

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

Property Address:	6833 4th Street NW	X	Agenda
Landmark/District:	Takoma Park Historic District		Consent Calendar
Meeting Date:	March 31, 2016	X	Concept Review
H.P.A. Number:	13-467		New Construction
Staff Reviewer:	Anne Brockett	X	Alteration

In September 2013, the Board reviewed a project to convert the historic Takoma Theater to multi-unit housing, including adding to the side and roof and punching openings in the sides of the auditorium. Since that time, the property has been purchased by Rock Creek Property Group and the design by Cunningham Quill Architects has been revised. Now slated for commercial use, the revised design eliminates the additions, but continues with a refined proposal for fenestration alterations to the sides and rear of the building.

Built in 1923, the theater was designed by John Zink in a restrained Classical Revival style, incorporating elements of the Colonial Revival. The lobby and office block is brown brick with a metal cornice and trim while the auditorium block is red brick with some decorative brick coursing and paneling on the north side elevation.

Project Description

The fenestration on the auditorium walls is not greatly changed from the previous submission and features regularly spaced openings on both north and south sides of the auditorium. At the request of the HPRB, the windows have been set closer to the building's surface, rather than the previously proposed inset. At the rear, the amount of fenestration has been significantly reduced and now features only two new openings, one on each floor. The design specs out more exact window types with muntin patterns and functioning sashes. Notably, the windows on the north have been sympathetically designed to fit within the existing decorative brick banding that appears on this side and to carry it across the window openings with muntins in the same line. Some new 2/2 sashes, which match the existing windows, are proposed on the sides of the front office block as well. Other alterations include restoring the storefronts on 4th Street, restoring the historic roof sign and marquee, and landscaping the public space around the building.

Evaluation

In its previous review, the HPRB asked the case to return for further consideration of the additions but was not opposed to adding fenestration. The revisions have eliminated the additive elements of the proposal and addressed the Board's concern about the inset depth within the walls. Overall, the project's goal to restore the theater's historic façade and adapt it for modern use is compatible with the character of the building and district. The project is consistent with previous HPO and HPRB recommendations, adding windows in a manner that is sensitive to the building's design while allowing for occupiable space. While generally discouraged on visible elevations – particularly on residential buildings – new window openings are not inappropriate here in support of the building's re-use and through walls that lack architectural distinction. Although the north elevation does feature some decorative brickwork, the placement of the windows has been specifically designed to respect the existing patterning.

Recommendation

The HPO recommends that the Board find the proposed concept compatible with the character of the historic district and consistent with the purposes of the preservation act with consideration of the above suggestions and that the Board delegate final approval to staff.