

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

NCPC File No. 2242



**UNION STATION
PARKING GARAGE EXTENSION
CONCEPT DESIGN
1st Street and H Street, NE
Washington, DC**

Submission by the Union Station Redevelopment Corporation

January 29, 2004

Abstract

The Union Station Redevelopment Corporation (USRC) has provided a concept design for the expansion of the existing parking garage behind the main building of Union Station. The design for the garage expansion will involve two strategies, using required elements to give scale and covering the building in a partial new skin. A new north stair tower will be treated as a sculptural element signifying an entrance at H Street for Union Station. While a specific material has not been selected for the new skin of the parking structure addition, some form of perforated or wire metal panel that will let the required air flow through is the intent. In plan the new structure skin envelope is angled from the garage to respect the building line along H Street and the future air rights development north and east of the proposal.

The improvements to the garage will be extended to include modifying the west elevation to make it lighter and more modulated in appearance. In total, the expansion provides 791 new parking spaces for cars and will allow the lower level of the existing and proposed structure to fully serve as bus parking which is critically needed in the city.

Commission Action Requested by Applicant

Approval of concept design pursuant to 40 U.S.C. § 8722(d) and Section 5 of the National Capital Planning Act (40 U.S.C. § 8722(b)(1)).

Executive Director's Recommendation

The Commission:

Approves the concept design for the Union Station Parking Garage Extension, as shown on NCPC Map File No.1.11 (08.21)-41299, and

Requires that:

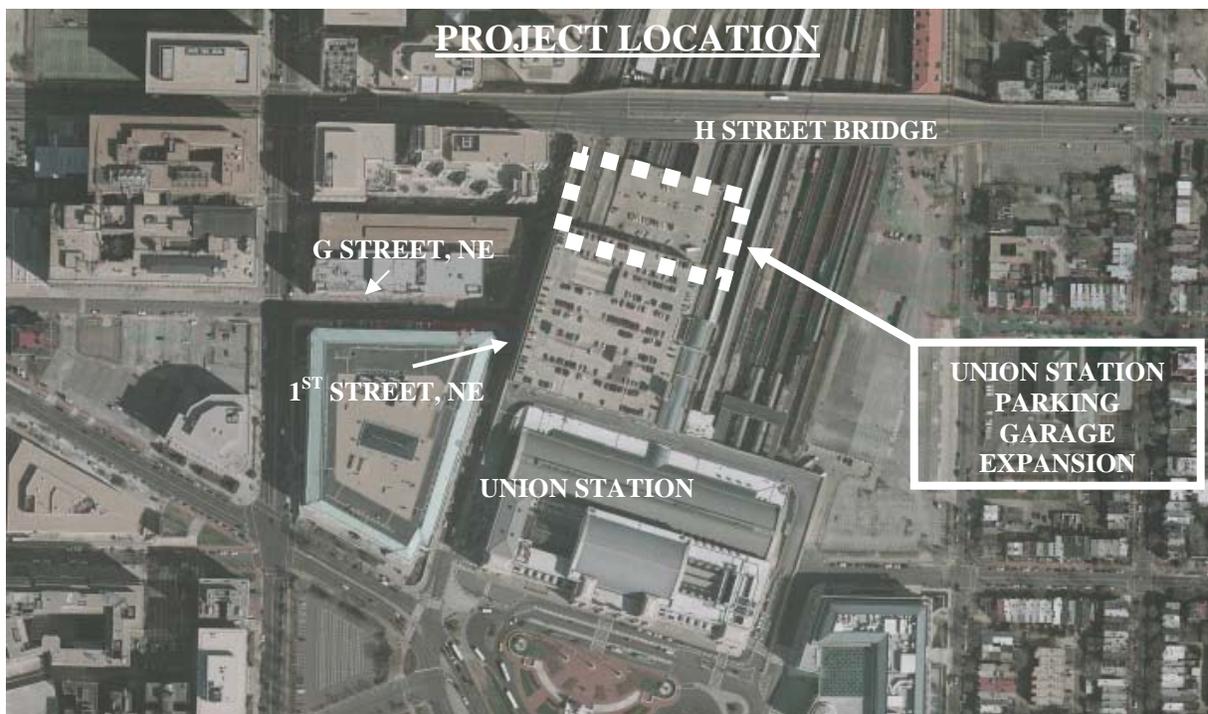
- The new exterior cladding proposed for the garage wrap around the southwest corner and extend inward toward Union Station along the south facade, for a limited distance, to provide continuity of the new exterior over the whole of the entire parking structure; and to visually enhance the façade, which is visible behind the western edge of the front façade of Union Station;
- The preliminary submission of the proposal provide definition regarding the type of exterior lighting contemplated, including all signage and its illumination, and demonstrate how exterior lighting will be established in the new garage expansion project; and
- The preliminary submission include provision for minor sidewalk amenities near the stair tower, such as a limited seating area, if sufficient area is present.

* * *

BACKGROUND AND STAFF EVALUATION

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSAL

The Union Station Redevelopment Corporation plans to expand and improve the existing parking garage at Union Station located in the vicinity of 1st and H Streets in NE, Washington, DC. The existing Union Station Parking Garage consists of a five level structure built above the Amtrak and Metrorail tracks on the north side or the back of Union Station. The existing first level above the tracks has been designed to accommodate the parking of buses. This level is referred to as the Bus Deck and it extends from Union Station on the south to the H-Street Overpass on the north.



The concept plan submittal proposes improving the Union Station Garage that would involve two strategies. The first aspect of the plan is to create elements to give scale. A new egress stair will be treated as a sculptural element near H Street signifying a new entrance feature. The stair will also give a human scale to what is one of the largest structures in this portion of the city.

The second step is to cover the exposed section of the parking levels so that it is sheathed in a scrim to mask the existing parking structural skin beyond, which currently is unfinished in certain areas. While a specific material has not been selected, this scrim will be some form of perforated or wire metal panel that will allow the required air flow into the parking bay areas. In plan view, this element would be angled from the garage to respect the building line along H Street and the future air rights development that will abut the northern and northeastern edge of the parking garage.



EXISTING VIEW OF THE PARKING GARAGE FROM H STREET, NE

The existing exterior wall on the western side of the garage is constructed entirely of precast concrete wall panels. This solid enclosure conceals the view of the cars. However, while the cantilever is dramatic in the way the building sits atop huge columns, and cantilevers 30 feet over the edge and the sidewalk below, its appearance is unfortunately oppressive with only a few openings to relieve the solid blank precast.

The concept improvements to the garage would extend to include modifying the west elevation to make it lighter and more modulated in appearance. This plan would remove some of the existing precast panels and insert the same metal scrim from the new northwest corner south along the façade at 1st Street. To recognize the termination of the G Street axis, openings in the

panels will be made larger to make this area distinctive. Additionally two parallel rails will be added running horizontally along the face of the garage. The shadow cast by these rails on the western walls will add detail to the surface. At the north and south ends of the garage the exterior rails turn the corner, becoming supports for building signage.



PROPOSED CONCEPT DESIGN OF GARAGE EXTENSION AS SEEN FROM H STREET, NE

The interior portion of the project consists primarily of adding parking to each level of the existing garage, plus a new mezzanine level for auto rental operations. The new parking levels will utilize the ramps of the existing parking structure. With the additional parking and the auto rental mezzanine, the bus deck would be dedicated exclusively for the parking of buses. Additional scope for the entire garage includes interior circulation improvements, parking access and revenue control upgrades, parking stall improvements and aesthetic enhancements intended to provide users with a more pleasant experience when using the facility. The intent of the design is to merge the expansion with the existing garage in such a manner as to provide an image of a singular unified facility where the distinction between old and new is not readily apparent.

With the new expansion construction, the total number of spaces (including the 171 on the mezzanine and the 75 gained by reconfiguring some existing spaces) available after project completion would be 2,509 parking spaces. The net gain of car spaces would be 791. This

number does not include any stacked parking which would result in a higher net gain of car parking spaces. With the new design, there is also a net gain of approximately 65 bus parking slips. Finally a signaled intersection and removal of some of the island median at the proposed bus exit on H Street would allow buses to make left turns to travel west. No right turns for buses would be allowed from the garage, to limit bus traffic through the neighborhoods to the east.



**SIMULATION VIEW OF PROPOSED GARAGE
EXTERIOR SKIN TREATMENT AT 1ST STREET, NE**

DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

Applicant: Union Station Redevelopment Corporation
Architect: RTKL, Washington, DC in association with Timothy Haahs and Associates, Inc.
Blue Bell, PA

Cost: Approximately \$25-30 million achieved in funding by a bond issue.

Schedule: Construction is anticipated to begin in June 2004 and a completion of the project is estimated for June 2005.

COORDINATION

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, except the District of Columbia Office of Planning. The representative for DCOP withheld its coordination pending discussions with the Redevelopment Corporation about issues involving relocating portions of the garage.

Subsequent to the meeting, the DCOP representative concurred in the coordination on the proposal. The other participating agencies were NCPC; the Department of Housing and Community Development; the General Services Administration; and the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority.

Commission of Fine Arts

At the November 20, 2003 meeting of the Commission of Fine Arts the Commission reviewed options considered by the Union Station Redevelopment Corporation and expressed interest to achieve a forward looking design but emphasized that particular care must be demonstrated in any new design regarding the views from North Capitol Street toward the new parking addition.



**SIMULATION VIEW OF PROPOSED PROJECT EXTERIOR, AT THE
SOUTHWEST CORNER AT 1st STREET, AS VIEWED NEAR THE WEST
ENTRANCE TO UNION STATION**

CONFORMANCE

Master Plan Compliance

This proposal completes the existing plans for Union Station established in 1995-98 under its developed master plan. A portion of that plan was submitted and reviewed by the Commission in February 2001. The access and circulation plan included revisions to the bus and passenger car circulation for Union Station and identified future expansion of the existing parking garage.

The H Street Corridor Study

NCPC staff reviewed the proposed concept in the context of the DCOP planning efforts recently developed in 2003 involving the H Street Corridor Revitalization. The portion of the plan study area that would affect the Parking Garage area is identified as the Western Gateway; the Hub area.

In the Hub area, the study advocates the following recommendations¹:

Air Rights and Station Place – The District and community stakeholders should continue to work with the developers of these significant projects to ensure they contribute to the creation of a quality pedestrian environment along the Hopscotch Bridge. This includes, but is not limited to, the provision of convenient, safe and clearly-marked connections to Union Station, the provision of streetscape amenities such as sufficient lighting, signage, hardscaping, and other street furniture, and the disposition of the proposed developments so that they engage the street at pedestrian level. New buildings should have H Street addresses with primary entries open directly on the bridge sidewalk or onto entry courts with direct connections to the bridge. New buildings should directly abut the bridge structure with no rails or fencing between the sidewalk and the building facades. To the greatest extent possible, the bridge should appear to be an extension of the H Street streetscape.

Staff's review of the garage expansion finds the following objectives are adhered to:

- Making direct and bridge-level connections at H Street (all access points of the expansion meet H Street)
- Clearly providing and marking a pedestrian connection to Union Station (the pedestrian stair tower).
- Sufficient lighting and signage to animate and highlight the street side environment of H Street (the new garage entrances with sidewalks, the new graphic signage and garage expansion façade treatments that will be undertaken in the garage expansion at H Street).
- Setback provisions in the garage expansion to allow private air-right development to occur directly adjacent to H Street at the bridge level which would provide both retail and office space development.
- Providing a shared parking opportunity for future development of retail at this area of the H Street corridor (use of the parking garage is open to anyone paying the parking fee).

Additionally, the study's design guidelines provide the following stated parameters:

Several locations for Type III Development (Projects with parking garages) have been considered that are centrally located and can provide parking. To mitigate the impact of Type III Development along the Corridor, the structures must be fronted with ground floor uses on H Street. Mid-block structures are relieved of this requirement. In addition, parking garages are expected to meet all the criteria of approval as other building types on the Corridor. In order to

¹ Page 37 of Chapter 8 of the H Street Revitalization Study

contribute to the overall quality of the Corridor, parking structures must meet the same architectural standards as other buildings. Parking deck placement requires careful coordination among developers, the City, merchants and residents to ensure that the need for public parking and the potential impacts the garages have on the surrounding areas are weighed evenly.²

Consequently, it is staff's finding that the garage expansion is consistent with the H Street study objectives.

National Environmental Policy Act

The Union Station Redevelopment Corporation is in the process of preparing an Environmental Assessment (EA) consistent with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, as amended, and the Council of Environmental Quality's (CEQ) regulations implementing NEPA. The Corporation is not a "federal agency" within the meaning of NEPA and CEQ. However, it intends to adhere to Commission project submission requirements. The Corporation is the entity responsible for this EA preparation and the Commission requested it be identified as a cooperating agency. The Commission intends to adopt the EA if the document is found to be adequately prepared. The Environmental Assessment (EA) will be available for public comment in February 2004.

National Historic Preservation Act

Union Station is a National Register-listed property, as is the nearby Post Office. The historic street pattern around the station is part of the National Register-listed designation of the L'Enfant Plan (which includes McMillan Plan elements, as well).

The Union Station Redevelopment Corporation has been conferring with the Federal Railroad Administration, in the U.S. Department of Transportation, and has not yet determined if this project is subject to the Act. If so, it will submit the project to the D.C. State Historic Preservation Office for review.

EVALUATION

Staff **recommends approval** of the concept plans with conditions. NCPC staff analysis concludes the new addition and proposed exterior façade modifications are appropriate and needed to accommodate the necessary changes anticipated for the USRC garage operations. The exterior modifications are particularly important to scale the modified appearance and achieve the "new face" desired by the Corporation.

Nevertheless, the full aspects of the new structural skin are somewhat unresolved, and certain details are of concern to staff.

The first issue is the extent of the façade modification that is carried south to the corner of the existing garage nearest to Union Station at 1st Street, NE and the west entrance of Union Station. Staff believes strongly that the new cladding proposed for the garage should at least turn the

² Page 6 of the H Street Design Guidelines identified at DCOP website, <http://planning.dc.gov/planning/>

southwest corner and extend inward toward Union Station for several hundred feet, similar to how the “railing element” turns the corner and returns toward the center of the garage. An overlap configuration thoughtfully terminated at an appropriately proportional distance, which includes the railing, would suffice in staff’s opinion.

The other conditions of approval balance on the issues of needed study of the exterior lighting proposed for the new façade on the north, west, and south ends of the garage expansion and simple streetscape amenities, such as seating at the proposed stair tower. Given the type of new materials suggested in the concept design, interesting and distinctive exterior lighting might be achieved if carefully planned. The streetscape furnishings are details that need to be resolved in further design with the tower. Staff recommends the Commission require the preliminary project design to be definitive in the type of exterior light contemplated, including all signage and its illumination, and that the information be submitted to the Commission in the next review of the project demonstrating how exterior lighting will be established in the new garage expansion proposal along with streetscape amenities.

Federal Capital Improvements Program

The Parking Garage Expansion improvements are not included in the Federal Capital Improvements Program, Fiscal Years 2004-2009 adopted by the Commission in September 2003, or any succeeding program. The Union Station Redevelopment Corporation is not a federal agency required to submit Capital Improvements funding pursuant to the authorities of the Commission.

Comprehensive Plan

This proposal is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital. Union Station is a historic property, and the streets around the station are part of the historic L’Enfant Plan. The Comprehensive Plan Policies for Special Streets and Places state that:

- Special Streets and Places should be maintained and enhanced in a manner that promotes their roles as major features that help establish the images and the symbols of the National Capital in the minds of its residents and visitors.
- The integrity of the form and design of Special Streets and Places, particularly those of historic significance, should be maintained and protected to the extent feasible and as warranted by safety requirements from unnecessary traffic channelization and from new buildings into public space. The intersections of Special Streets should be carefully designed to reflect the importance of the junctures and to respect the historic plans.
- Pedestrian usage of Special Streets and Places should be encouraged by emphasizing extra widths and other special amenities of sidewalks, where feasible.
- Landscape treatment of Special Streets and Places should supplement and reinforce the Green City or “city in a park” character fostered by the National Capital’s Natural Features, parks, public building, monuments, and memorials. High priority should be

given to continuing maintenance and supplementing existing street trees and providing trees and planting in Specials Places.



FULL WEST ELEVATION OF GARAGE EXTERIOR DEMONSTRATING FINISH MODULATION AND SCALING ELEMENTS