

Michael Gehr, chair, called the special meeting to order at 4:15 p.m. on Friday, January 27, 2017, in the Conference Room, Fourth Floor, City Hall. A roster of the members of the commission and the technical posts they fill are on file and available upon request. Also present were commission members L. Allen, C. Crumrine, and S. Kreiger. S. Bockmiller was present on behalf of the Planning and Code Administration Department. (NOTE: Historic District Commission revisions are indicated in red text.)

WORKSHOP

55-59 West Washington Street – Selected Demolitions.

Scott Bowen and Janelle Horst of MSB Architects in Hagerstown, Maryland, were present on behalf of the developer.

Mr. Bockmiller stated that the proposed work is for the first section of the Downtown Education Hub project. The project will be done in several phases and involves multiple property owners and properties. The subject of this workshop is the former Susquehanna Bank/BB&T building and is located between the Washington County Court House and the Potomac Bead Company.

The purpose of this workshop is to allow the architects to give the commission a general overview of the entire project. The main point of the workshop is to discuss with the commission how the rear portion will be treated. Staff recommended the workshop after seeing the plans that call for modern materials on the areas exposed after demolition. In theory, sometime in the distant future, the rear of this building will not be visible from West Antietam Street because the area behind the building has been identified as a location for a parking deck.

The proposed demolitions include existing additions on the rear of the building that do not have any historic value and the back part of the third and fourth floor levels. There are engineering and code compliance issues that will require the third and fourth floors to remain unused, and removing them would create structural problems and run afoul of the Historic District Commission's guidelines.

Mr. Bowen gave the commission a general overview of the project (A copy of Mr. Bowen's PowerPoint presentation is in the meeting file). The building that is part of the USMH project has several sections consisting of different levels. The four-story front of the building is the historic section. They are planning to add a second floor to the back. Also part of the general project is the Barbara Ingram School for the Arts and the Maryland Theatre.

After the one- and two-story additions are removed, the rear façade (facing the alley) will be rebuilt with a modern multi-story addition (not part of this application). Based on the advice of the applicant's structural engineer, they plan to retain the front three-quarters of the historic front building. The third and fourth floors will never be occupied based on structural concerns. A

considerable amount of work would need to occur in order to be able to use the third and fourth floors of the historic portion of the building. The current owner is not willing to invest the funds to make these floors inhabitable.

Concerning the future design of the back of the building, Mr. Bowen stated the idea was to pick up on some of the architecture from the existing University System of Maryland at Hagerstown (USMH) property across the street. The historic front would be retained (same as the historic Baldwin Hotel) and the new rear portion of the building would incorporate a glass tower and modern materials. Mr. Bockmiller noted that that level of detail on the new addition in the rear is not ready, however, when staff initially saw this design staff did not have a concern but wanted the Historic District Commission's input due to its modern nature. Mr. Bockmiller pointed out that the modern addition would not be on the front façade, it would only be visible from West Antietam Street (a half block away). Ms. Allen asked what, if anything, would be visible from West Washington Street. Mr. Bowen explained that since they will only be rebuilding to the second floor on the rear facade, no part of the new addition would be seen from West Washington Street.

The proposed bridge is a safety component for the high school students so they will not have to walk along the street. The University and the Board of Education would be sharing the science lab facilities proposed for 55-59 West Washington Street, rather than having separate facilities.

Mr. Gehr asked what kind of material would be used to enclose the area on the third and fourth floors once those floors have been removed. Mr. Bowen indicated that most likely they would cover the area with siding and paint it to match the brick. He was not certain the structure would be able to support the weight of additional brick. Concerning the material on the east side of the rear addition, Mr. Bowen stated that this would be an Alucobond-type material similar to board and batten but in a metal finish. This project is entirely developer-funded with no state money involved, therefore, the Maryland Historic Trust will not review it.

Mr. Bowen stated that some windows on the Potomac Bead Company building will need to be closed up as part of this project. Mr. Bockmiller noted that in the future these buildings will be under common ownership.

Ms. Allen stated she had no objection to the removal of the area in the rear and having that not be open space because it will be built to the same level as the adjacent building. She does not have an objection to the proposed demolition on the alley (south) side of the building. Ms. Kreiger was concerned about the comparison between what is proposed and the modern structure at the rear of the USMH building. She did not believe what is proposed is fitting for the environment, but if there is already a modern style addition existing somewhere else in the Downtown District, then it could be considered appropriate. Mr. Crumrine had no objections to the proposed demolitions. Mr. Gehr noted that whatever is built in place of the demolitions will someday be obscured by a parking deck. At some point visibility of the back portion of this building will be blocked from West Antietam Street. He observed that even though the future plans call for a modern addition,

the back half of the building is being gutted and it will appear as a new building. The front side will retain its historic character which maintains the West Washington Street streetscape. That has been the commission's focus. As long as the modern materials hold up and last as long as historic fabric, then he did not see an issue. He wanted to make certain the developer does not use an inexpensive product that ten years from now will not be attractive. His only concern is making certain the project keeps moving and that plans for the addition do not stall.

Ms. Allen asked what the impact of removal of the rear addition and the back part of the third and fourth floors would have on the public interest. Mr. Bockmiller stated there would be minimal impact. There would be no impact on the rear of the building because it is modern construction. The third and fourth floors would be a minor loss, but their removal would not affect the streetscape. Mr. Gehr asked if there are any salvageable materials in the third and fourth floors, such as dentil work, trim work, fireplace mantels, etc., that could be of value. Mr. Bowen stated that most of the fireplaces are in the front portion of the building. The back half of the building consists of a strange maze of spaces. There has been some debate between the structural engineers as to whether the third and fourth floors proposed for demolition are original to the building.

Commission members made the following comments about the direction in which the architects are heading with the renderings for the replacement addition. Ms. Allen felt the distance of the new additions from West Antietam Street are far enough away that they will not have an impact. Mr. Gehr said he would like to see the "~~front back~~" **the area towards the front of the property** included with the rendering to show what is proposed so he can understand the true scale of the front portion and how it relates to the back area. He asked if a window or relief feature could be worked into the area that is shown as tall, vertical siding. Another option would be to add a design, sign, or a color to break up the plain walls.

Mr. Bowen discussed the area behind the buildings that front on West Washington Street and the future parking deck. There are discussions about creating a plaza in the area behind these buildings that would tie in the Maryland Theatre, the Barbara Ingram School for the Arts, and the building at 55-59 West Washington Street. This area could be used as spillover areas for downtown festivals, such as Blues Fest or the Pop-Up Shops promotions. Rochester Place could be limited to delivery traffic only once the plaza is complete, creating a more pedestrian friendly space. Mr. Bowen cautioned that nothing has been programmed to date.

Concerning the proposed parking deck, Mr. Bowen stated the deck has been preliminarily designed for approximately 300 to 350 cars. There is room to make the deck wider but they would like to keep as much green space as possible. Washington County has expressed an interest in how the traffic will flow so it might be possible to abandon part of the road from here back so you can't come in this way. Mr. Bowen feels it might be more practical to keep the drive and delineate the road and sidewalk with colors and textures.

There was a discussion about the design of the rear portion of the building and how there is precedent in that the rear addition of the Barbara Ingram School for the Arts is a modern design.

Ms. Kreiger had concerns about the possible proliferation of modern additions downtown. If this area is going to become a place for events and Pop-Up Shops, the area will become a secondary streetscape. Mr. Gehr pointed out that the back of the building is a new structure so it can be different as long as it mirrors roof lines, heights, and proportions.

The commission agreed that it could act on the application for demolition. Staff suggested that one of the sets of plans be marked up to show the extent of the demolition for clarity. During discussions Mr. Bowen stated that the demolitions would occur as close as 48 feet from the front façade. Mr. Gehr suggested that the motion would give staff the ability to approve the demolition permit application as submitted based on the relative discussions at this meeting. If the plans are in conformance, Mr. Bockmiller could sign off on it at that time.

The commission amended the agenda to go into Design Review to consider an application for demolition of selected portions of this building.

MOTION: (Crumrine/Allen) So moved (to move Case No. HDC 2017-02 to Design Review).
DISCUSSION: None.
ACTION: APPROVED (Unanimous)

DESIGN REVIEW

55-59 West Washington Street – MSB Architects/Janelle Horst – Selected Demolitions, Case No. HDC 2017-02.

Staff Report: This building is a “B” resource in the Downtown Local Historic District. The applicant is proposing to demolish the third and fourth floors on the south side of the building and a modern addition on the rear of the property. Staff recommended approval with the condition that the applicant return to the commission within 60 days with plans for the treatment of the areas proposed for demolition. By approving this application, the applicant will be able to move forward with the demolition and staff would be able to approve the demolition permits with the understanding that plans will be submitted in a timely manner for the treatment of the raw edges of whatever is exposed after demolition. Most likely that will be the final design for the additions; however, Mr. Bockmiller suggested that the applicant have a back-up plan in the event the project does not continue to fruition. That will give the commission an idea of how the holes will be patched.

Applicant/Commission Discussion: Mr. Bowen had nothing to add. Mr. Gehr noted that if and when the commission is ready to make a motion, the motion should include that a plan be submitted that clearly identifies where the demolition begins and ends and a condition that once the demolition has been complete that temporary protection be added so the building is not left

open to the elements. Mr. Bockmiller also suggested that any motion contain a provision that demolition comes no closer than 48 feet from the front façade of the building.

MOTION: (Crumrine/Kreiger) Mr. Chairman, I have inspected the project plans and the property in question, and if constructed in accordance with these plans, considering that staff can approve based off of the stipulations outlined previously including a 48 feet from Washington Street, that measures are taken to temporarily enclose any demolished portions of the building, and that within 60 days the applicant returns to the commission with plans for the treatment. The project is compatible with the character of the district and generally in harmony with the Architectural Design Guidelines for the Downtown Historic District and the character of the adjoining properties. Therefore, I move that HDC grant a Certificate of Appropriateness to the applicant for Case No. HDC 2017-02.

DISCUSSION: Ms. Allen added that a marked-up drawing should be provided to indicate precisely where the demolitions will occur. Mr. Bockmiller stated that those details will be part of the demolition permit application. Mr. Gehr added that if and when the project comes to a stop, that permanent enclosure of any open areas due to demolition would be closed back up with a design subject to approval by the HDC. Mr. Crumrine and Ms. Kreiger agreed to both of the amendments.

ACTION: APPROVED, AS AMENDED (Unanimous)

ADJOURN

It was moved and seconded that the meeting adjourn (5:11 p.m.).

2/23/2017

Approved



Debra C. Calhoun – Secretary