

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

Property Address:	2420 Martin Luther Jr Avenue SE	X	Agenda
Landmark/District:	Anacostia Historic District		Consent Calendar
Meeting Date:	March 23rd, 2023	X	Concept Review
H.P.A. Number:	HP 23-225	X	New Construction
		X	Subdivision

Owner Caesar Layton, with plans developed by Square 134 Architects, seeks concept review for an addition on an existing one-story contributing building at 2420 Martin Luther King Jr. Avenue and new construction on an adjacent parking lot in the Anacostia Historic District.

Property Description

The property is located on the southern portion of Martin Luther King Jr. Avenue adjacent to existing a row of two-story contributing buildings and a six-story mixed use property built in 2019. The existing building was originally constructed in 1910 as two buildings on two separate lots. The lots and buildings were later combined, and a two-story addition was constructed at the rear.

Project Description

The plans call for construction of a four-story addition on the existing one-story building and a new five-story with a cellar building on the vacant lot.

Existing Building and Addition

The proposal calls for the demolition of the rear 70’ of the building with the front 41’ to remain. The ground floor retail entrance and facade would remain with limited alteration. The second and third story of the addition would be clad in brick and setback 18’ from the front façade, configured with a two-bay profile with a set of punched windows and capped with a heavy cornice. The fourth floor would be clad in metal seam paneling and setback an additional 7’ with walk out balconies. The penthouse would be setback 50’ and clad in lap siding.

New Construction

The new construction will be set in 6’ from the property line with a raised landscape planter along the front. The width of the front façade would be divided into two planes: the first is a four-story brick façade recessed from the street and containing the entry; the second is a three-story brick façade above the raised landscape planter. The windows in each component are varied, with casements in the recessed façade and double hungs in the other.

Evaluation

The composition of height and massing is successful in breaking down the new construction and balancing its five-story height between the historic one to two story buildings on one side with the large six story building on the other. The addition on the contributing building is setback

from the front façade and is designed to relate to the pattern and scale of the neighboring historic brick structures. The massing of the four stories pulls away from the street and steps up at the rear following the topography of the hilly landscape along Martin Luther King Jr Ave. The two three-bay design relates back to the historic two building arrangement. The two storefront openings will be retained with compatible alterations to the entry opening and storefront window for accessibility.

The Board has supported visible additions on small scaled commercial historic buildings in Anacostia when they provide a substantial set back and the context supports the proposed height, as is the case here.¹ The proposed concept additionally steps back the fourth floor, and the penthouse is proposed to be set back sufficiently where it is not visible from streetview. However, as the design continues to be developed, HPO recommends lowering the height of the fourth floor and exploring an alternative material for the lap siding that is less graphic and smaller in scale.

The proposed five story portion of the building has a composition that successfully layers the façade and stacks the three and four storied façades on top of each other. The three-story brick corner breaks away from the one-story historic building with the recessed entryway. The break allows for the new construction to read as an independent building. The landscaping separates the pedestrian from the alley corner and screens the large areaways.

The use of masonry is appropriate and compatible, as it is the most common material used for the district's commercial buildings, where red and light blond/tan brick are most common. As the palette of materials continues to be developed, the compatibility of the new construction could be enhanced by using a more typical blond or beige brick, rather than white. A closer alignment of material colors to the district's historic buildings could help better relate the larger building to its context. The use of metal panels and lap siding for the additional fourth, fifth, and penthouse floors, particularly for the size of the mass proposed, raises greater compatibility concerns. Consideration should be given to ensure that the panels do not appear metallic or reflective in finish; alternatively, stucco or an alternative finish may be worthwhile to consider.

As the project continues to be developed, HPO recommends the extent of demolition to the historic building on the roof framing and how the structure of the new construction will intersect with the historic buildings be clarified. The plans should also be developed to indicate how the structure of the additional floors will be work with the existing buildings. The storefront restoration work and material should be further detailed to include new storefront units and awning.

Also, HPO recognizes community significance of the mural on the side elevation of 2420 to the neighborhood. A mural has been featured on the wall since 2008 highlighting the music, people, and culture of Anacostia. HPO recommends the applicant work with the Anacostia Arts and Cultural District to develop arts plan to incorporate this element into the project.

¹ MLK Gateway I and II are set on the corner of MLK AVE and Good Hope RD surrounded by one to two story contributing buildings.

Recommendation

HPO recommends that the Board support the general design with the recommendation noted to be revised and delegated to staff for further review.

Staff Contact: Imania Price

