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**U.S. MARINE BARRACKS,
ACQUISITION OF LAND AND SITE DEVELOPMENT CONCEPTS
8th and I Streets, SE**

Report to the Department of the Navy

September 2, 1999

Abstract

The Department of the Navy submits a proposal to acquire approximately six acres of land for the U.S. Marine Barracks. The purpose of the initiative is to address the shortage of Bachelor Enlisted Quarters, parking, and personnel support and recreational opportunities. The District of Columbia Housing Authority has been negotiating with the Navy for the past year regarding the disposition of the portion of land to be transferred to the marines.

Authority

Section 5 of the National Capital Planning Act of 1952, as amended (40 U.S.C. 71d)

Commission Action

- The Commission **approves**:
 - The acquisition of approximately six acres of the Arthur Capper Dwellings (ACD) site, 7th and K Streets, SE for the development of Bachelor Enlisted Quarters, parking, personnel support and recreational facilities.
 - Development concepts for the Subarea Plan of the ACD site, as shown on NCPC Map File No. 41.00(05.12)-40687.
- **Requests** that the Department of the Navy, in the preparation of preliminary site and building plans for planned new facilities at the ACD site:
 - Submit detailed transportation management requirements implementing the Transportation Management Plan objectives identified in the development concepts.

- Provide a detailed air quality analysis of the effects to the immediate environs of the site of the proposed 273-space parking structure.
- Identify and evaluate motor vehicle traffic flow patterns, including peak-volume hours, total vehicle trips, and vehicle travel directions associated with all planned facilities on the new ACD site.
- Continue coordination with the surrounding community.
- **Urges** the Department of the Navy to prepare and submit, for Commission review, a complete Master Plan for the U.S. Marine Barracks at 8th and I Streets, SE.

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BACKGROUND AND STAFF EVALUATION

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSAL

The Department of the Navy (Navy) submits a proposal to acquire approximately six acres of land for the U.S. Marine Barracks (Barracks) as well as development concepts for the site to be acquired.

Site - Existing

The Marine Barracks is located at 8th and I Streets, SE. The Barracks has existed since the early 1800. During most of its life, it was contained within the confines of 8th and 9th Streets on the east and west, and G and I Streets on the north and south. In 1971, several parcels were acquired immediately south of I Street for the construction of additional Bachelor Enlisted Quarters (BEQ).

The Barracks occupies two separate intensely developed city blocks, with buildings built right up to the property lines. The historic Barracks consists of a quadrangle of buildings and walls that surround and relate inward to a central parade ground. The only open space is the parade ground, which is used for military and public ceremonies.

The Barracks is intensively developed around its perimeter, with an interior courtyard that is used for public performances during "parade season." Because of the historic significance of this site and its buildings, it is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The fully developed nature of the site, and the need to retain its historic significance, inhibited expansion for years. As a result, insufficient space has lead to severely cramped conditions, use of spaces that are inadequate for intended uses and an inability to group personnel in ways that foster efficiency.

The BEQ, south of I Street and the historic quadrangle, completely occupies its site between 8th Street I-295 and I Street. This structure was constructed in 1975.

The total acreage for the Marine Barracks, including the BEQ constructed in 1975, is approximately 4.74 acres.

Site – Proposed acquisition

- The Navy proposes to acquire approximately six acres of the Arthur Capper low- and moderate-income housing site. The District of Columbia Housing Authority has been negotiating with the Marines to effect the transfer of this site in late 1999.
- The site, located southwest of the main Barracks, is bordered on the north by Virginia Avenue; on the south by L Street; on the east by 7th Street; and on the west by an existing community center and gymnasium. Fifth Street is the closest street to the west of the site.
- Three five-story low-income residential buildings and a large ball field and recreation area, known as the Lincoln Playground, currently occupy this site. The housing authority advises that it intend to demolish these buildings as part of the divestiture plan, prior to transferring to the marines.
- The site also currently provides parking for approximately 90 vehicles with some parking along K Street. Bollards block K Street near its intersection with 5th Street and play equipment has been placed within K Street, immediately east of the bollards.
- Landscaping is minimal. A number of larger street trees exist at the site with Virginia Avenue having the better maintained and highest quality plantings. Smaller scale planting, such as shrubs and groundcovers are virtually non-existent.
- The site is zoned for medium density residential and park activities.

Program

The program for the six acres of the Arthur Capper Dwellings site would include barracks, parking, and associated support facilities for 300 junior enlisted marines. The new site will also accommodate a new facility for the Marine Corps Band, with space for public works supply and storage functions. A recreation area, which will be shared by both the marines and the community, is also proposed. Specifically, the principal program components of the new subarea include:

- The BEQ that will front on both L Street and the athletic fields. It will be a four-story structure with 166 rooms providing for 332 men.
- A parking garage with an entrance on L Street. This four-story structure will eliminate the need for surface parking areas and consolidate parking into one structure. It would provide 273 parking spaces.

- A three-story Marine Band Support Facility (with Public Works and Supply Storage components) will face 7th Street and establish the site's front façade.
- A new recreation area replacing the existing recreation area would be highly visible from Virginia Avenue and the freeway. This area will include a combination of softball, football, and soccer field as well as a support building that will house concessions, restrooms, and equipment storage.

Landscape

The landscape strategy for the new subarea is based on formal tree planting combined with open vistas and controlled views. Specifically:

- The new athletic fields will be framed by existing street trees along Virginia Avenue and by new tree plantings along the terrace/promenade adjacent to the BEQ to the south.
- Tree alleys will be planted along the K Street alignment supporting existing street trees and provide tree-linked pedestrian walkways leading to the fields.
- An 80-foot security setback will be extensively planted with trees in the form of a continuous bosque with openings at building entrances.
- High canopy trees will be used along the L Street perimeter fence to beautify the site while still maintaining necessary lines-of-sight for security.
- The Marine Band Support building will face 7th Street over a formal lawn area with a ceremonial flagpole setting.

Circulation

The circulation portion of the subarea will link key neighborhood activities while serving the community and the Marine Corps needs. It is anticipated that:

- Significant north/south movement for both pedestrians and vehicles will flow along 7th, 8th, and 5th Streets.
- Marine Corp personnel will move from the 8th and I Street Barracks to the new subarea along the north side of the freeway and beneath it along 7th Street. At the K Street, Virginia Avenue, and 7th Street intersection, a pedestrian entrance is provided.
- Primary east /west vehicle circulation is along L Street.
- The main entrance to the new athletic field will be along a pedestrian way from 5th Street between the Community Center and the gymnasium.

- The parking garage entrance is located adjacent to the Community Center parking area, providing ease of entry from L Street.

CONSULTATION WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY

The Navy has met several times with staff regarding the proposed acquisition and development concept for the proposed new subarea. As a result of these meetings, the placement of the BEQ, Band Support Building, and other elements on the site are in a better relationship to the surrounding community.

EVALUATION

Staff recommends approval of the proposed acquisition. The existing historic barracks is land-locked and has not had the opportunity to acquire additional land in the immediate vicinity since 1971, when the BEQ south of I Street was constructed. There is a legitimate need for expansion.

- Over 300 marines that should be housed on post are living throughout the Washington Metropolitan Area, requiring the need for basic housing allowance payments. Moving these marines to the new site within immediate proximity to the 8th and I Street Barracks would eliminate the need for housing allotments as well as improve functional relationships.
- The only available open space recreation opportunities are the open parade grounds of the historic quadrangle and jogging throughout the neighborhood. Sometimes the marines will use the Lincoln Recreation area, but only occasionally when not in use by the surrounding community. The new recreation area proposed in the subarea plan would provide first class flexible recreation opportunities for both the marines and the community on a shared basis. This shared-use arrangement has great potential to nurture and develop positive relations with the surrounding community.
- The land acquisition and construction of a new parking garage would eliminate the parking problem. Currently, marines not housed in the existing BEQ, south of I Street, park on the surrounding streets as well as under the Southeast Freeway through an arrangement with the District of Columbia government. The new 273-space parking garage would consolidate all parking requirements for the Barracks.

The Marine Corps Band's existing storage and support facility was designed for a band of 50 members. Currently the band is comprised of approximately 150 members. The band support building proposed for the new site would greatly relieve a very crowded condition and allow the band to function at a much higher efficiency.

The Subarea development concepts submitted with the proposal appear to place the new facilities on site in a very logical and efficient manner.

- Locating the parking garage next to an existing community center parking area links those related activities.

- Locating the new BEQ across the street from the existing elderly housing on L Street strengthens the residential character of this portion of the street.
- Locating the outdoor recreation fields in the northern portion of the site, adjacent to Virginia Avenue and the freeway, better relates to existing community recreation facilities.

Other positive aspects of the development concepts include formal tree plantings and landscaping that reinforces the streetscape along L Street, provides a sense of enclosure for the recreation field, and creates a strong gateway entrance to the recreation fields from 5th Street.

Staff fully supports the proposed land acquisition and development concepts for the new Subarea. However, there are several informational issues that the Navy should address when the preliminary site and building plans are prepared for the planned facilities at the new Subarea. They include:

- Detailed transportation management requirements implementing the Transportation Management Plan objectives identified in the revised Master Plan.
- Detailed air quality analysis of the effects to the immediate environs of the site of the proposed 273-space parking structure.
- Identification and evaluation of motor vehicle traffic flow patterns, including peak-volume hours, total vehicle trips, and vehicle travel directions associated with all planned facilities proposed in the new Subarea.

No comprehensive Master Plan for the U.S. Marine Barracks has ever been submitted for Commission review. Although staff is very supportive of the current proposal, the Navy should submit a comprehensive Master Plan to the Commission for review. This Master Plan should include all land holdings of the Marine Barracks.

As this project proceeds, the Navy should continue coordination with the surrounding community.

COORDINATION

Coordinating Committee

The Coordinating Committee reviewed this item at its meeting on August 11, 1999, and forwarded the proposal to the Commission with the statement that the project had been coordinated with all agencies participating, with the understanding that the Department of the Navy consider a second pedestrian entrance to the recreation areas from 7th and K Streets. The participating agencies were NCPC; the District of Columbia Office of Planning; the Department of Housing and Community Development; the Department of Public Works; the Fire Department; the General Services Administration; and the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority.

Subsequent to this meeting, the Navy has advised that at this time it is not possible to provide a community entrance at the intersection of 7th Street and Virginia Avenue. Although there is an entrance for marines at this intersection, security requirements would not allow a community entrance at this time. The Navy further advised that this issue would be revisited once all facilities are constructed at the new site to evaluate if a community entrance is possible.

CONFORMANCE

Comprehensive Plan

The proposal would permit the transfer of jurisdiction of the Subarea site to the Department of the Navy for development of the site to house military personnel and provide related recreational facilities that would also be available for community use. As such, the proposal is not inconsistent with the Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital. The Federal Facilities Element of the Comprehensive Plan designates the existing Marine Barracks for National Defense Facilities. The District of Columbia's Generalized Land Use Map designates the Subarea site for Parks, Recreation, and Open Space use and the surrounding area for medium density residential use. A facility for billeting military personnel with a substantial recreational component available for public use is generally compatible with the land-use designations. In the subsequent submission of preliminary site and building plans for the billeting facility, detailed information should be provided on the size, extent of patronage, and amount of parking required to service the exchange which would be transferred from the existing Marine Barracks to the Subarea site.

National Environmental Policy Act

Pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the Department of the Navy, U.S. Marine Corps, has determined that an environmental assessment (EA) is required for the proposed project in accordance with 32 CFR 775, Navy Procedures for Implementing the National Environmental Policy Act. The Marine Corps issued a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) on May 17, 1999.

- Two alternatives as well as the no action alternative are evaluated in the EA involving the immediate proposed acreage. Four other site locations in the Washington, D.C. area were also considered in the EA.
- The preferred alternative of acquiring the approximately six-acre parcel two blocks southwest of the existing Barracks, after demolition of the existing onsite structures, is identified in detail.
- Only the potential for disposal of hazardous materials (asbestos) is expected as an environmental concern. The District of Columbia Housing Authority will be responsible for removal and disposal of any hazardous materials before acquisition by the Marine Corps.

Staff, after reviewing the proposal, request the Marine Corps provide the following additional information when submitting preliminary site and building plans for the planned facilities:

- Submit detailed transportation management requirements implementing the TMP objectives identified in the proposal.
- Provide a detailed air quality analysis of the effects to the immediate environs of the site of the proposed 273-space parking structure identified in the proposal.
- Identify and evaluate motor vehicle traffic flow patterns, including peak-volume hours, total vehicle trips, and vehicle travel directions associated with all planned facilities proposed in the new subarea.

Commission staff requests the above data be provided in the subsequent NEPA documents alluded to in the current FONSI.

Historic Preservation Act

The Navy has initiated Section 106 review, examining the potential for archaeological data at the site. The potential is slight. In addition, K Street, an element of the L'Enfant Plan, would be closed under the proposed concept site plan. Already closed to vehicular traffic, the K street right-of-way would become part of the recreational open space at the new facility. The concept site plan calls for retention of the right-of-way vista, without the intrusion of built structures. Further, the right-of-way would be marked at both entrances to the site and reinforced with trees and special pavement.