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

Property Address:	3726 10th Street, NE	X	Agenda
Landmark/District:	Brookland Bowling Alleys		Consent Calendar
Meeting Date:	June 30, 2022	X	Concept Review
H.P.A. Number:	22-328	X	Alteration
		X	New Construction
			Demolition

Brookland Plaza Owner LLC, represented by Urban Investment Partners, architectural historian Jonathan Mellon and KTG Architects, seeks conceptual design review for construction of a five-story retail and residential project incorporating the landmark Brookland Bowling Alleys building at 10th Street and Michigan Avenue NE.

Property Description

The Brookland Bowling Alleys was constructed in 1938-1939 for the Brookland Recreation Center, Inc. to accommodate lanes for duckpin bowling. The building’s designer was William Edward St. Cyr Barrington, an architect who learned drafting in the office of Jules Henri di Sibour. In the mid-1930s, Barrington was known as an interior designer of restaurants, night clubs and hotel dining rooms. Later, he designed mostly single-family homes, plus several apartment buildings, a hotel, warehouses, stores, a gas station, a factory and a dairy.

Late in the Depression, bowling was increasing in popularity as an inexpensive entertainment for a rapidly growing D.C. population. When the Brookland facility opened, there were thirteen other commercial bowling alleys in Washington, plus lanes in clubhouses, universities, government bases, etc. Most are gone, including all of the public lanes themselves, but about a half dozen of the buildings remain from that time, only one other in Northeast (1123 H Street), and not all purpose-built. The sport’s popularity induced the property owners to add a second story and additional lanes to the Brookland facility within a year of its opening, still perceptible as a change in brick color on the exposed side and more pronounced in the set-back second-story façade.

The Brookland Bowling Alleys operated until a major fire in 1950. Barrington was again engaged to restore the building, no longer for bowling but as a wholesale store for electric lighting, parts and appliances. In village-like Brookland, characterized by modest, small-scale residential and commercial buildings, the Art Deco-styled bowling alley is a visual standout, especially as its setting in the Turkey Thicket section is now of mostly nondescript commercial and industrial buildings.

Proposal

The project calls for retention of the landmark building, with removal of a small rear appendage, preservation and rehabilitation of its front façade, and construction of a roof terrace and pool on the roof. With the landmark as the center of the new composition, a five-story building would be built on each side and partially on top of the historic building. The south wing of the new

building, wrapping from 10th Street around to Michigan Avenue, would have a two-story red brick retail base with three floors of residential above punctuated by oriel bays on the upper stories. The north wing would have a one-story red brick base with English basement units below a raised first floor and four additional floors of residential above. A red brick element with piers emulating the historic building would be constructed on the upper floors behind the landmark; the remainder of the upper floors would be clad in fiber cement panels with multi-light windows to replicate those on the landmark.

Evaluation

The removal of the small rear bump out is negligible, and the applicants have confirmed that it is their intent to retain the structure and renovate the portions of the building that will be subsumed into the new construction. However, the floor plans on the first and second floors do not entirely support this intent, as the walls of the new residential units don't align with the existing walls of the landmark, which needs to be rectified. The structural plans for the new construction should also be further developed to show how the historic building will be retained and the interventions for the new construction inserted.

The installation of a deck and pool atop the historic building could be considered as a compatible adaptation that continues the spirit of a building that was originally constructed for recreational use. However, the Board has consistently required that roof deck railings be set back sufficiently from the façade so that they are not visible. This is particularly important for a building such as this which is characterized by its stepped parapet roofline, which should remain visually undisturbed.

The most important preservation issue presented by the project is the compatibility of the new construction with the landmark. Removal of the undistinguished, car-centric shopping center surrounding the bowling alley and replacement with a multi-use residential and retail complex is consistent with Comprehensive Plan goals to revitalize and increase housing opportunities in existing neighborhoods and to maximize development close to Metro stations. While HPO believes a development of the size proposed could coexist comfortably with the landmark, additional design work is necessary to achieve that. The following refinements are recommended for further study:

- 1) The residential base of the building on the north wing of the building has a human scale that is comfortable and consistent with the scale of the landmark. By contrast, the scale of the two-story retail portion of the building on the south wing is too monumental adjacent to the landmark and should be reduced. Reducing the height of the base on the north wing could also help solve the awkward relationship presented by the oriel bays overlapping the base with no apparent coordination between the spacing of those projections with the spacing of the retail bays.
- 2) While it is not necessary to replicate the colors of the landmark building in the new construction, the proposed dark red brick provides a particularly sharp contrast. This is exacerbated by the length of the wings and the use of brick immediately behind and above the historic building, and the result makes the former bowling alley appear isolated rather than integrated into the new composition. An alternative palette of colors should be studied to alleviate this.

- 3) Breaking the new construction into smaller component parts with more differentiation between the wings could improve the relationship between the small historic building and the much larger new building. A hyphen element with a greater percentage of glass for the upper floors behind the historic building might also help break the horizontality of the composition and result in a more neutral backdrop.

Recommendation

HPO recommends that the Board find the general height and mass to be potentially compatible with the landmark but that further clarification on the extent of demolition and integration of the existing building into the new floor plans and additional design work on the new construction are needed. The project should be further developed and return to the Board for further review when ready.

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