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

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| Landmark/District: | Capitol Hill Historic District | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agenda |
| Address: | 1101 Pennsylvania Ave SE | <input type="checkbox"/> Consent |
| | | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Concept |
| Meeting Date: | April 28, 2016 | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Alteration |
| Case Number: | 16-308 | <input type="checkbox"/> New Construction |
| Staff Reviewers: | Sarah VanLandingham | <input type="checkbox"/> Demolition |
| | Steve Callcott | <input type="checkbox"/> Subdivision |

Applicant Perseus Realty, with architectural plans prepared by Hickok Cole Architects and a preservation plan prepared by EHT Tracerics, seeks concept review for an addition to and infill construction adjacent to 1101-1115 Pennsylvania Avenue, SE in the Capitol Hill Historic District.

Property Description

Comprised of two adjacent brick buildings separated by a small gap, Frager's Hardware was a neighborhood landmark for many years until a fire in June 2013 burned through the interior leaving only the exterior street-facing walls more or less intact. The site has remained vacant for three years.

1101 Pennsylvania Avenue was built in 1919 as a two-story brick structure with first floor commercial space and apartments above, designed by architect A.H. Wilson. 1115 Pennsylvania was designed in a complementary palette by Julius Wenig in 1923. The street-facing elevations of both buildings are constructed of light brown brick in a running bond with punched window openings. The corner building (1101) features a more elaborate cornice and decorative arched brickwork above the windows. 1115 is differentiated by its simplified features and more streamlined appearance. Both buildings feature a series of projecting storefronts with wood-paneled bases, large display windows, and transom windows above on the face of the building.

The second story windows were all burned in the fire along with the interior spaces, roof, and rear exterior walls. The storefronts have also suffered damage due to both the fire and subsequent deterioration. Despite the current conditions, many of the character-defining aspects of the buildings remain and the facades continue to contribute to the streetscapes on which they front, and to the character of the Capitol Hill Historic District.

Proposal

The plans call for restoring the street-facing elevations along Pennsylvania Avenue and 11th Street, adding two stories and a penthouse above, and infilling the adjacent vacant spaces between them and to the south of 1101 on 11th Street.

The proposal includes a preservation plan for the historic facades which calls for cleaning and repairing the existing masonry where necessary, retaining the original window and door openings and installing new appropriate windows and doors, replacing the storefronts in-kind, and repairing the metal cornices on both buildings. The plans also call for replacing the existing signage in-kind.

At the first two levels, the buildings would be connected with a linking masonry element with an oriel that would relate to the flanking historic buildings in a contemporary vocabulary. The new third story would be set back 5' from the retained facades, clad in a complementary light brown brick, and feature simple punched windows and a metal cornice. The fourth floor would be further set back, and clad in a silver-tone metal panel with more contemporary fenestration and simple detailing. This piece spans both buildings below but is broken down into three segments. The fourth floor would be topped by a penthouse that would be further set back and substantially clad in glass.

A new four-story infill element would be located to the east of 1115, designed to relate to the materials of the historic facades but in a more contemporary vocabulary. It would be clad in a grey mosaic brick with champagne metal accents and larger window openings. The width of the new building would be broken down asymmetrically into two modules and the upper three stories would project as two oriels above flush storefronts at the street level. The rear elevations of the project would use the same grey mosaic brick and would have large windows and balconies overlooking a raised courtyard.

On the 11th Street side, a narrow infill element would connect the historic building to the neighboring rowhouses; it would feature a garage door for access to the underground parking and an oriel above.

Evaluation

As the remains of these structures are facades and not intact buildings, the conditions warrant a more flexible approach to redevelopment of the site than might be appropriate for intact historic buildings. Given that the majority of the structures has been lost, it is important and laudable that the applicants are proposing to carefully repair and restore the facades to their original condition. The important characteristics of the buildings as experienced along the street – their textured brickwork, the rhythmic pattern of projecting storefronts, and punched six-over-one windows above -- will remain.

Given the long sightlines down Pennsylvania Avenue, the construction of any additional floors above the retained facades would be visible, and the design approach has been focused on incorporating the facades into a larger composition in a respectful manner without pretending that they won't be visible. Through the use of tiered setbacks, a limited palette of materials, and variety in the massing, the design maintains the historic facades as the most prominent piece of the overall composition. By using brick and punched openings, the third floor serves as an attic story to the facades; the break in the masonry at this level helps to maintain a visual separation in keeping with how the buildings have historically been perceived from the street. The character of Capitol Hill is defined by its small-scale residential and commercial rows that create a fine-grain rhythm of vertical elements. In order for large new development projects in the historic

district to be compatible, they need to be designed to relate to this character. In this case, the break at the third floor, and similar breaks in the fourth floor, avoids creating exceptionally long horizontal lines. The renderings appear to show the penthouse as primarily a glass enclosed structure, for which the detailing, reflectivity and tinting will be important to understand in evaluating for compatibility.

The new four-story infill structure has been designed to read as a new building. The design is modern but incorporates components characteristic of the historic district, such as oriels and street-level storefronts. The use of vertically-oriented openings and projections, and composing the façade asymmetrically are helpful in breaking the mass down and relating it to the vertical orientation of buildings in the district. Although the immediately surrounding buildings are only one or two stories tall, the proposed height is not incompatible for its Pennsylvania Avenue location and is in keeping with other new construction projects on large sites along the avenue, including the project across the intersection at Pennsylvania and 11th Street.

The proposed palette of materials is contemporary but appears to relate compatibly to the historic district. It is always difficult to judge the color and finish of a material from printed computer renderings, and more information will be needed on the specific materials selected as the plans progress. As rendered, some of the images appear somewhat dark, especially the penthouse and the rear elevation, which will be visible over the roofs of the houses on G Street. Materials should continue to be refined in consultation with HPO and presented to the Board when the project returns for review.

Recommendation

The HPO recommends the Board find the concept to be compatible with the Capitol Hill historic district and direct the applicant to continue to work with staff on the detailing and material selection as the plans progress.