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

Landmark/District:	Saint Elizabeths Hospital Historic District	(x) Agenda
Address:	1100 Alabama Avenue SE	
Meeting Date:	February 23, 2017	(x) New construction
Case Number:	17-047	
Staff Reviewer:	Tim Dennée	(x) Revised concept

The applicant, Events DC, with architects Marshall Moya Design, requests the Board's further review of a concept to construct a basketball arena and practice facility on the East Campus of Saint Elizabeths Hospital. The two primary uses/spaces are contained within and expressed as two boxes, with support and accessory spaces arrayed around and beneath them.

This project is also being reviewed by the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts and the National Capital Planning Commission. The Commission of Fine Arts approved the project in concept on November 17 and will review this revision and subsequent permit drawings (see attached letter).

The Board first reviewed the project in November and supported its general size, general site plan, materials and modern expression, but recommended that the volume containing the arena be further articulated by plane changes; that more texture be added through the exterior materials; that the openings and details be scaled more similarly to the historic buildings; that the stormwater management be worked out with the concept; and that the surface parking be improved by buffering or concealing it more in the topography.

Revisions

The project has been revised. Perhaps most useful for comparison are the side-by-side "before" and "after" perspectives starting on page 34 of the submission.

The module of the reddish metal panels on the front and rear has been reduced in size, something recommended in the previous staff report. The color palette of the panels on the ends of the building has changed from wholly gray. These are improvements.

The roof of the arena space is less sloped by heightening the rear wall, in order to improve interior sightlines beneath the roof trusses. This makes the mass more rectilinear, but it tilts the reflective roof less in the direction of the parcel across 13th Street, which will be eventually developed with a taller residential building. This change probably neither improves nor harms the design, as it lowers the building relative to its historic neighbors.

The boxiness of the arena and the extent of blank wall are emphasized, however, by the loss of the second-story windows on the front (Oak Street side), in favor of a narrow exterior terrace bounded by a railing. This is not an improvement upon the earlier design, as the addition of the

railing and a terrace/walkway does not help the building's appearance or its utility. The building now relates less well to the two-story historic buildings across Oak Street. The purpose of the reddish metal panels is, after all, the evocation of the roofs atop the two-story buildings of the "CT Quad."

Associated with the changes to the second level is the removal of a stair from the main entrance vestibule. This constitutes an improvement to the entry sequence and its flow.

Otherwise, the front of the project is much as it was in November.

On the building's south end, the glazed area is taller than previously, and the canopy over the double-height corner entrance has been folded down to meet a terrace at the second level. The terrace railing is no longer glass—which would tend to show dirt—but a cable rail. On balance, these are improvements.

The fenestration on the north end of the building has changed (the "before" and "after" perspectives are on pages 48 and 49, but their scale and angle are a bit different). The Wizards' entrance is unfortunately still sunken beneath the parking lot level, despite one having to proceed upward after entering. These revisions, too, are probably a wash.

The rear of the building has changed in several ways. The arena's "box" has been squared off at the rear, pushing a portion of the mass farther from 13th Street. Green screens have been removed in favor of large door openings that offer access to a terrace that continues around from the building's south end. This may activate that space above the sidewalk and eliminates the potential for a basketball court at the corner that would have required tall fencing. These are net positives.

The rear elevation has otherwise changed, not necessarily for better or worse. At the pedestrian level, the experience would not be much different, as the walls there are mostly blank. There are hints, however, as at the uppermost section pictured on page 27, that some of the space behind the arena would be sunk relative to the public sidewalk, a move which should be avoided. The section of the building containing the practice courts is set well away from the sidewalk, separated by the loading ramp. The once-covered walkway behind it would now have a green-screen armature over it. There is more mechanical equipment and screening on the roof.

As seen on page 49, the 13th Street right-of-way has fewer trees, presumably so as to not obstruct the illumination from the streetlights. The parking lot now contains a second layer of fencing and rails, to separate the team/staff parking from the loading area. Minimizing fences and providing quality fencing and more vegetative screening would be preferable to seeing more of the parking features. It is not clear how a long, newly proposed gate at the parking lot would operate (swing, double swing, slide?), but there is now a presumably card-operated lift-arm gate outside it. The new perspective suggests that the outer fencing has changed in design, but the materials section on page 55 shows the same tubular, channel-railed, pinched-spear-finial security fence, not a type most compatible to the character of historic districts

The landscape in the front yard of Building 102 has not changed much (see page 53). Unfortunately, there is still a rain garden outside the parking lot security fence. Building 102's yard is taking on more of a meadow character, which is inconsistent with the half of its front yard on the opposite side of its main entrance. Nor is it consistent with the typical front yard of

other buildings on the campus. The landscaping should be limited to a buffer screening the parking lot and its fence, with the front yard of Building 102 remaining flat lawn with occasional trees and shrubs.

Recommendation

HPO recommends that the Board approve the project in concept as not incompatible with the character of the historic district, and delegate to staff further review, with conditions that:

- 1. the former windows at the second-story of the arena's front not be eliminated;*
- 2. there be no areaway between the rear of the arena and the public sidewalk; and*
- 3. the landscape in front of Building 102 be limited to a buffer screening the parking lot and its fence, with the yard remaining flat lawn with occasional trees and shrubs.*