

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

Property Address:	1231 Good Hope Road	X	Agenda
Landmark/District:	Anacostia Historic District		Consent Calendar
Meeting Date:	February 25th, 2021		Concept Review
H.P.A. Number:	HP 22-149	X	Alteration Subdivision

The applicant, Studios Architecture, on behalf of the Washington Area Community Investment Fund (WACIF), requests the Board’s review of a concept for interior renovation and construction of a two-story addition atop a one-story contributing commercial building in the Anacostia Historic District.

Property Description

1231 Good Hope Road was originally constructed as two one-story stores before it was combined and leased to the Woolworth company in the 1930s. The Moderne styled façade has large plate glass windows, recessed storefront entrances, and a façade clad in limestone panels and patterned brick culminating in a low stepped parapet roofline. The property was renovated in 2013 for the current use as an arts and retail venue. The renovation included new aluminum framed storefront windows to evoke the originals, new wood double doors and transoms, retaining the vestibule floor tiles, and repointing and repainting the exterior façade.

Proposal

The building occupies the entire parcel. The plans call for retaining and renovating the building and adding two additional stories with an occupied penthouse. The addition would have an articulated brick façade, stepped back 17 feet from the historic street façade. These upper floors would have large window openings in a similar proportion to the existing storefront on the ground floor. At the back of the building, the upper façade would be stepped back 12 feet from the property line and is proposed to be similar in material and window openings as the front. The proposal currently shows most of the side elevations as solid with a courtyard carved out on the upper floors consisting of large, glazed openings on the western elevation. The primarily glass façade penthouse frontage along Good Hope would be set back 12 feet with a 12-foot height. The overall 3-story building’s roof is planned to be 46 feet high.

Evaluation

This former Woolworth building has become an unofficial landmark in the Anacostia Historic District, and it’s Moderne styling, parapets, and wide storefront design has a distinctly different character from the district’s other commercial buildings. The row buildings along this frontage represent the most intact block of historic commercial buildings in the district. Typically, the contributing commercial buildings are one to two-story buildings with patterned brick or stone, fully glazed storefronts and flat roofs. The project has the potential to add needed vibrancy and façade improvements to this important location.

The challenge is how and to what extent additional new construction can be incorporated into a larger composition in a manner that is compatible with the original one to two story commercial properties along Good Hope Road and the unique character of this building. The height and scale of the proposed three-story building attempts to relate its height to the height of the MLK Gateway project at the corner of Good Hope Rd SE and MLK Jr. Ave SE four buildings away. However, the immediate surrounding contributing historic buildings are lower in scale and height with two or three bays in width.

New construction in historic commercial areas should enhance vitality along the streetscapes, showcase interesting and thoughtful design, and contribute to neighborhood revitalization. The use of setbacks for added floors behind historic buildings has been found to be a compatible approach in many of the city's historic districts. However, the extent of setback currently proposed is not sufficient to provide a sense that the historic building been preserved and for the new construction to read as an independent building behind it. Increasing the setback and reducing the height of the addition would make the addition more subordinate and improve the proportional relationship of the addition to the underlying building. If the setbacks are to remain as proposed, dividing the elevation of the new construction horizontally with larger glazing and lighter weight materials could help alleviate the addition appearance to loom over the contributing building.

While masonry is the most common material used for the district's commercial buildings, an alternative material and increased glazing might be less heavy and of the spirit of this Moderne-styled building. As the palette of materials continues to be considered, the compatibility of the new construction might be enhanced by using a material that complements but is differentiated from and lighter than the brick Moderne parapet roofline. An alignment of material colors to the district's historic buildings could help better relate the large building to its context.

Recommendation

HPO recommends that the Board find the general concept for a two-story roof addition to be supportable but that additional design work is needed. It is recommended that the front setback be increased and the height of the floors be lowered to reduce the apparent size of the addition relative to the underlying building, and that the extent of glazing be increased and the materials and articulation of the addition continue to be studied to lighten its and relate it more closely to the character of this building. The project should return to the Board for further review when appropriate.

Staff Contact: Imania Price