US Tax Court
Executive Factsheet

Background

The US Tax Court at 400 2nd St. NW Washington DC is located across from the Mitch Snyder CCNV homeless shelter, the largest homeless shelter in the US. The shelter is unique as it was established on federal property in 1987 after a long struggle between homeless activists and the federal government. The court and shelter have been at odds over loitering in the tax court plaza for many years. Prior to 2007 an iron fence was erected along 2nd St in an attempt to reduce vagrancy. In 2008 the landscape of the property was overhauled with urban pressure in mind. In 2009 the majority of the plaza was fenced off with gates that allowed entrance during business hours. In recent months property around the shelter has eliminated gathering places and essentially pushed the homeless to the unfenced portion of the plaza that is adjacent to the open 395 tunnel. In November of 2012 it was clear that a camp was forming on the tax court plaza complete with tents, grills, hammocks, tables etc. The custodial and landscape staff expressed concerns for their safety and FPS and MPD started to clear the area on a regular basis. Despite law enforcement efforts, vagrancy increased. The relocation of the fence to enclose the entire plaza was recommended by FPS and MPD in December. In April of 2012 MPD reported projectiles and debris falling onto the high speed traffic lanes of 395. The mayor drafted an official letter to the federal government in regard to this serious safety issue.

Status

Darren DeStefano presented the situation and the temporary fence relocation solution to OPDQ in mid-May, which was endorsed. He then submitted a SOW, IGE and proposal from the existing landscape contractor to resolve the issue. DC Services has taken the lead role in bringing the project to completion. On May 27th 4 people were stabbed on the tax court plaza at 10 am.

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