

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

NCPC File No. 6681



JUDICIARY SQUARE NORTH SITE IMPROVEMENTS – PLANTING, SECURITY, LIGHTING, AND SIGNS Washington, D.C.

Submitted by the District of Columbia Courts

June 29, 2006

Abstract

The District of Columbia Courts has submitted a concept design for site improvements to the northern portion of Judiciary Square, encompassing the settings for Buildings A, B, and C, and for the E Street frontage of the Court of Appeals for the Armed Forces, and the E and F Street frontages of the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial. The proposed site improvements include planting, security barriers, street and building lighting, and signs. The improvements are pursuant to the Master Plan for Judiciary Square, approved by the Commission in 2005. The Master Plan seeks to coordinate the reorganization of both the facilities and functions of the District of Columbia Courts, and to revitalize the historic Square. The Judiciary Square Master Plan includes construction projects for the District of Columbia Courts, as well as concepts for open space landscapes, perimeter security, traffic, parking, and street edge treatments aimed at reestablishing the character of Judiciary Square and responding to modern day program requirements.

Commission Action Requested by Applicant

Comments on the concept design pursuant to 40 U.S.C. § 8722(e) and 40 U.S.C. § 8722 (b)(1), and D.C. Code § 10-603.

Executive Director's Recommendation

The Commission:

Comments favorably on the proposed north site improvements, including planting, security, lighting, and signs, as shown on NCPC Map File No. 21.00(38.00)42060.

Requires that threat analysis information be provided, and that further coordination with adjacent property owners as necessary, particularly with the National Park Service, occur prior to submission at the next phase.

* * *

PROJECT SUMMARY

Site Description

The current submission for site improvements encompasses the northernmost square in Judiciary Square (between E and F Streets), which includes Court Buildings A and B and the National Law Enforcement Memorial. The submission also encompasses a portion of the middle square (between Indiana Avenue and E Street), namely Court Building C and the E Street frontage for the District of Columbia Courthouse (Old City Hall) and the Court of Appeals for the Armed Forces.

Prior Commission Action

The Commission approved the Judiciary Master Plan at its May and August 2005 meetings. The Master Plan included a planting plan, general barrier locations—but not designs—for the perimeter security, general plans for lighting in the square, and general information for future signs to identify the court buildings and to orient visitors to the square. Prior to the August 2005 approval, agreement among all the property owners was reached for more specific treatment of the right-of-way of the 400 block of E Street, NW.

Proposal

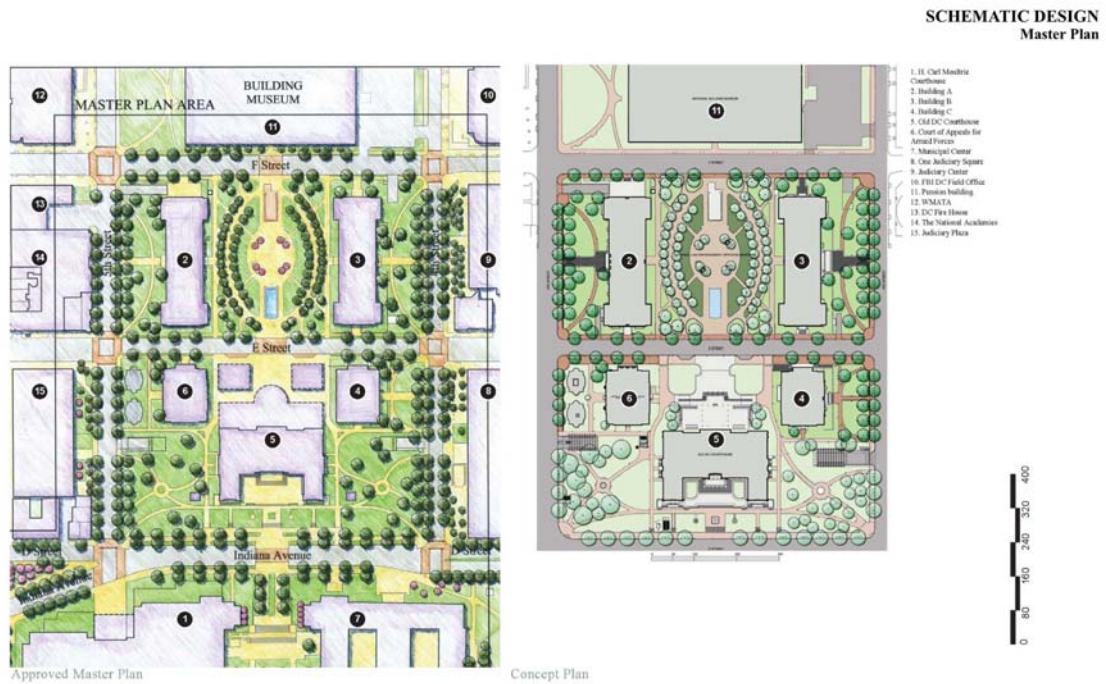
The site improvements fall into four categories: planting, security, lighting, and signs. The implementation will be phased according to need and funding. The E Street right-of-way will be the first component to be developed into preliminary and final site development plans for Commission review. The Courts intend to install the E Street landscape plan, including the security barriers, in time for the reopening of the rehabilitated District of Columbia Courthouse in early 2008.



The outlined area—the 400 block of E Street, NW—will constitute the first area where the proposed site improvements will be implemented, once final site development plans have been prepared and approved. Security barriers, pavement, street trees, street light standards, and building lighting will be installed in the area outlined in red. The other areas in this submission will be implemented as funding allows.

Planting Plan

The planting plan is consistent with the Master Plan scheme for planting a double row of trees on 4th and 5th Streets. In addition to trees near the curb, a second row will be planted inside the sidewalk edge. The trees will be paired (rather than staggered) across the sidewalk. Single street trees will be planted on the south side of F Street and on both sides of E Street, except in the center axis of the square.



On left: approved master plan landscape plan. On right: proposed concept landscape plan.

Security Plan

The location for the barrier line is identical to the line shown in the Master Plan. The D.C. Courts present “lawn” locations for the barrier lines, following the inside of the sidewalks around the square, except along E Street, where the barrier line is near the curb because of the narrow stand-off distance for the buildings on E Street. The court building facades on E Street are approximately 23 to 29 feet back from the curb.

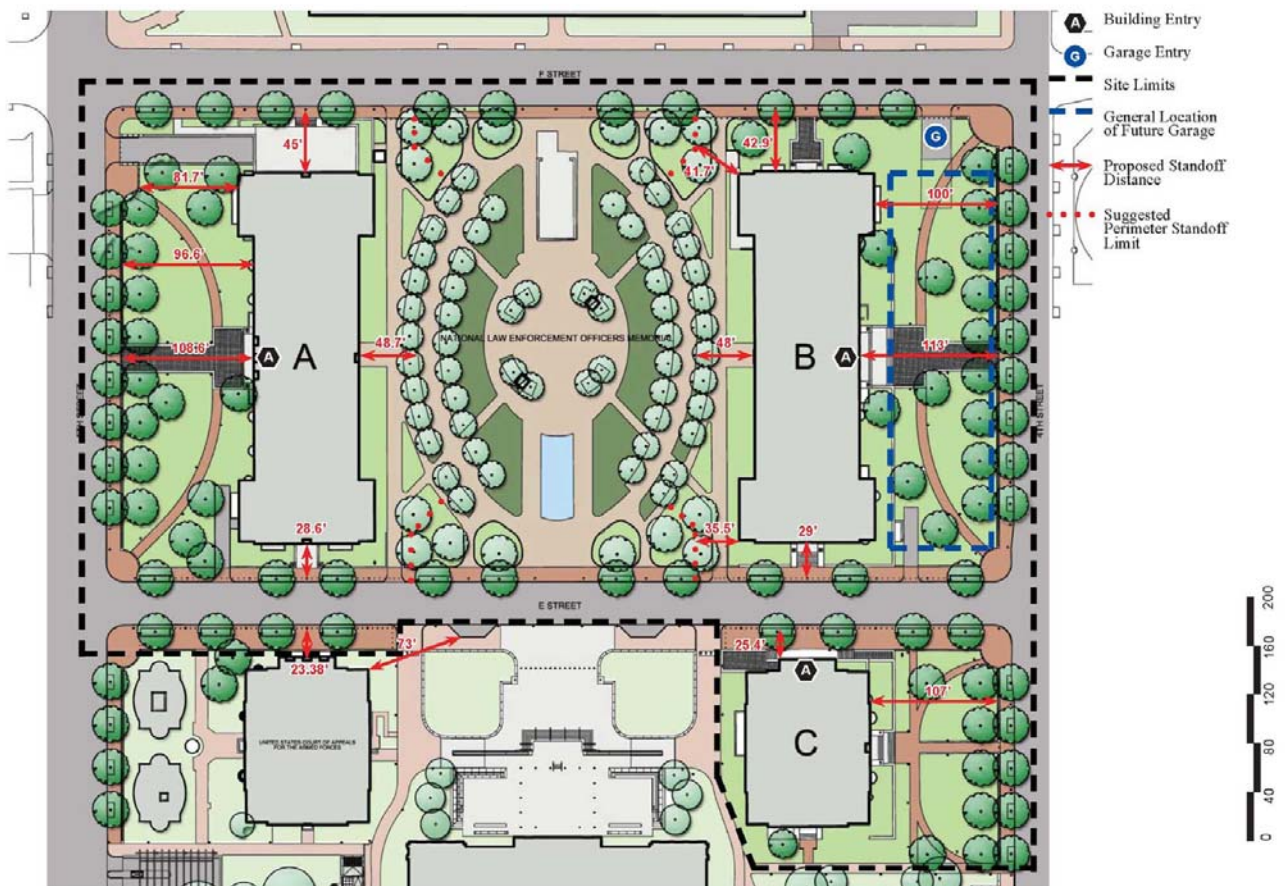
The barrier design incorporates two types of barrier design to be used together to provide interest and variation:

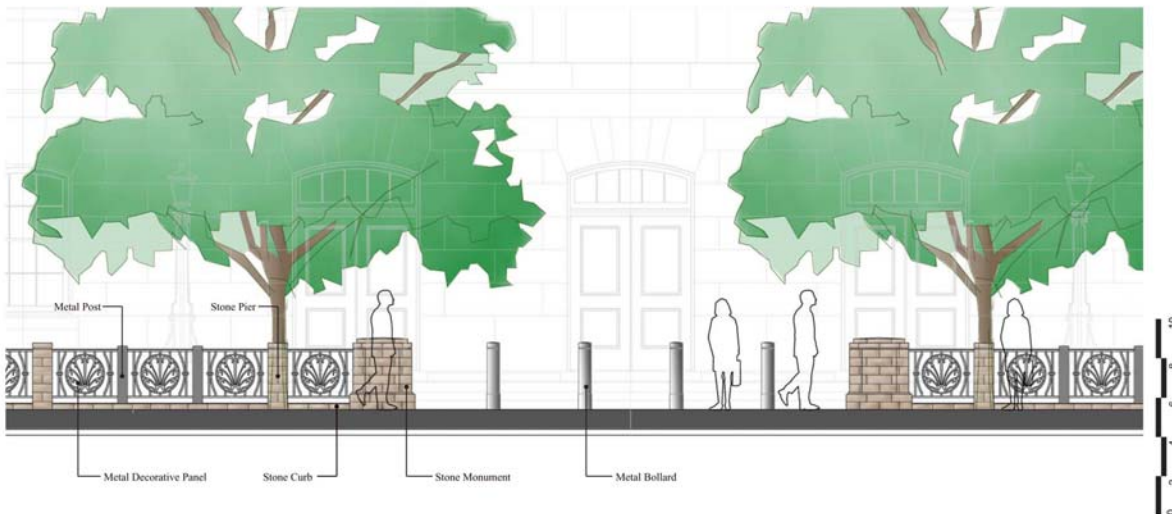
- Fence walls at the edge of the lawns inside the sidewalk that consist of steel fence panels with an anthemion (floral) pattern reflecting a historic railing design on one of the court buildings; the fence walls are spaced with both bollards and brick piers for variation. A

stone curb runs underneath the barrier elements at the sidewalk edge. The barrier line is approximately 36 inches high, on a four-inch curb; bollards vary in spacing but range from four to five feet on center. .

- Tree fences around the street tree boxes, complementary in design but lighter in appearance as befits their location near the curb and enclosing tree boxes along the sidewalk; the tree fences consist of steel fence panels spaced with bollards, also on stone curbs.

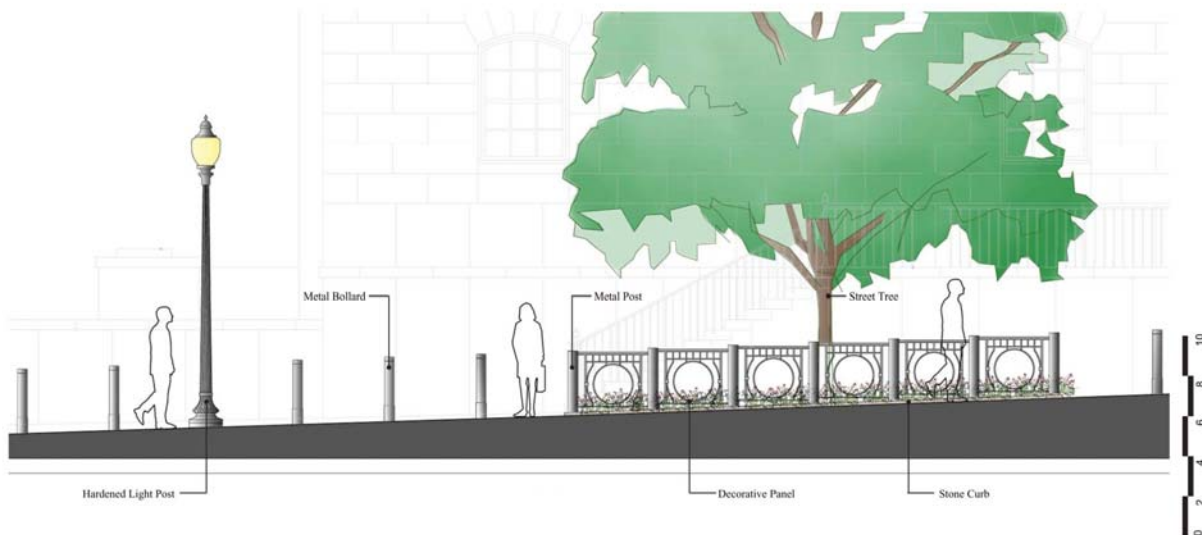
The Commission previously approved the installation of temporary bollards in front of the Court of Appeals for the Armed Forces with the agreement that they would be removed and a permanent barrier line installed when the sidewalk on the south side of E Street was widened. The Commission approved an “interim” plan for the plaza in front of the District of Columbia Courthouse (pending an approved site plan for the National Law Enforcement Museum) that incorporates a barrier line that is inside the sidewalk. The District of Columbia Courts are in consultation with the National Park Service about possible locations and designs for barriers at the corners of the memorial. No barrier design is proposed for the memorial in the current submission (red dotted lines are suggestive, but are not part of the proposal at present.)





Section/Elevation - View of West Side of Building A

Proposed fence line (inside edge of sidewalk), using brick piers, bollards, and decorative fence panels.



Section/Elevation - View of North Side of Building C

Proposed tree fence (near curb and around street tree boxes), using bollards and more open fence panels.



Tree Enclosure Option North Side of E Street

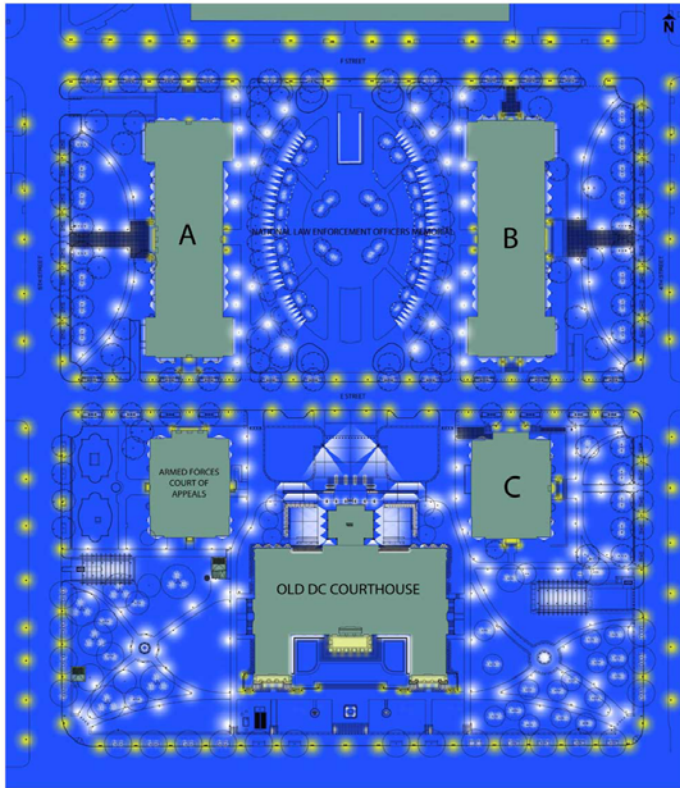


Fence Line Option

Renderings of both styles of security barriers, which will be used together, depending on the condition. The first rendering shows the option that will be used at the curb and around street tree boxes on the sidewalk. The second rendering shows the fence line that will be used in most locations around Judiciary Square where the stand-off distance is sufficient to allow the barrier line to be installed between the sidewalk and the lawn.

Lighting Plan

The Courts propose providing both street lighting and building lighting in order to improve pedestrian safety through the Square. The Washington Globe light standard would be installed, referring to the District of Columbia standards for size and spacing of the light standards. Within the precinct, the light standards already in use around the court buildings would be augmented with additional fixtures. In addition, ground level lighting would be installed around some of the paths and to illuminate the building facades. The purpose of the lighting is to create a unifying identity for the court buildings, but to create a background character for the buildings. The lighting is designed so as not to interfere with the subtle lighting of the memorial at night.





PROJECT ANALYSIS

The staff finds that the proposal is consistent with the early direction in the Master Plan. The planting, lighting, and sign plans are appropriate and enhance the square and improve its function. With time, the trees planted on the inside of the sidewalks along 4th and 5th Streets will have a dramatic effect on the quality of the pedestrian experience and on the public perception of Judiciary Square as a precinct.

The perimeter security barrier is the component that will have the greatest visual effect on Judiciary Square. In the Master Plan, the barrier line was proposed for the inside edge of the sidewalk except along E Street, and the current submission follows the Master Plan. The proposed concept design shows a more formal fence at the edge of the lawn, composed of fence panels with brick piers and some bollards. Where the barrier line is near the curb, a related design incorporates the character of the fence but in a lighter, more open steel fence that is appropriate for use around tree boxes and at curbs. Staff commends the design team for proposing elements that complement each other but that create a visual distinction between lawn and curb barriers. The use of both designs together increases the variation in the elements and decreases their repetition. The fence barrier is more formal with the use of the brick piers, and less formal around the tree boxes. Staff questions the use of the stone curb around the tree fence, however, finding that it adds weight and formality where it might not be desired.

Staff recommends that further consultation occur or information be provided in the following areas prior to the next submission:

- 1) Submission of threat analysis.
- 2) Evidence of agreement with the National Park Service for location and treatment of barriers near the memorial.

- 3) Continuing consultation on the barrier design and location as they are developed, including simple site mock-ups so that the proportions can be studied.

Phase I of the implementation will occur along the E Street right-of-way in time for the reopening of the Courthouse. The work can be implemented permanently, without interfering with future construction for the National Law Enforcement Museum, except for the two vehicle drop-offs in front of the Courthouse (also the front of the future museum pavilions), which will be installed for use by visitors to the Courthouse and which will need to be constructed again following below-grade museum construction. In other respects, the widening of the south sidewalk and the installation of street trees and light standards, as well as the security line, on both sides of the street in front of Buildings A, B, and C, and in front of the Court of Appeals for the Armed Forces were anticipated in the Master Plan. DDOT will be responsible for remarking the vehicle and bicycle lanes in the cartway.

The Courts' submission states that it will continue to discuss the project with the National Park Service, especially as it might affect the memorial under the Park Service's jurisdiction. The design and location of future security barriers near the memorial will require serious design effort in order to avoid altering its character. The Courts will also be developing a Memorandum of Understanding with the National Park Service for access and maintenance of the memorial.

CONFORMANCE

Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital

Relevant policies in the Preservation and Historic Features element include:

1. Express the dignity befitting the image of the federal government in the national capital. Federal development should adhere to the high aesthetic standards already established by the planning and design legacy of the nation's capital. This legacy encompasses both the old and the new – the capital's rich architectural heritage, continually augmented by the design contributions of each generation.
5. Protect and enhance the vistas and views, both natural and designed, that are an integral part of the national capital's image. .
9. Sustain exemplary standards of historic property stewardship.
14. Protect the settings of historic properties, including views to and from the sites where significant, as integral parts of the historic character of the property.
19. Ensure that new construction is distinguishable from historic structures but also compatible with the qualities and character of the setting, in accordance with the *Secretary of the Interiors' Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines*.

28. Protect the reservations that contain historic landscapes and features from incompatible changes or incursions.

National Environmental Policy Act

The District of Columbia Courts, as a joint lead agency with the National Capital Planning Commission, prepared an Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Master Plan and its associated projects. The EA was distributed to the public and local, state, and federal agencies on June 25, 2003 for a 30-day review and comment period. On July 30, 2003, the Executive Director completed a Finding of No Significant Impact, in accordance with the Commission's procedures, determining no environmental resources were significantly impacted by the contemplated Plan. The submitted site improvements of planting, security barriers, street and building lighting, and signs are consistent with the analysis and findings of the 2003 environmental review.

National Historic Preservation Act

NCPC served as the lead agency for the Section 106 review of the Master Plan. The consultation concluded with the execution of a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) by the D.C. Courts, the District of Columbia State Historic Preservation Officer, and the Executive Director. The following agencies participated in consultation and were invited to concur: the National Park Service, the General Services Administration, the U.S. Court of Appeals of the Armed Forces, and the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund. In addition, the Committee of 100 and the D.C. Preservation League participated in the consultation throughout the project.

The MOA acknowledged the Master Plan's objective of directing the historic preservation and orderly development of the Courts' projects in Judiciary Square, and the three major elements providing a framework for the D.C. Courts' future development: the open space (landscape) plan, the circulation plan, and the security plan. NCPC continues to serve as the lead agency for the D.C. Courts' projects as they are developed.

The staff finds that the current submission is consistent with the Master Plan and with the Memorandum of Agreement. Consultation with the parties will continue as the north site improvements are developed.

In many respects, the Master Plan enhances the setting of the buildings, especially the landscape plan that will reinforce the sense of the Square as a precinct, and the proposed improvements in the circulation plan. The historic buildings are being rehabilitated, repaired and cleaned, and used more efficiently. The adverse effect was derived from several sources: the addition to the Old D.C. Courthouse, the construction of the below-grade parking garages, and the future construction of the National Law Enforcement Museum pavilions. In addition, the proposed security plan is an adverse effect, although it recognizes that security design for individual buildings will be coordinated so that the precinct is treated as a whole.

Judiciary Square is a prominent reservation in L'Enfant's original plan for Washington. It straddles the 4th Street cross-axis and comprises a notable enclave within the original city. Other than the Old D.C. Courthouse, which was begun in 1820 and is one of the oldest extant buildings

in Washington, the other court structures date to the 20th century. The National Building Museum is housed in the Pension Building, which predates the campus design for the Square undertaken in the 1910s and implemented in subsequent decades. The Moultrie Courthouse and the National Law Enforcement Memorial are the most recent additions to the Square. Both the Old D.C. Courthouse and the Pension Building are National Historic Landmarks, and the other historic court buildings are contributing historic structures. Judiciary Square is included in the designations of both the L'Enfant Plan for the City of Washington and the Pennsylvania Avenue National Historic Site.

CONSULTATION

Coordinating Committee

The Coordinating Committee reviewed the proposal at its June 14, 2006 meeting, and forwarded the proposal to the Commission with the statement that the project had been coordinated with all participating agencies. The participating agencies were NCPC; the District of Columbia Office of Planning; the Fire Department; the District Department of Transportation; the Department of Housing and Community Development; and the National Park Service.

Commission of Fine Arts

The Commission of Fine Arts has not yet reviewed the current submission.