

Chet Holifield Federal Building



BACKGROUND

The Chet Holifield Federal Building (CHFB), commonly known as "the Ziggurat Building," was originally built in 1970 by the Aerospace and Systems Group of North American Rockwell Corporation. It was never occupied and was transferred to the federal government for use by federal agencies in March of 1974. It is managed by the United States General Service Administration (GSA). The building is approximately 1 million square feet in size and is located on an 86.5-acre parcel at 24000 Avila Road. An associated 5.5-acre parcel containing a central utility plant for the building is located north of Avila Road. Collectively, the site is 92 acres in total area.

PROPOSED ACTION

The CHFB is home to various federal agency tenants, with the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) serving as the largest tenant. According to GSA, as a result of the age and current condition of the building, the working space for their tenants does not meet applicable building code, accessibility, and security standards. The GSA proposes to relocate the existing tenants from the CHFB to a newly constructed facility next to the existing building and/or lease space in the Orange County market. The GSA has prepared a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) to analyze the potential impacts of the proposed action.

Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS)

The GSA prepared a DEIS, which examines the:

- Purpose and need for the removal and relocation of existing tenants
- Alternatives considered
- Existing environment that could be affected
- Potential impacts resulting from each of the alternatives and
- Proposes best management practices and/or mitigation measures

The DEIS is available for viewing [here](#).

Alternatives to be Considered in the DEIS

The DEIS includes the following three alternatives:

Hybrid Lease/Construction (Alternative 1): Build a new federal building on a portion of the existing 92-acre site to house the USCIS (approximately 2,000 employees) and relocate all other tenants into existing office lease space within the region. The new building would be approximately 380,000 square feet and would encompass 27 acres of the existing 92-acre site.

Future Redevelopment

If the property does not remain in federal ownership after going through the federal disposal process, future use of the portion of the site that is disposed (i.e., 64 acres) would be determined by the new owner. Under this scenario, the new owner may seek to redevelop the site. Because a developer is not known at this time, no detailed plan exists for redevelopment of the property. Future redevelopment is not a part of GSA's Proposed Action and GSA is not subject to any requirements associated with redevelopment. However, as development is reasonably foreseeable, two future redevelopment scenarios are considered in the EIS, including:

- Renovation of the existing CHFB. The new owner would conduct repairs and alterations to address known deficiencies in the existing building. GSA assumes building occupancy would remain similar to current conditions of approximately 3,000 personnel.
- Demolition of the existing CHFB and construction of a new mixed-use development. The new owner would demolish the existing CHFB and construct a new development in accordance with the City of Laguna Niguel zoning and land use processes, subject to the appropriate level of California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) documentation. New development could include a mix of commercial and residential development, with appropriate parking and support facilities.

Lease Relocation Alternative (Alternative 2): All tenants, including USCIS, would relocate to office lease space primarily within Orange County. The entire CHFB site would then be reported as excess and disposed in accordance with the federal disposal process.

Future Redevelopment

Future development of the existing property under Alternative 2 would be similar to as described for Alternative 1, but for development of the entire 92-acre site. Similar to Alternative 1, the density and composition of future commercial, residential or mixed-use development are unknown and the City of Laguna Niguel would require the future owner to complete the appropriate level of NEPA or CEQA documentation.

No Action Alternative: This alternative assumes all tenants would remain within the existing CHFB and no new construction or relocation would occur. Minor repairs would take place as needed and maintenance and operation of the existing facilities would continue. However, this alternative would not meet the

purpose and need of the project according to GSA, as tenants would continue to occupy office space that does not meet applicable building code, accessibility, and security standards.

Virtual Public Meeting

The GSA held a virtual public meeting for the DEIS on Tuesday, August 4, 2020 to garner public input on the different alternatives.

Public Comments

After the virtual public meeting, public comments on the DEIS were accepted by GSA until Friday, September 4, 2020. The City provided a public comment letter regarding the DEIS, and it is attached [here](#). The GSA is currently considering comments and will then prepare the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS).

Contact Information for the DEIS

For more information regarding the preparation of the FEIS, contact Osmahn A. Kadri, Regional Environmental Quality Advisor/NEPA Project Manager, GSA, at [415-522-3617](tel:415-522-3617) or osmahn.kadri@gsa.gov.

Potential Historic Covenant

Following the preparation of the DEIS, the GSA prepared a Draft Historic Preservation Covenant to convey the property with restrictions/conditions to “ensure long-term preservation of the property’s historic significance.” The Draft Historic Preservation Covenant is available [here](#).

As a Consulting Party, the City objected to the Draft Historic Covenant, and the response is available [here](#).

TIMELINE

October 2, 2019: Public scoping meeting regarding GSA’s intent to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

November 15, 2019: Notice of Intent (NOI) for the EIS, with a public scoping comment period until December 17, 2019.

July 8, 2020: Start of a 60-day comment period on EIS.

August 11, 2020: Virtual Public Meeting.

September 4, 2020: End of 60-day public comment period on DEIS.

September 2020 - ?: Ongoing consultation between the City and GSA regarding the Draft Historic Covenant.