

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

PROPOSED JOHNSON CITY CUSTOMER SERVICE CENTER AUCTION SALE

The Proposed Action and Need

The Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) proposes to sell its Johnson City, Tennessee, Customer Service Center (CSC) at public auction for fair market value. The CSC is approximately 40 years old and is now functionally obsolete. TVA currently houses its area transmission line maintenance crews and equipment at the site along with associated office space for customer service staff. The existing facility does not meet federal requirements under the Energy Policy Act of 1992 to reduce energy use. It does not meet TVA's current business needs, which include housing other TVA business units with offices in the Tri-Cities area at the same location with CSC staff. Also, since the facility was built in 1964, the area surrounding the CSC has become more developed and is no longer a suitable location for TVA's operations.

As a consequence of the sale, TVA would relocate several of its offices in the Tri-Cities area to one central facility in the area. TVA has previously considered constructing a new CSC at a greenfield site in the Johnson City area, but this is no longer a preferable course of action. TVA is now considering relocating to an existing facility at a more suitable location and renovating that existing facility as necessary to accommodate TVA's mixed office and quasi-industrial operations. At this time TVA has not determined where to locate the new CSC but is searching for suitable sites that would meet TVA's operational requirements and are cost-effective. As part of the proposal to sell its property, TVA would enter into a lease agreement with the successful purchaser that would allow TVA to remain on the site for up to five years until it relocates its operations. TVA would provide at least one year's notice of its intent to vacate the site. No alterations could be made to the property by the purchaser during the lease without TVA's permission.

Alternatives

TVA considered two alternatives, i.e., the Proposed Action Alternative noted above and the No Action Alternative.

Under the No Action Alternative, TVA would not auction the property and would continue to use the existing CSC. Under this alternative, TVA would have to renovate the facility to meet requirements of the Energy Policy Act of 1992 and to allow TVA to relocate other TVA operations in the area to the CSC.

Impact Assessment

The sale of the property is expected to result in redevelopment of the property. There are three qualified bidders with different proposals for redevelopment, so TVA has assumed for purposes of the EA that the property would be developed for retail use as the most intense use.

In the EA TVA assessed the impact of the action on land use, visual and aesthetic quality, traffic, storm water and surface water quality, air quality, socioeconomics, and cultural resources, and relocating existing TVA operations to a new facility. Land use is expected to change from the current quasi-industrial use to higher-intensity commercial and business uses that are more consistent with surrounding land uses. Visual and aesthetic quality would change. A commercial-type area would not likely retain the pleasing scale of space and open area. All three qualified bidders have stated their intent to retain the five mature American Beech trees on the site, but some members of the public have expressed concern about the potential loss of the trees. If these were removed, an attractive scenic feature and prominent focal point would be lost, which would reduce scenic integrity and adversely affect the sense of place.

Traffic would increase on the nearby road network due to employee commuting and retail customers, but service levels would not be materially reduced and only a slight increase in accidents is expected. Development would create new impervious surfaces which would require additional stormwater control measures. Increased traffic and traffic congestion would result in small increases of automotive emissions expected to have very localized impact without significantly influencing attainment status for either ozone or fine particulate air pollution. New development is expected to have economic benefits, but these would be small in comparison to the size of the overall county economy. The proposed auction and relocation have no potential to affect any properties on or eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. The cabin site of Revolutionary War veteran Robert Young and the cemetery where he is buried are too far from the site to be affected by any redevelopment of the property. The amount of development in the area has so altered and fragmented the original farm and landscape that TVA has determined the CSC site has minimal remaining historic value.

TVA expects to identify a suitable existing facility to which to relocate so that there would be minimal environmental impacts of renovation, and movement of material and staff to the new site would have minimal effects on traffic. TVA has determined that all of these impacts would be insignificant.

Mitigation

To minimize potential effects of the sale of the current CSC related to hazardous materials and air quality, TVA would notify the prospective buyer of any asbestos-containing materials that must be removed prior to demolition of the facility.

Public Review

TVA accepted public comments on the draft EA from November 26 through December 15, 2003. The draft document was posted on the TVA website, and a copy was sent to the Johnson City Public Library. TVA held a public meeting on December 11 to receive comments. Fifty-two people, including representatives of the bidders, attended the meeting. Twenty people provided comments through December 15. TVA also monitored public input into an earlier proposal to rezone the property.

Conclusion and Findings

Based on the subject EA as summarized above, Environmental Policy and Planning's NEPA Administration staff has determined that the potential environmental consequences of TVA's proposed action to sell the Johnson City Customer Service Center at auction have been adequately addressed and that the proposed action is not a major federal action significantly affecting the quality of the environment. Accordingly, an environmental impact statement is not required.

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for
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Date Signed