

---

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

---

Property Address:	<b>5425 Western Avenue, NW</b>	<b>X</b> Agenda
Landmark/District:	<b>Lisner-Louise-Dickson-Hurt Home [possible landmark]</b>	Consent Calendar
Meeting Date:	<b>December 2, 2021</b>	<b>X</b> Concept Review
H.P.A. Number:	<b>22-039</b>	<b>X</b> Alteration
		New Construction
		Demolition

---

The Lisner-Louise-Dickson-Hurt Home, represented by Urban Atlantic, Wiencek Associates Architects and EHT Tracerics preservation consultants, seeks conceptual design review for construction of a four-story addition to its building in Friendship Heights. While the property is not currently subject to review under the preservation law, the applicants are considering nominating it for landmark designation. As part of that consideration, they are requesting a courtesy concept review by the Board to see whether the proposed project would meet preservation standards.

### **Property History and Description**

The Lisner Home is located on a 5.4 acre property bound by Western Avenue, Livingston Street, 42<sup>nd</sup> Street, and Military Road, NW. It was built as a privately endowed residential facility for elderly women, originally consisting of a three-story Colonial Revival building designed by the local firm of Faulkner and Kingsbury in 1940. The facility was expanded in 1951, 1957 and 1992, and merged at different times with the Louise Home, the John Dickson Home, and the Henry and Annie Hurt Home, all originally separate institutions.

In an evaluation report prepared by EHT Tracerics, the applicants have concluded that the property is potentially eligible for designation as a landmark under DC Criterion B and National Register Criterion A as the oldest operating privately endowed home for the aged in the District that has remained continuously operational in its original location. It is also potentially significant for its representation of the national trend of the rise and fall of such privately endowed institutions in the twentieth century and for its role in the Civil Rights movement. While the original building and two rear wing additions embody the Colonial Revival style, the applicants do not believe it meets the designation criteria for its physical design and is not eligible for designation under National Register Criterion C (DC Criteria D, E, and F).

### **Proposal**

The project calls for construction of a V-shaped building at the north end of the site, currently occupied by surface parking lots and service functions. While technically an addition to the existing structure with a one-story hallway connection, it would appear as (and is referred to in this report) as a new building. It would have a three-story element fronting the court in front of the 1940 building that would very closely emulate the historic building in massing, materials, pattern of fenestration, rooflines and detailing. The remainder of the new construction, adjacent to the north side wing of the 1940 building and wrapping around to 42<sup>nd</sup> Street, would step up to four floors, expressed as a three-story brick base with the fourth story clad in a dark shingle roofing material punctuated with dormer-like windows. This portion of the building would have

larger windows, used singly and in pairs, and a repeating series of three-story bay projections along the 42<sup>nd</sup> Street and inner courtyard elevations. The parking and loading entrance would be provided on Livingstone Street, and paved terraces would be provided around the perimeter of the building.

### **Evaluation**

The site plan has been developed to reinforce the open court in front of the 1940 building, places the new construction on the service side of the property, and takes advantage of the steep drop in topography on 42<sup>nd</sup> Street to minimize the new building's height. The approximately 30 foot offset between the new building and the 1940 side wing feels more generous in person than the site plan would suggest and would allow the original building to continue to be seen as free-standing, with only a light one-story connection between the existing and new buildings.

The design has been developed with the intent of relating to the historic building, quite literally for the portion facing the court and more freely for the remainder. However, while the three-story element replicates the scale, massing, rooflines and fenestration of the 1940 building, this piece has a very different character from the rest of the proposal and the two architectural vocabularies seem to collide rather than being integrated with one another into a unified design. On the four story portion, the intent of differentiating the top floor to lower its height is laudable, but the result appears dark, top heavy and unconvincing in evoking or relating to the roof forms of the historic building.

To improve the compatibility and architectural cohesion of the design, HPO suggests study of the following:

- 1) Simplify the complicated, multi-part massing of the three-story element to better integrate it into the remainder of the building and also pull it back from the building line on Western Avenue. If the portion that extended forward of the end wing of the 1940 building was roughly the same dimension as that wing, that proportion could simultaneously establish a compatible relationship with the historic building and relate to the larger scale of the new building. Once the massing is finalized, evaluate whether bringing the fenestration pattern of the remainder of the new building through to the front element (and the other two end pavilions) results in a compatible relationship and provides further unity to the new building's design.
- 2) Evaluate treating the fourth floor more as a classical attic story rather than a roof, maintaining the primary cornice at the third story and with brick rather than roof shingles continuing up through the top floor. The top floor could still be differentiated through subtle variation in brick patterning, color, or detailing, but with the goal of integrating it into the body of the building.
- 3) Develop a landscape plan that reduces the extent of surface parking in front of the 1940 building and provides additional landscaping around the base of the new building, with individual terraces set within a landscape rather than a continuous paved terrace.

The project should return to the Board for further review when ready.

*HPO contact: Steve Callcott*