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

Property Address:	2119 Champlain Street, NW	Agenda
Landmark/District:	Pepco Substation #25	X Consent Calendar
		X Permit Review
Meeting Date:	June 22, 2023	X Alteration
H.P.A. Number:	23-318 (continuation of 18-035)	New Construction
		Demolition

The Potomac Electric Power Company (PEPCO) seeks permit review for partial demolition and an addition to the landmark Substation No. 25 as part of a comprehensive modernization of the substation that was reviewed by the Board in February 2018. The project remains largely the same with some minor refinements that don't impact the character of the proposal and some supplemental information provided in response to the Board's comments.

Property Description

Substation No. 25 is a half-acre energy distribution site located at the corner of Champlain Street and Old Morgan School Place, NW. In addition to substantial outdoor equipment, the site contains a 2-story substation building located on the northwest corner of the property facing Champlain Street. The building was constructed in 1930, designed by Washington architect Arthur B. Heaton in the Art Deco style. The west and south elevations are clad in brick with a granite foundation and limestone accents; the south elevation has a series of six distinctive buttresses. The east elevation is constructed of red brick laid in American bond pattern; the north elevation is parged.

Proposal

In 2018, the Board determined that the project would result in substantial demolition with the understanding that it would need to be referred to the Mayor's Agent; the applicants will be arguing that the project constitutes one of special merit. The Board found the proposed new construction to be compatible in character and materials but asked that the green wall adjacent to the side of the landmark continue to be studied, and that a preservation plan for the façade be developed in consultation with HPO.

As before, the project calls for retention of the building's front elevation, approximately one-third of the south elevation, and two of the six buttresses for incorporation into an expanded building that would house a reconstructed power plant. Due to the increased size and configuration of the new equipment, the remaining portion of the south wall, the north wall and the rear wall would need to be removed and replaced. The reconstructed north wall would be of brick sympathetic in color to the landmark, be broken in plane by shallow piers, and continue the lines of the landmark's base and top with precast stone. As requested, the green wall (a necessary element to meet the project's Green Area Ratio requirements) and a preservation plan for the retained building elements have been further developed.

Evaluation

The project was developed in consultation with Pepco's engineering teams and the extent of demolition has been reduced to the greatest extent possible given the program. Nevertheless, it will

result in substantial demolition of the 1930 building and is therefore not consistent with the purposes of the preservation act.¹

The concept design for the expanded facility has been developed to relate to the character of the existing building to present a single, unified architectural character to the complex. The preservation plan will ensure that the retained elements of the landmark will be treated according to appropriate preservation standards.

Recommendation

HPO recommends that the Board find the proposal will result in substantial demolition of the 1930 building required review by the Mayor’s Agent, and that the concept design for the replacement building is compatible with the character of the landmark.

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¹ Work considered demolition under the Act shall include, but is not limited to, any of the following, as determined by the Mayor’s Agent: the removal or destruction of any façade; the removal or destruction of all or a substantial portion of the structural components of the building, such a structural walls, floor assemblies, and roofs; the removal or destruction of all or a substantial portion of the roof along with all or substantially all of one or more exterior walls; the removal or destruction of all or substantially all of an entire wing or appendage of the building, such as a rear ell, unless the wing lacks physical or historic integrity, or is not a character-defining feature; the removal or destruction of a substantial portion that includes character-defining features of the building or structure.