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

Landmark/District:	Dupont Circle Historic District	(X) Agenda
Address:	1701-11 Rhode Island Avenue, NW	() Consent Calendar
Meeting Date:	March 24, 2016	(X) Alteration
H.P.A. Number:	16-255	() New Construction
		() Subdivision
Staff Reviewers:	Steve Callcott	(X) Conceptual Design

Akridge Development, with plans prepared by Hickok Cole Architects, seeks conceptual design review for façade replacement and public space alterations for the former YMCA building at the corner of 17th and Rhode Island Avenue in the Dupont Circle Historic District.

Property History and Description

1701-11 Rhode Island Avenue, NW is a seven-story red brick building that was purpose-built in the 1970s for the YMCA. As it falls outside the period of significance (1875-1931), it is non-contributing to the Dupont Circle Historic District.

To the west of the building are five large townhouses from the late 19th and early 20th centuries that have been renovated and incorporated into an office complex; St. Matthew's Cathedral is located to the west of the houses. To the north is a row of 1880s brick Victorian rowhouses.

The YMCA closed in December 2015 and the building is currently vacant.

Proposal

The project calls for replacing the exterior of the building and making some minor changes to its massing. Massing adjustments include infilling the large voids, cutting away at the corners, expanding the penthouse, and providing shallow architectural projections on each of the two street faces. The new cladding would consist of a variegated metal super-structure with decorative metal screens overlaid on an aluminum and glass curtain wall. A canopy would project at the first floor and a perforated sunscreen would cap the seventh. The public space in front of the building, which is mostly paved at present, would be redeveloped with a series of raised geometrically-shaped planters and decorative paving.

Evaluation

The concept provides a compatible sense of scale, shadow, texture and material richness to the historic district, albeit in a clearly contemporary vocabulary. The subtle changes in massing help lower the building's apparent height, and the contemporary take on a tripartite organization helps break down the building's scale. The projection of the superstructure is modest – approximately a foot – and is used to provide a greater depth and shadow to the street facades rather than in an effort to gain usable space; while they will be imperceptible as projections, they are important for the architectural effect they will have on the design. The variegated metal skin would provide a natural quality that is sympathetic to the natural stone, brick and metals used on the surrounding

historic buildings; the applicants are leaning toward using copper, which would have a similar warmth and coloration that would relate well with the surrounding red brick of those historic buildings.

The public space plan should continue to be developed. While it is an interesting and unusual concept, the design objective should be to ensure that the public space will read as a continuous green space rather than a series of objects in a plaza. Increasing the size and continuity of the planters, increasing the extent to which the planting areas directly engage the building, and reducing the amount of paving would improve the compatibility of the public space treatment with the surrounding historic district.

Recommendation

The HPO recommends that the Board find the concept to be compatible with the character of the historic district and delegate final approval to staff.