

106 SUCCESS STORY

Partners Make Resolute Commitment to Reconstruct National Landmark Washington, D.C.



“Builders have always understood that buildings are far more than brick and mortar and stone. Buildings are statements of hope, determination, declarations of faith in the future, acts of commitment to plans and purposes that extend far beyond the present. And as long as this Pentagon stands, and that will be a long, long time, the Pentagon will remain a symbol of America’s resilience, endurance, and resolve.”

—PAUL WOLFOWITZ
Former Deputy Secretary of Defense
Remarks at Worker Appreciation
Ceremony, Pentagon, 2002



THE STORY

As the United States built up its armed forces in 1941, the War Department faced a serious space issue for its military command. It determined an office building to house 40,000 workers in four million square feet of space was needed. Due to the military need for steel, congressional restriction on the number of occupants, and a desire not to obstruct the view of Washington, the building was originally planned at four stories high with ramps instead of passenger elevators. Architects George Bergstrom and David J. Witmer met the challenge with a unique five-sided structure using an innovative system of ramps. Congress appropriated \$35 million, and construction commenced on September 11, 1941, in Arlington, Virginia. In the Stripped Classicism style, the Pentagon is a remarkable example of a complex and highly efficient design consisting of stacked concentric pentagonal rings. The building’s iconic form, location, and role in military and civilian culture have established the Pentagon as a national and international monument, the paramount symbol of American national defense and military power. As a result of its significance, the Pentagon was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1989 and designated a National Historic Landmark in 1992.

THE PROJECT

In the 1990s, the Department of Defense’s (DoD) Washington Headquarters Service (WHS) proposed the Pentagon Renovation Program (PENREN), a long-term effort to thoroughly retrofit the Pentagon to conform to contemporary building codes and safety requirements while retaining its historic appearance and significance. With 17.5 miles of corridors, 7,700 windows, and 67 acres of parking, renovating the nation’s largest office building would be carried out in segments as funding was available. The WHS consulted with the United States Army Corps of Engineers, the Virginia State Historic Preservation Officer, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP), and the National Trust for Historic Preservation (NTHP), and together they determined that by following the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties (Secretary’s Standards) the work would not adversely affect the property.

Photos: Above, restoring the Pentagon after 2001; Right, southwesterly view with Potomac River and Washington Monument in the background (DoD photo); award bestowed on Secretary of Defense from the ACHP and National Trust



On September 11, 2001, the west side of the Pentagon was struck by a hijacked airliner. The damaged portion had been included in the first “wedge” of the multi-phased PENREN and was only five days away from completion, so many offices were empty when the attack occurred. PENREN was credited with saving many lives that might have been lost had the plane struck an unrenovated section.



Photos: views of the original and reconstructed sections of the Pentagon

THE 106 PROCESS

DoD, the federal agency carrying out this project, was responsible for conducting the Section 106 process under the National Historic Preservation Act. Section 106 requires that federal agencies identify historic properties and assess the effects of the projects they carry out, fund, or permit on those properties. Federal agencies also are required to consult with parties that have an interest in the historic property when adverse effects may occur.

Faced with the urgent need to reconstruct the damaged portions of the Pentagon after 9/11, the consulting parties agreed the earlier no adverse effect determination was still appropriate for the reconstruction. Within weeks of the attack, DoD launched Phoenix Project to reconstruct and restore the damaged section. DoD personnel and contractors worked 24 hours a day, seven days a week, vowing that occupants of the damaged wedge would be able to view memorial ceremonies on the first anniversary of the attack from their office windows. The Phoenix Project reconstruction paid careful attention to the original craftsmanship of the building and replicated the exterior limestone material and architectural detail in keeping with the Secretary’s Standards.

THE SUCCESS

All parties adopted a flexible approach and agreed to make necessary accommodations to reflect the national importance of the project. Reconstruction was completed in time for the September 11, 2002, commemoration. At the ceremony, the NTHP and the ACHP presented an award—an engraved piece of the original 1941 limestone façade—to the Secretary of Defense recognizing DoD’s commitment to reconstruct the damaged wedge using material, design, and craftsmanship that matched the original. This faithful renovation, symbolic of DoD’s approach to the overall PENREN project, demonstrated its uncompromising commitment to preserving its heritage. The extraordinary reconstruction work accomplished by architects, contractors, and construction workers under DoD’s leadership warranted the commendation. Subsequently, work continued on the renovation, acknowledging the tragic events of 9/11. The outdoor Pentagon Memorial, dedicated to the memory of those lost, opened on September 11, 2008. The entire PENREN was completed in June 2011, enabling the world-famous landmark to meet 21st century national defense needs.

ADVISORY COUNCIL ON HISTORIC PRESERVATION

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For more about
Section 106 and
the ACHP go to
www.achp.gov



Preserving America's Heritage