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

Property Address:	4820-4874 Massachusetts Avenue and 4301 49th Street, NW	X	Agenda Consent Calendar
Landmark/District:	Square 1500 (part of Spring Valley Shopping Center)		
Meeting Date:	October 22, 2015	X	Concept Review Alteration
H.P.A. Number:	15-252	X	New Construction Demolition
Staff Reviewer:	Steve Callcott	X	Subdivision

The applicant, Washington Real Estate Investment Trust, with plans prepared by Bonstra/Haresign Architects, seeks on-going conceptual review for construction of a two-story retail and office building on Square 1500, a landmarked complex of retail buildings.

Property Description

Square 1500 contains a collection of commercial buildings developed by the W.C. & A.N. Miller Company between 1939 and 1951 to provide services to the company's surrounding residential developments. The five red brick buildings were designed in a Williamsburg-inspired Colonial Revival style, clustered to form a village-like neighborhood center.

Previous Reviews

At its April meeting, the HRPB found the general concept for a two-story building in this location to be compatible with the character of the landmark, but that the proposal should be revised to more closely relate to the detailing and scale of the complex. The Board asked that the connection to 4860 Massachusetts (the adjacent one story bank building) be restudied to provide a separation or otherwise ease the transition between them.

In July, the Board found the revised height, mass and design revisions to be improved and compatible with the landmark. While the abutting of the new construction directly against the adjacent building was not stated as a specific issue, the connection and adjacency as designed were found not to comply with the Board's comments to simplify the design, and was found in need of further study and revision. The Board confirmed that the building should have its primary orientation to Massachusetts Avenue and found the inset of the façade from the Massachusetts building line to be incompatible. The Board took no action on the subdivision, and encouraged the applicants to continue having a dialogue with the community.

Revised Proposals

Two proposals have been submitted. Scheme 1 is similar to the previous presentation in providing a one-story connection to the bank building, but has been revised to pull the elevator fully into the two-story mass of the building (previously it projected partially into the one-story connecting element). The one-story connector has been pulled back several additional feet and in-ground landscaping would be provided in front of it. Other changes include flattening the

projecting pavilion at the east end of the Massachusetts Avenue elevation (it projected 10 feet previously and now projects approximately 16”), and the face of the building has been brought slightly forward (it previously was set 10’ back from the building line and is now set back 8’). On the rear elevation, the painted sign has been eliminated and the single solid doors converted to double doors with frosted glass. The paseo and its elevation remain unchanged.

Scheme 2 provides a 14’ wide separation between the new building and the bank with a pedestrian walkway and landscaping. The entrance to the second floor would open to the walk (rather than to Massachusetts Avenue) and the stair would project into the gap and is expressed as a contemporary glass enclosure. A metal trellis with hanging lights would be provided overhead. The Massachusetts Avenue elevation would be set back 6’8” from the building line, and the façade includes a slight projection at the west end to balance the gabled projection adjacent to the paseo. The same changes to the rear elevation shown in Scheme 1 are provided in Scheme 2.

As before, the application seeks conceptual approval of a lot combination subdivision to combine the site’s three lots into one. Currently, 4820 Massachusetts Avenue (Crate and Barrel) occupies one lot, 4301 49th Street occupies a second lot, and 4860 Massachusetts Avenue (the bank), 4866 (the gas station) and 4872-74 (Le Pain Quotidien) collectively occupy a third lot. The subdivision would combine these three lots together.

Evaluation

Scheme 1 addresses the direction of the Board to simplify the design of the new building as it abuts the bank by subsuming the elevator wholly within the mass of the new construction. The resulting one-story connection, with an increased set back and landscaping in front, provides a more elegant and compatible transition between the two buildings. Reducing the projection of the gabled corner element also improves the transition between the terrace in front of the new building and the paseo.

Scheme 2 provides an alternative solution with a gap between the buildings; the width of the gap is sufficient to ensure that it won’t be a mean space, it would be provided with some softening landscaping, and it hasn’t resulted in a demonstrable reduction in the width of the paseo (the Board previously asked that the paseo be widened to its existing dimension). This scheme provides an improvement in the composition of the Massachusetts Avenue elevation with a balancing projection (without a gable) at the east end adjacent to the new gap, however, this compositional change could also be incorporated into Scheme 1.

Both proposals retain a setback from the building line that was questioned in the previous review, and which is necessary in order to provide at-grade accessible entrances to the new construction on this sloping site. The minor reductions in the setback and the flattening of the corner projection in both schemes provides for a more fluid connection between the entrance terrace and paseo.

The schemes are quite similar and neither is incompatible with the character of the landmark. If the Board finds Scheme 1 to be the best approach, it is recommended that it incorporate the projection at the east end of the Massachusetts Avenue elevation shown in Scheme 2. If the

Board finds Scheme 2 to be preferable, it is recommended that design work continue on simplifying the trellis and lighting elements within the gap.

The proposed subdivision will not change the boundaries of the landmark, and will unite three lots that have historically been associated with each and which are designated as a single landmark. The subdivision will have no effect on the property's designation or the Board's review authority.

Recommendation

The HPO recommends that the Board determine which of the two proposals is most compatible with the character of the landmark, that it find the lot combination subdivision to be consistent with the preservation act, and that final design approval be delegated to staff.