

Staff Report- February 12, 2013
825 South Bond Street
Baltimore City Historic District- Fells Point

Plan: Concept Review New Construction, Hearing 1.

Staff Presenter : W. Edward Leon

Applicant : Mr. Hercenberg & Ms. Klein

Architects: James Shetler

Consultant: Al Barry

Background

This two unit project is coming for a Concept Review Hearing of a New construction in the Fells Point historic district. It is being reviewed in accordance with the Major Project Review Procedure. The site is located in the eastern side of the Fells Point historic district.

Plans

The plan is to construct a four story rowhouse on an empty lot site that had been demolished over 30 years ago. The proposal includes a ground floor front facade accessed garage, a contemporary rear construction with nearly full lot coverage and a three story front facade built with historically compatible masonry materials. There are two housing units proposed in the new construction.

Analysis

The staff has reviewed the site and found that the site had a three story high brick residential structure which collapsed more than 30 years ago, which was built sometime well before the 1860s. The design precedent on this site and in the immediate area is generally three story residential structures. The adjacent structure also includes a storefront. There are no historic garage front entrances in the immediate area being this block. The staff applied the following Standards for the review of the project:

- *Standard 9. New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment. Note: CHAP interprets standard nine in such a way that new work may be subtly different from the old, allowing for new additions and buildings to replicate historic architectural details.*
- *Standard 10. New additions and adjacent or related new construction shall 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.*

The staff applied the following Guidelines in the review of these projects: *11.1 Guiding principles for new design, 11.2 Site Design, 11.3 Scale and form, and 11.4 Building Features.*

The size, scale and massing has been reviewed and approved by the BMZA. (see attached for Dept. Planning comments and BMZA ruling)

Although the size, scale and massing is consistent with other precedents of new construction and additions that the Commission has previously approved, it is not consistent with the surrounding buildings. There has been considerable concern raised by both neighbors and objections made by the Fells Point DRC regarding the near full lot coverage created by the two structures on the site.

The proposal is planning on using the following materials: Clad wood windows, hardie panel with batten strips, cedar or fiber cement siding, architectural shingles, brick, metal clad wood windows, four over four wood windows, and wood trim. The materials list follows and has been used throughout new construction on the Fells Point historic district.

The elevation of the north and south facades while contemporary in style and higher than the surrounding structures is consistent with the guidelines. The rear elevations of the main structure and the second/rental unit are also consistent with the stated guidelines.

The proposed front elevation garage front entrance in this location is not in compliance with the guidelines. The first floor shows a garage front entry and main entry door on what is a primarily residential setting. The garage front has been approved by the commission in other locations where there is historic precedent such as alley streets or other historic garage like structures. The inclusion of the garage front in this location is in complete contradiction to the CHAP guidelines Chapter 11, p.63 which states *1) Design and place garage entrances and doors to be compatible with surrounding buildings and 2) Do not place garage entrances on front facades where there is no historic precedent.* There is no historic precedent for a garage front on this site or in this block.

Other nearby garage front doors were either built historically as carriage houses on secondary streets or as new construction before the district the created in 2007. Additionally, the majority of the garage doors are contemporary roll up rather than open up on traditional hinges.

The remaining second story and third story facade treatment with brick and wood windows is appropriate and conforms to the CHAP guidelines. The details proposed for the cornice also is appropriate. The fourth story front facade while appropriate in style and material is currently set 15 feet from the front cornice edge.

Staff Recommendation

The staff recommends that the applicants consider reducing the overall height massing and scale of the rear portion to be more consistent with the scale, form, and massing of the surrounding buildings (Guidelines 11.1, 11.2, 11.3, 11.4)

The recommends dis-approval of the garage front entrance on the main facade and that the applicants submit a revised design that conforms to the stated guidelines. (Guidelines 11.4)

Aerial Views of the Site from North Looking South



Aerial View of the Site looking East



Aerial View of the Site Looking West



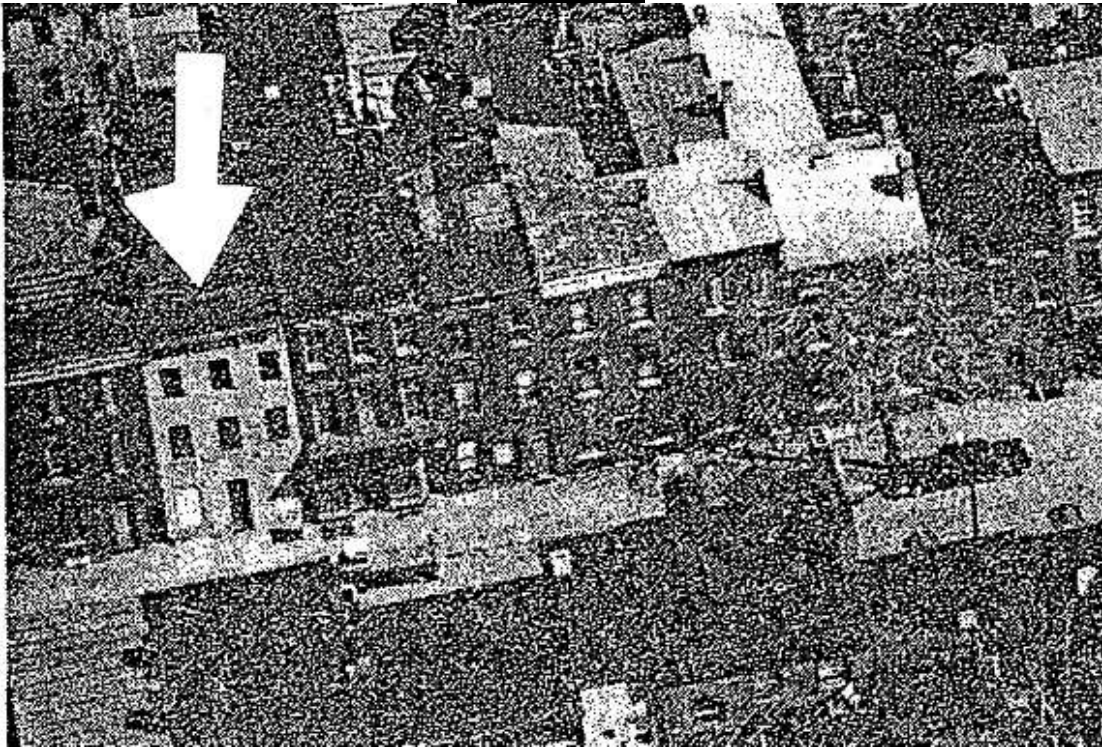
Aerial View of the Site Looking North



Current View



Historic View



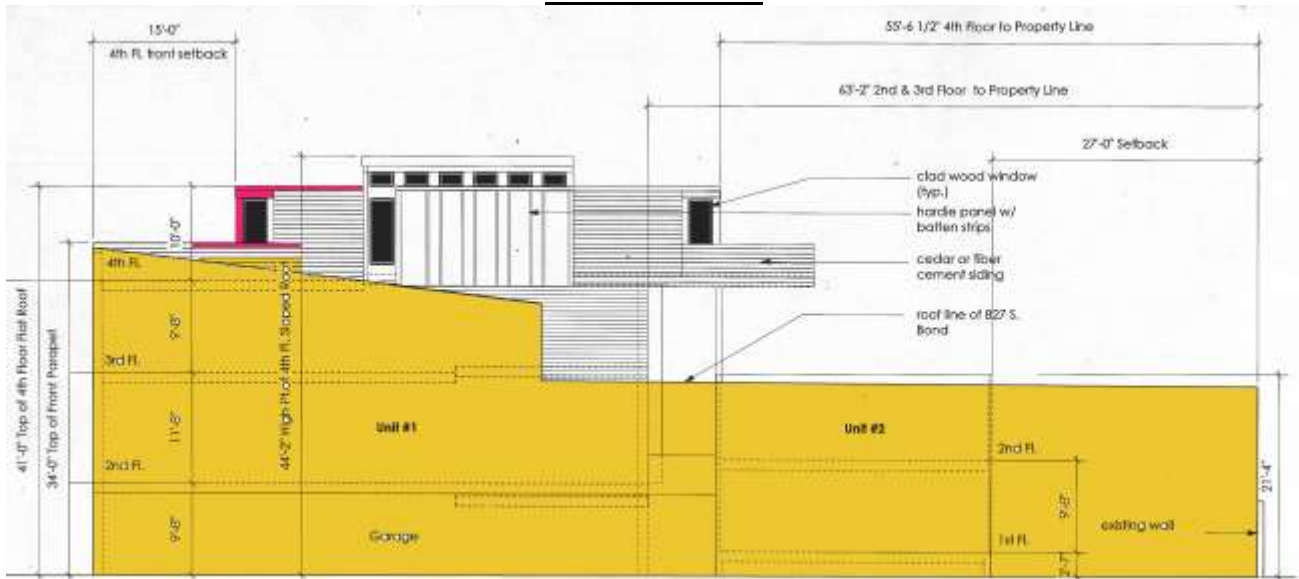
Current View



Front/West Elevation



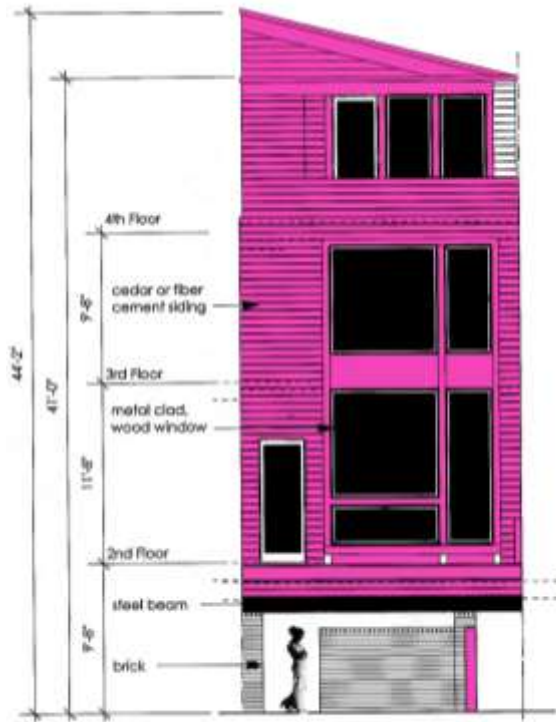
South Elevation



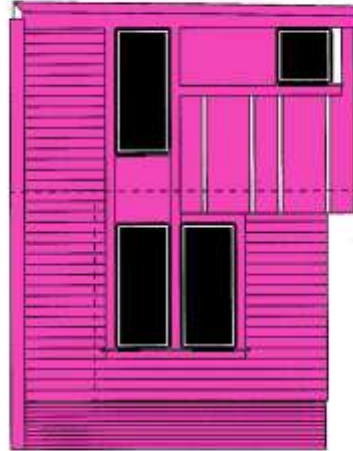
North Elevation



Rear/East Elevation



Unit #1 East Elevation
Scale: 1/8" = 1'-0"



Unit #2 East Elevation
Scale: 1/8" = 1'-0"



Zoning Attachments

The Department of Planning commented twice on the zoning appeal for variances associated with 825 South Bond Street. The first comments were for the February 7, 2012 hearing on a proposed 4-story building with 1st-floor parking level and 3 upper levels of living space, attached only by a deck system to a 2-story rear building intended to be a separate rental unit. That rear building would have been within 3' of the rear property line. The applicant postponed that hearing in order to redesign the building to reduce the amount of rear-yard variance required from 27' out of the 30' required rear yard to 3' out of the required 30' rear yard – a lesser amount of variance to which the Department had no objection if the BMZA chose to approve it. At both hearings the Department considered the ground-level (1st floor level) parking area unnecessary as there would be no net gain of off-street parking spaces, as they are defined in the Zoning Code in terms of accessibility to the street, over the currently-possible 2 spaces that would be created on-street by lifting of the parking ban in front of the curb cut. If the curb cut did not already exist both the Department of Planning and the Department of Transportation, and the Parking Authority of Baltimore City, would have opposed consideration of 1st-floor parking as part of the building design, and none would have “signed off on” any permit to create it as a driveway for the new building.

The BMZA approved the revised application for a 2-dwelling unit building with a 3' variance of the rear-yard setback requirement. Actual design and final form of the building into which the approved use is to go was made subject to CHAP approval.

Land Use and Urban Design: While this Department's policy that curb-cuts in residential neighborhoods are inappropriate except where an existing carriage house is involved remains in effect, the facts that there is an existing curb-cut in front of this property, and that the design of the proposed structure must be approved by the Commission for Historical and Architectural Preservation, tend to reserve to that Commission the final determination of whether or not there should be a parking garage incorporated in the proposed structure.

There is an existing curb-cut in front of the property, and there is angled parking on this (east) side of Bond Street. If the curb-cut would be closed two on-street angled parking spaces could be created, enough to satisfy the additional demand that would be created by construction of two dwelling units at this location. This Department's policy is that curb-cuts in residential neighborhoods such as Fells Point are inappropriate except where an existing carriage house is involved, which is not the case with this property. The applicant should redesign the dwelling units to remove the ground-floor tandem parking, which in turn would free that portion of the property for use as living space and allow a revised design that would not require a fourth level or as large a rear yard setback variance. (*comment on original 2-building design*)

The Department of Planning recommends that approval of this appeal, if granted, be conditional upon approval by the Commission for Historical and Architectural Preservation of the design and construction of the proposed two-family dwelling, and should that approval include approval of a front-loading garage within the structure, approval also by the City's Department of Transportation of continuation of the curb-cut now located in front of the property.