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

Landmark/District: **Saint Elizabeths Hospital Historic District** (x) Agenda
Address: **1100 Alabama Avenue SE**

Meeting Date: **April 27, 2023** (x) New construction
Case Number: **23-291** (x) Permit

The applicant, Dan Rieth, wireless infrastructure manager for the District of Columbia Department of General Services, requests on behalf of the property owner, the District of Columbia, and the user of the site, the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority, the Board's review of a permit application to construct a 250-foot-tall replacement steel-skeleton tower, a one-story prefabricated building, and a new generator and gas tank to support existing and anticipated communications equipment.

This corner of the historic district was previously a U.S. Navy reservation used as a weather station. The spot is surrounded by the campus itself, including the recent hospital building to the south and a historic cemetery to the north. To the southeast, beyond the designated campus, are some of the city's historic Jewish cemeteries, although these have not been designated landmarks. For some years, this has been the site of a steel tower that bears WMATA antennas, etc. At its base is a fenced compound containing three prefab buildings and a generator.

The present tower has reached the limit of the load it can carry. Because the new tower must be constructed before the old one is removed, the site will be expanded to the south to accommodate the second tower, approaching one corner of the hospital. It is said that the transfer of equipment and dismantling of the old tower may take up to six months after the new construction.

The extension of the utilitarian security fence, the additional structures, the implied additional future equipment, and the loss of some trees may not be ideal, but they are reflective of the character of this corner of the campus since World War II. The replacement of the tower is equivalent to the existing in terms of height and effects. It would be located several yards farther from the hospital's historic East Cemetery. The lower structures could scarcely be viewed from outside the campus, and the tower would be only slightly nearer the cemeteries on Alabama Avenue, while being slightly farther from both the neighborhood to the north and the distant Martin Luther King Avenue.

An archaeological survey was conducted here in 2022, and HPO made a conditional finding of No Adverse Effect (CNAE) pending completion of submission of a final report and site form.

Because the property is District-owned, the project would also be reviewed by the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts. Because of its proximity to the campus's East Cemetery, it would be reviewed by the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation pursuant to the 1987 deed by which

the District acquired the campus. The Federal Communications Commission has initiated review under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, asking for concurrence that there is no adverse effect. The Board's review provides an opportunity for public comment.

Recommendation

HPO recommends that the Board recommend approval of a permit, with the condition that the old tower be demolished within six months of the construction of the new one.

