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

Property Address:	2651 16th Street NW	Agenda
Landmark/District:	Meridian Hill Historic District	X Consent Calendar
Meeting Date:	March 23, 2017	X Concept Review
H.P.A. Number:	17-178	Alteration
Staff Reviewer:	Kim Williams	X New Construction
		Demolition

Property owner Akelius with the architecture firm, Soto, seeks conceptual design review for the renovation of and rooftop addition to the Century Apartment building at 2651 16th Street NW in the Meridian Hill Historic District. The project calls for the complete renovation of the interior of the building, the replacement of non-historic windows, the construction of a roof deck and addition, and alterations to the front drive to provide an accessible route and drop-off.

Property Description

The Century Apartments, built in 1936, is an eight-story buff brick apartment building designed by local architect Louis T. Rouleau. The building is proto-Modern in style with some Art Deco detailing including the reeded stone frieze in the entry surround, and the geometric incised detailing in the stone window spandrels. The narrow window bays in the central vertical bay of the building also accentuate the building's vertical massing, a common treatment in Art Deco design. The building historically had avant-garde corner casement windows that were touted at the time of the building's opening in 1937. The Century was constructed following the Depression at a time when the nature of development on Meridian Hill was changing from large mansions and purpose-built embassy buildings to multi-story apartment buildings. The Century Apartments was constructed within the historic district's Period of Significance and contributes to its architectural character and to the stylistic eclecticism of the apartment buildings of Meridian Hill.

Proposed Project

Site: The project calls for a slightly altered semi-circular drive on 16th Street largely to accommodate a new accessible sloped entry from Fuller Street to the front entry. The semi-circular drive will similarly be regraded for accessibility and will have new permeable pavers and a planted area in front at-grade with the sidewalk, eliminating the current steps and leadwalk to the front entry.

Renovation: The proposed renovation is largely focused on the building's interior, but it also includes the replacement of the building's windows and the addition of a canopy to the front entryway. The current windows are relatively recent 1/1 replacements and are being proposed for new aluminum 1/1 windows in the main block of the building and aluminum casement windows in the corner windows. The historic bronze door frame will be retained and refinished

and a new canopy built above it. The canopy will replace an existing awning and will be placed above the door's transom and below the reeded frieze in the stone surround.

Roof Deck: The project proposes a roof deck, penthouse, and mechanical enclosure towards the 16th Street side of the roof, and a one-story addition, private deck area and mechanical enclosure at the rear of the roof. The roof deck is set back from the façade up to the existing elevator overrun. The front penthouse will be built up against, behind and slightly lower in height than the overrun. The one-story rear penthouse addition will abut the existing stair tower to the east, and expand it slightly to the south. Together the front and rear penthouse structures will be I-shaped in plan set within the I-shaped footprint of the building's roof. The new roof structure will be constructed of buff brick to match the existing building and will be either a thin brick-panelized system, or standard mortar installation. The penthouse addition will have a flat roof that will be lower than the existing elevator overrun.

Evaluation

HPO has been working closely with the applicant for several months as the plans have been developed. As proposed, the renovation project will enhance the Century apartment building largely by returning it to its historic appearance through the re-introduction of new casement windows in the building's corners. While the canopy proposed for the front door is a new element to be introduced to the façade, it is stylistically in character with the Art Deco detailing of the building. Its location above the transom and below the stone surround fully exposes the stone reeding that is currently hidden under the present awning. Furthermore, canopies are a common element in the historic district, making it a seamless element to the streetscape. The proposed site work will make the building fully accessible with only minor and entirely compatible changes to the existing conditions.

In terms of the roof addition, the Meridian Hill Design Guidelines state:

Additions to apartment building should respect the original form, character and façade composition of the building. Rooftop additions on flat-roofed apartment buildings may be appropriate if set back from the façade and where they do not compromise or compete with decorative roof elements.

The roof top addition is set back from the façade, is only minimally visible from the north and south on 16th Street, and is architecturally compatible with the building. Its I-shaped footprint, flat roof and buff brick cladding are all consistent with the apartment building's massing and materials.

Recommendation

Staff recommends that the Board approve the project in concept and delegate to staff final approval of the windows, door canopy, materials and other details.