

March 24, 2025

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

From: Joe Barger  
NEPA Coordinator

Subject: Categorical Exclusion  
Record of Environmental Consideration

Project Title: Bioscience Research and Technology Center

Location: Claflin University  
1830 Magnolia Street  
Orangeburg, South Carolina 29115

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 Bioscience Research and Technology Center at Claflin University. Consequently, NEPA and the associated implementing regulations apply to this project.

This memorandum provides a Record of Environmental Consideration and summarizes the determination that the Bioscience Research and Technology Center at Claflin University has been found to be categorically excluded from further environmental review under NEPA.

**Description of the Action**

This project includes the construction and operation of a new building to house the Bioscience Research and Technology Center. This building will serve as the central core for science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) at Claflin University including environmental science, cyber security, artificial intelligence, and robotics. The 2-story building will include approximately 32,000 square feet of space. The building will provide the university with the following:

- a Cybersecurity Laboratory and Makerspace

- a Forensic Research Laboratory, and
- a DNA Sequencing and Research Laboratory,

Claflin University has seen a tremendous increase in STEM graduation rates, intramural research internships, senior thesis projects and graduate school/professional school placement. Moreover, there has been an increase in new faculty, grants submitted/funded, scholarly publications, instrumentation/equipment acquisition and conference presentations. Because the number of students taking STEM courses is increasing the need for a new STEM Building is urgent. The current James S. Thomas Science facility is approximately 48 years old, and is inadequate to meet current and future needs. The new Bioscience Research and Technology Center will put Claflin University in position to continue recruiting leading scientists and to grow the research enterprise of the School of Natural Sciences and Mathematics

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 for the new Bioscience Research and Technology Center is within a previously disturbed and developed portion of Claflin University. The university president's home is currently located on the project site and will be demolished as part of this project. The entire project site is approximately 1.2 acres. Grading and landscaping area for the project will be approximately 35,000 square feet. No conservation areas or forested areas exist at the project site.

#### **- Endangered Species and Critical Habitats**

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service was consulted regarding this project. Several Endangered or Candidate species exist in the area of this project, including Canby's Dropwort, the Red Cockaded Woodpecker, the Northern Long-eared Bat and the Tricolored Bat. However, since no critical habitats are found on the project site, no effect to these species is anticipated. If new information is found regarding this site, or the project changes significantly, the Fish and Wildlife Service shall be further consulted.

#### **- Wetlands, Flooding Potential and Resilience**

According to a review by the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources, there are no wetlands on or adjacent to the proposed site.

The site is located outside of any 100- and 500-year flood hazard areas (FEMA). Based on a review using the Federal Flood Standard Support Tool, the project site is also not within a Federal Flood Risk Management Standard floodplain.

The project is located approximately 2,328 feet from the nearest flood hazard area to the east of the site. The new building elevation will be 40 feet above this floodplain. Due to the horizontal distance from the flood plain and elevation difference, the project area is not considered to be susceptible to increased flooding that may result from climate change.

- **Stormwater**

Stormwater permits will be obtained from the South Carolina Department of Environmental Sciences Stormwater Division which will specify actions to be taken to control stormwater runoff from the construction site and post-construction stormwater management.

- **Building Staffing/Utilities**

Staffing and student populations are not expected to increase significantly due to the operation of the new building. Most staff and students will move from existing buildings to the new Bioscience Research and Technology Center.

Local roadways have capacity for a temporary increase in traffic during construction and for the ongoing increase in traffic expected for staff and students at the new building.

The City of Orangeburg Department of Public Utilities has confirmed that they have the capacity to supply the following utilities to the planned building: drinking water, sewer, electricity and natural gas.

- **Air Quality/Greenhouse Gas Emissions**

EPA Criteria Air Pollutants and Greenhouse Gas emissions are expected to increase due to the energy requirements of the new building. The main air emissions produced by the new facility would result from the added heating and cooling load required for the new building.

To mitigate the increased emissions the new building, the following energy conservation measures will be implemented:

- High efficiency mechanical systems,
- Energy efficient, UV blocking windows,
- LED lighting, and
- Light control management with occupancy sensors

**- Hazardous Materials**

Any hazardous materials (i.e., asbestos, lead based paint, PCBs) that might be encountered during the demolition portion of this project will be properly removed and disposed in accordance with state and federal regulations.

During the operation of the new Bioscience Research and Technology Center, no hazardous materials are planned to be used or hazardous waste generated.

**- Historic/Cultural Significance**

The State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) has confirmed that no properties listed or eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places will be affected by this project. (Attachment A).

If archaeological materials are encountered during construction, the procedures codified at 36 CFR 800.13(b) will apply. Construction will temporarily stop, and the Claflin Project Manager will contact the SHPO immediately.

This project was coordinated with the Tribal Historic Preservation Officer of the Catawba Nation and no comments were received.

**- Environmental Justice**

Due to nature of the project and the proposed site location on the Claflin University Campus, this project is not expected to have disproportional adverse human health or environmental impacts to overburdened and underserved communities, including minority, Tribal, or low-income populations.

**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 of university buildings.
- (b) Located on the campus of Claflin University, 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 will not result in uses that exceed existing infrastructure capacities. The project does not require review by the NCPC.

The proposed project: Bioscience Research and Technology Center at Claflin University is categorically excluded from the need for further environmental review under NEPA. Any changes to the above project will require additional NEPA review.

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Joe Barger  
NIST NEPA Coordinator

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3/25/25

Date

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Robert C. Vaughn  
NIST Chief Facilities Management Office

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Date

Attachment A, Letter from the Historic Preservation Officer



May 1, 2024

Bill Kropff  
Director of Auxiliary and Facilities Services  
Claflin University  
[wkropff@claflin.edu](mailto:wkropff@claflin.edu)

Re: Demolition of 1830 Magnolia St, Claflin University President's House, Proposed Biotech  
Research Center New Construction Site  
Orangeburg, Orangeburg County, South Carolina  
SHPO Project No. 24-JS0183

Dear Mr. Kropff:

Thank you for your project review submittal, which we received electronically on April 15, 2024, regarding the above referenced proposed undertaking. We also received maps as supporting documentation for this undertaking. The State Historic Preservation Office is providing comments to the US Department of Commerce and the National Institute of Standards and Technology pursuant to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act and its implementing regulations, 36 CFR 800. Consultation with the SHPO is not a substitution for consultation with Tribal Historic Preservation Offices, other Native American tribes including those with state recognition, local governments, or the public.

Based on the description of the undertaking's Area of Potential Effect (APE) and the identification of historic properties within the APE, our office believes that no properties listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places will be affected by this project.

If archaeological materials are encountered during construction, the procedures codified at 36 CFR 800.13(b) will apply. Archaeological materials consist of any items, fifty years old or older, which were made or used by man. These items include, but are not limited to, stone projectile points (arrowheads), ceramic sherds, bricks, worked wood, bone and stone, metal and glass objects, and human skeletal materials. The federal agency or the applicant receiving federal assistance should contact our office immediately.

Please refer to SHPO Project No. 24-JS0183 in any future correspondence regarding this project. If you have any questions, please contact me at (803)896-6129 or [JSylvest@scdah.sc.gov](mailto:JSylvest@scdah.sc.gov).

Sincerely,

*John D. Sylvest*

John D. Sylvest  
Supervisor of Survey and Review & Compliance  
State Historic Preservation Office