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

Property Address:	3400 Connecticut Avenue and 2911 Newark Street, NW	X	Agenda Consent Calendar
Landmark/District:	Cleveland Park Historic District	X	Concept Review
Meeting Date:	May 28, 2020	X	Alteration
H.P.A. Number:	20-043	X	New Construction
Staff Contact:	Steve Callcott		Demolition Subdivision

Velocity Property Management, with plans prepared by Kasa Architects, seeks on-going conceptual design review for construction of two new buildings at the Macklin apartment and retail complex in the Cleveland Park Historic District.

Property Description

The two-building, L-shaped residential and retail complex was designed by architect Mihran Mesrobian in 1939. The three-story Art Deco Macklin apartment building is oriented south to Newark Street with ground-level storefronts facing a corner parking lot. A separate one-story commercial building extends out to Connecticut Avenue with storefronts facing both the parking lot and the avenue; it abuts a row of similar one-story commercial buildings. The site is recognized in the Cleveland Park nomination as “an ingenious mixed-use complex with an unusually sensitive configuration designed in response to its urban context.”

Previous Review

When the Board reviewed the project in January, it made the following findings:

- (1) The conceptual site plan is respectful of the site organization of the Macklin and compatible with the character of the historic district, but making the north side of the townhouse/retail building parallel to the south elevation should be evaluated;
- (2) The height and mass of the new buildings are generally compatible with the historic district, subject to elimination of the penthouse and providing additional setbacks on the south and north elevations of the apartment building;
- (3) The architectural character of the townhouse/retail building is generally compatible, but the Newark Street elevation should be simplified and the design of the top floor restudied;
- 4) The architectural character of the apartment building needs to be rethought, simplified and made more compatible. The scale of fenestration, use of projections, material color choices, and whether the building could be further lowered in height should all be studied.

The Board asked that the project be further developed and return for further review when ready.

Revised Proposal

The townhouse building has been revised to provide a more consistent façade treatment on all sides. The implied bayfront vocabulary on Newark has been eliminated in favor of using the

same pattern of fenestration as on the other elevations. Striated limestone panels, the same as used on the retail base, have replaced the dark metal panels flanking the windows on the upper stories. On the top floor, the window and doors have been reduced in scale, the parapet wall has been raised, and the setback on the Connecticut Avenue side increased. At the base of the building, the curved retail base has been reworked to more fully engage the corner and to extend around into the exterior stair.

The occupied penthouse on the addition to the Macklin has been eliminated, reduced to a single stair and elevator extending to the roof. The top (fourth) floor has been redesigned with a six-foot setback on the front and a five-foot setback on the alley, and the all-glass vocabulary changed to brick with punched windows; the height of the top floor remains the same (at 277' for a building height of 39'3"). On the front elevation, the projecting bays have been eliminated and the design developed to more closely relate to the windows, scale and composition of the Macklin. The rear elevations have been redesigned to eliminate the multi-story glazing element and to extend the front elevation more consistently around to all sides. As requested, a rendering of the rear of the building on the alley has been developed.

Evaluation

The revisions are responsive to the Board's direction and improve the project's compatibility. The townhouse building is more cohesive, presenting a uniform building expression on all sides. The taller third floor parapet and the increased setback of the fourth floor from the corner deemphasizes the top floor, and the same use of limestone panels on the upper levels as is used on the ground floor unites the composition.

As requested, the applicants studied revising the mass to make the north and south elevations parallel, as was suggested by the Board, to see if it would open up views of the Macklin from Connecticut Avenue. However, the revised geometry doesn't appreciably improve the view and has the drawback of making the new building's massing boxier and more like a row of townhouses, and less contextual than by providing a matching obtuse-angled response to the unusual acute-angled geometry of the one-story commercial building on the opposite side of the courtyard.

The addition has been redesigned as a more closely-matched companion to the Macklin. The elimination of the large occupied penthouse has reduced its height and mass, while the setback of the fourth floor on the north and south sides provide a meaningful break in the massing that helps subordinate the addition relative to the existing building. The revisions to the addition's material coloration, window designs, and detailing are more clearly related to and compatible with the existing building.

Recommendation

The HPO recommends that the Review Board find the revised concept to be compatible with the character of the Cleveland Park Historic District and delegate final construction approval to staff.