

---

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

---

Landmark/District:	<b>Plan of the City of Washington (L’Enfant Plan)</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Agenda
Address:	<b>Potomac Avenue, SE</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Consent Calendar
Meeting Date:	<b>December 19, 2019</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> New Construction
H.P.A Number:	<b>20-092</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Alteration
S.O. Number:	<b>S.O. 19-46967</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Demolition
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Street Closing

---

The Office of the Surveyor has forwarded to the DC Historic Preservation Office (HPO) an application by the District of Columbia Water and Sewer Authority (DC Water) to close a portion of Potomac Avenue, SE, located east of First Street, SE and south of Reservation 248 along the bulkhead of the Anacostia River. Section 7-422(4) of the DC Code requires that the Mayor refer to the Historic Preservation Review Board (Board) any application “to close any street located on the L’Enfant Street Plan.” HPO is forwarding this application to the Board for the reasons outlined in this report.

**The Plan of the City of Washington (L’Enfant Plan)**

According to the DC Inventory of Historic Sites, the Plan of the City of Washington (L’Enfant Plan) is “... the sole American example of a comprehensive Baroque city plan with a coordinated system of radiating avenues, parks, and vistas overlaid upon an orthogonal grid of streets.” The Inventory further describes the L’Enfant Plan as the “masterpiece” of architect/engineer Pierre Charles L’Enfant, but also acknowledges the contributions made by 19<sup>th</sup> century public works and building regulations and the McMillan Commission of 1901. This recognition helps to establish that what contributes to the significance of the L’Enfant Plan is not necessarily what was depicted on the original map(s), but also compatible and significant developments that occurred over time.

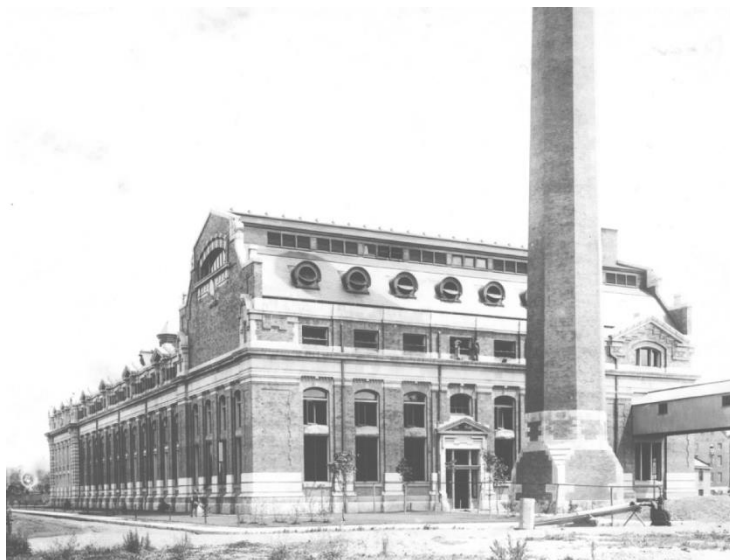
**Proposal**

The portion of the avenue to be closed is a “paper street” that has never been improved and is not required for transportation purposes. For much of its history, the area has been used for municipal functions related to sewerage pumping and sanitation. Most recently, DC Water constructed its new headquarters on top of an existing, c. 1970 sewerage pumping station within the eastern third of the site and now proposes to transfer the remainder to a private entity that will develop the land in accordance with an approved Planned Unit Development (PUD). A condition of the PUD requires the construction of a one-block segment of a private street that extends the historic Potomac Avenue, SE, right-of-way eastward towards DC Water’s new headquarters and establishes historically appropriate building setbacks. The details of the street extension were developed in consultation with HPO and they correct for the southerly shift in the Potomac Avenue, SE cartway that occurred when the baseball stadium was constructed (refer to attached site plan).

**Evaluation**

The section of Potomac Avenue, SE (originally Georgia Avenue) proposed for closure is not technically “located on the L’Enfant Street Plan” and was not formally designated as a contributing element in the original L’Enfant Plan National Register Nomination, most likely because much of the would-be-avenue in this area was underwater when the city was laid out. However, L’Enfant view corridors are equally as important as physical streets, and historic [and contemporary] maps suggest that the associated rights-of-

way and view corridors were meant to extend through the site and beyond in each direction. By the time the land had been reclaimed in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century, expansion of the Navy Yard and construction of the Main Sewerage Pumping Station to the east, along with the need for a DC Sanitary Engineering Department property yard resulted in two discontinuous segments of the avenue, one west of 1<sup>st</sup> Street, SE and the other east of 8<sup>th</sup> Street, SE. Nevertheless, the view corridor of the western segment remained important to visually tie the SW and SE quadrants together. At one time this view would have been framed or partially demarcated by the elaborate southern block of the Main Sewerage Pumping Station and the massive smokestack which one stood immediately to the south (refer to image below). For reasons such as these, HPO considers the “uncompleted” portion of the Potomac Avenue, SE right-of-way and its associated view corridor eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places and the DC Inventory of Historic Sites. Furthermore, HPO plans to incorporate these features into the draft National Historic Landmark designation that is currently being updated. Since the PUD requires construction of a private street along the historic right-of-way and establishes historically appropriate building setbacks, the proposed closure will result in a recognition of this hithertofore unappreciated segment of the L’Enfant Plan and facilitate its extension to the present visual terminus at the new DC Water headquarters.



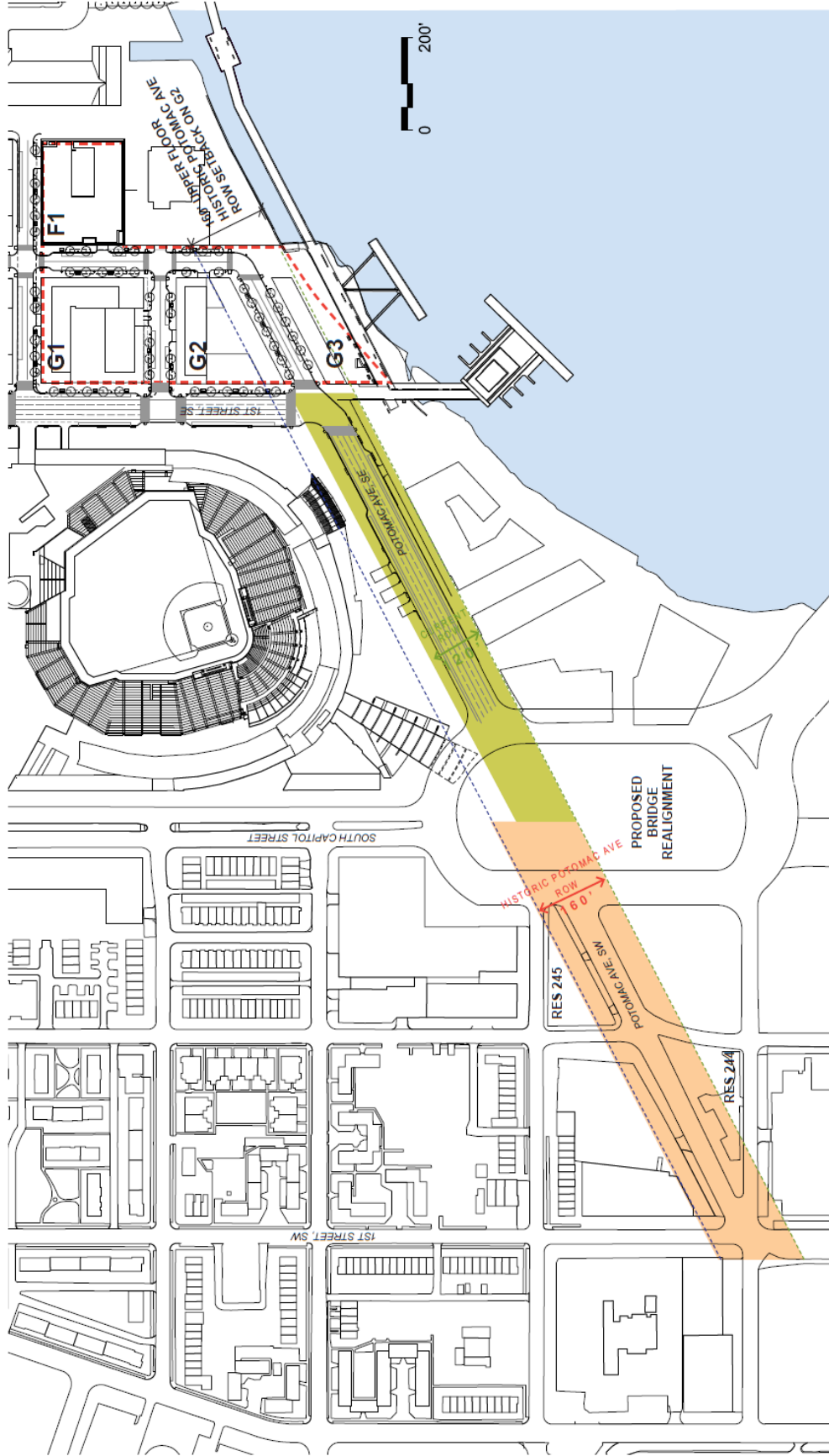
**Recommendation**

*HPO recommends that the Board’s report to the Surveyor state that:*

*The Board supports the proposed closure of the relevant portion of Potomac Avenue, SE since its closure and subsequent development in accordance with conditions of the approved PUD will facilitate recognition and partial extension in accordance with the principles of the L’Enfant Plan.*

Staff Contact: Andrew Lewis

POTOMAC AVE ROW DIAGRAM



FORESTCITY

DC WATER OCCUPIED SITES

B-06

architects | shalom baranes associates

©2013 Shalom Baranes Associates, PC

AUGUST 29, 2013 WASHINGTON, DC