

By Ellen Stodola

Although budget cuts and limited funding are affecting projects and organizations all over the state of Maryland, the White Oak consolidation project is one cause now getting ample funding.

Of the General Services Administration's \$82 million construction budget, \$44 million will be going to the White Oak project to update and modernize the Food and Drug Administration's facilities in Montgomery and Prince George's counties, according to a press release about the project.

The project involves combining the FDA's current facilities into more advanced buildings with modernized technologies.

When the GSA budget was cut this year, funding was not specifically set aside for the White Oak facility.

However, Sen. Ben Cardin; Sen. Barbara Mikulski; Rep. Steny Hoyer, Md.-5; Rep. Chris Van Hollen, Md.-8; and Rep. Donna Edwards, Md.-4, pushed the GSA for more funding for the White Oak facility.

"This is a major victory, not just for Maryland, but for the country," said Cardin, commenting on the allocation of more than half the GSA budget for this project.

Progress on the White Oak consolidation project has been ongoing, and funding has to be fought each year because of heated budget negotiations, according to Mikulski's office.

The consolidation project will help the FDA combine their facilities into one location and will also help to update equipment and laboratories to be better able to execute daily procedures.

“As one who helped lead the effort to consolidate the FDA in Maryland, I am pleased that GSA has chosen to allocate the funding needed to move forward as scheduled at White Oak,” Hoyer said in a June 23 statement. “As we work to rebuild our economy, it is more important than ever that we work together to determine which projects are critical to our growth, ability to create jobs and long-term prosperity. The continued investment in the consolidation at White Oak is a good deal for the American taxpayer and is a win-win for the local economy and the federal workforce at the FDA.”

The White Oak facility provides jobs to thousands of federal employees, and the construction project is expected to generate even more, according to Mikulski’s office.

The FDA monitors food and drug products all over the country. Therefore, Cardin said, “It’s important to modernize the facilities to meet the demands for safety for the people.”