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## HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD STAFF REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION

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Landmark/District:	<b>Materials Testing Lab at McMillan Reservoir</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Agenda
Address:	<b>350 McMillan Drive, NW</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Consent Calendar
Meeting Date:	<b>November 16, 2017</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> New Construction
H.P.A. Number:	<b>17-407</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Alteration
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Conceptual Design

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The District Department of Transportation (DDOT) proposes to construct a new building to consolidate and expand its existing materials testing laboratory at the McMillan Reservoir. The new building, designed by DLR Group Architects, will replace several temporary structures with a new facility that incorporates the historic building on site.

### **McMillan Reservoir**

The McMillan Park Reservoir Historic District was constructed to serve as Washington DC's first water treatment facility. Built in multiple stages, mostly between 1885 and 1913, some of the more noteworthy features include the main reservoir, the landscape design by Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., the remnants of the now defunct Sand Filtration Plant, and the magnificent East Shaft Gatehouse.

This latter building was designed by Henry Alexander McComb, constructed in 1901, and is an excellent example of what the National Register of Historic Places nomination refers to as "an ecclesiastical form executed in a northern Italian Romanesque style." Few other buildings within the historic district are as ornate, and the intricate brickwork, arched openings, and red clay tile roof of the East Shaft Gatehouse established the architectural vocabulary from which nearly all subsequent historic buildings were designed and constructed, including the East Shaft Annex – the small, c. 1904 building located on the existing materials testing laboratory site.

### **New Construction**

Like the historic East Shaft Annex, the proposed new facility will be one story tall. Together, they will provide a total of 8,900 square feet which will be divided into administrative and laboratory functions. The lab areas will incorporate the smokestacks necessary for testing transportation-related materials such as asphalt, concrete, soil and aggregates. Siting of the new building is limited by relatively steep topography and large trees on the north, Howard University on the south, an Army Corps of Engineers underground utilities setback on the east, and by 4<sup>th</sup> Street, NW on the west.

### **Evaluation**

The proposed new construction is compatible with the East Shaft Annex and the McMillan Park Reservoir Historic District because it is sufficiently set back from the historic building's primary façade to maintain important views to and from the reservoir, as well as to the East Shaft Gatehouse directly to the north. It is also compatible because of appropriately scaled massing and complementary new materials – especially the metal panels that echo the red brick color that

characterizes so much of the historic district. The connection between old and new is further strengthened by limiting most of the metal panels to the same height as the cornice line of the historic building, thus establishing a base for the new building that relates directly to the architectural features of the historic building. With the exception of a perforated metal screen that will hide mechanical equipment on the southeast corner, most every other part of the new facility will be light and glassy.

The new smokestacks will provide some visual interest and clues to the proposed use as well as serve as contemporary counterparts to the historic chimney that will be retained and incorporated into the new facility.

Although some alteration of the East Shaft Annex will be required to connect and incorporate it into the larger complex, these adaptations will guarantee continued, active use of the historic building which was originally going to be relegated to storage. Potential slight losses of historic fabric will be offset by a full exterior restoration of the historic building, including the introduction of historically appropriate doors and windows.

Archaeological investigations are underway and will continue in a phased approach. The only remaining issues to be resolved are relatively minor details and slight design refinements.

**Recommendation**

*HPO recommends that the Board approve the concept for the new facility and delegate all remaining design review and permit review to HPO.*

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