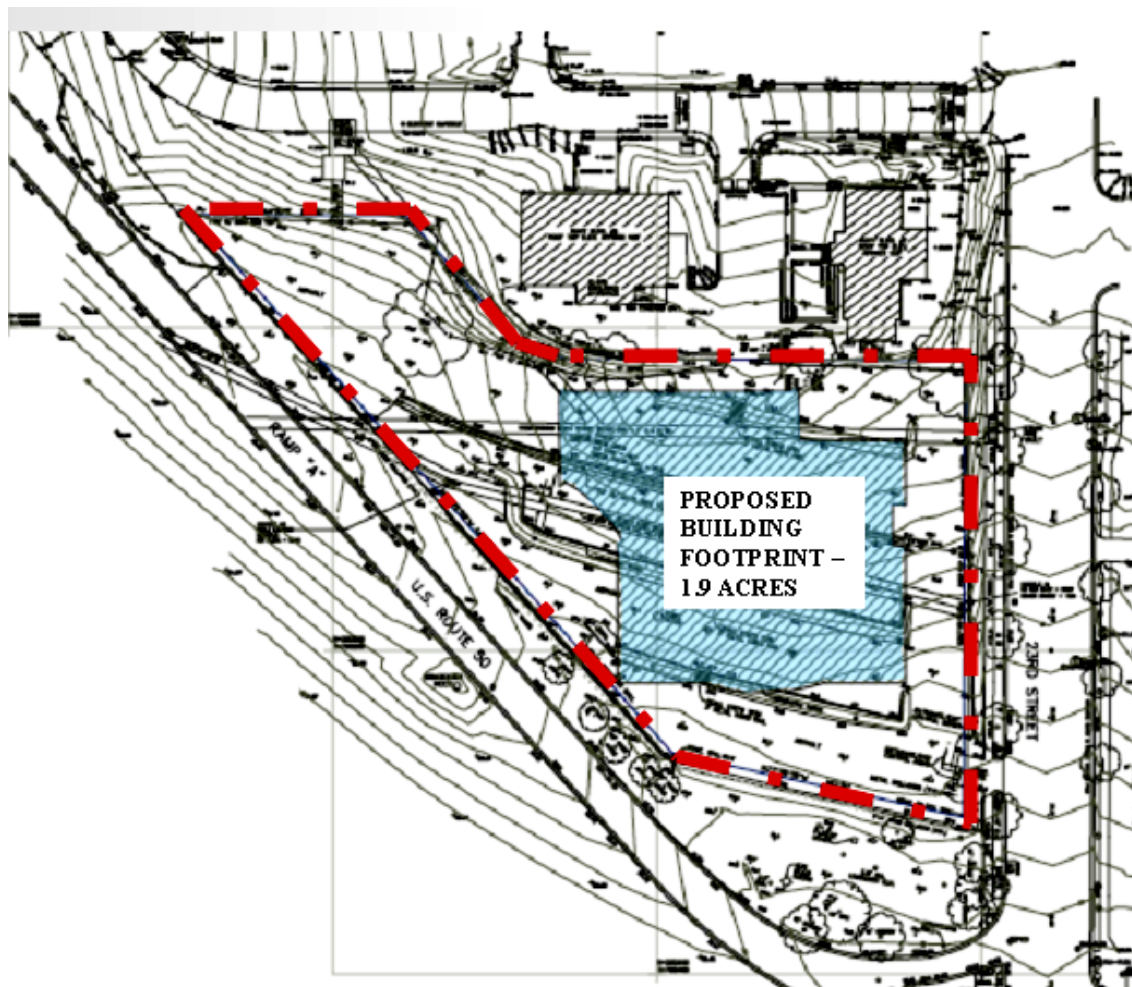
Public Law 104-201, Subtitle C Section 2831, dated September 23, 1996, authorizes the Department of the Navy to transfer land to USIP for the purpose of establishing a new headquarters building in Washington, DC. The USIP is an independent, nonpartisan, national institution established and funded by Congress. Its goals are to help prevent and resolve violent international conflicts, promote post-conflict stability and democratic transformations, and increase peace building capacity, tools, and intellectual capital worldwide. The Institute does this by empowering others with knowledge, skills, and resources, as well as by its direct involvement in peace building efforts around the world. The USIP's current location is situated within leased space at 17th Street, NW, in a shared tenant building.

The new headquarters location and design will serve the people of the United States, the federal government, and the international community as a national center for research, education,

training, policy, and program development on issues of international conflict prevention, management, and resolution.

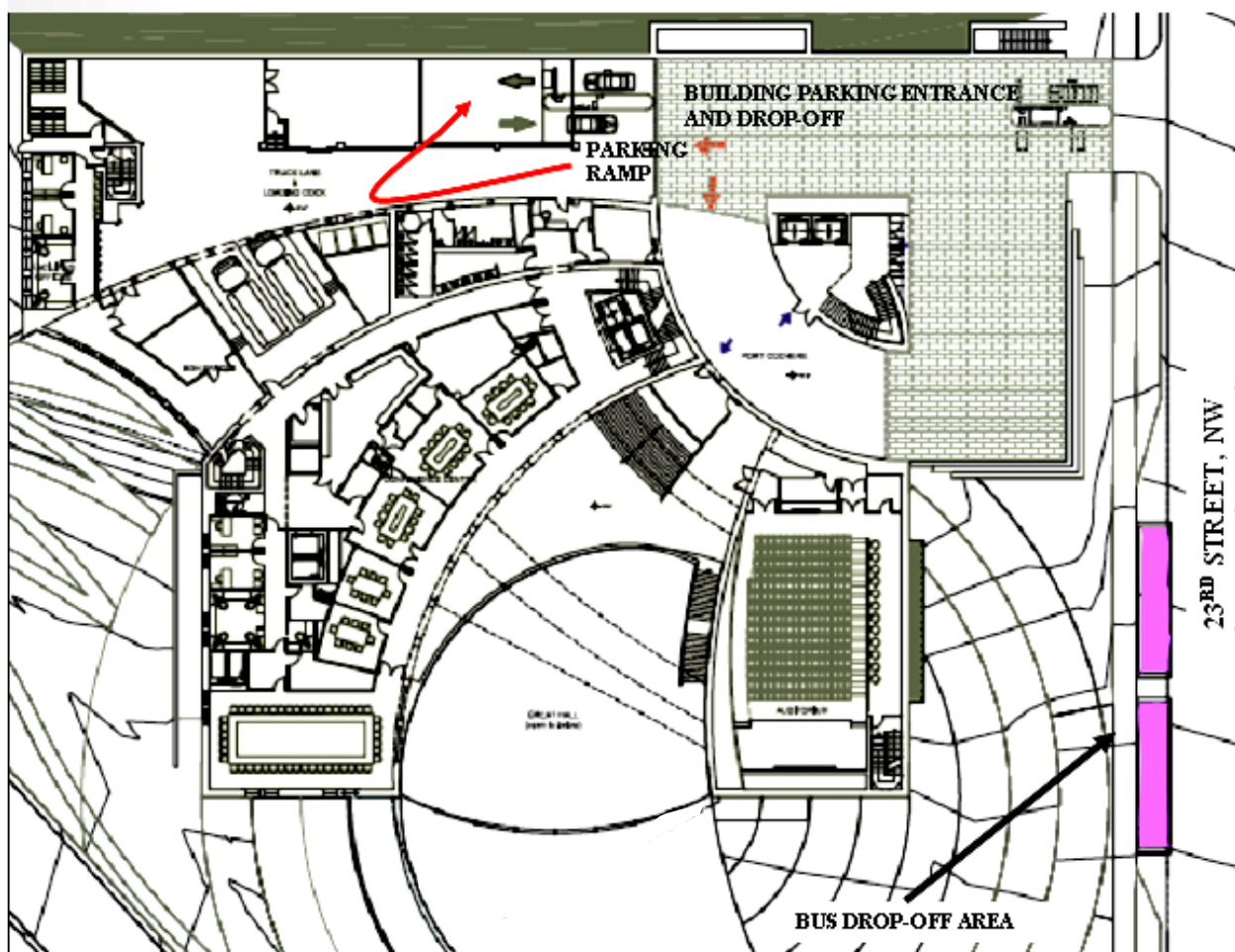
### Proposal

The submitted building is organized around two atria fanning out from a corner entrance at the northeast portion of the site at 23<sup>rd</sup> Street. One major spatial block faces towards the Potomac River, and the other towards the Lincoln Memorial. The former serves as the centerpiece for the spaces devoted to the research and conference, while the latter acts as a focus of public activity and conferences. A secondary entrance, which serves as the main public entrance, is provided directly from Constitution Avenue into the Public Education Center at the south façade of the structure. Underground parking for approximately 220 vehicles is included as part of the project, but only 80 spaces will be used by USIP, while 140 replacement spaces are required by the Navy.



**EXISTING SITE CONDITIONS WITH CONCEPT BUILDING FLOORPLATE  
POSITIONED ON SITE**

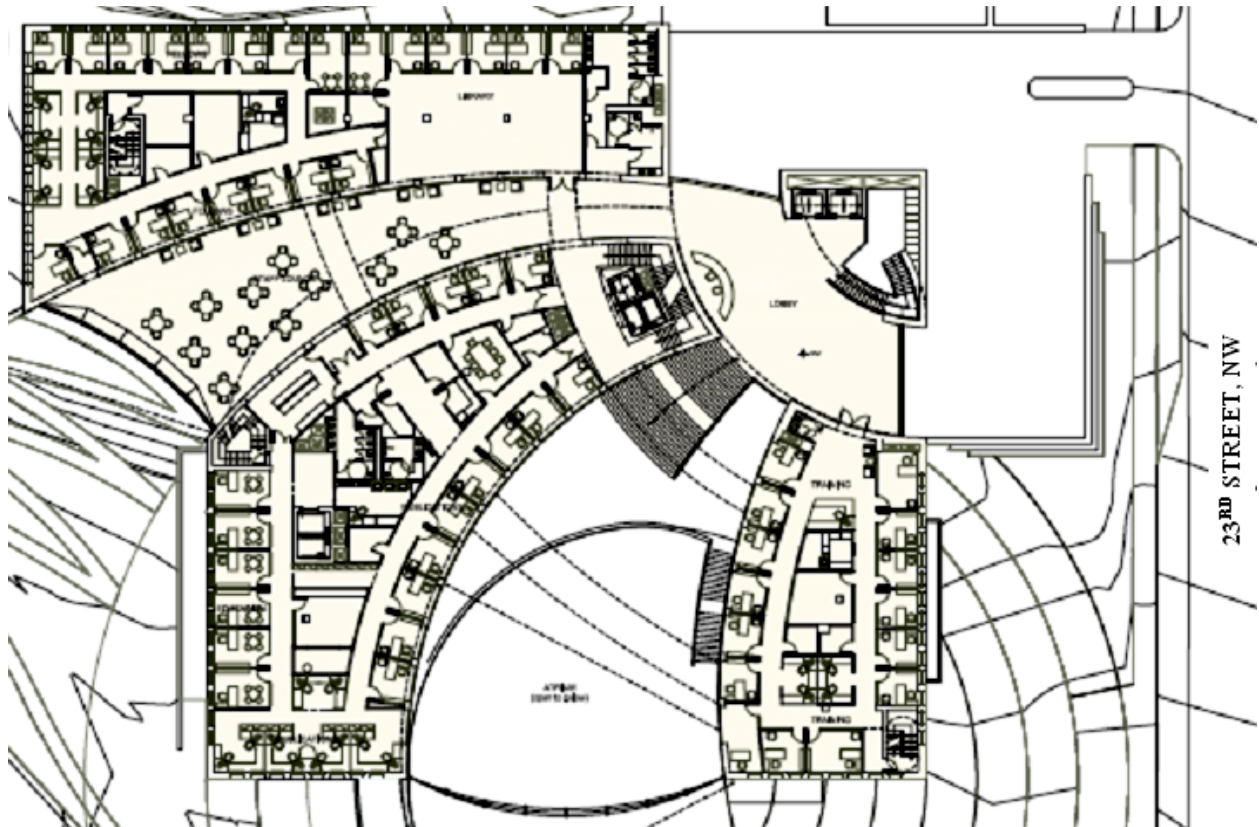
The six-level structure, at 90 feet in height—excluding the curving roof, will contain offices for program and administrative staff and research fellows, a research library and archives, a state-of-the-art conference center that includes classrooms and professional training rooms, and an interactive education center that is open to the public. In addition to workspace for Institute staff and research fellows and a research library, the new building will provide conference center elements including an auditorium, a 125-seat conference room, and a variety of smaller meeting rooms. The lower level and first floor of the building will serve as an education center and display area dedicated to increasing public understanding about causes of and responses to international conflicts. The center also will provide visitors of all ages with a unique learning experience in an engaging environment of exhibits, electronic media and displays, and public programming and publications.



**LEVEL 2 CONCEPT FLOORPLAN OF U.S. INSTITUTE OF PEACE**

The building, comprising a little more than 279,000 gross square feet of space (including garage), would be clad in acid-etched precast concrete, with a limestone-like appearance, and contains building spaces that are roofed by a series of undulating spherical and toroidal segments constructed of a steel frame and white translucent glass. An arrival plaza fronting on Constitution Avenue serves as an outdoor foyer to the Public Education Center. This space, which incorporates a receding single row amphitheater, will provide a gathering and briefing place for groups as they arrive at the Peace Institute. The eastern staff entrance area, off 23<sup>rd</sup> Street with

vehicle onsite drop-off area, provides access at the building's 3rd level that overlooks the internal grand entry area and lobby. Group arrivals, descending from buses along 23<sup>rd</sup> Street, are also led along a garden path into the plaza at the lower main entrance and garden, joining with others who have crossed Constitution Avenue towards the building's public entrance.



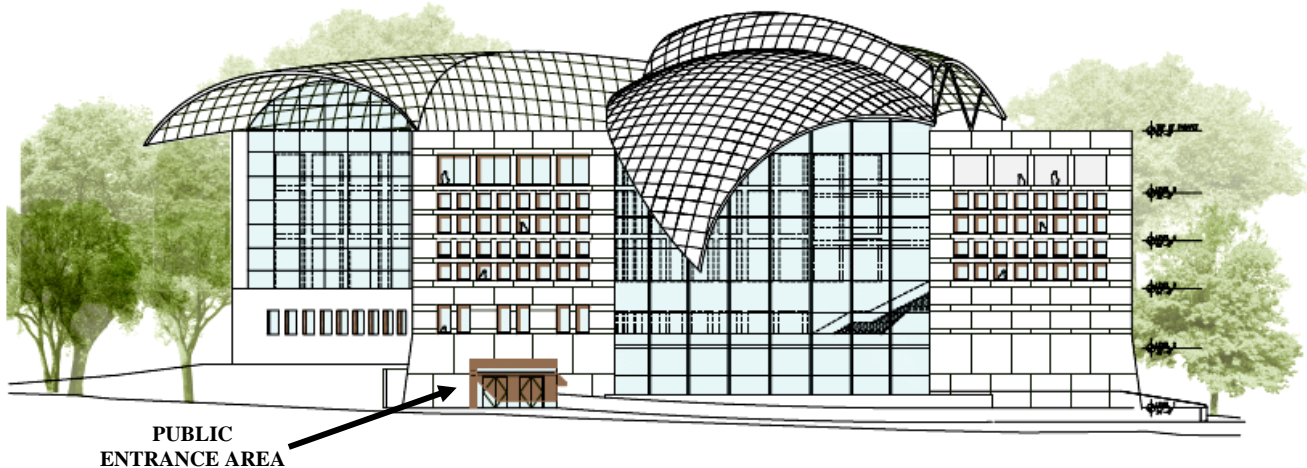
**LEVEL 3 CONCEPT FLOORPLAN OF U.S. INSTITUTE OF PEACE**



**LEVEL 3 INTERIOR VIEW LOOKING SOUTH, FROM THE GRAND STAIR, TOWARD THE GREAT HALL**

## Executive Summary

The staff recommends that **the concept site and building plans be favorably commented upon by the Commission, with recommendations.** Staff believes that the exterior building finish and assemblies have been developed and chosen to enhance the articulation of the building and express its functional and unique dynamic appearance. The use of the unique curved roof line will express the identity and function of the new structure while presenting a light but classical form that has been established to hover over the alternating character of the facades, which are expressed by solid stone and transparent glass.



**PUBLIC ENTRANCE ELEVATION AT CONSTITUTION AVENUE**

The design is intended to establish the headquarters as a symbolic structure on the capital's streetscape and skyline. The proposed building and its location maintain the rigor of the urban grid at Constitution Avenue for the exterior envelope of the building, and the internal atria are molded to respond to the vistas and views and to maximize exposure of workspace and public space to the surrounding environs. The use of the site at the corner of 23<sup>rd</sup> Street and Constitution Avenue anchors the corner area with a design that gives a defined presence and form to both the site and the public space area of the corner, and thus provides an added gateway presence to Constitution Avenue, NW. The building's form is a combination of the restrained enclosure of walls set with a roof that forms an ephemeral floating counterpoint, and that will be highlighted by controlled building light carefully balanced to not overwhelm the Constitution Avenue corridor nor adversely affect adjacent important memorials and important buildings of the vicinity. The topography of the site allows for security features that are integrated with the project landform, rather than strictly structural at the public space site perimeter. Additional aesthetically pleasing security features, such as benches, may be included in the preliminary design. A threat assessment for the project is currently underway.

Staff has determined, however, that a limited number of project development issues do exist relative to the submitted concept design. Most important is the clear establishment of the project

site work limits and the extent and nature of the western garden site development, with full project grading plan. Currently, the site grading and relationship to the building ancillary entrances appear inconsistent and severely constrained at the west side of the structure as depicted on the submitted drawings.



### U.S. INSTITUTE OF PEACE CONCEPT SITE PLAN

Staff also is concerned that appropriate pedestrian connections exist along the western extending ramp from Constitution Avenue to the Theodore Roosevelt Memorial Bridge, and the future bikeway and pedestrian walk to the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. These connections would be adjacent to the USIP site. Currently, these elements are not clearly anticipated by the concept landscape and site development on the west side of the USIP project site. Staff recommends that the Commission request that the Institute review, analyze, and provide for the public space streetscape setback and right-of-way delineation of any future revised ramp in the next project submission stage, and that pedestrian and bikeway connections be clearly established and marked out at the west and south portions of the site; even if at this point the Institute's project may precede the future development of the revised Kennedy Center Access Improvements and alteration of the Theodore Roosevelt Memorial Bridge. Providing this



information establishes some assurance to the Commission that a basic context of coordination for the USIP project exists and is feasible with the future planning of these other significant projects.

In addition, staff finds that supplementary text information and refined visual demonstration of the nighttime appearance of the building and site lighting should be submitted to the Commission, at the preliminary design stage, to further indicate the intent and character of all the project light enhancement (both internal and external), and its potential impact to the visual environment. A full analysis of the lighting is being undertaken by the applicant, given the high transparency of the building envelope and roof material. This information should examine both the nearby Constitution Avenue and 23<sup>rd</sup> Street area, but also significant viewpoints from the Theodore Roosevelt Memorial Bridge, the National Mall, and Lincoln Memorial.

Finally, staff has determined that the project concept design has been coordinated with the Department of the Navy. While the Base Development Business Line Coordinator Office, in the Naval Facilities Engineering Command (NAVFAC) Washington, DC, at the Washington Navy Yard, indicated it is important that the USIP meet and discuss the design and development of the USIP headquarters project; NCPC staff has determined the Institute has continually appraised the Office of the Assistant Secretary of the Navy (Mr. Penn and Captain Hollinberger), NAVFAC Real Estate personnel (Joan Markley), the Potomac Annex (Captain Kopacz), and North Area Operations (Commander Schofield and Carrie Blazack), which comprise the Navy's project contact points.



**SOUTH AERIAL VIEW OF U.S. INSTITUTE OF PEACE CONCEPT PROPOSAL**



**SIMULATED VIEW OF U.S. INSTITUTE OF PEACE PROJECT FROM THE SOUTH, ACROSS CONSTITUTION AVENUE, FROM WITHIN THE NATIONAL MALL**



**VIEW OF BUILDING STUDY MODEL DEPICTING NIGHTTIME APPEARANCE OF THE CONCEPT AS SEEN FROM EAST OF 23<sup>RD</sup> STREET, NW**

## CONFORMANCE

### Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital: Federal Elements

The missions of federal agencies are constantly changing as new laws, policies, and regulations are developed. To meet new agency mission requirements, office suites, meeting spaces, laboratories, and research centers need to be renovated or newly built.

In 1968, a policy adopted as part of the Federal Elements of the Comprehensive Plan stated that 60 percent of the region's federal employees should work in the District of Columbia and 40 percent should be located elsewhere in the region. This policy remains today. It should be considered in conjunction with the knowledge that federal activities provide opportunities for local jurisdictions to gain from taxes on the wages and salaries of federal employees, and generate property, sales, and income taxes from the private sector activities that often occur because of the federal presence. Therefore, federal workplaces that interact with each other, the private sector, and the public should be located in places that facilitate interactions. Federal workplaces with related activities will benefit from being located near each other, where interactions can occur more easily. For example, agency headquarters that work with the offices of the White House and Congress benefit from locations in the city of Washington. In conformance with those policy objectives, the project demonstrates adherence to the Comprehensive Plan objectives and goals of:

When locating federal workplaces within the Central Employment Area and the Capitol Complex\*, and surrounding areas\*\*, the federal government should:

1. Maintain the planned form and framework of the monumental core established through precedent and in the *Legacy Plan*.

2. Reserve the most prominent development sites, particularly those with important symbolic visual connections to the U.S. Capitol and other landmarks in the downtown area of the District of Columbia, for federal workplaces that contain the most important functions of the federal workforce.

4. Maintain and reinforce the preeminence of the monumental core by supporting the implementation of the other planning initiatives within the *Legacy Plan*, including transportation, infrastructure, and other development projects.

(Locating Federal Workplaces Policies, page 39)

In the context of the specific project design proposal, the following Comprehensive Plan policies apply:

#### *Security*

Policy for the Design and Review of Physical Perimeter Security Improvements (adopted by the Commission on January 9, 2003)

1. Agencies requiring physical perimeter security improvements should design such improvements in accordance with guidance included in The National Capital Urban Design and Security Plan, as adopted by the Commission on October 3, 2002.

2. All perimeter security improvements that are intended to be in place for more than 60 days shall be submitted to NCPC for review and/or approval.

6. Consider the agency's specific mission and its security needs before acquiring sites.

7. Incorporate building hardening into new and existing construction to meet blast resistance requirements when it is important to maintain a building line that provides accessible ground floor uses and ... viable street-level activity.

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\* The Central Employment Area and Capitol Complex are defined on pages 42 and 46 of the Comprehensive Plan.

\*\* In development areas identified by the local land use plans for this use.

8. When building new construction and when making improvements to existing buildings, integrate security threat counter measures, such as building hardening and blast-resistant glazing, into the physical design of the structure and the site to minimize the impact of perimeter building security on the public realm.

10. Incorporate security needs into the design of buildings, streetscapes, and landscapes using urban design principles in a manner that:

- Enhances and beautifies the public realm, resulting in coherent and welcoming streetscapes.
- Does not excessively restrict or impede operational use of sidewalks or pedestrian, handicap, and vehicular mobility.
- Does not impact the health of existing mature trees.

(Development of Workplaces with Communities Policies, page 55)

Staff has determined that the project would not have an adverse effect on other federal facilities and is consistent with the Federal Elements of the Comprehensive Plan.

#### National Environmental Policy Act

NCPC's Environmental and Historic Preservation Policies and Procedures do not require a NEPA document at the concept design stage. In preparation for the preliminary design approval, NCPC and the USIP are preparing an Environmental Assessment in compliance with our Policies and Procedures, NEPA, and the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations implementing NEPA. The project also is being reviewed and analyzed through the requirements of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) of 1966, as amended. Because the USIP is a small federal agency without capacity to oversee an environmental assessment, NCPC has agreed to be the lead agency and USIP is paying a contractor to develop the EA.

The EA that is being prepared describes and documents the affected environment, provides an estimation of potential impacts, and recommends mitigation measures related to the establishment of the proposed Institute headquarters. The EA also evaluates a No Action Alternative, as required by CEQ. The EA also addresses short-term construction-related impacts, long-term operational impacts, and cumulative impacts that would result from the USIP action, or other projects that have been recently completed, are currently under development, or are proposed within the project area. NCPC staff expects that the project environmental assessment will be available on May 30, 2006. The public review and comment period will be 30 days with all comments to be provided to NCPC.

The NEPA and NHPA materials should be finalized in time for review with the preliminary design submission.

#### National Historic Preservation Act

The USIP is conducting the Section 106 consultation for this undertaking. The Section 106 review is considering the effect of the proposed headquarters on historic properties in the Area of Potential Effect, particularly on the visual effects of the building—day and night—on historic buildings and parks. A gateway to the monumental core, the site is visible from the Roosevelt Bridge and from Memorial Bridge. The building will be seen in the contexts of: the historic Plan

of Washington (L'Enfant and McMillan Plans); the Lincoln Memorial and West Potomac Park; the row of Beaux Arts-style institutional buildings facing Constitution Avenue; the Navy's Potomac Annex, which includes the National Historic Landmark Old Naval Observatory; and the Northwest Rectangle complex of federal buildings, including the State Department.

The Institute has held two consultation meetings to date, on December 14, 2005 and March 7, 2006, during which the proposed building was reviewed through the use of visual simulations and computer modeling of expected luminance levels. The measured brightness of nearby memorials and buildings was compared to the predicted brightness of the proposed building. The study presented found that the brightness of the proposed building would not exceed that of nearby memorials or buildings. NCPC staff has asked for further information about the building's lighting, and both the D.C. State Historic Preservation Officer and the National Park Service have informed staff that they anticipate further consultation with USIP on this element in particular as the building design is developed further.

At the meetings, the height and setback of the proposed building were also compared with the buildings facing Constitution Avenue. Views from the Lincoln Memorial to the Old Naval Observatory were determined by USIP to be unobstructed. The removal of the Potomac Annex parking lot is deemed a benefit to Constitution Avenue.

The property has been graded or sufficiently disturbed by various 20<sup>th</sup> century development actions. There are no previously recorded archaeological sites at the Potomac Annex or nearby land parcels north of Constitution Avenue. It is expected that below-ground, physical remains of any former facilities on site could include utility trenches, landscaping deposits, and generalized refuse but these would be too modern to warrant consideration as significant archaeological resources. Although it is possible that prehistoric deposits could be present at the site, the extensive disturbance from urban development has likely reduced their integrity. The project site is considered to be of low or no archaeological significance because of the extensive disturbance and the lack of archival information that would suggest the presence of major archaeological resources.

Invited Section 106 participants include the D.C. State Historic Preservation Office, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, NCPC, the National Park Service, the D.C. Office of Planning, the Commission of Fine Arts, Advisory Neighborhood Commission 2A05, the Department of the Navy, the American Pharmacists Association, the National Academy of Sciences, the Federal Reserve, the Department of State, the Kennedy Center, the Architect of the Capitol, the National Coalition to Save our Mall, the Committee of 100 on the Federal City, the D.C. Preservation League, and the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

### Development Program

Applicant: U.S. Institute of Peace

Estimated Cost: Total prospect costs to design, construct, equip, and furnish the facility are still under study. Funding is organized as a public-private partnership. The U.S. Congress appropriated \$99.2 million for the headquarters building in the FY 2005 Consolidated Appropriations bill. Slightly more than \$3.5 million has already been raised from the private sector.

Architect: Moshe Safdie and Associates of Somerville, Massachusetts, with branch offices in Toronto and Jerusalem, is the design architect.

Completion Date: Late 2009 or early 2010

#### Federal Capital Improvements Program

The applicant's submitted project is not identified in the Commission's FCIP report, fiscal years 2006-2011. Funding is organized as a public-private partnership. The U.S. Congress appropriated \$99.2 million for the headquarters building in the FY 2005 Consolidated Appropriations bill.

#### COORDINATION

##### Coordinating Committee

The Coordinating Committee reviewed the proposal at its May 10, 2006 meeting, and forwarded the proposal to the Commission with the statement that the submission has been coordinated with all participating agencies. The participating agencies were NCPC; the District of Columbia Office of Planning; the District Department of Transportation; the Department of Housing and Community Development; the General Services Administration; the National Park Service and the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority.

##### Commission of Fine Arts

The Commission of Fine Arts reviewed and approved the USIP revised concept design at its meeting of November 17, 2005. The letter to the applicant on the action of the Commission of Fine Arts noted:

“As the design continues to develop, the members suggested that extra care and study be given to the configuration of the public entry plaza and garden at the southern part of the site, due to the need to buffer these areas from the busy intersection of 23rd Street and Constitution Avenue and the adjacent vehicular ramp leading to the Theodore Roosevelt Memorial Bridge.

The members also expressed concern about the amount of light that would emanate at night from the building's extensive glazing and its translucent roof. They recommended that light levels within and around the structure be carefully analyzed. The building's illumination should be controlled so that it produces a soft and subtle glow that will not outshine the nearby monuments on the National Mall, particularly the Lincoln Memorial.

The Commission looks forward to the review of the design as it continues to develop, including any provisions for perimeter security and the selection of building and landscape materials.”

The applicant has responded to the Commission of Fine Arts in the current proposal by reducing the size of the building and revising the site design to provide additional perimeter buffer area and an updated entrance space to the south public entry.