

MONTGOMERY COUNTY HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
STAFF REPORT

Address:	10500 & 10520 St. Paul St., Kensington	Meeting Date:	3/13/19
Resource:	Primary Resources Kensington Historic District	Report Date:	3/6/19
Applicant:	McCaffery Interests	Public Notice:	2/27/19
Review:	HAWP	Tax Credit:	Yes
Case Number:	31/06-19C	Staff:	Rebecca Ballo
Proposal:	Partial demolition, rehabilitation, new construction, and site work.		

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the HPC **approve with two (2) conditions** the HAWP application.

- 1) That prior to replacing any wood elements, including windows, trim, decorative items, exterior structural members, that historic preservation staff be given final approval as to whether these items are so deteriorated that replacement is necessary, and that preservation staff review and approve the replacement materials prior to installation.
- 2) That the new standing seam roof proposed for the historic buildings match the existing. Final approval of the details are delegated to staff. If the new roof system is unable to be field turned to match the existing, the applicant must return for a HAWP revision.

PROPERTY DESCRIPTION

SIGNIFICANCE: Primary Resources to the Kensington Historic District
STYLE: Folk Victorian & Commercial
DATE: c. 1900 & 1930

The property evaluated for this HAWP consists of two historic buildings that have been combined to operate as a single business. Both structures are categorized as Primary Resources in the Kensington Historic District.

The Folk Victorian-styled commercial building at 10500 St. Paul Street is located at the intersection of St. Paul Street and the adjacent railroad tracks. The building features a steeply pitched front gable roof, clapboard siding, three bays wide, with a full-width hipped front porch, and a small window in the front gable end.

The 20th-century roadside commercial building at 10520 St. Paul Street (located to the north of the other building) is orientated towards the highly visible corner of St. Paul Street and Metropolitan Avenue. The Metropolitan Avenue façade has a side gable roof and with the principal entrance to the left, and a large divided lite storefront window. The St. Paul Street façade has a divided lite storefront window to the right, with a pair of casement windows an entrance door, and a vehicle door to the left. This structure dates to the mid-1930s, though an earlier commercial structure was in this location by 1924 per Sanborn maps. The building featured a breeze and weigh station that connected to the neighboring building at 10500 St. Paul Street. That structure largely conforms to the footprint of the existing connector. The

earlier building was demolished by 1936 when the existing gas station appears on the Sanborn maps.

By 1924, the two buildings were first combined with the breezeway that allowed them to operate and function as a single building. The connectors are frame construction with clapboard siding. Both buildings also have later additions to the rear; these additions are located within the historic district, but are not considered to contribute to the historical or architectural character of these buildings or the larger district. The remainder of the site functions as an industrial storage yard. A historic gas station sign remains on the site adjacent to the Metropolitan Avenue frontage. This sign is a contributing element to the historic district; it is the only such site element to be retained, in addition to the historic structures on site.

BACKGROUND

The applicant proposes to rehabilitate the two historic buildings, construct a five-story senior housing complex to the rear of the two historic buildings, and create a new connection between the historic buildings and the adjacent new construction. New site work, curb cuts, and other improvements are also proposed.

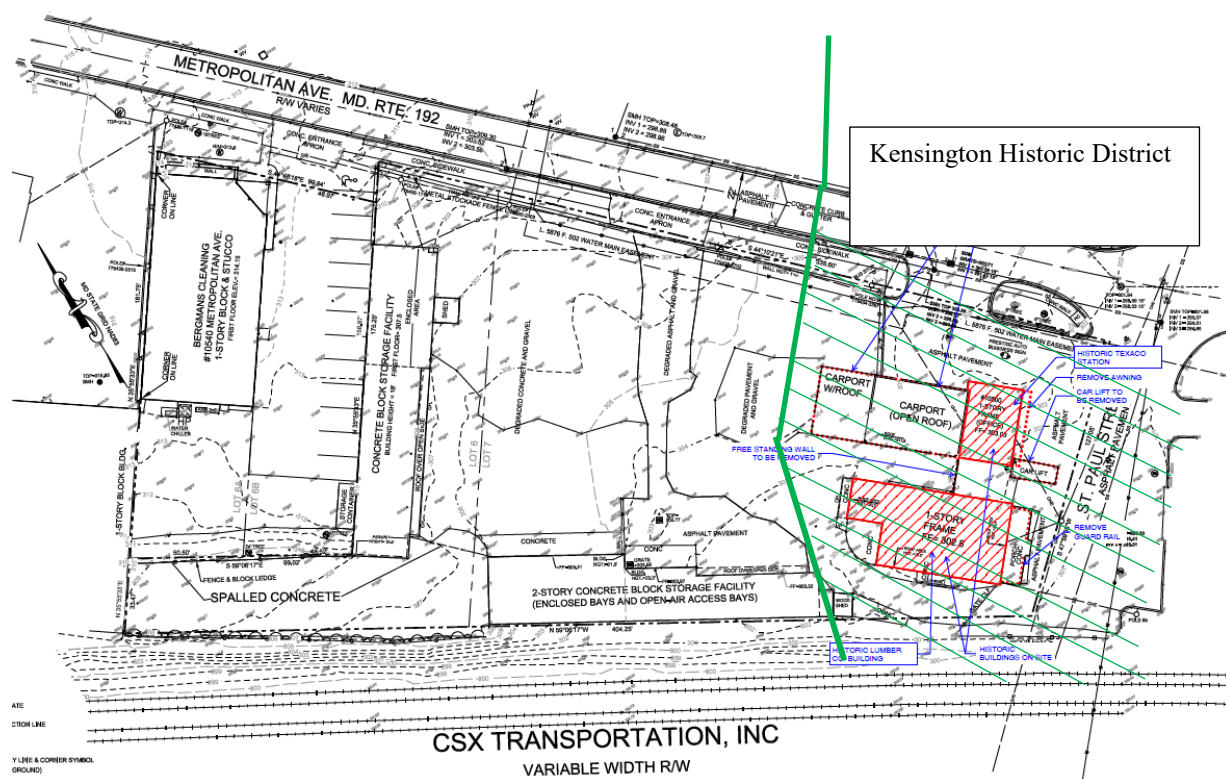


Figure 1: The proposed building site. The portion of the lot to the right of the green line is within the Kensington Historic District.

This case was previously heard as a Preliminary Consultation at the March 14th, September 5th, October 10th, and October 24th HPC meetings. The HPC and staff have given direction on the size, mass, scale, and height of the new addition, including determinations of appropriateness on hardscape alterations, proposed materials, and other issues. The HPC wrote a letter of support to the Planning Board for

consideration at its hearing on the Preliminary Plan and Site Plan for this development as part of the record for its December 20, 2018 hearing.¹

The applicant has finalized their Historic Structures Report and has enough information to return to the HPC for a HAWP.

APPLICABLE GUIDELINES

When reviewing alterations and new construction within the Kensington Historic District several documents are to be utilized as guidelines to assist the Commission in developing their decision. These documents include the *Approved & Adopted Amendment to the Master Plan for Historic Preservation: Kensington Historic District, Atlas #31/6 (Amendment)*, *Vision of Kensington: A Long-Range Preservation Plan (Vision)*, *Montgomery County Code Chapter 24A (Chapter 24A)*, and the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation (Standards)*. The pertinent information in these documents is outlined below.

Montgomery County Code; Chapter 24A-8

- (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.

¹ March 14, 2018 HPC Meeting Audio:

http://mncppc.granicus.com/MediaPlayer.php?publish_id=6b25f5fe-2865-11e8-8a08-00505691de41

September 5, 2018 HPC Meeting Audio:

http://mncppc.granicus.com/MediaPlayer.php?publish_id=0828a68e-b78f-11e8-a2a6-0050569183fa

October 10, 2018 HPC Meeting Audio:

http://mncppc.granicus.com/MediaPlayer.php?publish_id=af96f600-d92e-11e8-9302-0050569183fa

October 24, 2018 HPC Meeting Audio:

http://mncppc.granicus.com/MediaPlayer.php?publish_id=ec4cae7f-d92e-11e8-9302-0050569183fa

December 20, 2018 Montgomery County Planning Board Meeting Video:

http://mncppc.granicus.com/MediaPlayer.php?view_id=7&clip_id=1973

- (c) It is not the intent of this chapter to limit new construction, alteration or repairs to any 1 period or architectural style.
- (d) In the case of an application for work on an historic resource located within an historic district, the commission shall be lenient in its judgment of plans for structures of little historical or design significance or for plans involving new construction, unless such plans would seriously impair the historic or architectural value of surrounding historic resources or would impair the character of the historic district. (Ord. No. 9-4, § 1; Ord. No. 11-59.)

Vision of Kensington: A Long-Range Preservation Plan

The HPC formally adopted the planning study, *Vision of Kensington: A Long-Range Preservation Plan*, and is directed by the Executive Regulations, which were approved by the County Council, to use this plan when considering changes and alterations to the Kensington Historic District. The goal of this preservation plan "was to establish a sound database of information from, which to produce a document that would serve the HPC, M-NCPPC, their staff and the community in wrestling with the protection of historic districts amidst the pressures of life in the 21st century." (page 1). The plan provides a specific physical description of the district as it is; an analysis of character-defining features of the district; a discussion of the challenges facing the district; and a discussion of proposed strategies for maintaining the character of the district while allowing for appropriate growth and change.

The *Vision* identifies the following, as those features that help define the character of Kensington's built environment:

- Building Setbacks: Residential and Commercial Patterns
- Rhythm of Spacing between Buildings
- Geographic and Landscape Features
- Scale and Building Height
- Directional Expression of Building
- Roof Forms and Material
- Porches
- Dominant Building Material
- Outbuildings
- Integrity of Form, Building Condition, and Threats
- Architectural Style

The *Amendment* notes that:

The district is architecturally significant as a collection of late 19th and early 20th century houses exhibit a variety of architectural styles popular during the Victorian period including Queen Anne, Shingle, Eastlake, and Colonial Revival. The houses share a uniformity of scale, setbacks, and construction materials that contribute to the cohesiveness of the district's streetscapes. This uniformity, coupled with the dominant design inherent in Warner's original plan of subdivision, conveys a strong sense of both time and place, that of a Victorian garden suburb.

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.

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 proposes to demolish the non-historic additions to the rear, rehabilitate the two subject buildings, create a new interior connection, and integrate them with the larger proposed five-story senior housing facility.

Demolition of Non-Historic Additions

Staff finds that the proposal to remove the non-historic additions should be approved as part of this HAWP. They do not contribute to the historic character of the buildings or surrounding district and the demolition meets the criteria for approval under Chapter 24A.8.d.

Building Rehabilitation/Gas Station Sign

The applicant proposes to utilize the two historic buildings as part of the new development. The project includes the rehabilitation of two historic buildings, including the repair and retention of the historic fabric (i.e. retention of windows and doors, clapboard replacement as needed). Where features are too deteriorated to be repaired, the applicant proposes to replace them in-kind. The detailed Historic Structures Report from EHT Traceries discusses the proposed methods and investigations the applicant will undertake to examine each extant feature and how the applicant will work the historic preservation staff to determine if a feature, such as the German lap siding, is too deteriorated to use, or whether it will be replaced in kind.

10500 St. Paul Street will have minor alterations as part of this HAWP. On the north elevation, a new cased door opening will be introduced; this will only be visible from the interior of the new construction. On the east elevation (façade facing St. Paul Street), portions of the sloping roof on the “wings” of the building will be lowered to have a 1/12 slope. Per the Traceries report, these portions of the roof have been built up over time, have contributed to water infiltration, are not structurally sound, and are not historic. Removing the multiple layers of built up roof and framing are appropriate under Chapter 24A.8.b.3 and 4. Finally, an existing basement window on the south elevation will be removed. The opening will be patched with wood siding to match the existing.

The gas station sign is proposed to remain extant and no work is proposed for the sign.

New Hyphen/Connector

After demolishing the non-historic additions, the applicant proposes new construction between the two historic buildings and the proposed new construction. Previous iterations showed a large building addition that would have connected 10500 & 10520 in place of the existing breezeway. This connection to 10520 St. Paul Street has been greatly reduced so that it consists of only a small hyphen that will connect to 10500 St. Paul Street to the south in much the same way that the existing hyphen does. The entire connector has been set back considerably from Metropolitan Avenue, creating a larger

hardscape/courtyard area that allows for an enhanced pedestrian setting and plaza. The connector has also been set back further from St. Paul Street.

The applicant has chosen a material palette that consists of traditional masonry elements (brick, metal, precast concrete), mixed with modern materials (rainscreen metal panels, veneers). The design has been modified so that these modern materials, save for the large panes of glass in the hyphen, are located outside of the historic district boundaries.

Sitework

The applicant proposes to construct a five-story senior housing building to the rear of the historic buildings. The applicant has provided renderings and elevations of this proposed new construction to the HPC. Based on direction from HP and Planning Department staff, the applicant has chosen a design that takes cues from the industrial related history of Kensington as a turn-of-the-century, Victorian railroad suburb. The new design reduces the massing at the corner within the historic district; and features a reconfigured fenestration pattern and material palette that reflects traditional design vocabulary that does not overwhelm the historic buildings. In addition, the use of these traditional design elements serves as a bridge to the new construction that will span the remainder of the block.

The HPC provided feedback regarding these design changes and found at its October 10, 2018 meeting that the applicant had been responsive to previous concerns and comments.

Historic Structure Report

The applicant has engaged the service of EHT Tracerics to undertake a comprehensive documentation and assessment of the oldest building on the site located at 10500 St. Paul Street. The service station building located at 10520 St. Paul Street has a much clearer construction date of the mid-1930s, and the character defining features of that building are in overall better condition.

The building at 10500 St. Paul Street was constructed c. 1900 adjacent to the B & O railroad tracks and the Kensington Station. Tracerics has undertaken archival and map research that tracks the evolution of the building from 1897 to the present day. A condition assessment of all elements of the building from the foundation, sill plate, and roofs, to all exterior elements has been provided for review. The preservation recommendations in the report have a sound basis in the Secretary of the Interior's Standards. Essentially, where original building elements exist, primarily in the core of the historic building dating from the period of 1900-1924 and on limited locations on the exterior, Tracerics recommend they be repaired rather than replaced. Elements that have clearly been replaced or replicated over time, including large portions of the siding, roofs, and additional window openings, are accompanied by recommendations for replacement in-kind. The report has the caveat, as would any field investigation performed by staff, that some determinations regarding whether or not a building element is original to the c. 1900-1924 building may be amended once selective demolition and rehabilitation work begins. The applicant has committed to working closely with staff so that any questions that arise about preservation treatments will be addressed before any work is undertaken. This assessment was provided in a briefing to the HPC in October 2018 and remains largely unchanged.

Staff does not concur with one recommendation of the Tracerics report regarding the restoration of the front porch elements of the Mizell building and would ask the HPC to discuss this issue further. An assessment of the decorative brackets and other elements of the front porch, coupled with photographic evidence, show that much, if not the entirety, of the decorative woodwork on the front porch is not original to this structure. The applicant is proposing to remove this woodwork and restore the porch to a simpler appearance without the turned posts, balusters, and decorative brackets. This is a sound preservation approach and could be approved under the HPC's standards and guidelines. However, the highly-visible woodwork has existed since the designation of the historic district and is a minor

architectural elaboration that does not negatively affect the overall character of the building or the district. While not original, they are familiar and charming visual elements of this vernacular building. Rehabilitating these elements instead of removing them would not detract from the historic district and could help provide continuity as part of a redevelopment that will introduce many new features within and adjacent to the district. Staff would ask the HPC to weigh the merits of keeping these architectural features as part of the HAWP discussion.

Overall Project Recommendations

Staff finds that the design and site plan for this project, as well as the preservation treatments proposed for the historic resources, meet the standards. Reducing the footprint and location of the connector, removing and reducing the new building massing at the corner within the environmental setting, revising and enhancing the courtyard, removing the sound wall, and choosing a more traditional material palette that fundamentally relates to the history and architectural tradition of Kensington are all notable improvements. The applicant responded to previous comments by continuing the red brick palette around the entire east and southern portions of the building that are both in and adjacent to the historic district. The use of a traditional fenestration pattern, with punched openings and “blinds” in selected locations enable these elevations to be complementary to the character of the adjacent buildings and district. Staff finds that the continuation of this architectural treatment successfully mitigate previous concerns regarding massing, size, and design. Additionally, the applicant has articulated the corners of the historic buildings, including the southwest corner of 10500 St. Paul Street. The applicant has retained all of the historic roof forms and projections on both buildings to the extent possible as detailed in the Historic Structures Report.

The material treatment of the hyphen has been discussed many times. Different materials including brick, siding, and glass curtain walls have been tried in this location to tie the historic buildings to the new construction in a way that is architecturally compatible. The design of the adjacent courtyard is an integral part of this element as well. The HPC gave final direction in October that the applicant should use a glass window wall system with dark gray, metal, ACM panels. The height of the hyphen does not vary with the grade, rather there are interior changes as well as a series of steps (including handrails) within the courtyard that bridge the grade change between the historic buildings and the new construction of the senior living center. This new hyphen and its mix of glass and metal panels use color and details to match elements on the new five-story building adjacent to the historic district. This is an appropriate treatment as the hyphen serves as both a physical and design connector between the historic buildings and the new construction.

Smaller changes in the courtyard, including shifting planter boxes, and installing decorative pavers throughout also serve to connect the historic buildings and new construction so that the entire project compatibly fits within the historic district. Handrails within the courtyard will be simple, metal with a dark gray finish. Pavers will extend across the historic district boundary and cross the proposed driveway further strengthening the visual continuity of the courtyard as it crosses the district line and serving as a reminder for drivers that this is a pedestrian oriented area.

STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS

Staff recommends that the Commission **approve with the two conditions noted on Circle 1 above**, that the HAWP application under the Criteria for Issuance in Chapter 24A-8(b), (1), (2) & (d) having found that the proposal is consistent with the *Vision of Kensington*, and therefore will not substantially alter the exterior features of the historic resource and is compatible in character with the district and the purposes of Chapter 24A;

and with the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation* #2, 6, 9, and 10;

and with the general condition that the applicant shall present the **3 permit sets of drawings, if applicable to Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) staff for review and stamping** prior to submission for the Montgomery County Department of Permitting Services (DPS) building permits;

and with the general condition that final project design details, not specifically delineated by the Commission, shall be approved by HPC staff or brought back to the Commission as a revised HAWP application at staff's discretion;

and with the general condition that the applicant shall notify the Historic Preservation Staff if they propose to make **any alterations** to the approved plans.

Once the work is completed the applicant will contact the staff person assigned to this application at 301-563-3400 or Rebecca.ballo@montgomeryplanning.org to schedule a follow-up site visit.