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

Landmark/District:	Anacostia Historic District	(x) Agenda
Address:	2218-2224 Martin Luther King Avenue Jr. Ave SE	(x) Alteration
Meeting Date:	July 27, 2023	(X) New construction
Case Number:	HPA 21-016	(x) Concept

Applicant Bethel Christian Fellowship, Inc, with plans prepared by PGN Architects, return with a revised conceptual design for construction of a five-story building on top and behind three one-story contributing commercial buildings in the Anacostia Historic District.

Property Description

The site includes three one-story retail buildings located on the corner of Martin Luther King Jr. Avenue and Pleasant Street. Each property was built between 1929 and 1936. They are listed as contributing to the historic district and are specifically mentioned in the original historic district nomination. They are representative of their era with Art Deco-inspired designs capped with prominent cornices or parapets with simple stone reliefs inset into the brick. These simple buildings are enlivened by their patterned brickwork and parapet gables.

The surrounding context includes adjacent historic contributing one- and two-story commercial buildings along MLK and contributing two-story framed houses at the rear. A Planned Unit Development is proposed for the parking lot across the street and the mixed-used five-story Maple View Flats development that was approved by the Mayor's Agent is located to the south.

Revised Proposal

When the Board last reviewed the project in January 2022, the Board did not take an action but found that the height of the [then] proposed six-story building needed to be reduced and the metal panel vocabulary reconsidered. The Board found the three-story masonry infill pieces on the vacant portions of the site to be generally compatible but the remainder of the project incompatible in height, design and materials. The applicant was encouraged to work with HPO and the community on a revised design and return for review when ready.

The revised proposal reduces the height of the addition by removing the sixth floor, reducing the height of the property from 69' to approximately 57'. The infill element on MLK has been raised from three floors to four, with a traditionally inspired design capped by a cornice at the top of the third floor and the fourth expressed as an attic story. The first-floor fenestration and entry would resemble the neighboring storefronts with double ganged windows on the second and third floors. A similar four-story infill piece is proposed along the Pleasant Street side elevation clad in a light-colored masonry. The first floor here would have the lobby entrance and a mix of double ganged windows on all three floors. The four-story brick composition would be capped by a cornice, and the fifth story clad in metal panel rising flush with the brick façade. The metal clad corner piece at the existing building (2224) would be set back from the property line. The addition has been completely set off the existing corner property and the property is to be retained and repaired. The Pleasant Street

elevation proposes a five-story elevation with a mechanical penthouse. The elevation is treated a secondary entrance with smaller glazed window on the ground with similar fenestration above. The rear elevation proposes a full width brick design with double ganged windows and loading dock at the ground.

As before, the site would be excavated for an underground garage, accessed off the rear alley. The façades of the historic buildings would be rehabilitated and with some demolition of the rear and portions of the side bearing walls.

Evaluation

The rear building addition has been reduced in height by a floor and simplified into a single five-story element with a differentiated top floor. The rear building has also been set further back off the existing buildings and maintains the low-scale pedestrian-oriented facades to remain the focal point while providing the larger density in the vacant space behind. One of the important characteristics of the Anacostia Historic District is its topography and the views residents have across the river over the low scale buildings along the commercial streets; these views provide a visual link that connects Anacostia with the rest of the city. As the plans continue to be developed, HPO recommends that additional renderings be prepared that illustrates how the project will be seen from within the residential community up Pleasant Street and from the Fredrick Douglass National Historic Site.

The use of red and tan brick masonry for the new construction is appropriate and compatible, as they are the most common colors and materials used for the district's commercial buildings. As the palette of materials continues to be developed, consideration should be given to ensure that the metal panels do not appear metallic or reflective in finish; HPO recommends they be a painted finish in a warm earth tone rather than the cool gray/silver shown. Alternatively, stucco, terra cotta or an alternative finish may also be worthwhile to consider.

Additional suggested refinements include providing a setback or differentiated fourth floor on the street-fronting infill element to help break up the building to relate to the one to two-story neighboring context. As well, additional brick detailing, a sign band atop the first floor retail storefronts, better detail of the dentils at the cornices with a focus on how it wraps around the front facades, and the use of a compatible masonry on the Pleasant Street projecting bay and on the north elevation as seen over the adjacent small scaled buildings on MLK.

Recommendations

HPO recommends that the Board find the revised concept to be compatible in height, massing and overall design from Martin Luther King Jr. Ave with the condition that the applicants continue to refine the proposal with regard to materials, colors and detailed, and that renderings be prepared that illustrate how the building would be seen from the east within the residential neighborhood.

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