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

Property Address:	Florida Avenue at 9th and 8th, NW	X	Agenda
Landmark/District:	U Street Historic District		Consent Calendar
Meeting Date:	May 31, 2012	X	Concept Review
H.P.A. Number:	12-159		Alteration
Staff Reviewer:	Steve Callcott	X	New Construction
			Demolition
		X	Subdivision

Florida Avenue Residential LLC (JBG Companies), represented by the Miller/Hull Partnership architects, seeks ongoing conceptual design review for construction of two residential and retail buildings in the U Street Historic District. The sites are located on Square 393, with frontage on Florida Avenue, 9th Street and 8th Street (henceforth referred to as the “west site or “west building”) and Square 416, with frontage on Florida Avenue and 8th Street (“east site” or “east building”). The project would also include subdivision to combine lots.

The Board first reviewed the project in March, and provided direction on improving the compatibility of the proposal. The Board found the proposed relocation of 1933-35 9th Street (the only historic building on the site) to the southern end of the 9th Street frontage to be appropriate, and accepted the proposed reconfiguration of the alley, site organization and lot combination. While the Board found the general height and mass to be supportable, it directed the applicants to reduce or redesign the wings of the two buildings that extended south toward the residential neighborhood to ease the transition from the project to the abutting smaller-scaled historic buildings. As well, the Board asked that the architects take more cues and inspiration from the character of the historic district in selecting the materials and developing the design, and to improve the compatibility of the storefronts and building bases. The Board also asked for additional information on the treatment of the historic building, including its roof and any new uses on the roof.

Revised Proposal

As recommended, the wings of the east and west buildings have been modified on the upper floors to reduce the height and mass. The top two stories (the fifth and sixth floors) of each wing have been set back four feet from the buildings’ street faces; abutting the southern property line, the fifth floor of each building would be set back 10 feet and the sixth floors would be set back approximately 20 feet.

Although still somewhat contingent on the desires of future retail tenants, the storefronts have been further developed to include a raised base and solid panels to provide an opportunity for material diversity and signage. The canted exterior column has been straightened.

Historic documentation 1933-35 9th Street has been compiled by EHT Tracerics, which will provide the basis for façade rehabilitation. The scope of work will include reconstruction of the missing Italianate cornice, removal of later wood trim, reconstruction of the storefronts, and appropriate replacement windows and doors. The roof plan has been revised to relocate the proposed water to further behind the historic building.

The applicants are working to obtain material samples for the Board's review, with the idea that the materials will better illustrate that the project will have a relationship with the historic district.

Evaluation and Recommendation

The proposed changes improve the compatibility of the design. The revised height and massing on the 8th Street wings shows a contextual deference to the lower scaled historic buildings the project will abut, and the design of the storefronts, while still necessarily generic pending specific tenants, provides a somewhat finer scale to the very large expanses of glass. The façade rehabilitation, based on historic documentation, is consistent with preservation standards.

The HPO recommends that the Board find these incremental changes to improve the compatibility of the proposal, and seeks the Board's direction on whether the proposed revisions are sufficient in responding to its concerns.