
**HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD
STAFF REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION**

Landmark/District:	Saint Elizabeths Hospital Historic District	<input type="checkbox"/> Agenda
Address:	1100 Alabama Avenue SE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Consent Calendar
Meeting Date:	February 25, 2016	<input type="checkbox"/> Alteration
H.P.A. Number:	16-106	<input type="checkbox"/> Demolition
Staff Reviewer:	Andrew Lewis	<input type="checkbox"/> Conceptual Design

As part of a larger program to increase the District of Columbia's use of renewable energy sources, the D.C. Department of General Services (DGS) is proposing to install photovoltaic panels on the rooftops of several of the newer buildings at St Elizabeths Hospital and to construct approximately 25 free-standing "photovoltaic carports" in adjacent parking lots.

Evaluation

Saint Elizabeths Hospital was chartered by Congress in 1852 and is one of the nation's earliest and most significant institutions for the treatment of mental illness. The property was designated a historic district in 2005. The buildings upon which the solar panels are to be installed fall within the boundaries of district but none is a historic or contributing element of the historic district. At most, the panels atop the hospital itself will be minimally visible because they will be sloped to extend no more than 29 inches above the roof and will be set back a minimum of six feet from the parapets, which range from twelve to 60 inches in height. The buildings and the site for the photovoltaic carports are also considerably removed from any historic buildings and separated by a large, heavily treed ravine that provides an additional sense of visual and physical separation from the heart of the historic district.

The site for the carports consists of parking lots located behind (i.e. to the north of) the recently constructed hospital buildings. As such, the solar panels will not be readily visible from any of the surrounding streets. It is also worth noting that the proposed site is near where a new, 175-foot-tall water tower is slated for construction and that HPO's review of the site established that there was no potential to affect archaeological resources associated with the cemetery on this opposite side of the hospital buildings.

The photovoltaic carports themselves will be free-standing units supported by concrete piers. The canopies upon which the solar arrays will be installed will be slanted to maximize solar gain and to shed water. At their highest point, the canopies will reach approximately thirteen feet above grade. Although it will likely be possible to see the carports from the eastern edges of the campus, the physical separation, aforementioned ravine, relatively low height of the structures and the existing tree canopy will cause them essentially to fade into the foreground of the newer hospital buildings.

Recommendation

HPO recommends that the Board find the proposed photovoltaic rooftop panels and carports compatible with the character of the historic district.