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

Landmark/District: **Saint Elizabeths Hospital Historic District** (x) Agenda
Address: **2700 Martin Luther King Jr. Avenue SE**

Meeting Date: **January 30, 2020** (x) New construction
Case Number: **20-044** (x) Revised concept

The applicant, Carl Skooglund (Wiencek + Associates), architect and agent for the property owner, the government of the District of Columbia, requests the Board’s continued review of a concept to construct a building as a permanent replacement for the “801 East” shelter for single and homeless men. It is a design-build project, with Coakley-Williams Construction and Blue Skye Construction to erect the facility.

The approximately 86,000-square-foot building would be constructed behind the brick stable near the north end of the East Campus. It would consist mainly of dormitories, including an overnight shelter, transitional quarters for employed men, and beds for seniors and for those needing medical attention. It would also accommodate a day center and health clinic for supportive services. Because of the several uses, the facility would be constructed as three connected pavilions. The tallest pavilion would be five stories, largely because of a practical limitation on the number of beds that can be supervised per floor.

The facility would be reached by a new driveway branching off the access road to the Unified Call Center (UCC) to minimize the curb cuts on the avenue.

Revisions

At the December 5 hearing, the Board reviewed the initial concept drawings. The Board requested the project return with revisions, recommending:

- 1) more compatible exterior materials in smaller modules, perhaps responding to the campus’s predominant red brick, the barn’s board-and-batten siding, and the stable’s upper-story shingles;
- 2) that the design and extent of the external HVAC equipment be improved upon;
- 3) that the wings be parallel to and perpendicular to Martin Luther King Jr. Avenue;
- 4) that the approach to the building be more pedestrian-oriented;
- 5) that the paving be minimized and tight to the buildings, partly by orienting the driveway loop and parking perpendicular to the drive leading from the avenue;
- 6) that the canopy not be a fourth building mass, but be integrated better into the buildings;
- 7) that the buildings be massed more toward the north end of the site with Wing C pulled farther from the stable;
- 8) that the wings perhaps step down the ravine slope, rather than being supported over it;
- 9) that consideration be given to combining the bioretention swales, perhaps behind the building;
- and
- 10) that consideration be given to putting the generator behind the building; and

11) that the applicant address the comments of the Commission of Fine Arts and Advisory Council on Historic Preservation.

As a government project, this is being reviewed simultaneously by the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts. We understand that additional revisions are underway based on this month's CFA review. The staff of the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation will also have the opportunity to comment further, in accordance with the 1987 deed transferring the property from the federal to the local government.

More context photographs have been submitted.

The building's wings are now perpendicular, and the building would stand parallel to Martin Luther King Jr. Avenue. The foremost Wing C is kept several feet back from the lot's western boundary, but not splaying the wings, as previously, swings Wing C a bit closer to the stable. The entire building cannot be shifted much northward, because of the space needed for loading at that end. The east end of Wing B is still supported by piers over the falling slope, as stepping the building affect the layouts of the residential floors. The canopy remains largely independent, to connect the wings on the exterior and shelter queuing residents. It also provides a civic character and a sense of presence and arrival that ties the wings together visually.

The primary exterior wall material is brick, with the base in a red brick to tie the wings together and relate to the campus buildings. The exterior mechanical has been reduced in volume. The vent covers remain, but they are within comparatively shallow projections with metal surrounds, becoming almost a decorative device among the windows. It may become a practical issue to offer a ledge for birds, but the revision is an improvement to the project's appearance. Polymer windows are still proposed. The applicant should supply materials samples and a window sample to the Board at its hearing.

The driveway has been rearranged, not to become the L shape the Board suggested, but reducing the street paving at the building with a loop—connected by a very broad walk that would facilitate emergency access and arrivals of the resident. The parking has been pulled back to the access lane paralleling the UCC's driveway.

The landscape has developed in a positive direction and should be developed further. The initial placeholder of shrubs lining the driveway has largely been replaced. There is a history of tree allées along lanes at Saint Elizabeths, but this idea has been appropriately limited to the initial leg of the driveway. Some planted buffer has been introduced around the parking, but more is called for—on both sides—and that can be used to transition to the appropriately naturalistic “meadow” between the new building and the barn. As requested by the Advisory Council staff, there is planting between the stable and Wing C, but it does not take the form of an artificial row of trees or shrubs, but is clumped. One bioretention swale has been placed within the driveway loop, another behind the building, where it should be blended into the naturalistic landscape of the stream valley. The generator has not been placed behind the building, but it is buffered. The storage shed or crib also has to be developed, but placing such an accessory building next to a barn seems reasonable (the Commission of Fine Arts staff has recommended incorporating it into the new building).

Subdivision

The project site is within Assessment and Taxation Lot 830, which is shared by the present men's shelter and a temporary parking for the arena. It is anticipated that the proposed hospital will ultimately occupy most of this lot. The Board has no subdivision application before it at this time, but the new shelter (and the hospital) will presumably need its own lot of record before a permit may be issued. The regulations (10C DCMR 320.3(c)) delegate to staff subdivisions necessary "to implement a rehabilitation or construction project approved by the Board," and this is an opportunity to judge the appropriateness of at least the three sides of the future lot that have been depicted. Three of the lot lines are shown, dashed, on the site plans. A subdivision would simply introduce a fourth, on the south side, separating this lot from the proposed hospital site.

Recommendation

HPO recommends that the Board approve the concept (and an eventual subdivision of the lot), with a delegation of further review to staff, subject to the Board's approval of the exterior materials; with the condition that the landscape be developed further; and with the understanding that the concurrent reviews by the Commission of Fine Arts and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation may entail minor revisions.