

# 106 SUCCESS STORY

## Headquarters Consolidation Revives St. Elizabeths NHL West Campus

Washington, D.C.



### THE STORY

Designated by Congress in 1852 and opened in 1855 as the first federal mental health hospital for members of the armed forces and District of Columbia residents, the Government Hospital for the Insane became known as St. Elizabeths after the name of the tract of land on which it was constructed. The expansive, 350-acre campus is a prominent example of a mid-19th century movement that promoted moral treatment for the mentally ill in well-designed buildings amid a verdant agrarian setting. After decades of steady growth and expansion, including construction of an East Campus, the hospital declined with the creation of the veterans' hospital system in the 1940s and the deinstitutionalization of care for the mentally ill in the 1960s. Some buildings on the West Campus and the entire East Campus were transferred from federal ownership to the District of Columbia ownership in 1987. By the late 1990s, the patient population had shrunk to less than 10 percent of its peak of 7,500 patients, leaving the earliest buildings on the West Campus largely vacant. The West Campus was transferred to the General Services Administration (GSA) in 2004. St. Elizabeths was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1979 and designated a National Historic Landmark (NHL) in 1990.

### THE PROJECT

To consolidate the headquarters of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), GSA was charged with accommodating 6 million square feet of tenant space for 14,000 employees at St. Elizabeths, which included about 1 million square feet of historic buildings, a cultural landscape, and numerous archaeological resources. The plan also included road and highway interchange improvements within portions of adjacent National Park Service (NPS) property, which required compliance with Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act.

### THE 106 PROCESS

GSA 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

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“The General Services Administration is extremely proud of the progress made in public consultation with local and national preservation organizations and the community. These groups worked tirelessly with GSA to improve the master plan and protect this National Historic Landmark. ...The GSA looks forward not only to reusing and renewing this long-vacant historic campus but also to continuing to reinvest in local economic recovery efforts.”

—ANTHONY E. COSTA  
Acting Commissioner of Public  
Buildings, GSA 2009

Photos: Above, Center Building, built in the Kirkbride Plan (photo courtesy Library of Congress); Right, aerial view (photo courtesy U.S. Coast Guard)



Photos: Left, ACHP members tour cemetery grounds on West Campus; Above, Hitchcock Hall, the former psychodrama theater

properties. Federal agencies also are required to consult with parties that have an interest in the fate of the property when adverse effects may ensue.

GSA initially proposed to redevelop the West Campus as a high-security campus by demolishing approximately half of both the historic buildings and the cultural landscape. In 2008, working with numerous consulting parties through the Section 106 process, GSA developed a viable master plan and a Programmatic Agreement (PA) that set forth a process for resolving adverse effects for each phase of the master plan's implementation. If adverse effects were found, they would be resolved in separate Memoranda of Agreement (MOAs). The consultation was informed by guidance from Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP) members, a collective consulting party consensus document regarding locations and density of new development, and a Section 213 Report requested of the Secretary of the Interior by the ACHP to address the master plan's cumulative effects on the significant characteristics of the NHL.

GSA agreed to minimize the effects of the DHS program by retaining the preeminence of the Center Building in the landscape, concentrating new development outside of the historic core, submerging structured parking, blending new construction with existing buildings on the site's sloping topography, and offsetting added density with landscape rehabilitation. Making a case for their viability, GSA planned to reuse 52 of the 62 contributing resources (eight greenhouses were deteriorated beyond repair), as well as rehabilitate numerous landscape features, and recover archaeological resources. GSA's dedicated team of experts also completed building condition assessments, landscape analyses, and a geothermal archaeological survey, and stabilized and mothballed several historic buildings for later reuse. GSA undertook numerous mitigation measures early on, including an education program with a local partner bringing about 5,000 visitors to the site; conservation and digitization of historic drawings; documentation of buildings and landscapes; and publication of an online history book. GSA is planning an exhibit with the National Building Museum.

## THE SUCCESS

During eight years, seven MOAs have been executed under the PA. St. Elizabeths' West Campus is now home to the new LEED gold U.S. Coast Guard headquarters, and nearby rehabilitated historic buildings house support functions. By 2018, the historic Center Building will support the Office of the DHS Secretary. GSA has commenced consultation on two more MOAs to address reuse of 18 historic buildings. Using the framework of the Section 106 process to obtain ongoing input from consulting parties, GSA has guaranteed a future for the NHL's historic buildings and landscape while meeting the nation's critical 21st century homeland security needs. For more information: [www.stelizabethsdevelopment.com](http://www.stelizabethsdevelopment.com)

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### Consulting Parties:

General Services Administration  
 Department of Homeland Security  
 Federal Highway Administration  
 National Capital Planning Commission  
 District of Columbia Historic Preservation Office (SHPO)  
 ACHP  
 Many Others

For more about Section 106 and the ACHP go to [www.achp.gov](http://www.achp.gov)



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