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

Property Address:	4820-4874 Massachusetts Avenue and 4301 49th Street, NW	X	Agenda Consent Calendar
Landmark/District:	Square 1500 (part of Spring Valley Shopping Center)		
Meeting Date:	July 23, 2015	X	Concept Review Alteration
H.P.A. Number:	15-252	X	New Construction Demolition
Staff Reviewer:	Steve Callcott	X	Subdivision

The applicant, Washington Real Estate Investment Trust, with plans prepared by Bonstra/ Haresign Architects, seeks on-going conceptual review for construction of a two-story retail and office building on Square 1500, a landmarked complex of retail buildings.

Property Description

Square 1500 contains a collection of commercial buildings developed by the W.C. & A.N. Miller Company between 1939 and 1951 to provide services to the company's surrounding residential developments. The five red brick buildings were designed in a Williamsburg-inspired Colonial Revival style, clustered to form a village-like neighborhood center.

Previous Review

At its April 30th meeting, the HRPB found the general concept for a two-story building in this location to be compatible with the character of the landmark, but that the proposal should be revised to more closely relate to the detailing and scale of the complex. The Board asked that the connection to 4860 Massachusetts (the adjacent one story bank building) be restudied to provide a separation or otherwise ease the transition between the new construction and existing building.

Revised Proposal

Revisions include reductions in the building's width and height, with the decreased width of the building resulting in a corresponding increase in the width of the paseo. Compositionally, the design has been simplified by the elimination of one of the two gables; the remaining gable now extends the full depth of the building to the rear elevation. The apparent size of the building has been further reduced by stepping the height down to a one-story element as it abuts the bank.

On the front elevation, the number of storefronts has been reduced from four to three, and their height, width, proportions and detailing revised; the openings are now proposed to be capped with canvas awnings. The windows on the second floor have been reduced in size and scale, rendered as multi-light, double hung sash windows. All window and door trim would be white rather than the dark gray/black shown previously. The same proportional and detail changes to the openings have been made to the paseo and rear elevations; on the rear, the trellises over the doors have been replaced with canvas awnings.

The site plan has been revised to provide a more rational and efficient parking lot. On 49th Street, the parking has been pulled out of the public space and a redundant curb cut would be removed to

allow for a wider continuous greensward. The wider paseo has been developed to terminate in an open area within the block that could be used for additional planting or a children's play area, and a continuous pedestrian path has been provided that links Fordham to the paseo, across the rear elevations of the Massachusetts Avenue buildings, and extending out to 49th Street, obviating the need for pedestrians to walk through the parking lot. The revised parking lot plan also creates locations for trees to be planted in interstitial spaces.

The applicants also seek conceptual review of a lot combination subdivision to combine the site's three lots into one. Currently, 4820 Massachusetts Avenue (Crate and Barrel) occupies one lot, 4301 49th Street occupies a second lot, and 4860 Massachusetts Avenue (the bank), 4866 (the gas station) and 4872-74 (Le Pain Quotidien) collectively occupy a third lot. The subdivision would combine these three lots together.

Evaluation

While the dimensional and proportional changes are individually modest, they collectively result in a proposal that is substantially more compatible with the character of the landmark. The reductions in the building's height and width, the stepping of the mass down to a single story to abut the bank building, and the revised proportions and smaller scale of elements results in a building that is more deferential and harmonious with the existing buildings. The revised designs for the storefronts and second story windows, the detailing of the brick and precast, and the revisions to the roofline are less generic and industrial and more specifically tailored to the design qualities inherent in the landmark complex.

The lighter, one-story connection to 4860 achieves the goal of providing a more compatible transition between the two buildings while also reducing the mass, frontage and apparent size of the new building. In maintaining a connection, albeit a lighter one, the design avoids the creation of a redundant and potentially uninviting passageway that would result by disconnecting the two buildings entirely, with the blank party wall of the bank on one side and little opportunity for ground level fenestration and activation on the opposing wall of the new construction.

As encouraged in the previous report and by the Board, the site plan has been further developed to enhance and improve the aesthetic qualities of the parking lot and to provide safer pedestrian circulation through the site. The improvements of the public space fronting 49th Street, the wider paseo and plaza area at its terminus, the continuous dedicated walkway, and the planting of trees within the parking lot will all enhance and improve upon the "village-like" environment cited in the designation.

The proposed subdivision will not change the boundaries of the landmark, and will unite three lots that have historically been associated with each and which are designated as a single landmark. The subdivision will have no effect on the property's designation or the Board's review authority.

Recommendation

The HPO recommends that the Board find the revised concept design and the lot combination subdivision to be compatible with the character of the landmark and to delegate final approval to staff.