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

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Landmark/District:	<b>Saint Elizabeths Hospital Historic District</b>	(x) Agenda
Address:	<b>2700 block 13<sup>th</sup> Street SE, east side</b>	
Meeting Date:	<b>July 30, 2020</b>	(x) New construction
Case Number:	<b>20-399</b>	(x) Subdivision
		(x) Concept

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The applicant, Ana Baker (Cunningham Quill Architects), architect and agent for the District of Columbia Department of General Services, requests the Board’s review of a concept to construct a five-level, 750-space, precast-concrete parking structure on Parcel 6 on the east side of an extended 13<sup>th</sup> Street, opposite the arena.

The garage would largely serve the arena; it is to replace the surface lot where a new hospital is expected to be constructed.<sup>1</sup> It would be prominently visible from the historic “Maple Quadrangle” and Building 100. The north side of the garage would abut a plaza that is intended to provide public access and views to the treed ravine behind.

A subdivision is implied in the application, because the present parcel is an assessment and taxation lot, and the garage will occupy only part of the parcel, the rest of which is intended to be occupied by other buildings/uses.

The campus master plan design guidelines address parking structures in this way: “Generally, below grade structured parking is the preferred treatment for any new off-street parking associated with development. Above ground parking structures should be wrapped with buildings so that streets are framed with active uses and garaged are screened.”<sup>2</sup>

This principle was codified in the zoning regulations: “Parking spaces within an above-grade structure along 13th Street, S.E., and Sycamore Drive, S.E. shall be lined with preferred uses [i.e., arts, design and creation; eating and drinking establishments; retail; general service; or financial service]... *on the ground floor* [emphasis added] to a depth of thirty feet (30 ft.) minimum.”

The application does indicate that a future wrapper is contemplated, and a space is left for it, but no design has yet been developed for it. The Zoning Administrator has done a cursory review of the plans for the garage and determined that as shown, with a corresponding statement to wrap it at some later date plus drawings indicating as much, is sufficient to permit the garage.

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<sup>1</sup> No plans for a hospital have yet been submitted to the Board or staff.

<sup>2</sup> Regarding this 13<sup>th</sup> Street “sector”, the master plan emphasizes an active and safe street, a variety of uses, and minimizing “negative visual impacts on any and all historic areas west of this sector.”

The Historic Preservation Review Board is always concerned with the volume and massing of new buildings, but much of its review is the evaluation of exterior proportions, elements and materials. In this instance, the Board is asked for approval of a concept for the core of a building whose exterior is to be proposed at a future time.

There are efficiencies in constructing the wrapper simultaneously with the garage, and likely disincentives to building other uses against an operating garage at a later date. For these reasons, it would be preferable to have a more concrete commitment as to the construction of a wrapper in the near term.

Regarding the tension between the zoning regulations' requirement for a one-story-minimum wrapper and the design guidelines' performance standard to screen the garages, a taller wrapping building would be much more likely compatible and successful in screening the building. While a single-story building would effectively screen two stories of the garage, it would still leave most of the building revealed. It is encouraged that a taller wrapper building be explored at the appropriate time.

### **Recommendation**

If the Board is to approve the concept for a garage without a wrapper, the design should be revised as follows:

- 1) The exterior walls should be clad in red brick to relate to the predominant historic material on the campus;*
- 2) A landscape plan should be developed with sufficiently abundant plantings where the wrapper should be to provide screening of at least the lower portion of the structure;*
- 3) The huge signs depicted in the perspectives, which are likely not code-compliant and draw more attention to the structure, should be eliminated;*
- 4) The installation of a vertical living green wall system that would provide screening and preclude large exterior signage should be explored.*