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Mayor

**COMMISSION FOR
HISTORICAL & ARCHITECTURAL
PRESERVATION**

Tom Liebel, Chairman



Chris Ryer
Director

STAFF REPORT

July 13, 2020

REQUEST: Concept Review 2 – Massing and scale of three-story addition

ADDRESS: 601 South Broadway (Fells Point Historic District)

RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends approval of the massing and scale. Staff recommends that the applicant return to the full commission for approval of the final design.

STAFF: Stacy Montgomery

ARCHITECT: Justin Seto

APPLICANT: Five Seas Limited Partnership

SITE/HISTORIC DISTRICT

The site is located near the center of the Fells Point Historic District on the South Broadway corridor. Fells Point is significant as one of the original three settlements that merged to form the beginnings of Baltimore City. The area is directly linked to early maritime trade, which was central to Baltimore's growth and development. Besides the significance of Fells Point in the eighteenth century, the community has been a constantly growing and changing urban place. Many of the earliest houses were added on to in the Victorian era creating a unique blend of pre-Revolutionary War and post-Civil War architectural styles and characteristics. Fells Point has been a diverse neighborhood of many ethnic groups, each influencing the growth and development of the area throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Many of the later structures are of architectural significance and are consistent with the waterfront character of Fells Point, even if stylistically different.

Site Conditions: The site includes four buildings at the corner of South Broadway and Fleet Street. The building at 601 South Broadway is a one-and-a-half story Art Moderne commercial building that was built in the mid-1930s on the footprint of a four-story commercial building that stood on the same site. Photos from the 1930s show large storefront windows wrapping around the 1st story of the façade topped by a band of multi-light clerestory windows. The clerestory windows have been covered by siding. The building has been the home of a linens store for many years. Historically, the store that occupied the building was a five and dime store called Goldenberg's or Goldenberg's Bargain House.

The site also includes three small commercial buildings that date to the late-nineteenth century and feature ornate Italianate cornices. The tallest of the three brick buildings features decorative brickwork, elaborate mullions, and an ornamental cap above the cornice. Two of these buildings, three-story structures on Fleet Street, will be rehabbed and topped with a one-story addition that will be set back from the front facade. The third building is a two-story building on South Broadway that will be rehabbed and topped with a two-story addition that is setback from the front façade. The scope of work for these three buildings are considered minor and in compliance with the CHAP guidelines, and thus will be reviewed and approved at staff level.

BACKGROUND

The Commission reviewed this project in November of 2020 and granted concept approval to the height of the proposed addition and provided design direction to the applicant, requesting that the addition be glassier, have more horizontality, and take more cues from the style of the existing one-and-a-half story building. The commission approved the following staff recommendation:

Staff recommends approval of the height. Staff recommends the following:

- *The applicants should study other contemporary Art Deco¹ inspired additions and should apply design elements that fit the existing structure with emphasis on the proportions and scale of the design elements;*
- *The applicants should study the massing of the addition and its relation to the adjacent properties, in particular the massing behind the two-story structure on South Broadway.*

PROPOSAL

The applicants propose to construct a three-story residential addition on the existing one-and-a-half story commercial Art Moderne building at the corner of Fleet and South Broadway. The new addition will be set back from the two Italianate commercial buildings to the east of the Art Moderne building. The new addition will also extend over the adjacent two-story Italianate building on South Broadway. The building will have ground floor retail along Broadway and the entry to the residential portion in the existing structure on Fleet Street.

Since the November 2020 CHAP hearing, the team has modified the design of the proposed addition. They have removed the large lower cornice below the upper story windows and replaced it with a smaller, simpler band under the upper story windows. They have also simplified the design of upper cornice and removed the metal railing around the balcony at the corner unit. The fenestration has altered, with small transom windows above the 2nd and 3rd story windows to match the storefront windows on the 1st story. The spandrel panels between the 2nd and 3rd story windows are now a lighter color, rather than the original dark color proposed.

The building will be topped with a broad cornice that rounds the corner like the historic building. Each corner will feature inset balconies with rounded glass railings and paired doors.

¹ The original staff report from November of 2020 identified the historic building as Art Deco; however, staff has since determined that the building should be considered Art Moderne.

The applicant proposes using smaller paired windows on the upper story, and taller paired windows on the two lower stories. The applicants are seeking approval for the massing and scale of the building.

APPLICATION OF GUIDELINES

The proposal involves both the rehabilitation of historic buildings and the addition of two to three new stories on top existing historic buildings. To review the proposal CHAP Staff applied *Chapter 2: Design Guidelines for Additions, New Construction, and Non-Contributing Buildings*.

2.1 Guiding Principles for New Design

- *Avoid demolishing historic buildings, structures, and landscapes when designing new construction projects.*

The historic buildings will be retained and rehabilitated.

- *Identify the character-defining features of the surrounding historic buildings and streetscape. Design new buildings to visually relate to the historic environment. Respect the established design precedent in the immediate area but do not imitate existing buildings.*

The surrounding buildings and streetscapes have a variety of architectural styles, although the building material is primarily brick and most buildings date to the nineteenth or twentieth centuries. The historic one-and-a-half story building on the site is something of an outlier in its height and materials. The new addition would be in keeping with the heights of other taller building and contemporary additions on the block.

- *Contemporary architectural design that reflects its current time, place, use, and culture is accepted, provided that the design is compatible with the character of the historic district.*

The new addition is contemporary in design. The applicants have proposed a three-story design that will compliment the design of the historic building one-and-a-half story building as well as the nineteenth century buildings around it. The new addition will have a rounded corner like the historic building and a fenestration pattern that relates to the historic fenestration pattern. The applicant's choice of materials should also compliment the historic building.

2.2 Site Design

- *New construction at corners or abutting public spaces require special consideration in the design of entrances and multiple, publicly visible facades.*

The design of the new addition carries the rounded corner of the historic building to the top of the cornice.

2.3 Scale and Form

- *The scale and form of new buildings must be compatible with the height and depth of surrounding buildings. Where there is variation of building height within the immediate neighborhood, the new building should generally relate to the predominant pattern.*

The applicants were given approval to construct a 3-story addition on top of the historic building in November of 2020. Other buildings at this intersection are three or four

stories, with the exception of the Broadway Market building, which is a tall one-story building. The buildings to the south on South Broadway have a taller addition that is set back and not highly visible from the street; this addition was approved prior to the CHAP Historic District designation.

- *New buildings must complement the massing of surrounding buildings, including the proportion of solid surfaces (walls) to voids (window and door openings.) Respect the characteristic rhythm (fenestration, bays, rooflines, etc.) of existing buildings.*
The new addition is flush with the façade of the one-story historic Art Moderne building, but will be set back from the facades of the two and three story buildings. The massing and scale of the addition are in keeping with the massing and scale of other buildings in the area, including the other corner buildings at the intersection of Broadway and Fleet Street. The fenestration pattern is different than others on the block but is in keeping with the fenestration pattern on the historic one-and-a-half story building that serves as its base.
- *Design the new building to be proportional to surrounding buildings. Consider important building proportions such as floor-to-floor heights, the size and placement of windows and doors, the scale of articulated elements such as porches, overhanging cornices, and bay windows.*

There is some variation in the floor-to-floor heights on the buildings surrounding the site, and on the site itself. The corner building at 601 South Broadway and the Broadway Market building are very tall one-story buildings. The variation on Fleet Street is more pronounced than South Broadway. Since 601 South Broadway is a one-and-a-half story building and the surrounding buildings are two or three stories, it would be challenging for the second stories to align; however, the third stories are more closely aligned. Given the height and design of the historic building and variety in the streetscape, some leeway with the floor-to-floor heights can be acceptable here.

The placement of doors and windows should be in keeping with the placement of the doors and windows on the historic building that is the base of the addition.

The lower cornice that was proposed in November of 2020 was simplified into a single band, which is a better compliment to the historic Art Moderne Style of the historic building below it.

- *Design rooflines to be compatible with those found on surrounding buildings.*
The roofline of the new addition will be flat. The sloped roof of the historic two-story building on South Broadway will be retained.

ANALYSIS

The massing and scale of the building meet the design guidelines. The final placement of the fenestration and selection of materials should compliment the historic Art Moderne building that serves as the base.

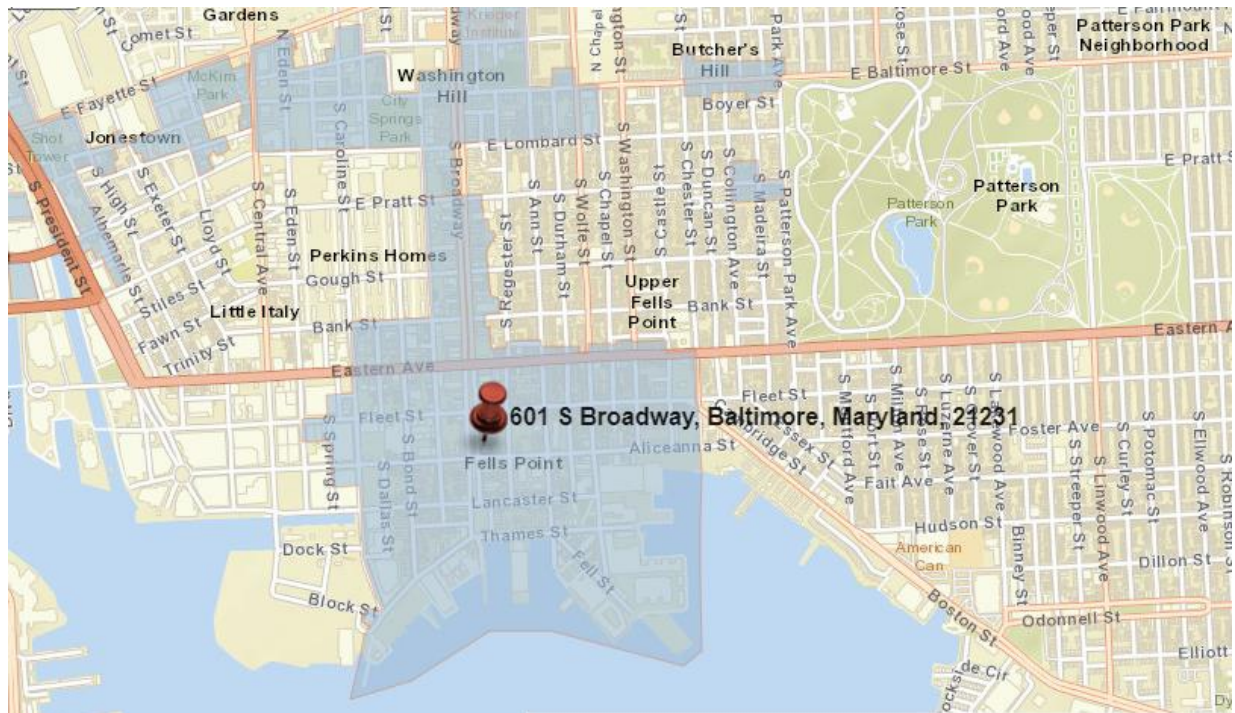
NEIGHBORHOOD COMMENTS

The Fells Point Design Review Committee and the Fells Point Task Force were notified and provided the plans for the project. The FDRC supports the plans and re-use of the site and voted in favor of the height, massing and scale at their meeting. The team made some updates to the design to reflect feedback from the committee and CHAP staff and the tentative agenda committee. Staff is awaiting the community feedback on these updates.

RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends approval of the massing and scale. Staff recommends that the project return to the full commission for review of the final details, including materials and fenestration.



Eric L. Holcomb
Executive Director



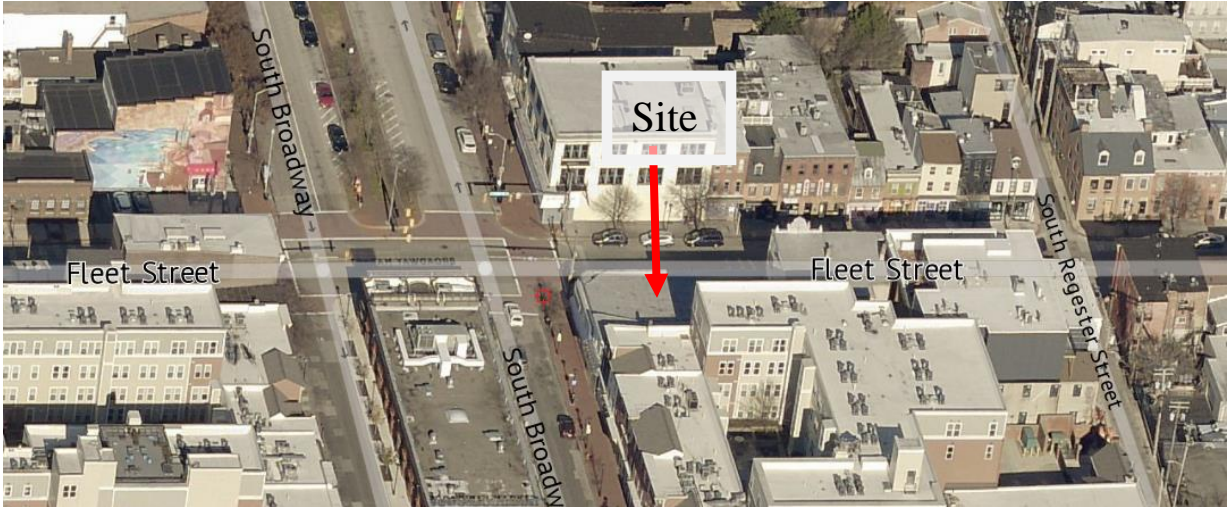
Site Map - Fells Point Historic District



Aerial View of the site



Aerial View of the site from application



View from the South



View from the West



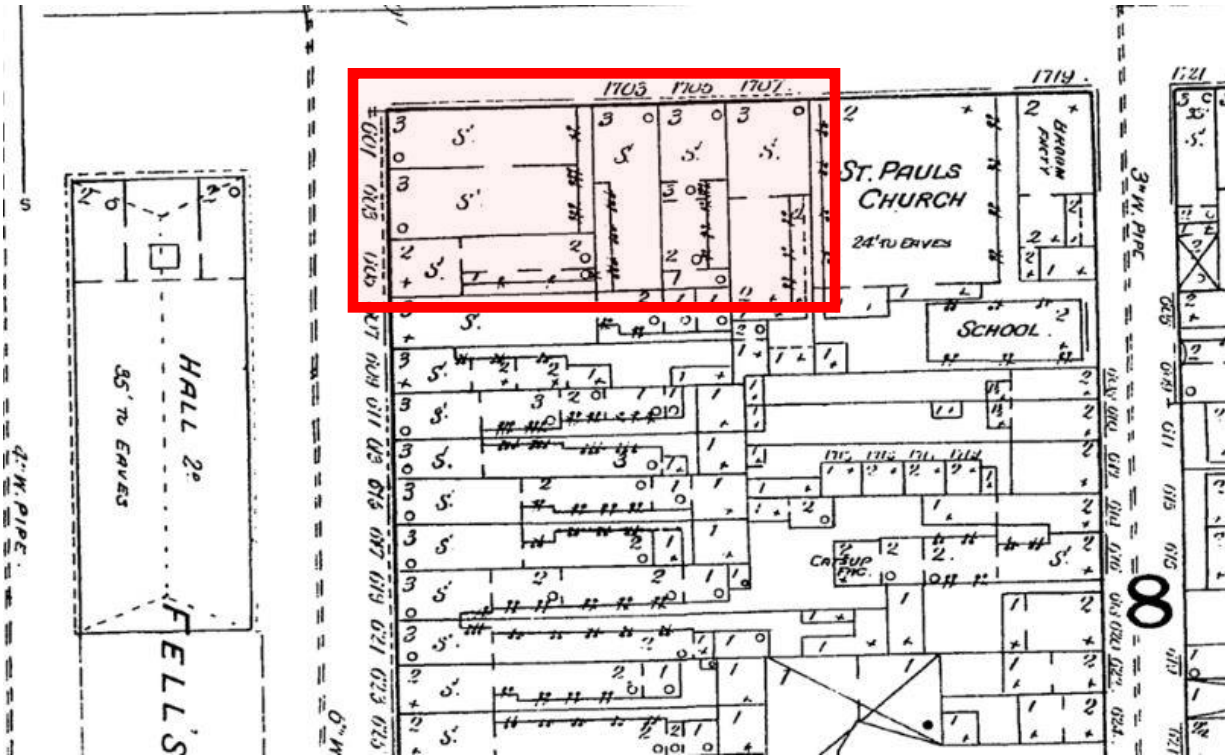
View from the North



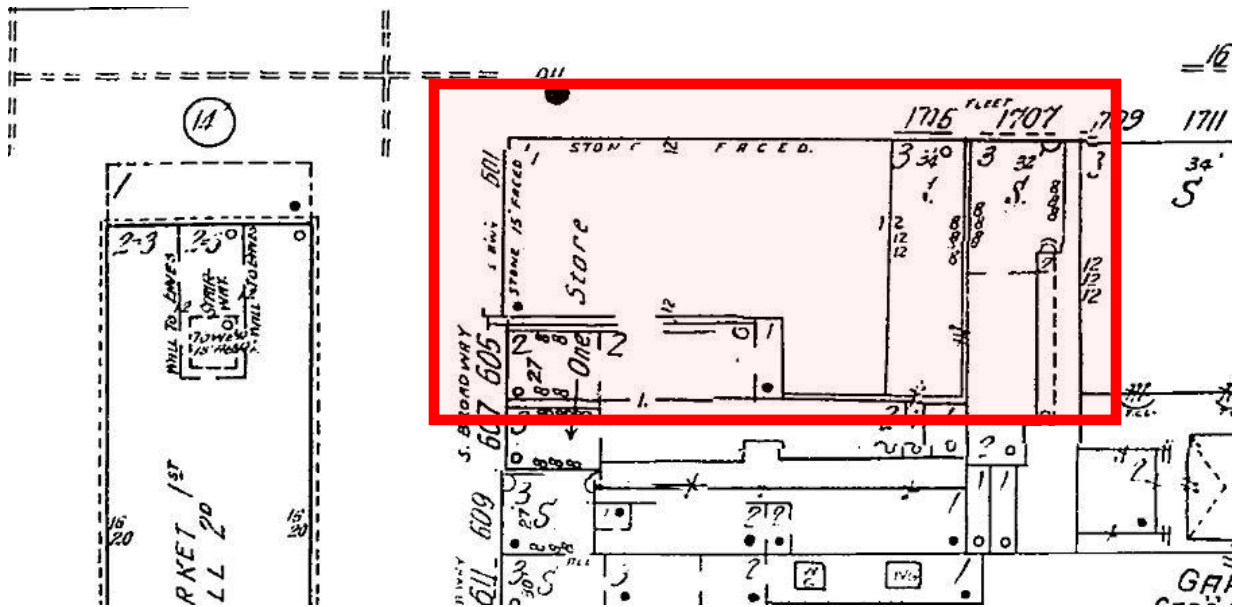
View from the East



Historic Image of Building – circa 1934 from application



1890 Sanborn Map



Current View - South Broadway and Fleet St (2020 Google maps)



November 2020 Rendering