

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

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NCPC File No. 6519



DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA WATHA T. DANIEL (SHAW) NEIGHBORHOOD LIBRARY LIBRARY REPLACEMENT

1701 8th Street, NW
Washington, D.C.

Submitted by the District of Columbia Public Library

March 27, 2008

Abstract

The District of Columbia Public Library has submitted concept design plans for the construction of the Watha T. Daniel (Shaw) Neighborhood Library, located at 1701 8th Street, NW, in Washington D.C. The project will replace the existing library on the same site. The new three story building will have two floors above grade and one floor below grade. The contemporary design of channel glass and metal screening will mimic the block's triangular formation and will achieve the LEED silver rating for green building design.

Commission Actions Requested by Applicant

Approval of concept design pursuant to 40 U.S.C. § 8722 (b)(1).

Executive Director's Recommendation

The Commission:

Comments favorably on the concept design plans for the Watha T. Daniel (Shaw) Neighborhood Library, Washington, DC, as shown on NCPC Map File No. 33.10(38.00)42321.

Recommends that the applicant revise the designs for the entryway and streetscape at the corner of 7th and R Streets, NW, to make the library entrance more prominent; and develop the landscape plan to create usable green space for library patrons.

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PROJECT DESCRIPTION

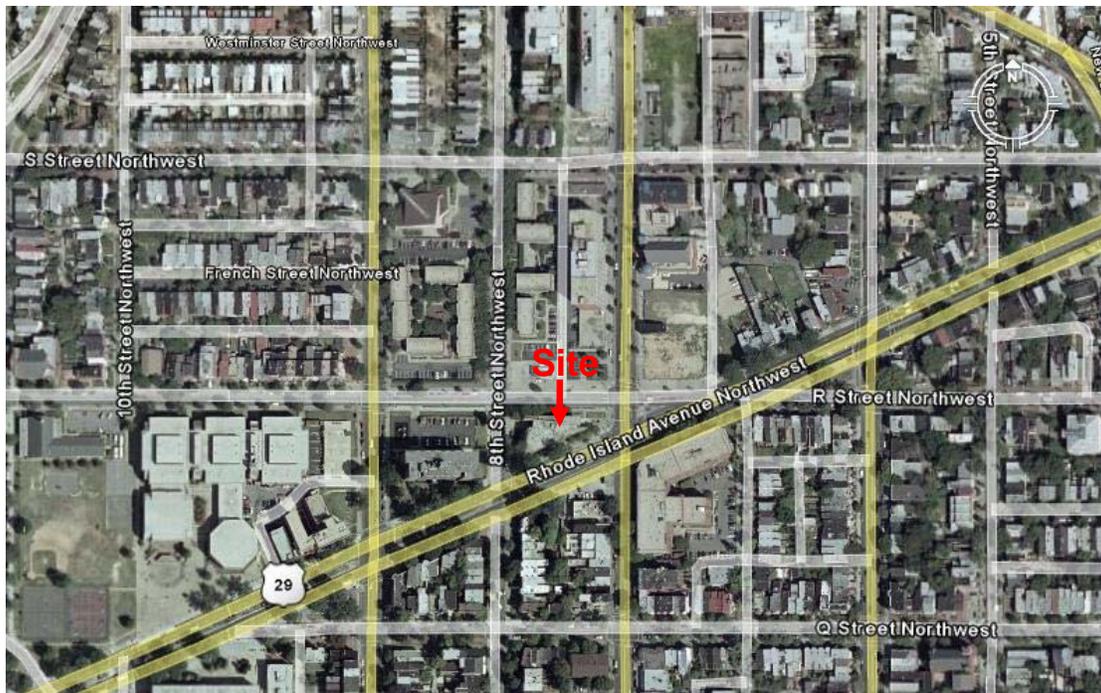
Background

The DC Public Library System (DCPL) is undergoing a transformation that includes services, programs, collections and buildings. DCPL is addressing facility needs across the system and will start with building four new libraries to replace those that have closed. The demolition of the existing Watha T. Daniel(Shaw) Library will be completed in mid-March 2008. Construction of the new library is scheduled to begin in late summer 2008 and should be completed by the end of 2009. The new library is slated to open in Spring 2010.

NCPC reviewed and approved plans for the Watha T. Daniel Library in 2005; however, DCPL did not move forward with construction because a larger budget was ultimately approved. As a result, DCPL hired the architecture firm of Davis, Brody Bond and Aedas to redesign the building with the new budget in mind. Over the last year DCPL has held several public meetings in the neighborhood to involve the community in the library's design and future services.

Site

The Watha T. Daniel Neighborhood Library will be located at 1701 8th Street, NW in Washington DC. This is the same site as the old library which is currently being demolished. The site is bound by Rhode Island Ave, NW, 7th Street, NW, 8th Street, NW and R Street, NW. The building's entrance will face the corner of R Street, NW and 7th Street, NW. The site is located in the Shaw School Urban Renewal Area across from the Shaw/Howard University Metro Station on the green line.



Proposal

DCPL has submitted concept design plans for the construction of Watha T. Daniel Library in Northwest Washington, DC. The new library will be three stories – two above grade and one below grade. The project is being designed for LEED Silver Certification and will include a green roof to accommodate one of the project’s sustainability goals.

The Ground Level of the library, accessible via the entrance at the intersection of R and 7th Streets, will contain a majority of the library’s administrative services including the main service desk, express check-out terminals and staff work room. Adult interests such as the “Power Wall” book display, “New Materials” and “Sights and Sounds” Division will occupy the space adjacent to the service desk with the bulk of the floor devoted to the children’s collections, reading and activity areas. The lower level will house community-oriented areas such as the multi-purpose room as well as building systems for mechanical, electrical and other service areas. The upper level will contain the main collection stacks, reading and reference areas, numerous private study rooms and, in the projection located above the building’s entrance, the periodicals division.

The design of the library was developed as a response to the project site, the environmental factors which affect the building, and the idea of the library as a jewel-like object on its isolated site within the urban context. The building form reflects the triangular site that the previous building occupied. The form of the building is a combination of a triangular form rising vertically from the site, combined with a secondary “L” shaped form that wraps the triangular mass in the horizontal direction. These two distinct masses are reinforced by the different building skins applied to the facades, as well as height differences between the two masses which form the building.

The total site area is 9,836 square feet with a building footprint of 8,164 square feet. The site has an 83% lot coverage with the remainder of the lot being covered by hardscape and landscape.



Intersection of R and 8th St



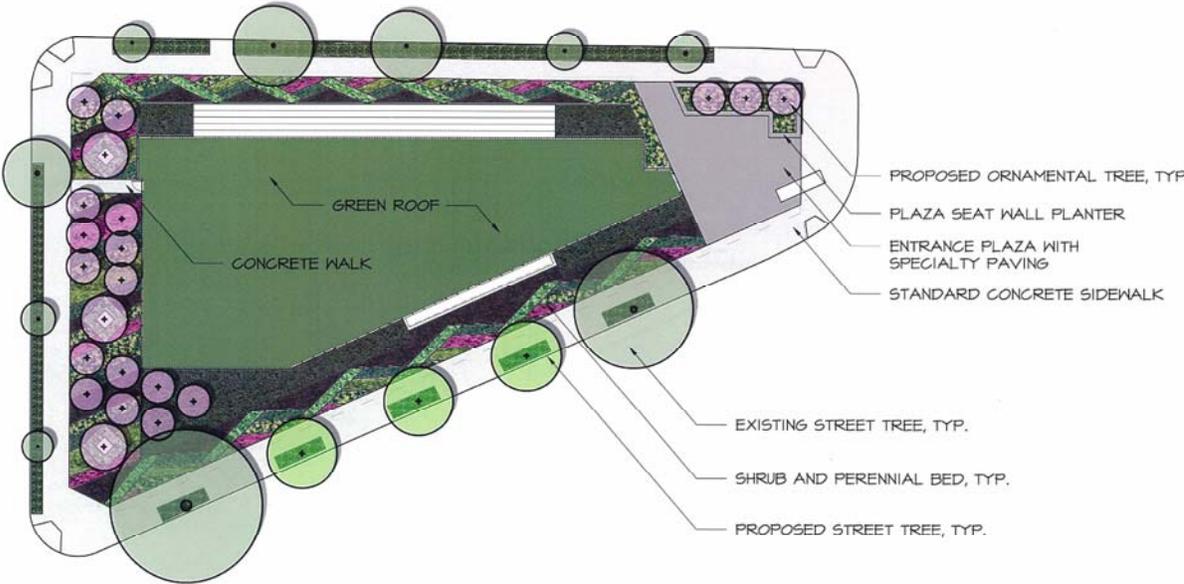
The main entrance at 7th St between Rhode Island and R Streets

The public space surrounding the site will be landscaped and new public sidewalks will be provided. The proposed building materials include channel glass, structural glass and a metal screen.

PROJECT ANALYSIS

Staff finds that the proposed design for the Watha T. Daniel Library is well developed and architecturally compatible with the surrounding neighborhood with regard to scale, massing, materials, and details. Additionally, the sophisticated design and integration of sustainable development techniques is to be commended.

Staff concurs with the Commission of Fine Art’s analysis that the proposed entrance on 7th Street, NW, and R Street, NW, needs to be more prominent. Staff recommends that the applicant revise the entryway and streetscape at the corner by opening up the metal screen to reveal the glass entryway and by creating an outdoor plaza with seating at the entrance. While staff commends the design’s attention to light and air, the preliminary design submittal should address safety measures with regard to the light well at grade on 7th Street, NW. Finally, the unique site presents a great opportunity to create an urban landscape around the building with places to read and eat lunch. Staff recommends that the landscape plan be further refined to create a usable green space for library patrons.



Concept Landscape Plan

CONFORMANCE

Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital

Staff has determined that the proposed project is not inconsistent with the *Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital: Federal Elements*.

Shaw School Urban Renewal Plan

Staff has determined that the proposed project is not inconsistent with the *Shaw School Urban Renewal Plan*.

National Environmental Policy Act

NCPC has approval authority over and therefore independent NEPA responsibility for District of Columbia projects within the Central Area. Environmental review is not required at the Concept Design stage, but will be required for the Preliminary and Final Submission.

National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA)

Section 106 review is not required to be completed at the Concept Design stage. NCPC will serve as the lead federal agency for Section 106 review, since the library is a District public building in the Central Area and therefore will be approved by the Commission. The site is near the Shaw and Greater U Street Historic Districts and at a prominent convergence of L'Enfant Plan streets including Rhode Island Ave, NW.

CONSULTATION

Coordinating Committee

The Coordinating Committee reviewed the proposal at its March 12, 2008 meeting and forwarded it to the Commission with the statement that the project has been coordinated with all agencies represented, except the representatives for the District of Columbia Office of Planning and the District Department of Transportation. DCOP and DDOT noted that further coordination is required before final approval. The participating agencies were NCPC; the Department of Housing and Community Development; the General Services Administration and the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority.

U.S. Commission of Fine Arts (CFA)

The U.S. Commission of Fine Arts reviewed and approved the concept for the project at its meeting on February 21st, 2008. The Commission members commented favorably on the design but recommended pulling back the south façade screen from the entrance area to reveal the glassy skin of the library behind; and to restudy the column and roof configuration at the entrance to create more openness and a stronger presence along the street. They also suggested a re-evaluation of the landscape design in order to present a more urban rather than suburban character.