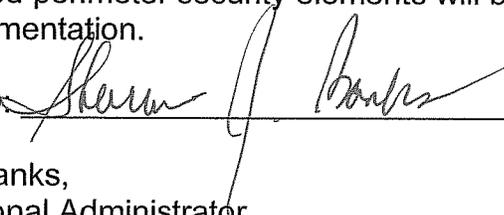


**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT  
RELOCATION OF NATIONAL AQUARIUM ENTRANCE AND  
HANDICAP ACCESSIBILITY IMPROVEMENTS AT THE  
HERBERT C. HOOVER BUILDING  
WASHINGTON, DC**

**FINDING**

In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), Council on Environmental Quality Regulations for Implementing NEPA (40 CFR 1500-1508), U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) Order ADM 1095.1F: Environmental Considerations in Decision Making, and the Public Buildings Service NEPA Desk Guide, I find that the proposed new entrance to the National Aquarium (NAQ) and handicap accessibility improvements at the Herbert C. Hoover Building, as described in the attached Environmental Assessment (EA), are not major Federal actions significantly affecting the quality of the human environment. Therefore, an Environmental Impact Statement will not be prepared for the NAQ entrance relocation and handicap accessibility improvements. The NAQ entrance relocation and handicap accessibility improvements were found to have independent utility and these actions can be implemented regardless of the perimeter security elements that were studied in the EA. The proposed perimeter security elements will be subject to additional NEPA analysis and/or documentation.

APPROVED: \_\_\_\_\_



Date: \_\_\_\_\_

*June 6, 2010*

Sharon J. Banks,  
Acting Regional Administrator  
U.S. General Services Administration  
National Capital Region

*This FONSI will become final 30 days after publication of its Notice of Availability in the Washington Post, provided that no information leading to a contrary finding is received or comes to light during the 30-day review period.*

## **I. BASIS FOR FINDING**

GSA prepared an environmental assessment (EA) analyzing the environmental impacts that could result from exterior improvements at the Herbert C. Hoover Building (HCHB). The EA was prepared pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, the Council on Environmental Quality Regulations for Implementing NEPA (40 CFR 1500-1508), GSA Order ADM 1095.1F: Environmental Considerations in Decision Making, and the Public Buildings Service NEPA Desk Guide. The EA documents the direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts for the two action alternatives and a No Action alternative.

The environmental issues addressed in the EA were identified through early public involvement (scoping), which included consultations with Federal and local agencies and other stakeholders. In addition to scoping, a Draft EA was distributed for a 30-day public review. The Final EA responds to comments and concerns received during the 30-day public review. The Final EA is incorporated by reference into this Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI).

## **II. PURPOSE OF AND NEED FOR THE PROPOSED ACTION**

The purpose of and need for the proposed action is to enhance the building and building site, comply with American Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements, and provide Level IV protection for the facility. Actions analyzed in the EA included handicap accessibility improvements, a new entrance for the NAQ, and permanent perimeter security measures.

## **III. DESCRIPTION OF ALTERNATIVES**

Three alternatives were considered in detail in this EA, two action alternatives and a No Action alternative. The two action alternatives differ in the location and treatment of perimeter security around the HCHB. The other components of the alternatives, the ADA improvements and new entrance to the NAQ, are consistent between the two action alternatives. The alternatives are summarized below. More complete descriptions of the alternatives are included in Chapter 2 of the Final EA.

### **No Action Alternative**

Under the No Action Alternative, exterior improvements would not be undertaken at HCHB. The entrance to the NAQ would remain on 14<sup>th</sup> Street, and temporary perimeter security measures would continue to be employed around the outside of the building. In addition, handicap accessibility improvements would not be installed and thus the building would not meet current standards for accessibility.

### **Elements Common to Both Action Alternatives**

Under both action alternatives, improvements would be undertaken at the HCHB site to be in compliance with ADA. These measures would include handicapped accessible ramps at six entrances; raised crosswalks at the four entrances to the motor courts; and curb ramps at each of the four corners of the site and at the north and south entrances to the motor courts on 14<sup>th</sup> Street. In addition to ADA improvements, a new entrance would be constructed for the NAQ on Constitution Avenue, and include a public art

element. On Constitution Avenue, the new entrance to the NAQ would be hardened to serve a security function.

#### **Alternative A**

Under Alternative A, permanent perimeter security (combination of bollards), would be constructed a minimum of two feet from the curblin on Constitution Avenue, 15th Street, Pennsylvania Avenue, and 14th Street. Security elements would include a combination of low fences, tree boxes, hardened walls and seatwalls, bollards, and hardened streetscape features such as bike racks, trash receptacles, and streetlights.

#### **Alternative B**

Under Alternative B, permanent perimeter security would be constructed at the property line, between the sidewalk and the building face, on 14th and 15th Streets, replacing the existing temporary planters that encircle the building. Permanent security elements could include fence panels, seatwalls, terrace walls, bollards, and hardened benches. On Pennsylvania Avenue, a combination of bollards and tree boxes would be employed. These elements would be sited between the sidewalk and the curblin since there is no established building yard.

### **IV. ACTIONS SELECTED FOR IMPLEMENTATION**

GSA initially identified Alternative A as the preferred alternative, since it provided the largest standoff from area roadways and thus best met the purpose and need for the proposed action. However, based on the analysis provided within the EA and public comments received, GSA has determined that the handicap accessibility improvements and the new entrance to the NAQ on Constitution Avenue do not constitute a significant impact. Therefore, an Environmental Impact Statement will not be prepared for the NAQ entrance relocation and handicap accessibility improvements. The NAQ entrance relocation and handicap accessibility improvements were found to have independent utility and these actions can be implemented regardless of the perimeter security elements that were studied in the EA. This decision in no way effects, influences, or prohibits any future determinations on the design or location of perimeter security as analyzed under Alternatives A or B. The proposed perimeter security elements will be subject to additional NEPA analysis and/or documentation.

### **V. ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES**

The EA analyzed the impacts of each of the alternatives on the natural and man-made environment. This section summarizes the impacts associated with implementing the new entrance for the NAQ and ADA accessibility improvements at HCHB. Mitigation measures are outlined for resources where mitigation has been determined appropriate. A full description of impacts can be found the in the Final EA.

In addition to the resource issues summarized below, a number of issues were considered for evaluation at the outset of the process, but were eliminated from detailed study within the EA because there would be no impacts or impacts would be negligible. Resource issues dismissed from detailed study include; Demographics and Environmental Justice, Geology, Topography, and Soils, Wildlife, Water Resources, and Solid Waste.

## **Archaeological Resources**

Excavation related to the construction of the ADA ramps and NAQ entrance could potentially result in minor to moderate, long-term, adverse impacts.

### Mitigation Measures

- Mitigation for impacts to archaeological resources will be determined during the 106 consultation process. See *Section VI. Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act*.

## **Historic Resources**

Adverse impacts to the HCHB from the NAQ entrance and handicapped accessible ramps would be moderate and would constitute an adverse effect under Section 106. The NAQ entrance would also impact historic sites and districts in the area and would result in minor to moderate adverse impacts to the Federal Triangle Historic District, the Pennsylvania Avenue National Historic Site, and the L'Enfant Plan. Further, the entrance would have indirect minor adverse visual impacts on the National Mall to the south of the HCHB.

### Mitigation Measure

- Mitigation for impacts to historic resources will be determined during the 106 consultation process. Required mitigation and the 106 consultation process is discussed in more detail in *Section VI. Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act*.

## **Visual Resources**

ADA improvements on 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> street would result in negligible to minor long-term adverse impacts. Adverse impacts resulting from the new NAQ entrance and associated public art would be minor to moderate.

### Mitigation Measure

- The design of the ramps, entrance, and public art is subject to the Memorandum of Agreement developed by GSA, the State Historic Preservation Office of the District of Columbia, and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP). See *Section VI. Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act*.

## **Land Use**

Impacts to land use from the NAQ entrance and ADA improvements would be negligible.

## **Planning Policies**

Overall, impacts to planning policies resulting from the NAQ entrance would be minor adverse, with beneficial impacts resulting from the strengthening of 14<sup>th</sup> Street.

## **Public Space**

The proposed entrance for the NAQ would be located on land controlled by the United States of America and the District of Columbia. The NAQ entrance would not be in compliance with District Department of Transportation (DDOT) policies regarding public

space, as the entrance would be partially located within public space on Constitution Avenue. ADA improvements would be made to crossings at driveway entrances; these improvements are in compliance with DDOT's public space policies and would result in a beneficial impact for pedestrian flow. The ADA ramps would not be located in public space.

#### Mitigation Measure

- As the design progresses for the ADA improvements in public space, coordination with DDOT regarding guidelines presented in their *Design and Engineering Manual* and *Public Realm Handbook* would be required.
- Since the NAQ entrance will be located on land controlled by the United States of America and the District of Columbia, GSA will obtain a public space permit to use the portion controlled by the District. As part of that process, GSA has initiated preliminary discussions with DDOT.

#### **Visitation and Visitor Experience**

Impacts resulting from the NAQ entrance and ADA improvements would be beneficial.

#### **Economic and Fiscal Resources**

The proposed NAQ entrance could increase visitation to the facility and thus have a beneficial impact on local restaurants and retail establishments.

#### **Vegetation**

Overall, impacts to vegetation as a result of the ADA improvements and NAQ entrance would be minor to moderate.

#### Mitigation Measures

- Mitigation for the impacts to the historic magnolia on 15<sup>th</sup> Street, NW is outlined in the MOA that was developed during the section 106 consultation process. See *Section VI. Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act*.

#### **Vehicular Circulation**

There could be a short-term cumulative impact to vehicular circulation if construction at the HCHB and the National Museum of African American History and Culture (NMAAHC) occur simultaneously. Overall, construction-related impacts would be short-term and moderate.

#### Mitigation Measures

- Minimize construction vehicle traffic and equipment during AM and PM peak hours.
- Coordinate construction schedules with nearby projects, including the NMAAHC, to minimize impacts on area right-of-ways.
- Coordinate with District of Columbia Fire and Emergency Services throughout the design process to ensure that emergency vehicle access is maintained.

### **Parking**

Impacts to public parking would be as a result of construction activities and would be short-term, adverse, and minor. There would be no long-term impacts to parking availability in the area.

### **Public Transportation**

Although visitation may increase at the NAQ due to its increased visibility on Constitution Avenue, it is unlikely to substantively impact public transportation services as most visitors would likely already be on the National Mall visiting other attractions and traveling to the site by foot. ADA improvements would not impact public transportation. Short-term and long-term adverse impacts would be negligible.

### **Pedestrian Circulation**

Short-term impacts to pedestrian circulation would be moderate and related to construction activities.

The proposed ADA improvements, including raised crosswalks on 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> Streets at the parking entrances would enhance pedestrian facilities at the HCHB by improving accessibility, resulting in a minor beneficial impact. The new NAQ entrance would alter pedestrian circulation patterns in the vicinity of HCHB, since the new entrance would provide access from Constitution Avenue; however, this would not adversely impact circulation on the Constitution Avenue sidewalk.

#### Mitigation Measure

- During construction, employ appropriate signage and flagging to minimize impacts to pedestrian safety.

### **Utilities**

Impacts to utilities would be minor, adverse and long-term.

#### Mitigation Measure

- Coordinate with DC WASA to determine if a preconstruction survey is necessary.
- Coordinate with PEPCO to ensure all electrical lines will remain intact and are safe to work around.

### **Hazardous Materials**

GSA does not propose to introduce any new hazardous waste materials or contamination to the site. Thus, impacts would be negligible.

### **Stormwater Management**

Minor short-term construction-related impacts would occur. Long-term impacts to stormwater management would be negligible.

#### Mitigation Measure

- Employ stormwater best management practices during construction to minimize sediment loads in stormwater runoff.

## **Air Quality**

Overall, short-term impacts to air quality are anticipated to be minor, and long-term impacts are anticipated to be negligible.

### Mitigation Measure

- Appropriate best management practices should be implemented during construction to reduce, minimize, or eliminate construction vehicle and equipment emissions and fugitive dust.

## **Noise**

Overall, short-term construction-related impacts would be minor to moderate. Once completed, long-term impacts would be negligible.

### Mitigation Measure

- During construction, employ appropriate best management practices to control noise at its source.

## **VI. SECTION 106 of the NATIONAL HISTORIC PRESERVATION ACT**

The HCHB is a contributing structure in the Pennsylvania Avenue National Historic Site and is located within the boundary of the L'Enfant Plan. Pursuant to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), federal agencies are required to consider the effects of any undertakings on districts, sites, buildings, structures, or objects included, or eligible for inclusion, in the National Register of Historic Places. Federal agencies are also required to afford the ACHP a "reasonable opportunity to comment with regard to such undertaking."

Through the coordinated NEPA and Section 106 processes, GSA has determined that the proposed NAQ entrance and ADA upgrades have the potential to have an adverse effect on the historic resources within the Area of Potential Effect. GSA has consulted with the SHPO and the ACHP pursuant to 36 CFR Part 800, regulations implementing Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (16 U.S.C. Section 470(f)) regarding the effects of the Undertaking on the HCHB and the L'Enfant Streets to develop a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) to document the agreed upon design program and mitigation measures. The MOA will be executed and signed by GSA and the consulting parties. GSA shall ensure that the measures outlined in the MOA are carried out to minimize, mitigate, and avoid adverse effects.