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

Landmark/District: **Lumber Shed (Building 173) Washington Navy Yard Historic District**
Address: **131 Tingey Street, SE** () Agenda
Meeting Date: **January 26, 2012** (x) Consent Calendar
Case Number: **12-198** (x) Alteration
Staff Reviewer: **Andrew Lewis** () Demolition
(x) Conceptual Design

The development company known as Forest City Washington, LLC (Forest City) proposes to rehabilitate the historic Lumber Shed (Building 173) and to completely enclose the building in glass to facilitate adaptive use as office and future retail space.

Building Description

The industrial, two-story Lumber Shed was constructed by the United States Navy circa 1918 to provide a place to store and dry lumber. The building is made of cast-in-place concrete and consists of two, north/south oriented blocks with gabled roofs that feature monitors with metal louvers on all sides. A wooden truss roof connected the two main blocks in 1953 to form one large building. As can be seen in the photograph below, the building is characterized by its prominent roof forms, simple columns, two-story open construction, the bracketed overhang of the second floor and the even more prominent eaves. The Lumber Shed contributes to the Washington Navy Yard Historic District and is also subject to a Programmatic Agreement that was executed pursuant to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act in response to portions of the historic district being transferred from the Federal government to Forest City for redevelopment.



Rehabilitation and Alteration

Forest City originally intended to pursue historic preservation tax credits for rehabilitation of the Lumber Shed. Consultations with the NPS and the SHPO regarding the appropriate treatments for the building were initiated as early as 2008. Although a general consensus was reached about most of the interior alterations and the overall rehabilitation scheme, the appropriate position for the proposed glass curtain wall remained a point of contention.

The NPS and HPO recommended that the glazing be located flush with the outermost surface of the columns so that the historic character of the building could continue to be “read” from the exterior. Forest City maintained the glazing should be located beyond the overhang of the second floor to maximize the amount of developable interior space. Numerous design alternatives were evaluated in an attempt to identify an appropriate solution but none met the *Secretary of the Interior Standards for Rehabilitation* so Forest City elected to forego tax credits and propose a design that placed the glass curtain wall beyond the overhang of the second floor and caused the building to appear more like a “Miesian” glass box than a historic industrial building.

Evaluation

The SHPO continued to consult with the developer to identify an approach that would allow the historic structure to be “read” beyond the proposed glass enclosure, but the project architects eventually argued that any exposed concrete surface would act as a “cold bridge” and allow cold temperatures to leach into the building. To counter this situation, thick insulation would have to encase the historic fabric, thus obscuring it from view.

Given this limitation, it was decided that the most appropriate solution would be to “simulate” the original building form by applying new materials onto the glass curtain wall. The current design does so by incorporating a new metal roof edge and new metal louvers at the corresponding locations of the historic roof line and the second floor slab. Although this approach still fails to meet the *Secretary of the Interior Standards for Rehabilitation*, it suggests the building’s original form, avoids the appearance of a “glass box,” protects the building from exposure, minimizes damage to historic fabric and remains a fully reversible treatment. Furthermore, it is consistent with the DC Historic Landmark and Historic District Protection Act’s stated purpose of encouraging the adaptation of historic properties in historic districts for current use.

Finally, Forest City has agreed to work with the SHPO to develop and incorporate interpretive signage for the site that will feature historic photographs of the Lumber Shed and narrative information about the history of the structure.

Recommendation

Staff recommends that the Board approve of the conceptual design and delegate the development of interpretive signage and any remaining design review to the staff.