
**HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD
STAFF REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION**

Property Address:	1100-1102 16th Street, NW	Agenda
Landmark/District:	16th Street Historic District	X Consent Calendar
		X Concept Review
Meeting Date:	May 24, 2012	X Alteration
H.P.A. Number:	12-344	New Construction
Staff Reviewer:	Steve Callcott	Demolition
		Subdivision

OTJ Architects, representing Rock Creek-1100 16th LLC, seeks concept review for alterations to a three-story corner townhouse at the northwest corner of 16th and L streets.

Property History and Description

1100-1102 16th Street was constructed in 1909 as a single family residence for owner William Alden Smith, a Michigan attorney and politician. Owner of the Grand Rapids, Kalkaska and Southeast Railroad and Grand Rapids Herald newspaper, Smith was elected to the House in 1895, and later served in the Senate from 1907-1919. He chaired the Senate committee that investigated the sinking of the Titanic and is credited with a report that led to important maritime safety reforms.

While construction permits and historic maps are not entirely conclusive, it appears that the house was built in two stages – 1102 was constructed first in 1908-09, and then later expanded by 1913 to include the corner property. As there were preexisting buildings on the corner, it is possible that this lateral expansion simply incorporated and remodeled (rather than replaced) those existing structures into Smith’s house. The finished house was classical revival in style, with a rusticated based, stucco wall surfaces with stone detailing, and was capped by a deep cornice with a balustrade parapet.

At some point in the mid-20th century, the cornice was removed and two additional floors added to 1102. The property was renovated to serve as a school in the 1990s, with construction of a roof addition and roof-top playground, and application of synthetic stucco (EIFS) over the primary facades. Despite its somewhat altered condition, the building was included as a contributing structure in the expansion of the 16th Street Historic District in 2007.

Proposal

The project calls for removing the later, incompatible alterations, such as the angled roof line and rooftop playground, and to renovate the exterior in a manner that is guided by the building’s historic character. Unfortunately, the application of EIFS that covers many of the original wall surfaces caused significant damage to the underlying stone and stucco, so it will be left in place and painted. Missing architectural details, such as window lintels, string courses and cornice will be replicated, and sealed window openings opened.

Evaluation and Recommendation

While not resulting in full-scale restoration, the project will significantly improve the compatibility of the building with the 16th Street Historic District. The recreation of the building's tripartite classical composition – with a strong articulated base, a smooth stucco midsection, and a substantial cornice – will reestablish an important design characteristic of the building that is currently missing, and which is shared among most contributing structures in this district.

As the design continues to be developed and refined, the HPO would encourage that the cornice more closely replicate the scale and projection of the original. Without the substantial projection to the cornice, the new element will appear flat and insufficient to visually cap the building. Similarly, materials other than EIFS should be explored for the new cornice; while EIFS can replicate the general appearance of flat stucco wall surfaces, it is less successful when used for three-dimensional forms with crisp edges and profiles. As well, rather than capping the building with a new open metal railing for the roof deck, the original solid parapet would provide a more compatible and classical source of inspiration.

The HPO recommends that the Review Board find the concept design to be consistent with the purposes of the preservation act, with the refinements suggested above and subject to further design development, and to delegate final approval to staff.