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

Property Address:	4866 Massachusetts Avenue, NW	X	Agenda
Landmark/District:	Square 1500 (part of Spring Valley Shopping Center)		Consent Calendar
Meeting Dates:	October 22, 2015	X	Concept Review
H.P.A. Number:	15-283	X	Alteration
Staff Reviewer:	Steve Callcott		New Construction
			Demolition
			Subdivision

The applicant, prospective tenant Millie's Restaurant, returns for on-going conceptual design review for additions and site alterations to a 1936 gas station that is part of Square 1500, a landmarked complex of retail buildings. Plans have been prepared by Katinas Bruckwick Architects.

When previously presented in April, the Board did not approve the proposed addition and agreed with the following principles outlined in the HPO report:

- 1) The addition should not engage or intersect with the roof of the building or the canopy; it should tie in at the eave line of the gas station and not engage or enclose the free-standing canopy.
- 2) The addition should not enclose or obscure the building's front door, which should remain visible from the street.
- 3) The front terrace and planting areas should evoke the original circulation through the site by maintaining a wider opening at each end of the site, retaining the curved planted area adjacent to the mechanical yard, and using differentiated paving to denote the former circular drive.
- 4) Modifications to the planting area separating the terrace from the sidewalk should be developed as less of an architectural barrier to what was originally an open site. The existing sloped berm with plantings would provide a good model.
- 5) The seating area at the rear should be eliminated and this area retained as landscaped green space, as is the typical condition for buildings in this complex facing the parking area

Property Description

The gas station is part of a cluster of one- and two-story brick Colonial Revival commercial buildings commonly referred to in conjunction with a separate landmark across the street, the Massachusetts Avenue Parking Shops, as the Spring Valley Shopping Center. The subject building and the one-story commercial building to the south were the first structures erected on the square, built in 1936 by the W.C. and A.N. Miller Company to provide neighborhood retail services to their adjacent Spring Valley and Wesley Heights residential developments.

The building's original form consisted of a simple gabled form clad in brick and topped with terra cotta shingles. The façade features three garage door entrances and a pedestrian entrance with a

colonial door surround flanked by small sash windows. A large free-standing canopy sheltering the original gas pumps is centered on the building's front door.

In the early 1990s, additions were constructed on the front, side, and rear of the building for conversion to a restaurant. The metal and glass front addition sought to evoke the three garage door bays while maintaining the original doors inside, the side addition took the form of an angled wing to the main block of the building and was clad in matching brick, and the rear addition was differentiated in materials and massing that allowed the original block of the building to remain legible. While the front addition was initially found to be incompatible by the Board, it was approved by the Mayor's Agent as necessary for the economic viability of the restaurant; the Mayor's Agent cited the removable nature of the front enclosure which would retain the original façade and allow visibility of it through the addition.

Revised Proposal

The proposed front addition has been pulled away from the entrance and the first garage door bay, and pulled down in height to the eave line; it would no longer intersect the building's roof or the free-standing canopy. The addition would project approximately 30 feet from the front elevation (18 feet back from the front property line) and be approximately 27' wide. The glazing would be evocative of garage doors that would open; the metal enframing would be white to match the color of the building's wood trim and the doors are shown as black or dark gray. The addition would abut the bank building next door, but would leave that building's brick side wall exposed inside. It would be capped by a skylight.

A small shed roofed addition is proposed at the rear, projecting off the 1990s rear addition, in order to relocate bathrooms. This addition would be clad in stucco to match the other rear additions.

The front court would be converted to a flat terrace for outdoor seating, and a paving pattern introduced to evoke the circular driveway albeit in a smaller footprint and pulled in away from the projecting front addition. The raised planter previously proposed has been eliminated in favor of a planted berm backed by a retaining wall. Landscaping would be retained to screen the mechanical area in the front and the seating area in the rear has been eliminated and the landscape retained.

Evaluation and Recommendation

The rear addition, located within the fence-enclosed delivery and trash storage area, is compatible in size, roofline, location, and finishes and would not materially impact the massing or character of the building.

The revised front addition is improved for no longer engaging the canopy or the building's roof, and eliminating the addition in front of the entrance and one of the original garage door bays will allow more of the façade to be visible. [An earlier iteration shared with HPO and the ANC projected out 40' and resulted in the addition being roughly the same size as the original building; in response to concerns that this addition was simply too big, the present plan has been developed pulling the addition back to the outside edge of the canopy.] The current plan still results in a sizable addition but is smaller than the building to which it is attached, allows the canopy (which is taller) to remain the predominant element of the courtyard, and maintains more open sight-lines of the front of the building. The skylight has also been redesigned to be set low in the roof so that it isn't seen from street view or compete with the profile or roofline of the canopy or the building.

New mechanical equipment, if needed, should be provided in the fenced mechanical yards at the front or rear and not on the roof of the addition where, given the low sight lines, it would be quite visible.

The elimination of the raised planter at the edge of the terrace results in a more naturalistic landscape similar to the existing planting area. Additional landscape in public space in front of the addition would provide a continuous planted edge for the property similar to that in front of the buildings to the west. As the plan continues to be developed, the pedestrian openings should be widened and the paving materials specified so as to reinforce the idea that the property was originally accessed by automobiles. The material of the retaining wall should also be developed to be compatible with materials found on the site.

Designing a compatible addition for the front elevation of a building is always challenging, and is made all the more difficult by this building's modest size, unassuming character, and small scale. However, some compromise for the purpose of ensuring viable reuse was previously accepted by the Mayor's Agent, and could similarly be accepted by the Board for this revised proposal. The plans maintain the standards established by the Mayor's Agent in that the addition could be removed without damage to the abutting buildings (it would have a minimal roof connection with flashing to the bank building and gas station eave line) and would allow visibility of the original elevation through the addition. While it projects further out than the existing structure, it is removed from a portion of the original façade that is currently enclosed.

As the project continues to be developed, the materials, detailing and the scale and colors of elements should continue to be studied to ensure a compatible relationship. The original building is characterized by the use of red brick, terra cotta roof tiles, white painted wood trim, and the small scale of its' glazing and trim elements. The rear additions are clad in a yellow-taupe stucco, and have metal roofs and clear anodized aluminum windows and doors; the rear garage door inserts have large square panes that are larger than would have been found on historic garage doors but are of the same general proportions. The existing front addition is framed in black metal with relatively clear glass.

The proposed front addition is illustrated with white (presumably metal) framing that is intended to relate to the white trim of the original building, and with dark framed (presumably metal) garage doors with vertical panes. As these doors will be located immediately adjacent to the one original garage door that would be exposed, coordinating the scale and size of the glass panes and ensuring a compatibility of color and material between them could improve the compatibility of the addition.

Recommendation

The HPO recommends that the Board approve the concept as compatible with the character of the landmark, contingent on further development of materials and detailing, and delegate final approval to staff.