
**HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD
STAFF REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION**

Property Address:	7th and Pennsylvania Avenue, SE (Hine Junior High School site)	X Agenda Consent Calendar
Landmark/District:	Capitol Hill Historic District	X Concept Review Alteration
Meeting Date:	April 26, 2012	X New Construction Demolition
H.P.A. Number:	11-195	
Staff Reviewers:	Steve Callcott and Amanda Molson	

Stanton-Eastbanc LLC, represented by architect Amy Weinstein, seeks ongoing conceptual review for redevelopment of the Hine Junior High School site in the Capitol Hill Historic District. The site includes all of Square 900 (bounded by Pennsylvania Avenue on the south, C Street on the north, and 7th and 8th Streets, SE on the west and east), and a portion of Square 901 north of C Street, with frontage on 7th and 8th.

Project Background

The redevelopment of this city-owned property was awarded to Stanton-Eastbanc in 2010 through a competitive bidding process managed by the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Economic Development (DMPED). Design consultation with the community and OP began in January 2011, and the applicants have since presented the evolving plans at numerous meetings hosted by Advisory Neighborhood Commission 6B, the Capitol Hill Restoration Society, and other groups.

The project will include reopening C Street, which will run through a new plaza opening to 7th Street; the plaza and street will be used collectively to accommodate weekend vendors and special events. On the north side of C Street will be a four story residential building with ground level retail (North residential building); the new construction on Square 900 will technically be one structure above a single garage but will read as a series of architecturally independent buildings. These will include a five-story residential building on the south side of the plaza, an apartment building designed to appear as a series of row buildings on 8th Street, a six-story residential building at the corner of 8th and D Streets, and a seven-story office building at the corner of 7th and Pennsylvania that steps down in height as it extends north on 7th Street.

The project has been submitted and accepted for set down as a Planned Unit Development (PUD) by the Zoning Commission.

Revised Proposal

The project was reviewed in its entirety by the Board in April 2011; various aspects of the project were reviewed in greater detail again in June and July. In those three conceptual reviews, the Board expressed support for the overall site plan, the proposed height and

mass, the overall architectural direction, and the landscape plan. In its comments and motions, the Board made a number of suggestions for additional study, refinements or modifications, which have been the focus of the applicants' redesign work over the intervening months. Those comments are enumerated below, together with a brief description of the changes (in italics) that have been made:

Landscape and Plaza

1. Concerns were expressed about the proposed water features. Suggestions made for further study included that they be eliminated, have ledges that could double as seating, or be flush with the ground so that space could be programmed for alternative uses when not in use.
 - *The water features have been redesigned to include a small fountain and decorative sculpture, a raised pool that provides perimeter seating, and an at-grade rill that will connect the two primary features but which can be turned off to allow tents to be erected over it.*
2. It was encouraged that street paving material through the plaza should extend seamlessly to the intersection of 8th Street, and that plaza paving should have commonality and compatibility with surrounding streets rather than sharp contrast.
 - *The paving materials have been designed to ensure visual continuity with the surrounding historic district. The paving materials for C Street will have the same general asphalt coloration as surrounding streets, flanked by a brick sidewalk on the north side and specialty paving for the plaza on the south side. As before, the curb has been eliminated to allow the entire area to serve as a flat plaza during special events.*
3. The number of vendor tents was determined not to be a preservation issue. The Board asked HPO to seek the assistance of DMPED in coordinating a discussion with the community, Councilmember Wells' office and appropriate District agencies (DDOT, Fire Department, HPO, OP) on the topic.
 - *A meeting was convened by DMPED and Councilmember Wells' office with various stakeholders. The size of the plaza has remained the same as when last reviewed by the Board.*

North Residential Building

4. The rear (alley) elevation of four-story element was found to need additional development and a stronger sense of being designed.
 - *Through changes in materials, coloration and design, the rear elevation has been given a similar tripartite organization as the facade.*
5. The entrance to the residential portion of building was found to be too austere, and that it needed to be made more prominent and welcoming.
 - *The entrance has been shifted in location and enframed with a freestanding portico to give it greater emphasis.*

Plaza Building

6. The HPRB was evenly split between those that felt that the C Street elevation was “chaotic,” with the bays on the two sides “looked like they were coming from two different hands” and those that thought it was “complex without losing control.”
 - *The plaza elevation has been significantly redesigned with a more regularized, less abstract pattern of fenestration that has resulted in greater compatibility with the 7th Street elevation. The materials of the building, which were not specified in the last review, have also been developed to include a tripartite palette of iron-spot brick and stone.*
7. The entrance to apartment building was found to need further development to be made more residential in character.
 - *The projecting brick bay has been eliminated and the entrance set flush with the building face; the door would be capped by a metal and glass canopy.*
8. The treatment of first floors of the projecting bays on 7th Street needed further study and design to ensure strong, vibrant retail spaces.
 - *The storefronts on both sides of the building have been redesigned to be more open, provide a stronger base to the building, and to include appropriate areas for the incorporation of signage.*

8th Street Residential Row

9. Greater prominence and distinction was encouraged for the residential entrances, and the fenestration further developed with the goal of introducing additional variety.
 - *The at-grade street entrances to the individual units have been made more prominent based on an historic precedent where an arched masonry link is inserted above each door that spans between the flanking projecting bays. The fenestration and detailing has been further developed to provide variety.*
10. The use of rounded, non-rectilinear elements – windows, dormers, oriels, ironwork – was encouraged to break up the rectilinear character of the row.
 - *As this frontage has been further developed, rounded metal coping, brick detailing, window mullions, masonry detailing, and arched openings have been included to provide relief to the row’s rectilinear design.*
11. The transition of the five story entrance element with the lower building elements on each side was found to be somewhat abrupt; the Board did not direct that it be lower in height or set back from the face of surrounding buildings, but asked that the transition be studied.
 - *The design of the entrance element has been entirely revised to break down its design into a sophisticated and delightfully asymmetrical composition that steps down in height. As well, the composition of the façade elements on each side has been revised to step up to the taller entrance element, eliminating the abruptness in the previous design.*

8th & D Residential Corner

12. The Board found the design to be a little too square and with perhaps too much of the lacey, patterned brick work. Further evaluation of the materials and coloration was encouraged.

- *The liver-purple colored brick has been substituted with a taupe brick with red brick accents. The base of the building has been made more prominent with storefronts that are differentiated from the upper level windows and capped by a series of masonry panels for the placement of commercial signage. The change in brick color and the weaving through of red brick more successfully relate the building to the rest of the project and to the historic district.*

13. The Board asked that the 8th Street elevation be developed with comparable fenestration in the bay as the D Street elevation so that it doesn't read as the back of the building.

- *A commensurate percentage and quality of fenestration has been added to the 8th Street elevation, except at the ground level.*

7th and Pennsylvania Avenue Office Building

14. The retail base was found to need further development to ensure visual interest, appropriate scale, and relationship with feel of retail on Capitol Hill. It was suggested that projecting or smaller scaled storefronts, solid bases, and/or awnings be used to provide a three-dimensional character.

- *The elevations of the corner building have been redesigned to reduce the depth of the façade and to provide a more human scale to the base. The storefronts have been redesigned to include small angled projections topped by transom windows and canopies.*

15. The design of the two-story entrance element to office building was thought to be a "weak link."

- *While still conceived as a separate element from the buildings on each side, the entrance piece has been redesigned with a brick backdrop rather than a glass curtain wall system. The sculptural element at the front, clad in slate to relate to the accent material used on the office building, remains largely the same.*

16. The Board directed that the penthouse should be reduced in size and visibility.

- *Previously, the highest portion of the penthouse (closest to Pennsylvania Avenue) was 18'-6" in height, and averaged 91 feet in its north/south plan dimension. The footprint has been reduced to 52 feet in north/south plan dimension, with the highest part of the penthouse set 21 feet back from the Pennsylvania Avenue elevation, and a lower portion (11 feet high) set back 17' from Pennsylvania Avenue. The north part of the penthouse remains at a height of 13' - 3", but has been set back 20 feet from the north edge of the building's roof (formerly it has been aligned with the north edge of the roof). The decrease in height and volume has been achieved by moving the building's two emergency generators and chillers to the basement..*

17. Materials and coloration on 7th Street were thought to be a little dark and grim.
 - *The liver-purple brick has been eliminated in favor of a slightly lighter colored brownish brick. Red terra cotta and brick accents have been incorporated into the design to provide a relationship with the corner portion of the office building.*
18. Reevaluation of the design and setback of the seventh floor on 7th Street was encouraged to eliminate a “wedding cake” profile.
 - *The penthouse has been pulled 20 feet south of the exposed side wall of the office building (as seen through the gap where the building steps down in height), eliminating its visibility from 7th Street. The top floor has been redesigned to have an architecturally differentiated treatment from the underlying floors, with a higher percentage of glass.*

The changes represent a substantive response to the Board’s concerns, and result in a significant improvement to the project’s compatibility with the character of the Capitol Hill Historic District. The ground level and storefront treatments throughout the project feel more representative of the character of Capitol Hill, and the color and material changes to the 7th Street portion of the office building, the 8th and D building, and the 8th Street residential building similarly result in a more compatible fit for the historic district. While the HPO would encourage further development of the office building entrance element (the “weak link”), this is a relatively small component that can be resolved prior to final approval.

As requested by the Board, the applicants have prepared a three dimensional model of the project and surrounding blocks. The model is on public view at the Hill Center (921 Pennsylvania Avenue, SE) and will be presented at the HPRB meeting.

Recommendation

The HPO recommends that the Review Board find that the revisions improve the compatibility of the conceptual plan and consistent with the purposes of the preservation act. Any substantial changes should return to the Board for further review.

The HPO also acknowledges the high degree of community involvement in this project, and the additional review process required at the Zoning Commission to consider impacts on the surrounding neighborhood. The HPO’s recommendation of approval for the proposed revisions should not be construed as constituting a recommendation of approval for any necessary zoning relief, nor should the Board’s comments and findings be construed as an evaluation under the separate jurisdiction of the Zoning Commission.