

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

Property Address:	1215 Good Hope Road SE	X	Agenda
Landmark/District:	Anacostia Historic District		Consent Calendar
Meeting Date:	February 24, 2022		Concept Review
H.P.A. Number:	HP 22-148	X	Alteration Subdivision

MLK Gateway Partners, with designs prepared for Enlightened Inc, seeks permit review for installing a blade sign on an office building at 1201 Good Hope Road.

Property History and Description

The property is a recently completed project that went through the HPRB review process in 2019 and included façade restoration, construction of a four-story addition atop the one-story historic buildings and construction of a four-story building on the vacant corner of Good Hope Road and MLK Ave. After being redesigned and refined several times in response to the Board’s review, the Board approved the final design and the project is now almost complete.

The proposed sign will be located on the corner of Good Hope Road and Martin Luther King Jr. Ave. The property is a three-story new construction building at the corner, with large plate glass storefront windows capped by transoms and separated by brick pillars. This corner element would be set back 5’ from the Good Hope Rd property line and 2’ from the MLK Jr. Avenue property line, with a recessed canopied lobby entrance. Carefully consideration for material included use of traditional red brick one-over-one double hung windows in a traditional proportion.

Proposal

The application calls for the installation of one sign, one at the top corner of the third floor of the office building. The sign would be internally illuminated, projecting blade sign, featuring the logo and name of a tenant of the building. It would measure roughly 11’ tall 36’’ wide with 1’long, 1/2’’ thick aluminum mounting plates.

Evaluation

The original concept for signage was a pin-mounted logo sign attached at the top corner of the construction property.



Final rendering showing conceptual signage, 2020

At permit, the applicant requested an internally lit, blade sign of the logo at the corner of the property. HPO did not agree that an internally lit blade sign at the top corner of the property was appropriate and alternative options for a more appropriate sign type and placement were discussed.

The applicant is committed to an internally lit blade sign at the corner of the property. HPO and the applicant tried to reach a compromise. However, after multiple iterations the sign was revised to include the business name (12 characters plus the logo). The thought being possibly a fuller blade sign would look more compatible – similar to a “special sign”.

HPO remains concerned that the current proposed sign will visually detract from the building façade, which was so carefully designed to enhance this important intersection at the gateway into the historic district. Signage on non-contributing buildings and sites can materially affect the streetscape of historic districts. These signs should be appropriate for the building or site where they are located and shall not detract from the character of historic districts, landmarks, or sites.

The sign type and placement at the top corner of the property does not follow the Board’s sign regulations (DCMR 10-C, Chapter 25) promote signage that is primarily oriented to and experienced at the pedestrian level, discourages signs intended to be seen from far distant views, and prohibits signs at the rooflines of buildings. Unfortunately, this building has multiple tenants and signage at the pedestrian view is already assigned. There is an approved sign for the applicant/tenant at the entry level for this property.

The guidelines state a sign shall be sized appropriately for its location on a building or site. Signage in a historic district should be generally consistent with the prevailing size of comparable signage in the district. The sign and anchors will become the most prominent feature on the corner of the building. The Anacostia Historic District guidelines for signage states that new signage should reflect the scale of the storefront and of the building and should not obscure its architectural features. Signage shall be installed in a manner that minimizes permanent

damage to a building. On masonry buildings, signage shall be attached through mortar joints, rather than through masonry units, whenever possible.

Recommendation

The HPO recommends that the Board find the proposed sign incompatible and recommend a sign type that is substantially smaller than the almost 12 foot height proposed and ideally is mounted directly to the face of the building rather than projecting from the façade. A flat metal or painted sign might be worthy of consideration.

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