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

Landmark/District:	Downtown Historic District	X	Agenda
Address:	801, 807, and 809 7th Street; 633-35 H Street NW		Consent Calendar
Meeting Date:	September 22, 2011	X	Alteration
H.P.A. Number:	11-484	X	New Construction Subdivision
Staff Reviewer:	Steve Callcott	X	Conceptual Design

Douglas Development and McCaffery Interests, represented by architect Sasha Rosen (R2L Architects) seek conceptual design review of a proposed mixed-use office and retail project at the corner of 7th and H Streets in the Chinatown section of the Downtown Historic District. The Board reviewed and approved the concept for a 10-story residential tower on the site in 2006, proposed by a different design and development team. The current proposal is significantly smaller, calling for one additional floor and a penthouse atop and setback from the facades of several of the buildings.

Property Description

The project involves renovation, alteration and/or additions to the following historic buildings:

- **801-05 7th Street** is a four-story Italianate structure built in 1871 and enlarged in 1921. The building visually anchors the corner and retains a high degree of integrity.
- **807 and 809 7th Street** are a pair of three-story brick and wood frame buildings originally built in the 1850s, but heavily altered since. The facades retain a reasonable degree of integrity, but due to structural failure and recent emergency demolition, only the front 20 feet of the buildings remain.
- **633-35 H Street** is a 3-story brick store building dating from 1913. The building retains a high degree of integrity, although the façade has been painted and the storefronts bricked in. Julius Germuiller was the original architect.
- **633-35 H Street (Rear)** is a 2-story brick warehouse dating from 1897. The roof and floors are near collapse, but the brick walls remain. The modest but handsome south façade now opens onto a very small courtyard and is not visible from the street. Appleton Clark was the architect.

Proposal

The project calls for the first two floors and basement to be rehabilitated for retail use; the space could be leased to a single user or several smaller tenants depending on demand. The upper floors would be converted to office space, and would be supplemented by the construction of a fourth and fifth floor on all but the corner building; the fifth floor would not contain leasable space but would contain the building's mechanical equipment and provide access to a roof

terrace. The fourth story addition would be set back 20 feet from the retained facades of 807-809 7th Street and 10 feet back from the façade of 633-635 H Street; the fifth floor would be set back 30 feet from the 7th Street facades and 50 feet from the H Street facade.

The additions would be entirely contemporary in design, composed of glass curtain walls with metal framing facing the streets and masonry on the party walls. A sky-lit atrium would be created in front of the warehouse to allow it be read as a separate, stand-alone structure.

The specific preservation treatments are still being developed with the HPO, but would include historically appropriate storefronts and doors, repaired or replacement wood windows, necessary repairs to cornices and trim, and reconstruction of the interior structure of the warehouse.

Evaluation and Recommendation

The applicant and architect have worked closely with the staff on the emergency demolition and stabilization, and in formulating the preservation and new construction plans. The design has been revised to reduce the visual impact of the roof additions atop the 7th Street buildings by reducing the size and increasing the setbacks for the penthouse level. The applicants are still exploring alternative elevator options that may reduce the height of the penthouse by an additional two feet or so.

The compromise in allowing a visible roof addition on 7th Street is justified based on the historic buildings' lack of integrity and its location in an extremely varied streetscape within the Downtown Historic District. With the collapse and removal of all but the front 20 feet of the buildings, the 7th Street buildings no longer possess historic integrity as structures, and their facades are modest vernacular designs that were altered over time to adjust from residential to commercial use. The new construction would rise behind the retained portions of the historic buildings and remain within the established range of heights of the block. In contrast, the H Street building is a more imposing architectural design historically related to (and internally unified with) the corner building to which it is attached. Due to the taller height of the H Street building, the one additional floor will be only minimally visible and not fundamentally affect its composition or perception from the street.

Because the site area is relatively small, the design includes a wing built over the historic warehouse at the rear of the lot. The brick walls of this building are sound, but its wood framing is deteriorated beyond salvage. This allows for the possibility of adding during rehabilitation new structural columns that would support the construction above. This rear wing would admittedly constitute a dramatic alteration in setting of the alley warehouse, but alleys are historically more functional and casual in character. This location is also well removed from the primary street views. The project will have the benefit of not only restoring the now-concealed warehouse building, but establishing it as the centerpiece of the interior.

The HPO recommends that the Review Board approve the concept as consistent with the purposes of the preservation act and delegate final approval to staff.