

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

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NCPC File No. 6791



CLOSURE OF PUBLIC ALLEYS IN SQUARE 566 Bounded By 2nd, 3rd, F and G Streets, NW

Washington, D.C.

Submitted by the District of Columbia Office of the Surveyor

December 27, 2007

Abstract

The Office of the Surveyor of the District of Columbia proposes to close two public alleys in Square 566 bounded by 2nd and 3rd Streets, NW, and F and G Street, NW. The proposed alley closing is part of a much larger re-development project that is in its early concept stage. The Deputy Mayor's Office of Planning and Economic Development is working with a developer to deck over I-395 between F Street, NW, and Massachusetts Avenue, NW, and construct four new buildings. The proposal will restore F and G Streets, NW, as public rights-of-way. F Street, NW, will be opened to both pedestrians and vehicles whereas G Street, NW, will only be re-opened to pedestrians.

Commission Action Requested by Applicant

Approval of comments to the Council of the District of Columbia pursuant to D.C. Code § 9-202.02.

Executive Director's Recommendation

The Commission:

Comments favorably on the public alley closings in Square 566, provided that the public alley space adjacent to the GSA building is maintained as open space in perpetuity.

Notes its appreciation of the cooperative working relationship between the Deputy Mayor's Office and NCPC staff, and looks forward to continued coordination.

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PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Background

Prior to the construction of the I-395 Freeway, Squares 564, 566 and 568, which are part of the L'Enfant Plan, consisted of privately owned lots, public alleys, and through streets (see Figure 1). F and G Streets, NW, were both open to traffic, providing an important connection between Union Station and the Treasury Building. When the I-395 Freeway was constructed, it consolidated the majority of the properties in these squares (see Figure 2) and portions of F and G Streets, NW, between 2nd and 3rd were closed.

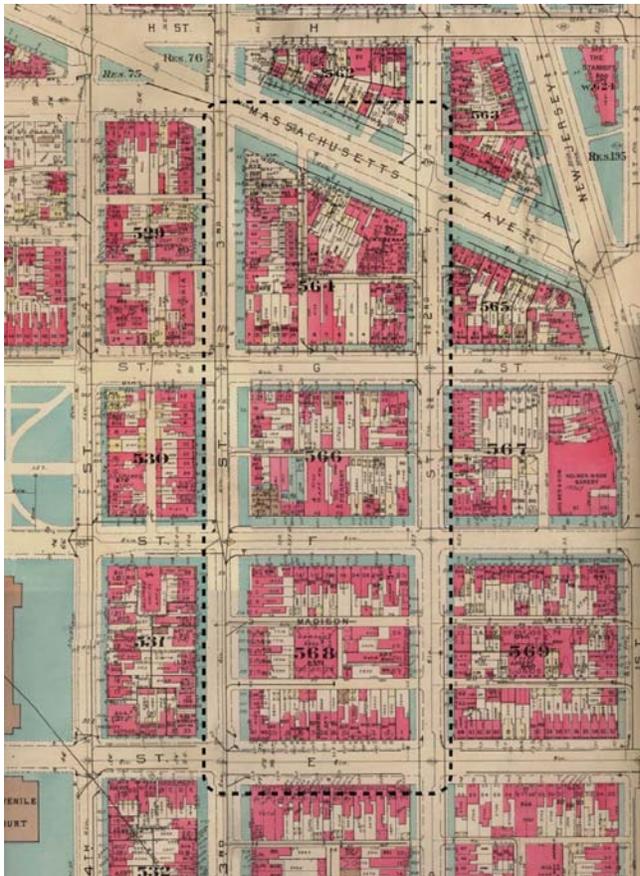


Figure 1: G. Wm Baist's Sons, *Baist's Real Estate Atlas of Surveys of Washington, District of Columbia, Vol. 1*, ©1939



Figure 2: Orthographic View of the same squares today

Site

The larger development area consists of Squares 564, 566 and 568 bounded by 2nd and 3rd Streets, NW; Massachusetts Avenue, NW; and E Street, NW. Existing buildings within and adjacent to these squares are illustrated in Figure 3.



Figure 3

The Federal Government and the District of Columbia own all of the property within these three squares with the exception of the Holy Rosary Church and Casa Italiana (which are owned by the James Hickey Archbishop of Washington) and the building in Square 568 (which is owned by the Communications Workers of America).

Proposal

The Office of the Surveyor of the District of Columbia proposes to close the two public alleys in Square 566 bounded by 2nd and 3rd Streets, NW, and F and G Streets, NW (Figure 4). The alleys abut the Judiciary Square Building owned by GSA. This public alley closure is part of a much larger development project that is in its early concept phase. The Deputy Mayor's Office of Planning and Economic Development is working with a developer to bridge over the I-395 freeway between E Street and Massachusetts Ave, NW (see Figure 5 and 6), creating new developable area. Early site plans indicate that the developer will build four new buildings and reopen F Street, NW, to vehicular traffic and G Street, NW, to pedestrians.

PROJECT ANALYSIS

NCPC staff finds that the proposed alley closings would not have an adverse impact on the federal interests provided that the public alley space adjacent to the GSA building is maintained as open space in perpetuity. The alley that is perpendicular to 3rd Street, NW, abuts the GSA Judiciary Square Building and a building owned by the James Hickey Archbishop of Washington. The alley dead ends at the freeway and does not allow parking. The GSA building currently houses the offices of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Fire Arms and Explosives (ATF); the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) U.S. Customs and Border Transportation Security (BPBTS), Office of the Secretary; US Tax Court; and the Treasury Department's Office of the Secretary. The remaining portion of the alley above the freeway was removed when the freeway was built. The second alley runs parallel to 3rd Street, NW, and is located between the GSA building and the freeway. It does not support vehicular traffic.



Figure 4

The GSA building was designed and built with windows on all four sides relying on the existing open space that is provided by the alleys. Staff recommends that the public alley space adjacent to the GSA building be maintained as open space in perpetuity to protect the light and air flow into the GSA building. The preliminary development plans indicate that the GSA and Archbishop buildings and the open space where the public alleys exist will not be altered by the proposed development project.

While the applicant has only submitted an alley closing proposal at this time, staff notes that the overall development concept to bridge over the I-395 freeway and re-establish the L'Enfant Plan at F and G Streets, NW, represents an important opportunity to re-knit the L'Enfant City in this location. Staff also notes the developer's early sustainable development efforts and proposal to manage and reuse stormwater. Since the developer is



Figure 5

proposing to bridge over the freeway, it is important to comment that the heights of the proposed buildings should be measured from the existing grade of F, G, 2nd and 3rd Streets depending on which street the buildings front. The project will require a Highway Plan Amendment to re-open the portions of F Street, NW, that have been closed. The project will also be referred to NCPC as a proposed zoning action of the Zoning Commission.

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)

NCPC does not have independent NEPA responsibilities because it has an advisory role on the proposed alley closings.

National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA)

NCPC does not have independent NHPA responsibilities because it has an advisory role on the proposed alley closings. The Historic Preservation Review Board approved the alley closings at its December 20, 2007 meeting.

COORDINATION

Coordinating Committee

The Coordinating Committee reviewed the proposal at its December 12, 2007 meeting and forwarded it to the Commission with the statement that the project has been coordinating with all agencies represented except NCPC. The representative for NCPC noted that additional information was needed related to the street closings; however, since that time; the applicant withdrew the street closing proposal of the project and is now only seeking advisory comments on the public alley closings. The participating agencies were NCPC, the District of Columbia Office of Planning, the District Department of Transportation, and the General Services Administration.

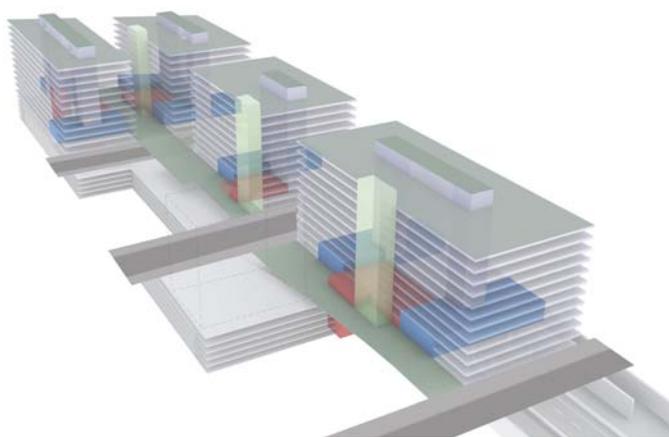


Figure 6