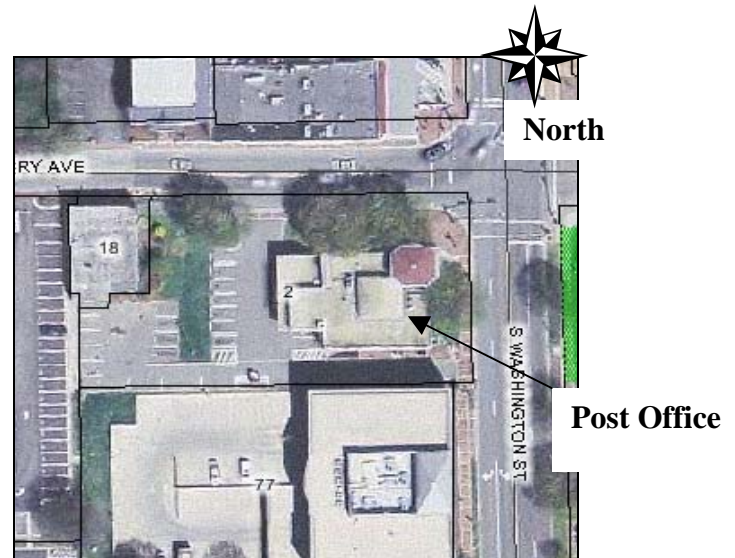


**CITY OF ROCKVILLE HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
STAFF REPORT
for
January 21, 2010
MEETING NO. 01-10**

APPLICATION:	HDC2009-00455
ADDRESS:	2 West Montgomery Ave.
OWNER/ APPLICANT:	Mayor and Council of Rockville
REQUEST:	Rear addition, roof addition and infill construction
STAFF:	Cindy Kebba

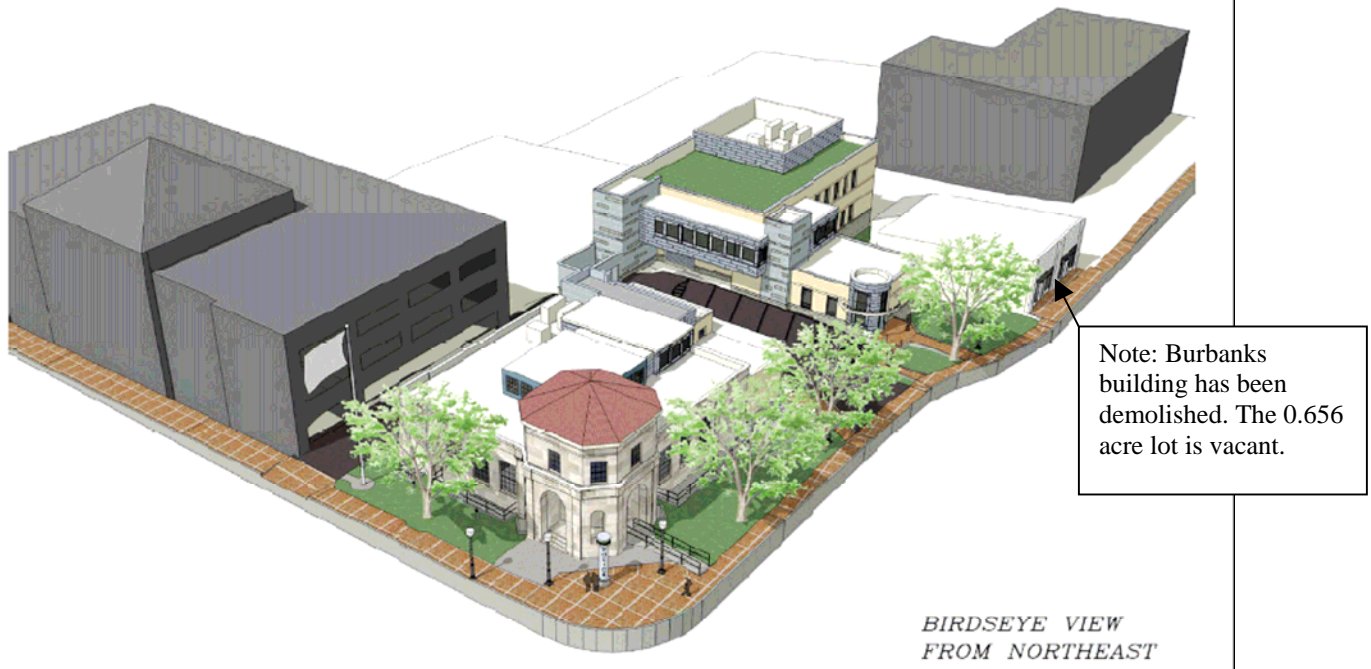


BACKGROUND

The City of Rockville acquired the former post office property on October 20, 2008 for adaptive re-use as the City's police department. The police department has been housed in the basement of City Hall for almost 30 years and the current space presently accommodates approximately three times the number of employees than intended. The post office site offers the central downtown location needed for this use.

The HDC reviewed massing and materials of the proposed additions to the post office and the freestanding infill building at a Courtesy Review on September 18, 2008 and found them to be appropriate for the historic district but suggested a different material be used on the addition in place of corrugated metal.

The HDC held a second Courtesy Review on April 16, 2009 to consider 1) an increase to the square footage of the proposed annex by adding another story to a portion of it and expanding the footprint to accommodate the full police program, 2) changes to some of the materials to be used on the additions to the post office and on the new infill construction, and 3) the architectural design proposal for the annex. Changes to the proposal since the September 18, 2008 HDC meeting were favorably received by the HDC at the second Courtesy Review. The proposed massing, size and scale of the additions to the Old Post Office have not changed since the first Courtesy Review.



New police headquarters site as proposed

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends approval of the proposed additions to the post office, including materials, and the massing, size and scale, materials and architectural design of the in-fill annex building, given the following findings:

- The City plans to consolidate all police functions at the post office site, while maintaining the historic integrity of the old post office building. The architect’s recommendation is to accommodate most of the additional space requirements in the new annex building (14,538 GSF) rather than significantly add to or alter the historic building. This follows the intent of the Secretary of the Interior’s *Standards for Rehabilitation*.
- The proposed contemporary design and materials of the annex are compatible with surrounding buildings and the adjacent historic post office, yet differentiate the new construction from the historic building. Design and materials for the annex and the post office additions meet the Secretary of the Interior’s *Standards for Rehabilitation*, #9 and #10, and the City of Rockville Technical Guides #4 and #5 which provide guidance for additions and new construction in historic districts:

Secretary of the Interior’s 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.

Secretary of the Interior's 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.

Excerpt from City of Rockville Technical Guide # 4, Additions: Additions that replicate the features of a historic building must be clearly differentiated as new construction to preserve the visual understanding of the original historic building. This differentiation can be accomplished by breaking the plane of a wall to inset the addition, giving the addition a lower roofline or using a different material. Contemporary designs may be acceptable on the rear elevation.

Excerpt from City of Rockville Technical Guide # 5, New Construction: It is important that the scale of a new building be compatible with, and representative of, other buildings on the street. In designing a new building in a typical historic district, one should try to match the historic roof heights. New construction should reflect the 21st century while respecting size, scale, massing and materials found in the district. Complementary new construction becomes part of the fabric of the district, marking changes in the City over time.

The footprint and height of the new annex will be similar to those of the post office. The annex footprint is 100 square feet larger than the post office (5,450 v. 5,350 s.f., respectively). The height will be comparable, even with a second above-grade level added to a portion of it, because the topography of the site slopes fairly severely from the northeast corner of the site to the annex location at the southwest corner. The height of the largest portion of the annex will be less than one foot taller than the monitor on top of the post office. The tallest portions of the annex (screening for the mechanical equipment, and stairway and elevator columns) remain below the eave height of the post office tower. The annex height of the peninsula that fronts West Montgomery Avenue continues to be only one story above grade. The peninsula will contain the main entrance and its north façade will be even with the plane of the post office on West Montgomery Avenue.

In response to HDC comments concerning materials at the first Courtesy Review, the architect introduced a horizontal Arriscraft building stone in both "rocked" and smooth textures; Belden brick in a buff color similar to that on the post office; Rheinzink, a weathered zinc cladding; and storefront glazing on the annex and in place of Kalwall on the post office. The HDC responded favorably to these materials at the second Courtesy Review.

HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE

Historic, archeological, or architectural value and significance of the site or structure and its relationship to the historic, archeological, or architectural significance of the surrounding area.

- Contributing**
- Non-Contributing**

Significance:

The 1939 WPA Post Office was designated as part of the local Courthouse Square Historic District in 1979 and listed in the National Register of Historic places as a contributing resource in the Courthouse Square Historic District in 1986. It is significant for its architecture, including the octagonal corner entry tower, its historic association with government uses, and as a symbol of Rockville's maturation through its role as the Town's first permanent post office.

History:

Federal postal service began in "Montgomery Courthouse" (Rockville's first name) in 1794. The road from Fredericktown (Frederick) to Georgetown was a "post road", and stages were used to haul the mail. Rockville's post office was located in a variety of buildings for the next 144 years. Space was leased from different storeowners until the need was recognized for a permanent post office building. Rockville's growth during the "building boom" of 1890 to 1905 had significantly increased its residential and business population.

The post office was a Works Progress Administration project, designed by Supervising Architect Louis A. Simon and Architect R. Stanley-Brown. The project was dedicated on July 22, 1939 with a parade and the building officially opened for business on September 5 of that year. (MHT M: 26/11/2). One of three "New Deal" federally funded post offices built in Montgomery County, the dressed gray limestone and classical lines of the building are reflective of the 1931 County Courthouse further east on Montgomery Avenue. (*Places From The Past*, 2001). The Historic American Building Survey (HABS) recorded the building in 1985. The building ceased operation as a post office in 2006.

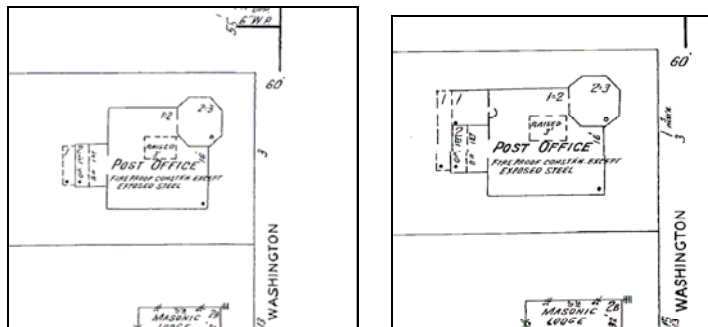
Architectural Description:

The post office occupies a prominent corner in downtown Rockville and is characterized by an octagonal two-story tower with tile roof. Entry is through the two large archways, one facing West Montgomery Avenue and the other South Washington Street. The building is clad with rectangular panels of dressed Indiana Limestone and is characterized by restrained classical elements, such as molding strips, Doric pilasters, and 12/12 first floor symmetrically placed double-hung wood windows.

The building is two stories with a basement. Two sets of external stairs provide access to the basement on the south side. The rear of the building (west) is a loading dock area. The parking

lot is divided into two sections; one directly west of the post office and the other further west with a 20-foot wide green space between them. The two parking lots are connected with a driveway. The site has access from both West Montgomery Avenue and South Washington Street and the L-shaped driveway connects the two curb cuts. A short retaining wall separates the post office property on the south side from a three-story brick office building with multi-decked parking garage.

Recessed arched niches are located at the far ends of the West Montgomery Avenue façade, and the South Washington Street façade, and the northeast side of the octagonal tower faces the intersection of the two streets. A light buff colored glazed brick characterizes the secondary elevations. The current configuration of the canopy and loading bays on the west (rear) elevation were constructed between 1949 and 1960, as per the Sanborn Map images, shown below.



1949 Sanborn

1960 Sanborn

Note difference in rear loading area

PROPERTY DESCRIPTION

Property Area: 27,926 square feet (0.641 acre)

Structure Area: existing building 9,143 gross square feet; as proposed 11,848 gross sq. ft. Annex 14,350 gross sq. ft.

Footprint: existing building, 5,234 sq. ft. and will be increased to 5,350 sq. ft. with the proposed additions. The footprint of the proposed annex is 5,450 sq. ft.

Zone: MXNC (Mixed-Use Neighborhood Commercial). Publicly-owned and publicly-operated buildings are permitted uses in the MXNC zone.

Development Standards: The MXNC zone is primarily intended for neighborhood-serving retail commercial and mixed-uses in areas that are close to single unit detached residential uses. The maximum building height is 45 feet, but may be increased up to 65 feet “when found suitable in accordance with the [Comprehensive or Neighborhood] Plan.” No setbacks are

required for facades abutting a public right-of-way or non-residential land, but if a setback is provided, it must be 10 feet or greater. The side setbacks are 10 feet and the rear setback is 0 feet.

The project is in compliance with all development standards of the zone. In addition, the architect has successfully implemented additional design guidelines for mixed-use zones and special design regulations for the MXNC zone, per Article 13, Sections 06 and 07, of the Zoning Code.

DISCUSSION OF THE PROPOSED PROJECT and MATERIALS

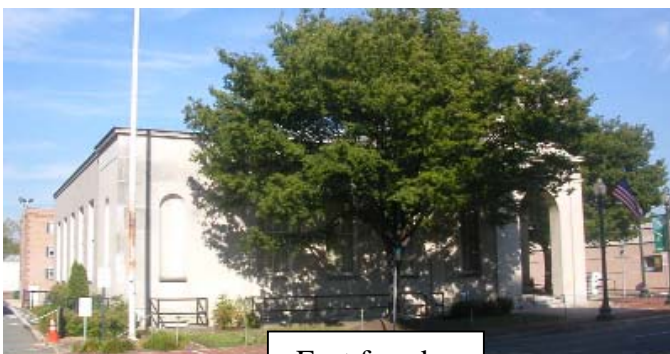
The relationship of the exterior architectural features of the structure to the remainder of the entire structure and to the surrounding area. The general compatibility of exterior design, scale, proportion, arrangement, texture, and materials proposed to be used.

The City of Rockville acquired the 1939 Post Office from the Federal Government, General Services Administration (GSA) in October 2008 to be adapted for a Homeland Security related use (City of Rockville Police Department).

The massing of the proposed project was accepted by the Maryland Historic Trust (MHT) as a condition of perpetual preservation easement required by Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act for transfer of federally owned National Register listed property to a non-federal entity. The MHT must approve final plans before the work can commence.

At its second Courtesy Review, the HDC requested that the architect reduce the height of the Annex elevator tower, if possible. Following this Courtesy Review, the HDC sent a letter (dated April 22, 2009) to MHT Director Rodney Little in response to comments on the project from the MHT Easement Committee. The HDC noted that it agreed with the findings of the Easement Committee with the exception that the HDC supported filling in the rear (west) overhead door openings on the Post Office building with matte zinc cladding rather than retaining the existing corrugated metal doors.

In a letter dated April 27, 2009 to the applicant (Scott Ullery, City Manager), MHT Director Rodney Little denied removing the existing overhead doors at the rear (west) elevation of the post office building and filling the openings with zinc panels as was suggested by the HDC. As a result, the architect has retained the corrugated metal overhead doors in current plans. The architect has reduced the height of the Annex elevator tower by approximately 16 inches, which is the maximum reduction possible to still provide sufficient interior overhead clearance.



East facade



Northeast corner



Rear elevation, taken from west boundary line of Burbanks. View of roof monitor outlined in red square.



Rear elevation, southwest corner where elevator tower is to be located

Additions to historic Post Office:

Additions will be minimally apparent on the roof behind the central square light monitor element, and on the west (rear) and south elevations. The two principle facades of the Post Office will not be affected, as the rooftop construction is set back, mostly out of sight from street views of the building.

The historic post office exterior is comprised of four primary materials: limestone on the primary facades, beige brick on the secondary elevations, copper cladding and glazing.

The architect has chosen a contemporary zinc cladding material to clearly differentiate the existing material from the new. The zinc cladding is compatible with the formality of the Post Office, yet it is a lightweight infill material that is different from the existing copper cladding on the post office building.

The new elevator/stairway enclosure at the southwest corner of the post office will be clad with 12 x 24 smooth masonry building stone (Arriscraft).

The same monolithic building stone will be used for the rear infill of the loading dock area and the overhead door openings will be filled with matte zinc panels.

The roof top monitor extension will consist of storefront glazing with metal panels. The proportion of glazing to metal cladding is similar to that of the original monitor. The existing monitor is clad with copper sheeting and contains five square 12-light windows on each of the three sides. The old and new will be connected with a horizontal zinc interlocking tile system.

The masonry, metal, and glazing materials proposed for the post office additions are evocative of those used on the post office and compatible with the existing historic structure and the surrounding built environment, yet they do not replicate the historic building materials.

The existing vehicular access points at West Montgomery Avenue and South Washington Street will be retained and no new access points will be added. Six parking spaces (including two handicap spaces) will be provided along the east side of the Annex. The applicant will request a parking reduction waiver (Section 25.16.03) from the Planning Commission to allow the majority of police station parking to be located at the adjacent office condominium at 77 South Washington Street.

The post office will be connected to the new Annex via an underground tunnel which will extend from the southwest corner of the post office to the east side of the Annex.

Annex Building:

The environmental setting of the post office will be changed by the addition of the two/three-story L-shaped freestanding annex to be located at the southwest corner of the parcel, but most of the building will be set back from West Montgomery Avenue. The new annex will serve as the 24-hour operational component of the on-site police program. The main part of the building will consist of three levels, but the lowest level will be considered a basement given its relationship to the ground plane. The roof will include a vegetated system in addition to screened rooftop mechanical equipment. The building steps down to one story (plus basement) on West Montgomery Avenue so as not to compete with the historic post office on this street frontage.

The West Montgomery Avenue elevation of the new building has the only major street frontage and is in line with the West Montgomery Avenue façade of the Post Office. The building fits into the dense urban fabric and its height and massing are consistent with the overall density patterns of the Town Center.

The building's height will be generally comparable to that of the post office, given the site's grade change. The tallest portion (top of mechanical screen) of the annex is lower than the eave of the post office tower and approximately 5 feet above the post office clerestory. The top of the high parapet of the annex is 8.5 feet taller than the high parapet of the post office. Buildings to the immediate west and south of the site are taller than the proposed annex.

Materials used for the post office infill and additions also will be used on the annex to help unify the two buildings while the distinct architecture will differentiate their timeframes. Beige brick, similar to that on the secondary elevations of the original post office, is the primary cladding material for most of the annex. A bullnose sill separates the brick cladding from the rusticated 12 x 24 Arriscraft building stone base. The same building stone, in both smooth and rusticated finishes, is used on the elevator and stair towers and on the south elevation. Smaller blocks of the same material are interspersed to provide visual interest.

Public access to the annex is at the northeast corner of the building on West Montgomery Avenue. The public entranceway is defined by a low vertical element in a contemporary design. It is clad with matte zinc and storefront glazing. A cantilevered second story faces east toward the post office and partially conceals the utilitarian sally port entrance below it. The cantilevered element is also wrapped in zinc cladding and storefront glazing.

The north elevation contains the same four materials as well as five aluminum windows on the first and second stories. The south and west elevations each have recessed zinc panels which break up the facades and provide housing for security lighting.

The south elevation will be built to the property line as permitted by the zoning ordinance development standards. The smooth masonry units will be randomly interspersed with textured (rocked) masonry units to provide interest. The rocked masonry units will be used below the sill as well. Two recessed interlocking metal tile system inserts with exterior light fixtures break up the facade.

Signage and Lighting:

No new signage or lighting will be added onto the original post office building. Additional exterior lighting will be provided only on freestanding bollards and on the new additions. The relief lettering on the post office tower will be painted a light color to reduce its visual prominence and to help avoid public confusion.

Clear identification of the property as the police station is essential. The main identification signage for the police department is depicted in the plans as a 13.5-foot freestanding vertical monument located near the northeast corner of the post office building, made of anodized aluminum with vertical lettering ("Police") atop a masonry base (see pages 31 and 32 of plans).

The top of the post will include “City of Rockville” within a lighted monitor for 24-hour visibility.

A small, low granite sign monument will be located near the front entrance of the Annex to provide identification and directional information to visitors.

Landscaping:

The landscape plan (page 4 of plans) indicates no existing trees will be removed from the site. Special care will be taken to preserve the four Zelkova trees along the W. Montgomery Avenue and S. Washington Street perimeter. Two Magnolias will be planted on the north side of the Annex. Three evergreens, shrubs and perennials will also be planted.

COMPLIANCE WITH GUIDELINES

The proposed massing, design and materials proposed for the annex in-fill construction and the materials proposed for the additions to the post office building are consistent with the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards #3, #9 and #10, and the City of Rockville Technical Guidelines #4 and #5.

Attachments:

1. Certificate of Approval application, submitted 12/17/09
2. Project narrative, submitted by WGM Architecture & Interiors, 12/17/09
3. Plans for the Adaptive Reuse of the Former United States Post Office for the City of Rockville Police Department, WGM Architecture & Interiors, dated 01/21/10
4. Existing condition photos, submitted by WGM Architecture & Interiors, 12/17/09
5. Letter from HDC Chair to Rodney Little, Director of Maryland Historical Trust, 4/21/09
6. Letter to from Rodney Little, Director, Maryland Historical Trust, to Scott Ullery, City Manager 4/27/09
7. HDC minutes, Courtesy Review, April 16, 2009
8. HDC minutes, Courtesy Review, September 18, 2008