



DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY PLANNING, HOUSING AND DEVELOPMENT  
Neighborhood Services Division

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# MEMORANDUM

TO: HALRB

Rebecca Ballo, Historic Preservation

FROM: Planner

DATE: October 17, 2017

SUBJECT: SP#339 Amendment, Market Common Redevelopment, Engraver's Building

## Background

The subject property, bounded by Wilson Boulevard to the north, North Edgewood Street to the east, Clarendon Boulevard to the south, and the Whitlow's restaurant to the west, is identified as Block "A" of the Market Common Clarendon site plan. The site is currently occupied by a vacant office building, which was originally constructed as a Sear's retail store and warehouse, and by the storefronts at 2836 Wilson Boulevard (known as the Engraver's Building) and 2828-2832 Wilson Boulevard (Iota). The applicant is proposing to amend the existing Site Plan #339 (approved by the County Board in November 1999, and amended several times since) to rezone the Wilson Boulevard properties from C-2 to C-O-1.5, and to construct new stories on the block, in addition to other alterations. This project has been heard twice by the Site Plan Review Committee (SPRC) of the Planning Commission in July and September 2017.

## Historic Buildings in the Project Area

The project area contains one building, 2836 Wilson Boulevard, which is identified as historic in both the *Historic Resources Inventory (HRI)* and the *Clarendon Sector Plan*. This property, also known as the former A & R Engravers Building is called out as an Essential HRI Commercial property under the County's *Historic Resources Inventory Policy Document* (2011). 2836 Wilson is also called out for Building Façade Preservation in the Clarendon Sector Plan (p. 50). This building was constructed in May 1941 (Permit #12938)

The property at located at 2828 - 2832 Wilson Boulevard (Iota) is not called out for any level of preservation, either in the text of the Sector Plan or in the HRI. The Map in the Sector Plan (p. 60) includes 2832 Wilson as a Designated Frontage with required setbacks and preservation, but this does not match the text of the plan. The HRI ranked this building as Not

Historic/Altered. This building was originally constructed in 1940 (Permit #10030), but has been so altered that it is no longer considered an historic structure. The façade was remodeled numerous times beginning in 1956.

The rest of the block was originally constructed as a Sear's commercial building in 1941/1942, and that commercial use continued into the late 1980s. Since that time the building was remodeled extensively and used by the Arlington Public Schools and others for office and swing space. The building has been remodeled to such an extent that, much like the Iota facades, it was considered so altered that it was listed as Not Historic/Altered as part of the Historic Resources Inventory.

### **Plan and Policy Guidance for Historic Properties on Site**

The Engraver's Building at 2836 Wilson Boulevard is called out for historic preservation as part of two County documents: The *Clarendon Sector Plan* (2006), and the *Historic Resources Inventory* (2011).

The Façade Preservation designation under the *Clarendon Sector Plan* requires a 10' setback from the façade of the building along Wilson Boulevard to the face of any new construction above. Additional policies the HALRB should consider for redevelopment of the property including the Engraver's Building include the following guidance from the *Clarendon Sector Plan* (pg. 47). The *Plan* notes that "it is expected that the highest quality design and materials, along with careful consideration of massing and proportioning, will be provided for any project that incorporates the preservation of ... buildings listed herein" (pg. 47).

Additionally the *Plan* states new development should incorporate this guidance:

- Maintain the ensemble of buildings/facades/frontages, as the importance of many structures comes from the context of adjacent buildings. If frontages/facades are preserved, special features such as recessed entrances/windows, flooring details (i.e. terrazzo) are considered important, necessary, and may be sought to be preserved.
- The County Board, with recommendations from HALRB, may consider alternative design proposals in order to consider unusual circumstances or the extent to which new development may impact a preserved structure, including proposals to modify the type (or category) of preservation and adjustments to the Step-Back Adopted Policies #22-25. For example, a structure recommended for frontage/façade preservation may be reconsidered for full building preservation.
- Obtain recommendations from HALRB on the design and extent of any preserved structure located in a site plan proposal, including recommendations on the effectiveness of the overall project in providing an appropriate context for the preserved structure.
- Where a proposal includes preservation of a structure, the style, materials, and heights of new structures should be informed by the style and materials of the preserved structure.

The *Historic Resources Inventory* sought to evaluate buildings' importance on a Countywide basis. Adopted after the *Clarendon Sector Plan*, the HRI did not assess the integrity and importance of buildings in one geographic area; rather, the HRI survey looked at all of the garden apartments, commercial buildings, and commercial shopping centers constructed from

the 1920s-1950s in a countywide context. Taking this broader perspective, the Engraver's Building was assessed as an Essential Commercial building, one of ten given this highest designation. The HRI policy guidance recommends the highest level of historic preservation possible for the HRI Essential properties. Specifically, the HRI states that the following goals should apply to Essential Properties:

**GOAL 4: PROMOTE THE PRESERVATION OF THE ESSENTIAL HISTORIC BUILDINGS IN THE HRI.**

- The County will strive to protect all Essential properties and will use all available tools to ensure their continued stewardship and preservation.
- The County will actively collaborate with owners of Essential properties to preserve the buildings' historical and material integrity to the maximum extent possible.
- The County will require that new development proposals affecting all Essential properties be reviewed by the Historical Affairs and Landmark Review Board (HALRB).
- The County will actively promote Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) in exchange for building preservation. However, a TDR received from an historic site for purposes of historic preservation by a receiving site plan that proposes demolition of a listed historic resource is strongly discouraged unless the combined community benefits derived from the sending and receiving sites are determined by the County Board to outweigh the loss of the receiving site's historic resource and address valuable County initiatives.
- The County will appropriately weigh the impact on Essential properties when awarding bonus density to development proposals.
- The County will actively encourage owners of Essential properties to take maximum advantage of available financial incentives (e.g., Federal and state rehabilitation tax credits, preservation easements, County real estate tax exemption for rehabilitation).
- The County will encourage owners of Essential properties to take advantage of available zoning tools (e.g., site plans and use permits, TDR, local historic district designation).
- The County will pursue local historic district designation with all Essential properties where owner consent is present, and will give designation priority to those Essential properties threatened with demolition. (pg. 2, HRI Policy Document).

**GOAL 7: CONTRIBUTE TO THE LASTING HISTORIC RECORD OF THE COUNTY BY DOCUMENTING HISTORIC RESOURCES LISTED IN THE HRI.**

- The County will require, through site plan and use permit conditions and coordination with Historic Preservation Program staff, the formal recordation of historic resources ranked as Essential and Important in the HRI prior to any proposed demolition.
- The County will require that Essential buildings proposed to be demolished in whole or in part through the site plan or use permit process will be subject to the most detailed level of historic documentation according to the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) standards (including a research report, measured drawings, and photographs). (pg. 3, HRI Policy Document).

## **Considerations**

The HALRB should determine if the proposal meets the policy and plan guidance outlined above. As part of their review the HALRB should consider whether the use of materials, massing, setbacks, and the overall design scheme of the proposal is compatible with the preservation of the Engraver's Building, and whether an appropriate context has been created for this preserved structure. Precedents for this type of preservation project in Clarendon include the Penzance Site Plan on Washington Boulevard (McQuinn's Sporting Goods & VA ABC frontage preserved), the Phoenix Condominium Project on Washington Boulevard (Joseph Fisher Post Office preserved), and the BF Saul Development (Old Dominion building & Leadership Building preserved). The HALRB should also consider whether the goals of preservation of an Essential HRI building have been met through the proposed design of new construction and the proposed preservation of the Engraver's building. The HALRB may also consider whether the proposed level of preservation (frontage plus a portion of the alley elevation) meets the HRI and *Sector Plan* preservation goals for this property.