

Montgomery-National Capital Park and Planning Commission

May 23, 2013

Food and Drug Administration statement for Building One

Testimony for the Food and Drug Administration by Brian Peper before Montgomery County Planning Board Public Hearing for the White Oak Science Gateway Master Plan as Item 8 regarding possible Historic Designation of the Naval Ordnance Laboratory Administration Building on Thursday, 23 May 2013.

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is pleased to support the Historic Designation of Building 1 located on the campus of the Federal Research Center in White Oak, Maryland. There were numerous discussions conducted over two years to determine the best use of the Administration Building of NOL; continuing to use it as an office building was the most logical decision. Thusly, FDA has occupied Building 1 as an office building since late 2008.

Inasmuch as the building was constructed in 1946, a few modifications were necessary to revamp it into the 21st Century. Building 1 has a functional floor plate dimension which allows sunlight to enter most of the offices in the building. All of the windows were replaced with energy-efficient, operable windows of the same scale and design as the original windows. The fire suppression and smoke control system required laborious attention to retain the beautiful stairway on three of the floors. The railing for the stairway was also raised in order to comply with current requirements. The two story grand marble-lined entry foyer is repurposed to a conference room overflow area. The main large conference rooms adjoining the two story space were refurbished to their original glory with reconstructed decorative ceiling and repaired terrazzo flooring.

Transforming the ground floor into habitable space and making that level the primary entry level was a challenge. KlingStubbins Architectural Firm designed a large security pavilion, mostly of glass, in the front of the Administration Building at the ground level; this design change entailed excavating and removing a considerable amount of dirt, as well as removal of the monumental stairs in order to create a new at-grade level entrance. Unfortunately, the design modification eliminated the grand monumental stairs leading to the first level of the original building, commonly referred to as the *Piano Nobile*.

The new ground level entry provides a central location to process visitors and staff as they enter the building and other semi-public areas of the Campus. The new security pavilion accommodates the magnetometers and other protective screening devices necessary in today's security environment. While the security pavilion is the new focal point, it does not compete with the commanding post-war façade of Building 1.

The design flow from the security pavilion naturally moves the guest or visitor into an anteroom where the space and walls are filled with archival memorabilia of the history of FDA. Artifacts date back to 1906, the early days of FDA, and progress in approximate decade time frames through our current days. Visitors then proceed into the 'Great Room,' FDA's state-of-the-art auditorium that seats up to 600 guests; the 'Great Room' is also technologically equipped to conduct in-house, as well as countrywide webinars.

In the original plan (1946) of the NOL, behind the Administration Building was a large auditorium and food service. KlingStubbins retained that same logic and placed Building 2, the Central Shared Use Building, behind Building 1. Today Building 2 houses a food services unit and the conference center. As previously stated, FDA's main public auditorium is accessible through Building 1.

The 1946 Administrative Building encompassed a circular drive upon the approach to the building. Although this feature has been modified to accommodate today's traffic patterns, it still retains its prominent position as one enters the FDA Campus. This circulation feature allows Campus shuttle busses and public transportation to easily access Building 1 and the Campus.

KlingStubbins also enhanced the welcoming aspects of the Campus by adding small office wings on both sides of Building 1; these wings serve as arms reaching out to welcome one onto the Campus. As one drives down Mahan road to enter the Campus, the additional side buildings tend to accentuate the importance of Building 1. The height proportioning of the other buildings on Campus allows Building 1 to be the principal focus as one approaches the Campus. The other Campus buildings do not supersede Building 1 or displace the significance of Building 1. KlingStubbins exercised great diligence and respect to preserve Building 1 and the entire Campus in a complementary scale that is easy to comprehend.

Transforming a 1940's building into a building for today's use was a magnanimous undertaking. An inordinate amount of attention was devoted to the transformation of Building 1; much attention was given to the building itself, its surrounding environment, and even to the textures and materials used in the surrounding architecture. FDA is pleased with the finished product, its functionality, and its public reception. FDA is comfortable with and supports placing Building One in the White Oak Science Gateway Master Plan.