



*Preserving America's Heritage*

# CASE DIGEST: SECTION 106 IN ACTION



ADVISORY COUNCIL ON HISTORIC PRESERVATION

SPRING 2012

# COLORADO

**Project:** New Case: Rehabilitation and Modernization of the Wayne N. Aspinall Federal Building and U.S. Courthouse

**Agencies:** U.S. General Services Administration

**Contact:** Kirsten Kulis [kkulis@achp.gov](mailto:kkulis@achp.gov)

The General Services Administration is transforming a 1918 post office and courthouse into a LEED Platinum “net-zero” energy efficient building by using a design-build project delivery method and American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funds. The long-term viability of the historic property should be sustainable through unprecedented operational savings.

Built in 1918, the Grand Junction Post Office and Courthouse was designed in the Second Renaissance Revival Style under the direction of James Wetmore, Acting Supervising Architect, Department of the Treasury. In 1939, a complementary extension was completed, doubling the size of the building.

When the U.S. Postal Service vacated the building in 1965, the first floor post office area and elevator lobbies were heavily modified. Heating, ventilation, and air conditioning improvements were made also. In 1972, the building was renamed after the late former Congressman Wayne N. Aspinall (Aspinall building). The building was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1980.

The Aspinall building now houses offices of the General Services Administration (GSA), Federal Bureau of Investigation, U.S. Attorneys, Internal Revenue Service, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. Probation and Pretrial System, U.S. Marshals Service, U.S. District Court, and U.S. Senator Mark Udall.

In January 2010, GSA was given \$15 million in American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funds to rehabilitate remaining original spaces to bring the building into compliance with Architectural Barriers Accessibility Act (ABAA) and fire and life safety standards, and to modernize building infrastructure.



“The characteristics of the building itself – like its large windows and original high ceilings – have made it more feasible for net zero (energy use),” according to Jason Seilcken, GSA’s project manager. (photo courtesy GSA)

When responses to GSA’s initial solicitation indicated that the project could achieve Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Platinum, the highest certification level offered by the U.S. Green Building Council, GSA further challenged select bidders to develop schemes to achieve “net-zero” energy performance. A relatively new concept that reaches beyond LEED, net-zero performance buildings utilize sustainable technology to produce as much (or more) energy than they would normally consume.

The bidders determined that the building could achieve both LEED Platinum certification and net-zero performance by utilizing interior storm windows, dozens of on-site geothermal wells, photovoltaic (PV) panels, and increased insulation. Eager to show the building’s sustainable features, the GSA Source Selection Evaluation Board (SSEB) selected a bidder that also proposed a PV canopy that covered the entire roof.

GSA’s Regional Historic Preservation Officer (RHPO) participated in the SSEB effort, and was impressed with the bidder’s interior renderings depicting a sensitive rehabilitation of character-defining spaces. However, the RHPO determined that the PV canopy posed an adverse effect.

ARRA funding requirements called for project

completion in 2015. To meet project goals and requirements, GSA elected to commence construction in March 2011 via a design-build contract. This fast-track project delivery method, regularly employed in the private sector, has become popular among federal agencies.

Under the traditional design-bid-build project delivery method, an architect is hired to develop a design, a contractor is hired based on its bid on that design, and construction occurs in accordance with the design (except for occasional change orders). Under the design-build method, a contractor is hired, and then hires an architect to develop a design; construction occurs in parallel with design refinement. For design-build, agencies contract and coordinate only with the contractor, who is responsible for both design and construction.

There is often ample time for Section 106 consultation during the first stage of the design-bid-build method. However, design-build compliance challenges can arise when contractors are hired based on solicitations that do not specify adherence to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards (Standards), when consultation does not adequately consider alternatives early on, and when qualified agency personnel are not integrated into ongoing design refinement.

Given GSA's commitment to preservation, its initial solicitation for the Aspinall building included rehabilitation in compliance with the Standards. In addition, a peer with historic preservation expertise, contracted through GSA's Design Excellence program, accompanied the qualified RHPO to SSEB reviews. The RHPO alerted the Colorado State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), the ACHP, and consulting parties—including the City of Grand Junction Historic Preservation Board—of GSA's determination of adverse effects in a timely manner.

With singular support from the SHPO, consultation occurred expediently, but in keeping with regulations. A Memorandum of Agreement (MOA), executed in spring 2011 among GSA, the ACHP, and the SHPO, included baseline approved concept drawings and renderings as attachments. They depicted a smaller PV canopy; due to consultation and input from GSA's regional and national preservation programs, GSA



This historic photo is the basis of design for the staircase rehabilitation. (photo courtesy GSA)

did a further analysis and determined that a different combination of green technologies could achieve the targeted performance goals. Thereafter, consultation focused on a limited set of adverse effects, managed by the RHPO, who regularly attended meetings with the contractor and coordinated with the SHPO in accordance with the MOA.

Construction at the Aspinall building is ongoing. The postal lobby and elevator lobbies are being rehabilitated, hardwood floors have been refurbished, and a historic mural is being restored and reinstalled in a suitable publicly accessible location. GSA also is reopening a walled-off staircase from the postal lobby to the intact historic courtroom area. Though minimized in the revised design, the PV canopy remains visible from the rear of the building and from a distance. Due to security concerns and the building's raised plinth, GSA also encountered challenges associated with the placement and design of ABAA ramps, but arrived at a solution GSA considers as reversible.

Rehabilitation and modernization is slated to be complete in January 2013. By achieving operational savings, GSA will ensure the long-term viability of this historic building. As Congressman Aspinall was an ardent supporter of energy self-reliance policy, it is fitting that his namesake building is slated to become the first net-zero federal building on the National Register.

For more information: [www.gsa.gov/historicbuildings](http://www.gsa.gov/historicbuildings)