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

Property Address:	1775 Massachusetts Avenue NW	X	Agenda
Landmark/District:	Massachusetts Avenue		Consent Calendar
Meeting Date:	January 25th, 2018	X	Concept Review
H.P.A. Number:	18-141	X	Alteration
			New Construction
			Demolition
			Subdivision

The Brookings Institution, at 1775 Massachusetts Avenue NW, requests conceptual design review for construction of a projecting entry vestibule and front yard public space landscape alterations.

Property History and Description

1775 Massachusetts Avenue is an eight-story, limestone clad office building that consists of a central main block with recessed side wings. The central block is 10 bay openings wide with paired windows at each opening; the wings are each four bay openings wide with paired windows. The main block rests on a colonnade with eight openings that have been enclosed with glazing. The colonnade is topped by a metal and glass canopy that was added in the 1990s.

Massachusetts Avenue is a linear historic district composed of Victorian and Beaux-Arts mansions, early- and mid-20th century apartment buildings, and mid- to late-20th century institutional buildings. Despite the range of building types and eras of construction, the district is remarkably cohesive in the civic grandeur of its buildings.

1775 was constructed in 1959, just after the period of significance for the historic district (1880-1957). However, it has many of the same design qualities that are important in defining the character of the district's historic buildings, including its classically symmetrical composition, prominent centered entrance, and high-quality limestone cladding.

Proposal

The project proposes adding an exterior vestibule centrally located at the existing colonnade. The glass and steel vestibule would project eight feet from the façade; the height would align with the top of the colonnade bay openings. The vestibule will have centered doors at the center front of the vestibule, as well as on each side.

Also proposed is landscaping work that would reduce the footprint of the circular drive and expand pedestrian and green areas immediately in front of the building. The existing security bollards would be replaced with new bollard features that would double as outdoor bench seating for visitors and staff.

Evaluation

Alterations for non-contributing buildings are principally evaluated for their effect on the general character of the historic district. The 1700 block of Massachusetts Avenue consists of large

institutional and apartment buildings that are set back from Massachusetts Avenue with a generous public space front yard, many of which feature a circular driveway. Many of the properties have a canopy of some sort to emphasize the primary entrance. Projecting vestibules are not common; only one such vestibule exists at the Boston House Apartments (1711 Massachusetts Avenue), which spans the width of a single bay opening, is incidental to the façade, and is not as readily visible from the street.

The prominence and industrial muscularity of the framing elements of the proposed vestibule result in a substantial mass on the front of the building. Rather than relating to each other, the vestibule and the canopy together appear cramped, disproportionate and obscure rather than enhance the sense of entry to the building. Both from a design and functional perspective, the canopy and vestibule may simply be mutually exclusive; either the entrance is covered by a canopy or it is served by a vestibule, rather than containing both.

The ideal scenario would be for the vestibule functions to be absorbed into the existing lobby of the building rather than projecting out from the face of the building. However, if this isn't feasible, consideration should be given to simplifying the design of the vestibule – reducing it to a lighter weight, cleaner lined structure -- and eliminating the redundant canopy.

The proposed landscape alterations will maintain the formal symmetry of the landscape's composition and primary focus on the building's centered entrance. As the design continues to be developed, any further reduction of paving and introduction of in-ground landscape would further enhance the compatibility of the public space.

Recommendation

The HPO recommends that the Review Board find the concept for an exterior vestibule be found compatible on the condition that the existing canopy be removed, and that reduction in its size and simplification in design be further evaluated, with final approval delegated to staff.

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