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

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| Property Address: | 2033 G Street NW and 725 21st NW | X | Agenda |
| Landmark/District: | Landmark Buildings: Maxwell Woodhull House, Corcoran Hall | | Consent Calendar |
| Meeting Date: | Historic District pending: GWU HD November 17, 2011 | X | Concept Review Alteration |
| H.P.A. Number: | 12-030 | X | New Construction |
| Staff Reviewer: | Kim Elliott / Steve Callcott | | Demolition Subdivision |

Hartman-Cox Architects, representing George Washington University, seeks conceptual design review for construction of a six-story museum at 725 21st Street NW. The museum will connect to the landmark Maxwell Woodhull House to the south, and abut the landmark Corcoran Hall to the north.

Property History and Description

The Maxwell Woodhull House, at the corner of G Street and 21st Street, was built in 1855 and is an excellent example of an Italian villa style house. The two-story brick house, with heavy projecting cornice and wooden semi-hexagonal oriels, embodies the distinctive architectural features of a significant architectural style, as well as being significant to the history of George Washington University. General Woodhull, the owner of the house, was a university trustee and benefactor, and the house stands as a symbol of the relocation of the university campus to Foggy Bottom.

Corcoran Hall, built in 1924, is of the Georgian Revival tradition and was the first building constructed on the GWU Foggy Bottom campus as part of the campus plan developed by architect Albert L. Harris, which guided the campus' development in the first decades of the 20th century. Harris, together with architect Arthur B. Heaton and builder Harry Wardman designed Corcoran Hall as characteristic of American institutional design, and the four-story brick building creates a strong edge framing the University Yard.

George Washington University was chartered in 1821, and in 1912 moved to its current Foggy Bottom neighborhood. The campus includes a variety of historic building types including 19th century townhouses, late Victorian rowhouses, multi-storied apartment buildings, and university-related educational and religious buildings. The GWU campus is a pending Historic District.

Project Description

The project calls for construction of a six-story building (four stories above grade and two below) as an infill building between Corcoran Hall and Woodhull House. Although the new construction would read as a separate building, it will form a connection to the Woodhull House and is defined as an addition to that property.

The proposed new construction, along with the renovated Woodhull House, will be the new home to the Textile Museum, University collections, and the Albert H. Small Washingtoniana Collection. The project will also relocate an existing non-original stair tower at the south end of Corcoran Hall.

The new building would be accessed from 21st Street through a glassy street front. The above-ground four-story addition continues predominantly as stone cladding, with a glass top floor and glass bridge connecting to the Woodhull House. A loading bay and door for the museum are located on this main façade but will be clad in the same material as the façade in order to minimize its appearance. An exterior passageway between the new construction and Woodhull House maintains a pedestrian access from 21st Street to University Yard. The east side of the museum faces University Yard and will have programmatic elements that take advantage of the views and outdoor space of the Yard.

The design of the building is modern with stone cladding and glazing infilling the space and differentiating itself from its mid-19th century and early 20th century neighbors.

Evaluation

Prior to submission of the concept, the HPO worked with the applicants to identify the important design principles that the new building should follow. The design was developed based on the following principles:

- 1) The new building should be respectful of the landmarked Woodhull House and not detract from its character.
- 2) The building should have an appropriate scale and proportion to Corcoran Hall.
- 3) The mass and articulation of the building should have a contextual relationship to the street and University Yard.

The building is respectful to the Woodhull House in its massing, location and connection to the landmark. By removing the non-contributing stair tower on Corcoran Hall, the mass of the museum was able to be moved away from Woodhull House, directly adjacent to the larger Corcoran. The majority of the stone mass of the new museum is located adjacent to the four-story brick Corcoran Hall, in similar scale and proportion to the academic building. The fourth floor is set back from the street elevation, and with steel and glass, lightens the overall mass of the building. . The connection takes the form of a transparent bridge made of steel and glass at the second floor only. It sits below the roof

line of the Woodhull House, allowing the rich architectural details of the house to be the focal point.

The design vocabulary, manifesting in a solid building with few windows, is partially driven by the programmatic needs of the building – gallery spaces housing light-sensitive art and tapestry work. Giving flexibility to the form of the design is appropriate given that it is a museum, and it appropriately distinct from its Italianate and Georgian Revival neighbors.

The applicant has worked with HPO to keep the majority of the massing away from the Woodhull House, minimize the views of the new construction from G Street so as not to overshadow the Woodhull House, maintain the original Harris campus plan as a strong edge along 21st Street, and disguise the loading doors for the museum along this public façade.

As the design continues to be developed, the materiality and articulation of the façade should continue to be developed. The contemporary form is appropriate and to scale for its program and context, but there may be opportunities for the building to relate more successfully to the street edge and engage the pedestrian at an inviting level. The large expanse of the windowless elevation could include a more expressive façade through texture or materials, an integrated signage or banner for the museum, or further sculpting of the building form.

Recommendation

The HPO recommends approval of the concept, with continuing study of the articulation of the façade and elevation materials to engage the street, as outlined above.