

Final Environmental Assessment for the Proposed U.S. Courthouse Harrisburg, Pennsylvania

Prepared by:
General Services Administration
20 North 8th Street
Philadelphia, PA
19107-3191

July 14, 2006



Appendix E

RESPONSES TO COMMENTS RECEIVED ON THE DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

The draft Environmental Assessment for the U.S. Courthouse in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania was released to the public on April 6, 2006 (the date of availability was actually April 10, due to delivery problems) and the Notice of Availability was published in the Harrisburg Patriot-News on April 6, 10, and 13, 2006. Written comments of the draft Environmental Assessment were accepted until May 11, 2006 (this date was changed to May 18 as a result of delivery problems), and are addressed herein. Comments received at the Public Hearing held on April 18, 2006, were recorded by a stenographer and are also addressed. The transcript of the Public Meeting is presented in its entirety.

The following table of contents can be referenced in order to find comments from specific people/organizations and the responses to those comments. Responses to individual comment letters/e-mails follow after each letter/e-mail. Responses to comments located in the transcript follow after the entirety of the transcript.

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**Craig Nye
Mechanicsburg PA**

Dear Sir/Madame:

I am a resident of the Harrisburg area. I am very much dismayed at the choices proposed for the location of a new courthouse in Harrisburg. There are many vacant and blighted areas in Harrisburg that are ripe for development. Displacing people from their homes and/or tearing down vibrant neighborhoods is ridiculous in light of the availability of preferable sites.

#1

I am particularly appalled that the area around 3rd and North streets is a possible choice. This is one of the prettiest neighborhoods in Harrisburg. I often patronize the restaurants and bars in this area and there also are a few nice stores there. Additionally there are many nice homes, historic homes that would be torn down. Surely this isn't necessary or advisable. It is definitely not in the best interest of the citizens of Harrisburg or of its revitalization. While the other two sites don't impact me personally, I understand that many elderly residents would be displaced from apartment buildings at these sites.

#2

I implore "the powers that be" to reconsider and to find a site that will work out in everyone's best interest.

Craig Nye
Mechanicsburg PA

**Craig Nye
Mechanicsburg PA**

Response to Comment #1:

All sites brought to GSA's attention have been given careful consideration. Table 1 in Environmental Assessment provides a list of sites that were considered for the project and a summary of the reasons the sites were not chosen for further analysis after site evaluation screening.

The vacant lot, currently a surface parking facility at 7th and Reily, is more than adequate in size. Vacant lots were either not of sufficient size or, if of adequate size, not considered because sites north of Reily Street were deemed too remote from commercial markets and other amenities. While GSA has authorization to site the new courthouse within the city limits of Harrisburg, Executive Order 12072 requires that preference be given to sites in areas adjacent to the Central Business District (CBD) and possessing a similar character to the CBD. Although some of the currently short listed sites are outside the CBD, they are close to the CBD and located in areas that are of similar character to the CBD.

Response to Comment #2:

Comment acknowledged.

Thomas W. Helsel, Jr.

April 19, 2006

U.S. General Services Administration
Mid-Atlantic Region
Attn: Abby Low, Project Manager
20 N. 8th Street
Philadelphia PA 19107-3191

Via email: HarrisburgCourthouse@gsa.gov

Dear Ms. Low:

I reside at [REDACTED]. I am a resident within the 3rd & Forster site for the proposed Federal Courthouse. I strongly oppose this site as a location for the Courthouse.

First, I would like to thank the GSA for the copy of the draft of the Environmental Assessment. Having reviewed it, on the face it addresses many of the structural and environmental issues that the project would bring to a site but it lacks a true assessment of the economic and social impact on the residents of the sites. I do understand that this is a draft document and therefore is not complete.

Let me state the obvious. My opposition to the 3rd & Forster Streets site is personal. I live there. I work there. The community of that neighborhood and its immediate surroundings would be adversely affected should that be the site chosen. | #1

The capitol area neighborhood is the last of its type in downtown Harrisburg. There are no other significant residential neighborhoods in the downtown. The historic value of the neighborhood, its structures, its nature would be lost. The impact of increased vehicular traffic, the already inadequate parking would do irreparable harm to its immediate neighborhoods. The quality of life in that area would diminish significantly. | #2

The economic impact on the community and the city has not truly been dealt with. The GSA has reported a real estate tax loss of \$1.4 million over a finite period from that site. In a city where real estate taxes are skyrocketing because of a diminishing tax base, this would force an increase to all taxpayers in the city. | #3

The GSA has indicated that jobs lost would easily be replaced elsewhere. I beg to disagree. The businesses in the site area are not easily moved elsewhere. They are geographically and socially linked to the 3rd & Forster area. The ability to move elsewhere is remote. This would cause long-term economic loss to the owners as well as the employees. | #4

Notwithstanding the overall economic loss by tax revenue and the cost of economic justice to the residents and businesses, the wisdom of selecting 3rd & Forster is circumspect when it comes to the future of the Courthouse. The site is the smallest of the three. Using the criteria that is now needed to build a Federal courthouse, this site would lead to a premature obsolescence of a new building. The current Reagan Courthouse is close to 40 years old. It is and has been obsolete for many years and has no viable way to renovate or rejuvenate. The 3rd & Forster Street site would only create the same in the not too distant future.

#5

Since the GSA has narrowed its search to three locations, allow me to comment on the remaining two. I oppose the site at 6th & Verbeke Streets. Again, this is neighborhood community that would be adversely impacted by such a project.

#6

The 6th & Basin Street site would make the most sense of the three chosen. The land is already tax-exempt. It is the largest site of the three, almost twice the size of the 3rd & Forster site and minimally larger than 6th & Verbeke. Of the two high-rises, the Jackson Building is vacant and in desperate need of significant renovation. The second, the Lick Building houses underprivileged elderly in seemingly suspect housing. It would behoove the GSA to relocate these individuals to a new assisted living housing development that urban Harrisburg greatly needs and deserves.

#7

The site borders an area that is on the verge of redevelopment and a project of this nature would be the catalyst for it. The City of Harrisburg is looking to rebuild the 7th Street corridor and this project would help foster that as well.

As others stated at the community meeting on April 18th, I wonder why with the availability of vacant land in many areas of Harrisburg these sites with their inherent problems were chosen.

#8

Sincerely,

Thomas W. Helsel, Jr.

Thomas W. Helsel, Jr.

Response to Comment #1:

Comment acknowledged.

Response to Comment #2:

Comment acknowledged.

Response to Comment #3:

Section 3.4.3.3 has been revised to indicate that the loss to the tax base on N. 3rd and Forster as well as the N. 6th and Verbeke Street Alternatives would be considered “permanent” and would not be replaced under the proposed project.

Response to Comment #4:

GSA conducted a relocation study which indicated that comparable sites were available for the relocation of businesses and restaurants from the N. 3rd and Forster Alternative. The finding that employees would be able to find new employment if businesses don't relocate is based on the unemployment rate and interviews with city officials.

Response to Comment #5:

Each of the short-listed sites has been evaluated to ensure that it could meet the 30-year expansion needs of the U.S. Courts.

Response to Comment #6:

Comment acknowledged.

Response to Comment #7:

GSA looked at opportunities to make funds available for the construction of new housing. While GSA can not directly construct new housing, the agency has explored funding the construction of

housing by another entity. In the end, the available budget did not support the amount of new housing that would need to be created for the displaced population.

Response to Comment #8:

Table 1 in Environmental Assessment provides a list of sites that were considered for the project and a summary of the reasons the sites were not chosen for further analysis after site evaluation screening.

The vacant lot, currently a surface parking facility at 7th and Reily, is more than adequate in size. Vacant lots were either not of sufficient size or, if of adequate size, not considered because sites north of Reily Street were deemed too remote from commercial markets and other amenities. While GSA has authorization to site the new courthouse within the city limits of Harrisburg, Executive Order 12072 requires that preference be given to sites in areas adjacent to the Central Business District (CBD) and possessing a similar character to the CBD. Although some of the currently short listed sites are outside the CBD, they are close to the CBD and located in areas that are of similar character to the CBD.

Jessica Sprajcar

Hello,

After reading the Draft Environmental Assessment for the Proposed US Courthouse in Harrisburg, PA, here are my comments.

I oppose all three options described in the EA because of their effect on people's homes. People should not be forced to leave their home in order to expand an existing facility. Why not use an area, such as the vacant state hospital grounds, where no homes would be destroyed and you would be making good use of vacant land and possible re-use of existing buildings? Factors like floodplains and proximity to railroad tracks should not carry more weight than displacing large numbers of residents.

#1

If one of the three sites must be chosen, then I suggest the N. 6th and Verbeke Street site, for multiple reasons. #1. Choosing this site will displace a considerable amount of people from their homes, however they will be the easiest to relocate to comparable or better living quarters. This site is near the Broad Street Market and other businesses, which would provide food for courthouse visitors and staff. It is located near public transportation, as well. #2. You cannot replace historic buildings, and they should be preserved for the future. Therefore, I am opposed to the N. 3rd and Forester Street site.

#2

In addition, that site contributes hundreds of thousands of dollars in tax revenue to the city of Harrisburg each year, while the other two options offer little, to no, taxes. How will that revenue source be replaced if this site is chosen? The people in this neighborhood take great pride in where they live. They are the most stable of the three resident groups, and the ones to be most negatively affected by the loss of their community and homes. Building a courthouse on this site would not only affect them, however, but all residents of the downtown and midtown areas, people that eat, shop, work, and recreate in and around that proposed site.

#3

#3. My second choice for the site of the courthouse would be the N. 6th and Basin Street site. This site is an ok choice because one of the buildings is already vacant, and has more existing parking than the other two sites. The biggest drawback of this site is that it will be difficult to find new homes for the elderly residents currently living there. Otherwise this is a prime choice.

#4

Both the N. 6th and Verbeke Street site and the N. 6th and Basin Street site are roughly twice the size of the N. 3rd and Forster site, thus allowing for greater future expansion opportunities. Therefore it makes more sense to choose one of them over the N. 3rd Street site, which is small and would be difficult to expand in the future. It is understandable to take into consideration the income levels of the residents at each site, but this should not be the main factor in making the decision on which site to choose. The choice should be made by deciding which option has the lowest negative impact overall, and I believe that choice is the N. 6th and Verbeke Street site.

#5

Thank you for listening to my concerns.

Jessica Sprajcar

Jessica Sprajcar

Response to Comment #1:

Site selection factors are described in Section 2.2.1. GSA must consider factors such as floodplains in compliance with Executive Orders and other regulations. Resources are not weighed against one another in an Environmental Assessment. One resource does not have more or less importance than another. The Environmental Assessment has been prepared to provide the decision makers with complete information on all of the potential impacts of the proposed action.

All sites brought to GSA's attention have been given careful consideration. Table 1 in Environmental Assessment provides a list of sites that were considered for the project and a summary of the reasons the sites were not chosen for further analysis after site evaluation screening.

While GSA has authorization to site the new courthouse within the city limits of Harrisburg, Executive Order 12072 requires that preference be given to sites in areas adjacent to the Central Business District (CBD) and possessing a similar character to the CBD. Although some of the currently short listed sites are outside the CBD, they are close to the CBD and located in areas that are of similar character to the CBD.

Response to Comment #2:

Comment acknowledged.

Response to Comment #3:

Comment acknowledged. Section 3.4.3.3 has been revised to indicate that the loss to the tax base on N. 3rd and Forster as well as the N. 6th and Verbeke Street Alternatives would be considered “permanent” and would not be replaced under the proposed project. The Environmental Assessment documents that impacts related to acquisition of businesses on the 3rd and Forster Street Alternative would impact remaining businesses and residential areas in the vicinity of the site.

Response to Comment #4:

Comment acknowledged.

Response to Comment #5:

Comment acknowledged.

John K. Robinson

It would be disastrous to replace viable historic housing and businesses in the Third and Forster Streets area with a Federal Courthouse.

This is one of the last remaining residential areas of Harrisburg's downtown. The homes are well-maintained. Its businesses support individuals and families and serve workers in the neighborhood. Both homes and businesses provide much needed taxes for the city.

#1

Parking in the area, already difficult to find, will become non-existent.

The State's treasure houses, the State Museum of Pennsylvania and the State Archives -- immediately opposite the block in question -- are placed in danger should there ever be an attack on the Federal Building.

#2

The best choice for the Courthouse is at 6th and Basin Streets, where an empty building already stands and where there is plenty of space for parking. In addition, the new building might generate new construction and other renewal in that area of the city. Choosing a site simply because it is in walking distance for lawyers who will use the Federal Building is simply not a valid reason.

#3

Please do not sacrifice the homes and livelihoods of the people in the Third and Forster site or endanger the priceless artifacts and documents housed nearby in the State Museum of Pennsylvania and the Pennsylvania State Archives.

#4

Thank you

John K. Robinson

John K. Robinson

Response to Comment #1:

Comment acknowledged.

Response to Comment #2:

Regardless of what site is selected, GSA would include security measures in the design and construction of the new U.S. Courthouse. These measures, including setbacks and site perimeter control, are designed to deter attacks against the building by diminishing the likelihood of a successful attack.

Response to Comment #3:

Comment acknowledged.

Response to Comment #4:

Comment acknowledged.

Nancy L. O'Connell

I do not understand why the GSA has selected 3 sites that are all occupied. Why don't they search the Harrisburg Area for the 2 - 3 block blighted areas that have rows of homes that are empty, burned, unoccupied, etc. There are numerous sites within the city limits that could be used rather than the 3 sites that have chosen at this time. What's wrong with the former Beer World on South 29th Street with the attached Bingo hall (which could be closed)? This is still within the city limits already has a very large area unoccupied and ample parking? Also, as I mention earlier, the many city blocks on N 7th street or 6th street that have homes that need to be torn down most and most of the blocks are unoccupied and for the few occupied homes you could see that these families are compensated.

#1

It seems sad to force so many people, elderly & poor from the Jackson Lick apartment complex as well as the site on 6th & Verbeke which also houses the poor and elderly. As for the location on N 3rd Street, why would you want to destroy occupied homes and businesses when there area too many blighted areas within the city limits that could be look at for the courthouse.

#2

What about the Uptown Shopping center?? Most of the stores are gone, many sitting closed. It too is a possible site where a court house could be built without putting out the elderly and poor.

#3

I truly believe that the GSA does NOT care WHO they harm when it comes to looking for a site for the court house. At present, the courthouse has no parking (free) and it is not easily accessible for many since it sits downtown on Walnut & Locust Sts. I feel that the GSA should start their search over again, this time focusing more on blighted areas that are unoccupied or areas as I stated above.

#4

Concerned Citizen,

Nancy L. O'Connell

Nancy L. O'Connell

Response to Comment #1:

GSA conducted an extensive search for sites in the vicinity of Harrisburg's Central Business District. All sites brought to GSA's attention have been given careful consideration. Table 1 in Environmental Assessment provides a list of sites that were considered for the project and a summary of the reasons the sites were not chosen for further analysis after site evaluation screening.

While GSA has authorization to site the new courthouse within the city limits of Harrisburg, Executive Order 12072 requires that preference be given to sites in areas adjacent to the Central Business District (CBD) and possessing a similar character to the CBD. Although some of the currently short listed sites are outside the CBD, they are close to the CBD and located in areas that are of similar character to the CBD.

Response to Comment #2:

Comment acknowledged.

Response to Comment #3:

See response to Comment #1.

Response to Comment #4:

Comment acknowledged.

Pete Washington

PLEASE BE ADVISED THAT I AM AGAINST ALL THREE PROPOSED SITE SELECTIONS!

These selected sites if any are chosen, will have a negative impact on the culture and history of this community.

If the Jackson/Lick site is chosen it will cause additional hardships as below listed.

Lack of African American history

Health problems

Deaths

Loss of over three hundred site units for elderly The " Poorest of Poor" will again be victimized by the government.

#1

In a relate matter I did send comments and delivered same to both previous hearings. Those comments were not included in your report. Others did not like your abbreviations of their comments. Consequently, trust and confidence in your actions is not recognized.

#2

In closing, it is my opinion that this action was not done fairly. Why did the Harrisburg Housing Authority close down a housing site, tell the residents the building was scheduled for rehabilitation and later stop all actions? Many in the community feel that collusion and conspiracy have occurred. I hope and pray that the aforementioned is not true.

#3

Please don't locate the courthouse in the previously selected sites!

#4

Pete Washington

Pete Washington

Response to Comment #1:

Comment acknowledged.

Response to Comment #2:

All comments received during preparation of the Environmental Assessment were considered in the analysis and are part of the project's Administrative Record. Comment forms and letters received during the project scoping period in June to August, 2005 have been maintained as part of the record and are summarized in Appendix A of the Environmental Assessment. Transcripts were prepared for the public meetings held in October 2005 and comments received at those meetings, along with comments received during the scoping period have been considered by GSA.

Response to Comment #3:

GSA is not in a position to speak on behalf of the Harrisburg Housing Authority regarding renovation plans for the Jackson Tower. We recommend the commenter contact the HHA for further information.

Response to Comment #4:

Comment acknowledged.

Philip J. Walsh, Jr.

Attention: Abby Low, Project Manager
U.S. General Services Administration

Dear Ms. Low,

I am writing to express my concern regarding the proposed site selection for the Federal Courthouse in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. Specifically, I believe that N 6th and Verbeke location is inappropriate due to the displacement of residents and the Harrisburg Friends Meeting House. I would encourage the GSA to re-consider one of the other options initially dismissed that would impact fewer residents.

Sincerely,
Philip J. Walsh, Jr.

#1

Philip J. Walsh, Jr.

Response to Comment #1:

Comment acknowledged.

Matthew J. Simmons

General Services Administration, Mid-Atlantic Region
Attention: Abby Low, Project Manager
20 N. 8th Street
Philadelphia, PA 19107-3191

Dear Ms. Low,

I truly found this assessment to be uninformative and misleading.

Everyone in Harrisburg knows the following:

- if the 3rd and Forester site is selected the city will lose the tax base from that area, roughly \$1.3 Million a year,
- if the Cumberland Court Apartment site is selected the city will lose a stable and safe low income housing complex,
- and that if the Jackson Lick site is chosen the experience may be very traumatic for the senior citizens that currently reside there.

#1

These are all well know facts/opinions regarding the three sites.

The EA report did nothing more than quantify GSA's opinion of whether this would have a minor, moderate or major effect for the city of Harrisburg for either a short or long term.

This assessment is woefully inadequate.

There is no explanation as to what criteria was used to determine the weighting that was applied to generation of the individual classifications. This fact alone calls the entire report into question.

#2

General misclassifications and false assumptions also abound throughout the report. The destruction of the historic properties located at the 3rd and Forester site can not be considered to be "a short-term, moderate adverse impact". If these properties are destroyed they can not be replaced and the city will suffer irreparable harm, both financially and thru the loss of these buildings and the community that they support.

#3

Neighboring properties will also be greatly affected. On p. 52 the EA notes "indirect impacts to land use may occur as properties in the vicinity of the courthouse are converted to commercial space to serve employees and visitors to the courts or to provide office space for businesses with activities related to the courts. Properties could experience a conversion from residential land use to commercial land use or parking activities. Therefore, this alternative would have moderate, long-term, direct and indirect adverse impacts on land use planning in the City." To classify this as a moderate loss to the city undermines the value of the residents in the

#4

community and the relationship that this historic neighborhood holds as one of the cornerstones of renovation and revitalization in the city of Harrisburg.

#4
cont.

The detrimental effects of choosing the 3rd and Forester site are counterintuitive to the revitalization efforts that the city has worked on for decades.

This report continues to make other general misclassifications about all of the sites and ultimately fails at providing any relevant information.

#5

I believe that if GSA were truly interested in doing what was best for the City of Harrisburg they would actually involve citizens in the selection process, not just in the perfunctory public hearings.

Respectfully,

Matthew J. Simmons

Matthew J. Simmons

Response to Comment #1:

Comment acknowledged.

Response to Comment #2:

Resources are not weighed against one another in an Environmental Assessment. One resource does not have more or less importance than another. The Environmental Assessment has been prepared to provide the site selection board and the GSA Regional Administrator with complete information on all of the potential impacts of the proposed action.

Response to Comment #3:

The removal of the historic 3rd and Forster neighborhood would have different impacts on different resources. The Environmental Assessment describes impacts to historic properties on the N. 3rd and Forster Alternative as long-term, major, adverse impacts (section 3.5.2.2). Impacts on the surrounding community have been revised to indicate that they will also be long-term and major due to the loss of an important part of this community.

Response to Comment #4:

Impacts to land use surrounding a new courthouse would be subject to City zoning and building approvals. GSA can not predict what decisions the City will make regarding future land use.

Response to Comment #5:

Comments acknowledged.

Sloan Auchincloss

As a former captain U. S. Army and writer for Security Watch and Security Management Bulletin, I have some expertise in the plant security field. I therefore strongly recommend siting the new federal courthouse at Sixth and Basin Streets. The expansiveness of the property and the surrounding area would enable a strong perimeter defense. This is not possible at the Third and Forster Streets location.

#1

Sloan Auchincloss

Sloan Auchincloss

Response to Comment #1:

Comment acknowledged.

Dr. David Alan Zwifka
Executive Director
Historic Harrisburg Association

General Services Administration, Mid-Atlantic Region
Attention: Abby Low, Project Manager
20 N. 8th Street
Philadelphia, PA 19107-3191

Dear Ms. Low:

I write today in response to the Draft Environmental Assessment (EA) for site selection of the Proposed U.S. Courthouse in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania.

On behalf of Historic Harrisburg Association, I wish to express our gratitude for the opportunity to have input into this important project.

Historic Harrisburg Association (HHA) is aware of the limitations placed upon the GSA from several sources. The criteria established by legislatures, executive orders, and internal policy statements can make such a process extremely complicated for those charged with making these decisions. However, HHA is also profoundly aware that the site selection process will have a deep and abiding impact on elements of the Harrisburg community regardless of decision taken. The EA outlines in detail the site selection process. It further outlines the various factors that led to the selection of three "short-listed" sites. The EA also outlines in detail, GSA's assessment of the many factors that will contribute to a final decision. HHA is aware that this is an assessment document only and not an argument for or against any particular site.

This response will limit its observation to the site at N. 3rd and Forster Streets. HHA's mission focuses primarily on the preservation of historic assets (fabric and neighborhoods). While HHA board and members feel strongly about the impact this project will have on other sites listed, it feels that its prime focus must be historic assets threatened by this project. HHA's observations here and its effort to confine comment to the single site in no way implies that other proposed sites are to be preferred.

It is the opinion of HHA that the EA overall does not adequately communicate the gravity of specific factors in the decision process, especially in the EA's Executive Summary. For example, the report describes the nature of many of the structures at the N. 3rd and Forster site as having historic character. What the report fails to communicate adequately is that these structures comprise a significant element of the inventory of a post-Civil War neighborhood. If these structures are demolished, the negative impact on the historical architectural assets of the city could be classified only as catastrophic. Moreover, the impact to the historical assets of the area would not be limited to the site only.

#1

What would remain of the architectural inventory in the immediate area would suffer as a sort of "critical mass" is reached where investment in preservation and maintenance of the remaining structures may suffer from the increase in traffic density, the need for parking, security concerns, and other factors that often have a negative impact on such neighborhoods.

#2

For example, on p. 52 the EA notes "indirect impacts to land use may occur as properties in the vicinity of the courthouse are converted to commercial space to serve employees and visitors to the courts or to provide office space for businesses with activities related to the courts.

Properties ... could experience a conversion from residential land use to commercial land use or parking activities. Therefore, this alternative would have moderate, long-term, direct and indirect adverse impacts on land use planning in the City." The statement, however, fails to convey the significance of demolishing these historically significant structures.

#3

While existing buildings at the N. 3rd and Forster Streets site might be functionally rebuilt, since people and functions can be relocated, the structures themselves cannot ever be replaced. Put bluntly, once they are gone, they are gone forever. This fact needs to be stated boldly, not in terms that may cause the reader to miss their significance.

#4

On this point alone, the report fails to take cognizance of the strong preservation ethos that exists among residents of the affected neighborhood and the importance of such neighborhoods to the larger community. The report notes that the area has undergone a sort resurgence because of other downtown development ("they began renovating the neglected row homes of the downtown and mid-town neighborhoods."). While the EA recognizes the impact of this project on the historic district as such, it fails to recognize that much of this work is not merely updating or repair but genuine preservation and restoration. The area lies not only partly within the Harrisburg National Historic District but also completely within one of Harrisburg's six municipal historic districts. As a result, the Harrisburg Architectural Review Board must approve any work done to houses in the area. Moreover, the work already accomplished has created a cultural environment that cannot be except in like neighborhoods of which there are by definition a limited number. As further evidence, many of these homes have been featured on semi-annual house tours sponsored by HHA that boast of nearly 1000 participants at each event. Many of the houses have been designated as premier examples of historic preservation and restoration through HHA's Preservation Award program, where preservation projects are singled out for excellence using defined criteria.

#5

The report continues concludes that there will be "no cumulative impacts" from this project concerning the continued trend of downtown "residential and downtown development." On the contrary, this project represents the kind of development that is antithetical to the redevelopment recently experienced in this area. Instead of redeveloping and enhancing existing resources, this project would demolish existing assets and lead to the deterioration of what it has taken a generation to heal.

#6

The report assesses the impact on population and housing for the N. 3rd and Forster Streets site as follows: "Relocations would have direct, moderate, short-term adverse impacts to individual tenants . . . There is ample replacement housing available in the City of Harrisburg for the homeowner/occupants . . . though the replacement neighborhoods lack some of the historic

#7

ambience of the subject site." Such a statement demonstrates that the impact assessment misses the mark. The very reason most of the residents of this neighborhood live where they do is precisely because of the "historic ambience." This writer also acts as a real estate professional in the city of Harrisburg. It is not unusual, when clients look for housing in these neighborhoods, to choose an older house rather than a "new-build" even though they may be in the same proximate neighborhood. This only underscores the irreplaceable (might one say "priceless"?) nature of a historic architectural asset. Low vacancy rates, waiting lists and other factors point to the importance these assets hold for housing in the city of Harrisburg. Moreover, the N. 3rd and Forster Streets site is the only site where there are multiple property owners, several of which are owner-occupants.

7
cont.

With the exception of a single multi-story office building, the mixed-use buildings housing commercial enterprises for the most part are neighborhood-based businesses that thrive because of the context in which they exist. Like other property owners in the area, they respect the historic nature of the neighborhood and are governed by the same standards concerning renovation or modification of their buildings. Moreover, if these businesses are forced to relocate, services may be lost to the neighbors that remain causing further deterioration in the neighborhood fabric.

#8

The impact on neighborhood cohesion seems self-evident. The EA, however, seems to minimize this impact without a recognition of the human toll involved: "Those who remain would lose neighbors and local gathering places as affected residents, restaurants and bars/clubs would move out of the neighborhood . . . These indirect impacts are typically short-term, as remaining residents adjust to their modified community or decide to leave and others move into the neighborhood. Therefore, a short-term, moderate adverse impact to the larger CAN community is anticipated as a result of this alternative." The report seems to conclude "they'll simply get over it or leave." That conclusion may be correct. HHA for most of its 33 years has seen neighborhood stabilization and development as part of its mission through the use of a historic preservation ethos. By its nature, this process understands this kind of development to be slow and incremental of deeply rooted and dynamic. This project would dismantle many years of effort by numerous dedicated citizens and expect the situation to right itself with the passing of time. HHA respectfully disagrees that this outcome is inevitable.

#9

HHA wishes to recognize the EA's conclusion that the project would have a "major, direct, long-term, adverse impact to historic structures" (p.107).

However, this conclusion must be seen in the real-life context of this impact as noted above. Historic assets are preserved not for themselves but for the community, which they serve. To see the assets in isolation does not provide an adequate assessment of their importance. Again, HHA is grateful for the opportunity to respond to this EA. If HHA can offer further input or guidance, please contact us directly.

#10

With every kind wish, I remain
Sincerely,
Dr. David Alan Zwifka
Executive Director

Dr. David Alan Zwifka
Executive Director
Historic Harrisburg Association

Response to Comment #1:

The Environmental Assessment's Executive Summary is meant to provide an overview of the potential impacts of the proposed action. Detail on the history of the N. 3rd and Forster Street Alternative is included in Section 3.5.2.1. Impacts to historic resources have been evaluated within an Area of Potential Effect as shown in Figure 12. This Area of Potential Effect extends beyond the site boundaries and includes resources which may be affected by such impacts as increased traffic and changes in views.

Response to Comment #2:

Comment acknowledged.

Response to Comment #3:

The text on page 52 refers to land use impacts. The assessment of demolishing historically significant structures is included in Section 3.5.2.2, Impacts to Historic Structures.

Response to Comment #4:

Section 3.5.2.2, Impacts to Historic Structures, describes the impact of demolishing historic structures and acknowledges that this impact would be a major, long-term, adverse impact.

Response to Comment #5:

Comment acknowledged.

Response to Comment #6:

Impacts to land use surrounding a new courthouse would be subject to City zoning and building approvals. GSA can not predict what decisions the City will make regarding future land use.

Response to Comment #7:

GSA acknowledges that the historic nature of the N. 3rd and Forster Street Alternative can not be “recreated” for displaced residents elsewhere in the City. The relocation assessment was conducted by professional relocation specialist who interviewed real estate professionals in the City of Harrisburg, among others.

Response to Comment #8:

Comment acknowledged.

Response to Comment #9:

Comment acknowledged.

Response to Comment #10:

Comment acknowledged.

CAPITOL AREA *neighbors*

William W. Allis Jr.
President Capitol Area Neighbors

May 11, 2006

General Services Administration, Mid-Atlantic Region
Attention: Abby Low, Project Manager
20 N. 8th Street
Philadelphia, PA 19107-3191

RE: Draft Environmental Assessment for the Proposed US Courthouse

Capitol Area Neighbors provides the following general comments related to the assessment of the Third and Forster St. Alternative Site. We contend that the “economic”, “community cohesiveness” and “historical resource” losses represent three significant major, long term, adverse impacts that can not be mitigated. Accordingly, we strongly object to a “Finding of No Significant Impact” in this Environmental Assessment.

#1

- Page 6: End of first paragraph suggests that recommendations for mitigation are made in this document. While starting on page 142, mitigation is discussed, this information lacks specificity and commitment. Several significant adverse impacts are not even addressed in the mitigation section as described below. The lack of recommendation and commitment to concise mitigation strategy disassociates the public from true scrutiny and meaningful input in this process.

#2

- This document utilizes poorly defined metrics to support the agencies desire for a finding of no significant impact, so that it can render a site selection based on its own internal ranking and weighting system, independent of a sincere effort to obtain public scrutiny and input.

#3

- There is no language in this document that leads the reader to understand that there is a credible and sincere effort to “protect, restore and enhance the environment”, necessary for compliance with the NEPA process as discussed in Section 1. No language related to restoration or preservation of historic resources is present. Taking photographs of historic structures, as is alluded to on page 145, certainly does not preserve a historic neighborhood. Additionally, the correspondence from the SHPO office dated December 5, 2005 included in the Appendix indicates that the coordination process with that office was not completed to their satisfaction. This report should not have been issued without

#4

this critical element completed. Regarding table S-1, the historic structures impact should clearly be indicated as major, and not modified with a moderate impact due to indirect impacts on adjacent historic districts.

#4
cont.

- This report generally lacks “accurate scientific analysis”. A Social Impact Assessment is included, but there are clearly no qualified professionals in the list of preparers with backgrounds and stated qualifications in sociology or economics. This may explain the lack of mitigation strategies related to “community cohesiveness” and economics associated with long term loss of school and real estate tax revenue.

#5

- In the bulleted list of “issues that could affect” on page 5 there is no mention of “neighborhood” as a social entity. In past correspondence, we have clearly indicated this project would adversely impact an urban neighborhood that is vital to this city. A neighborhood is different than a community, it is rather a subset with its own unique contributing characteristics. This report makes no effort to determine what those are and how they benefit the city. The report does address “community cohesion” and indicates a major adverse impact for the Third and Forster St. Site and slightly less impact for the other sites. However, there is no mitigation mentioned concerning this issue in the descriptions starting on page 142. This is a significant deficiency in the report and calls into question the credibility of the finding of no significant impact. How can a major adverse impact be overlooked? If this impact can not be mitigated, while major and adverse, shouldn’t this support a finding of a Significant Impact?

#6

- The presumption that significant impacts were not expected became a foundation for a professional scope of services that predetermined the assessment findings of no significant impact. Why are the neighborhood residents not afforded the same protections that wildlife is when its habitat is threatened? Isn’t loss of unique urban habitat irreversible? If the loss is major and adverse and there is no mitigation described, it is significant.

#7

- The economic analysis for the Third and Forster St. Alternative site is flawed. The loss of school and real estate taxes will be permanent and last for the life of the project, not 3 years of construction. We provided this analysis in previous correspondence and indicated that to be equitable, mitigation should include payment to the City of a present worth value equal to lost annual tax revenue, escalated for inflation, over a thirty year period. Based on a proper economic analysis, the impact finding should be revised to a major direct adverse impact and so indicated on Table S-1 in reference to Taxes and Revenue. In so doing, the positive impacts due to employment tax should be broken out and listed separately. The report also does not in any way describe any mitigation for this tax revenue loss, which again calls into question the credibility of this document.

#8

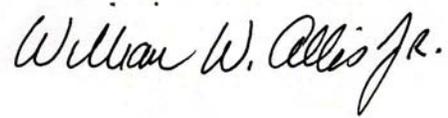
- The public scoping process for this project began after a short list was developed. This shortlist included three sites that would require significant destruction of residences and included no sites that were largely vacant. In so doing, the GSA set up equivalent properties for evaluation in this assessment. Had brownfield sites, such as those available north of the study area been selected, the lesser impacts compared to these sites would be

#9

significant. Furthermore, the positive benefits of occupying those sites with anchor development would have a significant positive impact on the City. This observation begs the question as to why sites suggested by the City planners and our Mayor prior to short listing were summarily rejected, when the scoping process is to include local public agency input. The shortlist should be revisited and expanded, during the moratorium period, in accordance with a true partnering between GSA and the City of Harrisburg.

#9
cont.

Sincerely,



William W. Allis Jr.
President Capitol Area Neighbors

William W. Allis Jr.
President Capitol Area Neighbors

Response to Comment #1:

GSA has not issued a Finding of No Significant Impact for the N. 3rd and Forster Street Alternative.

Response to Comment #2:

Mitigation measures are defined where feasible, and the Government acknowledges that some adverse impacts described in the Environmental Assessment can not be mitigated by GSA. As noted in the Environmental Assessment, specific commitments to mitigation will be made when a final site is selected for the new courthouse.

Response to Comment #3:

The metrics used to define significance thresholds within the Environmental Assessments based on National Park Service definitions. These impact descriptors are consistent with NEPA and the CEQ's implementing regulations (40 CFR 1508), and have been used for Environmental Assessments for GSA and other federal agencies. For the purposes of this Environmental Assessment, a major impact may be indicative of significance under NEPA.

The Environmental Assessment was not prepared with a predetermined notion that it would result in a Finding of No Significant Impact. Rather the document was prepared to provide decision makers with a thorough analysis of potential impacts associated with construction of the courthouse on any of the three alternative sites. A preferred alternative will be identified and after that, only if appropriate, a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) will be made. If significant impacts are identified for the selected site, then an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) will be prepared.

Response to Comment #4:

Consultation with the Pennsylvania State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) was initiated on July 5, 2005. GSA has also met with the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP) as part of the Section 106 consultation. As described in Section 3.5, Cultural Environment, GSA is

continuing coordination with the SHPO and the ACHP in compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. The steps taken to date as part of this consultation include:

- Submission of Areas of Potential Effect for each of the three alternative sites
- Submission of a Draft Determination of Eligibility of Eligibility and Determination of Effects report to PHMC.
- Submission of a revised Determination of Eligibility of Eligibility and Determination of Effects report addressing PHMC comments.

GSA has developed a list of consulting parties with whom they will coordinate as Section 106 consultation continues after selection of a preferred site for the U.S. Courthouse.

Response to Comment #5:

The Social Impact Assessment was prepared by planners from Greenhorne & O'Mara, Inc. with over 15 years of experience in social impact assessments. The economic analysis was prepared by economists from Basil, Bauman, Prost and Associates with over 25 years experience in economic impact assessments.

Response to Comment #6:

GSA has used the terms “neighborhood” and “community” interchangeably in the Environmental Assessment. Mitigation measures for impacts to community cohesion are not provided because GSA acknowledges that it is not possible to mitigate the impacts to the community cohesion described for this project.

GSA has not issued a Finding of No Significant Impact for the N. 3rd and Forester Street Alternative.

Response to Comment #7:

The draft Environmental Assessment does not include nor pre-assumes a Finding of No Significant Impact. However, Under Title 40 CFR Part 1508.14, "Human environment," economic or social effects by themselves are not enough to require preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). If significant impacts are identified on the selected site, then an EIS will be prepared.

Response to Comment #8:

Section 3.4.3.3 has been revised to indicate that the loss to the tax base on N. 3rd and Forster as well as the N. 6th and Verbeke Street Alternatives would be considered “permanent” and would not be replaced under the proposed project.

GSA can not make payments to local governments such as those described by the commenter. As noted previously, GSA acknowledges that there are impacts that can not be mitigated.

Response to Comment #9:

Table 1 in Environmental Assessment provides a list of sites that were considered for the project and a summary of the reasons the sites were not chosen for further analysis after site evaluation screening.

The vacant lot, currently a surface parking facility at 7th and Reily, is more than adequate in size. Vacant lots were either not of sufficient size or, if of adequate size, not considered because sites north of Reily Street were deemed too remote from commercial markets and other amenities. While GSA has authorization to site the new courthouse within the city limits of Harrisburg, Executive Order 12072 requires that preference be given to sites in areas adjacent to the Central Business District (CBD) and possessing a similar character to the CBD. Although some of the currently short listed sites are outside the CBD, they are close to the CBD and located in areas that are of similar character to the CBD.

KATHY SPEAKER MACNETT, Esq.

May 11, 2006

General Services Administration
Mid-Atlantic Region
Abby Low, Project Manager
20 N. 8th Street
Philadelphia, PA 19107-3191

Re: Additional Comments on proposed location of the new Federal Courthouse.

Dear Ms. Low:

This letter requests that you avoid the smallest of the sites for two reasons: decline in tax base and impact upon two schools.

Decline in Tax Base

Hanging in my office is a picture of the State Capitol Complex in the 1930's. Significant is the number of homes that are contained in that picture, which no longer exist because government buildings now occupy the same sites. Significant is the decline in the City of Harrisburg's tax base due to the State Capitol expansion.

Harrisburg's tax base will decline yet again if the new federal courthouse is sited at either the location within Capitol Area Neighbors ("CAN") or Cumberland Courts. Both of these locations would destroy viable neighborhoods. The third site would destroy low income housing, but would not have as large an impact on Harrisburg's tax base. Once tax base is lost, it is not lost for three years as noted in the draft impact study, but for the foreseeable future. An added disadvantage of the CAN site is the small footnote of that site compared to any of the other locations. We fear and suspect that a new Federal Courthouse before 2010 at that site will simply create the need for yet another larger courthouse within a 40 year period.

#1

Ironically, Harrisburg this week announced a major downtown expansion project with development on a platform above the flood plane. Location of a Federal Courthouse in the Gateway area would allow existing neighborhoods and low income housing to continue while providing development in a new business oriented district within blocks of the existing courthouse. This could be a win for the city, federal workers and city residents. We urge you to strongly reconsider the three pre-selected locations and abandon them in favor of finding a new one. Destroying neighborhoods and communities of residents at any of those pre-selected locations simply does not make sense. Destroying the CAN neighborhood, the most economically viable of the three, is a terrible idea.

#2

Impact Upon Two Schools

Additionally, I note that there was discussion during the recent community meeting of the impact of the Cumberland Courts location on one city school, the Ben Franklin School. Overlooked was the fact that two schools are within one block of the CAN site. Those schools are the Consolidated Cathedral School on Liberty Street (one block south of the proposed site) and the Ronald H. Brown Charter School at Forster and Green Streets, adjacent to the proposed site on the north.

#3

Sincerely,

Kathy Speaker MacNett, Esq.

Kathy Speaker MacNett, Esq.

Response to Comment #1:

Section 3.4.3.3 has been revised to indicate that the loss to the tax base on N. 3rd and Forster as well as the N. 6th and Verbeke Street Alternatives would be considered “permanent” and would not be replaced under the proposed project.

Each of the short-listed sites has been evaluated to ensure that it could meet the 30-year expansion needs of the U.S. Courts.

Response to Comment #2:

GSA has met with City officials and reviewed plans for the Gateway area. This proposed development is located within a floodplain and would not be completed in the time frame in which a new courthouse is needed. Therefore, construction of the U.S. Courthouse in this area would not be feasible.

Response to Comment #3:

Section 3.4.6.2, Impact to Educational Facilities, has been revised to describe potential impacts to the Consolidated Cathedral School and the Ronald H. Brown Charter School.

Chad Frey

General Services Administration, Mid-Atlantic Region
Attention: Abby Low, Project Manager
20 N. 8th Street
Philadelphia, PA 19107-3191

April 23, 2006

Mrs. Low,

After attending the most recent General Services Administration (GSA) public hearing, I am compelled to write this letter outlining a few of my concerns. I am a college educator, but perhaps more importantly, I live in the North Street community just a few yards away from the area proposed by the GSA as a potential site for the new federal courthouse.

It is my hope that this letter will be included in the public record and that the following critiques will be received as constructive (at the very least) and perhaps even as corrective to the ongoing work of the GSA. The letter is divided into four sections discussing:

- The GSA’s responsibility as a public trustee
- The GSA’s rhetoric in the Draft Environmental Assessment (Draft) and public hearings
- The representation of short listed communities
- Recommendations for the future

The GSA’s Responsibility as a Public Trustee

One of the primary responsibilities of the United States government is to protect the constitutional rights of its citizens to life, liberty and *property*. Toward this end, it is generally accepted that federal courthouses are needed to conduct the processes of defending and interpreting these rights (among other things) and that the GSA is fully justified in acquiring land for public benefit in accordance with eminent domain law. That being said, however, I am seriously concerned that:

1. Constitutional property rights are currently in jeopardy as three communities languish under the threat of possible eviction;
2. The GSA has become a “lame duck” and is currently unable to defend these rights and fulfill its responsibility as a public trustee as it is seduced by Federal funding.

With respect to my first concern, it is incumbent upon the GSA as a public trustee, to protect the rights of citizens to their properties in the *present* as these rights supersede any bureaucratic charge to find land for a federal courthouse building in the *future*. For example, the GSA has not assured home and business owners that they will not face irreparable and unaccounted losses should their neighborhood become the site selected for the new courthouse building. (This point is evidenced and reinforced in the glaring omissions and short sighted nature of the recent Draft to be discussed in greater detail under “Recommendations for the Future”).

#1

Additionally, if the GSA cannot reverse the current economic climate which is negatively stigmatizing local business prospects and effectively stalling and devaluing homes recently put on the market near or within the Draft's short listed communities; then it will continue to distance itself from the current realities facing Harrisburg residents and will breach any remaining trust that residents may have of the GSA's ability to respect their rights in the future should eminent domain be enacted.

#2

Of even greater concern to me, however, is that this failure is merely symptomatic - a sign that the GSA has become a "lame duck" and unable to currently function as a responsible public trustee. Not only does the limited issue Draft reflect the GSA's failure to steward current home and business owner's constitutional property rights, it's nearly 300 pages long without one compelling argument for the selection of any of the three short listed communities. The "objective" and "unbiased" language used by the GSA throughout the Draft and public hearings, is particularly problematic given that there is no such thing as altruistic impartiality. If the GSA cannot assert any beliefs or principals of its own, and it instead tries to convince Harrisburg residents that it's findings are based purely on objective facts and unbiased scientific research, then I am left to wonder if the GSA has, in fact, lost its constitutional soul and is instead prostituting itself to the highest bidder on Capital Hill. If this is the case, you can save some time and simply discard this letter now. But, if the GSA is capable of championing citizen's right to property, and it seeks to measure responsible work by the resulting public benefit; then it must refuse to use "impartial" language that only masks its intentions and sabotages its integrity.

#3

Rhetoric in the Draft and Public Hearings

By employing strictly "objective" language and quantitative research, the GSA has positioned itself somewhere outside both the public and governmental spheres. The notion that somehow the GSA can be an unbiased legal entity that transcends all social and political pressures is completely absurd. The GSA's rhetoric is dissembling, masking its social and political commitments. By not acknowledging its biases or the important qualitative dimensions of this project, the GSA and its work has become suspect.

#4

In his wonderful book, *Standing by Words*, Kentucky farmer/poet Wendell Berry discusses the effects of this kind of speech on the public as he reflects on the nuclear meltdown of Three Mile Island (TMI) and the inability of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission to clearly communicate the crisis. He writes:

"So inept is the speech of these commissioners that we must deliberately remind ourselves that they are not stupid and are probably not amoral. They are highly trained, intelligent, worried men, whose understanding of language is by now to a considerable extent a public one. They are atomic scientists whose criteria of language are identical to those of at least some linguistic scientists. They determine the correctness of their statement to the press exactly according...by their purpose, audience, and situation. Their language is governed by the ethical aim...to speak in such a way that as to "reduce another's sense of threat." But the result was not "cooperation and mutual benefit"; it was incoherence and dishonesty, leading to public suspicion, distrust, and fear. It is beneficial, surely, to "reduce another's sense of threat" only if there is no threat."

There can be no mistake that the impending annihilation of homes, businesses, churches, and the ensuing destruction of established communities under the GSA proposal is threatening to residents. Yet, the GSA continues to talk about this project in detached formulas and percentages, referring to human beings as “Environmental Impact Topics” where damage assessments are conducted in the same way that the effects of underlying rock structures or available parking is measured.

#5

Another particularly destructive example is the way that the GSA refers to each of the places under investigation. Labeling them as “sites” rather than communities, the GSA has effectively dissolved their particularity into an amorphous and impersonal place where a “project” can now be built where *homes* currently are. An equally destructive tactic is to separate all voices of dissent from a *greater* general “public”. This allows the GSA to talk about the “public” benefit of this project because the “public” is now an abstract community or idea which somehow these dissenters have forfeited their rights to be a citizen of.

#6

This subtle shift is done through quantitative feasibility studies that can’t account for quality life or quality work. At the most recent public hearing, it was painfully obvious that the GSA is out of touch with important parts of local community life. One poignant example was the ignorant suggestion that demographic studies have revealed ample housing opportunities in the Harrisburg area for potentially displaced residents of the Jackson Lick apartments. It was inflammatory and degrading to suggest that short-term government vouchers would somehow provide reasonable compensation for low-income individuals and families who have significant needs and would be rendered homeless by a GSA decision.

#7

When GSA officials employ the language of specialization and public relations (a language that safely distances its representatives from society and serves to confuse and divide their audiences in order to gain an unfair advantage), they reinforce the perception that they can’t speak or even understand community language (that language which serves to connect us to each other). Residents of all three short-listed communities spoke against this insidious tactic to divide and conquer at the public hearing – refusing to allow the GSA’s position to pit neighbors against each other. The GSA must not subjugate the public through its rhetoric or straw man arguments for short listed building sites. If it engages in coercive land grabbing techniques it will inevitably lose its soul and any respect people have for its work.

#8

The Representation of the Community

I believe that the GSA must exist for the betterment of society (of which these communities are a part), but it must evaluate its work on local levels. Good or bad work can only be understood within a particular context or local community (places like those short listed in the Draft) as it is impossible to talk about meaningful assessment practices in strictly abstractions. Societies are made up of communities composed of individuals not faceless ideals. Why then does the Draft gloss over individual concerns and recommendations? The GSA must not flippantly dismiss, misrepresent, or blatantly omit any of these individual concerns or recommendations in their final report. To do so would be either fraudulent or negligent.

Two Examples of Significant Omissions in the Draft:

1. The city of Harrisburg has urged the GSA to consider numerous places in the uptown/midtown district for this project. Located outside flood zones, these areas, if razed would significantly benefit the community and remove severely blighted and condemned buildings. While a new federal building could be a major catalyst in these neighborhoods for other city renewal projects and economic development plans, only a few vague sentences are offered as a rationale for their exclusion in the Draft. These areas need to be thoroughly assessed just as the short listed communities have been. They may be a little farther away than judges, politicians, or even the President would prefer; however, people's homes, communities, and their rights are more important than matters of Federal preference and judicial convenience.
2. Within walking distance of the State capital is an undeveloped lot off of Cameron Street boasting more than enough acreage to accommodate the proposed designs for a new courthouse building, as well as, ample space for employee and visitor parking (it is important to note here, that adequate parking has not been included in any of the GSA recommendations thus far). Not only would this area be aesthetically enhanced with the addition of a modern courthouse building, the surrounding community could experience significant economic development and revitalization due to its construction. Yet, this lot is not being considered either. (To be fair it should be mentioned that this site is located in a 100 year flood plain, however, it is entirely possible to design the courthouse building to withstand severe flooding.)

#9

#10

A Personal Story:

My first experience with the GSA came last year during the public hearing at the Hilton Hotel. After the short presentation, I walked around various learning stations to hear more about the project. I remember meeting a GSA representative who looked quite kind as he asked me enthusiastically if I had any questions. I smiled weakly, and said that I had one or two. As I took a seat, I asked him why the Cameron Street site wasn't under consideration. He folded his hands, began to nod, and smiled at me knowingly. The problem, he explained quite professionally, was that this site was located in a 100 year flood plane and therefore couldn't be considered for the courthouse. I paused and looked back at him still nodding and smiling. I can remember thinking to myself that surely he must know that architects routinely design buildings to withstand severe flooding. Curious, I persisted and asked him why this was a problem. Upon seeing that I wasn't satisfied, he took another angle, stopped smiling, and began explaining that even if the building could be built the employees, judges, attorneys, defendants, and visitors wouldn't be able to get into it due to the flooding of surrounding areas. As the explanation continued it became very clear that I could have pointed out a pristine grassy meadow just feet from the Capital steps and it would have been problematic because I wasn't an expert and my recommendation wasn't what the government had in mind. I remember genuinely thanking him for his time and walked away trying to think of reasons why courthouses anywhere should stay open during a natural disaster.

Because the Draft only mentions community and individual recommendations in a perfunctory way (if at all), it appears that the GSA is serving the interests of those in Washington. Additionally, when the recent Draft was not widely distributed the perception is that information is being withheld. The GSA should widely disseminate its findings through multiple

#11

mechanisms in order to maximize representation and bring as many people as possible into the conversation. (I should mention that at the recent public hearing numerous residents expressed frustration and concern over this fact.)

#11
cont.

Recommendations for the Future

In closing, I offer the following recommendations to you in preparation for your final report. Please consider:

- Affirming your commitment to protect citizens property rights
- Clearly answer foundational and underlying qualitative questions
- Use language that respects and humanizes this project in public discourse and written reports
- Reiterate and communicate public concerns and suggestions openly.
- Offer more sites as viable options with thorough explanations of the strengths and weaknesses for each
- Adequately represent and respond to individual and community concerns and recommendations (For example, address the parking concerns, losses to neighboring businesses during construction, etc.)
- Widely disseminate your findings to as many people as possible through as many means as possible.
- Put representatives on the GSA planning committee that live in, or very near, the final area recommended to the Federal government

#12

Mrs. Low, I urge you to resist any political or economic pressures to recommend a community that would violate the constitutional rights of residents living there. Reclaim your role as a faithful trustee and steward of public property to ensure that no citizens will lose their homes against their will and without equal or better housing options. I am confident that an unwavering commitment to these tenets will reveal alternatives or amendments to the recent Draft. In closing, I leave with you the words of Wendell Berry who articulates many of my thoughts more eloquently than I ever could:

“We are speaking where we stand, and we shall stand afterwards in the presence of what we have said.”

#13

Chad Frey

Response to Comment #1:

Comment acknowledged.

Response to Comment #2:

GSA acknowledges that the uncertainty surrounding the U.S. Courthouse site selection has had a negative affect on residents and business owners on each of the three alternative sites. GSA has committed to announcing a selected site in the summer of 2006.

Response to Comment #3:

The purpose of the Environmental Assessment is not to persuade anyone on the selection of one alternative site over another. Rather the Environmental Assessment has been prepared by independent consultants, who do not have a financial or other interest in the outcome of the site selection process, to provide an objective review of the potential impacts associated with the construction of the courthouse on any of the three alternative sites.

Response to Comment #4:

Comment noted.

Response to Comment #5:

GSA acknowledges that impacts to the human environment extend beyond the natural and physical setting and that the project would have real and lasting impacts to the people living and working on the selected site as well as the people of the surrounding communities.

Response to Comment #6:

Comment noted.

Response to Comment #7:

GSA has not suggested within the Environmental Assessment or at the Public Hearing that there is comparable replacement housing available for the residents of Jackson Lick. The Environmental Assessment indicates that the lack of such housing would result in a major, long-term, adverse impact to the residents.

Response to Comment #8:

GSA has not sought to set one site against another in the site selection process.

Response to Comment #9:

Executive Order 12072 requires that preference be given to sites in areas adjacent to the Central Business District (CBD) and possessing a similar character to the CBD. Although some of the currently short listed sites are outside the CBD, they are close to the CBD and located in areas that are of similar character to the CBD.

Response to Comment #10:

Executive Order 11988, Floodplain Management, directs federal agencies to avoid, to the extent possible, long- and short-term adverse impacts associated with the occupancy and modification of floodplains, and to avoid direct and indirect support of floodplain development whenever there is a practicable alternative. In addition, the General Services Administration's Order ADM 10995.6, Consideration of Floodplains in Decision Making, also prohibits construction within the floodplain unless there is no practicable alternative.

Response to Comment #11:

GSA distributed the Environmental Assessment to all those who requested a copy during the study process. Sign-up sheets were available at the three public scoping meetings in June 2005 for individuals to request a copy of the document. In addition, three notices were run in the Harrisburg Patriot-News in April 2006 announcing the availability of the draft Environmental Assessment and its availability at the Downtown and Uptown branches of the Dauphin County Public Library, and on the internet at GSA's website.

Response to Comment #12:

Comments acknowledged.

Response to Comment #13:

Comment acknowledged.

HARRISBURG MONTHLY MEETING
Religious Society of Friends
1100 North 6th Street
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17102
(717) 232-7282
(Quakers)

Richard Morse, Clerk

May 11, 2006

U.S. General Services Administration
Attention: Abby Low, Project Manager
20 North Eighth Street
Philadelphia, PA 19107-3191

Dear Ms. Low:

As you know, the Harrisburg Friends Meetinghouse at Sixth and Herr Streets is on one of the three sites under review for a new U.S. Courthouse in Harrisburg. In the detailed statement that we sent to you on August 1, 2005, we did not make specific recommendations for or against any of these sites. However, in the light of events which have taken place since, including the recent release of the Draft Environmental Assessment and the GSA public hearing that was held on April 18, we now feel led to offer the following comments.

At the meeting of our membership held on Sunday, April 23, 2006, we approved adoption of a statement expressing our opposition to all three U.S. Courthouse sites presently under consideration and asking the General Services Administration to evaluate and ultimately choose an alternative site.

Our own position clearly reflects a building sentiment in the wider community against all of the three proposed sites. Comments at the April 18 public hearing bore witness to this. In a February 15 letter to one of our members, the Mayor of Harrisburg wrote that none of the three sites was particularly ideal and that none of the various locations previously offered by the City had been seriously considered by the GSA. And in the April 21 issue of *The Patriot-News*, a strongly worded editorial marshaled a number of arguments against the three sites.

Specific arguments against these sites include *first*, the difficulty that can be expected in finding and obtaining replacement housing for displaced residents; *second*, the costs of compensating and relocating existing persons and businesses, and of demolishing existing buildings, which would significantly increase the project's expense; and *third and most importantly of all*, the fact that the Environmental Assessment and other elements of the selection process fail to recognize adequately the human cost that selection of any of the three sites would entail.

#1

#2

The human cost inherent in the choice of each of these sites militates against its selection. The **Third and Forster Street site** lies partially within the National Register-listed Harrisburg Historic District and is home to 79 private homes and several businesses, mainly restaurants and taverns. Selection of the **Sixth and Basin Street site** would require the relocation of elderly and economically disadvantaged occupants of 146 units in the Jackson-Lick Apartments. Finally, selection of the **Third and Verbeke Street site** would dislocate the occupants of 108 units in the Cumberland Court Apartments, which includes low-income families with children as well as individual renters; also dislocated would be the Friends Meetinghouse, which is home to the Praise and Play Early Learning Center whose operator has tried to identify a nearby alternative location without success. Praise and Play, with an enrollment of some 40 to 50 children, was discussed near the end of the detailed statement that we sent to you on August 1, 2005.

#3

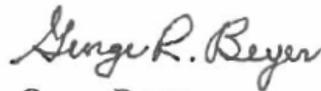
It seems to us that, among the alternatives to the three sites that you are presently considering, one site stands out. This is a largely vacant area paralleling Sixth Street above Reily which is ripe for development. It is just to the north of the two Sixth Street sites presently under consideration by the GSA, it is in the City of Harrisburg and not in the floodplain, and its selection would not entail the demolition and relocation costs involved with each of the currently proposed sites. There may be other alternative sites, in this or other parts of the City of Harrisburg, which should now be considered.

#4

Again, we wish to state our opposition to selection of any of the three sites now under consideration, and we ask that you evaluate and ultimately choose an alternative site. We shall deeply appreciate your thoughtful consideration of the new direction that we are recommending.

On behalf of the Meeting,


Richard Morse
Clerk


George Beyer
Assistant Clerk

HARRISBURG MONTHLY MEETING
Religious Society of Friends

Response to Comment #1:

Comment acknowledged.

Response to Comment #2:

Comment acknowledged.

Response to Comment #3:

Comment acknowledged.

Response to Comment #4:

All sites brought to GSA's attention have been given careful consideration. Table 1 in Environmental Assessment provides a list of sites that were considered for the project and a summary of the reasons the sites were not chosen for further analysis after site evaluation screening.

The vacant lot, currently a surface parking facility at 7th and Reily, is more than adequate in size. Vacant lots were either not of sufficient size or, if of adequate size, not considered because sites north of Reily Street were deemed too remote from commercial markets and other amenities. While GSA has authorization to site the new courthouse within the city limits of Harrisburg, Executive Order 12072 requires that preference be given to sites in areas adjacent to the Central Business District (CBD) and possessing a similar character to the CBD. Although some of the currently short listed sites are outside the CBD, they are close to the CBD and located in areas that are of similar character to the CBD.

E.J. Garisto

4-27-06

To GSA, Abby Low:

Re: Proposed Federal Court House in HBG –

Why do you think we need one?

#1

E.J. Garisto

Response to Comment #1:

The Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts rated Harrisburg as the fifth court city most in need of a new courthouse building. Originally constructed in 1966, the Ronald Reagan Federal Building and U.S. Courthouse in Harrisburg was altered in 1994 to meet short-term needs of the court components, but these alterations were limited and did not meet the necessary security, circulation, and space requirements of the U.S. Courts Design Guide. In addition, these alterations did not address expansion needs, and additional alterations to expand the court's space would result in compromised adjacencies, functional deficiencies, and the relocation of most or all related agencies.

Date: April 26, 2006

To: U.S. General Services Administration
Attn: Abby Low, Project Manager
20 N. 8th Street, 9th Floor
Philadelphia, PA 19107

From: Russell H Mueller

Subject: Proposed U.S. Courthouse in Harrisburg, PA -Draft Environmental Assessment-
Public Comments

Dear Ms. Low,

I am a resident of one of the sites under consideration for the proposed Harrisburg Pennsylvania Federal Courthouse. My wife supports me in the content of this letter.

I am also the pastor of several residents in the sites under consideration and the secretary of the Capital Area Neighbors; I do not speak on behalf of either the congregation or the organization.

The following comments are submitted regarding the Proposed U.S. Courthouse in Harrisburg, PA, Draft Environmental Assessment (EA). I am requesting GSA provide responses to all comments and questions. If a comment or question is not considered substantial, please indicate why.

General

1. Given the level of public controversy, the potential to destroy historic resources, and the social impacts, we strongly believe GSA should have done an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The basic premise of an EA is that the agency can demonstrate that the action will not have a significant effect on the human environment and is therefore exempt from doing an EIS. GSA has not made the case that through avoidance or mitigation (corrective action) impacts are not significant. Since there is no way destruction of historic districts/homes can be made whole, there will be a significant impact with at least one alternative. (3rd and Forster Street).

#1

2. In support of an EIS and not an EA, CEQ and GSA guidance states that EA should not be lengthy, not more than 10-15 pages. Question 36B, of the "Forty Most Asked Questions Concerning CEQ's National Environmental Policy Act Regulations (March 16, 1981)" clearly states, that "In most cases, however, a lengthy EA indicates an EIS is necessary." If it took three hundred pages to make your case (often in a vague manner

#2

that did not include adequate details) how do you support the use of an EA rather than an EIS considering Question 36B cited above?

#2
cont.

3. We believe GSA failed to comply with spirit of NEPA in that it did not make “diligent efforts to involve the public in preparing and implementing their NEPA procedures”. The fact that the only public involvement they had were 3 public initial (scoping) meetings all on the same day, is not sufficient since if an interested party missed the meeting there was virtually no way to know what was going on or provide input. The November meetings were not widely publicized and specific announcement were only mailed to some property owners and some residents of those cites excluding the impacted people related to the neighborhoods. The GSA web did not provide any on-going or project related information on the project. Given the level of public interest, things such a web site, newsletters, and more meetings would have been more in keeping with NEPA. Limited hard copies of the EA were provided. Many people, such as my wife and I, who are residents are who had attended previous meetings never received a copy. Many people affected by the project, particularly those without Internet access, were excluded from reviewing and commenting on the document. Can you explain why the GSA made such a “restrained” effort to involve the public when the spirit of the NEPA calls for a “diligent” effort?

#3

4. Since this EA document does not identify the selected or preferred alternative, GSA did not provide the public sufficient information to weigh in on the decision making process. Waiting to announce the selected alternative until the time of a FONSI has prevented consideration by the public of any alternative specific mitigation comments prior to GSA making a determination and precludes public input. Why was an alternative not provided when that is the common practice in the preparation of an EA?

#4

5. Mitigation presented in the document is only “potential” or speculative at best. Question 40 of the “Forty Most Asked Questions Concerning CEQ’s National Environmental Policy Act Regulations (March 16, 1981)” clearly states, “If a proposal appears to have adverse effects which would be significant, and certain mitigation measures are developed during the scoping or EA stages, the existence of such *potential* mitigation does not obviate the need for an EIS.” There were sufficient challenges at the April, 2006, public hearings to manifest that some potential mitigation was contrary to what was said at the scoping sessions and that other mitigation was easily recognized as ripe for challenge and without foundation in reality. Why did the report repeatedly present potential mitigation as if the words in the report precluded a need for an EIS?

#5

6. Although the EA discusses the alternatives it does not give a quantitative comparison of the alternatives. Table 2 is very subjective, uses vague measures that are subject to opinions, and does not present any hard numbers, dollars, or quantitative impacts. It is impossible to make an informed decision without a more concrete comparison of alternatives. Why was not a simple matrix showing quantitative impacts of the alternatives provided which would have greatly reduced the vagueness (which permeates the entire report and violates the spirit of what the report should have been)?

#6

7. Based on our review of the EA and of other projects listed on the GSA web site, it appears that the only reason GSA scoped this project as an EA was because all other GSA courthouse projects are EA. This rationale is not supported by NEPA or CEQ. The level of documentation (i.e.; CE vs. EA. vs. EIS) should be based on potential environmental concerns, not project type. Why did GSA use different standards or rationale than those supported by NEPA or CEQ?

#7

8. In the event to GSA cannot provide convincing evidence that a FONSI can be made, an EIS should be prepared. Any FONSI must be based on committed and binding mitigation. Appropriate regulatory or resource agencies must concur that the mitigation does indeed negate or offset the impact. Agency letters should be included in the final EA/FONSI.

#8

9. All the alternatives will result in significant displacement impacts. Residents and businesses must be relocated which will result in secondary or indirect impacts. Residential and business impacts are arguably the most significant impact associated with this project. Given the significance of these impacts and the potential for secondary impacts, the H.C. Peck report should be made available as part of the document. We request GSA provide the H.C. Peck study as an attachment to the EA.

#9

10. If an EIS is prepared it should consider all reasonable alternatives, not just the limited few presented in the EA.

#10

I. Purpose and Need

1. Page 5. The statement that the current federal courthouse building in Harrisburg needs ongoing maintenance and repair, a roof replacement and ADA updates, can be made of many federal buildings. That is not the purpose or need to construct a new building. It should not be used for consideration of a new building. This clutters the report.

#11

2. Page 9 states that community meetings were held on November 9 &10, 2005 for residents of the affected neighbors. This project also affects non-residents, (those in neighboring areas, those with historical interests, the commuting public and workforce, and, the patrons of the businesses). Affects to non-residents include such things as; parking, loss of businesses frequented, traffic conditions commuting to/from work, etc. These affected people who are not residents were never contacted, or provided information on the project or public meetings. This lack outreach by GSA prevented many affected people from obtaining or providing input. Again, this demonstrates GSA was not sincere in its efforts to comply with NEPA's requirement for diligent public involvement.

#12

3. Page 9 EA states that for the November 9 community meeting, the Friends were under the impression that the meeting was only for the Community Court residents. This speaks to the sincerity of GSA public outreach. Despite knowing there was a misunderstanding

#13

that resulted in a known interested party being denied an opportunity for involvement, GSA failed to take any corrective action.

#13
cont.

4. Page 11 Response to comments. Alternatives that were deemed by GSA as “overly remote” or “too far from the Central Business District,” were dismissed from consideration. What constitutes overly remote or too far? Please provide a quantitative measure of what is “overly remote” or “too far.”

#14

II. Alternatives Considered

1. Page 17, 2.2.1, states, “site must be available within required time frame” and “sites costs for acquisition, relocation . . . must remain within the project budget.” What is the time frame and project budget? This information should be provided to the public as part of this report so that they can evaluate and comment on the GSA elimination of any alternative that does not fit this “criteria.”

#15

2. GSA presents site selection criteria, minimally responsive criteria, project requirements criteria, technical criteria, and cost criteria, but then fails to demonstrate how each of the retained alternatives meets or does not meet the criteria, and to what degree. Measuring the ability of an alternative to meet the stated criteria is critical when comparing the 3 alternatives that were retained for study. GSA fails to do this, but rather compares anticipated impacts, as opposed to demonstrating that an alternative met the stated criteria.

#16

- Please provide a comparison of how all alternatives met or failed to meet the criteria.
- Please demonstrate how each alternative that was dismissed, to include those suggested by the public and rejected, failed to meet one or more of the criteria.
- Since the EA states that no alternative meets all the criteria, please provide the minimum standard necessary for an alternative to be considered reasonable.

3. We question why the opportunity for each of the sites to spark economic development is not considered a Project Requirement Criteria. We request GSA consider all opportunities to encourage economic development when making its decision.

#17

4. N. 6th and Reilly was dismissed due to “overly remote from commercial markets.” (Table 1 – Sites Considered but not Selection for the Long List) This is another example of a vague and subjective statement especially considering its proximity to two of the three alternative sites. Another reason given for dismissal was the “Closure of Reilly Street.” If you can destroy an entire city block and other streets, why is closing this street so significant when streets are regularly closed for other federal projects?

#18

5. The N. 6th & Verbeke St and N. 6th & Basin Street are almost double the acreage of the N. 3rd & Forster site and more than the stated minimum of 2.5 acres. If the acreage of these sites were reduced to the same size as the N. 3rd & Forster site or to the minimum of 2.5 acres, it stands to reason impacts would be less. It is an unfair comparison of

#19

alternative impacts when the sites sizes vary so much. Please example why such a large variation in acreage is required.

#19
cont.

III. Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences

1. Page 32. “The thresholds of change for the intensity of impacts” are very vague and subjective in nature. It is not clear how they are applied when assessing impacts for a particular resource. It appears that impact intensity was based on opinion, not fact or verifiable data.

#20

2. Page 32, states, “GSA will continue to look for ways to minimize and mitigate impacts during final design and construction.” This is putting the cart in front of the horse. An EA should end by one of the following: an EIS is needed or with a Finding Of No Significant Impacts (FONSI). In reaching a FONSI an agency may demonstrate that with mitigation what would be an impact is not significant, but that mitigation must be prior to final design and construction. If GSA has not completed its mitigation for impacts until final design and construction, how can a FONSI be issued before then?

#21

3. The Peregrine Falcon, a federally listed Endangered Species, is known to nest on the Rachel Carson (DEP) Building. There is no mention of this species in the EA or what impacts, such as construction, could have on their nesting.

#22

4. In the Environmental Justice section beginning on page 39, the GSA states N6th & Verbeke and N. 6th & Basin alternatives have a higher percentage of low-income and minority persons. It does not state how much higher. Again, if an informed decision is to be made the data should be as precise as possible and made available to the public. Please provide the percentages in the final EA.

#23

5. In the Land Use Planning and Zoning on page 52, the report states that N.3rd & Forster could have moderate, long term, direct and indirect adverse impacts on land use planning and zoning. If this is true (and I’m sure it is) then how can this EA possible end with a Finding of NO Significant Impacts? Again this supports the need for an EIS or the choice of a fourth site.

#24

6. Page 52 states (in reference to N.3rd & Forster) that new development in the vicinity of the courthouse would be consistent with the City of Harrisburg, *Panning and Zoning Code*, or appropriate measures to change the zoning would have to undertaken. The statement that no indirect impacts to zoning would occur assumes zoning changes, which may not happen. Therefore the statement is based on a presumption and is incorrect.

#25

7. Page 59: there is a stated consensus that N.3rd & Forster location is unique and that there are no other neighborhoods resembling it. Given that statement, why is it not noted that there is an impact, or at least a potential impact, associated with destroying that unique area?

#26

8. Page 61 states there is ample replacement housing available in the City of Harrisburg, but fails to mention if the replacement housing is comparable in terms of cost, size, location, services, etc. Not all housing is equal and studies should identify if comparable housing is available, not just number of available houses. This may change the level of impact intensity to more than moderate. Please provide an assessment of **comparable** housing available.

#27

9. The EA does not define a clear project area. It only defines the boundaries of the three retained alternatives. Impacts can, and often do, extend beyond the alternative site boundaries. We request GSA define the entire project area, and then annotate the alternative site boundaries within the project area. Affected environment and environmental consequences should be assessed for the entire project area, not just alternative site areas.

#28

10. Page 64. GSA concludes that the removal of the Jackson Lick building would exacerbate the problem of housing for the elderly. However, GSA makes no mention of the possibility of GSA funding (for mitigation) housing for elderly. Many who attended the first scoping sessions heard this promised by GSA. The GSA has regularly built replacement facilities when it needed to destroy building. Why is that option not viable and considered in Harrisburg for the elderly?

#29

11. Page 65, Table 5. Why are unemployment rates for the City of Harrisburg listed as N/A for 2004, 2005? Loss of jobs associated with business destruction (should N.3rd & Forster be selected) will affect the employment rate and should be considered in the decision making as an impact.

#30

12. Page 66. We question how an increase in annual rent of \$9,600 can be considered "moderate". What percentage of increase does this represent, and could this increase result in loss of profits or the business owner's ability to remain operational? Please verify that the business owners consider this cost increase "moderate."

#31

13. Cumulative impacts should assess all reasonable past, present and future trends or actions. To make the statement that there are no cumulative impacts to economy and employment due to business or residential relocations is premature in the absence of a discussion on what the past, present and futures trends have been. At a minimum, the EA should present a description of what businesses, by type, have come and gone or are anticipated to come or go, in order to establish a trend and assess cumulative impacts. Please provide this trend analysis and an informed discussion on the impact of revitalization.

#32

14. It appears that N.3rd & Forster is the only alternative that would result in a loss of commercial taxes to the City. At the April 18, 2006 public meeting, it was stated that the court house would be subject to taxes. Please provide a revised analysis based on the specific taxes that would be paid by the courthouse. There would be a loss to the school district, city and county. What entities would be paid and on what basis?

#33

15. Page 74. The report states that potential lost tax revenue was calculated for the years 2009 through 2012. This is a very short time period. The potential lost tax revenue should be calculated for the duration or life span of the courthouse. The short time frame does not present an accurate assessment of long-term impacts. This is also yet another significant impact that would not support a FONSI.

#34

16. Page 83. Report states the N. 6th & Verbeke alternative would displace residents who rely on bus routes. The same applies to the statement on page 84 regarding residents in the N6th & Basin area. GSA assumes that changing the bus routes would negate this impact. Please verify that GSA has coordinated with Capital Area Transit (CAT) and that CAT is willing and able to relocate bus routes.

#35

17. Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act requires the agency seek and consider the views of the public in a manner that reflects the nature and complexity of the undertaking and its effects on historic properties. To state that comments on Section 106 can be submitted throughout the consultation process with PHMC and ACHP (page 99) passes this responsibly to the PHMC and ACHP. GSA is responsible for this public outreach involving cultural resources. This requirement is separate and in addition to the NE PA public outreach requirement. There is no indication that efforts were made by GSA to contact interested parties or local historical societies. Please provide proof that the PHMC is satisfied that the public involvement requirement of Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act has been met.

#36

18. Section 3.5.2, Historic Structures. Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act requires on-going consultation with the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). Consultation should occur through out the NEPA process and should cover (in order) the following basic steps:

- Identification of historic properties
- Evaluation of National Register eligibility
- Assessment of Effects and
- Resolution of any Adverse Effects.

Appendix B provides a copy of the PHMC (i.e. SHPO) December 5, 2005 letter where they state there was inadequate information provided to assess eligibility or effects. There is no indication that PHMC's request for more adequate information was addressed. Sending a letter with inadequate information does not fulfill the requirements of Section 106. Until historic property eligibility and effects have been concurred with by the SHPO or both GSA and SHPO agree consultation has occurred, the Section 106 process is not complete. In the absence of consultation with the SHPO impacts to historic resources cannot be accurately assessed. To leave out PHMC's contention that adequate information has not been provided is very misleading to the reader and violates both the NEPA and Section 106 requirement for GSA to make diligent efforts to keep the public involved. Based on information provided in the EA, we believe GSA has failed to comply with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. Please provide a letter from the PHMC that the requirements of Section 106 have been met.

#37

19. Impacts to Traffic conditions should be expressed using the standard highway model and measure of Level of Service. As presented, it is very subjective as to what will happen should the courthouse be constructed.

#38

20. Page 122 states that for the N.3rd & Forster site it can be expected that the number of available on-street parking spaces would be greater than the number of visitors trying to park. Table 16 shows a total 199 spaces. This is a very misleading or incorrect statement as the vast majority of spaces (183 out of 199) are 2 to 4 hour metered spaces, and most visitors, and as stated by the footnotes in Table 15, remain more than 2 hours and in 50% of time more than 4 hours. These visitors could not or would not be able to use the 2 or 4-hour meter parking spaces. We do not know when the census of these meters was conducted, but we cannot find anyone who has witnessed even a fraction of that number available on any day a court would be in session.

#39

21. It should be noted that if planned parking expansions are not done or are not complete at the time the courthouse goes into operation, there will be a parking shortage as a result of the additional employees the courthouse is expected to generate. Please explain why the assumption that parking expansion will be in effect is valid. Please also explain why you continue to ignore that the offices vacated when the courts move will be filled by new workers for other federal agencies who will need the spaces to which you contend the moved employees might walk if it were at the N.3rd & Forester site.

#40

22. Page 124, Under Rail it states Lancaster to Harrisburg service and service to E. Mechanicsburg will be operational in mid-2006 and 2007 respectively. Corridor One has had little movement over the years. It will be mid-2006 in 2 months, how can GSA say service will be available? GSA needs to verify this with FRA and PENNDOT.

#41

23. Page 132 states that under the N.3rd & Forster alternative UGI would have difficulty meeting the marginal increase in demand. The same is not true for the other site alternatives, yet all three are assessed at the same level of intensity. Please explain why the level of intensity is deemed equal among the alternatives despite this difference.

#42

24. Cumulative impacts are mentioned (certainly not addressed) for only economic and employment impacts. Cumulative impacts relate to ALL resources, not just the two stated above. GSA has failed to assess the cumulative impacts of the entire project.

#43

25. Section 3.6.11, Mitigation measures for residential and business relocations are discussed for all site alternatives EXCEPT the N.3rd & Forster alternative. Previous sections stated that finding historic homes with the same character or amenities would be difficult. (Many residents would say, by expensive experience trying, it was impossible to find comparable homes.) GSA should state what mitigation is planned for this alternative. If none is planned GSA must state so rather than ignoring that site alternative.

#44

26. Mitigation measure for archeology, historic structures, parking, and water supply are only conceptual or potential. As stated in the General comments section, "If a proposal appears to have adverse effects which would be significant, and certain mitigation

#45

measures are developed during the scoping or EA stages, the existence of such *potential* mitigation does not obviate the need for an EIS.” Based on the information provided, a FONSI cannot be issued and an EIS appears to be warranted.

#45
cont.

27. There is a potential that some of the mitigation or relocation efforts will have secondary or indirect impacts, such as traffic, taxes, etc., to other areas. These secondary impacts must be discussed and disclosed.

#46

28. Throughout the EA GSA states there will be varying degrees of impacts associated with each resource. GSA describes these impacts as negligible, minor, moderate, or major, for the long or short term. Each resource impact is considered independently. Most resource impacts are classified as minor or moderate. However, GSA fails to present the total picture. GSA must make its determination based on the combined or total effect impacts will have on area. To say all impacts were minor to moderate and therefore the project has minor to moderate impacts is incorrect. When all the impacts are added up the end result may be a major impact to the area.

#47

Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on this EA. Should you have any questions or need clarification on any comment, please feel free to contact me. I look forward to your responses.

Sincerely,


Russell H Mueller

Russell Mueller

Response to Comment #1:

The purpose of an Environmental Assessment is to determine if there is potential for significant impacts. The outcome of an Environmental Assessment is typically either a Finding of No Significant Impact or preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement. A Finding of No Significant impact was not presumed with preparation of this Environmental Assessment.

Response to Comment #2:

The Council on Environmental Quality NEPA regulations suggest that Environmental Assessments be 15 pages in length. There is not mandatory page limit for an Environmental Assessment. GSA feels that the information contained in the Environmental Assessment is necessary to fully assess and disclose to the public all potential impacts of the proposed action on the three alternative sites.

Response to Comment #3:

A summary of the public involvement that was undertaken for this project is provided in Section 1.5, Public and Agency Involvement. This public involvement program is commensurate with NEPA requirements. Notices of the scoping meetings and public hearing were published in the Harrisburg Patriot-News and with other media outlets. Copies of the draft Environmental Assessment were distributed to persons who requested a copy, and also to local libraries, public officials and government agencies. The Notice of Availability was published in the Harrisburg Patriot-News on three days and announced the availability of the draft Environmental Assessment at the libraries and on the intranet.

The November 2005 public meetings were held in response to specific comments from residents of the alternative sites requesting individual meetings to answer their questions regarding the site selection and relocation processes. Notices of these meetings were mailed or delivered to all residents of the affected sites. Comment periods were included in the mailings, and if someone was unable to attend a meeting, they were able to provide written comments to be included with the comments from those who attended the meeting.

Response to Comment #4:

A preferred alternative will be identified and only then, and only if appropriate, will a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) be made.

Response to Comment #5:

GSA did not presume that the Environmental Assessment would result in a Finding of No Significant Impact. If a “mitigated Finding of No Significant Impact” is issued under which mitigation is required to reduce an impact below the level of significance, then the finding will provide commitments for conducting such mitigation.

Response to Comment #6:

Impacts can not be measured purely in quantitative form, rather GSA must consider the context and the intensity of the impact. In addition, impacts to some resources, such as community cohesion, can not easily be measured using quantitative formulas or models. Table S-1 Comparison of Anticipated Impacts has been changed from a color coded table to a table of narrative descriptions.

Response to Comment #7:

In accordance with NEPA and its implementing regulations, when the potential significance of impacts is uncertain, an Environmental Assessment is the appropriate form of environmental documentation that should be prepared. If significant impacts that cannot be mitigated come to light during the Environmental Assessment process, an EIS would be required.

Response to Comment #8:

Comment acknowledged.

Response to Comment #9:

The H.C. Peck report is too lengthy to include as an appendix to the Environmental Assessment. The report is part of the NEPA Administrative Record and may be obtained through a Freedom of Information Act Request.

Response to Comment #10:

Comment acknowledged.

Response to Comment #11:

In compliance with 40 CFR 1502.13, GSA has included within the Environmental Assessment a description of the purpose and need for the proposed action. The current U.S. Courthouse lacks the functional capacity for daily courthouse activity.

Response to Comment #12:

The November 2005 public meetings were held in response to specific comments from residents of the alternative sites requesting individual meetings to answer their questions regarding the site selection and relocation processes. Notices of these meetings were mailed or delivered to all residents of the affected sites. Meetings were held for affected residents and property owners of each of the three alternative sites.

Response to Comment #13:

Notice of the November 2005 public meeting was sent to the Harrisburg Friends Meeting. The meeting was well attended by representatives from the Friends and these attendees were given the opportunity to ask questions and provide comments on the proposed action. A second meeting was offered to the Friends as a result of a misunderstanding; however they felt that they had sufficient representation and dialogue at the meeting and did not pursue the additional meeting.

Response to Comment #14:

While GSA has authorization to site the new courthouse within the city limits of Harrisburg, Executive Order 12072 requires that preference be given to sites in areas adjacent to the Central Business District (CBD) and possessing a similar character to the CBD. Although some of the currently short listed sites are outside the CBD, they are close to the CBD and located in areas that are of similar character to the CBD.

Response to Comment #15:

The budget and schedule are in Public Law (PL) 108-199. Congress appropriated \$26,000,000 for site and design in FY04. The current schedule anticipates a FY09 construction appropriation, with occupancy in FY12.

Response to Comment #16:

GSA's review of the alternative sites against the site selection criteria is not part of the Environmental Assessment process and these criteria were provided as background information for the public. The findings of the Environmental Assessment and the impacts of the proposed action are one factor in the decision-making process.

Response to Comment #17:

A detailed description of the site selection criteria is provided in Section 2.2, Site Selection Criteria, of the Environmental Assessment.

Response to Comment #18:

While GSA has authorization to site the new courthouse within the city limits of Harrisburg, Executive Order 12072 requires that preference be given to sites in areas adjacent to the Central Business District (CBD) and possessing a similar character to the CBD. Although some of the currently short listed sites are outside the CBD, they are close to the CBD and located in areas that are of similar character to the CBD.

Response to Comment #19:

The minimum site size is 2.5 acres. The size of the site directly affects how tall the building must be to meet the project requirements. Larger sites are being considered and offer opportunity for a lower building.

Response to Comment #20:

The metrics used to define significance thresholds within the Environmental Assessments are based on National Park Service definitions. These impact descriptors are consistent with NEPA and the CEQ's implementing regulations (40 CFR 1508), and have been used for Environmental

Assessments for GSA and other federal agencies. For the purposes of this Environmental Assessment, a major impact may be indicative of significance under NEPA.

Response to Comment #21:

GSA will not issue a Finding of No Significant Impact for an alternative where impacts can not be mitigated below a level of significance. However, regardless of the site selected and the outcome of the NEPA process, GSA will continually look for ways to minimize even “non-significant” impacts.

Response to Comment #22:

Identification of species of special concern was accomplished through a standard process in Pennsylvania that begins with a PA Natural Diversity Inventory (PNDI) database review. PNDI identifies species that may potentially be present in the project area. The Peregrine falcon was not indicated in the PNDI search. A consultation letter received from the US Fish and Wildlife Service, which has jurisdiction over federally listed threatened and endangered species, did not indicate the presence of the species and stated that no biological assessment nor further consultation with the agency was required.

Response to Comment #23:

The racial and income characteristics of the site residents are provided in the Social Impact Assessment (Appendix C).

Response to Comment #24:

The draft Environmental Assessment does not include nor pre-assumes a Finding of No Significant Impact. However, Under Title 40 CFR Part 1508.14, "Human environment," economic or social effects by themselves are not enough to require preparation of an EIS.

Response to Comment #25:

Impacts to land use surrounding a new courthouse would be subject to City zoning and building approvals. GSA can not predict what decisions the City will make regarding future land use.

Response to Comment #26:

The impact to the unique character of the N. 3rd and Forster Street Alternative is described under land use and zoning (Section 3.4.1.2); and community cohesion (Section 3.4.7.2)

Response to Comment #27:

The availability of housing is based on available “comparable” housing as defined by the Uniform Relocation Act. A comparable replacement dwelling is defined by the Act as a dwelling which is:

- Decent, safe and sanitary;
- Functionally equivalent to the displacement dwelling;
- Adequate in size to accommodate the occupants;
- In an area not subject to unreasonable adverse environmental conditions;
- In a location generally not less desirable than the location of the displaced person's dwelling with respect to public utilities and commercial and public facilities, and reasonably accessible to the person's place of employment;
- On a site that is typical in size for residential development with normal site improvements, including customary landscaping;
- Currently available to the displaced person on the private market or for a person receiving government housing assistance before displacement, a dwelling that may reflect similar government housing assistance; and
- Within the financial means of the displaced person

The requirements of this act were the basis for determining if adequate replacement housing exists for each of the alternate sites.

Response to Comment #28:

As described in the introduction to Chapter 3, “For any one type of resource, the extent of the impact may be the alternative site, the area immediately surrounding the alternative site, or a larger area within the City of Harrisburg. For some resources (such as natural resources), the principal affected environment is primarily the project area; for others (such as transportation), the affected environment may extend to a larger area within the City of Harrisburg.”

Response to Comment #29:

GSA looked at opportunities to make funds available for the construction of new housing. While GSA can not directly construct new housing, the agency has explored funding the construction of housing by another entity. In the end, the available budget did not support the amount of new housing that would need to be created for the displaced population.

Response to Comment #30:

Data for the City of Harrisburg for 2004 and 2005 is not available.

Response to Comment #31:

The rent increase for the six small businesses affected under the N. 3rd and Forster Street Alternative would be \$800 per month. This is a 6 percent increase over current rents. This increase is considered moderate given the increase size and the number of businesses affected.

Response to Comment #32:

The City of Harrisburg's economy has been continually growing since the 1980s and thus there has been a cumulative beneficial impact on the economy. Removal of businesses for construction of the proposed courthouse would have an adverse affect, and would not contribute to the otherwise beneficial cumulative impacts.

Response to Comment #33:

Construction of the new U.S. Courthouse would result in a permanent loss of tax revenue on both the N. 3rd and Forster Street and the N. 6th and Verbeke Street Alternatives. The Government would not pay taxes under any of the build alternatives. However, there would be new taxes generated from employment of construction workers and new court employees as described in Section 3.4.4.3

Response to Comment #34:

Section 3.4.3.3 has been revised to indicate that the loss to the tax base on N. 3rd and Forster as well as the N. 6th and Verbeke Street Alternatives would be considered “permanent” and would not be replaced under the proposed project.

Response to Comment #35:

The draft Environmental Assessment does not indicate that bus routes would change. Rather the draft Environmental Assessment indicates that if residents are not relocated to areas served by mass transit, there would be moderate, long-term, adverse impacts to the residents.

Response to Comment #36:

GSA has undertaken public outreach under Section 106 in conjunction with public outreach under NEPA. All public meeting notices and requests for comments under NEPA have also included requests for comments on cultural resources under Section 106. Section 106 does not require that public outreach be “separate and in addition to” public outreach under NEPA. Rather, Section 106 encourages coordination between NEPA and Section 106 efforts.

Response to Comment #37:

Consultation with the Pennsylvania State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) was initiated on July 5, 2005. GSA has also met with the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP) as part of the Section 106 consultation. As described in Section 3.5, Cultural Environment, GSA is continuing coordination with the SHPO and the ACHP in compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. The steps taken to date as part of this consultation include:

- Submission of Areas of Potential Effect for each of the three alternative sites
- Submission of a Draft Determination of Eligibility of Eligibility and Determination of Effects report to PHMC.
- Submission of a revised Determination of Eligibility of Eligibility and Determination of Effects report addressing PHMC comments.

GSA has developed a list of consulting parties with whom they will coordinate as Section 106 consultation continues after selection of a preferred site for the U.S. Courthouse.

The completion of Section 106 consultation prior to the completion of NEPA is not required under the Section 106 implementing regulations (36 CFR 800), the Council on Environmental Quality's NEPA regulations (40 CFR 1500-1508), or GSA's Administrative Order ADM 1095F.

Response to Comment #38:

Levels of service have not been calculated for the proposed action due to the numerous access points into and out of the downtown area; the relatively insignificant number of trips generated by the courthouse in relation to the overall amount of traffic entering or exiting the city during the peak hours; and the dispersion of parking areas throughout the downtown.

Response to Comment #39:

The text in the Environmental Assessment has been revised to note that on-street parking is adequate for visitors coming to the courthouse for four hours or less.

Response to Comment #40:

The Environmental Assessment does not assume that new parking will be added. The document indicates that with existing parking there will be a moderate, direct, long-term, adverse impact to parking availability. GSA does not have plans to increase employment at the Ronald Reagan Federal Building at this time. If employment increases are planned in the future, these actions would be covered under separate NEPA analysis.

Response to Comment #41:

The Environmental Assessment has been revised to indicate that service between Harrisburg and Lancaster is now anticipated in 2008.

Response to Comment #42:

The Environmental Assessment indicates that under all of the alternatives there would be a moderate, direct, short-term, adverse impact due to the cost of relocation. However, the document indicates that there would be no impact to the systems under the N. 6th and Verbeke Street and the N. 6th and Basin Street Alternatives because pressure of those sites is adequate.

The document indicates that there would be a moderate impact under the N. 3rd and Forster Street Alternative because the low pressure system would need to be upgraded.

Response to Comment #43:

Cumulative effects have been assessed in Chapter 3 for all resources.

Response to Comment #44:

Section 3.6.11 discusses the residential and business relocation process under the Uniform Relocation Act for all of the alternative sites. Additional mitigation measures are presented for the N. 6th and Verbeke Street and N. 6th and Basin Street Alternatives because of the additional impacts on the residents of those sites.

Response to Comment #45:

If a “mitigated Finding of No Significant Impact” is issued under which mitigation is required to reduce an impact below the level of significance, then the finding will provide commitments for conducting such mitigation.

Response to Comment #46:

It is not anticipated that any of the mitigation measures described in Section 3.6.11 would have indirect impacts on other resources.

Response to Comment #47:

GSA will consider all of the impacts described in the Environmental Assessment in their entirety in determining whether the project qualifies for a Finding of No Significant Impact.

May 3, 2006

Abby Low
Project Manager
U.S. General Services Administration
20 N 8th Street
Philadelphia, PA 19107

Dear Ms. Low:

Please register my objections to the proposed locations for the new federal courthouse to be located in Harrisburg.

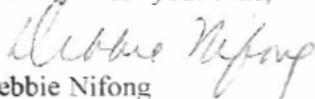
Harrisburg has worked very, very hard for the past two decades to become once again an attractive city with inviting downtown locations for people to live, work, and entertain themselves.

It seems completely unnecessary to uproot residents and businesses to provide space for a replacement courthouse when alternative locations and vacant lots are available within the city. I am sure that not many of them meet the particular needs of a courthouse, not least among those needs being ample room for security measures, but a mutually beneficial site to both the city and the federal government can be found.

Of MUTUAL BENEFIT should be the basis for choosing the site; neither side should proclaim to be more important; neither side should wield the upper hand.

Harrisburg has created plans for redeveloping the South 3rd Street area including access to Interstate 83. The federal government should look seriously at this opportunity to partner with their local hosts.

Thank you for your time,


Debbie Nifong

#1

Debbie Nifong

Response to Comment #1:

GSA has met with City officials and reviewed plans for the Gateway area. This proposed development is located within a floodplain and would not be completed in the time frame in which a new courthouse is needed. Therefore, construction of the U.S. Courthouse in this area would not be feasible.

Fox Ridge Neighbors, Inc.

May 9, 2006

U.S. General Services Administration, Mid-Atlantic Region
Attention: Abby Low, Project Manager
20 N. 8th Street
Philadelphia, PA 19107-3191

Dear Ms. Low:

As residents of the Old Fox Ridge Historic District, we would register our objection to any of the potential sites identified for construction of the federal courthouse. However, it appears the die has been cast and sites less disruptive to the social and economic fabric of the city will not be considered.

#1

Of the three identified sites, we have grave concerns regarding the impact selection of the N. 6th and Verbeke or, to a lesser degree, the N 6th and Basin sites will have on our neighborhood.

#2

We are especially troubled the General Services Administration has not actively sought the participation of residents *adjacent* to any of the proposed locations. Indeed, GSA has downplayed the long-term, arguably *significant and direct* adverse impact a federal facility will impose on adjacent neighborhoods. The draft environmental assessment only makes passing reference to the effect the courthouse will have:

#3

“Indirect, long-term, moderate, adverse impacts to population and housing may occur if residential properties in the vicinity of the alternative sites are converted to commercial uses compatible with the courthouse.” - GSA Draft Environmental Assessment, April 6, 2006

The small size of Harrisburg’s midtown neighborhoods makes them particularly vulnerable to incompatible development. Effects are long-term and adverse.

We are especially appalled by the designation of the Forster and Third alternative since that would entail destruction of a culturally and economically diverse neighborhood in many ways similar to Old Fox Ridge. Indeed, if the federal government can blithely demolish a National Register Historic district, where are the protections for other historic districts? Who will be next?

#4

If we are to have livable cities, it makes no sense to destroy neighborhoods like the one located at Third and Forster that contribute immeasurably to the charm and ambiance of Pennsylvania’s capital.

#5

Further, the very *designation* of an area for governmental offices can have a deleterious, long-term, impact.

In the 1970’s, our neighborhood experienced the threat of demolition for expansion of the state office complex. Now, some 30 years later, the adverse effects of that failed proposal are still being felt. During the period when the neighborhood faced a doubtful future, many properties fell into the hands of unscrupulous real estate speculators. Several blighted properties remain in their hands.

#6

Fox Ridge Neighbors, Inc. response to draft environmental assessment

The on-street parking evaluation in the environmental assessment strikes us as wildly optimistic and laughably naïve. We note our neighborhood, in whole or in part, was included in the parking survey for all three proposed sites.

We would point out our neighborhood is zoned residential parking. There are those of us who recall the days before the residential parking designation when commuters would slowly circle the neighborhood to claim any available space. We have no intention of returning to that era.

#7

Despite the assessment's conclusion "*on-street parking availability appears to be adequate,*" we challenge that finding based on the fact it appears residential parking was included in the optimistic estimation that "*approximately 200 on-street parking spaces were available within the on-street parking evaluation boundary for this (N. 6th and Verbeke) site.*"

Should either site north of Forster St. be selected, we have concerns about pedestrians crossing a street that at some points spans five lanes. Forster St. has only two designated crosswalks three blocks apart and most pedestrians will not walk that far out of their way to a crosswalk. That fact, coupled with habitual speeders, a blind corner at Messiah Lutheran Church and crosswalk signals on a very short cycle have conspire to render Forster a very dangerous street to cross.

#8

A federal courthouse north of Forster combined with a lack of parking will result in marked increase in pedestrian traffic. Visitors may not be aware of the dangers in crossing Forster. We urge GSA to take a more holistic approach than has been evident thus far. Projects of this magnitude have a ripple effect far beyond the boundaries of whatever location is ultimately selected. Efforts must be undertaken with the state and city to render Forster Street more hospitable to pedestrians.

Should the 6th and Verbeke site be selected, we also have concerns regarding the design of the facility. These concerns include but are not limited to: demolition, noise, height, mass, setbacks, lighting, materials, service entrances, security provisions and landscaping.

#9

We are also concerned with additional traffic patterns the courthouse will impose on our streets.

#10

Certainly construction of a courthouse will have an immediate effect on those living in any of the alternate sites. However, those of us left behind will face the long-term effects of a federal courthouse as a neighbor.

#11

Although we hope GSA will work with us to mitigate adverse effects inherent in this project, we are far from confident that will be the case.

#12

Sincerely,



Ted W. Hanson, President
Fox Ridge Neighbors, Inc.

Fox Ridge Neighbors, Inc.

Response to Comment #1:

Comment acknowledged.

Response to Comment #2:

Comment acknowledged.

Response to Comment #3:

Public scoping meetings were held in July 2005, and a public hearing was held on April 18, 2006. All interested parties had opportunity to attend these meetings and provide written comments. These meetings were advertised in a local newspaper (Harrisburg Patriot-News) with circulation to the general public.

Development of adjacent areas would require a change in the current zoning, and GSA can not predict what the city will do.

Response to Comment #4:

Comment acknowledged. GSA is required to comply with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, which involves identifying historic properties, assessing effects of the undertaking to historic properties, and determining appropriate measures to mitigate for adverse effects through consultation with the State Historic Preservation Office. Consultation with the Pennsylvania State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) was initiated on July 5, 2005. GSA has also met with the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP) as part of the Section 106 consultation. As described in Section 3.5, Cultural Environment, GSA is continuing coordination with the SHPO and the ACHP in compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act.

Response to Comment #5:

Comment acknowledged.

Response to Comment #6:

Comment acknowledged.

Response to Comment #7:

Residential parking, which is discussed in Section 3.6.2 as “Permit Parking”, was not included in the on-street parking evaluation in Tables 16, 17, and 18.

Response to Comment #8:

Comment acknowledged.

Response to Comment #9:

Comment acknowledged.

Response to Comment #10:

Comment acknowledged.

Response to Comment #11:

Comment acknowledged.

Response to Comment #12:

Comment acknowledged.

Ethel E. Saauer

5/8/06

To: Abby Low, GSA

I am writing in regards to the new Federal Court House proposed for Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. Although, I do not live in the three sites considered, I have to write in protect of them. People have homes and living in them and there are businesses in these areas and these are not “slum” areas so it doesn’t make sense to me to uproot people for a courthouse when there are plenty of vacant sites in this city. The State closed the State Hospital on N. Cameron Street and there are acres of land there with easy access to Interstate 81, why not use that area?

#1

I have lived in Harrisburg since 1952 and I have seen it go from good to bad and now back to good again. Please consider my suggestions!

Respectfully,

Ethel E. Saauer

Ethel E. Saauer

Response to Comment #1:

While GSA has authorization to site the new courthouse within the city limits of Harrisburg, Executive Order 12072 requires that preference be given to sites in areas adjacent to the Central Business District (CBD) and possessing a similar character to the CBD. Although some of the currently short listed sites are outside the CBD, they are close to the CBD and located in areas that are of similar character to the CBD.

ZSHCDM Operating Committee
2701 North Third Street
Harrisburg, PA 17110

May 11, 2006

United States General Services Administration
20 North 8th Street, 9th Floor
Philadelphia, PA 19107

VIA USPS – Certified Mail

Attention: Ms. Abby Low, Project Manager

Re: Proposed United States Courthouse
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania

Dear Ms. Low:

This letter is written and postmarked within the mandated period for comments on your agency's draft Environmental Assessment of possible sites for the proposed United States Courthouse project. The signatories to this letter include the two fee simple titleholders of a site containing 12 contiguous acres of land (four square blocks) in Harrisburg's uptown neighborhood, together with their development co-venturer. We are working with a real estate planning and development consultant, Powers & Associates, LLC.

The site we propose is bounded by Division Street on the north, Wiconisco Street on the south, Fourth Street on the east and Susquehanna Street on the west. It consists of four parcels containing occupied, non-residential buildings that are the headquarters of two fraternal organizations, the Zembo Shrine and the Harrisburg Scottish Rite Consistory. It is supported by two and one-half square blocks of surface parking lots.

For more than seventy years, the site has been part of a de facto institutional district together with its neighbors, Pinnacle Health Hospitals (4.5 acre Polyclinic Medical Center located south of Polyclinic Avenue) and Penn Center Harrisburg (6.5 acre commercial office park located north of Polyclinic Avenue and formally a part of Polyclinic Medical Center). The site and its neighbors have been the home to a 350+ bed hospital and two fraternal organizations, Zembo Mosque and Scottish Rite Consistory. The existing neighborhood infrastructure and local roadways have supported thousands of daily visitors to the area over the past seventy years.

It behooves your agency to give serious consideration to expanding the draft Environmental Assessment process to include the site we are presenting.

Telephone: (717)238-8867 - FAX (717)238-4596

#1

Although GSA has been engaged in the search for a new courthouse for sometime and some would say that the hour for considering any new sites has passed, a bit of perspective would be in order. Construction of the project is to begin in 2009 and occupancy is contemplated in 2012. A current proposed project budget has been set at \$102+ million. The three sites GSA has assessed are problematic. They all fall short in meeting the numerous technical and practical criteria set out by your agency. The existing Ronald Reagan Federal Building and Courthouse has been in service for 50 years. The replacement location you are developing will be in service for 50 - 100 years. There should be no rush to incur an enormous expenditure by the federal government that will not achieve the interior and exterior security goals that are so critical for judicial administration and operations. Selection of any of the three identified sites will entail the emotional and financial dislocation of hundreds for individuals and businesses. The site we offer dislocates not one person or business and entails only two acquisitions..

#1
cont.

The purpose of this letter is to invite serious and open-minded consideration of a site within the City of Harrisburg that is approximately one mile from the central business district.

We believe the site offered poses an exciting opportunity to the federal government to meet its courthouse requirements, to enhance the administration of justice, to be fiscally responsible, to be proactive in advancing the interests of the City of Harrisburg, and to avoid the unnecessary infliction of hurtful consequences on individuals and neighborhoods.

We look forward to your agency's determination that an assessment of our site is warranted. Until further notice, Samuel R. Andrews, Secretary, Harrisburg Scottish Rite Consistory, A.A.S.R., will serve as liaison for the site owners. You may contact Mr. Andrews by telephone at (717)238-8867 or by writing to him at 2701 North Third Street, Harrisburg, PA 17110.

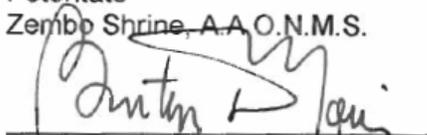
Sincerely,



Sherman J. Edwards
Potentate
Zembo Shrine, A.A.O.N.M.S.



Frank J. DeStefano, Jr.
1st LT Commander
Harrisburg Consistory, A.A.S.R.



Burton D. Morris
Partner, Daley/Morris Partners

ZSHCDM Operating Committee

Response to Comment #1:

The site proposed in the commenter's letter, bounded by Division Street on the north, Wiconisco Street on the south, Fourth Street on the east, and Susquehanna Street on the west is located partially within the 100-year floodplain and remote from downtown Harrisburg. The site proposed also has historic buildings on site. Therefore, this site would not meet GSA's requirements for the proposed U.S. Courthouse.

While GSA has authorization to site the new courthouse within the city limits of Harrisburg, Executive Order 12072 requires that preference be given to sites in areas adjacent to the Central Business District (CBD) and possessing a similar character to the CBD. Although some of the currently short listed sites are outside the CBD, they are close to the CBD and located in areas that are of similar character to the CBD.



United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
Northeast Region
United States Custom House
200 Chestnut Street
Philadelphia, PA 19106

IN REPLY REFER TO:

May 8, 2006

ER-06/0364

Abby Low, Project Manager
General Services Administration, Mid-Atlantic Region
20 N. 8th Street
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19107-3191

Subject: Draft Environmental Impact Assessment for the Proposed U.S. Courthouse, Harrisburg
Pennsylvania (ER-06/0364)

Dear Ms Low:

This is in response to a request for the Department of the Interior's (Department) review and comment on the Draft Environmental Assessment for the Proposed U.S. Courthouse, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. We offer the following comments on this project for your consideration.

General Comments

The draft environmental impact assessment includes an assessment of the potential effects of the project on cultural resources for each of the three alternatives identified for consideration. Properties listed on or determined eligible for the National Register of Historic Places within the proposed construction areas as well as the area of potential effect are identified and discussed. Potential of the alternative sites for the presence of historic archeological resources is also considered. Based on the information presented in the assessment, the North 6th Street and Basin Street Alternative appears to have the least impact on architectural resources both in terms of historic structures that would be demolished for the new construction and visual impacts of the new courthouse on historic districts and buildings. Archeological test excavations will be required to assess for the presence and nature of archeological resources on each of the alternative sites to determine if resources exist that require evaluation for eligibility and mitigation.

#1

Specific Comments

Pg. 100: N. 6th and Basin Street:

We suggest that the presence of the J.H. Santo Coal and Wood Yard on Parcel 17 could possibly have resulted in a limited amount of ground disturbance in the southeast portion of the North 6th Street and Basin Street Alternative due to the nature of this type of business enterprise. Either

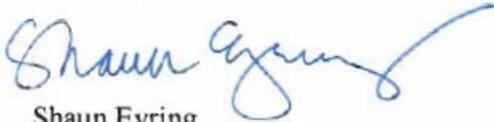
#2

prehistoric or historic archeological resources might have a greater potential for preservation here than in other areas of more intensive urban construction. We suggest that GSA assess this possibility with the Pennsylvania State Historic Preservation Officer in your continuing Section 106 consultations.

#2
cont.

Should you have any questions regarding these comments, please contact Lloyd Chapman at (215) 597-2334 or at lloyd_chapman@nps.gov. We appreciate the opportunity to provide these comments.

Sincerely,



Shaun Eyring
Manager, Resource Planning and Compliance

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service
Northeast Region**

Response to Comment #1:

Comment acknowledged.

Response to Comment #2:

GSA is assessing affects to archaeological and historic resources, in consultation with the the Pennsylvania Historical Museum Commission (PHMC), in compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. Consultation with the Pennsylvania State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) was initiated on July 5, 2005. GSA has also met with the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP) as part of the Section 106 consultation. As described in Section 3.5, Cultural Environment, GSA is continuing coordination with the SHPO and the ACHP in compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act.

DAUPHIN COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

DAUPHIN COUNTY COURTHOUSE - HARRISBURG, PENNSYLVANIA 17101

STAFF OFFICE
112 Market Street, 2nd Floor
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17101-2015
Telephone 717 234-2639
Fax 717-234-4058
e-mail: planning@tcrc-pa.org

May 1, 2006

General Services Administration, Mid- Atlantic Region
Attn: Abby Low, Project Manager
20 N. 8th Street
Philadelphia, PA 19107-3191

Re: DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT FOR THE PROPOSED U.S.
COURTHOUSE in HARRISBURG, PA

Dear Ms. Low,

At its May 1, 2006 meeting, the Dauphin County Planning Commission had the opportunity to review the draft Environmental Assessment for the proposed US Courthouse in Harrisburg.

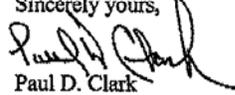
The Commission is aware of the statements made in the EA that while the building will be exempt from local zoning regulations, local officials will be given the opportunity to "review" site and building plans for code compliance (page vi). The Commission truly hopes the choice will be made with consideration to local concerns and not one of government convenience. After reviewing the document the Commission offers the following comments:

1. The City of Harrisburg has made strides to expand its downtown to use vacant land. Consideration should be given to site location at the southern end of Harrisburg, including the area to be made accessible with implementation of the Southern Gateway project. The Southern Gateway project will make buildable land more accessible within close proximity to Harrisburg's downtown. The Gateway project is a major transportation project supported by the MPO to alleviate congestion and enhance the City's southern entrance. In addition, there is significant buildable land within the City environs south of Interstate 83. The issue of buildings in the floodplain is not against any regulations if built to floodplain standards. Functional office space could readily be built above any potential flooding situation, with buildings constructed to allow flooding to mitigate through any ground level facility (i.e. PennDOT Riverfront Office Complex). A location in this area would minimize any impacts to existing neighborhoods and further the City's goals and objectives of expansion. The "minor, indirect, adverse impact on court operations" (p.43) from periodic flooding would significantly outweigh any "indirect, long-term, moderate adverse impacts" which may occur to population and housing under any of the three suggested locations (pp.62-64).

2. There are concerns regarding the loss of housing units at all three sites, particularly N. 6th and Basin (Jackson Lick Apartments) and the ability, or lack thereof, of tenants/owners to find suitable affordable replacement housing in the City. Any displaced residents should be afforded all needed services in relocating and establishing new living arrangements; to include dwelling, transportation, and meal and medical services for the elderly and/or disabled currently being provided these services. #2
3. There is concern over the number of businesses that would be displaced at the 3rd & Forster site and their ability to relocate to affordable and accessible replacement sites in the City. If these businesses leave the City, there adverse economic impacts are likely. #3
4. At the N.6th & Basin site, Bethesda Mission reports there are Jackson Lick residents who take meals at the Mission. Displacement and the loss of this option could have an adverse impact on the elderly residents. #4
5. The Commission disagrees there would be a short-term, moderate adverse impact to the community surrounding the N.3rd and Foster site. We believe this would be a long-term, major impact on this neighborhood, considering the loss of buildings of historical architectural significance, loss of neighborhood cohesiveness, impact of large-scale building into a small-scale building neighborhood, and the potential demand for future ancillary office and commercial development in close proximity to the courthouse. The latter would only compound and intensify the prior mentioned adverse impacts. The 3rd & Forster site would require the removal of historic buildings causing an extra step in the planning process. #5
6. There may be economic benefits to locating the courthouse near the Broad Street Market. The spin-off benefits of federal employees and users of the courthouse could potential add to the sales at the historic marketplace #6
7. Concerns about the lack of available off-street parking for employees and visitors to all three sites. This concern would be heightened by the development of ancillary office and commercial development in close proximity to the courthouse. While it would improve one's health, in the Commission's thoughts it is unreasonable, to require employees to walk up to six blocks from their existing parking arrangements to a new job location (3rd & Forster). It is expected a parking facility dedicated to the federal courthouse would eventually be desired and constructed, causing additional loss of taxable property. #7
8. Potentially, an agreement with Capital Area Transit to provide a shuttle service to any chosen location could be feasible. CAT has a history of working with employers to meet the needs of employees. This could be an opportunity for a win-win situation. #8
9. A recent agreement among various parties has forestalled any commuter rail service to Cumberland County for any time in the near future. Service by 2007 as reported in the EA (p. 125) is incorrect. #9

The Dauphin County Planning Commission recommends the GSA reexamine its locational criteria paying particular attention to available and buildable sites at the southern end of Harrisburg City. These locations offer the least impacts on existing residential and commercial land uses and offer opportunities to develop an attractive facility more beneficial than detrimental to the City. Excluding these locations, the Planning Commission recommends the GSA place primary emphasis on the long-term, adverse impacts to residents and use or develop programs to mitigate these impacts for a longer period of time. Thank you for the opportunity to review the draft environmental assessment. Should there be any questions concerning this review, please contact Tim Reardon, AICP, Associate Director at the staff offices.

Sincerely yours,


Paul D. Clark
Chairman

#10

Dauphin County Planning Commission

Response to Comment #1:

Site selection factors are described in Section 2.2.1. GSA must consider factors such as floodplains in compliance with Executive Orders and other regulations. Resources are not weighed against one another in an Environmental Assessment. One resource does not have more or less importance than another. The Environmental Assessment has been prepared to provide the decision makers with complete information on all of the potential impacts of the proposed action.

Response to Comment #2:

Comment acknowledged.

Response to Comment #3:

Comment acknowledged.

Response to Comment #4:

Comment acknowledged.

Response to Comment #5:

Comment acknowledged.

Comment #6:

Comment acknowledged.

Comment #7:

Impacts to parking are described in Section 3.6.2 of the Environmental Assessment

Comment #8:

GSA will coordinate with CAT after a site has been selected.

Comment #9:

Information on planned commuter rail service has been updated in the Environmental Assessment.

Comment #10:

Table 1 in Environmental Assessment provides a list of sites that were considered for the project and a summary of the reasons the sites were not chosen for further analysis after site evaluation screening. Mitigation measures are discussed in Section 3.6.11 of the Environmental Assessment. GSA will continue to look for ways to mitigate impacts to residents and the City of Harrisburg during the design and construction of the new courthouse.

Robert L. Deibler

I am dismayed with the GSA handling of the site selection for the proposed Harrisburg Courthouse. When we ask questions, we get generalities; for example, in your release you state a five member committee will make the final site selection; who precisely are these people?

#1

Your Environmental Assessment says practically nothing: Counting parking meters, restaurants, businesses, and homes does little to evaluate the impact upon the people affected. You gloss over the impact construction would have on areas adjacent to the selected site. What happens to the shop owner with a shop on a street which would be closed for the duration of construction and razing of existing buildings?

#2

With so many other sites on which to build without eradicating communities of people, it appears to me to be simply another case of government running roughshod over people. It's another case of abuse of eminent domain. A man's home was once his castle; now it's his castle unless the government wants it for a courthouse located where its judges can walk to restaurants for lunch.

#3

I have no trust in the fairness in this site selection nor in the integrity of the selection committee.

Robert L. Deibler

Response to Comment #1:

The five member committee is comprised of a federal court judge in Harrisburg, three GSA officials from Philadelphia, and one GSA official from Washington. The committee is advised and supported by additional U.S. Courts personnel, the U.S. Marshal Service, and additional GSA officials from both Washington and Philadelphia. The committee will provide a recommendation on the final site to the GSA Regional Administrator of the Mid-Atlantic Region who will have final approval of the site.

Response to Comment #2:

Under the N. 3rd and Forster Street Alternative, Susquehanna Street between Forster and North Streets; Briggs Street between N. 3rd and Green Streets; and several alleys would be permanently closed for construction of the U.S. Courthouse. These streets and alleys primarily serve residents and business owners located on the N. 3rd and Forster Street Alternative and are not often used for through traffic. While there may be temporary lane closures for construction, , GSA does not foresee closing any streets for the duration of construction.

Comment #3:

Comment acknowledged.

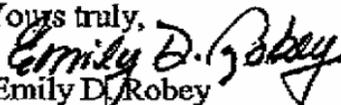
U.S. General Services Administration
Attention: Abby Low, Project Manager
20 N. 8th Street
Philadelphia, PA 19107

Dear Ms. Low,

At this stage of the assessment process, would it not be productive to have a question and answer forum to address specific concerns of residents, parishoners and business owners? The sheer volume of the draft EA makes it easy to overlook the details of the impact on each of the proposed sites.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Yours truly,



Emily D. Robey

#1

Emily D. Robey

Response to Comment #1:

GSA will be meeting with residents of the preferred alternative prior to final site selection.

Comment #2

Comment acknowledged.

David R. Hoffman
1108 Green Street
Harrisburg, PA 17102

717-232-7926
email: traugott@epix.net

April 20, 2006

US General Services Administration
Attn: Abby Low, Project Manager
20 N. Eighth Street
Philadelphia, PA 17107

Ms. Low:

Herewith, my comments on the sites under consideration for a new courthouse in Harrisburg:

--**Downtown (Third-Forster-Green-North).** Selection of this site would do the most serious damage to Harrisburg. The City must retain and expand its downtown residential housing to attract middle- and upper-income residents if it is ever to become a vibrant community able to stand on its own without heavy dependence on suburban neighbors. Your own study indicates that the residents of this site choose to live here because of their proximity to business, offices, restaurants, entertainment, and the like. These are people who are mobile but opt to live where they can walk to many venues. Were they to be displaced, there is no comparable housing stock in the city not already occupied and available to them within walking distance of downtown. Selection of this site would not only displace its residents, but also would downgrade the values of residential property along the west side of Green Street and retard the development of the south side of North Street. Further, selection of this site would deprive the City and School District of significant property taxes. If these residents and businesses are forced to relocate elsewhere in the city, they will move only to properties already on the tax rolls, and there will be no relief to the City and School District, and the net result will be that the rest of us in the city will have to pay more in taxes because the property of these homeowners and businesses will be taken off the tax rolls.

#1

--**Cumberland Court Apartments.** Selection of this site will displace a viable community whose residents do, according to your study, take advantage of opportunities afforded them in their neighborhood and elsewhere in the city. This is privately-owned property, on the tax rolls, and is one of the cleanest and quietest, crime-free low-income neighborhoods in the City. There is no comparable housing available for these residents. If selected for the courthouse, it will deprive the City (and School District) of revenue, requiring an increase in the tax for the balance of the residents of the City.

#2

--**Jackson-Lick Apartments.** If the courthouse *must* be built and must be built on one of these three sites this is the preferred one. High-rise public housing as a concept has been discredited for some time. One of the towers has been vacant for years. According to your study, the

#3

residents of the other tower tend not to take advantage of their location, participating in very few activities outside their own residence. New -- and not high-rise -- housing could be constructed by HUD for these residents in the vacant area along Sixth Street, beginning at Riley, equally convenient to bus routes, the Health Center, and the Broad Street Market.. Finally, this property is not on the tax rolls and GSA's selection of it would not adversely affect the taxpayers of the City (and School District).

#3
cont.

I urge you to reject the Downtown and Cumberland Court Apartments sites as possible sites for a new courthouse for Harrisburg.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "David R. H. H." with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

David R. Hoffman

Response to Comment #1:

Comment acknowledged.

Response to Comment #2:

Comment acknowledged.

Response to Comment #3:

Comment acknowledged.

Melva L. Robison

Please do not tear down Cumberland Court. For the past 5 ½ years I've been living here and since I work at Goodwill on Cameron Street I can walk to not only my job, but I have easy access to my doctor's office, downtown, etc. Plus CAT bus Services run both on 6th Street and 3rd Street. I really love my home, so please try to find another place to build the Courthouse!

#1

Thank you!!

Melva L. Robison

Response to Comment #1:

Comment acknowledged.

Frances Iles

From an older citizen: out of our neighborhood.

| #1

Frances Iles

Response to Comment #1:

Comment acknowledged.

233 Briggs Street
Harrisburg, PA 17102
April 30, 2006

U. S. General Services Administration, Mid-Atlantic Region
Attention: Abby Low, Project Manager
20 N. 8th Street
Philadelphia, PA 19107-3191

Dear Ms. Low,

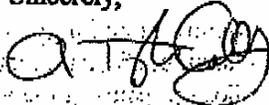
Many speakers at the public hearing of April 18, 2006 reminded GSA representatives that, by tearing down people's neighborhoods, you are actually tearing down people's lives. All neighborhoods have histories of the residents' mutual love and support. Let me give you a recent example from the Capitol Area Neighbors (CAN), which contains the proposed site at 3rd and Forster Sts.

In June, 2004 a CAN family gave birth to their second child. The baby soon became jaundiced, the result of a dysfunctional liver. After several operations of increasing severity, it was determined that the baby needed a liver transplant. Last October, after an unsuccessful operation in which the baby's body rejected the donated liver of a deceased infant, a live donor was deemed necessary or the baby would die within five days. Neither parent, nor any relative, had a compatible blood type. Three Capitol Area Neighbors offered our livers. My wife's liver was selected by the team of transplant surgeons. Her liver donation saved the baby's life. Throughout the ordeal, the baby's parents kept the Capitol Area Neighbors informed of progress via frequent emails and phone calls. Dozens of neighbors, including a good many living in the proposed site, gave generous donations and continue giving moral support to the baby's family to help them rebuild their disrupted lives.

... And you are considering tearing down part of our neighborhood, displacing and separating many of the people who have become extended family by way of this crisis.

The purpose of this account is not to try and save the 3rd and Forster site by suggesting that either one of the other sites be sacrificed. It is to appeal to the spirit of humanity in the hearts of the GSA decision-makers. How can you, agents of the United States government, be so callous as to uproot residents of any neighborhood rather than build the courthouse on vacant and/or blighted land?

Sincerely,



A. Tyler Cowell, Jr.
Capitol Area Neighbors

#1

A. Tyler Cowell, Jr.

Response to Comment #1:

Comment acknowledged.

Carol Cole

Dear Ms. Abby Low (project manager new federal courthouse site),

I live in Cumberland Court, 1 of the 3 proposed sites that are being under consideration to be torn down to be replaced by a new federal building. I understand the need for a new federal building that is more secure. However, my daughter and I have lived here for 10 years. I like where I live because I do not have a car and can't afford one on my income if I am to provide my child with the other things she need or sometimes wants and where I live is within walking distance of my work and my daughter's school, Math and Science Academy for 5th to 8th grade, a sort of charter school for special school within the school district that gifted students get elected for attend and if they succeed there in 9th grade will automatically go to the new Science High Tech School Mayor Reed created that is an extremely successful high school that's in partnership with the business community and colleges and that also is within walking distance of where we live, as is riverfront part, city island and two major museums that are the major recreational sights I take my daughter to, which is why I moved where I did. I like being right downtown within walking distance of these places since I don't have a car. With the money I make it would be too expensive to ride a bus everywhere. Yet I wouldn't want to be moved out of my neighborhood, a relatively quiet area within walking distance of everything to the extreme central downtown restaurant row which is so packed full of noisy bars and nightclubs and where the rent is an extreme \$500 for a 1 bedroom apartment as compared to an affordable \$375 a month for a 2 bedroom where I live now. My income can't afford that. Nor would I want to seek a section 8 and have to live where someone tells me I have to live which may be farther walking distance that I'm at now where I can walk my daughter to school and then walk to work from there especially if there is a snow blizzard because my custodial job also make it mandatory for us to work during snow because part of the job is snow removal. Please don't uproot my family and move me farther from my job and my daughter's school. We also live in walking distance of the downtown library where my daughter needs access to do reports and papers she has to type a lot for her school because we don't yet have a computer at home. Plus the library is a safe place for my daughter to go to and work on her school reports an projects until I get off work and if she need to go there after school ever, I can walk there right after work to meet her and also the bus is right near the corner where we live that takes my daughter to the family day car she goes to in the summer time. The government should think about families because if they save the families it makes better communities with lower crime rates, etc. If we keep families intact as much as possible and don't interfere with their way of life that causes emotional and psychological stress, especially on a child if they were to be uprooted not knowing where they would go next when they had roots in their community and their schools are there, etc.

#1

Please pray for these children and families and think about them before you make a decision. I heard there is vacant, ready to develop land along North 6th Street between Reily and MacClay Streets. Why not use that land instead of displacing people? How would our children trust the government if the government would put law-abiding hard working citizens out of their homes they've worked to pay the rent on for years? I trust you will be a wise enough person to think of these things and to do what is in the best interest of all the families in our community.

#2

Why not choose the vacant ready to develop land along North 6th Street between Reily and MacClay Streets instead of displacing families who've had a steady home life for 10 years?

#3

Would you want your family and children uprooted from where you lived at 10-12 years if you had a family and children?

#4

Thank you for saving the families now! Government should help keep families intact! I'm so concerned about the future of my family of my child with this proposed new federal court site and possible removal of people from their homes!

#5

Thank you so much.
Sincerely,
Carol Cole

Carol Cole

Response to Comment #1:

Comment acknowledged.

Response to Comment #2:

The vacant lot, currently a surface parking facility at 7th and Reily, is more than adequate in size. Vacant lots were either not of sufficient size or, if of adequate size, not considered because sites north of Reily Street were deemed too remote from commercial markets and other amenities. While GSA has authorization to site the new courthouse within the city limits of Harrisburg, Executive Order 12072 requires that preference be given to sites in areas adjacent to the Central Business District (CBD) and possessing a similar character to the CBD. Although some of the currently short listed sites are outside the CBD, they are close to the CBD and located in areas that are of similar character to the CBD.

Response to Comment #3:

See response to comment #2 above.

Response to Comment #4:

Comment acknowledged.

Response to Comment #5:

Comment acknowledged.

Kay Pickering

US General Services Administration
Attention: Abby Low, Project Manager
20 North Eighth Street
Philadelphia, PA 19107-3191

Dear Ms. Low:

The comments in this letter reflect my response to the Draft Environmental Assessment dated April 6, 2006. I am a member of Harrisburg Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends and a full time Housing Counselor at the Harrisburg Center for Peace & Justice.

The Federal Government is and has been a vital player in the revitalization of the City of Harrisburg. There are multiple Federal agencies that have direct ongoing fiscal relationships with the City of Harrisburg. I implore the GSA to be a team player. This is an opportunity that will be viewed in a positive way by cities and states around the country.

#1

The City and other local entities such as Harrisburg Area Community College, local businesses and the State government are planning and proceeding with the development of the Mid-town area. (See enclosed article on HACCC Plan) I have been actively engaged in the GSA process and am opposed to the taking of any of the proposed three sites.

#2

Please review the attached three newspaper articles that summarize the position of Harrisburg residents. Over 40 years ago the City of Harrisburg had a vision of a better life for residents at 6th and Verbeke Street. Homes were torn down and the Cumberland Court Apartment complex was constructed with the assistance of State and Federal dollars. This is considered a very desirable place to live and raise children. I have observed a lack of involvement in this GSA process by the residents of Cumberland Court. They are feeling victimized. Many individuals work long hours at low paying jobs and have little time for anything else. Others are elderly or disabled and unable to be mobile. They are all disenfranchised, undereducated and intimidated by this GSA process.

#3

In the past, several Federal programs have helped to create affordable rental housing. In recent years those programs have stagnated and support has decreased. My clients, who are single men & women find the Harrisburg Public Housing program closed to them. The Section 8 Program in Harrisburg has come to a virtual standstill. I directly challenge the statement in the Draft EA that says landlords are eager to rent to tenants with Section 8 vouchers. Clients of mine have been on waiting lists for 2 to 3 years and are desperately seeking subsidized housing.

#4

An official of the Dauphin County Housing Authority recently told the Capital Area Coalition on Homelessness that 2 of every 3 Section 8 vouchers are returned to the Dauphin County Housing Authority because the tenant cannot find a suitable dwelling.

#5

I directly challenge the statement made in the EA on page C-35. There are no similar subsidized housing complexes with similar amenities and services. It is a sad state of affairs, but it is a fact; the state of the housing stock in Harrisburg is deplorable. Last week an employee of the Harrisburg Housing Authority told me that there are over 300 vacant units in the Housing Authority system. A large number are not fit for anyone to live in.

#6

Has GSA consulted with the Capital Area Coalition on Homelessness? Have you reviewed the Blueprint for the Capital Areas 10 Year Plan to End Homelessness? The opening sentence in the Executive Summary states, "On any given day, approximately 600 people experience homelessness in the county of Dauphin and the City of Harrisburg." Have you reviewed the County & City Federally required planning documents? Are you aware that 93% of the students who attend Harrisburg City Schools come from families who live in poverty and 96% of the students are minority?

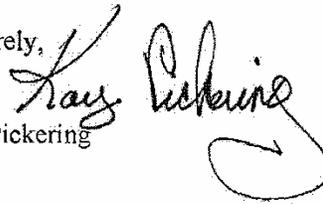
#7

I challenge GSA to rethink the current position. If the Federal Courthouse is built at 6th & Verbeke, those staffing the building will be looking at two empty towers (the Jackson & Lick buildings). Do they really want to be surrounded by deteriorating towers? I implore GSA to "come to your senses".

#8

Sincerely,

Kay Pickering



Enclosures: 4

PEOPLE IGNORED

Why not put federal courthouse on a vacant parcel within city?

It continues to perplex many of us in Harrisburg how the U.S. government can come into a city and tear down a lot of people's homes to put up a new courthouse, ignoring the pleas of the residents and their elected local officials.

We've yet to hear one good reason why a vacant parcel of land in a neighborhood ripe for redevelopment is not preferable to displacing residents and vibrant commercial enterprises.

For a federal government running record deficits, the added costs of compensation and relocation expenses ought to be the deal breaker.

The government plans to move the U.S. Middle District Court operations out of the federal building at Third and Walnut Streets, though other federal agencies will remain there. The new courthouse to be built will contain eight courtrooms and will require a 2.5 acre-site to allow for security setbacks.

Each of the three sites the General Services Administration has selected as finalists will require demolition of existing buildings, adding to the project's cost. Two sites contain rental units for low-income residents, and there appears to be insufficient comparable housing in the city to which they might be relocated.

The third site — bounded by Forster, Third, North and Green streets — is on the list apparently because of its proximity to down-

town and the existing courthouse. It is the site of 79 private homes and several businesses — mostly restaurants and taverns — for which the government must provide compensation.

For a federal government running record deficits, these added costs of compensation and relocation expenses ought to be the deal breaker.

Just to the north of two of the finalist sites along North Sixth Street — the Cumberland Court Apartments and the Jackson-Lick apartment towers — is an eight-block area sorely in need of just the kind of rejuvenation that building a federal courthouse there would bring.

Does not the federal government have an interest, both financial and aesthetic, in helping cities to rebuild their abandoned neighborhoods?

Oh, we understand that's another program in another department.

GSA officials listened to a parade of residents complain about the three sites during a hearing Tuesday evening. The hearing, to gather comments on a draft of an environmental study on each site, was a required part of the selection process, which appears on track to identify the final site this summer.

Is it too far along for anyone to say, "Wait a minute; maybe we should rethink our priorities..."? That needs to be done, before a bad decision is imposed on an unhappy city.

POSSIBLE FEDERAL COURT SITE

The U.S. General Services Administration has identified three possible sites for a new federal courthouse.



SOURCE: ESRI, GDT HOLLY BLYLER, The Patriot-News

Courthouse would destroy communities, residents say

BY JACK SHERZER
Of The Patriot-News

The meeting's announced topic was building a new federal courthouse in Harrisburg, but the comments were about destruction.

Destruction of one of the three neighborhoods being considered for the building. Destruction of homes and businesses. Destruction of a way of life.

More than 150 people endured a hot and humid public hearing held by the U.S. General Services Administration in the Benjamin Franklin Elementary School on North Sixth

Street to protest what some called a callous disregard by the federal government for citizens.

"I have concerns with all three sites. This is more than a neighborhood issue. This is a community issue," said Staci Basore of the 200 block of North Street. "I can't believe with all the blighted areas and vacant areas that we cannot find a site without displacing a single resident."

"It makes me angry," said Bruce Weber of the 600 block of Boas Street.

Please see **FEDERAL** on Back Page

X Business	CI-6	Comics	D8-9	Food	D1-10	Lotteries	Page Two
Classified	F1-12	Crosswords	D7, 8, F11	How to reach us	A4	Obituaries	B4-1

FEDERAL: Residents oppose proposed courthouse sites

Continued from Page A1

"It clearly reeks of an out-of-touch federal government that wants to build a courthouse of convenience and doesn't care about the culture and the community," Weber said.

Federal officials say they need a new building with a minimum of eight courtrooms on at least 2.5 acres, to allow 50- to 100-foot security setbacks. The courthouse on Third Street between Walnut and Locust streets would still be used by noncourt government agencies.

A site should be selected by this summer, officials said.

Federal officials also want a building convenient to downtown and outside the 100-year floodplain. After considering 25 sites, the GSA narrowed the focus to three. Each plan would displace residents.

A brief GSA presentation at the meeting's start gave a glimpse of the disruption. The North Third and Forster

TO COMMENT

Comments on the courthouse site can be sent by May 10 to: U.S. General Services Administration, Attention: Abby Low, project manager, 20 N. Eighth St., Philadelphia, PA 19107.

Comments can be e-mailed to: HarrisburgCourthouse@gsa.gov.

The draft of an environmental study on three sites under consideration for the courthouse is available at: www.gsa.gov/r3projects.

streets site has 79 residences; North Sixth and Verbeke has 108 apartments (including the Cumberland Court Apartments); and North Sixth and Basin has 146 occupied apartments (Jackson-Lick Apartment Towers).

City officials aren't fans of the proposed sites either.

Randy King, Mayor Stephen R. Reed's spokesman, said the

city would prefer a site at the southern end of downtown as an anchor for the proposed southern gateway project. The other preferable site, he said, would be vacant, ready-to-develop land along North Sixth Street between Reilly and Maclay streets.

Of the three sites proposed by the GSA, King said, city officials believe the Sixth and Basin location would do the least harm. Only one of the two Jackson-Lick towers is occupied, and relocating about 140 residents would be less difficult than relocating those in Cumberland Court.

"Plus, the Jackson-Lick site is still close enough to those developable areas farther to the north on Sixth Street, our second preferred site, that it could serve as a catalyst for new and additional economic development in the same target area," King said.

Clare Jones, president of the Greater Harrisburg Area Branch of the National Association for the Advancement

of Colored People, said being forced to move could kill some of the elderly residents in the Jackson-Lick apartments. If that site is chosen, the government should ensure that a safety net of services follows the residents, she said.

"We expect them to be terrified," Jones said, urging people to contact lawmakers to oppose the courthouse plans. "They are going to lose everything."

Matt Simmons of the 200 block of Briggs Street, a spokesman for the Capital Area Neighbors community group, said he was heartened to see the community coming out as a whole to help everyone who might be hurt.

"I've not seen neighbor fighting neighbor," Simmons said. "I've seen a community come together and say not in my backyard and not in my neighbor's backyard, because that's not right, either."

JACK SHERZER: 255-8263
or jsherzer@patriot-news.com

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Why tear down vital neighborhoods?

Thank you for your editorial regarding the General Services Administration's site selection for a new federal courthouse in Harrisburg ("People ignored," April 21).

All of us who live in the three designated sites have lived unsettled lives since the announcement last summer that the homes we own or rent, or the businesses that provide our livelihoods have shown up on the "short list" of sites from which one will be selected. We, like you, have never been told why any of these sites is on the list.

We also have no idea who gets to decide our fate. GSA is a faceless bureaucracy. Its fact-finding is flawed or incomplete, as was pointed out at last week's meeting at the Ben Franklin School. In fact, even the announcement of the meeting and the contents of the 299-page report had a spotty distribution in the affected neighborhoods.

We can't help but feel we are the victims of a hostile takeover that is couched in bland terms of corporate or government speech.

We are grateful for the officials who have spoken out, but the three neighborhoods are sorely in need of someone with clout to hear what we have to say and to intervene, since the whole idea of tearing down vital neighborhoods seems an archaic notion that city planners abandoned years ago after many failures.

Why spend these valuable dollars to do it again?

ROBERT COLDREN
Harrisburg

IG Plan poses HACC as midtown boon

BY JOHN LUCIEW
Of The Patriot-News

A \$14 million expansion of the Harrisburg Area Community College's trade school for carpentry, home building and remodeling is expected to build up the city's midtown neighborhood in the process.

"This project today is going to be like the fire of a rocket that is going to take midtown to new heights,"

"Midtown is about to become a hotbed for higher education, with considerable spin-off benefits."

Mayor Stephen R. Reed

said state Sen. Jeffrey Piccola, R-Dauphin County, who is working to secure \$4 million in state redvelop-

ment money for the expansion. The project, to be financed mostly by private developers, would give HACC at least 100,000 square feet of classroom space in the vacant Evangelical Press Building at North Third and Reily streets.

Virtually all of HACC's building and trade programs would move to the facility, where they'll be able to grow in the expanded space. The building also would serve as a re-

REPORTED YESTERDAY AT
1:29 P.M. ON PNNLIVE.COM

source center for high school students to take college-level classes.

The addition will more than double HACC's presence in the midtown, where it operates its Community Center for Technology nearby

Please see HACC on Page E7

HACC: Project aims to boost midtown

Continued from Page B1

at North Fourth and Harris streets. That site will be renovated and expanded.

The college's trade school programs would move to the new building in late 2007, the project's expected completion date.

A HACC campus would be created by establishing an "urban meadow and commons area" between the two buildings. Boyd alley would become a walkway with surrounding parcels providing open space, complete with benches, landscaping and lighting, along with room for at least 700 parking spaces.

"Midtown is about to become a hotbed for higher education, with considerable spin-off benefits," Mayor Stephen R. Reed said.

Reed called the project "one of the most important anchor renewal projects to occur in the midtown in years."

Reed said the city would request proposals from private developers to build as many as 350 units of student housing on parcels in and around the campus.

He said the housing would be open to HACC students, as well as those attending the Harrisburg University of Science and Technology downtown.

That would add to the housing redevelopment taking place in and around midtown, including the Market Place town homes to the south and Capitol Heights and Governor's place developments to the north, Reed said.

Because all of the estimated \$32 million in development is being undertaken by private developers, Reed said the land and buildings involved would stay in the city's property tax rolls.

The Harrisburg development firm of Powers and Associates will renovate and own the HACC building, then

lease the space to the community college.

Reed didn't say whether any tax abatement programs — which reduce or eliminate property taxes for a number of years — are being used to spur development.

Dave Robertson, president of the neighborhood development group Friends of Midtown, said he welcomed the HACC expansion as a way to give the neighborhood more of a "college town feel," perhaps drawing more retail shops, restaurants, coffee houses and bank branches.

However, one of the neighborhood's larger landowners criticized HACC and the city for failing to inform area businesses how plans for a larger campus would affect them.

Eric Papefuse, owner of the Midtown Scholars book store, directly across Third Street from the project site, said the campus plans don't even show his bookstore and other nearby businesses, despite the fact that his land is smack in the middle.

He said that the plans to convert Boyd alley into a walking path and urban meadow would eliminate parking access for his store.

"There is a lack, at this stage, of any community involvement," Papefuse said. "It's a big plan. It will have a lot of repercussions. And it's not a simple assumption that this is a good thing."

HACC serves 17,000 students. For the past three years, college officials have been working on an overall expansion plan, plotting growth for its campuses in Harrisburg, Lancaster, Lebanon, Gettysburg and at a newly-opened center in York.

HACC President Edna V. Baehre said that, with the expansion, HACC also would partner with high school votech programs in Harrisburg and surrounding school districts.

Kay Pickering

Response to Comment #1:

Comment acknowledged.

Response to Comment #2:

Comment acknowledged.

Response to Comment #3

Public meetings were held with residents of each alternate site in November 2005 in response to specific comments from residents requesting individual meetings to answer their questions regarding the site selection and relocation processes. Notices of these meetings were mailed or delivered to all residents of the affected sites. Meetings were held for affected residents and property owners of each of the three alternative sites.

GSA will be meeting with residents of the preferred alternative prior to final site selection.

Response to Comment #4:

According to the Harrisburg Housing Authority there are a sufficient number of landlords with comparable housing that will accept Housing Choice Vouchers. According to HHA, landlords prefer these vouchers as they are guaranteed to collect rent payments.

Response to Comment #5:

Comment acknowledged.

Response to Comment #6:

The availability of housing is based on available “comparable” housing as defined by the Uniform Relocation Act. A comparable replacement dwelling is defined by the Act as a dwelling which is:

- Decent, safe and sanitary;
- Functionally equivalent to the displacement dwelling;
- Adequate in size to accommodate the occupants;
- In an area not subject to unreasonable adverse environmental conditions;
- In a location generally not less desirable than the location of the displaced person's dwelling with respect to public utilities and commercial and public facilities, and reasonably accessible to the person's place of employment;
- On a site that is typical in size for residential development with normal site improvements, including customary landscaping;
- Currently available to the displaced person on the private market or for a person receiving government housing assistance before displacement, a dwelling that may reflect similar government housing assistance; and
- Within the financial means of the displaced person

The requirements of this act were the basis for determining if adequate replacement housing exists for each of the alternate sites.

Response to Comment #7:

See response to comment #6 above.

Response to Comment #8:

Comment acknowledged.

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PROPOSED UNITED STATES COURTHOUSE
HARRISBURG, PENNSYLVANIA
DRAFT OF ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS
PUBLIC HEARING

DATE: APRIL 18, 2006, 6:12 P.M.
PLACE: BENJAMIN FRANKLIN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
1205 NORTH SIXTH STREET
HARRISBURG, PENNSYLVANIA

PRESENT:

ROB HEWELL, ASSISTANT REGIONAL ADMINISTRATOR, GSA
PUBLIC BUILDINGS SERVICE, MID-ATLANTIC REGION
JOAN GLYNN, CONSULTANT FOR GSA
ABBY LOW, PROJECT MANAGER, GSA
GINA GILLIAM, PUBLIC RELATIONS OFFICER, GSA
BARBARA SHELTON, REGIONAL ADMINISTRATOR, GSA
JOHN BANE, REPRESENTATIVE HOLDEN'S OFFICE

TERESA K. BEAR, REPORTER
NOTARY PUBLIC

1 MR. HEWELL: Good evening. Welcome to the
2 Harrisburg Courthouse Public Meeting. Thank you so much
3 for coming and taking the time to attend. My name is Rob
4 Hewell. I'm the Assistant Regional Administrator for
5 Public Buildings in the General Services Administration
6 Mid-Atlantic Region.

7 The purpose of tonight's meeting is to
8 provide you an opportunity to comment on the draft
9 Environmental Assessment that has been prepared for the
10 proposed U.S. Courthouse.

11 Before we begin, I would like to take this
12 opportunity to introduce a couple of other GSA
13 representatives here tonight. In the back is Abby Low.
14 Well, many of you know Abby -- there she is. Abby Low is
15 waving her hand in the back. She's the GSA Project
16 Manager for this project. And Gina Gilliam, who is over
17 here on the side waving her hand, is our Public Relations
18 Officer. We also have John Bane from Congressman Tim
19 Holden's office who is here who is now waving his hand.
20 Thank you.

21 We'll begin tonight's meeting with a brief
22 presentation on the findings of the draft Environmental
23 Assessment and then we will open up the meeting to you so
24 that we can accept your comments on the document. If you
25 haven't done so, you can sign up at the front desk at any

1 time this evening to speak. We are asking that you keep
2 your comments to three minutes, as we want to provide the
3 opportunity for everyone to speak.

4 GSA will not be answering questions or
5 comments tonight. We have a stenographer here to obtain a
6 complete record of your comments and we will address all
7 the comments in the final version of the Environmental
8 Assessment. If you wish, you can also provide comments to
9 a second stenographer who is located out this door and
10 down the hall at a table and that will give you some
11 separation if you want to make your comments in a somewhat
12 more private forum, and of course we will accept your
13 comments in writing.

14 The draft Environmental Assessment was
15 issued on April 6th and was available at the Uptown and
16 Downtown branches of the Harrisburg Library on April 7th.
17 Because we were a day or so late, the comment period on
18 the document has been extended until May 11th and we ask
19 that all comments be postmarked by that date. The draft
20 Environmental Assessment is also available on GSA's
21 website which is www.gsa.gov/r3projects.

22 We have comment forms available here
23 tonight and they have the GSA mailing address and e-mail
24 address where comments can be submitted, and I think you
25 were all probably given one of these when you came in.

1 The comment form looks like this, okay.

2 Again, following the comment period, GSA
3 will respond to all substantive comments in the final
4 version of the Environmental Assessment. You may have
5 noticed that there are tape-recorders here in front of the
6 meeting, as well as news microphones. This meeting is
7 being recorded so that we have a complete record of your
8 comments. So whether you speak tonight or provide your
9 comments in writing, they will be included in the final
10 Environmental Assessment.

11 As most of you know, GSA has spent several
12 years studying potential locations for a new federal
13 courthouse in Harrisburg and completion of the draft
14 Environmental Assessment marks a significant step forward
15 in the required process of selecting a final site for the
16 new courthouse.

17 The draft EA was prepared in compliance
18 with the National Environmental Policy Act and is a
19 required part of the site selection process. The document
20 will aid GSA in making a careful and informed decision on
21 a final site for the courthouse; however, the findings in
22 the EA are only one of many factors that GSA will take
23 into consideration when making a decision.

24 The Environmental Assessment does not
25 indicate a preferred site or make any similar conclusions

1 and it's important to note as I go through this
2 presentation, and Joan follows, that GSA has not yet
3 identified a preferred site. The selection of the final
4 site for the courthouse is still anticipated this summer.

5 The U.S. courts are currently located in
6 the Ronald Reagan Federal Building at 228 Walnut Street in
7 Harrisburg. The Federal Building was constructed in 1968
8 and houses the U.S. District Court, the U.S. Bankruptcy
9 Court, the U.S. Marshals, the Office of the U.S. Attorney,
10 the Probation Office and the Office of the U.S. Trustee.
11 In addition, the Federal Building also houses some other
12 federal agencies, including the Federal Highway
13 Administration, IRS and the FBI. GSA is not planning to
14 move the non-court related agencies into the new federal
15 courthouse.

16 As you know, GSA is proposing to construct
17 a new approximately 263,000 gross square foot stand-alone
18 U.S. courthouse within Harrisburg. The new courthouse
19 would accommodate eight courtrooms and will meet the
20 10-year requirements of the courts, court-related agencies
21 and the U.S. Attorneys.

22 The site for the courthouse must be a
23 minimum of 2.5 acres and needs to accommodate the court's
24 30-year program. The new building will need to have 50 to
25 100 foot setbacks for security purposes.

1 The existing Ronald Reagan Federal Building
2 and Courthouse does not meet the federal government's
3 security and expansion requirements. Courthouses are
4 designed with three separate circulation paths inside the
5 buildings to separate and protect judges and juries,
6 defendants and the public. The Ronald Reagan Federal
7 Building cannot provide these separate circulation
8 systems.

9 It has been determined that it's not
10 technically or economically feasible to renovate or expand
11 the existing building to meet both security and space
12 needs. The Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts has
13 rated Harrisburg as the court city fifth most in need of a
14 new courthouse building nationally.

15 I'm now going to turn the meeting over to
16 Joan Glynn who is a consultant working with GSA on this
17 project to review the sites under consideration for the
18 proposed federal courthouse and the findings of the draft
19 Environmental Assessment.

20 MS. GLYNN: Thank you. Good evening. As
21 many of you know, GSA has, as Rob said, undertaken a
22 thorough search for sites for the new courthouse, and
23 three sites have been identified for detailed
24 consideration.

25 These sites were studied in detail, along

1 with the no action alternative, in the Environmental
2 Assessment. Now, no action means that the proposed
3 courthouse would not be constructed and the courts would
4 continue to use their existing space in the Ronald Reagan
5 Federal Building.

6 Now, while the no action does not meet the
7 needs of the court, it is studied in the Environmental
8 Assessment in compliance with the National Environmental
9 Policy Act to provide a baseline for comparison of
10 impacts.

11 The following slides illustrate the three
12 alternative sites that were studied for the proposed
13 courthouse. Again, please note that GSA does not have a
14 preferred site and these sites are not presented in any
15 order of preference.

16 The Third and Forster site is a 3.6 acre
17 site bounded by Third Street, Forster Street, North Street
18 and Green Streets. Buildings located within this site
19 include approximately 40 two- and three-story row-houses
20 in which uses include residences, both owner-inhabited and
21 rental homes, offices, restaurants and retail. There are
22 three apartment buildings, two buildings with
23 restaurant/entertainment businesses and one five-story
24 office building with associated parking.

25 The Sixth and Basin Street site is a 6.4

1 acre site bounded by North Sixth Street, Basin Street, the
2 Benjamin Franklin Elementary School and the PHEAA
3 building. Buildings located within this block include the
4 Jackson-Lick Apartments, consisting of two high-rise
5 apartment buildings and parking lots. A parking lot and a
6 portion of the pool house for the Jackson-Lick Community
7 Pool are also located on this site.

8 And the last site, the Sixth and Verbeke
9 Street site, is six acres and is bounded by Verbeke
10 Street, North Sixth Street, Herr Street and Capital
11 Street. Buildings located within this block include
12 Cumberland Court Apartments, which is approximately 108
13 housing units, and associated surface parking lots and the
14 Friends Meetinghouse.

15 Now, the draft EA studies potential impacts
16 of the proposed courthouse on the natural, social and
17 cultural environments. And I'm going to give you a brief
18 overview of the findings that are in the EA, and by no
19 means is this presentation exhaustive of all of the
20 information that is in the document, but I'm going to try
21 to cover as much as I can.

22 The EA also provides possible mitigation
23 measures that could be undertaken to minimize or avoid
24 impacts, and please note the final decisions on mitigation
25 measures will be made at the time of a final site

1 selection.

2 Constructing the proposed courthouse on any
3 of the three alternative sites would have negligible
4 impacts to water resources, air quality, vegetation or
5 wildlife. All of the alternatives are located outside of
6 the 100 and 500 year floodplains, but in the event of a
7 flood, access to the city of Harrisburg in each of the
8 alternative sites could be affected by flooding along
9 major roadways, as is the case today.

10 Land use on any of the alternative sites
11 would be altered by the demolition of the existing
12 structures and construction of the proposed courthouse.
13 The proposed courthouse would be consistent with the city
14 of Harrisburg's land use plans. And regardless of its
15 location, land adjacent to the new courthouse could in the
16 future be converted to commercial space for businesses
17 associated with the courts. These indirect impacts could
18 change the land use and would not be compatible where
19 there is currently residential development.

20 The proposed courthouse would exceed the
21 city of Harrisburg's height limits on any of the three
22 sites; however, the courthouse would not be substantially
23 taller than existing building heights on or surrounding
24 any of the three alternative sites.

25 Construction of the courthouse on the North

1 Third and Forster Street alternative would displace 79
2 residences. 108 apartment units at Cumberland Court would
3 be displaced by the North Sixth and Verbeke alternative.
4 And under the North Sixth and Basin Street alternative,
5 146 occupied units of the Jackson-Lick Towers would be
6 displaced. In addition, the unoccupied tower at the
7 Jackson-Lick Apartments would also be demolished.

8 Relocation studies were undertaken by
9 consultants for GSA, H.C. Peck and Associates with the
10 assistance of CGI-AMS to determine the availability of
11 comparable replacement housing for each of the alternative
12 sites.

13 These studies included interviews with
14 local realtors, appraisers, property managers, newspaper
15 and magazine sources and neighborhood canvassing. In
16 addition, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban
17 Development and the Harrisburg Housing Authority were also
18 consulted.

19 Based on these relocation studies, there is
20 adequate replacement housing available in the private
21 market for owners and tenants of the North Third and
22 Forster alternative.

23 Under the North Sixth and Verbeke
24 alternative, residents of Cumberland Court would receive
25 housing choice vouchers which would assist residents in

1 obtaining rental units in the private market.

2 Under the North Sixth and Basin
3 alternative, residents of the Jackson-Lick Towers would be
4 relocated into public housing as it becomes available or
5 placed in the private housing market with the assistance
6 of replacement housing payments from GSA.

7 For economy and employment, under the North
8 Third and Forster alternative, 23 businesses would be
9 displaced. Office and restaurant spaces have been
10 identified and are available within Harrisburg to relocate
11 these displaced businesses. The North Sixth and Verbeke
12 alternative would displace one business and one nonprofit
13 organization, while no businesses would be displaced under
14 the North Sixth and Basin Street alternative.

15 Employees of displaced businesses may be
16 temporarily unemployed. However, the unemployment rate in
17 the city of Harrisburg has been below 4.5 percent and
18 below the state and national averages for the past 10
19 years. Therefore, it is anticipated that displaced
20 employees should be able to find new work within the city.

21 Beneficial impacts to the economy and
22 employment would occur with the construction of the
23 proposed courthouse via expenditures on construction, the
24 employment of construction workers and courthouse
25 operations would all benefit the economy.

1 Now, the displacement of the residences and
2 businesses on the North Third and Forster Street
3 alternative could result in a potential tax loss of
4 \$1,409,268, and that's for the years 2009 to 2012 which is
5 the time frame that the courthouse would be under
6 construction.

7 Displacement of the Cumberland Court
8 Apartments on the North Sixth and Verbeke Street
9 alternative could result in a potential tax loss of
10 \$235,138 from 2009 to 2012. And please note, the draft
11 EA indicates that Cumberland Court is tax exempt; however,
12 we've since learned that that is not the case and that
13 will be corrected in the final EA.

14 The Jackson-Lick Apartments on the North
15 Sixth and Basin Street sites are tax exempt and there
16 would be no loss of taxes under this alternative. The
17 courthouse would generate income taxes from employees and
18 indirect taxes from businesses working with the courts.

19 The construction of the proposed courthouse
20 on the North Third and Forster alternative would have
21 negligible impacts on community services.

22 Under the North Sixth and Verbeke
23 alternative, displaced residences of Cumberland Court may
24 have less access to mass transit than they do now which
25 many use to access jobs, shopping and services, such as

1 healthcare.

2 Likewise, under the North Sixth and Basin
3 alternative, displaced residents of Jackson-Lick may have
4 less access to mass transit. In addition, right now the
5 residents of Jackson-Lick currently have access to on-site
6 healthcare. The Hamilton Health Center has indicated that
7 they would work with the Harrisburg Housing Authority to
8 provide access to healthcare if that site were selected.

9 Construction of the proposed courthouse on
10 the North Third and Forster alternative would have
11 negligible impacts on community facilities.

12 Under the North Sixth and Verbeke
13 alternative, the Benjamin Franklin School could be
14 affected by noise during construction and under the North
15 Sixth and Basin alternative the Jackson-Lick Pool House
16 would be displaced.

17 Based on the social impact assessment that
18 was completed as part of the Environmental Assessment, the
19 North Third and Forster site is a highly cohesive
20 neighborhood. Displacement of the residences and
21 businesses under this alternative would result in a
22 permanent loss of a diverse, stable neighborhood. In
23 addition, the loss of this community would be felt
24 throughout the surrounding community as well.

25 Construction of the courthouse on the North

1 Sixth and Verbeke alternative would result in the loss of
2 the Cumberland Court Apartments, a well maintained
3 subsidized apartment complex, and the loss of the Friends
4 Meetinghouse which is an important entity for both its
5 members and the greater community in which it is located.
6 In addition, the loss of the Praise N Play Daycare Center
7 would affect people in the surrounding community who use
8 its services.

9 Construction on the North Sixth and Basin
10 alternative would result in the loss of the Jackson-Lick
11 Apartments which serve the elderly and handicapped and
12 would disrupt a community of individuals who count on each
13 other and the services they receive through the Harrisburg
14 Housing Authority.

15 Now I'm going to talk about cultural
16 resources. All of the sites have a moderate potential for
17 archeological resources associated with past development
18 on the sites dating from the 1800s.

19 For historic structures, construction of
20 the proposed courthouse on the North Third and Forster
21 alternative would require the demolition of contributing
22 buildings in the Harrisburg Historic District. In
23 addition, the courthouse would impact views of the Capital
24 Historic District, the Midtown Historic District and the
25 Fox Ridge Historic District.

1 Construction on the North Sixth and Verbeke
2 alternative would not directly impact any of the historic
3 structures; however, the courthouse would affect views to
4 the Broad Street Market, the German Evangelical Zion
5 Lutheran Church and the Fox Ridge Historic District.

6 Construction on the North Sixth and Basin
7 alternative would not directly impact any historic
8 structures and would have negligible impacts on the views
9 of the historic resources, including the Broad Street
10 Market and the Bethesda Mission.

11 Construction of the proposed courthouse on
12 any of the alternative sites would result in minor impacts
13 to existing traffic volumes and patterns. There would be
14 moderate impacts on parking availability. Court employees
15 and visitors may have a substantial walk to access the
16 courthouse, especially at the North Sixth and Verbeke and
17 North Sixth and Basin alternatives.

18 Under any of the alternatives, bus stops
19 that are currently located adjacent to the site may need
20 to be relocated. Under all of the alternatives, there
21 would be minor increases in demand for utilities,
22 including water, sewer, electrical power and natural gas.
23 On-site utilities on any of the three sites may need to be
24 relocated.

25 All of the sites have the potential for

1 soil and groundwater contamination from past uses and
2 existing buildings have the potential to contain asbestos
3 or lead paint. Regardless of which site is selected, any
4 contamination present would be removed prior to
5 construction.

6 Now, possible mitigation measures, as I
7 said earlier, are described in the EA, and I'm going to
8 give you a brief overview of these. And please note again
9 final decisions on mitigation will be made with the final
10 site selection.

11 Residential and business relocations would
12 be undertaken in compliance with the requirements of the
13 Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property
14 Acquisition Policies Act of 1970 and the Uniform
15 Relocation Act Amendments of 1987. We do have handbooks
16 available when you go to leave on these acts and GSA's
17 responsibilities under those acts. Those brochures were
18 available at some of the previous meetings so you may have
19 them, but we have them here again tonight.

20 I would like to note that if the North
21 Sixth and Verbeke or the North Sixth and Basin sites were
22 selected, GSA would coordinate closely with the U.S.
23 Department of Housing and Urban Development and the
24 Harrisburg Housing Authority through the relocation
25 process.

1 Now, impacts to community services and
2 facilities may be mitigated by relocating -- if it were
3 the Cumberland Court or the Jackson-Lick sites, relocating
4 those residents to areas served by mass transit and
5 accessible to healthcare services.

6 For impacts to the Benjamin Franklin
7 Elementary School under the North Sixth and Verbeke
8 alternative, noise controls on equipment could help
9 mitigate impacts.

10 And under the North Sixth and Basin
11 alternative, relocation or avoidance of the Jackson-Lick
12 Pool House could be undertaken to mitigate impacts to this
13 recreational resource.

14 Regardless of which site is selected, GSA
15 will continue coordinating with the Pennsylvania Historic
16 Preservation Office regarding impacts to cultural
17 resources. Impacts to archeology may be mitigated through
18 subsurface investigations to identify, study and document
19 intact archeological deposits.

20 With historic structures, as with
21 archeology, GSA will continue to coordinate with the
22 Pennsylvania Historic Preservation Office. Mitigation
23 measures for impacts to historic structures may include
24 preparation of design guidelines for the new courthouse
25 and Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American

1 Engineering Record, which is called HABS/HAER, recordation
2 before historic buildings can be demolished.

3 The mitigation for impacts to
4 transportation facilities include coordinating with the
5 Harrisburg Parking Authority to identify parking options
6 for court employees and visitors and encouraging visitors
7 and federal employees to ride share and use mass transit.

8 Impacts to utilities may be mitigated by
9 incorporating energy and water conservation measures into
10 the courthouse building and landscape design.

11 And lastly, site contamination may be
12 mitigated by conducting testing to identify site
13 contamination and then remediating that contamination in
14 accordance with federal and state laws.

15 That ends our presentation tonight and I'm
16 now going to open the floor to comments. I will be
17 calling people up in the order in which they signed up.
18 And so, again, if you haven't signed up and you'd like to
19 speak or at any time during the testimony you decide you
20 would like to speak, if you can go over to the table on
21 the side and sign up.

22 Again, we're asking people to limit their
23 comments to three minutes so that we can give everyone a
24 chance to speak. And we do have a timer, so that as it's
25 getting to three minutes it will beep and I'll remind you

1 that we're at three minutes.

2 Again, there's a stenographer in the
3 hallway. If you don't wish to stand up in front of people
4 and speak, you may go out there and give private
5 testimony.

6 We're asking people to come up to the
7 podium to speak, but if you have difficulty doing that, if
8 when I call your name you just want to raise your hand, we
9 do have someone with a microphone that can come around and
10 bring the microphone directly to you.

11 So with that, our first speaker is John
12 Hartley. After that we'll have Bill Pickering and then
13 Matt Simmons.

14 MR. HARTLEY: J-o-h-n, H-a-r-t-l-e-y. I'm
15 a resident of 423 Herr Street in Harrisburg. I came to
16 ask questions about -- in the assessment it says that
17 you're going to think about changing the directions of
18 some of the streets if you select those locations. I'd
19 like to know what your specific thoughts are on which
20 streets you would change the direction of.

21 And you also mentioned that you may
22 restructure the parking. When I looked at your parking
23 assessment, I didn't think it was quite fair. You didn't
24 take into consideration that a lot of the areas affected
25 are areas where it's limited parking anyhow to the

1 residents of that area.

2 When you conducted your parking study, you
3 only said a percentage of the parking places are
4 overfilled. You didn't say the percentage of people that
5 were eligible were able to park in that area that were
6 parked in that area.

7 And also I would like to remind you that
8 if you choose the Cumberland Court location, that one of
9 the most famous baseball players in Negro League history
10 lived on the Cumberland Court site, Spot Poles, and I'd
11 like you to take into consideration that that area has a
12 rich cultural background to Negro League Baseball. Thank
13 you.

14 MS. GLYNN: Thank you. I did forget to
15 mention if you could spell your name when you come up for
16 the stenographer, that would be helpful. Mr. Pickering.

17 MR. PICKERING: My name is Bill Pickering
18 and I guess I'm here -- I'm a resident of the city of
19 Harrisburg and I guess I'm here representing -- or at
20 least speaking for the Friends Meetinghouse.

21 I appreciate receiving the draft
22 Environmental Assessment in enough time to review it
23 before the public hearing. GSA and their consultants have
24 done a thorough job in evaluating the three selected
25 alternative courthouse sites. I'd like to offer some

1 technical comments or corrections to the document.

2 In different places in the document, the
3 Harrisburg Friends Meetinghouse of the Religious Society
4 of Friends, Quakers, is referred to in a variety of ways.
5 I would like to make it clear and consistent that the
6 meetinghouse is not a club and it's not a community
7 building. It's the Quaker Church in Harrisburg and is
8 primarily a place where religious services are held. It
9 also is a place where organizations, religious and
10 otherwise, without a building of their own, as well as a
11 private early childhood center are located.

12 On page vii of the executive summary and
13 page 68, displacement of the Friends Meetinghouse is
14 described as housing a nonprofit organization. As stated
15 above, the Friends Meetinghouse is the Quaker Church which
16 is incorporated as a nonprofit.

17 On page 54, in the second sentence at the
18 top of the page, it should be noted the Friends purchased
19 the property in 1962 or '63 and constructed the
20 meetinghouse in 1964-65. Similar references elsewhere in
21 the document are closer to being correct. There's a lot
22 of discrepancies that are not -- there is no consistency.

23 Also, on page 54, in the North Sixth and
24 Basin Street discussion, the directions are wrong. So
25 take a look and make that correction before they send the

1 statement any further.

2 But I continue to have the same concern I
3 had when I made written comments to GSA after the public
4 meeting at the Friends Meetinghouse. These comments
5 request a detailed evaluation of an alternate site or
6 sites north of Reily Street. These locations seem to have
7 been summarily dismissed and I don't understand why.

8 These locations offer considerably less
9 community disruption, fewer residential relocations and
10 the same favorable attributes that are assigned to the two
11 northern alternates. The only factor I can glean from the
12 EA is that proximity seems to control this choice.

13 The Sixth and Verbeke site is 12 blocks
14 from the existing courthouse downtown, the Sixth and Basin
15 Street site is 14 blocks away, sites above Reily Street
16 are 14 and 15 blocks away. That's not a significant
17 difference.

18 I request that this concern be specifically
19 addressed in the final document. Thank you.

20 MS. GLYNN: Next I have Matt Simmons,
21 followed by Kay Pickering and Reverend Russell Miller.

22 MR. SIMMONS: If I can reserve time for
23 later.

24 MS. GLYNN: Okay. In that case, the next
25 person we have on the list is Kay Pickering.

1 MS. PICKERING: I'm here as a member of the
2 Harrisburg Friends Meetinghouse and as a member or staff
3 person for the Harrisburg Center for Peace and Justice.

4 My daytime job is working as a housing
5 counselor advocate and support person. And I find that
6 the environmental impact statement lacks, greatly lacks,
7 any sensitivity to the residents of these communities. I
8 have numerous questions that I didn't find answered in the
9 environmental impact statement.

10 Specifically, they make reference to
11 housing choice vouchers, that if either of the sites are
12 taken people would be given vouchers. The fact is, and
13 this is to quote a staff person from the Dauphin County
14 Housing Authority, two of every three vouchers that are
15 given to tenants to go -- so they can go out and see where
16 they can find housing are returned to the Housing
17 Authority unused. 10

18 And the reason they are returned to the
19 Housing Authority unused is because they can't find a
20 landlord who will rent to them. We have a serious
21 existing problem in our community and it is not recognized
22 in this environmental impact statement.

23 There are restrictions that HUD places on
24 -- when they hand out the voucher. Currently it's a
25 60-day voucher, currently you must use it in a particular 11

1 municipality. That may not be true with the vouchers that
2 are given when GSA comes in, but we need to know the
3 definite details. We need to know if there are any
4 restrictions. We need to know what kind of help and
5 support are given to our residents.

6 Unfortunately, when we look at the number
7 of housing units in Cumberland Court, it says 108 and that
8 looks like a lot less people. As a matter of fact, there
9 are a lot of -- a lot more people living in the Cumberland
10 Court site than in the Lick Building. The Lick Building
11 usually houses one particular person in a site, sometimes
12 two. We have large numbers of families living in
13 Cumberland Court. So we're talking about a large number
14 of people, not just 108.

15 If one of the other two sites are chosen,
16 what is the commitment of the federal government to
17 renovations of the Jackson Building? We have a tower, a
18 Jackson Tower, that has been sitting vacant for years and
19 years and years. If the -- one of the other two sites is
20 taken, we will continue to have a large vacant structure
21 sitting next to the Lick Building. I guess I have to
22 leave.

23 MS. GLYNN: Reverend Russell Mueller and
24 then after him I have Staci Basore.

25 REVEREND MUELLER: R-u-s-s-e-l-l,

1 M-u-e-l-l-e-r. You heard in the presentation that the
2 H.C. Peck Company had done some of this work and prepared
3 some of the material. This last October they made a
4 presentation out in California, Anaheim, at a uniform
5 relocation act and decided to just share a little piece of
6 information that would never get back here, and that was 14
7 that they had found, according to the speaker from H.C.
8 Peck, that the alternatives would be incredibly difficult
9 for which to find comparable resources, relocation sites,
10 and that there just was no room for a courthouse in
11 Harrisburg, are the definitions I have.

12 Now, it's interesting that that statement
13 from that company I couldn't find in the report. Now, I
14 -- you know, it's been a busy week for me and so I haven't
15 been able to see the entire report. In fact, I had never
16 got a copy of it, but I'd like to, at least through the
17 Federal Freedom of Information Act, have access to their 15
18 report and find out in truth did they tell them that these
19 sites are not -- all three of them are not suitable.

20 I have over 20 questions and issues, and
21 I'm not going to try and squeeze them in, but a few of
22 them -- I think Mr. Pickering lifted up one, this
23 vagueness, such as overly remote, too far from central 16
24 business district, or then -- we have this overly remote.
25 Is this 40 feet, four blocks, four miles? I think that's

1 what I'm interested in.

2 The parking, I was involved with -- I think
3 her name was Abby back two years ago when just a couple
4 people were at the Historic Harrisburg and she said what
5 problems do you see and I said parking. And she said,
6 well, there's going to be no problem because the people
7 who are going to be in the courthouse will stay in the old
8 location. And I said, well, then the people who are 17
9 filling their office building, where are they going to
10 park and she said I don't know.

11 And I still hear I don't know and I see no
12 reference to the hundreds of people, or a hundred people
13 anyway, who are going to be put in that building but will
14 have no parking. So we have that whole matter.

15 I was intrigued by the good news in the
16 report that we are going to have Lancaster to Harrisburg
17 railroad service in mid 2006. If you want to view that, 18
18 that's on page 125. And this to me speaks to the
19 integrity of the report.

20 Now, on the other hand, was there any
21 reference in the report, I couldn't find it, to the
22 Seventh Street Corridor? I mean, the whole work that 19
23 Mayor Reed and the city is doing, that would impact this
24 whole area of town and would impact everything that
25 they're saying about transportation and location and

1 development, and I don't see it.

2 Like I say, someone pointed out to me that
3 according to old rules, anyway, an EA is supposed to be
4 between 10 and 15 pages long; and if it isn't, it's
5 supposed to be an EIS, according to them, and I think the
6 report was about 300 pages.

7 AUDIENCE MEMBER: 299 to be exact.

8 MS. GLYNN: Thank you. Our next speaker I
9 have is Staci Basore followed by Joe Lucia.

10 MS. BASORE: Hello, my name is Staci Basore
11 and I live on North Street. I just wanted to say first
12 that I have concerns with all three sites that have been
13 chosen. This is more than a neighborhood issue, this is a
14 community issue. And I've struggled with this and I just
15 cannot believe that we cannot find an alternative, with
16 the blighted areas and the vacant areas that exist in
17 Harrisburg so that we will not displace one single
18 individual.

19 I also have problems with the way the
20 meetings are set up because I feel that they are pitting
21 one community against another community. Take their
22 community, not mine, and I don't think that that's fair or
23 an equal process. I have real problems with the way
24 that's been set up.

25 I certainly don't want my property taken.

1 I know that everybody who lives in any of the properties
2 don't want their property taken either, but what I would
3 do and what I'd encourage everyone to do is if in fact
4 this comes to fruition is to stay just as involved as we
5 currently are, to help those people who may be displaced
6 in their community to make sure that they're given
7 adequate housing and our representation because I sort of
8 have problems with that.

9 I want to reiterate something that Reverend
10 Mueller said and that just concerns the parking component.
11 I read the study and I have questions with the methodology
12 that was used to arrive at the amount of parking spaces
13 that are available. I think it said there were 199 spaces
14 that are unused and available in my area alone.

15 Well, I've lived and worked there for four
16 years and I ride my bike because I can't find a parking
17 space. So I find that hard to believe and I was hoping
18 that maybe you could address that and give us an
19 explanation for that, not only my site but with all three
20 sites in your next impact study. Thank you.

21 MS. GLYNN: Joe Lucia followed by Rheta
22 Holleran.

23 MR. LUCIA: Thank you. It's Joe Lucia,
24 L-u-c-i-a. I'm from the same neighborhood as Staci and
25 the Reverend Mueller who have already spoken. And I will

1 reiterate the concerns of Mr. Pickering and Staci, my
2 chief complaint from the beginning with this whole
3 process, I don't think they did their homework with the
4 other alternative sites and I think that's the problem we
5 have here.

6 These three sites, it's a disgrace that
7 they're even considering when there's a relocation of
8 people, places and things and more so a way of life when
9 you just look a few blocks from here and you see those
10 fabulous vacant lots up on Sixth Street which could be
11 filled up -- which could be filled up and on top of it all
12 there would be federal and state money and city money
13 pumped in there in an enterprise zone if the feds would
14 get off their hands and make the right decision instead of
15 tearing -- instead of tearing into people's ways of life
16 we're talking about here, okay. Thank you very much.

17 MS. GLYNN: Thank you. We now have Rheta
18 Holleran followed by Margaret Schenck.

19 MS. HOLLERAN: It takes me a while to get
20 here. It took me a while to get inside this building
21 tonight. The reason is that I went to Cumberland Court to
22 hand out fliers saying you could lose your apartment,
23 meeting tonight at Ben Franklin School. I gave it to a
24 number of residents outside the building. I said did you
25 know about this and she said, well, we were told we're not

1 going to lose our apartments. I said who told you that
2 and she said the maintenance people. I said, well, here
3 are fliers. I'm late, I have to leave, can you pass these
4 out? I had only 15 fliers. They took them and so other
5 people in another car took them. She said where is the
6 meeting be held? I said at Ben Franklin.

7 So I then crossed the street and went to
8 the main entrance at Ben Franklin. Well, I had to go
9 inside because I didn't see any large sign telling me
10 anything. So when I got inside, they said no, it's in
11 another building. So of course I said you need to put a
12 sign up that people can read, not this tiny little print
13 with an arrow. And people are coming from Cumberland
14 Court, they're going to think it's down in that building.

15 So I finally got in here and told them
16 again of my concern about notification. I'm a member of
17 Harrisburg Friends Meeting. We are a religious body. It
18 is a church, as Bill Pickering stated.

19 In the environmental impact assessment, in
20 the beginning of it, there are colored blocks rating each
21 of these three sites -- and by the way before -- three
22 minutes, okay. I'm concerned about the three communities
23 being pitted against each other. Harrisburg Friends can
24 meet anywhere, but we're concerned about young families,
25 people who have no alternative housing and that someone

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1 who is a single mother of three children and who is
2 fortunate enough to live in a house, I know how tough it
3 is to find housing.

4 So the vouchers they're going to give
5 people, even at market rate, is not going to cover any
6 more than three and a half year's additional subsidy at 29
7 market rate. It says 42 months. So they may get them out
8 into a market rate apartment, but after three and a half
9 years they'll have to make up that difference.

10 So I -- there's lots of other things, but
11 they're shoving me out. They don't have adequate chairs
12 for people to sit back there. At least make an effort, if
13 you're going to have a fake public meeting, at least have
14 adequate chairs.

15 MS. GLYNN: The next speakers we have are
16 Margaret Schenck, Pete Washington and Bill Allis.

17 MS. SCHENCK: Hello to my neighbors and
18 friends. I didn't come here with any prepared speech
19 because I wasn't apprised of this big booklet that you all
20 got because I'm not in one of the affected neighborhoods. 30
21 I just live down the street in one of the neighborhoods a
22 half a block away so I didn't get a report, but I second
23 everything that everyone has said here tonight.

24 And I've been a long time member of this
25 community. I've owned my home for over 20 years. I've

1 been an activist in Capital Area Neighborhood and with the
2 Historic Harrisburg Association and other organizations in
3 the city. I don't have much money, but I give my time and
4 I do not think that any of these sites are suitable for
5 this kind of project.

6 There are empty lots up the street. All
7 you have to do is look, it's about a block away from here,
8 but there are hundreds of people in each one of these
9 neighborhoods that are going to be displaced, some own
10 their homes, some rent, some have businesses. It's just a
11 very diverse neighborhood, all three of them.

12 And to say that, well, we're going to pick
13 one neighborhood and the other two are okay isn't --
14 doesn't sit right with me and I don't think it sits right
15 with the organizations to which I belong. So you need to
16 go back to the drawing board and look again.

17 I've been told this by other people, that,
18 oh, they've already picked these three sites, this is it,
19 this is it. Well, this is a -- not that big a city and
20 there's lots of vacant land. The mayor would love to have
21 you build on some of these vacant lots.

22 When you build and tear down an area for
23 this courthouse, I'm concerned with all the other areas
24 next to it because they too will be affected by this. My
25 neighborhood, for example, you may need to go across the

1 street and tear down a couple more blocks in order to have
2 parking. And so we don't need to have these courthouses
3 taking our people's homes and businesses. Thank you very
4 much.

5 MS. GLYNN: I now have Pete Washington
6 followed by Bill Allis and Bruce Weber.

7 MR. WASHINGTON: Good evening. After
8 reading this report, the bell keeps ringing and it says to
9 me this proposal, this whole thing is designed for a
10 courthouse of convenience. It's taking the needs and
11 desires of the people of a courthouse over the culture and
12 omitting the existence of people.

13 I'm very much concerned because as a
14 Christian in Luke 12:48 it says for whom so much is given
15 much is required. I'm concerned about the poorest of the
16 poor living in the Lick Towers and all of the problems it
17 will create for those people who are elderly, handicapped
18 and disabled.

19 And when I asked and when I e-mailed to
20 them all these questions, however my comments were not
21 included in the comments section of this report. I read
22 all of the things -- or some of the things from other
23 organizations which were submitted and they were
24 sanitized. Nothing deals with the culture of Harrisburg,
25 whether it be African-American or any race or ethnic

1 group, it doesn't address those concerns. It doesn't
2 address the longevity of life and the hardship that it
3 will cause.

4 Again, I state that this is going to be a
5 courthouse of convenience if it is put in these three
6 areas. It shouldn't be in this area. It's a political
7 move. There seems to be some collusion in this matter and
8 I hope that we join together and file a lawsuit against
9 this.

10 MS. GLYNN: I now have Bill Allis followed
11 by Bruce Weber and Clare Jones.

12 MR. ALLIS: My name is Bill Allis,
13 A-l-l-i-s. I represent Capital Area Neighbors and I'm a
14 member of the community. I'm going to be brief and I'm
15 willing to yield my time to anybody that needs extra
16 moments.

17 Capital Area Neighbors will be doing due
18 diligence on this report and providing written comments by
19 May 11th now. I would like to ask, however, and
20 supporting I think Reverend Mueller's comments, that the
21 supporting information related to the relocation study is
22 just -- is abbreviated in this report and we'd like to see
23 it as an additional appendix to the document and we'd like
24 to have it provided to us prior to the May 11th time
25 period so we can include that in our comments.

1 A couple of other specific comments related
2 to the economic analysis, and this really pertains mostly
3 to the Third and Forster Street area. I don't understand
4 why the economic analysis was just done over a three-year
5 period of construction when it should have been a life
6 cycle assessment and a present worth analysis.

7 I'm not -- I don't understand how they can
8 indicate that the economic impact is long term when
9 they're only looking at it over three years, but more so I
10 think also if you're not going to talk about what
11 mitigation is I'm not sure how you can classify what type
12 of adverse impact it is. That's all I have. Thank you.

13 MS. GLYNN: Mr. Weber and then Clare Jones.

14 MR. WEBER: I don't really have any
15 prepared remarks, but this whole process seems to be
16 something of a fait accompli and actually it really makes
17 me angry. You know, this really reeks of an out-of-touch
18 federal government who, as stated, wants to put a
19 courthouse of convenience rather than worry about a
20 culture and a community.

21 There is unfortunately little left of what
22 Harrisburg was and what we have here we have to hold onto.
23 And I hope that everybody here who realizes that this
24 process is bigger than all of us and if we don't unite and
25 talk to our friends, our neighbors, our senators, who are

1 up for election this year, talk to Santorum's office, talk
2 to Casey, talk to Holden and get the people who can affect
3 this decision and the internal mechanisms of our
4 government that do not care about people, they care about
5 numbers and they care about the process, and that's all
6 that so far this is about.

7 And we need to all stand up and fight for
8 what is right and what is right is none of these three
9 impacts. And they talk about floodplains and they talk
10 about parking spaces and mitigation, but that is all
11 irrelevant. What matters is people and community and the
12 displacement and the -- the ultimately unintended
13 consequences that anything that requires eminent domain
14 law to be enacted will require, and that's what will
15 happen, and do not think that it will not affect all of us
16 in some way. It will keep going and going if we don't put
17 a stop to this now.

18 So thank you and let's all get together
19 behind stopping this.

20 MS. GLYNN: I have two more speakers signed
21 up, Clare Jones and then Michael Ennis.

22 MS. JONES: Good evening, fellow residents
23 of Harrisburg and taxpayers and concerned citizens. I am
24 the President of the Greater Harrisburg Area NAACP. And
25 several months back, when this process began, the NAACP

1 met with the residents of the Jackson-Lick Apartment
2 Buildings and asked what they want if this came about.

3 And from talking with them, we then sent a
4 letter to the federal government which was curiously
5 overlooked in the process. We sent it by certified mail,
6 we sent it by e-mail, we sent it by fax, but apparently we
7 didn't send it the right way.

8 I don't exactly know how that occurred, but
9 I know this, that the first thing that we said was that we
10 don't like any of the choices. They're all Hobson's
11 choice. We don't want any community in Harrisburg torn
12 apart and so none of the choices are good choices. The
13 choice is to put it somewhere else. That would be our
14 druthers.

15 Within the three choices, however, we think
16 one has special vulnerability and will likely be chosen
17 and that is the Jackson-Lick complex. Why is this? Well,
18 for one thing, it's a relatively small group of people.
19 They are among the least powerful people on the surface in
20 the city of Harrisburg and so the voting impact is
21 relatively low. They don't appear to have a spike in
22 their tail that they can strike back, but that may be a
23 misperception.

24 I am here to say we'd like to do things as
25 reasonably and honorably and logically as possible, but

1 the Jackson-Lick Apartment residents can't be discounted
2 any more than anyone else. They're human beings, they're
3 elderly, they're at the frailest point of their lives and 48
4 I believe they deserve your attention and everyone in the
5 city of Harrisburg because they've done their time and
6 they've paid their dues.

7 We would propose, because we think that
8 it's inevitable or most likely that they will be chosen,
9 that if they are moved they present special problems.
10 Because they are elderly, there are health issues 49
11 involved. Because they are elderly, many of their close
12 family has passed away and the family they have left are
13 the people in Jackson-Lick, and they look after each
14 other, and they continue to exist vibrantly because of
15 those relationships.

16 If we tear apart those relationships, they
17 have nothing to live for. If they are not moved as a
18 group, the impact is likely to reduce not only the quality
19 of their life, but the very existence of their life 50
20 because without those connections, if they are moved
21 separately, what do they live for, what do they see on a
22 given day.

23 And so it's very important to us that the
24 issues of their health be addressed and we would propose, 51
25 if they are chosen, and that's an ironic word indeed, if

1 they are the target of this process, that the appropriate
2 number of social services travel with them; that is,
3 medical care from the Hamilton Health Center because
4 that's where they have been getting their healthcare, that
5 a sociologist monitor their well-being who is familiar 51
6 with the African-American culture, and it's not simply --
7 if we're talking about Japanese, I would say someone
8 familiar with Japanese also. That they be checked upon to
9 see how they're doing because we expect them to be
10 terrified to some degree in the environment.

11 Some of the individuals involved have lived
12 in this community for 70 years and they are used to that
13 market across the street which is a very ordinary thing,
14 but it's a part of their culture and their social 52
15 underpinnings. And when they lose that and when they lose
16 the familiarity with this, I'm not sure that we've got
17 good substitutes, but the best we can do is lots of human
18 intervention and concern and to try to, any way we can,
19 resolve this situation.

20 I'm not sure we have to have it. I agree
21 with the prior speaker, Mr. Washington, and the speaker
22 before him. I think we ought to talk to everybody that we 53
23 can talk to who has any political vulnerability at all or
24 any political sensitivity, and they're not necessarily
25 found in the same person, but the NAACP is going to stand

1 by this group of people.

2 So if someone thinks that they don't have
3 the -- we will call in -- we will make a recommendation
4 that not only the state NAACP comes into the situation but
5 the national. I would like to work affirmatively with the 54
6 federal government, but the federal government also has to
7 remember this, they are us, they are our government and
8 what's good for us needs to be considered. Thank you.

9 MS. GLYNN: I have Michael Ennis and then
10 Matt Simmons.

11 MR. ENNIS: E-n-n-i-s. Good evening. I
12 had three main -- I just -- even though I came to a
13 meeting and I'm a resident in one of the areas, I wasn't
14 notified of the meeting and I didn't receive a copy of the 55
15 report. So I have a complaint about that. I just luckily
16 found out about it, but I did get ahold of a copy before I
17 came and just a quick read I had three things that I
18 thought were major flaws.

19 The first is that the environmental report
20 acknowledges that whatever location is chosen it's going
21 to have an impact on the area surrounding that site and 56
22 the -- if it's -- to me if it's going to be a true
23 environmental impact report, it has to deal with the
24 impact of the surrounding area as well as the chosen site
25 to be a -- to give you a real idea of the full impact. So

1 that's the first thing.

2 The second thing is that I feel that
3 there's a glibness in saying, well, we have checked with
4 the real estate people and there's -- or the social
5 service people or whoever and there's adequate housing for
6 all the people that are going to be affected when they
7 lose their homes. And I think that's a glib statement
8 without going into any depth of where people are supposed
9 to go to.

10 So if there's going to be any depth to the
11 study, it has to address those issues, where are these
12 people going to go, aside from the real estate brokers
13 saying we'll be glad to sell them a house or get them an
14 apartment somewhere else. I'm sure they'll be glad to do
15 that.

16 And then the third thing is that as we read
17 the environmental impact report, because they're all just
18 listed by topic without any suggestion of how they're
19 being weighed, in other words, which area is more
20 significant than another area and how will the -- what
21 will the decision be based on. In other words, are the
22 transportation -- the number of people more important than
23 transportation versus historical impact?

24 Without some kind of key of knowing how the
25 impact report is going to be analyzed, we're all in the

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1 dark until the selection is announced and then it's much
2 more difficult to deal with it. So I think that those
3 three issues. Thank you.

4 MS. GLYNN: Matt Simmons and then Michael
5 Billo and Chad Frey.

6 MR. SIMMONS: M-a-t-t, S-i-m-m-o-n-s. I
7 have a few comments. The first one I want to make is I
8 entirely agree with some of the earlier comments and have
9 to just applaud everybody in this room for what I've seen
10 tonight. I have not seen neighbor fighting neighbor. I
11 have seen a community come together and say not in my
12 backyard and not in my neighbor's backyard because that's
13 not right either.

14 I also have some complaints for GSA. And
15 the primary complaint, and I've heard it time and time
16 again, is the notification process has been atrocious. To
17 say that two copies available at the public library is
18 enough is atrocious. I applaud Historic Harrisburg for
19 their efforts to get the notice out and make a copy
20 available and at least some of us have access to the
21 Internet and can get an online copy.

22 Addressed earlier also is the parking
23 issue. I think it is entirely and woefully inadequately
24 addressed in this presentation. The assumption that a
25 hundred people -- new employees in the courthouse will

1 have no impact on parking and that all the new cases that
2 are going to be heard will have no impact on parking is
3 ridiculous.

4 I'd also like to see the H.C. Peck
5 assessment made available to the public. So much of this
6 information that this document was based on came from that
7 report and we have not had access to that report. I think
8 we deserve to see that.

9 I think the last two comments, kudos to the
10 Mayor, to Representative Buxton and Senator Piccola,
11 particularly to Congressman Holden for being involved in
12 this process because our U.S. senators have been absent.
13 They don't want to get involved. They don't think we're a
14 community and that we deserve their time or their respect
15 and that's atrocious.

16 Finally my last comment and what I glean
17 mostly from this report is that as far as GSA is concerned
18 the benefits of this courthouse to the community of
19 Harrisburg and the income that it will glean and the
20 surrounding communities that will be blossoming in growth
21 from new businesses far outweighs the loss any one of
22 these communities would feel and I think that's woefully
23 inadequate. Thank you.

24 MS. GLYNN: The next speaker is Michael
25 Billo followed by Chad Frey and then Teresa Dorritie.

1 MR. BILLO: B-i-l-l-o. Good evening, my
2 friends and neighbors. I'm going to keep this very brief
3 because anyone that knows me knows that I could stand up
4 here for an hour and talk.

5 There is one thing in my mind that is
6 woefully missing in this report and that is the
7 psychological impact on each and every one of us that
8 lives in these sites. And ever since the announcement has
9 been made, we have been under a degree of stress that is
10 beyond words. That is coupled by the arrogance of some of 66
11 these federal officials, and I do say some, because there
12 are a few I've dealt with that have at least treated me
13 with respect, and the timing of all this that is taking
14 forever to tell us not much more than what we knew when
15 this process started last July. So let's finish up this
16 process and make a decision so that we can go on with our
17 lives.

18 MS. GLYNN: Chad Frey and then Teresa
19 Dorritie.

20 MR. FREY: My name is Chad Frey, that's
21 F-r-e-y, and I'm relatively new to Harrisburg. I just
22 recently kind of moved in. So I was tentative of whether
23 or not to come up. I figured I came out here, I found the
24 school and I may as well say something.

25 First of all, I'd like to echo what Matt

1 Simmons said, that I count it a privilege to be among you
2 now, to be living with you and I hope that extends for a
3 couple more years, but I just have -- and I also want to
4 recognize the officials here. I'm sure that your job is
5 extremely difficult and I don't envy your work.

6 I'd just like to say -- just ask one
7 question, because I'm new to the area, I wonder how many
8 folks in GSA who are conducting or controlling this
9 Environmental Assessment actually live in any of the three
10 areas.

11 MS. GLYNN: The last speaker I have at this
12 time is Teresa Dorritie.

13 MS. DORRITIE: I live in that big high-rise
14 over there with the yellow balcony so I'm not personally
15 affected by my home going away if these two sites are
16 picked, but if they do take away -- if they do pick these
17 two sites, guess what I get to listen to for three years,
18 the construction.

19 Also, which is not a problem, but if they
20 keep taking more property for parking, they may -- because
21 in fact at one point that building was on the list, which
22 of course has 20 floors and approximately 20 apartments
23 per floor. I came to Harrisburg in 1998. I made a
24 conscious choice to decide to live in the city. I was
25 working in Camp Hill at the time and everybody said why

1 would you want to live in the city. I says, well, why
2 not, I don't want to live in the burbs.

3 So I have -- I rented -- when I first came
4 to Harrisburg, I did rent over there and then I bought a
5 house. I recently just sold it because for a single woman
6 it just was too much, but I wasn't in the affected area.
7 So it wasn't until recently that I found out about this 70
8 project. And the only reason I have a copy is because I
9 have access to the Internet, I'm on their e-mail mailing
10 list, I got the information and I physically printed the
11 report myself.

12 I am not one of the residents that was told
13 about anything because, duh, I'm not affected, but I am
14 affected.

15 Also, I lived in a neighborhood which is
16 just over here. I mean, I lived on Green Street. The
17 only difference is I moved from Green Street to Boas
18 Street, but I'm still in the same relative location to the
19 Capitol building. I wish my job was downtown, but that's 71
20 another story.

21 The problem with this -- as everybody has
22 said, there's all this land that's vacant and apparently
23 they want to be close to downtown. I have lived in other
24 capitol cities and they do the same thing in all the
25 capitols because they assume everybody works in the

1 capitol, nobody lives here at night, the streets are
2 empty, and that's how they see the capitol. They see it
3 as just a group of people that come in in the daytime, do
4 their little jobs and go home to the burbs at night.

5 I have friends that drive an hour to work
6 because they want to live in the mountains. I've done
7 that in Colorado, I don't need to do that here. I live 15
8 minutes from work. I could walk, but the state hospital
9 is not a place I want to walk to.

10 Anyway, the point is why do they have to
11 pick these three sites so close, why do they have to pick
12 sites that have so many people involved when we have so
13 much land, and also is all that land privately owned. And
14 true, there's no tax base, but a million and a half
15 dollars in taxes from the Third Street, Verbeke -- Forster
16 location, wait a minute, there's something wrong with this
17 picture. We have enough problems with taxes because our
18 schools are bad because everybody who lives here doesn't
19 want to support the town. That's my time. I'll go home
20 now.

21 MS. GLYNN: We don't have any more speakers
22 signed up so I would like to ask if there is anyone else
23 who would like to come up and speak. Sir, come forward.
24 And if anyone else would like to speak, if you could go up
25 and sign up.

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1 MR. DEIBLER: Robert Deibler,
2 D-e-i-b-l-e-r. Good evening, I am Bob Deibler and I
3 second most of what has been said tonight. I think
4 probably the best feeling that we are getting here tonight
5 is we're all in this together. It is not neighborhood
6 against neighbor. Now, of course, we got the report --
7 and I guess I was one of the lucky people, I got one in
8 the mail. And I read it and reread it and there's one
9 thing that is outstanding, the report talks about things. 73
10 It does not talk about people.

11 And when we look at the impact, you know,
12 negligible, if any, one of the things that really bothered
13 me when they were talking about relocation, it says in
14 that report that it would be short term for some and long 74
15 term for the rest of us, is what it amounts to. You know
16 if they take my house, it's going to be long term, folks,
17 there is no question about it.

18 And we all have neighborhoods, we all have
19 neighbors, we all interact with each other. Another thing 75
20 that bothered me about the report, people who live not
21 quite in the affected neighborhoods were not spoken with,
22 in fact were ignored.

23 I'll give you an example. I own a store,
24 it's called the Bare Wall Gallery. It's across the street
25 from the area that will disappear. I'll tell you right

1 now, we're hanging on by a shoestring. The street --
2 Green Street, if they should take the Third, Forster
3 Street place, Green Street will be closed for God knows
4 how long. You won't be able to get to us.

5 And then when they are finished, they will
6 need parking. I don't care what that says about the
7 number of parking spaces available. I defy anybody to
8 come to any of our neighborhoods and find ample parking on
9 the street. It just is not there.

10 So, people, we need to stick together. We
11 need to make the federal government know that the federal
12 government is answerable to us. We are the government.
13 If I remember my civics, the government is of, by and for
14 the people. We're the people. Thank you.

15 MS. GLYNN: I have two more speakers,
16 Christine Harris and then David Frederick.

17 MS. HARRIS: Hello, ladies and gentlemen.
18 I've been living in Harrisburg since I was a kid and
19 bought me a house and I think this is -- if someone would
20 just come to me and give me a letter and tell me to move
21 out of my house for some type of building or road, I mean
22 put yourself -- put yourself in their shoes. Older
23 people, people with babies, families that's been here
24 sitting in that area for years and you just want to tell
25 them to hop up and just leave and they're just sitting

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1 there going, well, where am I going to go, what am I going
2 to do? Then you just send them a letter and say, well,
3 you've got to get out of here on the 21st. Hello.

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cont.

4 These people aren't rabbits, they're not
5 birds, they're human beings, and I think you should really
6 think about what you're doing. What about the state
7 hospital grounds, they're going to close it anyway.
8 That's all I have to say.

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9 MS. GLYNN: David Frederick.

10 MR. FREDERICK: I'll try to make this short
11 and sweet. I've lived in the city for 20 years and I live
12 over here on Grant Street and I also work at the wonderful
13 PHEAA building. I can walk to the Jackson-Lick Apartments
14 -- I can see Jackson-Lick from where I work at and I can
15 walk to Cumberland Court in five seconds.

16 It's going to be a mess no matter where you
17 put this new building at. It's going to displace a lot of
18 people and you're going to save all kinds of -- the city
19 can make all kinds of money for taxes they can get
20 someplace else. There's all this land everywhere else
21 they can get, they're just too stupid not to find the
22 right place.

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23 MS. GLYNN: Thank you. Again, I don't have
24 any more speakers. Is there anyone else? Ma'am. Do you
25 want to come up or do you want us to bring you a mic?

1 MS. THOMAS: Could you bring me a mic?

2 MS. GLYNN: They're bringing it over.

3 Could you please state your name and spell it when she
4 brings the microphone, thanks.

5 MS. THOMAS: My name is Janet Thomas,
6 J-a-n-e-t, T-h-o-m-a-s. I was thinking about Paxton
7 Street where they tore down the nursing home out there,
8 part of it. There's a lot of land there and it's just
9 laying. Wouldn't that be sufficient for the courthouse?
10 That's not far from there, from the old one, so why not
11 look into that. There's many restaurants out there and
12 there's grocery stores and everything so why not try going
13 out there. Thank you.

14 MS. GLYNN: Thank you. If there's anyone
15 who hasn't spoken.

16 MS. HARRIS: Juanita Harris, J-u-a-n-i-t-a.
17 When we first was talked to about being displaced, the way
18 we understood it was that when you took our property,
19 which it is our property, you was going to build us a
20 place for us to go. You weren't going to move us out
21 until the ground was broken and the ribbon was cut.

22 Now you're telling us you might still take
23 it and you might give us a piece of paper to see if we can
24 find someplace to stay. I think that sucks.

25 MS. GLYNN: Anybody else that hasn't spoken

1 that would like to speak?

2 MS. ALLIS: My name is Jane Allis, J-a-n-e,
3 A-l-l-i-s, and I'd just like to say that I know that the
4 GSA feels like they've gone through a long part of the
5 process and they've narrowed it down and this is it, but I
6 think it's clear that our city government and our entire
7 community is opposed to these three sites and the
8 displacement that it's going to cause to the people that
9 live in those sites, that there's adequate empty land very 82
10 close by, the amount of money you would save by using an
11 empty lot rather than displacing all these people could be
12 used to ferry the judges and whoever else wants to go
13 downtown back and forth, and we would welcome you. It
14 would be smooth sailing and probably a much faster process
15 if you would listen to the community and select a new site
16 that will not displace our community.

17 MS. GLYNN: Anyone else who hasn't spoken
18 that would like to speak? Ma'am.

19 MS. DENNIS: My name is Kaiya Dennis, last
20 name is Dennis, D-e-n-n-i-s. I've been a resident of
21 Harrisburg since December of 2003. I'm from Richmond,
22 Virginia where we went through this same process for a new
23 federal courthouse.

24 One thing that I would like to say that I
25 haven't heard, and I would like to ask the question,

1 outside of the people that live at Cumberland Courts and
2 the Jackson-Lick buildings, is there anyone that has ever 83
3 been in those properties, been in those buildings? I work
4 in the human services field and I have clients that work
5 in Cumberland Courts, I have clients that are incarcerated
6 that their grandparents live in the Jackson-Lick Building.

7 Some clients call me and say, Miss Kay, we
8 don't have any electricity. The electricity is not turned
9 off in the building, we just don't have any electricity.
10 They've had to wait for days, senior citizens. If the
11 elevator breaks down, is anybody in another community
12 going to help them carry their bags up 10, 15 flights of
13 steps? This is already happening.

14 The federal government mandates that if
15 people have to be relocated, they have a national standard
16 that has to be set for housing. That national standard 84
17 includes Texas and it includes New York, which are states
18 that are three or four times larger than Harrisburg,
19 Pennsylvania.

20 People, this is already happening. If this
21 -- if you don't live in Cumberland Courts and you don't
22 live in the Jackson-Lick buildings, you don't know how bad 85
23 the properties are or how bad the buildings are. If it
24 was fair housing for everybody, this would have been done
25 10, 15 years ago.

1 What needs to happen now is you need to
2 stay on city council, make sure the money gets to the
3 areas and the people that it has to go to. Don't sit
4 back, don't become complacent, don't say, oh well, it's
5 happening, I'm going to get a voucher for 60 days. You
6 don't have to. If you go to city council and say, look, I
7 know you guys have so many million dollars, I want proper
8 housing, I want housing that fits the other areas in the
9 city.

10 I'm a resident of Capital Heights. They
11 can build low income housing around Capital Heights. They
12 took over Maclay Street Apartments. The apartments are
13 gorgeous. They take Section 8 housing. Whatever they
14 get, make sure it's according to the standards of the new
15 buildings that are being built in the city to beautify the
16 city. This is already happening.

17 Yes, it's unfortunate that people have to
18 be displaced, but buildings are old, properties are old.
19 If it was about keeping neighborhoods and keeping people
20 safe, Cumberland Courts would have been rehabed years ago,
21 Jackson-Lick buildings would have been rehabed years ago.
22 Why hasn't it? Why does it take until the federal
23 government needs more land for people to say it's our
24 neighborhood?

25 The only neighborhood is the people that

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1 live there, the people that live in Jackson-Lick, the
2 people that live in Cumberland Courts. If you do not live
3 in substandard housing, you don't know how it is. If you
4 don't visit people, if you don't have people that you care 88
5 about that stay in that housing, that have bugs, that
6 maintenance don't care, maintenance breaks into people's
7 apartments and takes their stuff, if you don't live there,
8 you don't have a clue.

9 Make sure, people, if you are displaced and
10 it is your area, make sure that you get appropriate
11 housing, stay on city council. After the federal
12 government, it is their job, it is Mayor Reed. You all
13 voted for him, you make sure he spends six million dollars
14 on something other than a baseball park.

15 MS. GLYNN: Is there anyone else who hasn't
16 spoken who would like to speak? Sir.

17 MR. DAVENPORT: My name is Albert
18 Davenport, D-a-v-e-n-p-o-r-t. I'm a resident of New Fox
19 Ridge right down on Verbeke Street here across from the
20 Broad Street Market. And I looked at the Environmental
21 Assessment when it came out and it raised some red flags
22 with me. There's a tremendous lack of transparency in the
23 whole decision-making system here.

24 When I -- back at the original meetings
25 that were down at the Hilton when I asked -- I believe it 89

1 was Miss Low here what the actual weightings on the
2 criteria were going to be and how a decision was going to
3 be made, she himmed and hawed and would not give the
4 actual weightings and ultimately said that we would just
5 have to trust her.

6 Now we have this Environmental Assessment
7 which is more of the same thing. It's -- you know, it's
8 -- it's not numbers, it's not dollars and cents. It's
9 yellow, red and green blocks. What we aren't seeing is an
10 economic impact statement. We don't see what's going to
11 happen to the Broad Street Market when you take away many
12 of its customers. That's a city owned -- that is a city
13 owned operation. And if they don't make the money -- we
14 all want to maintain it in the city, but we have two
15 choices, get rid of it or raise taxes.

16 Well, we aren't seeing -- we also aren't
17 seeing what's going to happen at any of these sites once
18 you put the courthouse in and what that does to
19 employment, what it does to the tax base and there -- in
20 short, there is not a real economic impact assessment in
21 this assessment.

22 And even if we knew that, they won't tell
23 us how much that goes into the decision-making process.
24 They won't tell us what -- how much the Environmental
25 Assessment affects the final decision. And everything --

1 if you notice in that, each site is so close that a little
2 weighting one way or the other -- is one factor more
3 important than another? If we knew that, we could make
4 more intelligent public comments, we could address
5 concerns, we could address misconceptions that GSA has.

6 Now, in a published article in the
7 Harrisburg Patriot, GSA people were quoted as saying that
8 they had local crime concerns about Jackson-Lick and
9 Cumberland Court Apartments. So I e-mailed them and I
10 said, fine, I'd really like to see -- I'm a resident here,
11 if there's crime here that isn't down in Third and
12 Forster, I'd really like to know where you get those
13 statistics because every crime statistic I see is city
14 wide. It doesn't break it down by neighborhood.

15 Well, I was told that they were misquoted.
16 I followed up with the Patriot-News reporter and he says
17 no, they weren't.

18 In short, there's a big problem with
19 transparency, a big problem with credibility and we all
20 want to know as city residents what's this going to do to
21 our economy, what's it going to do to our taxes and what
22 kind of city are we going to have left after GSA has moved
23 onto the next project.

24 MS. GLYNN: Is there anyone else who hasn't
25 spoken that would like to speak tonight? Sir.

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cont.

1 MR. ANDRING: My name is Bill Andring,
2 A-n-d-r-i-n-g, and I own the building at the corner of
3 North and Green Street. I wasn't going to say anything
4 tonight because I don't actually live in the affected
5 neighborhood, although I own property, and I don't have
6 the same emotional intensity that a lot of you folks do,
7 and quite understandably, because this is your home.

8 But after listening to the last speaker, I
9 just had to comment on this process. I've been involved
10 with government a long time, and I'll tell you, I didn't
11 bother to read this report. The reason I didn't bother to
12 read this report is because it is absolutely meaningless.
13 The only purpose of this report is to justify locating
14 this building where they want to put it.

15 They can take any one of these three sites,
16 they can refer to their report and say the report says we
17 can put it there. That's the purpose of the report.

18 Somewhere in GSA there's somebody who will
19 either make or has already made this decision. Does
20 anybody here know who that person or who those people are?
21 I would sure like to know who is going to make the
22 decision and I would like to know, as the last speaker
23 made very clear, what criteria are they actually using to
24 make that decision.

25 And I've been going to these meetings, I

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1 went to meetings down at the Hilton, and you got no
2 information, you got no answers, other than that I was
3 told by two different people that this decision was going
4 to be made last November. You know, obviously that hasn't
5 happened.

6 I think it would be nice if you would come
7 to a meeting, they would have the person here who is going
8 to make the decisions and that person would actually stand
9 up here and answer questions from the people who are going
10 to be affected by the decision, and that's how government
11 is supposed to work, not this kind of dog and pony show.

12 And I appreciate the conviction all the
13 speakers have brought tonight, but frankly I don't think
14 anything anybody said here tonight makes any difference
15 one way or another on what these people are going to do
16 and I think it's a shame that the process works like
17 that.

18 MS. GLYNN: Is there anyone else who hasn't
19 spoken?

20 MS. SHELTON: Barbara Shelton,
21 S-h-e-l-t-o-n. Good evening. My name is Barbara Shelton.
22 I am the Regional Administrator for the General Services
23 Administration. I recently had some dental work done so
24 it's kind of difficult for me to talk, but I cannot sit
25 there as a representative of George W. Bush and have

1 someone call me to the pulpit and not answer that call.

2 You want to know how the decision is going
3 to be made, it will be made objectively. Let me share
4 something else with you. I am from Harrisburg,
5 Pennsylvania.

6 AUDIENCE MEMBER: Where?

7 MS. SHELTON: My original home was torn
8 down. I grew up at Seventh and Hamilton Street.

9 AUDIENCE MEMBER: I know you.

10 MS. SHELTON: Folks do know me. I've been
11 active in the community. I grew up there at Seventh and
12 Hamilton. I know Jackson-Lick. I mean, my sister lived
13 on Reily Street when Jackson-Lick was still public
14 housing. I know Jackson-Lick.

15 So when I looked at the EA, I had an
16 opportunity to go through there and say this is true, this
17 isn't true. You pronounce it Verbeke, not Verbeke, or
18 however it was being said. I made it a point as I went
19 through these documents to take the knowledge that I have
20 of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania and caused changes to be made
21 and more changes will be made.

22 I have been making sure that this process
23 is very objective. So for folks to believe that there is
24 nobody who cares about this community involved in this
25 process, they're wrong. I don't know if you could ever be

1 lucky enough to have a federal representative who cares
2 more about the community than I do. I don't think you'd
3 ever be lucky enough.

4 So let me say this, I am very happy to work
5 on this project, I am making sure that the community is
6 taken care of as we go through this process.

7 AUDIENCE MEMBER: With vouchers?

8 MS. SHELTON: Pardon me?

9 AUDIENCE MEMBER: With vouchers?

10 MS. SHELTON: I'm not here to answer
11 questions in this process, but let me share with you --
12 let me share with you -- let me share with you, we are
13 working very hard to make sure that whatever site is
14 chosen people are taken care of. We're making very sure
15 that people are taken care of. You can ask anybody here
16 who's on my staff who has been dealing with me working
17 with that Environmental Assessment and trying to make sure
18 that it is as accurate as possible.

19 The draft is not very accurate. It's a
20 draft. We're still working to make it better, but you
21 best believe that I am not going to allow my hometown to
22 be short -- get short shifted as part of the federal
23 process. I'm not going to let that happen.

24 AUDIENCE MEMBER: We'll hold you to it.

25 MS. SHELTON: Please do. That is just why

1 I stood up here. I did not identify myself earlier
2 because I did not want to put a chill on comments, but it
3 gets to a point where folks don't know. I believe this is
4 a wonderful opportunity for the people of Harrisburg to
5 have a new federal courthouse. We'll make sure that
6 wherever that courthouse gets sited people are taken care
7 of. I'll make sure of that. It will happen.

8 AUDIENCE MEMBER: Please, your name and
9 title.

10 MS. SHELTON: Barbara L. Shelton,
11 S-h-e-l-t-o-n, Regional Administrator, U.S. General
12 Services Administration.

13 AUDIENCE MEMBER: For Region 3?

14 MS. SHELTON: For the Mid-Atlantic Region,
15 Region 3.

16 AUDIENCE MEMBER: Acting or --

17 MS. SHELTON: I am the actual regional
18 administrator. I spent -- during the early part of this
19 process, I was actually working in Washington, D.C. on a
20 special project. So I didn't get to any of the earlier
21 meetings, but I am there now in my job and I have been
22 there since January of 2002.

23 AUDIENCE MEMBER: Thank you.

24 MS. SHELTON: You're welcome.

25 MS. GLYNN: Thank you, Ms. Shelton. Is

1 there anyone else who hasn't spoken that would like to
2 speak?

3 MS. LITTLE: I would like to speak.

4 MS. GLYNN: Could you bring the microphone
5 over. State your name and spell your last name.

6 MS. LITTLE: My name is Phyllis Little,
7 P-h-y-l-l-i-s. I live right down from the site at Forster
8 and Third and I've been involved in the process somewhat.
9 Miss Shelton, I would like to just address to you if you
10 really heard what the people were saying tonight and
11 you're really concerned about Harrisburg, I think you
12 ought to try to fight for another site, and that's all I
13 wanted to say.

14 I don't -- I don't doubt your concern. At
15 this point, as you see, everyone here in this area is
16 concerned about the choices of these three sites. I think
17 you need to rethink what you're saying about is your
18 concern and that's all I can say.

19 MS. GLYNN: Thank you. We have about 15
20 minutes left so is there anyone else who would like to
21 speak who hasn't spoken yet? I don't see anyone. If
22 there is no one else who would like to speak, we'd like to
23 close the meeting for tonight -- I'm sorry, Matt Simmons
24 would like to speak.

25 MR. SIMMONS: Matt Simmons again. I'd like

1 stand up and face this crowd. At the same time I'd like
2 to ask her one direct question that is clearly omitted --
3 and I don't expect an answer tonight, I understand that.
4 That is clearly omitted from this draft and on page 6 we
5 simply have the next step in this process is the public
6 notice of availability for final Environmental Assessment 94
7 is due the summer of 2006. No date on when we're going to
8 get a final decision on what the site is and I think the
9 people in this room deserve that piece of information.
10 Thank you.

11 MS. GLYNN: Again, if there is no one
12 else --

13 MR. ANDRING: Since your administrator
14 spoke directly to my comments -- Bill Andring. I would
15 just mention that I raised a couple questions when I stood
16 up here before. I asked who's going to make the decision,
17 does anybody in this room know who's going to make the
18 decision. I asked what criteria are they going to use, 95
19 does anybody in this room know what criteria they're going
20 to use. I asked when is GSA going to answer your
21 questions, does anybody know when your questions are going
22 to be answered.

23 MS. GLYNN: Thank you. Again, I would like
24 to thank everyone for taking the time to come out here
25 tonight. All of the comments that have been given and all

1 of the comments that are received in writing and
2 postmarked by May 11th will be addressed in the final EA
3 which will be available this summer.

4 As you do leave, we have a frequently asked
5 questions sheet for you to take with you with some
6 information on the courthouse project. So please feel
7 free to pick one of those up on the way out.

8 We also again have the acquisition of
9 relocation books for anyone who has not received one. And
10 one last time, the draft EA is available at the uptown and
11 downtown branches of the Harrisburg library.

12 Thank you again. We'll be receiving
13 comments until May 11th.

14 (The public hearing was concluded at 7:51 p.m.)
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I hereby certify that the proceedings and evidence are contained fully and accurately in the notes taken by me on the within proceedings and that this copy is a correct transcript of the same.

Teresa K. Bear

Teresa K. Bear, Reporter

1 PROPOSED U.S. COURTHOUSE
2 HARRISBURG, PENNSYLVANIA

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5
6 TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

7 COMMUNITY MEETING

8 PRIVATE SESSION

9
10 DATE: APRIL 18, 2006, 7:00 P.M.

11 PLACE: BEN FRANKLIN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
12 1205 NORTH SIXTH STREET
13 HARRISBURG, PENNSYLVANIA

14
15
16
17 PRESENT:

18 JOAN GLYNN, CONSULTANT
19 ROB HEWELL, ACTING ASSISTING REGIONAL ADMINISTRATOR
GSA PUBLIC BUILDING SERVICE, MID-ATLANTIC REGION
20 ABBY LOW, PROJECT MANAGER, GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION
21 DALE ANDERSON, ASSET MANAGER, GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION
MARY ANN LASCH, GENSLER ARCHITECTS

22
23
24 DONNA J. FOX, REPORTER
25 NOTARY PUBLIC

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1 MR. BURRELL: Rumor in the neighborhood is
2 that the parking footprint has not been established but is
3 likely to be in the block below the downtown site, the site
4 bounded by Forster, Third and North streets. And it's
5 believed that the parking footprint will be in the lower
6 block bounded by Second and Green.

7 What information can you provide about the
8 location of the parking for the proposed courthouse if the
9 downtown site is chosen?

10 MR. BENSON: Jon Benson. I live at Fishing
11 Creek Valley. I'm a member of Harrisburg Friends Meeting,
12 which is across the street.

13 I know that the General State Authorities
14 (sic), federal government, their parking projections, their
15 parking estimations and their evaluations and decisions about
16 parking are highly conjectured; wishful thinking, let's call
17 it. She just spoke that they think that people are going to
18 group ride and that they're going to take public
19 transportation.

20 What's going to happen is that they're going
21 to clog up an already clogged-up neighborhood. This is the
22 State employment area, buildings. It's already loaded up
23 with people that don't want to pay for parking. They're
24 using street parking. To have another large unit of
25 government come that is not responsible for their own parking

1 is bizarre.

2 I don't see how they can build a large new
3 building in Harrisburg and just say, well, we're only going
4 to provide for the sheriffs and the judges. What about the
5 lawyers? What about the witnesses, the defendants, all of
6 that?

7 What's going to happen is that buildings are
8 going to be torn down and they're going to be charging \$10 an
9 hour, \$15 an hour like they do in Philadelphia for witnesses
10 to be able to appear in court. And it's not fair to poor
11 people, and it's business as usual. I don't like it.

12 I think this is the weakest part of the
13 environmental impact statement, that they labeled it as a
14 moderate impact. And I think it's an extreme impact and a
15 long and ongoing impact unless they take it by the horns and
16 do something about it. And it doesn't matter which site:
17 It's still the same impact. I sure hope they begin to get
18 off their rose-colored glasses and see this the way it is.

19 MS. DORRITIE: I'm affected by the buildings,
20 the two on Sixth Street, because I live on Sixth Street.

21 I did not get a copy in the mail because I
22 didn't know any of this was going on until somebody happened
23 to tell me about it. I don't get the newspaper. If it's not
24 on the public radio station, I don't know if the world comes
25 to an end. I don't listen to the news.

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cont

1 The tax base of the Third and Forster Street
2 is important. It is a historical district. Those people put
3 a hell of a lot of money into renovating those houses.

4 I know: I bought a house. I put more money into the house
5 than I paid for it. And because I sold it too quickly, I
6 didn't return any profit.

7 I know they wanted to be closer to downtown.
8 But if it's a federal courthouse, why does it need to be so
9 close to the State Capitol Building? There's no relevance.
10 It's the Third region, or whatever this region is. Why can't
11 it be in Perry County, for example? Though, there's not much
12 transportation there. But the people that are coming to the
13 federal courthouse more than likely are going to be driving
14 in from the burbs and they're going to need parking.

15 And parking downtown is a pain. Having lived
16 in the city with no parking, every night it was a search to
17 find a spot. So I don't know where they're getting these
18 extra parking spaces unless they're counting each home with
19 one car, which is not likely. My next-door neighbor had
20 three cars. The house was as wide as one car. So you figure
21 the math. There's not enough parking. My car was longer
22 than my house.

23 Construction is not going to start for three
24 years. As one friend of mine, who is in her eighties, said,
25 hopefully the residents from Jackson-Lick will have passed

1 away by then. That's a sad thing to say, but that was her
2 comment. 100

3 Floodplains, I understand the floodplains and
4 some of the property further north is in floodplains. That
5 is true. 101

6 Historic, I mean they always talk about
7 historic; yet, they don't seem to have much concern for it.
8 Then, again, this is the state capital city. And like all 102
9 state capital cities and the federal state, for that matter,
10 they don't care about the residents because their residents
11 are irrelevant because their residents aren't part of the
12 city, per se. I've said my piece.

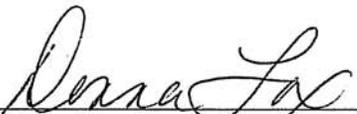
13 MR. SHAULIS: Samuel Shaulis. I'm concerned
14 about the taxes raised. I live at 1318 North Sixth Street,
15 which is right across from the Cumberland Courts. It's an
16 eyesore. I think it's the best location if the courthouse
17 has to be someplace is over there. But then also I'm 103
18 concerned about the tax raising since I live right across the
19 street.

20 Out of all of the other places historically
21 and eyesore, that's the worst one.

22 (The proceedings were concluded at 8:00 p.m.)
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I hereby certify that the proceedings and evidence are contained fully and accurately in the notes taken by me on the within proceedings and that this copy is a correct transcript of same.



Donna J. Fox, Reporter
Notary Public

RESPONSES TO COMMENTS RECEIVED AT THE APRIL 18, 2006 PUBLIC HEARING

Speaker: Mr. Hartley

Transcript pages 19-20

Response to Comment #1:

The direction of streets would not change under any of the Build Alternatives.

Response to Comment #2:

GSA has no plans to restructure or build new parking for the U.S. Courthouse. Residential parking, which is discussed in Section 3.6.2 as “Permit Parking”, was not included in the on-street parking evaluation in Tables 16, 17, and 18.

Response to Comment #3:

The parking assessment reviewed the number of available (i.e. vacant) parking spaces in the vicinity of each alternate site.

Response to Comment #4:

Comment acknowledged.

Speaker: Mr. Pickering

Transcript pages 20-22

Response to Comment #5:

The Environmental Assessment has been revised to indicate that the Friends Meeting House serves the Quaker Church.

Response to Comment #6:

The non-profit organization referred to is the Praise N Play Daycare Center. The document has been revised for clarity.

Response to Comment #7:

The Environmental Assessment has been revised for clarity.

Response to Comment #8:

The directions under the N. 6th and Basin Street description have been corrected.

Response to Comment #9:

Table 1 in Environmental Assessment provides a list of sites that were considered for the project and a summary of the reasons the sites were not chosen for further analysis after site evaluation screening.

The vacant lot, currently a surface parking facility at 7th and Reily, is more than adequate in size. Vacant lots were either not of sufficient size or, if of adequate size, not considered because sites north of Reily Street were deemed too remote from commercial markets and other amenities. While GSA has authorization to site the new courthouse within the city limits of Harrisburg, Executive Order 12072 requires that preference be given to sites in areas adjacent to the Central Business District (CBD) and possessing a similar character to the CBD. Although some of the currently short listed sites are outside the CBD, they are close to the CBD and located in areas that are of similar character to the CBD.

Speaker: Ms. Pickering

Transcript pages 23-24

Response to Comment #10:

According to the Harrisburg Housing Authority there are a sufficient number of landlords with comparable housing that will accept Housing Choice Vouchers. According to HHA, landlords prefer these vouchers as they are guaranteed to collect rent payments.

Response to Comment #11:

Because the families living at the Cumberland Court Apartments are residents within HHA's jurisdiction (assuming HHA is awarded administration of the vouchers by HUD), these families would be able to lease a unit anywhere in the HHA's jurisdiction or

anywhere in the United States in the jurisdiction of a public housing administration with a Section 8 tenant-based program. GSA would not relocate residents until vouchers were available.

Response to Comment #12:

Comment acknowledged.

Response to Comment #13:

GSA looked at opportunities to make funds available for the construction of new housing. While GSA can not directly construct new housing, the agency has explored funding the construction of housing by another entity. In the end, the available budget did not support the amount of new housing that would need to be created for the displaced population.

Speaker: Reverend Mueller

Transcript pages 24-27

Response to Comment #14:

H.C. Peck comment's were misquoted. H.C. Peck indicated that the research and planning undertaken by GSA as part of the Harrisburg courthouse project were good examples of identifying possible challenges early and making sure solutions are identified and put in place to minimize negative impacts.

Response to Comment #15:

The H.C. Peck relocation study is part of the NEPA Administrative Record and may be requested under the Freedom of Information Act through a request to the GSA Mid-Atlantic Region.

Response to Comment #16:

While GSA has authorization to site the new courthouse within the city limits of Harrisburg, Executive Order 12072 requires that preference be given to sites in areas adjacent to the Central Business District (CBD) and possessing a similar character to the

CBD. Although some of the currently short listed sites are outside the CBD, they are close to the CBD and located in areas that are of similar character to the CBD.

Response to Comment #17:

GSA do not have plans to increase employment at the Ronald Reagan Federal Building at this time, however the space may be reused by other federal tenants. . If employment increases are planned in the future, these actions would be covered under separate NEPA analysis.

Response to Comment #18

The Environmental Assessment has been revised to indicate that service is anticipated by 2008.

Response to Comment #19:

Improvements to the 7th Street corridor are discussed in Section 3.6.1.1.

Response to Comment #20:

The Council on Environmental Quality NEPA regulations suggests that Environmental Assessments be 15 pages in length. There is no mandatory page limit for an Environmental Assessment. GSA feels that the information contained in the Environmental Assessment is necessary to fully assess and disclose to the public all potential impacts of the proposed action on the three alternative sites.

Speaker: Ms. Basore
Transcript pages 27-28

Response to Comment #21:

The vacant lot, currently a surface parking facility at 7th and Reily, is more than adequate in size. Vacant lots were either not of sufficient size or, if of adequate size, not considered because sites north of Reily Street were deemed too remote from commercial markets and other amenities. While GSA has authorization to site the new courthouse within the city limits of Harrisburg, Executive Order 12072 requires that preference be

given to sites in areas adjacent to the Central Business District (CBD) and possessing a similar character to the CBD. Although some of the currently short listed sites are outside the CBD, they are close to the CBD and located in areas that are of similar character to the CBD.

Response to Comment #22:

GSA has not sought to set one site against another in the site selection process.

Response to Comment #23:

The methodology for the parking study is described in Section 3.6.2.

Speaker: Mr. Lucia

Transcript pages 28-29

Response to Comment #24:

Comment acknowledged.

Response to Comment #25:

All sites brought to GSA's attention have been given careful consideration. Table 1 in Environmental Assessment provides a list of sites that were considered for the project and a summary of the reasons the sites were not chosen for further analysis after site evaluation screening.

Speaker Ms. Holleran

Transcript pages 29-31

Response to Comment #26:

The Public Hearing was advertised in a local newspaper (Harrisburg Patriot-News) with circulation to the general public. A press release was also issued to all local media and the meeting was widely reported on the various media outlets including television, radio, and print.

Response to Comment #27:

Comment acknowledged.

Response to Comment #28:

GSA has not sought to set one site against another in the site selection process.

Response to Comment #29:

After 42 months, there will be no immediate assistance (in the form of vouchers or public housing) available for the residents of Jackson Lick Apartments. For Cumberland Court residents, Section 8 vouchers would become available upon pre-payment of the mortgage for the property. These vouchers do not expire and would be available to the resident as long as they qualified for the Section 8 program.

Speaker: Ms. Schenck

Transcript pages 31-33

Response to Comment #30:

Three notices were run in the Harrisburg Patriot-News in April 2006 announcing the availability of the draft Environmental Assessment and its availability at the Downtown and Uptown branches of the Dauphin County Public Library, and on the internet at GSA's website.

Response to Comment #31:

Comment acknowledged.

Response to Comment #32:

Comment acknowledged.

Response to Comment #33:

Comment acknowledged.

Response to Comment #34:

The vacant lot, currently a surface parking facility at 7th and Reily, is more than adequate in size. Vacant lots were either not of sufficient size or, if of adequate size, not considered because sites north of Reily Street were deemed too remote from commercial markets and other amenities. While GSA has authorization to site the new courthouse within the city limits of Harrisburg, Executive Order 12072 requires that preference be given to sites in areas adjacent to the Central Business District (CBD) and possessing a similar character to the CBD. Although some of the currently short listed sites are outside the CBD, they are close to the CBD and located in areas that are of similar character to the CBD.

Response to Comment #35:

Indirect impacts to remaining communities are assessed in the Environmental Assessment. GSA has no plans to construct parking for the proposed U.S. Courthouse.

Speaker: Mr. Washington
Transcript pages 33-35

Response to Comment #36:

GSA has undertaken the Environmental Assessment and the public involvement processes to ensure that the concerns and needs of the residents of the three alternate sites and the City of Harrisburg are understood and taken into consideration.

Response to Comment #37:

Comment acknowledged.

Response to Comment #38:

As part of the Environmental Assessment, a Social Impact Assessment (SIA), located in the Appendix C, was conducted to analyze the potential impact that construction and operation of the proposed courthouse may have on social and economic aspects of the environment. The SIA assessed social aspects that included the ways people cope with life through their economy, social systems, and cultural values.

All comments received during preparation of the Environmental Assessment were considered in the analysis and are part of the project's Administrative Record. Comment forms and letters received during the project scoping period in June to August 2005 have been maintained as part of the record and are summarized in Appendix A of the Environmental Assessment. Transcripts were prepared for the public meetings held in October 2005 and comments received at those meetings, along with comments received during the scoping period have been considered by GSA.

Response to Comment #39:

Comment acknowledged.

Speaker: Mr. Allis

Transcript pages 34-35

Response to Comment #40:

The H.C. Peck relocation study is part of the NEPA Administrative Record and may be requested under the Freedom of Information Act through a request to the GSA Mid-Atlantic Region.

Response to Comment #41:

Section 3.4.3.3 has been revised to indicate that the loss to the tax base on N. 3rd and Forster as well as the N. 6th and Verbeke Street Alternatives would be considered "permanent" and would not be replaced under the proposed project.

Speaker: Mr. Weber

Transcript pages 35-36

Response to Comment #42:

GSA will not make a decision on the proposed action until the NEPA process is completed.

Response to Comment #43:

Comment acknowledged.

Response to Comment #44:

GSA acknowledges that impacts to the human environment extend beyond the natural and physical setting and that the project would have real and lasting impacts to the people living and working on the selected site as well as the people of the surrounding communities. As part of the Environmental Assessment, a Social Impact Assessment (SIA) was conducted to analyze the potential impact that construction and operation of the proposed courthouse may have on social and economic aspects of the environment. The SIA assessed social aspects that included the ways people cope with life through their economy, social systems, and cultural values.

Speaker: Ms. Jones

Transcript pages 36-40

Response to Comment #45:

All comments received during preparation of the Environmental Assessment were considered in the analysis and are part of the project's Administrative Record. Comment forms and letters received during the project scoping period in June to August, 2005 have been maintained as part of the record and are summarized in Appendix A of the Environmental Assessment. Transcripts were prepared for the public meetings held in October 2005 and comments received at those meetings, along with comments received during the scoping period have been considered by GSA.

Response to Comment #46:

Comment acknowledged.

Response to Comment #47:

GSA has not completed the selection of a site for the proposed U.S. Courthouse.

Response to Comment #48:

Comment acknowledged.

Response to Comment #49:

Comment acknowledged.

Response to Comment #50:

Comment acknowledged.

Response to Comment #51:

Comment acknowledged.

Response to Comment #52:

Comment acknowledged.

Response to Comment #53:

Comment acknowledged.

Response to Comment #54

Comment acknowledged.

Speaker: Mr. Ennis

Transcript pages 40-42

Response to Comment #55:

Three notices were run in the Harrisburg Patriot-News in April 2006 announcing the availability of the draft Environmental Assessment and its availability at the Downtown and Uptown branches of the Dauphin County Public Library, and on the internet at GSA's website. Information on the availability of the draft Environmental Assessment was advertised through a variety of media outlets, mailed to stakeholders and residents, and e-mailed to a large number of community leaders, stakeholders, and people who have attended previous meetings.

Response to Comment #56:

Indirect impacts to remaining communities are assessed in the Environmental Assessment.

Response to Comment #57:

A detailed relocation study has been conducted by H.C. Peck and Associates on behalf of GSA.

Response to Comment #58:

Resources are not weighed against one another in an Environmental Assessment. One resource does not have more or less importance than another. The Environmental Assessment has been prepared to provide the decision makers with complete information on all of the potential impacts of the proposed action. A detailed description of the site selection criteria is provided in Section 2.2, Site Selection Criteria, of the Environmental Assessment.

Response to Comment #59:

See response to Comment #58 above.

Speaker: Mr. Simmons

Transcript pages 42-43

Response to Comment #60:

Comment acknowledged.

Response to Comment #61:

Three notices were run in the Harrisburg Patriot-News in April 2006 announcing the availability of the draft Environmental Assessment and its availability at the Downtown and Uptown branches of the Dauphin County Public Library, and on the internet at GSA's website. Information on the availability of the draft Environmental Assessment was advertised through a variety of media outlets, mailed to stakeholders and residents,

and e-mailed to a large number of community leaders, stakeholders, and people who have attended previous meetings.

Response to Comment #62:

The Environmental Assessment indicates that there will be a moderate, direct, long-term adverse impact on parking.

Response to Comment #63:

The H.C. Peck relocation study is part of the NEPA Administrative Record and may be requested under the Freedom of Information Act through a request to the GSA Mid-Atlantic Region.

Response to Comment #64:

Comment noted.

Response to Comment #65:

The Environmental Assessment documents both adverse and beneficial impacts. However, there is no judgment made that any one impact out weighs another.

Speaker: Mr. Billo

Transcript pages 44

Response to Comment #66:

Comment acknowledged.

Speaker: Mr. Frey

Transcript pages 44-45

Response to Comment #67:

Comment acknowledged.

Speaker: Ms. Dorritie

Transcript pages 45-47

Response to Comment #68:

Comment acknowledged.

Response to Comment #69:

There will be limited underground parking associated with the U.S. Courthouse for the Judges and the Marshal Service. Additional parking is not planned outside of any of the alternative sites.

Response to Comment #70:

Comment acknowledged.

Response to Comment #71:

Comment acknowledged.

Response to Comment #72:

Comment acknowledged.

Speaker: Mr. Deibler

Transcript pages 48-49

Response to Comment #73:

GSA acknowledges that impacts to the human environment extend beyond the natural and physical setting and that the project would have real and lasting impacts to the people living and working on the selected site as well as the people of the surrounding communities. As part of the Environmental Assessment, a Social Impact Assessment (SIA) was conducted to analyze the potential impact that construction and operation of the proposed courthouse may have on social and economic aspects of the environment.

Response to Comment #74:

Comment acknowledged.

Response to Comment #75:

Meetings were held in November 2005 in response to specific comments from residents of the alternative sites requesting individual meetings to answer their questions regarding the site selection and relocation processes. Notices of these meetings were mailed or delivered to all residents of the affected sites.

Response to Comment #76:

Comment acknowledged.

Speaker: Ms. Harris
Transcript pages 49-50

Response to Comment #77:

GSA will comply with the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970 (Relocation Act) as amended to provide eligible displaced persons with assistance in moving to comparable replacement dwellings, as well as related relocation assistance services. GSA must assist residents in finding and relocating to comparable replacement housing.

Response to Comment #78:

While GSA has authorization to site the new courthouse within the city limits of Harrisburg, Executive Order 12072 requires that preference be given to sites in areas adjacent to the Central Business District (CBD) and possessing a similar character to the CBD. Although some of the currently short listed sites are outside the CBD, they are close to the CBD and located in areas that are of similar character to the CBD.

Speaker: Mr. Frederick
Transcript pages 50

Response to Comment #79:

Comment acknowledged.

Speaker: Ms. Thomas

Transcript pages 51

Response to Comment #80:

Land in the Paxton Street area is located within the 100-year floodplain and therefore is not a feasible location for the U.S. Courthouse.

Speaker: Ms. Harris

Transcript pages 51

Response to Comment #81:

GSA will comply with the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970 (Relocation Act) as amended to provide eligible displaced persons with assistance in moving to comparable replacement dwellings, as well as related relocation assistance services. The Uniform Relocation Act does not allow for the eviction of residents from their homes. GSA must assist residents in finding and relocating to comparable replacement housing.

Speaker: Ms. Allis

Transcript pages 52

Response to Comment #82:

All sites brought to GSA's attention have been given careful consideration. Table 1 in Environmental Assessment provides a list of sites that were considered for the project and a summary of the reasons the sites were not chosen for further analysis after site evaluation screening.

Speaker: Ms. Dennis

Transcript pages 52-55

Response to Comment #83:

GSA has met with the residents of Jackson Lick at the housing complex.

Response to Comment #84:

GSA would relocate residents and businesses in compliance with the Uniform Relocation Act.

Response to Comment #85:

Comment acknowledged.

Response to Comment #86:

Comment acknowledged.

Response to Comment #87:

Comment acknowledged.

Response to Comment #88:

Comment acknowledged.

Speaker: Mr. Davenport

Transcript pages 55-57

Response to Comment #89:

The Environmental Assessment is one of many factors GSA will consider in the decision making process. Other factors include the Court's mission, the project need, cost, and schedule. Resources are not weighed against one another in an Environmental Assessment. One resource does not have more or less importance than another. The Environmental Assessment has been prepared to provide the decision makers with complete information on all of the potential impacts of the proposed action.

A detailed description of the site selection criteria is provided in Section 2.2, Site Selection Criteria, of the Environmental Assessment. Site selection criteria has been shared with the public, however the weighting of the specific criteria is procurement sensitive.

Response to Comment #90:

Comment acknowledged.

Response to Comment #91:

Comment acknowledged.

Response to Comment #92:

The Environmental Assessment is one of many factors GSA will consider in the decision making process. Other factors include the Court's mission, the project need, cost, and schedule. Resources are not weighed against one another in an Environmental Assessment. One resource does not have more or less importance than another. The Environmental Assessment has been prepared to provide the decision makers with complete information on all of the potential impacts of the proposed action. A detailed description of the site selection criteria is provided in Section 2.2, Site Selection Criteria, of the Environmental Assessment.

Speaker: Mr. Andring

Transcript pages 58

Response to Comment #93:

The purpose of the Environmental Assessment is not to persuade anyone on the selection of one alternative site over another. Rather the Environmental Assessment has been prepared by independent consultants, who do not have a financial or other interest in the outcome of the site selection process, to provide an objective review of the potential impacts associated with the construction of the courthouse on any of the three alternative sites.

Speaker: Mr. Simmons

Transcript pages 63-64

Response to Comment #94:

GSA has committed to announcing a selected site in the summer of 2006.

Speaker: Mr. Andring

Transcript pages 64

Response to Comment #95:

The Environmental Assessment is one of many factors GSA will consider in the decision making process. A detailed description of the site selection criteria is provided in Section 2.2, Site Selection Criteria, of the Environmental Assessment.

A preferred alternative will be recommended by the Site Selection Board. The final decision for site selection will be made by the Regional Administrator for the Mid-Atlantic Region of GSA.

Speaker: Mr. Burrell

Transcript pages 3

Response to Comment #96:

There will be limited underground parking associated with the U.S. Courthouse for the Judges and the Marshal Service.

Speaker: Mr. Benson

Transcript pages 3-4

Response to Comment #97:

Comment acknowledged.

Speaker: Ms. Dorritie

Transcript pages 4-6

Response to Comment #98:

Comment acknowledged.

Response to Comment #99:

28 U.S.C. Section 118(b) requires that the courthouse be located within the City of Harrisburg

Response to Comment #100:

Comment acknowledged.

Response to Comment #101:

Comment acknowledged.

Response to Comment #102:

Comment acknowledged.

Speaker: Mr. Shaulis

Transcript pages 6

Response to Comment #103:

Comment acknowledged.