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

Landmark/District:	Randall School	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agenda
Address:	65 I Street, SW	<input type="checkbox"/> Consent Calendar
Meeting Date:	June 27, 2013	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Demolition/Alteration
H.P.A. Number:	13-341	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> New Construction
Date Received:	May 1/June 17, 2013	<input type="checkbox"/> Subdivision
Staff Reviewer:	David Maloney	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Conceptual Design

Owner TR SW 2 LLC and design architect Bing Thom Architects Inc. have requested Board review of a new project to redevelop the old Randall School and its site at First and I Streets, SW. The project would include a new museum of contemporary art, restaurant, and commercial/education facility in the historic school building, and a 12-story apartment building with about 550 living units and underground parking.

The project is similar in many respects to an earlier proposal by a different ownership entity to redevelop the property for the Corcoran College of Art and Design and apartments. The Board reviewed this previous project in 2007, ultimately finding the extent of demolition proposed to be inconsistent with the purposes of the preservation law, but otherwise finding the project generally compatible with the character of the landmark, dependent on further design refinement.

In September 2007, the Mayor’s Agent approved the demolition as necessary to construct a “project of special merit.” The Zoning Commission also considered and approved a Planned Unit Development (PUD) application for the project in 2007.

The new ownership will be submitting the present proposal to the Mayor’s Agent for approval on similar “special merit” grounds, and to the Zoning Commission for approval as a modification of the original PUD, which is valid through March 2015.

Project Description

The project is described in detail in the attached narrative summary submitted by the applicant.

Comparison with Previously Approved Project

The planning and design of this project have benefited from the review process for the previous proposal, which involved both the government review agencies and the community. The project builds on the insights and results of that earlier review by following similar outlines, with a somewhat different program and architectural concept.

The applicants will be returning to the Mayor’s Agent and Zoning Commission for approval, so a summary comparison with the previous proposal is useful.

The present project maintains several features in common with the earlier submission:

- The three I Street sections of the landmark school (1906 and 1927) are rehabilitated for

arts-related and similar uses, and the remaining sections including the contributing 1912 section are demolished;

- The rehabilitation involves some exterior changes to the school, such as lowering the I Street windows of the 1927 auditorium to grade;
- The area north of the school is redeveloped for a phased apartment building arranged around an interior courtyard;
- The above-grade footprint of new construction follows the former building lines on the north, east, and west sides, thus maintaining the historic L'Enfant street corridors and allowing for potential reopening of the streets should that be proposed; and
- Vehicular entrances for parking and loading are all located on H Street.

The new project differs from the previous proposal in the following ways:

- The 3-part school block remains free-standing on I Street, without additions on the ends (although the small stagehouse on the east façade of the 1927 auditorium is replaced with a new entrance pavilion of about the same);
- The central 1906 block of the school is extended northward into the courtyard with a museum addition;
- The center entrance of the school is used as the main entrance to the primary arts component of the project;
- The center entrance is lowered and the berm in front is altered to allow for new steps and ramped access to grade;
- The 1927 smokestack is demolished;
- The new apartment building is C-shaped in configuration, rather than E-shaped, and 110 instead of 100 feet in height;
- The massing of the apartment building is composed of simpler geometric blocks, with a more wall-like backdrop to the school;
- There is public access to the central courtyard through openings at the southeast and southwest corners; and
- The vehicular entrances on H Street are more consolidated, taking up less street frontage.

Project Evaluation – Demolition

The present project has similar preservation impacts on the Randall School, which is a rambling complex of historic and non-historic elements. The extent of proposed demolition is nearly the same, with the addition of the smokestack to the previous proposal to remove the contributing 1912 section and all of the non-contributing wings.

The demolition of contributing elements is not consistent with the purposes of the preservation law, but not unreasonable in the context of a special merit project. The demolition of the smokestack is due to the different courtyard configuration, and is a relatively minor change from the preservation standpoint.

Project Evaluation – Rehabilitation

The rehabilitation and adaptation of the major component of the school remains the primary and very significant preservation benefit of this project. The current proposal has the advantage of keeping the school as a free-standing group on I Street, which highlights its civic nature and street presence, and could be seen as an improvement over the previous design. It also retains the functionality of the central entrance as the main entry to the primary museum use, although that does require alteration of the architectural design to allow for universal access. In the context of

an adaptation for museum use, where significant interior features of the building are being incorporated into the design for a public-use space, this seems to be a reasonable trade-off. The proposed design concept makes clear the original and new components of the modified entrance, and is consistent with preservation standards.

Another result of the approach to keep the school free-standing is that a new section of wall must be constructed at the back of the 1927 west wing where it abutted the earlier 1912 block. Since there never was a completed façade to the 1927 wing at this location, the design concept is to complete the wall to be sympathetic in scale, material, and composition, but with a contemporary expression. This concept is also consistent with preservation standards, and should continue to be developed and refined.

At the 1927 auditorium wing on the east, the removal of the incidental stage block for a new entrance pavilion also leaves an open section of wall, but in this case the opening is filled in with new masonry to match the existing wall and preserve the appearance of the simple auditorium block. This is also consistent with preservation standards.

At the rear of the central 1906 block, the original wall is retained as a visible wall from inside the museum, preserving this as an architectural feature and contributing to an ability to appreciate the combination of historic and contemporary construction.

Project Evaluation – New Construction

The proposed apartment building is a distinctly different approach from the previous proposal, though retaining the crucial principle of following the historic building lines as a means of fitting the new project into the urban pattern that existed when the historic school was built. The concept could perhaps be described as more dramatic or more elemental, composed of large interlocking L-shaped blocks separated by strategically placed openings. The simple forms, uniform facades, and rounded corners suggest almost that the blocks are large pieces of sculpture that could pivot into upper and lower sections. At the south end behind the school, this effect is heightened by two upper wings that are suspended mid-air above the courtyard, supported only by two columns each.

The contrast with the Randall School is more dramatic and the architectural engagement more direct than in the previous scheme. The new building is more apparent behind the school, and in both massing and façade design the architecture is more forthright as a frank contemporary expression. Nonetheless, the clean simple geometry is appropriate to the simple block-like composition of the school, the repetitive façade pattern creates a neutral backdrop, and especially in the context of a public museum for contemporary art, the overall sculptural approach seems entirely appropriate as a striking new contribution to the city's modernist quadrant.

One significant difference with the new proposal is that the apartment building is proposed at 110 feet, rather than the 100 feet previously approved by the Zoning Commission. The relationship in scale between historic landmark and the apartment building would very likely be improved by limiting the height to 100 feet, but the staff defers to the Board, Mayor's Agent, and Zoning Commission for a resolution of this issue.

The Historic Preservation Office recommends that the Board forward the project to the Mayor's Agent for consideration in conjunction with requested demolition permits, with the following

advice:

- *The demolition of portions of the landmark building is not consistent with the purposes of the preservation law;*
- *The adaptive rehabilitation of the three main blocks of the school for a contemporary art museum, restaurant, and commercial/education facility is a substantial preservation benefit; and*
- *The concept plans are compatible with the retained portions of the Randall School and with the L'Enfant Plan.*

HPO also recommends that the applicant continue consultation on design refinements for further review by the Board as appropriate.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION FOR HPRB REVIEW RANDALL SCHOOL REDEVELOPMENT

Overview

TR SW 2 LLC proposes to construct a new mixed-use development on the site of the Randall School historic landmark at 65 I Street, S.W. (Square 643-S, Lot 801). The original 1906 Randall School building and its two flanking wings dating from 1927 will be retained, rehabilitated and incorporated into the new development. Other additions of lesser historic value will be removed to allow construction of the new development, consistent with the approval granted in 2007 for a similar redevelopment scheme by the Corcoran College of Art and Design. The new development will provide a museum of contemporary art, approximately 550 residential units, retail and service uses, and one level of underground parking. Twenty percent of the gross floor area devoted to residential space will be reserved for households earning no more than eighty percent of area median income ("AMI"). The proposed project will contain approximately 499,843 square feet of gross floor area, which equates to a density of 4.32 FAR, and be constructed to a maximum height of 110 feet. The museum and related uses will comprise approximately 40,000 square feet of gross floor area, or 0.35 FAR of the total project, with another 5,000 square feet of art-related space in the cellar area. Approximately 16,000 square feet of gross floor area will be devoted to retail and service uses, or 0.13 FAR of the total project. The remaining 443,843 square feet of gross floor area, or approximately 3.83 FAR, will be devoted to residential uses. The below grade parking garage will provide spaces for approximately 200 vehicles. The PUD is designed by Bing Thom Architects, a distinguished architectural firm of international stature that designed the new Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theatre several blocks to the west of this site.

Project Design

The museum and arts-related uses will occupy the renovated Randall School buildings, as well as a new wing behind the main, central portion of the historic landmark. The residential portion of the development will be located in the remaining portions of the new building. The residential space will be divided into approximately 550 residential units. The new construction in the development will rise to a maximum height of 110 feet, which is below the maximum permitted height allowed under the PUD standards for the C-3-C District.

The massing of the new construction is rectangular in shape and is formed by a series of building blocks that form a central courtyard behind the historic wings of the Randall School. A new four-story wing is proposed to be added to the back of the central historic building to house the large exhibition spaces of the museum. The below grade loading facilities will be located on the east side of this addition, with a freight elevator located on the west side for large-scale works of art. The historic east and west wings of the Randall School building will be devoted to commercial service/retail uses and education/arts-related uses. A restaurant is envisioned for the east wing.

The new twelve-story residential building will be set behind the historic Randall School. It is comprised of nine distinct blocks that are stacked around the west, north and east sides of the

site and behind the historic school structures to the south. These forms enclose a publicly accessible courtyard and run parallel to H Street, the former Half Street and former First Street, thereby physically defining these streets in the neighborhood. Gaps between these building blocks emphasize their proportions and recall the slab building forms common in the Southwest neighborhood. The lower six levels of the new south west and south east building elements are cut at an angle leading into the center of the site in deference to the historic buildings. It is at these points that the entrances to the residential "towers" will be located just behind the historic buildings to the east and west. Six levels above these entries at the south side of the courtyard are two building wings that span from the perimeter of the building to columns on either side of the new museum structure. Ground floor units facing First Street, H Street and the courtyard will have individual entrances and private outdoor spaces along the street or at the interior courtyard. The site and public space in front of the historic buildings on I Street will be modified to make the historic buildings accessible and to provide opportunities for street side café seating. The massing concept, which evolved through a series of meetings with District agencies and the staff of the Historic Preservation Office, places a majority of the project's density away from the historic building toward the rear of the site. The sensitive massing of the new construction allows the historic Randall School to continue to appear as a separate building along I Street, SW, and maintain the character of the existing streetscape.

Exterior Façade Materials

Designed in institutional interpretation of the Georgian Revival style, the historic building is faced with red brick and limestone trim. In order to play as a backdrop to the historic buildings, the proposed PUD will be clad in contemporary materials. Primarily metal panels and glass, the fenestration pattern has been purposely arranged in an irregular and informal composition in counterpoint to the studied and carefully arranged facades of the historic buildings. Balconies and overhangs are introduced on the lower levels of the new building to complement the individual residential unit gardens and entries and to provide a sense of human scale at the street level. The metal cladding on the new museum wing located within the courtyard will be capable of accepting project images and film/video.

Courtyard Design and Landscaping

The landscape features and elements of the project have been designed to respond to the existing historical context and to the surrounding neighborhood. Although rooted in the Post-War context of the Southwest Waterfront, this new development will include innovative sustainable site elements that include rain-water harvesting, urban forestry best-practices and green roofs. These elements, as well design features that help to humanize the space will infuse vitality into the site.

At the heart of the development, the courtyard will be directly connected to the surrounding streetscape by continuous walking surfaces at the Southeast and Southwest corners of the building. Asymmetrical planting areas in the courtyard will break up the space into separate rooms for various uses, including restaurant seating and opportunities to view projections on the new museum walls. Planting areas will also offer privacy and screening for the residential entry units. The plant palette for the courtyard will be made up of lush, textural, and shade-tolerant groundcovers with year-round interest, such as ferns and grasses. Multi-stemmed *Betula nigra* (River Birch) will offer additional shade and add to textural interest.

I Street is one of the primary corridors running through Washington's Southwest Quadrant, connecting its neighborhoods. Its tree-lined character will be preserved and enhanced in the block in front of the project. Existing street trees in good condition, primarily *Quercus rubra* (Red Oak), will remain. Additional street trees such as *Quercus lyrata* (Overcup Oak) will be used to infill along the street, promoting continuous canopy coverage along the scored concrete sidewalks that are typical to the neighborhood. An existing brick retaining wall will be rebuilt across the front of the building to maintain the earth platform on which the historic building sits. This platform will be edged with a raised planter along the sidewalk, filled with shrubs and perennials. New stairs and accessible ramps will lead up to the Historic Randall School building which will house a museum and restaurant, and outdoor cafés to the west and east will enliven the street's character.

Along First and H Streets the frontage of each residence will maximize green space featuring small gardens and private terraces, enclosed by green screens and brick walls, in character with the mid-twentieth century residential character of the Southwest Waterfront neighborhood. The gardens will be planted with a mix of perennials and small flowering trees, providing privacy from the sidewalk while echoing the intentions of 1960's urban character of the neighborhood.

Above street level, green roofs of varying sizes can be found on top of the new gallery space on the Museum's north side, on 7th floor balconies and at the roof level of the residential blocks. Two pool terraces for residents at the roof level will be surrounded by green roof. Plant material will be extensive in nature, with a variety of sedums and perennials suitable to the levels of light and shallow soil depth, creating year-round visual interest. The green roofs will also contribute towards the site's sustainable goals by capturing and treating stormwater runoff.

Site Circulation

Separate parking and loading access points are located at the rear of the site along H Street, SW. The parking entrance is centered on the H Street elevation while the driveway to the underground loading facilities is located on H Street at the east edge of the site. Pedestrian access around and through the site will be accommodated by a series of pathways and public sidewalks. Patrons of the Randall Recreation Center will continue to have vehicular access along H Street.