



General Administration Building

SEPA Environmental Review Public Comments and Responses

Responses to comments provided in this document address environmental issues raised during the public comment period for the draft General Administration Building Demolition Project State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) environmental review.

The Department of Enterprise Services (DES) released the draft environmental review for comment on August 12, 2024. The 30-day comment period ended on Sept. 11, 2024. Eleven comments were submitted.

DES has provided responses for each comment in the following sections. They are intended to provide clarification and refinement of information presented in the draft environmental review. Some issues raised are outside the scope of a SEPA environmental review, which is to evaluate potential environmental impacts (and benefits) of the project and to inform decision makers and the public of reasonable alternatives, including mitigation measures that would avoid or minimize adverse impacts or enhance environmental quality.

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General

Comment received from Susan Dunn

Comment: I support demolition of the General Administration Building on the Capitol campus. I disagree with the determination of historical significance. Also the campus space is limited and needs to be used. I worked in this building for many years in the 1980s and it wasn't very functional space then. It did not then or now seem to have historical significance but rather an inexpensive, convenient answer to postwar construction needs for space. Please don't hesitate to demolish. Demolish!

Response: Comment noted.

Comment received from Michael Citrak

Comment: So sorry to hear of the death of the old GA Building. It's been part of my many decades in the Olympia area. It's very cute, so it's too bad that it's too expensive to keep. So, rather than tear it down, why don't you implode it? So, what are you going to use the space for?

Response: A temporary parking lot will be constructed in the space currently occupied by the GA Building.

Issue: Preservation of mural

Comment received from Bridget Flory

Comment: What about the mural in the GA building?

Comment received from Bill Moomau

Comment: I would hope that the mosaic mural inside the entry hall could be preserved and removed to another site.

Response: The mural was moved to the Helen Sommers building in 2018.

Issue: Loss of a property listed on the National Register of Historic Places

Comment received from Greg Griffith, Olympia Historical Society & Bigelow House Museum

Page 4: "This project will demolish the vacant six-story 283,865 gross square foot General Administration Building located at 210 11th Avenue SW, in Olympia Washington. The building was completed in 1956 and is designated as a state capitol historic facility and listed on the National Register of Historic Places."

Comment: Listing of places in the National Register of Historic Places has meaning and significance to present and future generations; this point should be acknowledged and strengthened in the checklist.

Substantive and meaningful measures should be identified and provided for the loss of a National Register of Historic Places property.

Response: Comment noted. In response, in the Notice of Action Taken, DES has added the following text to the SEPA project description:

According to the National Park Service evaluation sheet for the 2007 General Administration Building National Register of Historic Places Nomination, "The General Administration Building is significant at the statewide level under National Register Criteria A and C in the areas of Architecture and Government/Politics. As the first major building completed on the capitol campus after the Depression, the General Administration Building is reflective of the state government's significant growth in the post-World War II period, and the critical, court-directed centralization of state functions in Olympia. Completed in 1956, the building is an outstanding example of Modernist (International Style) design, by respected Tacoma architect A. Gordon Lumm." The building is an important landmark in the development and growth of state government.

Issue: Proposed reuse

Comment received from Greg Griffith, Olympia Historical Society & Bigelow House Museum

Page 4: "After demolition, a new, temporary 293-stall parking lot will be constructed on the site with landscaping, utilities, and potentially a new restroom building. The approximately 120,000 square foot parking lot will help address the parking demand on campus."

Comment: OHS & BHM expresses deep concern about the vision for the GA Building site as a "temporary" parking lot. The GA Building site occupies a key site not only for the Capitol Campus but also for the city of Olympia. The "highest and best use" for this site should not be a 293-parking lot if even on "temporary" basis. Without a greater vision and strong commitment, we have great concern that "temporary" will come to mean the site will be a parking lot "indefinitely." With the loss of the GA building and recent loss of the Newhouse building, the Carlyon House, Ayers Duplex, and the partial demolition of the Pritchard Building, we have concern that the historically and architecturally significant west Capitol Campus is being diminished and given over to parking lots.

Response: The 2017 State Capitol Development Study and 2006 State Capitol Master Plan identified the priority for highest and best use for Capitol Campus properties:

Principle 1 – Public Use and Access indicates that the highest priority is given to uses that serve the needs of state government. It calls for maximizing opportunities for access to and interaction with state government.

Principle 2 – Delivery of Public Services calls for an assessment of the highest and best use of the Opportunity Sites and encourages co-location of services to increase efficiency of operations. The Highest and Best Use Chart in Principle 2 indicates that properties on the west

campus should be for uses critical to the effective operation of the functions in the Legislative Building.

The 2017 study found that, during a typical legislative session, the parking supply on the Capitol Campus is not adequate to meet current vehicular demand from legislators, staff, agency employees, visitors, or others, and that the campus would benefit from additional parking facilities.

The current mothballed building has a \$472,000 annual operating cost. Construction of the temporary parking lot serves the highest and best use for current campus needs and reduces operating costs, while planning continues on a new building at this location.

Comment received from Patrick McDonald, Ph.D.

Comment: The Secretary of State's office appreciates the thorough work John Lyons and Michael Tyson from the Department of Enterprise Services have put into the environmental review of the proposed demolition of the General Administration Building, and fully supports their recommendations. The Secretary of State's office is working with stakeholders and the Legislature concerning alternative uses for the site. Removing the current facility and providing a temporary parking lot would be the best short-term use for the site. Our only concern is building a restroom at the location, which would involve upgrades to the site, especially if a new permanent structure is built on the site in the next 2-4 years.

Response: Comment noted. Outside the scope of the SEPA process.

Comment received from Cameron Smith

Comment: I am in favor of the SEPA checklist's proposed plan to build a new public restroom in the location of the old General Administration building.

Response: Comment noted. Outside the scope of the SEPA process.

Issue: Preservation of architectural feature

Comment received from Yvonne L. Ellison

Comment: I would like to ask that if it is not already the plan, that the medallion on the GA Building be preserved and mounted in or on the Helen Sommers Building.

Response: The bronze seal will be put in DES storage for restoration and future use.

Earth

Issue: Solid waste management

Comment received from Department of Ecology, Southwest Regional Office

Comment: All grading and filling of land must utilize only clean fill. All other materials may be considered solid waste, and permit approval may be required from your local jurisdictional health department prior to filling. All removed debris resulting from this project must be disposed of at an approved site. Contact the local jurisdictional health department or Department of Ecology for proper management of these materials.

Response: Comment noted. In the SEPA Environmental Checklist (page 5), DES anticipates using approximately 1,350 cubic yards of fill, consisting of pit run rock, quarry run rock, crushed rock, crushed gravel, or sand from an approved supplier.,

Air

No comments received for this category.

Water

No comments received for this category.

Plants

No comments received for this category.

Animals

No comments received for this category.

Energy and Natural Resources

No comments received for this category.

Environmental Health

Issue: Hazardous waste & toxics reduction

Comment received from Department of Ecology, Southwest Regional Office

Comment: In addition to any required asbestos abatement procedures, the applicant should ensure that any other potentially dangerous or hazardous materials present, such as PCB-containing lamp ballasts, fluorescent lamps, and wall thermostats containing mercury, are removed prior to demolition.... It is equally important that demolition debris is also safely managed, especially if it contains painted wood or concrete, treated wood, or other possibly dangerous materials.

Response: As noted in the SEPA checklist (pp. 12-13), a Hazardous Building Materials Survey Report was prepared to identify building materials that may require special handling/disposal during demolition/construction. The report identified materials containing greater than 1 percent asbestos containing material (ACM) throughout the building. Materials containing less than 1 percent ACM, lead-containing paint and materials, and fluorescent light ballasts (polychlorinated biphenyls (PCB)), and mercury-containing exit signs were also identified. The SEPA checklist (pp. 12-13) outlines measures to control environmental health hazards.

Issue: Toxics Cleanup

Comment received from Department of Ecology, Southwest Regional Office

Comment: This property is within a quarter mile of several known or suspected contaminated sites.... If contamination is suspected, discovered, or occurs during the proposed SEPA action, testing of the potentially contaminated media must be conducted. If contamination of soil or groundwater is readily apparent, or is revealed by sampling, the Department of Ecology must be notified.

Response: Comment noted.

Land and Shoreline Use

No comments received for this category.

Housing

No comments received for this category.

Aesthetics

No comments received for this category.

Light and Glare

No comments received for this category.

Recreation

No comments received for this category.

Historic and Cultural Preservation

No comments received for this category.

Transportation

No comments received for this category.

Public Services

No comments received for this category.

Utilities

No comments received for this category.