

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

NCPC File No. 6422



ARTHUR CAPPER/CARROLLSBURG HOPE VI REDEVELOPMENT PROJECT PRELIMINARY AND FINAL SITE AND BUILDING PLANS

The portion on Squares 797, 798, 824, 825, S-825, and 880; bounded by 3rd Street, SE on the west, Virginia Avenue, SE on the north, 7th Street, SE on the east, and M Street, SE on the south

Submission by the District of Columbia Housing Authority

January 29, 2004

Abstract

The District of Columbia Housing Authority, through a partnership with private developers and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), is constructing a new mixed-income, mixed-use project known as the Arthur Capper/Carrollsborg HOPE VI Redevelopment Project in Southeast Washington, DC. This project will replace an existing public housing complex on all or parts of 13 Squares with a one-for-one replacement of the approximately 700 public housing units currently on the site, and add new senior housing as well as market-rate townhouses, condominiums, and apartments, for a total of 1645 housing units overall. The Arthur Capper/Carrollsborg project will utilize approximately \$35 million in HOPE VI funding provided by HUD, making it the largest HOPE VI project in the nation to date. This major new redevelopment will create not only new housing, but also new neighborhood-serving retail, a community center, a new park and several office buildings, resulting in a vibrant new community connecting the Capitol Hill neighborhood to the Anacostia waterfront. The submitted project represents only a portion of this overall redevelopment project on all or parts of six Squares, including most of the townhouse-style housing units, a new mid-rise senior housing building and an addition to an existing senior housing building. The remainder of the project will be developed at a later date and reviewed by NCPC at that time. The entire project encompasses approximately 33 acres of land. The project is located on the north side of M Street, SE across the street from the planned U.S. Department of Transportation Headquarters and the Southeast Federal Center.

Commission Action Requested by Applicant

Approval of preliminary and final site and building plans pursuant to Section 5 of the National Capital Planning Act (40 U.S.C. § 8722(b)(1)).

Executive Director's Recommendation

The Commission:

Approves the preliminary and final site and building plans for the Arthur Capper/Carrollsbury HOPE VI redevelopment project on Squares 797, 798, 824, 825, S-825, and 880, bounded by 3rd Street, SE on the west, Virginia Avenue, SE on the north, 7th Street, SE on the east, and M Street, SE on the south as shown on NCPC Map File Number 41.10(38.00)41296, **except for**:

- The design of Senior Housing Building 2, which places a blank wall above the ground floor along M Street, SE, an identified Special Street in the Preservation and Historic Features Element of the Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital.

Recommends that:

- The south wall of Senior Housing Building 2 facing M Street, SE, be redesigned to include fenestration above the ground floor where feasible, use of higher quality building materials such as brick or stone, and further detail such as patterned brick work as appropriate on the wall's exterior where it is visible from M Street;
- The project's landscaping along M Street, SE, to be included in phase 2 of the redevelopment project, comply with the landscaping plan previously developed by the District of Columbia Department of Public Works and the U.S. Navy, and subsequently approved by NCPC in 1999;
- For Senior Building 2, the ground floor design along 4th and 5th Streets, SE be modified by incorporating landscape or other screening material, to significantly reduce the amount of building frontage along these streets that presents a blank wall at the sidewalk level;
- The design of Senior Building 1 be modified to reduce the visual impact of the garage door on the building's east façade by using more articulated and transparent materials such as wrought iron instead of a solid door and by minimizing the size of the door, and that blank portions of exterior wall along the building's east and west facades at the parking garage level be further articulated and screened, for example, with landscaping;
- The DC Housing Authority verify that the loading bay for Senior Housing Building 2 is of adequate depth to allow delivery vehicles to clear the sidewalk on 5th Street, SE;
- For the townhouse-style housing units, the applicant redesign the layout of these units to eliminate the condition where fronts of houses abut the sides of other houses across narrow walkways;
- For townhouse-style housing units type A and E, the applicant redesign the units to place a vestibule or other occupied space between the ground floor garage and the front wall of the house;

- All building fronts along 3 ½ Street, SE in Square 797 be positioned along the established build-to line on that street; and
- The use of vinyl siding, cementitious fiber board and exterior insulation finishing systems (EIFS) be limited to areas that are not visible from any public or private street.

* * *

BACKGROUND AND STAFF EVALUATION

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The District of Columbia Housing Authority, through a partnership with private developers and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), is constructing a new mixed-income, mixed-use project known as the Arthur Capper/Carrollsborg HOPE VI Redevelopment Project in Southeast Washington, DC. This project will replace an existing public housing complex on all or parts of 13 Squares with a one-for-one replacement of the approximately 700 public housing units currently on the site, and add new senior housing as well as market-rate townhouses, condominiums, and apartments, for a total of 1645 housing units overall. The Arthur Capper/Carrollsborg project will utilize approximately \$35 million in HOPE VI funding provided by HUD, making it the largest HOPE VI project in the nation to date. This major new redevelopment will create not only new housing, but also new neighborhood-serving retail, a community center, a new park and several office buildings, resulting in a vibrant new community connecting the Capitol Hill neighborhood to the Anacostia waterfront. The submitted project represents only a portion of this overall redevelopment project on all or parts of six Squares, including most of the townhouse-style housing units, a new mid-rise senior housing building and an addition to an existing senior housing building. The remainder of the project will be developed at a later date and reviewed by NCPC at that time. The entire project encompasses approximately 33 acres of land. The project is located on the north side of M Street, SE across the street from the planned U.S. Department of Transportation Headquarters and the Southeast Federal Center.

The submitted portion of the Arthur Capper/Carrollsborg HOPE VI redevelopment project consists of 233 market rate and subsidized housing units in townhouse-style buildings, and 219 senior apartments in two mid-rise buildings. The townhouse-style buildings range in height from 30 to 45 feet, depending upon the characteristics of existing townhouses on adjacent blocks. The two senior buildings are approximately 45 feet in height. The primary exterior building material for all of the buildings in this project is brick, although other materials are used on exterior walls that are less visible from the street. Other materials used include exterior insulation finishing systems (EIFS), cementitious fiberboard and vinyl siding. The exterior character of the townhouse-style buildings is consistent with that of the historic row houses of Capitol Hill. Although the majority of new housing units consist of apartments, the apartments are contained within buildings that read clearly as row houses from the street. With the exception of unit type C, garage entrances are confined to alleys. The garage door for unit type C opens onto the street on the side of the unit. This condition occurs only twice in the entire development, both times in Square 797.

According to the submission, ninety percent of the street frontage of the development conforms to the build-to lines established along the historic street right-of-way lines. The other ten percent consists of open courts with townhouse units arranged around the courts. Placement of street trees at 40 feet on center in a planting strip between sidewalk and street, and use of fifteen foot high Washington Globe street lighting is consistent with the adjoining Capitol Hill neighborhood to the north. Six foot wide concrete sidewalks will be used throughout the development.

DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

Applicant: District of Columbia Housing Authority (DCHA)
Architects: Lessard Architectural Group, Torti Gallas and Partners
Cost: \$96 million, including \$35 million in HOPE VI funds from HUD
Schedule: Construction start summer 2004

PREVIOUS COMMISSION ACTION

1999 M Street Streetscape Plan

At its regularly scheduled meeting on July 1, 1999, the Commission approved portions of the M Street Streetscape Improvements submitted by the District of Columbia Department of Public Works, including the scheme for street trees on M Street, SE and New Jersey Avenue, SE in the vicinity of the Capper/Carrollsborg project. The M Street Streetscape Improvements plan calls for a double row of street trees along the entire length of M Street, SE in the project area and along New Jersey Avenue, SE near its intersection with M Street. Landscaping submitted for the Capper/Carrollsborg project is not consistent with this plan.

January 2004 Referral from DC Zoning Commission: Section 8 Review

At its regularly scheduled meeting on January 8, 2004, the Commission approved the release of comments on this project to the District of Columbia Zoning Commission under Section 8 of the National Capital Planning Act. In response to the Commission's comments, the Zoning Commission withheld final action on this project and requested that the applicant submit additional design materials that addressed the Commission's concerns regarding the south wall of Senior Housing Building 2, facing M Street, SE.

EVALUATION

The Capper/Carrollsborg HOPE VI Redevelopment project is a commendable effort that will repair the urban fabric south of Capitol Hill, provide housing for low income residents and create a lively new neighborhood. The project will provide both market-rate and affordable housing within walking distance of Metrorail and nearby federal employment centers, allowing city residents to access jobs, neighborhood services, and new park space in a mixed-income neighborhood. Its design will reconnect historic streets and link Capitol Hill to the Anacostia waterfront. The project's architecture and its urban design are appropriate to its setting, and will enhance the surrounding neighborhoods. The Arthur Capper/Carrollsborg project represents an important opportunity for the city to create high-quality affordable and subsidized housing that is well-integrated with market-rate housing units.

While staff's analysis of the project design is favorable, the following aspects of the project could be improved:

Senior Housing Building 1

The parking garage entrance for Senior Housing Building 1 is on the building's east façade near the southeast corner of the building. The entrance is protected by a solid steel door that is approximately 20 feet in width. Because of the surrounding grade of the building's site on Square 880, a significant portion of the building's east wall at the parking garage level is exposed, presenting a blank building face toward the street. This condition is exaggerated by the presence of the 20 foot wide garage door. Staff recommends that the design of Senior Housing Building 1 be modified to reduce the visual impact of the garage door on the building's east façade, and that blank portions of exterior wall along the building's east and west facades at the parking garage level be further articulated and screened with landscaping. (See attachments 3 and 4.)

Senior Housing Building 2

The south wall of Senior Housing Building 2 fronts M Street, SE, a designated special street in the federal elements of the comprehensive plan. M Street, SE is also the main commercial corridor serving both the redeveloped Southeast Federal Center and the Capper/Carrollsborg, essentially the "Main Street" for the southeast quadrant of the City north of the Anacostia River. As designed, the south wall of Senior Housing Building 2 has no windows above the ground floor and very little architectural detail. Additionally, it is to be faced with an exterior insulation finishing system (EIFS), which is constructed from insulation board and light weight stucco. Staff recommends that the south wall of this building be redesigned where it fronts M Street, SE to include fenestration above the ground floor where feasible and higher quality building materials, such as brick or stone, as well as further articulation of detail on the wall's exterior in all areas where it is visible from M Street. Staff understands that the project's architect has already begun design improvements to this façade based on Commission comments made in response to the Section 8 review in January of this year.

The ground floor of Senior Housing Building 2 consists almost entirely of the building's parking garage, resulting in blank exterior surfaces constructed of split-faced concrete masonry units (CMU) on three sides, including the sides that face 4th and 5th Streets, SE. Staff recommends that the design of this building be modified, for example with landscaping or other screening material, to significantly reduce the amount of building frontage along these streets that presents a blank wall at the sidewalk level.

Finally, the submission does not clearly indicate whether the loading bay for Senior Housing Building 2 is of adequate depth to allow delivery vehicles to clear the sidewalk on 5th Street, SE. Staff recommends that the applicant ensure that adequate loading bay depth is available so as not to encumber the sidewalk along 5th Street, SE with the presence of delivery vehicles that block pedestrian travel. (See attachments 5 and 6.)

Townhouse-Style Units

Unit Types A and E

Unit types A and E contain ground floor garages accessed at the back of the house from the alley. In these two types of units, the garage extends the full length of the house to the street façade. From an urban design standpoint, it is not preferable that garage walls front the street, and these units must be carefully designed so that the ground floor windows in the front wall do not “read” as a garage. It would be more appropriate to design these units such that a living space lies between the garage and the front wall. (See attachment 7.)

Unit Type C

Unit type C incorporates a side-loaded, double-width garage door that opens onto the street by means of a curb cut. Although garage entrances for townhouses more appropriately occur within alleys, this unit type occurs only twice within the proposed project development area, and its impact is therefore relatively minimal. (See attachment 8.)

Landscaping along M Street, SE

Staff recommends that the project’s landscaping along M Street, SE (in phase 2 of the project) be modified to comply with the landscaping plan previously developed by the District of Columbia Department of Public Works and the U.S. Navy, and subsequently approved by NCPC in July of 1999. The M Street Streetscape Improvements plan calls for a double row of street trees along the entire length of M Street, SE in the project area and along New Jersey Avenue, SE near its intersection with M Street. Landscaping included for the phase 2 portion of the Capper/Carrollsbury project is not consistent with this plan.

Build-to Lines

According to the submission, ninety percent of the townhouse-style building fronts in this project conform to the build-to lines that are established along street rights-of-way, however, eight of the townhouse-style buildings near the southwest corner of Square 797 sit back from the build-to line on 3 ½ Street, SE. The street wall at this location is compromised by the unusual set-back of these buildings. Staff recommends that these eight townhouse-style buildings be repositioned in line with the established build-to line on 3 ½ Street.

Building Materials

Although the primary exterior building material for the majority of buildings in this project is brick, other materials are used on exterior walls facing interior courtyards and in a few other locations. In one instance, at Senior Housing Building 2, these materials face M Street, SE. Staff recommends that the use of vinyl siding, cementitious fiber board and exterior insulation finishing systems (EIFS) be limited to areas that are not visible from any public or private street.

Streets and Alleys

In general, the Capper/Carrollsborg project will respect the street grid of the District of Columbia overall, and will, in fact, restore portions of several streets that were previously removed for development of public housing, namely I and L Streets, SE. New streets generally will align with existing streets and will be compatible in width and character. A new block of 6th Street, SE will be constructed just north of M Street, SE. This block will not align with 6th Street, SE south of M Street, SE due to the presence of a public utility that will not be relocated as part of this project. As 6th Street cannot be extended farther to the north because of the presence of the Marine Barracks, the impact to the overall street grid is minimal.

Several alleys will be closed as part of this project. These include alleys within Squares 824, 798, and 799; however, these will be replaced by two new alleys and a new street. There will be no net decrease in capacity of service access as a result of these changes. (See attachment 8.)

Parking and Traffic

Each of the new office, apartment and condominium buildings will be constructed with underground parking to serve the occupants of the buildings, and most of the new townhouses will be provided with at least one off-street parking space. Additionally, streets in the new development will allow on-street parking, and curb-cuts for driveways and garage entrances will be limited to side streets and alleys. All of the new development will occur within walking distance of the Navy Yard Metro Station on Metro's Green Line.

The traffic analysis submitted by the applicant indicates that the planned roadways will be adequate to handle the anticipated traffic loads. Traffic generated by this project will not negatively affect the federal interest.

COORDINATION

This project is being developed as a planned unit development (PUD), and as such both the District Department of Transportation (DDOT) and the District of Columbia Office of Planning (DCOP) have been thoroughly involved in its design development. Both DDOT and DCOP have provided comments and guidance throughout the design process, and the project design has evolved in response.

Coordinating Committee

The Coordinating Committee reviewed this item at its meeting on January 14, 2004 and forwarded the proposal to the Commission with the statement that the project has been coordinated with all agencies participating. The participating agencies were NCPC; the District of Columbia Office of Planning; the Department of Housing and Community Development; the General Services Administration; and the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority.

Commission of Fine Arts

This project has not been submitted to the Commission of Fine Arts (CFA) for review, although CFA has informed the applicant of the requirement to do so.

CONFORMANCE

Section 5

This project is being reviewed under Section 5 of the National Capital Planning Act, which requires that the District of Columbia submit all projects being constructed on District-owned land to NCPC for review and comment. In its capacity as advisor to the project's design, the Commission's comments are forwarded to the applicant for consideration in revising the project's design.

Federal Elements of the Comprehensive Plan

This project is consistent with the Federal Elements of the Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital regarding federal employment. The project will not only place new market-rate and affordable housing within walking distance of transit (Navy Yard Metro Station on the Metro Green Line) and neighborhood-serving retail, but within walking distance of new and existing jobs along M Street and at the Southeast Federal Center and the Washington Navy Yard. The federal employment element states that federal employment sites should be "...located so that low and moderate income housing...is available within a reasonable distance..."

The project is inconsistent with the Preservation and Historic Features Element of the Comprehensive Plan, because a blank façade above the ground floor on Senior Housing Building 2 negatively impacts M Street, SE, a Special Street. The use of a higher quality material, such as stone or brick, is recommended for this façade. Further, the placement of windows or the variation of materials to create a pattern to visually enhance this façade should be considered.

Anacostia Waterfront Initiative

The Anacostia Waterfront Initiative (AWI) is a partnership among 20 federal and District of Columbia agencies that own or control land along the Anacostia River. These agencies, including the National Capital Planning Commission, have signed the AWI Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). The stated goal of the MOU (March, 2000) is to guide a series of projects that will "...transform the Anacostia River from the City's forgotten river to a gem that could rival any urban waterfront in the world." The draft AWI Framework Plan developed to guide the revitalization effort, outlines eight target areas for detailed study and recommendations. One such target area, known as Near Southeast, includes the Capper-Carrollsborg redevelopment project, including the area that will become the Canal Blocks Park. Goals for this neighborhood sub-area include transforming the existing public housing into a mixed-income community with a one-to-one replacement for existing public housing units, extending the neighborhood scale and architectural character of Capitol Hill to the south side of the Southeast Freeway, organizing higher density apartment buildings along the Canal Blocks Park, and creating linkages between the neighborhood sub-area and surrounding residential, recreation and employment areas. The Capper-Carrollsborg project as submitted accomplishes all of these goals.

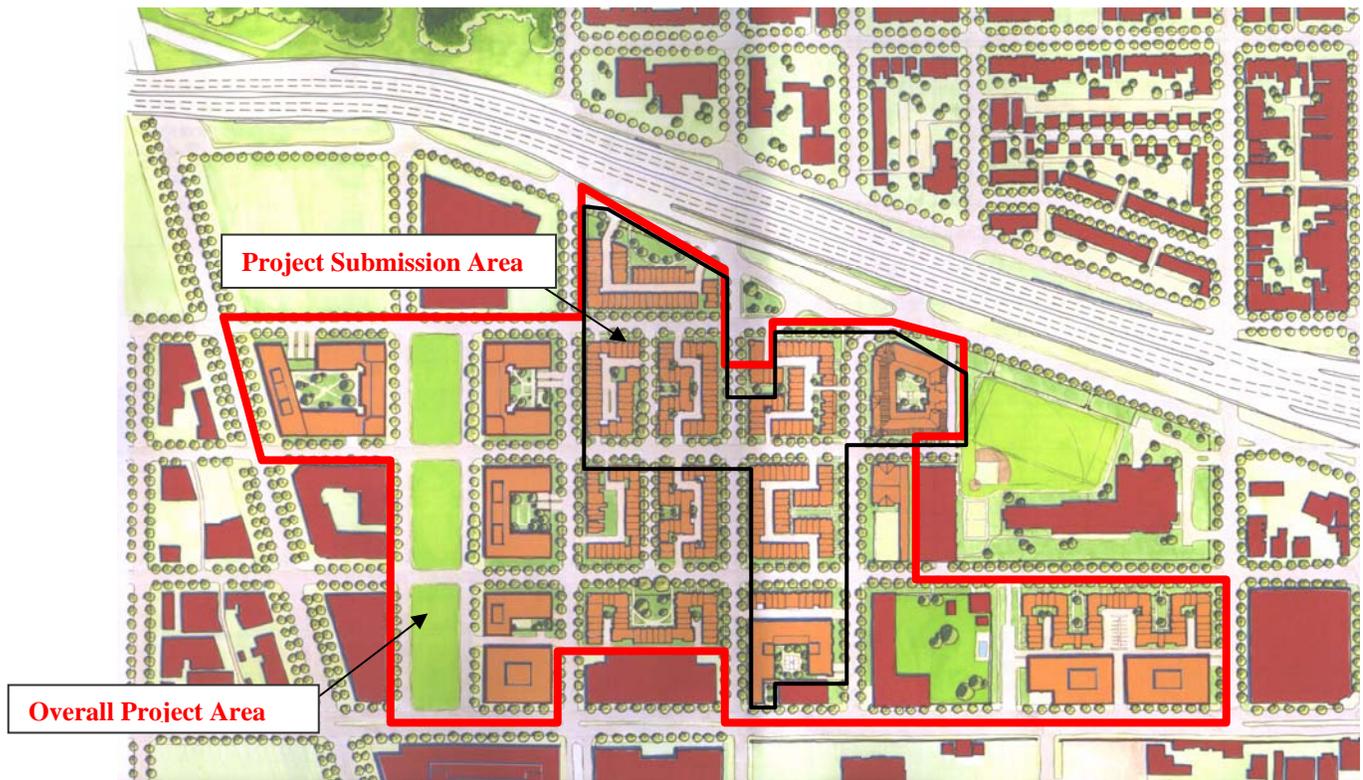
National Environmental Policy Act

The District of Columbia has reviewed the action and determined that it qualifies as an exempted action in accordance with the implementing rules of the District of Columbia Environmental Policy Act of 1989. As the action is an activity outside of the Central Area that has been concurrently defined by the Commission and Council to include the Shaw School and Downtown Urban Renewal Areas, the action is not subject to final federal approval, as defined under Commission environmental procedures. Nevertheless, staff reviewed the action for extraordinary circumstances as sanctioned by NEPA but finds no issues of any level of significance which would alter the determination of exemption.

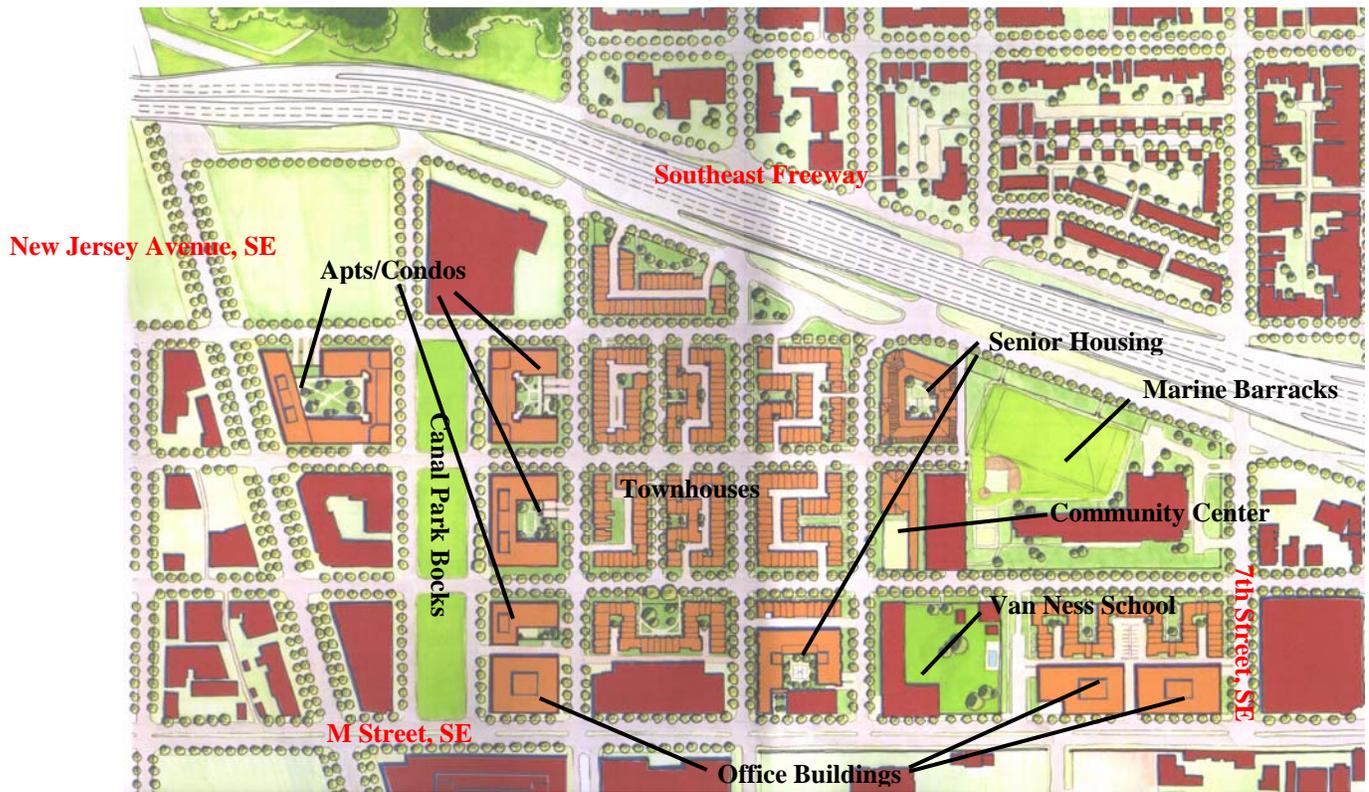
- The project would not generate major impacts on natural features or the local road network since all of the work would occur on built surfaces currently in a developed state.
- The proposed exterior improvements will not generate significant adverse impacts on the natural environment.
- Traffic and parking impacts are modest in additional volume or numbers of potential vehicles.
- No significant noise impacts are anticipated because all construction activities will comply with local noise ordinance restrictions as required by the construction permitting process of the District of Columbia.

National Historic Preservation Act

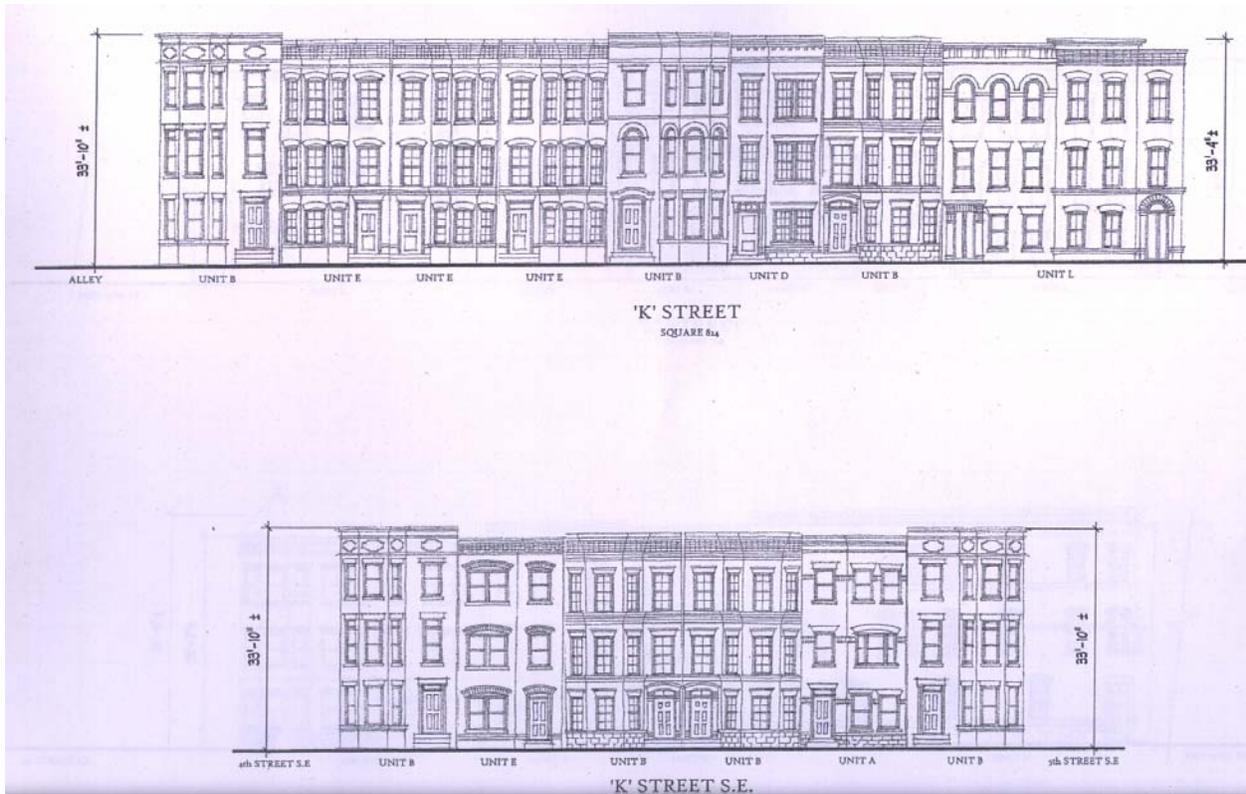
The District of Columbia Housing Authority (DCHA) has concluded consultation with the D.C. State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) on the historic preservation effects of this element of the proposed project. This portion of the overall redevelopment effort (the consolidated PUD) consists of the construction of new rowhouses and two mid-rise residential buildings. The subsequent phase (the Phase I PUD) will consider the remaining area of the redevelopment, which includes the Canal blocks and the I Street right-of-way. That historic preservation consultation is ongoing as the project continues to be developed. The Commission will review the remaining project areas under Section 5 and Section 8 of the Planning Act at a later date.



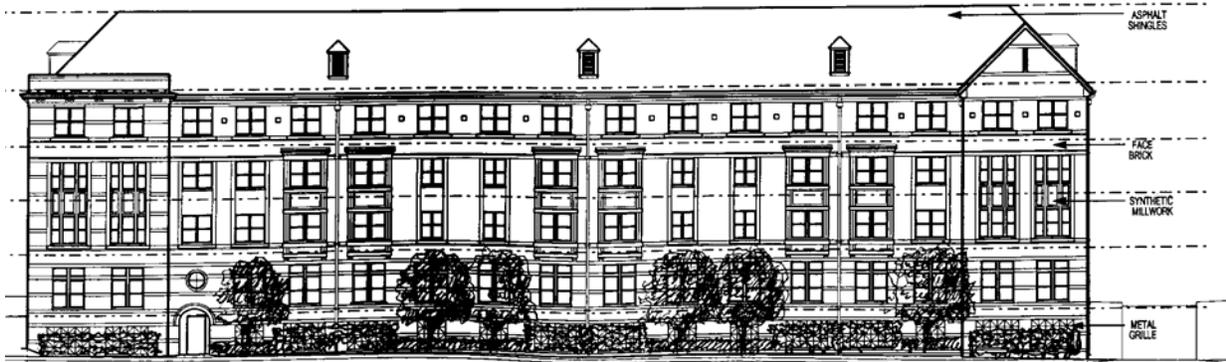
Project Development Plan



Illustrative Site Plan



Typical Townhouse Elevations



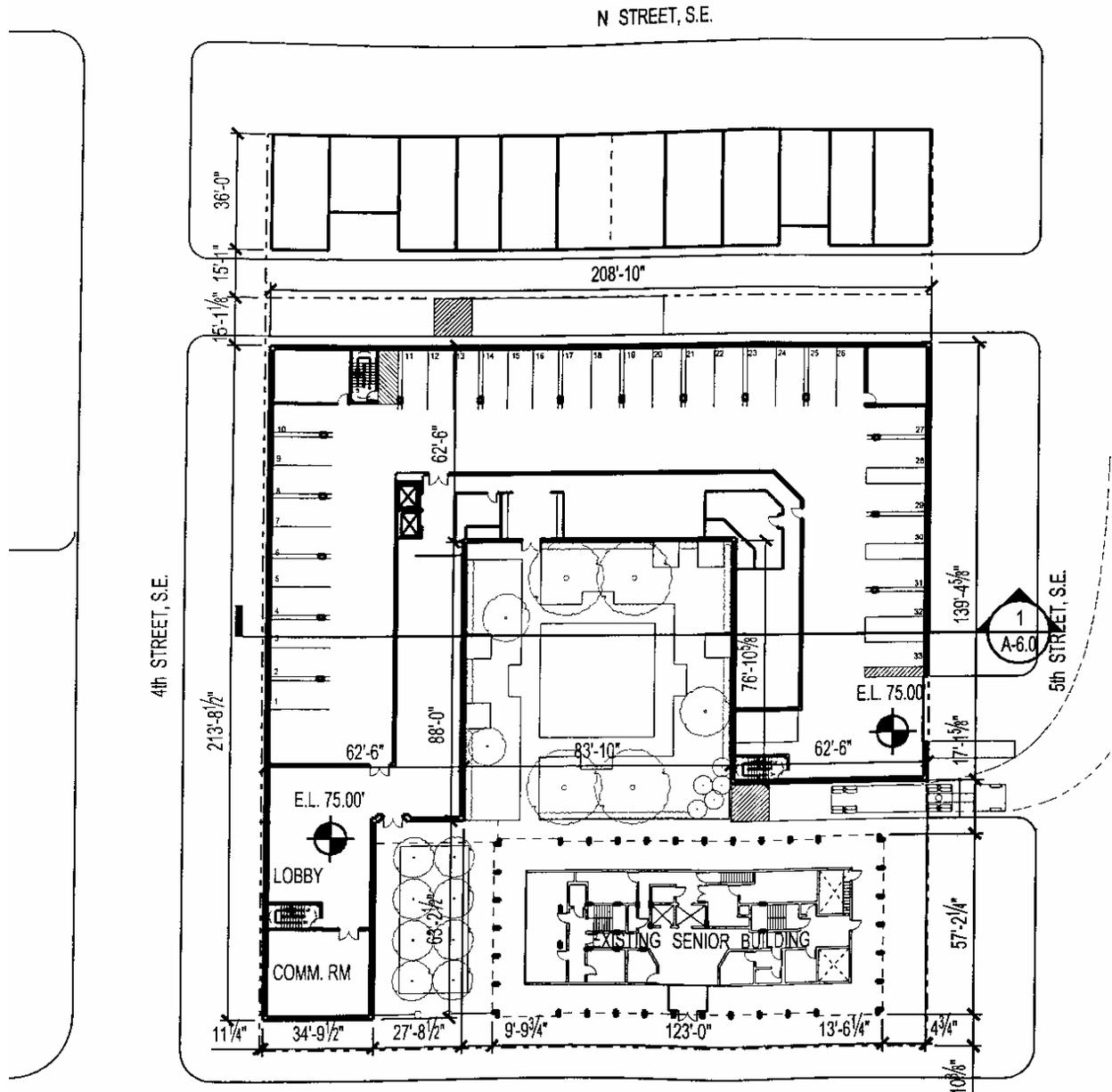
Senior Housing Building 1: South Elevation



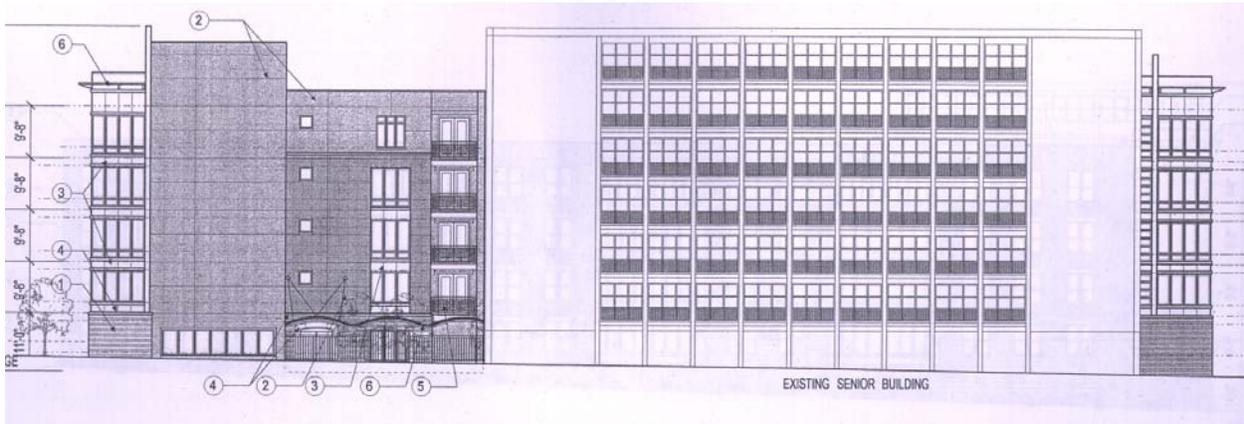
Senior Housing Building 1: East Elevation



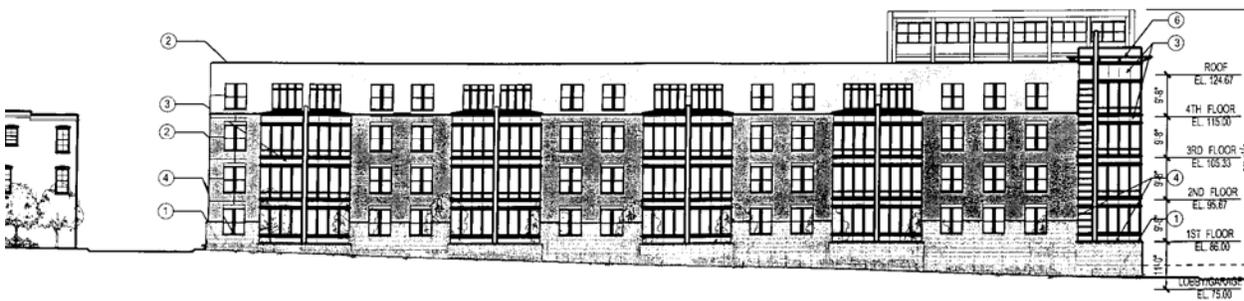
Senior Housing Building 1: West Elevation



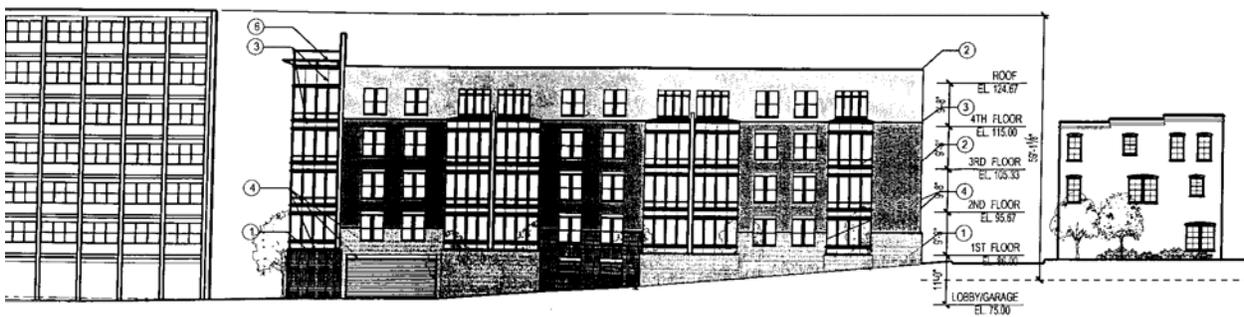
Senior Housing Building 2: Plan at Garage/Ground Level



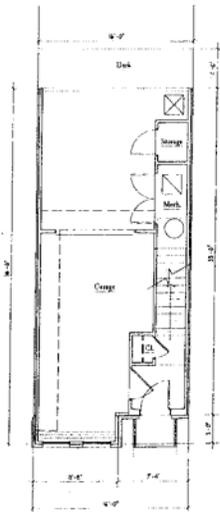
Senior Housing Building 2: M Street, SE Elevation



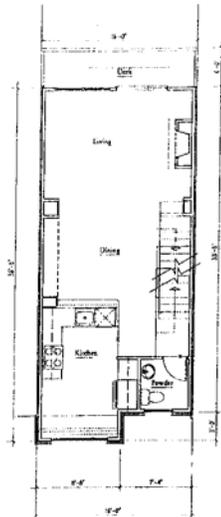
Senior Housing Building 2: Fourth Street, SE Elevation



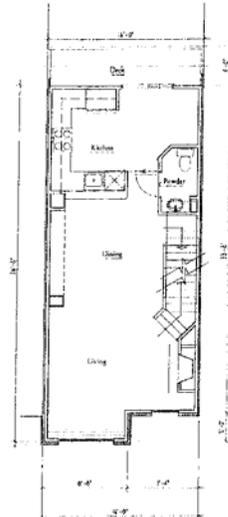
Senior Housing Building 2: Fifth Street, SE Elevation



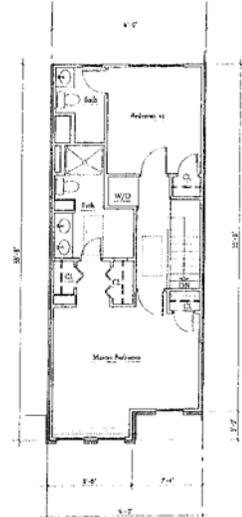
first floor plan



second floor plan
(kitchen front)

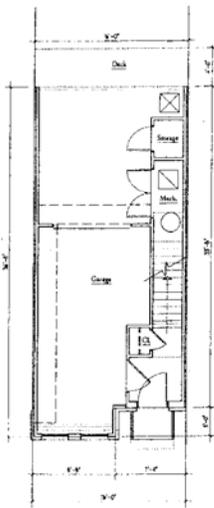


second floor plan
(kitchen rear)

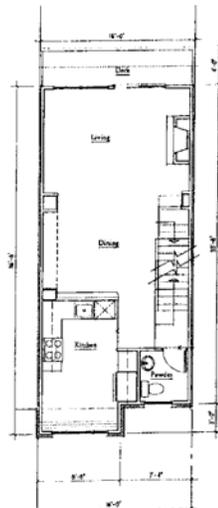


third floor plan

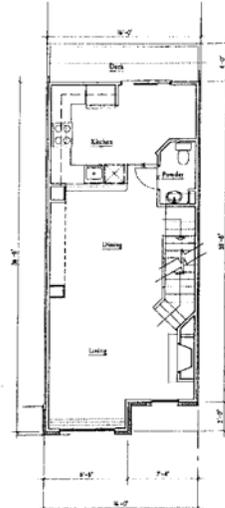
Townhouse Style Unit Type A



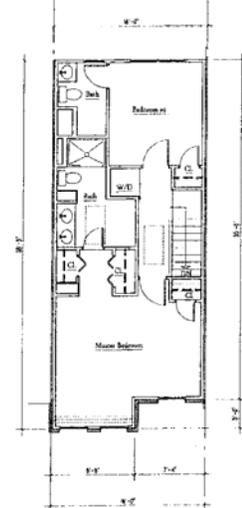
first floor plan



second floor plan
(kitchen front)



second floor plan
(kitchen rear)



third floor plan

Townhouse Style Unit Type E

