



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Institute of Standards and Technology
Gaithersburg, Maryland 20899

April 3, 2024

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

From: Mark Liao
NEPA Coordinator

Subject: Categorical Exclusion

Project Title: Workforce Development, Applied Research and Outreach Center in Health, Science, and Cyber Security

Location: University of Scranton
400 Madison Avenue
Scranton, PA

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and associated implementing regulations (40 CFR Parts 1500-1508) require that all major actions by federal agencies be reviewed with respect to the environmental consequences on the human environment. The National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) is providing a congressionally directed funding grant for the project: Workforce Development, Applied Research and Outreach Center in Health, Science, and Cyber Security at the University of Scranton. Consequently, NEPA and the associated implementing regulations apply to this project.

This memorandum summarizes the determination that the Workforce Development, Applied Research and Outreach Center in Health, Science, and Cyber Security project has been found to be categorically excluded from further environmental review under NEPA.

Description of the Action

This project entails the construction and operation a new multi-use building at the University of Scranton. The building is proposed to be located on the university's campus adjacent to the existing university buildings and parking lots. The new building will be four stories above ground with one basement level. The total floor area will be 89,000 square feet. The project also includes 7,800 square feet of parking and 3,300 feet of new sidewalks.

The new center is intended to enhance current academic programs and support new innovative academic programs in health, STEM and cyber security, with special emphasis on providing experiential learning opportunities for university students. Additionally, the center will leverage existing, long-standing relationships with regional non-profits, businesses, K-12 schools, government and healthcare providers.

The center is planned to house:

- training and education space to support current and new undergraduate and graduate programs in cyber security, STEM, and health sciences;
- a specialized suite of simulation spaces and clinical rooms to support research, instruction, and service in a variety of healthcare areas, including programs in psychology;
- a Center for Health and Employee Wellness, and Student Health Services;
- clinical spaces to support existing and emerging programs in healthcare, health sciences, and pre-medical education.
- specialized and interdisciplinary laboratories to support research, instruction, and service by existing and emerging academic programs, especially STEM programs; and
- a multipurpose gathering space to host events and activities, including events with community leaders, school groups, and other partners, and guest spaces for visiting scholars, researchers, and lectures.

This project will be accomplished in accordance with all applicable state and federal environmental and safety regulations. All applicable regulatory permitting will be obtained.

Specific Considerations of this Action and any Extraordinary Circumstances

- Existing Site

The proposed site is approximately 0.97 acres owned by the University of Scranton. The site is currently vacant and consists of paved and unpaved parking. Previously, buildings occupying the site were removed. The site is adjacent to existing university buildings, open lots and parking. A Phase 1 Environmental Site Assessment conducted in October 2023 did not find any existing environmental conditions of concern at the project site.

- Endangered Species and Critical Habitats

According to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 3 federally listed threatened and endangered species could be found in the area of the proposed site. The proposed project site does not impact any critical habitats for any of the listed species; therefore, no impacts to threatened or endangered species are anticipated.

The PA Game Commission has made a determination that no impact is likely to species or resources of concern.

- **Building Staffing/Utilities**

Staffing and student population are expected to increase due to the construction of the new building, but not significantly. Increases in full time staff are estimated at ten new faculty, administrative and maintenance staff. The student population is expected to increase proportional to faculty expansion for an estimated 20 students. The facility will also accommodate open workshops and summer programs for local students. Local roadways have the capacity for a temporary increase in traffic during construction and for an ongoing increase in traffic due to increases in staffing, and students attending the University.

Local utility providers have the capacity to support the proposed facility. The following utility providers were coordinated with to confirm capacity:

- The Pennsylvania American Water Company - drinking water supplier and wastewater treatment,
- PPL Electrical Utilities Corporation - electricity provider, and
- UGI Utilities - natural gas utility provider.

- **Greenhouse Gas Emissions**

Energy conservation measures will mitigate greenhouse gas emissions resulting from the heating and cooling of the building. The building will be designed and constructed per LEED Silver requirements. Energy conserving measures to be implemented include:

- insulated windows utilizing high-performance glass and high-performance building envelope insulation,
- reflective roof membrane,
- high-efficiency heating ventilation and air conditioning systems with a heat recovery wheel,
- exterior and interior LED lights, occupancy sensors, and
- solar roof panels (100KW).

- **Wetlands, Flooding Potential and Resilience**

According to the United States Fish and Wildlife Service National Wetlands Inventory Map and the United States Geological Service topographic map, there are no known wetlands on the proposed site. Based on FEMA floodplain mapping, the site is entirely outside of the 100- and 500-year flood zones.

City of Scranton, Lackawanna County Erosion & Sedimentation approval and Pennsylvania American Water Company stormwater permits/approvals must be obtained for this project to

account for construction related stormwater impacts and for the increase in impermeable surfaces.

- **Hazardous Materials**

Any hazardous materials found at the project site will be handled and disposed in accordance with state and federal regulations.

- **Historic/Cultural Significance**

The State Historic Preservation Officer has concluded that there are no above ground concerns and no archaeological concerns with regard to this project (see attached).

- **Environmental Justice**

According to the Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool, the project site is located in a disadvantaged area. Based on the scope of this project and the projected use of the site, as an academic building, disproportional adverse human health or environmental impacts are not anticipated. The new Workforce Development Center will offer courses to the local community in technologies that can enhance employment potential. The new center will also be open to the public as a location to host non-profit and community activities.

Public meetings will be held to present and discuss the project with public and solicit input.

Before construction begins, the Construction Manager must obtain a City of Scranton building permit.

Effects of the Action

No significant adverse impacts on the environment are expected from this action.

Categorical Exclusion

The activities associated with this project fall within the criteria of the following Department of Commerce Categorical Exclusion (CATEX):

A-2, New construction upon or improvement of land where all of the following conditions are met:

- (a) The site is in a developed area and/or a previously disturbed site,
- (b) The structure and proposed use are compatible with applicable Federal, Tribal, State, and local planning and zoning standards and consistent with Federally approved State coastal management programs,
- (c) The proposed use will not substantially increase the number of motor vehicles at the facility or in the area,

- (d) The site and scale of construction or improvement are consistent with those of existing, adjacent, or nearby buildings, and
- (e) The construction or improvement will not result in uses that exceed existing support infrastructure capacities (roads, sewer, water, parking, *etc.*). This CE does not apply where the project must be submitted to the National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC) for review and NCPC determines that it does not have an applicable Categorical Exclusion. DOC is not a major land managing agency in the Federal government. Department activities involving new construction or improvements of land typically involve single buildings and supporting infrastructure in a single locality. Any potential for environmental impacts would be of a small scale and confined to more localized impacts.

The proposed project meets the criteria of CATEX A-2 as follows:

- (a) The proposed site has been disturbed during previous construction and demolition of buildings.
- (b) Located on property owned by the University of Scranton, the project is compatible with applicable Federal, Tribal, State, and local planning and zoning standards.
- (c) Increases in the number of motor vehicles at the facility or in the area are not expected to be significant.
- (d) The proposed new building will not result in uses that exceed existing infrastructure capacities. The project does not require review by the NCPC.

The proposed project: University of Scranton Workforce Development, Applied Research and Outreach Center in Health, Science, and Cyber Security is categorically excluded from the need for further environmental review under NEPA. Any changes to the above project will require additional NEPA review.

Mark Liao
NIST NEPA Coordinator

Date

Robert C. Vaughn
NIST Chief Facilities Management Office

Date

Attachment A
Pennsylvania State Historic Preservation Officer Letter



March 15, 2024

Sent Via PA-SHARE

RE: ER Project # 2024PR01327.001, University of Scranton - New Workforce Development, Applied Research and Outreach Center in Health, Science and Cyber Security, National Telecommunications and Information Admini, Scranton City, Lackawanna County

Dear Submitter,

Thank you for submitting information concerning the above referenced project. The Pennsylvania State Historic Preservation Office (PA SHPO) reviews projects in accordance with state and federal laws. Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, and the implementing regulations (36 CFR Part 800) of the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, is the primary federal legislation. The Environmental Rights amendment, Article 1, Section 27 of the Pennsylvania Constitution and the Pennsylvania History Code, 37 Pa. Cons. Stat. Section 500 et seq. (1988) is the primary state legislation. These laws include consideration of the project's potential effects on both historic and archaeological resources.

Above Ground Resources

No Above Ground Concerns - Environmental Review - No Historic Properties - Above Ground

Based on the information received and available in our files, it is our opinion that there are no above ground historic properties (resources listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register) present in the project area of potential effect. Therefore, no above ground historic properties will be affected by the proposed project. Should the scope of the project change and/or new information be brought to your attention regarding historic properties located within the project area of potential effect, please reinitiate consultation with our office using PA-SHARE.

For questions concerning above ground resources, please contact Emma Diehl at emdiehl@pa.gov.

Archaeological Resources

No Archaeological Concerns - Environmental Review - No Historic Properties - Archaeological

Based on the information received and available within our files, it is our opinion that there are no archaeological historic properties (resources listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register) present within the area of potential effect. Should the scope of the project change and/or should you be made aware of historic property concerns, you will need to reinitiate consultation with our office using PA-SHARE.

For questions concerning archaeological resources, please contact Emma Diehl at

emdiehl@pa.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Emma Diehl". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish at the end.

Emma Diehl
Environmental Review Division Manager