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

Landmark/District:	Cleveland Park Historic District	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agenda
Address:	3310 Connecticut Avenue, NW	<input type="checkbox"/> Consent Calendar
Meeting Date:	December 17, 2015	<input type="checkbox"/> Alteration
H.P.A. Number:	16-051	<input type="checkbox"/> Demolition
Staff Reviewer:	Andrew Lewis	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Conceptual Design

The District of Columbia Department of Public Libraries (DCPL), along with Perkins Eastman Architects, propose to replace the existing Cleveland Park Library located at 3310 Connecticut Avenue, NW with a new, two-story building that will provide approximately 25,000 gsf of space. The applicants prepared an initial concept for the new library in October but have revised it to reflect comments from the Commission of Fine Arts and other sources, and are now seeking the Board's views on the most recent conceptual design.

Cleveland Park Historic District

The Cleveland Park Historic District was identified for listing in the DC Inventory of Historic Sites as early as 1964 and formally designated by 1986. The National Register listing followed shortly thereafter in 1987. Among other things, the historic district is significant as an early "streetcar suburb" neighborhood and its period of significance extends from 1880 to 1941.

The existing library is not a contributing element of the Cleveland Park Historic District because it was constructed in 1953, more than a decade after the end of the period of significance. HPO staff conducted a site visit to examine the building and worked closely with DCPL to help ensure sufficient community outreach and that no historic preservation-related public objection was raised to the proposed demolition. All comments which HPO has received to-date support replacement of the existing library.

Proposed New Construction

The proposed new building is being designed to accommodate a program consisting of library uses and community meeting space. Approximately 20,000 sf will be devoted to library-related functions while the remaining 5,000 sf is to be set aside for meeting rooms. Like the existing library, the new facility will be oriented towards to the east, along Connecticut Avenue, NW, and the primary entrance will be located in the southeast corner of the site.

Evaluation

The proposed concept has several commendable aspects when evaluated from the perspective of community compatibility. To begin, the overall proposal was based upon a thorough evaluation of the architectural context of the neighborhood and many new features have been designed to establish a relationship with the surrounding area, including a variation of

building scale and the use of buff colored brick and limestone, like that which occurs along Connecticut Avenue. The primary elevation incorporates a particularly strong architectural reference to the rhythm and form of the storefronts directly across the street while the “corner element” where the entry is proposed has a civic quality appropriate for a new District Government facility. The elimination of a previously proposed trellis above the front elevation and a more limited materials palette has helped to simplify the design and establish a more coherent architectural identity for the new building.

On the other hand, the large “house-scaled, porch element” on the northern elevation continues to read as the most prominent feature of the design. Despite being set further back from the street and reduced in height from the earlier concept, this element remains overly grand for its residential setting – so much so that it competes with the more reserved “corner element” in terms of suggesting entry. Even though the houses and porches along Newark Street served as inspiration for this feature, the expansive, recessed curtainwall and its tall, rectilinear frame has a monumental scale that is very different from the smaller scaled, highly detailed, residential façades and their varied projections and roof forms. The similarly designed element on Macomb Street does not raise the same level of concerns due to its slightly smaller size on this elevation, a context that includes a larger-scale multi-storied apartment building across the street, and the topographical differences between the two sides of the site.

Potential approaches for improving the new library’s compatibility with the surrounding historic district might include reducing the height of the northern elevation (the roofline slopes upward to the north), breaking down the scale of the porch element through a refinement of the frame and/or the introduction of stronger horizontal and finer-scaled elements. Shifting some of the monumentality of this elevation to the Connecticut Avenue elevation should also be considered as a way to reinforce entry, bolster the civic nature of the design and denote the gateway into the neighborhood more clearly.

Recommendation

HPO recommends that the Board:

- Recognize that some aspects of the concept are appropriate for the historic district;
- Provide recommendations for how the concept can be refined to increase compatibility with the historic district, including those listed above; and
- Recommend that the concept be revised and resubmitted for HPRB review at a later date.