

Finding of No Significant Impact
For the
Department of Commerce Boulder Laboratories
Campus Master Plan

Agency: Department of Commerce (DoC)

Action: Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI)

Introduction

The DoC has developed a 20-year Master Plan for the DoC Boulder Laboratories campus located in Boulder, Colorado. Three DoC agencies operate at the Boulder Laboratories campus: the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST), and the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA). The need for the Master Plan, and the campus improvements described therein, is driven by both institutional policy and the inability of existing facilities and infrastructure to support current and projected mission requirements for the three agencies. NIST, with participation from NOAA and NTIA, served as the lead agency in the development of the Master Plan. An Environmental Assessment (EA) has been conducted to evaluate environmental impacts arising from execution of the Master Plan.

Scope

The EA was completed in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 (Public Law [P.L.] 90-190, 42 U.S. Code [U.S.C.] 4321 et seq.), as amended through P.L. 119-21 in 2025, and NIST NEPA Procedures. NIST determined that an EA was the appropriate level of NEPA review for the DoC Boulder Laboratories Campus Master Plan.

Alternatives Considered: This EA considered two alternatives: the Proposed Action and the No-Action Alternative.

Proposed Action: The Proposed Action is a Master Plan to guide the physical development of the campus to advance the agency's mission-related goals over the next 20 years. The Master Plan emphasizes quality and collaborative research. The Master Plan addresses current campus needs and delineates future development through phasing packages. Full implementation of the Master Plan will increase the employee population by approximately 7% from its current population of 1,767 to 1,886 by 2035 and will result in a net increase in facility space by approximately 11%.

The physical development envisioned in the Master Plan will include new construction, additions, renovation, demolition, landscape improvements, utility improvements, circulation improvements, and wildfire planning. The Master Plan will focus on a core center of the campus and associated green space used to connect existing, renovated, and new laboratories. The Master Plan also involves the consolidation of administrative buildings and support facilities at the western end of the campus green. Aging, deteriorating, and some temporary buildings will be phased out and replaced by updated facilities.

No-Action Alternative: The No-Action Alternative would not implement the Master Plan and would maintain the present course of action at the campus by continuing ongoing research, management, and maintenance activities. The No-Action Alternative would ultimately result in a site that would no longer support the advanced research requirements of DoC and would render much of the campus obsolete. The No-Action Alternative would not meet the purpose and need criteria for the campus.

Scoping

The DoC held a public meeting during the 2017 Master Plan development process at which the community commented on the 2025 Master Plan concept.

The DoC conducted internal scoping as part of the Master Plan process to ensure the development of concepts addressed concerns for the campus and considered components of interest to stakeholders. As part of the scoping process, a questionnaire was circulated to all campus employees, including contractors, to solicit feedback regarding existing conditions and issues that are of interest to be considered in the Master Plan. Interviews with NOAA, NTIA, NIST subject matter experts, and all NIST organizational units were also conducted.

All feedback received, including those from staff at the DoC Boulder Laboratories Campus, were taken into consideration during development of the Final Master Plan and Final EA.

Findings and Conclusions

Based on the analysis of baseline conditions and the anticipated impacts of the Proposed Action described in the EA, NIST has determined that no significant impacts to the environmental conditions of the DoC Boulder Laboratories Campus and/or the surrounding community will result from implementation of the Proposed Action. Impacts would be minimized through adherence to applicable federal, state, and local permits, regulations, and agreements; incorporation of typical construction best management practices; and coordination and/or consultation with regulatory agencies and stakeholders. NIST has not relied on implementation of mitigation to reduce impacts to a less-than-significant level.

Determination

In view of the analysis contained in the EA prepared for the DoC Boulder Laboratories Campus Master Plan, it is hereby determined that the projects included within the Master Plan will not significantly impact the quality of the human environment. Accordingly, preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement for this action is not necessary.

This FONSI concludes the NEPA process for the Master Plan. However, further NEPA analysis may be required as new projects are identified and incorporated into the Master Plan, or if significant changes are made to the projects currently included in the Master Plan. As the proposed projects described in the EA enter the preliminary design stage, each will be reviewed individually to determine whether further NEPA analysis is warranted.

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