



# HISTORIC ANNAPOLIS

Historic Annapolis, Inc.  
Shiplap House  
18 Pinkney Street  
Annapolis, MD 21401  
410.267.7619  
info@annapolis.org

To: Members and Staff of the Annapolis Historic Preservation Commission

From: Rachel Robinson, VP Preservation, Historic Annapolis

Date: January 23, 2025

RE: Maritime Welcome Center Pre-Application Review

In regard to Item #1 under Other Business on the 1.23.25 agenda ("Pre App. For the City Dock Resiliency Project - Phase II for the Maritime Welcome Center and the Prince George Street Park"), Historic Annapolis (HA) offers the following observations on the proposed Maritime Welcome Center (MWC) based on our local expertise, familiarity with the MWC design, and long involvement with the City Dock Project.

Through our nearly 75 years of working to protect and preserve Annapolis, a National Historic Landmark District and the local historic district under your purview, and as the steward of 13 historic properties—five of which are within close proximity of City Dock, we have a vested interest in the success of the City Dock Project.

At every opportunity, HA staff has testified to **our unwavering support of the resiliency** portion of the project in the form of flood barrier protection and the elevated park. Our main concern has always been the size of the MWC. Now that it has come to HPC for pre-application and then final review, we respectfully submit the following.

HA has continually stated that the MWC is **two times too big** as an addition to the historic Burtis House as proposed and as sited at the end of Dock Street. For reference, attached is a transcription of conversation that occurred during the October 30, 2024, joint HPC/Planning Commission work session. A 580 square foot reduction of the building size above grade was cited, but confirmed that it occurred prior to May 2024, or two design iterations ago.

Following a review of the HPC design guidelines, our professional opinion is that the current design does not meet the Annapolis Historic District Design Manual guidelines, especially with respect to additions to existing buildings:

1. A.3 Views from the Water

- “All projects which are visible from the water shall respect and reinforce the historic character of the district and shall respect traditional views and visual focal points.” We believe the size of this prominent waterfront building, more so than the design, detracts from the views, particularly at the point where Dock Street today and the future pedestrian allée of the park design meets the water.

## 2. B.6 Size and Massing of Additions

- "Additions shall be designed to be subordinate to the main part of the building in terms of massing, height, scale and detail." The MWC is not subordinate to the historic Burtis House, to which the MWC is an addition.
- **"Additions which compete with or obliterate an original structure *will not be approved*."** This should disqualify the current design as the Burtis House is not visible from Dock Street.
- "Additions that compete in size with original buildings are strongly discouraged." In mass, height, and scale, the MWC is larger than the Burtis House.

## 3. B.10 Prevailing Setbacks

- "The prevailing setback line at the street should be preserved." It is not.
- "The facade of a planned new building should respect the alignment of existing building facades relative to the sidewalk edge." The MWC is not in alignment with the existing buildings on Dock Street and surpasses the existing sidewalk, thus interrupting the rhythm of the street face and blocking views.

## 4. D.18 Windows and Doors in Additions

- "Windows and doors in an addition to a historic building should relate to the scale and proportion of original openings in the existing building." The large amount of glazing on the MWC does not relate to the sash window openings of the Burtis House.

## 5. D.19 Windows and Doors in New Buildings

- Figure 92: "Glass area in excess of 33% is not compatible with existing buildings in the historic district." The gable ends of the MWC are nearly fully glazed, and the Dock Street facade is mostly glazed.

Additionally, we agree with the Maryland Historical Trust's assessment and guidance (Letter from Director Elizabeth Hughes dated August 1, 2024):

The [easement] committee recognizes that the height of the addition is sensitive, particularly its height relative to the height of the Burtis House at multiple levels, and that the need to place and screen rooftop equipment is also a factor in the design... If feasible, we encourage you to look for opportunities to reduce the height of the addition for inclusion in your submission for final approval.

Thank you for your consideration of our comments. We are glad to make ourselves available to the HPC should you have any questions.