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

Landmark/District: **Walter Reed Army Medical Center Historic District** (x) Agenda
Address: **6900 Georgia Avenue NW**

Meeting Date: **May 24, 2018** (x) New construction/Alteration
Case Number: **18-369** (x) Concept

The applicant, long-term lessee and developer TPWR Developer LLC (a joint venture of Hines-Urban Atlantic-Triden), requests the Board’s review of a concept to construct an approximately one-acre plaza/park to serve as a town square for the “Town Center” complex in the campus’s northern tier. This park was included in the campus master plan, a central gathering space requested by the adjacent communities.

The Board has already approved the concept for a new building west of this site, across 12th Street. Plans for the buildings proposed to flank the plaza north and south have not been submitted, beyond the schematics shown in the master plan and subsequent contextual site plans for neighboring projects.

The plaza would cover a portion of an underground garage, reconstructed from the present garage in front of soon-to-be-demolished Building 2. The garage would be reached from the surrounding buildings, but the public use of the square calls for an additional public entrance, to be incorporated into a kiosk-type building that may serve food. Another small building is indicated within the south side of the plaza, but the design of neither structure is formally presented at this time.

The presence of the garage would create some limitations on the size of trees grown on top, so the larger trees have been located toward the eastern perimeter of the site, beyond the garage’s footprint. This provides an appropriate green edge to the campus.

Probably the most important consideration is how the landscape relates to the larger buildings, which have yet to be designed.

As for the paving and the various features within the space, they are derived from expressed preferences for a variety of uses. Their design are more a matter of taste than of preservation, as this remade place will be bounded by new construction. Among the public comments we have received is that there should be more paving on the plaza. But there appears to be plenty of hardscape. The real issue is the choice between specialized- and unspecialized-use zones within the larger space. How flexible or open should this space be, given the specific uses vying for room?

The number of paving materials could stand to be reduced, to simplify the palette. A section cut across the west end of the plaza would touch five types of pavers. This plaza is one spot on the campus where special pavers—distinct from the campus’s historic roadway and sidewalk materials—are appropriate. But the number of distinct circulation paths and functional areas expressed by the various pavers is probably unnecessary and a little fussy. Having fewer materials may provide a greater sense of the unity and flexibility of the space.

Recommendation

HPO recommends that the Board approve the concept, with future review of the proposed buildings within and adjacent to the plaza.

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