

Preliminary Consultation
MONTGOMERY COUNTY HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
STAFF REPORT

Address:	7155 Wisconsin Avenue, Bethesda	Meeting Date:	1/9/2019
Resource:	Individually Listed Master Plan Site Farm Women’s Market (#35/14-1)	Report Date:	1/2/2019
Applicant:	Charles Hathway, Agent	Public Notice:	12/26/2018
Review:	Preliminary Consultation	Staff:	Rebecca Ballo
Proposal:	Site and building alterations, comprehensive rehabilitation and new construction		

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the applicant make revisions to the proposal based on feedback from Staff and the HPC and return for a second preliminary consultation

PROPERTY DESCRIPTION

SIGNIFICANCE: Individually Listed Master Plan Site
STYLE: Vernacular
DATE: 1932

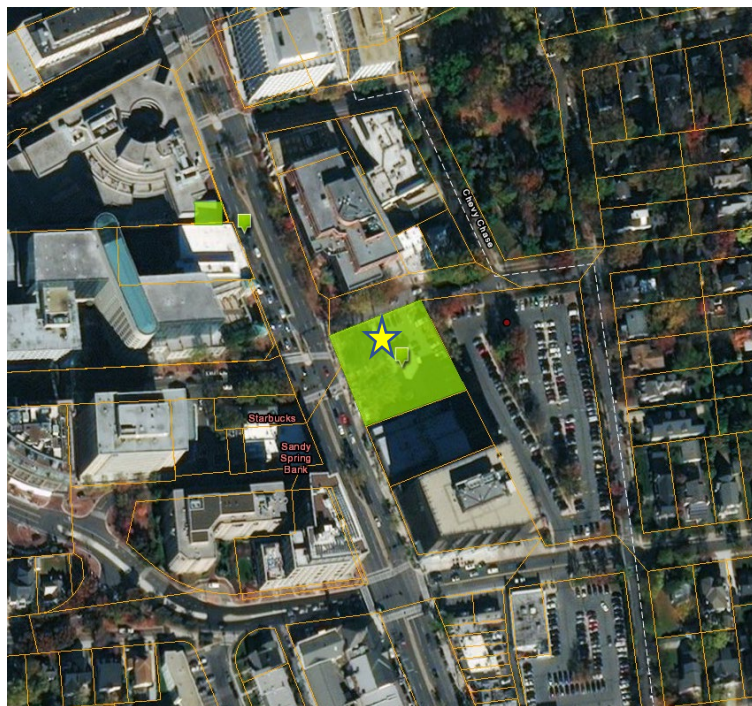


Figure 1: The Farm Women’s Market is identified with a yellow star.

From *Places from the Past*:

“A group of Montgomery County women formed the Farm Women’s Cooperative as a self-help response to the severe economic conditions of the Great Depression. In 1932, they held the first market in an empty Bethesda storefront, selling fresh produce and home-made products directly to suburban families. The women built the permanent Farm Women’s Market in 1932 and it has been in continuous use as a farm market ever since.”

From the MIHP form:

“The Farm Women’s Cooperative is important as a highly successful community institution and landmark, housed in a low-scale building which provides visual relief from the highrise growth around it. The idea of the cooperative came during the Depression in the 1930s. During the Depression, the rural areas were hit sharply. With the decline of farm prices, the farmers looked both to government and themselves for solutions. The market was started in 1934 [other sources note 1932] as a self-help project proposed by Blanche A. Corwin, a home demonstration agent for Montgomery County. She thought of it as a way to help the farmers out of the Depression. The women involved with the marker were all members of the “Home Demonstration Clubs” where were groups set up by the agent to demonstrate a multitude of domestic procedures.

The market faces west on Wisconsin Avenue. To the north, south, and east are parking lots. On the west (front) side, the market house is separated from the road by a gravel yard, a fence, and two large deciduous oak trees.”

Additional detailed historical information and information regarding the structure itself is contained in the MIHP form available here: http://mcatlas.org/HP/hpdocs/M_%2035-014-01.pdf

This historic site was one of the first designated in Montgomery County in 1979 with the adoption of the new Master Plan for Historic Preservation. It has been recognized as a unique historic site with a cherished heritage for many decades. The history of the Farm Women’s Cooperative is wholly unique in Montgomery County and the State of Maryland.

PROPOSAL

The applicant is proposing a comprehensive commercial and residential redevelopment project on the parcel containing the Farm Women’s Market. The proposal includes adjacent property to the south, east, and west across Wisconsin Avenue.

The environmental setting for this historic site is the entire existing parcel. Any alterations within this boundary, including but not limited to new construction, hardscape, tree removal, street improvements, site storage, and signage require HAWP approval from the HPC. Given the size and scope of this project it is to be expected that a number of HAWPs would be required. At this stage, the applicant is seeking a HAWP for site work related to the adjacent new construction and construction of a subterranean parking garage, moving the historic Farm Women’s Market, comprehensive rehabilitation of the Farm Women’s Market structure, construction of new

hardscape and new landscaping, tree removal, and streetscape improvements.

APPLICABLE GUIDELINES

When reviewing alterations and additions for new construction to an Individually Listed Master Plan Site, decisions are guided by the Montgomery County Code Chapter 24A (Chapter 24A) and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards (Standards). The newly adopted *Bethesda Downtown Plan* (2017)¹ and *Bethesda Downtown Plan Design Guidelines* (2017)² contain specific guidance for streetscape treatments, setbacks, design, public amenities, and preservation which also pertain to this block and the larger areas under consideration with the Sketch Plan.

Montgomery County Code, Chapter 24A Historic Resources Preservation

(b) The commission shall instruct the director to issue a permit, or issue a permit subject to such conditions as are found to be necessary to insure conformity with the purposes and requirements of this chapter, if it finds that:

- (1) The proposal will not substantially alter the exterior features of an historic site or historic resource within an historic district; or
- (2) The proposal is compatible in character and nature with the historical, archeological, architectural or cultural features of the historic site or the historic district in which an historic resource is located and would not be detrimental thereto or to the achievement of the purposes of this chapter; or
- (3) The proposal would enhance or aid in the protection, preservation and public or private utilization of the historic site or historic resource located within an historic district in a manner compatible with the historical, archeological, architectural or cultural value of the historic site or historic district in which an historic resource is located; or
- (4) The proposal is necessary in order that unsafe conditions or health hazards be remedied; or
- (5) The proposal is necessary in order that the owner of the subject property not be deprived of reasonable use of the property or suffer undue hardship; or
- (6) In balancing the interests of the public in preserving the historic site or historic resource located within an historic district, with the interests of the public from the use and benefit of the alternative proposal, the general public welfare is better served by granting the permit.

(c) It is not the intent of this chapter to limit new construction, alteration or repairs to any 1 period or architectural style.

¹ http://montgomeryplanning.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/BDP-COUNCIL-ADOPTED-MAY2017_SMALL-FOR-WEB.pdf

² http://montgomeryplanning.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/BDP-Urban-Design-Guidelines_Approved-July-2017_for-web.pdf

Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation

2. The historic character of a property will be retained and preserved. The removal of distinctive materials or alteration of features, space and spatial relationships that characterize a property will be avoided.
5. Distinctive materials, features, finishes and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property will be preserved.
6. Deteriorated historic features will be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature will match the old in design, color, texture, and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features will be substantiated by documentary and physical evidence.
9. New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction will not destroy historic materials, features, and spatial relationships that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and will be compatible with the historic materials, features, size, scale and proportions, and massing to protect the integrity of the property and its environment.
10. New additions and adjacent or related new construction will be undertaken in such a manner that, if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.

STAFF DISCUSSION

The applicant has filed a Sketch Plan for consideration by the Planning Board which encompasses the parcel containing the Farm Women's Market, as well as the parcel immediately to the south and parcels on the western side of Wisconsin Avenue; the proposal will be heard at a yet-to-be scheduled meeting in early 2019, potentially in February or March. The most recent Sketch Plan filings, which were partially included in the HPC submission, can be viewed at this link: http://www.mcatlas.org/Development_Info/default.aspx?apno=320190030

After Sketch Plan approval, the applicant will be required to file both Preliminary and Site Plan applications to the Planning Board for approval. It is expected that many aspects of this proposal will be changed, redesigned, and refined as staff, the public, the Bethesda Downtown Advisory Panel (DAP), and the HPC have the opportunity to review the plans and give feedback that the applicant will incorporate into subsequent submissions.

The applicant has completed an initial historic structures report with EHT Tracerics and Silman Structural Engineers which has been included for HPC review. Staff recommends that the HPC provide feedback during these initial preliminary consultations that focus on whether or not the alterations, *broadly considered and proposed* for the environmental setting, are compatible with or detrimental to the historic character of the site.

Alterations and topics to consider include the following:

- Appropriateness and potential adverse effects from moving the historic building to a different location on the site;
- Appropriateness and potential adverse effects from building below-grade structured parking underneath the historic building;

- Appropriateness of removing existing mature trees, and existing hardscape;
- Appropriateness of the approximate size, location, and proposed materials for new construction;
- Appropriateness of any newly proposed buildings or structures within the environmental setting, as well as the impact from adjacent new construction; and,
- Appropriateness of design and location of any proposed streetscape improvements that encroach within the parcel boundaries.

STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS

Staff recommends that the applicant make revisions to the design and Sketch Plan based on the feedback from the HPC and submit additional information for a second preliminary consultation.