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

Landmark/District:	Town Center East	<input type="checkbox"/> Agenda
Address:	1001 and 1101 3rd Street, SW	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Consent Calendar
Meeting Date:	November 17, 2022	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Alteration
H.P.A. Number:	23-036	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> New Construction
		<input type="checkbox"/> Subdivision
Staff Reviewer:	Steve Callcott	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Conceptual Design

The Bernstein Companies, with designs by architect Maurice Walters, seeks final conceptual review of a development project at Town Center East, a pair of landmark apartment buildings designed by the noted modern architect I.M. Pei.

In 2013, the Board gave concept approval for the construction of two 110' tall residential towers on the surface parking lots to the north and south of the landmark buildings facing M and K Streets (HPA 13-394). The project subsequently obtained approval as a Planned Unit Development (PUD) by the Zoning Commission. The south tower, facing M Street, was constructed and completed in 2015. The current application is for construction of the north tower, facing K Street. While it was approved in concept together with the M Street tower, that approval expired after three years in 2016 and requires reauthorization by the Board.

Property Description and History

Built in 1960-61, the two buildings that comprise Town Center East were originally part of the 14-acre Town Center superblock, bounded by 3rd, 6th, I, and M Streets, that was to be the commercial and community center of the Southwest Urban Renewal Area. Organized around a central courtyard and flanked by surface parking lots facing the streets, the two Town Center East buildings were the first of two identical pairs of residential towers, closely followed by the construction of Town Center West (Marina View) in 1960-62.

Town Center East is one of Washington's best examples of mid-century Modernism, and certainly among the best in Southwest. It is a significant early work of the Pei firm, one of the major planners of Southwest, and a project that Pei himself closely supervised. Set on piloti with a deeply recessed first floor arcade, the concrete towers are a full expression of the rationalist school of the International Style. Oriented end-on to 3rd Street and facing on to a generous courtyard, they give the impression of towers within a park. The original entry orientation toward the parking lots was somewhat less successful, but the treatment of how the buildings meet the ground creates the interpenetration of interior and exterior spaces that is characteristic of Modernism.

Proposal

As in the previous concept, the project calls for construction of a new building to match the height, mass and façade organization of the completed M Street tower to retain a balanced and symmetrical composition between the historic buildings and new construction. The building would be set parallel to the north Pei building, with a centered entrance opening to K Street. The massing provides a setback for the top two floors to establish a datum at 90 feet to align with the height of the Pei towers, and a narrower profile at each end.

Since the concept was approved in 2013, slight adjustments to the materials and fenestration have been made – the primary material would be striated metal panels, the arrangement of balconies has been slightly revised on the south elevation, and the penthouse design has modified to provide for a solar array - but the overall proportions of the façade and the design remains the same.

A new landscaped courtyard would be created between the new tower and the Pei north building that has been developed in consultation with the existing residents. A previously proposed auto court and one-story glass hyphen connecting the new north tower and the north Pei building have been eliminated.

Project Evaluation

The concept design has been designed to complement but not overtly reference the Pei towers and completes the implementation of the approved concept of a unified and concentrated Southwest town center. Like the Pei buildings, the new building has been designed in the round, with equal design emphasis on all sides. The articulation of their facades, with inset windows and projecting detailing, will provide shadow and depth resulting in distinction and contrast with the sheer facades of the Pei buildings. The design revisions maintain the continuity of the concept and the elimination of the auto court and glass connector represent significant improvements to the compatibility of the proposal.

Recommendations

The HPO recommends that the Board find the concept to be compatible with the landmark, and consistent with the purposes of the preservation act.