



***Docket Item #2
Informational Item
Carlyle Courthouse Security Improvements***

Application	General Data	
Project Name: Carlyle Courthouse Security Improvements Location: 401 Courthouse Square and 2100 Jamieson Avenue (Block I) Applicant: U.S. General Services Administration (GSA)	DRB Date:	March 15, 2012
	Site Area:	~2.7 acres
	Zone:	CDD#1(Carlyle)
	Proposed Use:	Courthouse

Purpose of Application	
Provide an overview of the proposed security improvements to the Federal Courthouse in Carlyle, specifically along Jamieson Avenue, Elizabeth Lane, and within and around Courthouse Square.	
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I. SUMMARY

City staff has continued to meet with the U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) and the U.S. Marshals Service to discuss removal of the temporary security measures that were installed around the Carlyle Courthouse several years ago and develop a more appropriate plan for security that considers the high amount of pedestrian activity in Carlyle. The area around the Courthouse has experienced significant changes in the last few years with the completion of the Westin hotel and Jamieson condos on Block F, and the office building on Block J. Given the increased number of people living, visiting, and working in the neighborhood, it is extremely important that the City and GSA work together to create a finished look for the Courthouse that will contribute to the Carlyle neighborhood. The proposed plan will remove the jersey barriers along the street and park, reopen the street in front of the Courthouse, and provide more appropriate security measures that minimize the impacts to pedestrians, while maintaining the security needs of the Courthouse.

This project is being undertaken by a Federal agency and, thus, does not need to be approved through the City's regulatory process. However, GSA has been working closely with the City to ensure it meets the needs of the City and the design intent for Carlyle. The project will also be reviewed by the National Capital Planning Commission. Since the project falls within Carlyle, staff is presenting the proposal to the Design Review Board as an informational item to keep the Board aware of what is happening and allow for the opportunity to comment.

II. BACKGROUND

Location

The Carlyle Courthouse is located on Block I at 401 Courthouse Square. The building fronts Jaimeson Avenue, Courthouse Square, and Elizabeth Lane and is adjacent to the Simpson parking garage and office building to the south. Carlyle Towers is across Jamieson Avenue to the northwest, The Westin hotel and Courthouse Square Park are across Courthouse Square to the northeast, and the office building on Block J (now owned by Catholic Charities) and the west PTO garage are across Elizabeth Lane to the east.

Project Evolution

The security improvements were installed in 2003 in response to heightened security at the Courthouse after 9/11. In 2007, GSA submitted plans to the City for comment that would formalize the security measures. Unfortunately, staff and the community were not satisfied with the original proposal and requested further design consideration for a more appropriate solution. In July 2009, a proposal was discussed at the DRB meeting. This design included a walled area at the garage entrance on Jamieson to accommodate the large buses the Marshals Service anticipated needing for prisoner transfer and a connection to Courthouse Square Park that addressed the road in front of the courthouse which is closed.

Since 2009, two changes have occurred that have allowed the design for the security improvements to be simplified. First, the Marshals Service determined that they would not need a large bus for prisoner transfer and could continue using a van that will fit within the existing sally port next to the Jamieson Avenue garage entrance. This eliminated the need for the

screened area for a bus to pull into. Second, the Marshals Service agreed to allow vehicular traffic on the portion of Courthouse Square adjacent to the Courthouse entrance. This eliminated the need for a plan that treated the closed street and integrated it with the park. City Staff have been working with GSA to revise the plans given these changes. The proposed plan will be reviewed by the NCPC this spring and preparation of construction documents will follow.

Project Description

Although simplified from the proposal discussed in 2009, the current plan provides for the security needs of the Courthouse while returning the pedestrian environment and vehicular circulation to a condition close to the original plan for the area. The plan addresses all three streets surrounding the Courthouse and a summary of the proposed improvements for each street is provided below.

Jamieson Avenue

Jamieson Avenue currently has jersey barriers for the length of the building that reduce one of the travel lanes along the street. Official vehicle parking along the jersey barriers further reduces the width of Jamieson Avenue. With this plan, the jersey barriers and vehicle parking would be removed. In order to obtain an adequate setback from the Courthouse, GSA has proposed installing a 19'6" planted area along the building with a 10' wide sidewalk for most of the length of the street. A hardened garden fence would be installed between the planted area and the sidewalk to provide additional security. The existing street trees along Jamieson would be retained within the new planted area. Retractable bollards would be installed across the garage entrance and fixed bollards would be installed in front of the U.S. Attorney General's Office and at the corner of Jamieson Avenue and Courthouse Square.

To obtain enough width for the planted area and the sidewalk, the curb will be extended away from the building. This will permanently reduce the width of Jamieson Avenue, although little will change from the existing conditions given the location of the jersey barriers and vehicle parking. The new street section will provide one eastbound lane and two westbound lanes. During off-peak hours, one of the westbound lanes will be made available for parking. GSA has done a traffic study to ensure that the impacts of this proposal on traffic are minimal.

Courthouse Square

As mentioned above, a significant change that has occurred is the reopening of the segment of Courthouse Square street in front of the Courthouse. For the last several years, this portion of the street has been blocked to vehicular traffic by jersey barriers, which has created the unsightly appearance of an abandoned road and has created circulation problems for the area, particularly in relation to the Westin. With this proposal, the street will be reopened to one way, southbound traffic. The street will be narrowed to 18' to provide an additional offset for the Courthouse. Similar to the improvements along Jamieson Avenue, planted areas and hardened garden fences will be installed. Permanent bollards will be installed at the main entrance to the Courthouse along the curb. Retractable bollards will be installed at each end of the street in case security concerns require the street to be closed again.

Elizabeth Lane

There are also jersey barriers along Elizabeth Lane that are proposed to be removed. Given the narrower sidewalk on this side and the fact that dimensions of Elizabeth Lane are smaller than Jamieson Avenue, there is not enough room to provide an additional security offset with a planted area as is proposed for Jamieson Avenue. Instead, bollards and ornamental fencing will be installed along the existing curb. The design of the fencing will relate to the hardened garden fences installed along Jamieson Avenue and Courthouse Square.

Since the improvements on Jamieson Avenue will eliminate the street parking for official vehicles, Elizabeth Lane will be used for official vehicle parking. This will provide an additional offset for this side of the building. There is currently enough room in the street to provide on-street parking and the Marshals Service is comfortable with street parking on this side of the building if it is security related.

III. STAFF ANALYSIS

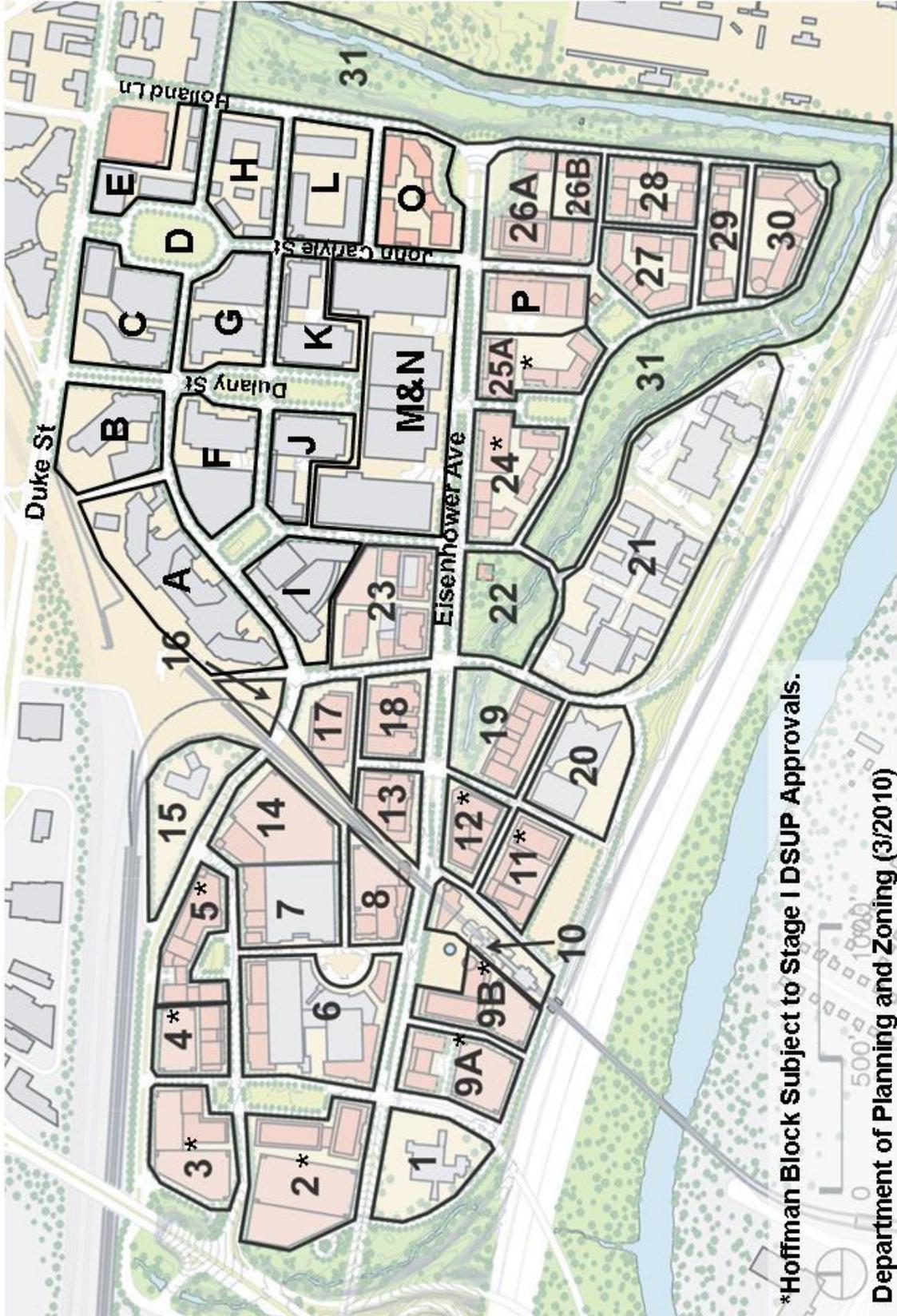
In general, staff is very supportive of this proposal. The removal of the jersey barriers, opening of Courthouse Square street, and the addition of a sidewalk along Jamieson Avenue that is outside of the secured area goes a long way towards returning the area to the original vision for Carlyle as a pedestrian friendly environment. Staff will continue to work with GSA on the details for the design of the hardened garden fences and the bollards.

In addition, GSA will need to continue coordinating with the Carlyle Community Council (CCC). The CCC owns all of the streets and most of the sidewalks in Carlyle. Since the proposed improvements impact these areas, GSA will need an easement from the CCC. Furthermore, since the CCC has provided the City with a public access easement for these areas, the easement will need to be coordinated with the City as well. GSA has been working with the CCC and is taking steps to obtain this easement.

IV. CONCLUSION

Staff is believes this plan will provide a great improvement to the streetscape and overall neighborhood and would like to see it appropriately implemented as soon as possible. While official DRB approval is not required for this case, staff recommends the DRB support the proposal.

Eisenhower East / Carlyle Blocks



*Hoffman Block Subject to Stage I DSUP Approvals.

Department of Planning and Zoning (3/2010)

