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

Property Address:	300-308 Carroll Street, NW	X	Agenda
Landmark/District:	Takoma Park Historic District		Consent Calendar
Meeting Date:	January 30, 2020	X	Concept Review
H.P.A. Number:	19-549	X	Alteration
Staff Reviewer:	Steve Callcott	X	New Construction
			Demolition
		X	Subdivision

SGA Cos. LLC, represented by Sassan Gharai, seeks conceptual design review for construction of a five-story plus penthouse apartment building in the Takoma Park Historic District. The building would incorporate two early 20th century houses and a row of one-story 1920s commercial buildings.

Property History and Description

The property includes three abutting parcels in Square 3354 – lots 4 and 5 facing Carroll Street, and lot 24 facing Vine Street. Each of the Carroll Street lots contain a brick detached house sitting at the top of the hill. 300 Carroll was constructed in 1898 by William F. Follmer. 308 Carroll, also built by Follmer, dates from 1906 and has a row of three one-story commercial buildings designed by B.F. Meyers that were added in the house’s front yard at street level in 1928. The house was further obscured by construction of a two-story front addition in 1950. The houses and the commercial buildings date from the period of significance for the Takoma Park Historic District (1862-1948) and are reflective of the railroad suburb’s initial phase of residential development and earliest phase of commercial development.¹

The Vine Street lot is occupied by several non-contributing prefabricated trailers and is paved for vehicular parking. Vine is a narrow street that dead ends at the train tracks, accessed from Maple Street just south and running parallel to Carroll. At the December 2019 meeting, the Board reviewed and approved a conceptual design for construction of a four-story apartment building on the abutting site to the east.

Proposal

The project calls for retaining and restoring the two houses, removing the disfiguring 1950s front addition to 308, and reconstructing the houses’ original front porches based on historic photographs. The 1920s storefront buildings would be retained but their projecting storefronts replaced with flush storefronts to improve an awkwardly narrow sidewalk condition. The

¹ Four other houses constructed at the ridge of the hill also remain, largely obscured behind later commercial buildings, including 272 Carroll (built in 1902 by Follmer), 264 Carroll (1923), 254 Carroll (1907) and 248 Carroll (1904).

berm in front of 300 would be retained, cut back slightly to widen the sidewalk, with a new stone retaining wall and a wider stair provided to the top of the hill.

A five-story apartment building, with penthouse and set above cellar level garage, would be constructed facing Vine; due to the change in grade, the building would be four stories on Carroll behind and connected to the houses. The Vine Street elevation would be clad in cementitious panels with projecting bays clad in a “wood-look” siding and doors opening to metal Juliette balconies. On Carroll, the body of the building would be clad in the wood-look siding behind a central entrance bay clad in tile or brick; the openings would be filled with double hung windows.

Evaluation

The building’s general height and size are consistent with other new construction projects approved by the Board in this portion of the district, and with the site’s zoning and the vision outlined in the 2000 Takoma Central District small area plan that encourages redevelopment of underutilized parcels by adding more infill housing. As was discussed in the review of the adjacent project in December, Vine Street is devoid of contributing buildings and has no remaining or immediate historic context warranting design flexibility for a new construction project. As with the adjacent project, the subject building has been pulled back from the Vine Street property line to increase the width of the sidewalk and provide a planting strip at the base of the building.

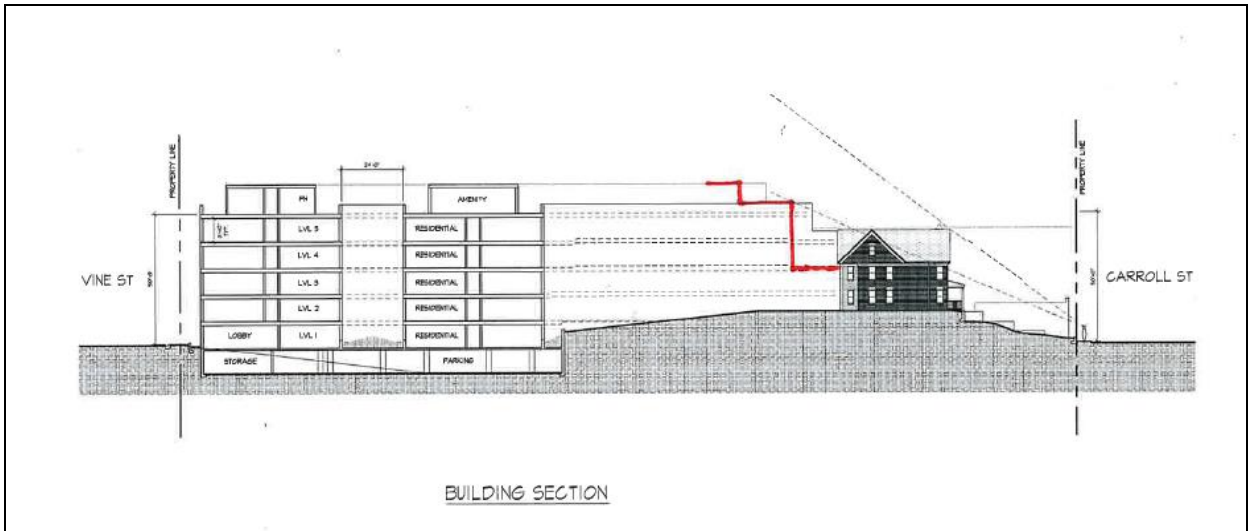
The primary impact of the project on the historic district will be on Carroll. While it will result in the valuable preservation benefit of the houses being restored, the design challenge is how to design a large new building that spans behind and above these two detached houses in a way that is respectful and doesn’t appear to dwarf them. While it is not necessary for the new building to be invisible – the context of substantial additions to these houses is already established as part of the development pattern along Carroll – some additional design study should be undertaken to improve the compatibility of the new construction. Areas recommended for further design study include:

- Providing further separation and lowering the connection to no higher than two floors at the rears of the houses to retain their discrete masses and eliminate awkward connections with their roofs;
- Setting the penthouse level further back from the Carroll Street elevation to diminish its visibility;
- Providing greater articulation in the mass of the new construction behind the houses with more variety to the façade plane and roofline would help scale the building down into smaller components that would better relate to the historic houses;
- Developing a more consistent architectural vocabulary and use of materials so that the Vine and Carroll elevations read as part of the same building;
- Rethink the use of “wood-look” siding as a primary façade material. While *painted* wood is commonly found as trim and or a siding material on houses in the historic district, the rusticity of unpainted wood is not characteristic, particularly for the façade

of a block-sized apartment building. The artificiality of this type of siding is also often more apparent when used on large unarticulated wall planes.

Recommendation

The HPO recommends that the Review Board find the general concept for building rehabilitation and new construction to be compatible with the character of the Takoma Park Historic District, but that further design study be done and for the project to return to the Board for additional review when ready.



HPO suggested revisions for increased setbacks in red.