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

Property Address:	2013 H Street, NW	X	Agenda
Landmark/District:	Pending GWU Historic District		Consent Calendar
Meeting Date:	November 20, 2008	X	Concept Review
H.P.A. Number:	08-362	X	Alteration
Staff Reviewer:	Jonathan Mellon		New Construction
			Demolition
			Subdivision

The applicant, Group Goetz Architects for owner The HSC Foundation seeks revised conceptual design review for alterations and construction of a seven-story addition to a contributing building in the pending George Washington University Historic District. While the property is not currently subject to review under the preservation law, it may be at some point in the near future, prior to the applicants obtaining building permits for construction. Accordingly, the applicants have requested a conceptual review of the project in order to respond to and incorporate the Board's comments into the design while it is still in this early design development stage; the applicant has filed an application with the Zoning Commission for a zoning map amendment and are in the process of filing an application with the Board of Zoning Adjustment for a parking variance for the project.

The proposed alterations to the building were first reviewed at the September 25, 2008 meeting, at which time the Board declined to take any action on the application, but provided the applicant with some feedback as to the proposal.

Property History and Description



2013 H Street

2013 H Street is a three-story brick row house with a raised brownstone stoop, three-story projecting bay, and is topped by a slate mansard roof. The house has distinctive brick work in the door surround that forms a pediment, as well as in a band that delineates the second floor from the third. A two-story rear ell fronts on to the large side yard, and the rear yard contains a two-story brick carriage house. One of the few surviving row houses in the area, the house was constructed in 1888 by builder J. F. Sanner and designed by architect C. A. Didden for owner Fred Gheen. The house is bordered to the side (west) by an alleyway providing access to a large commercial building to the north, and to the side (east) by a surface parking lot that is proposed to be developed at some time in the future by GWU. The carriage house at the rear of the lot is accessible from an alleyway north of the property; a right-of-way has been retained for access to the carriage house through the property to the east. The house sits across the street from the GWU quad; as part of its campus plan a future building is proposed to be constructed along H Street that would enclose the quad.

Proposal

The revised proposal continues to call for the construction of a seven-story addition that would align with the side (east & west) property lines and be set back from the front (south) property line as well as from the rear (north) property line. The first floor of the addition is proposed to contain the main entrance lobby, with the upper floors containing office space. The row house is proposed to contain a board room on the first floor and offices on the upper floors, while the carriage house would contain a two-story conference room.

In response to concerns raised by the Board at the September meeting, the massing of the proposed addition has been revised with the two primary changes occurring to the rear (north) elevation where it interacts with the carriage house, as well as the interaction of the second floor with the historic rear ell of the house.

The rear elevation has been pulled away from the carriage house resulting in the exposing of a larger portion of the carriage house roof, and as well the elevation has been broken up through the use of a projecting glass curtain wall bay that would wrap around to the side (west) elevation.

The base of the addition has also been reworked, with the first and second floors proposed to be largely of glass with a concrete panel plinth, followed by the original proposal for a two-story inset glass lobby area with a side loggia providing access to the building from a new outdoor plaza containing a stair and ramp from H Street. In addition, the fire control room and stair tower have been redesigned to read as sculptural elements within the two-story base, and height of the two-story base has been raised so as to have it clear the cornice line of the historic rear ell.

The revised proposal also calls for the addition of windows on the rear portion of the side (east) elevation which will eventually be largely obscured from view with the development of the surface parking lot by GWU.

The proposal continues to call for the restoration of the front elevation of the historic row house, and the majority of the rear ell to be preserved. The ell is proposed to extend inside the addition and to be fully visible in the two-story glass lobby. The historic carriage house is proposed to see its alley (north) facing exterior elevation restored, and as well have its south facing elevation visible inside a double height space in the lobby. (The applicant should again provide the Board with a thorough review of the proposed removal of historic fabric in the project)



Side (west) Elevation

Evaluation and Recommendation

As noted earlier, the row house at 2013 H Street is one of the few remaining examples of the once elegant residential neighborhood that existed in this section of Washington. The site is remarkably intact, with the rear ell and carriage house both in largely original condition. As well, the large open side yard when taken along with the pedestrian alleyway and row house to the west, provides an important link with the open space of the GWU quad to the south.

As the site is quite small, measuring approximately 40' wide by 154' deep, with two largely intact historic structures on it, its development poses a number of challenges. The applicant has worked to address concerns raised by staff over the need to preserve the row house, majority of the ell, as well as the carriage house. In addition, the proposed set back of the addition from the row house is largely compatible in that it does not overwhelm the historic building, and its massing is broken up through the use of two pieces that reflect the proportions of the row house. As well, the rear ell would be visible from public view through the two-story glass lobby which would allow for the house to retain its prominent position on the site.

The proposed addition has a clean design that clearly states that this is a modern building, and the revised proposal deftly addresses the concern raised over the awkward interaction between the addition and carriage house in the earlier design. As well the raising of the height of the two-story base allows both for the needed breathing room for the historic rear ell, as well as allowing for the upper portion of the addition to appear to float above the base. The revisions to the two-story base, including the concrete panel plinth, reworking of the design of the solid elements, and the substitution of a largely open glass façade, are all changes that enhance the overall design of the addition. In addition, the alterations to the rear (north) and side (east) elevations result in a breaking up of the elevations in to proportions keeping with the scale of the historic structures on the site.

The context of the site, with large structures to the rear (north) and to the side (west) beyond the pedestrian alleyway and row house, and in the future to the side (east) and across the street to the south, results in a decidedly downtown like feel. As such, the staff is comfortable with the insertion of an addition of this height to the site, which will also serve to soften the impact of the future GWU building on the surface parking lot to the side (east) on the historic row house at 2013 H Street.

The property is not currently subject to review under the preservation law, and as such the Board's role is an advisory one. The applicant is looking for the Board's comments on the proposal for the development of the site, and as noted above has sought to address the concerns that were raised by both the Board and staff at the September meeting.