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

Property Address:	2111 Florida Avenue, NW	X	Agenda
Landmark/District:	Friends Meeting House/ Sheridan-Kalorama Historic District		Consent Calendar
Meeting Date:	November 20/December 4, 2014	X	Concept Review
H.P.A. Number:	14-529	X	Alteration
Staff Reviewer:	Steve Callcott		New Construction
			Demolition
			Subdivision

Architect Evan Lippincott (Lippincott Architects), representing the Washington Friends Meeting, returns for the ongoing conceptual design review for construction of a two-story entrance foyer, elevator and corridor to provide accessibility to several adjacent but unconnected buildings owned and operated by the Friends.

Property History and Description

The Friends Meeting House occupies a triangular-shaped lot fronting Florida Avenue and bounded on Phelps Place to the north and Decatur Place to the south. The two-story, gable-roofed Colonial Revival building, closely based on 18th century meeting house design, has Georgian and Federal detailing and is clad in Pennsylvania Foxcroft stone. The original portion of the building was constructed in 1930, with a seamless addition built in 1950.

The property also includes 2121 Decatur Place, a 1923 Federal revival townhouse and associated two-story garage. Acquired by the Friends in 1970 and since converted for use as classrooms and child care facilities, these buildings were not historically associated with the meeting house. They are contributing buildings to the Sheridan-Kalorama Historic District but are not part of the landmark.

Proposal

The project calls for constructing a two-story glass foyer addition facing Decatur Place between the side of the meeting house's 1950s addition and the former garage building associated with 2121 Decatur. The foyer would house a stair and an elevator, and provide access to the rear courtyard garden, to the meeting house and to a two-story hallway that would connect along the back of the garage and 2121; the hallway would ramp up as it extended west to provide access to the varied levels. On the second floor, the roof of the hallway connector would intersect with the backside of the gable roof of the garage and retain the existing dormers. One stone gate post (associated historically with the meeting house addition) and four brick gate posts (associated with 2121) would be removed to allow for a unified, regraded entrance court.

Previous Review

The Board approved the concept for the project in September on the consent calendar, but provided some comments and direction on the record regarding further development of the concept. The comments included exploring whether the height of the connecting link could be reduced any further and for the cladding of the elevator tower to be in a new material that should not match the stone of the meeting house or the brick of the adjoining townhouse.

Current Proposal

The architect has explored the use of a natural zinc panel for the cladding of the elevator – a material that is similar in coloration to the stone but clearly distinguishable as a new material. However, he and the Friends feel strongly that the stone cladding to match the meeting house is the better option, and seeks the Board's approval of that finish.

Evaluation

The zinc panel cladding is the better design and preservation solution. It would achieve compatibility in coloration and could (depending on how it is detailed), relate well in scale and texture to the landmark. At the same time, it would clearly read as a secondary, lighter-weight, and subordinate element to the complex's composition. By cladding the elevator in stone, it suggests that this purely functional element is of equal importance to the landmark, which it is not. The unusual form and the close positioning of this solid, weighty form immediately adjacent to the townhouse is already not an entirely comfortable one, and this juxtaposition could be alleviated somewhat by cladding the tower in a lighter-weight metal material finish. The use of the metal cladding material – whether zinc or an alternative choice – could be fully integrated into the vocabulary of the hyphen, such as for the framing and roofing elements, so that this new intervention has its own language that relates to but is distinguishable from the existing buildings.

Recommendation

The HPO seeks the Board's direction on the material choice for the addition.