
**HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD
MASTER PLAN REVIEW**

Property Address:	North Capitol/Michigan Avenue, NW	X	Agenda
Landmark/District:	McMillan Park Reservoir		Consent Calendar
Meeting Date:	January 22, 2015		Alteration
Staff Reviewer:	Steve Callcott		New Construction
		X	Subdivision

The District of Columbia, represented by the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development (DMPED), and the Vision McMillan Partners, seek a subdivision of the McMillan Sand Filtration Site, a component of the larger McMillan Park Reservoir that is listed as a landmark in the DC Inventory of Historic Sites and an historic district on the National Register of Historic Places.

Subdivision of the sand filtration site for redevelopment by different development entities was always an inherent component of the master plan; however, no subdivision application or specific lot boundaries have been presented to the Board. Pursuant to the Historic Landmark and Historic District Protection Act, the Board is advisory to the Mayor's Agent who must review and hold a public hearing on subdivision applications that segment the land of historic landmarks.

Proposal

The proposal calls for subdividing the single lot (801) that comprises Square 5128 (bounded by North Capitol Street, First Street, Michigan Avenue and Channing Street, NW) into six separate record lots as shown on the attached "Proposed Record Lot with Existing Buildings Exhibit." The boundaries of the parcels reflect the proposed development projects that the Board reviewed as part of the master planning and conceptual design review processes:

- Parcel 1: Medical office buildings north of the north service court
- Parcel 2: Apartment building and medical office buildings south of north service court (originally conceived as parcels 2 and 3 but since combined, thus no parcel 3)
- Parcel 4: Grocery store/apartment building
- Parcel 5: Townhouses
- Parcel 6: The new public park, including the south service court
- Parcel 7: North service court

The redevelopment master plan and most of the projects therein have already been extensively reviewed by the Board.¹ Due to the Board's finding that the project would result

¹ The Board considered the master plan and various projects at McMillan in July and September 2012, March, April, June, July and October of 2013, and May 2014.

in substantial demolition, the applicants presented the project to the Mayor's Agent on October 6th and November 3rd, 2014; a decision by the Mayor's Agent has not yet been issued.

Evaluation

The term "subdivision" is used to refer to two types of actions – lot consolidations, where multiple lots are combined into a single lot (typically for the construction of a single building) and lot segmentation, where a single lot is proposed to be divided into multiple lots (typically for the purpose of constructing multiple buildings). Of the two, subdivisions involving consolidation of lots at landmark sites have been the most commonly proposed, and have typically been found to be compatible and consistent with the Act by the Board and the Mayor's Agent.²

Subdivisions to divide a landmark property into multiple lots have been somewhat less common, and have almost always been judged within the context of the particular project for alteration or new construction that accompanied them.³ In certain instances, the Board has found subdivision to be compatible with the character of the landmark after ensuring that the associated new construction was appropriately designed and sited. In its review of subdivisions at the Wetzell-Archibold farmstead (B-582), Rosedale (02-614), the Owl's Nest (02-635) and the Bowie-Sevier House (06-007), the Board found subdivision to be compatible after ensuring that the new construction was appropriately sited and designed so as to not negatively affect these landmarks and was part of projects that would result in rehabilitation and overall property enhancement. A further contributing factor to the Board finding these particular subdivisions to be consistent was that the property boundaries for each had been altered or already intruded upon during the course of their history, and some additional alteration was found to be acceptable as long as an appropriate buffer was provided for the landmark building.

The McMillan subdivision is somewhat different from these cases, and has perhaps the most similarity with that proposed at the Tregaron estate (04-145). While it is a very different property type, like McMillan and unlike the properties cited above, Tregaron retained its original boundaries and its landscape was deteriorated but essentially intact. After multiple presentations to the HPRB in which proposals for infill construction were substantially reduced and redesigned, the Board approved a project that resulted in a substantial amount of open space being retained with new construction carefully sited and designed to relate to

² Among the many lot combination subdivisions found compatible by the HPRB and approved by the Mayor's Agent are the Luzon Apartments (91-261), Brickyard Hill House/Georgetown Incinerator (98-355-361), United Mine Workers Building (99-324), Yale Laundry (00-026 and 05-042), Rhode Island Avenue Residential Buildings (00-149), Germuiller Row (01-144), American Pharmacists (03-286), Tivoli Theater (04-092), and First African New Church (04-484). Because this type of compatible expansive subdivision is so routine with projects to rehabilitate landmarks with adjacent construction, the preservation law was amended in 2006 to eliminate the requirement for a public hearing in these cases.

³ The only known instance of a subdivision proposed in the absence of a project was for the Williams-Addison House (HPA 07-267), in which the Board and the Mayor's Agent found a proposal to create a new lot inconsistent with the purposes of the Act.

the character of the property. While the Board found subdivision of Tregaron to be “inherently inconsistent with the original unified character of the property,” it acknowledged that through careful siting, massing, and design, the redevelopment plan substantially mitigated the subdivision’s adverse impacts, and would result in a substantial program of restoration and rehabilitation.⁴

The McMillan Sand Filtration Site is a single, unified site that still maintains its original boundaries and site organization. Like the proposed demolition of the underground cells, subdivision of the property into multiple parcels for the purpose of redevelopment is not, in and of itself, compatible with the goal of retaining and enhancing the landmark. However, if the Mayor’s Agent finds the project to be one of special merit, the subdivision would be necessary to execute that project, and the Board should advise the Mayor’s Agent that through the Board’s review process the master plan and the proposed site organization as reflected by the subdivision parcels has been developed to “retain significant character-defining features of the landmark sufficient to convey its historic character” and in a manner that will result in “an architecturally cohesive, high-quality and site-specific series of projects that relate to the character of the landmark.”⁵

Recommendation

The HPO recommends that the Board find that the subdivision of the McMillan Sand Filtration Site is incompatible with the character of the landmark but reconfirm to the Mayor’s Agent that the master plan has been developed to mitigate many of the adverse effects of the subdivision in the event that the project is found to be one of special merit.

⁴ The subdivision was approved by the Mayor’s Agent as part of a project of special merit with the finding that the conceptual proposal was exemplary in terms of its architecture and land use planning.

⁵ May 2014 findings of the HPRB. In adopting the HPO report, the Board concluded that the project “retains the most important above-grade topographical, architectural and engineering features, will result in substantial rehabilitation and meaningful incorporation of the sand bins, regulator houses, sand washers and portions of the service court walls; retains two of the below-grade cells for interpretation and reuse, and retains a substantial open space within the new public park at the southern end of the site.”