

**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:	April 27th, 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, returns to the Board with a revised 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 commercial 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

In March, the Board found the general massing and scale of the proposal to be compatible with the Anacostia Historic District but asked that the design be simplified with fewer façade elements and languages.

The revised plan for the addition behind the one-story building is relatively unchanged with a new window configuration on the fourth floor and a patterned metal panel siding. As before, 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; revisions have been made to improve the proportions of the brick detailing.

The revised plan for the adjacent new construction has eliminated the three-bay projection and pulled the entire four-story element to the property line. The four-story element simplifies the varied fenestration with modern casement windows in a vertical patterned brick and a stone base. The raised landscape planter has been removed and the building features a full-width storefront with an awning. The penthouse would be setback 50’ and has been revised to be clad in fiber cement paneling.

Evaluation

The revised plans respond to the Board’s request to simplify the different façade configurations. The addition behind the contributing building is designed to relate to the pattern and scale of the neighboring historic brick structures. HPO recommends the applicant provide additional detail

on the dimensions of the corner and center pillar elements to be symmetrical and balanced, and further study of the metal paneling on the fourth floor to reduce its scale. 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 penthouse is proposed to be set back sufficiently where it is not visible from streetview.

Rather than breaking down the new construction, the revised composition pulls the full four-stories new construction to the property line. While slightly taller than many of the contributing buildings on the MLK corridor, it serves as a successful transition to the adjacent larger building. Including a recessed entryway and further work on the scale of the storefront could help the design relate to the surrounding historic commercial buildings.

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, HPO recommends using a blond or beige brick for the four-story element.

Also, as mentioned in the previous report, 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.

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

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.

