

**St. Elizabeths Hospital – West Campus  
Consulting Party Working Group Meetings  
August 7 and 14, 2007**

In attendance:

Rebecca Miller, DC Preservation League  
John Clark, DC Preservation League  
Nell Ziehl, National Trust for Historic Preservation  
Betsy Merritt, National Trust for Historic Preservation  
Tom Luebke, Commission of Fine Arts  
Kristina Penhoet, Commission of Fine Arts  
Hector Abreu, Advisory Council on Historic Preservation  
Tim Dennee, DC Historic Preservation Office  
Barbara Zartman, Committee of 100 on the Federal City  
Gary Scott, National Park Service  
Judy Scott Feldman, National Coalition to Save Our Mall

*Note:* Although the National Capital Planning Commission is not included among the participants in this project, NCPC staff does agree with the locations identified in the report as potential development and/or demolition sites.

**Goal**

The goal of these meetings was to articulate the working group's consensus on preservation priorities for a high-security federal tenant at St. Elizabeth's West Campus including: 1) appropriate siting, massing and height for new buildings; and 2) least objectionable demolition of and additions to existing structures (both contributing and non-contributing). The group emphasizes that many of these changes, while bringing benefit to the campus, will also adversely affect the National Historic Landmark.

Through this exercise, the group seeks to provide guidance to the General Services Administration (GSA) in minimizing harm to the National Historic Landmark to the maximum extent possible, as required by Section 110(f) of the National Historic Preservation Act. The working group documents also supply comments addressing adverse effects pursuant to 36 CFR §800.5(a)(1), which may alter, directly or indirectly, characteristics of the property that qualify it for inclusion in the National Register.

For the sake of convenience, we have used the parcel designations given to the consulting parties on February 2006. Please note that the draft map accompanying this report was used primarily to help determine the appropriate level of build-out at St. Elizabeths. The drawings are intended to indicate areas for development and convey a sense of mass and scale for potential new construction. The drawings should not, in any way, be interpreted as proposals for actual footprints.

## **Overall Planning Principles**

- The core of the National Historic Landmark West Campus contains three building periods, representing the site's development under Supervisor Nichols (1852-1877), Supervisor Godding (1877-1899), and Supervisor Richardson (1899-1903). This record of development and its character-defining features – including the clusters of small, 19<sup>th</sup>-century buildings, the 20<sup>th</sup>-century “quadrangle” and associated settings and landscapes – must be appropriately rehabilitated and essentially preserved.
- The core of the National Historic Landmark West Campus may, as specified in the parcel-by-parcel analysis below, contain very limited areas appropriate for the sensitive addition of carefully designed and sited new development.
- Major new development should be placed on the periphery of the historic campus, and should extend its clustering or “quadrangle” design, characterized by multiple buildings with relatively small footprints and narrow widths that relate to each other. Any major new development should appropriately incorporate significant landscape elements.
- New development should reference, enhance, and be subordinate to – not overwhelm – the setting, views and interrelationships of the existing campus. The height of any new buildings should not surpass the appropriate height limits specified below for each parcel, and in no event should the height of any new building exceed the height of the mass of the Center Building (*i.e.*, four floors) to ensure that building retains its historic prominence.
- The height and massing of new buildings should be consistent with adjacent buildings. Building footprints should be narrower than standard office buildings. Using the Center Building as a standard, the length of unarticulated surface on a new building should not exceed 50 feet, and the width of any new building should be limited to a maximum range of 75 to 90 feet.
- The views from the entrance of Gate 1 to the Center Building and the “Point” should be preserved.
- Intrusion of development into the forested slopes should be avoided, so as to protect to the maximum extent possible the character-defining viewshed and setting of the National Historic Landmark, as well as the significant views into St. Elizabeths from the monuments, memorials, and other public areas throughout the Washington, DC metropolitan area.
- Preservation, rehabilitation, restoration and new construction within the National Historic Landmark should adhere to the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties*.
- Construction and occupancy should be phased with the rehabilitation and reuse of historic buildings as a high priority. No demolition of any contributing building should occur until funding is immediately available for new construction that requires the use of the specific site, and until other contributing buildings have been rehabilitated for adaptive reuse.

- All historic buildings should be put to appropriate productive uses to enhance ongoing preservation and maintenance of their historic integrity.

### **Circulation Patterns**

- The primary entrance should be at Gate 3 with a secondary entrance (if necessary) at Gate 2. Gate 1 should be preserved as the ceremonial entrance.
- The historic roads and pathways should be maintained and restored to the maximum extent practicable to preserve the historic circulation pattern of the campus.
- Any new roadways from Shepherd Parkway should be built to National Park Service Standards for Parkways.
- Large parking structures should be placed off-site.

### **Security Perimeter and Public Access**

- Any required security barrier should be placed at the perimeter of the property line and should be designed to minimize visual impact to the National Historic Landmark, including consideration of the viewshed from the Washington, DC area into the St. Elizabeths West Campus, for example, perhaps by utilizing vegetation or trees as a screen.
- Regular public access should be provided to the Point and the Civil War Cemetery.

### **Landscape**

- Every effort should be made to preserve the mature trees and landscape features of St. Elizabeths. In 1892, Superintendent Godding described St. Elizabeths as grounds that are among the most beautiful in Washington. Rare trees imported by Godding's son still exist and must be preserved. The therapeutic setting was a key characteristic of Dorothea Dix's treatment philosophy, and the landscape was carefully planned to ensure that the mentally ill had access to "pleasant surroundings" to aid in their recovery. This historic landscape is a highly significant feature of the National Historic Landmark campus.

### **Parcel 1A**

This parcel is representative of the informal clusters of smaller red brick buildings throughout the 19<sup>th</sup>-century part of the campus. It also frames the highly significant viewshed from Gate 1 to the Center Building, which should be protected. Sensitive new construction may be appropriate in this area, and existing clustered buildings could conceivably be linked together with new appropriately scaled building additions.

***New development:***

- should be arranged as a cluster of relatively small buildings, while retaining existing landscape elements;
- should conform to the general scale and mass of the historic buildings (limited to approximately 75,000 to 125,000 total square feet with a maximum height of 35 feet);
- could be slightly greater in height and density toward MLK Avenue further away from the historic core of the campus;
- could occur in the area of buildings 38 & 39 to accommodate a total of roughly 25,000 to 50,000 square feet with a maximum height of 35 feet.

***Buildings retained:***

23 – Allison D  
24 – Allison C  
25 – Allison A  
26 – Allison B  
31 – Atkins Hall  
32 – Relief  
33 – Dining Hall  
34 – Detached Kitchen  
36 – Home  
37 – Hitchcock Hall

***Buildings that may be demolished for new construction:***

23 (partial) – Non-historic addition to Allison D  
38 – Hagan Hall (contributing, but not considered significant)  
39 – General Store/Canteen (contributing)

**Parcel 1B**

Containing the iconic Center Building, its related wings and remarkable landscape, this is the most significant parcel of the 19<sup>th</sup> century campus. Designed by Thomas U. Walters, Architect of the Capitol, in consultation with Superintendent Charles H. Nichols, the Center Building was one of the first mental hospitals based on the on “Kirkbride” or “linear” plan, named for Thomas Kirkbride of Pennsylvania Hospital, who provided a blueprint for moral treatment, the antebellum therapeutic philosophy that emphasized emotional and social factors in treating mental illness. Nichols wrote in 1860 that the plan of the main edifice had been appropriately denominated *en echelon*; this plan was thought to embrace advantages of light and ventilation in presenting a broken outline of a castle or villa.<sup>1</sup>

The group finds that no development in this area would be appropriate, although a sensitive addition to the Garfield wing of the Center Building (5) might be possible. This would be a limited to single building subordinate in character to the Center Building with a possible size of up to 25,000 to 50,000 square feet and a maximum height of 35 feet.

***Buildings retained:***

- 1 & 2 – Center Building
- 3 – West Wing
- 4 – East Wing
- 5 – Garfield
- 6 – Retreat/Pine
- 8 - Willow
- 27 – Staff Residence No. 3
- 28 – Linden
- 29 – Holly
- 30 – East Lodge/Detached Nurses Home
- 44 – Old Storeroom
- 45 – General Kitchen
- 46 – Bakery

***Buildings that may be demolished for new construction:***

None

**Parcel 2A**

Parcels 2A and 2B represent the core of early 20<sup>th</sup>-century development at St. Elizabeths West Campus. The largest expansion in the campus' history, this building campaign was an architectural achievement by St. Elizabeths Superintendent Alonso Richardson, collaborating with Boston architects Shepley, Rutan and Coolidge, an architectural firm that worked with Frederick Law Olmstead on the planning for the Stanford University Campus in 1888. The 13 "Lettered" buildings, resembling landscaped garden apartments, housed the new administrative quarters and patient accommodations. <sup>ii</sup>

New construction in this parcel should complement and be subordinate to the existing buildings in the central quadrangle area around the designed landscape. In Parcel 2A, the quadrangle is essentially complete, though sensitive additions to the rear of the buildings along MLK Avenue in the range of approximately 150,000 to 200,000 square feet with a maximum height of 35 feet could be accommodated, and limited areas of partial demolition at the rear of the existing buildings could be considered. The working group recognizes that any such additions would fall within the 100-foot security setback and would need to be reinforced.

***Buildings retained:***

- 69 – E Building
- 72 – M Building
- 73 – C Building
- 74 – A Building
- 75 – B Building

***Buildings that may be demolished for new construction:***

- 70 – Employee Cafeteria (contributing, but with low significance and reuse potential)
- 71 – Fan house (non-contributing)

**Parcel 2B**

In part due to gaps left by historic buildings that have been demolished, the working group finds Parcel 2B to be a promising area for the highest amount of development. Despite the significance and reuse potential of contributing buildings 60 and 66, the working group was willing to accept demolition and mitigation for these buildings, in order to accommodate a larger complex west of the quadrangle and reduce pressure to develop other sensitive portions of the campus.

***New development:***

- should be placed in a pattern according to the existing geometries of the quadrangle and its landscape elements, with new development broken down in its massing to a grouping of connected buildings, separated by landscaping and view corridors, in keeping with the scale of the existing campus;
- should include two smaller buildings (maximum height of 45 feet) that complete the western side of the quadrangle and have strong architectural compatibility with the “Letter” buildings;
- may locate a larger massing of development interspersed with landscape areas to the west of the quadrangle, incorporating several buildings between 45 and 60 feet in height, with buildings proximate to the historic core on the north side limited to 45 feet;
- could accommodate, at maximum build-out, approximately 450,000 to 550,000 square feet

***Buildings retained:***

- 64 – L Building
- 68 – Q Building

***Buildings that may be demolished for new construction:***

- 60 – J Building (contributing)
- 62 – Transformer Room (non-contributing)
- 66 – K Building (contributing)

**Parcel 3A**

The working group places a high priority on maintaining the integrity and character of the viewshed to the Point from Gate 1 and the dominance of the Center Building in its landscape. Gate 1 was built in 1874 as the original entrance to the campus. The Borrows

Cottage was built especially for a patient by her parents in 1891, and is representative of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century picturesque and idiosyncratic elements that define the campus.

Low-scale development that does not encroach on the Borrows Cottage may be acceptable. The historic greenhouse site may be considered for new development, and could potentially accommodate up to a total of 75,000 to 100,000 square feet. Development must be set back from the road and not exceed 35 feet in height to protect the character of the northern end of the campus where the landscape is most intact.

***Buildings retained:***

18 – Borrows (Bouroughs) Cottage

***Buildings that may be demolished for new construction:***

20 and 21 – Greenhouses (contributing, but with low significance and low reuse potential)

**Parcel 4A**

The working group found that Parcel 4A is appropriate for intensive new development. Therefore, the working group was willing to accept demolition and mitigation for contributing buildings 11 and 12, which have limited significance and limited reuse potential, in order to accommodate development on the site. However, additional preservation concerns include the forested buffer on the wooded slopes to the west of the parcel and around the historic cemetery, as well as the view of new construction from the Center Building and plateau, and the viewshed from the Washington, DC area into St. Elizabeths. Any new construction within this parcel should not be visible from outside the campus. A total of 225,000 to 350,000 square feet could potentially be accommodated.

***New development:***

- should be clustered or placed in a campus arrangement interspersed with landscaped areas to retain view corridors between buildings;
- should not place below-grade construction under landscaped areas, in order to allow the retention and future growth of mature trees;
- should not intrude further north or west than the footprint of the existing warehouse building (118);
- could be a maximum of 35 feet in height near the plateau with connected building elements located on lower elevations of the existing building footprint, but not exceeding 35 feet above the average natural grade at the perimeter of the building elements.

***Buildings retained:***

None

***Buildings that may be demolished for new construction:***

- 11 – Storage Shed (contributing, per National Historic Landmark nomination)
- 12 – Mechanical and Electrical Shops (contributing, per National Historic Landmark nomination)
- 53 – Tool House (contributing, but not considered significant)
- 118/118A – Warehouse (non-contributing)

### **Parcel 4B/C**

The preservation priority for this parcel is the “small town” cluster of buildings (40, 41, 49, and 52), built between 1882 –1929, which contribute heavily to the character of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century campus and should be restored. The most dramatic element of this cluster is the Fire House, built by Congressional appropriation in 1888, and new development plans should ensure that its five-story clock tower continues to visually dominate this parcel of the campus.

The group found that the ravine would be an acceptable place for higher density and encourages re-using the powerhouse and smokestacks and incorporating the historic building into the new construction. While preservation of the powerhouse is preferable, however, the group agreed that it could be demolished and mitigated for new development, if necessary.

Retaining the powerhouse for re-use, new construction in the ravine could be 50 to 60 feet in height, for a total of 300,000 – 450,000 square feet. However, no development should be taller than the elevation of the mass of the adjacent historic structures, regardless of whether the powerhouse is demolished.

#### ***Buildings retained:***

- 40 – The Rest/Circulating Library
- 41 – Engine House/Fire House
- 49 – Construction Shops
- 52 - Boiler House/Ice Plant

#### ***Buildings that may be demolished for new construction:***

- 55 - Locomotive House (contributing, but not considered significant)
- 56 & 57 – Powerhouse and Stacks (contributing)
- 123 – Incinerator (non-contributing)

### **Parcel 5**

Only very limited new development would be appropriate within this area, such as a roadway built to NPS “parkway” standards. Preservation of the forested slope as part of a larger topographic feature that includes Shepherd Parkway is critical to maintaining the historic viewshed from the city into St. Elizabeths. Significant areas of large mature

large trees must be maintained and their future growth assured, without encroachment by new development, to preserve the character of the parcel.

### **Summary of Conclusions**

Founded in 1852, St. Elizabeths became a National Historic Landmark in 1991 due to its exceptional value in illustrating and interpreting the heritage of the United States. More specifically, St. Elizabeths holds an extraordinarily significant place in the history of the mental health field, the historic development and design of Washington, DC, and the region's Civil War history. It is an irreplaceable site that must be carefully considered and sensitively treated, and preserved for future generations, in accordance with the federal government's stewardship responsibilities under the National Historic Preservation Act.

The working group found that the acceptable gross square footage of above-ground new construction on site at the St. Elizabeths West Campus could range from 1,325,000 to 1,875,000 gross square feet. These guidelines allow for the demolition of up to nine contributing buildings. Reuse of existing historic structures would yield between 400,000 and 600,000 gross square feet, resulting in a total maximum range of approximately 1.925 to 2.475 million gross square feet of usable space. In addition, underground construction could increase these totals by 15 to 20 percent.

This scale of development would more than double the amount of usable square feet within the historic campus, and is consistent with findings in the August 2005 Jones Lang LaSalle land use feasibility study, which suggested that total development of less than 3 million gross square feet on the site would be the preferred option. We note that a previous study commissioned by GSA in 2002 indicated a similar amount of allowable development; this assessment is also consistent with the Urban Land Institute study from 2003.

As described above, additional density could be achieved in a few limited areas on the site, and the consulting parties and review agencies would be pleased to work with GSA to refine these concepts and parameters, with the goal of minimizing harm to the National Historic Landmark. All members of the working group maintain the firm conviction that a development proposal of much greater density, such as 4.5 to 6.4 million gross square feet proposed in GSA's PDEIS, would fundamentally destroy the National Historic Landmark.

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<sup>i</sup> St Elizabeths Hospital – Text of 1990 NHL Documentation

<sup>ii</sup> St. Elizabeths Hospital – Text of 1990 NHL Documentation

