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

Property Address:	1130-1150 3rd Street, NE	X	Agenda
Landmark/District:	Uline Arena		Consent Calendar
Meeting Date:	April 25, 2013	X	Concept Review
H.P.A. Number:	13-160	X	Alteration
Staff Reviewer:	Steve Callcott		New Construction
			Demolition
			Subdivision

Antunovich Architects, representing Douglas Development, seeks conceptual review for alterations and additions to the Uline Arena and Ice Plant.

Property History and Description

This unusual industrial complex was first constructed in 1931 as the ice plant for the Uline Ice Company, founded by Migiel “Mike” Uline. The two-story brick structure, located at the corner of 3rd and M Streets, NE, is architecturally unremarkable and typical of utilitarian industrial buildings of the period. It is characterized by its simple geometric massing, brick construction, minimal detailing, and metal casement windows. It was expanded south along 3rd Street with additions in 1935-36.

With the rise of electric refrigeration and subsequent decline in the need for industrially-produced ice through the 1930s, Uline modified his business model and erected the adjoining arena in 1939 for hockey and other ice sports. Designed by the Chicago engineering firm of Roberts & Schaefer, the arena is distinguished by its ribbed thin-shell concrete roof, an innovative engineering solution which allowed for a clear span unencumbered by columns or trusses.

The building was soon adapted to be used for professional basketball (serving briefly as home court to the Washington Capitols), boxing, tennis, and wrestling events, and was renamed the Washington Coliseum. During World War II, it hosted patriotic rallies and swing dances, and served as a temporary barracks. Like many public accommodations in Washington at the time, these events were racially segregated, except for matches featuring African-American boxers. However, it later became an important venue for African-American cultural and political events: Nation of Islam founder Elijah Muhammad and his disciple, Malcolm X, spoke there in 1959 and 1961, and in the 1980s, it was a center for performances of Washington’s indigenous Go-Go music. The building is perhaps best known as the site of the first personal appearance of the Beatles in the United States in 1964.

Proposal

The project calls for conversion of the complex into an office building with ground level retail. On the icehouse, original windows would be opened up, and additional openings created at regular intervals based on the size and proportions of the existing. A roof addition is proposed -- two-stories atop the existing one-story block, one-story atop the two-story section -- set back 8 feet from the outside perimeter walls. A four-story parking garage addition would be constructed on land to the south, replacing a non-historic one-story building. The vocabulary of the roof

addition would be of metal-framed glass walls capped by a metal cornice element. [The Board approved a proposal for a roof addition to the ice house of a different design and with a setback of approximately 20 feet in 2008.]

The arena building would also be converted to office use with ground level retail, with floors inserted in the large interior open space. Recessed brick panels on the north (M Street) and west (Delaware Avenue) elevations would be opened up and elongated for windows; new openings would be punched into the first floor along Delaware Avenue for garage doors that could open for covered café or outdoor display areas for restaurants and retailers. Dormers would be inserted into the curved roof between the exposed concrete ribs.

Evaluation

The proposal represents a creative reuse of this unusual building, albeit with a somewhat greater level of alteration – a substantial roof addition, dormer windows in the curved coliseum roof, additional and altered window openings -- than is typical for most historic buildings. In an acknowledgement of the difficulties of converting unusual building types to new uses, the Board has sometimes applied greater flexibility for buildings with an extremely specific original design or function in order to encourage their rehabilitation and adaptation for modern use. For example, the Board recently approved two additional floors with a distinctive new roof line being added to the rear portion of Dorsch's White Cross Bakery at 614 S Street, NW. Other examples might include the enclosure of the originally open Lumbershed and the addition of floors on Building 160 (Foundry Lofts) both at the Washington Navy Yard, the reincorporation of the original performance halls into a new enclosure at the Arena Stage, and the addition of five additional floors to the Tenleytown Sears.

In general, the alterations and additions have been designed to be sensitive to and consistent with the character of the building. The dormer windows in the sloped roof have been kept low in profile, below the curved exterior ribs and are not proposed in the outer most bays at each end of the building, in order to preserve the distinctive roofline of the building as seen from the street.¹ The newly-created fenestration within the coliseum replaces inset brick panels (some of which appear to have originally had windows), maintaining the shallow implied brick piers that provide a monumental composition to the elevations. The additional floors on the ice house employ a modest setback from the outside edge of the building and a thin-framed, glass wall vocabulary so as to sit lightly on the simple brick structure below.

The fenestration on the ice house portion of the building has been based on the few original units that remain. However, as the project continues to be refined, additional study should be given to the treatment of the fenestration on the coliseum. While new storefront glazing is not inappropriate for the first level, openings of this size on a building of this era would likely have had a multi-light steel industrial sash (rather than extremely large sheets of plate glass within openings trimmed out with steel I-beams) and would provide a better model for new or expanded fenestration. Retaining more of a sense of the original fenestration pattern on the front (M Street) elevation of the coliseum should also be evaluated. For instance, perhaps the windows aren't lowered quite as much as is shown, and could maintain the stepped up sill of the center window.

¹ In this respect, the insertions within the roof are not unlike the inset balconies created in the red tile roof of the Daniel Burnham designed Railway Express Agency Building at 900 2nd Street, NE which are seen from the train tracks but largely imperceptible from street view.

Finally, eliminating the two narrow storefronts – the one at each end of the Delaware Avenue elevation – wouldn't substantively compromise the goal of opening the building's base up for enhanced street activity and would better maintain the solidity of the coliseum at its corners.

The design of the roof addition on the icehouse, and its relationship with the underlying building, might also benefit from continued study. If the addition is going to be located so close to the outside edge of the building, it will be important to establish a strong relationship between the new and old and for the addition to be clearly subordinate. Recent refinements have improved this relationship – the organization of the addition's glazing and vertical fins on the 3rd Street elevation has been more closely related to the underlying structures and the addition has been pulled back off the 3rd Street portion of the building that contains a small free-standing chimney. However, the use of both horizontal and vertical glazing on the portion of the addition that wraps around to M Street appears busy and might benefit from some simplification. If there is any room for lowering the height of the addition, that should also be evaluated.

While the interior is not subject to the Board's review, it is unfortunate that the interior build-out of the coliseum – a space specifically designed to be open and unencumbered by supporting structure -- will eliminate all sense of that openness. The applicants should be encouraged to consider whether some open space could be created within the central elevator lobby or incorporated into the interior plans when the office tenant is identified.

Finally, the HPO encourages that on-site interpretation of the social, cultural, and engineering significance of this unique facility be incorporated into the rehabilitation and final plans.

Recommendation

The HPO recommends that the HPRB find the conceptual design to be generally consistent with the purposes of the preservation act, with the additional study and consideration given to the following:

- 1) Fenestration within the coliseum: to better retain the pattern of fenestration on the M Street elevation and to ensure new windows are compatible with the building;*
- 2) Design of the roof addition on the icehouse: particularly on the portion that wraps around to M Street, to improve its relationship with the underlying building;*
- 3) Consideration of how the interior volume of the building might be retained in some portion of the coliseum;*
- 4) On-site interpretation of the site's significance as an integral part of the building's design.*