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

Landmark/District:	Shaw Historic District	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agenda
Address:	1511 11th Street, NW	<input type="checkbox"/> Consent
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Concept
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Alteration
Meeting Date:	November 18, 2010	<input type="checkbox"/> New Construction
Case Number:	10-492	<input type="checkbox"/> Demolition
Staff Reviewer:	Eldra D. Walker	<input type="checkbox"/> Subdivision

Architect Sassan Gharai (SGA Architects), representing owner Kelly Miller Smith, seeks conceptual approval for a three story rooftop addition on the one story property at 1511 11th Street, NW.

Property Description

Architects Fredrick V. Murphy and Walter B. Olmsted, best known for their religious, educational, military, and commercial buildings in Washington, DC, designed the one-story variegated sandstone and brick office building in 1927 for builder and owner Cassidy and Company. Murphy and Olmsted's design for 1511 11th Street was a marked departure in height, scale, and ornamentation from their elaborate Beaux Arts style buildings. Yet in following the Beaux Arts tradition, the architects created a symmetrical and centered façade featuring a Roman-inspired triumphal arch flanked by 6/6 windows. Modest carved rope and dentil patterns add embellishment and carved stone form concave corbelled shoulder arches at the window openings. While not as grand as other Washington Beaux Arts buildings of the time, the structure's classical proportions and details contribute to its architectural significance. A one-story brick garage at the rear of the property was constructed after 1932, after the period of significance for the Shaw Historic District.

The property is located within a neighborhood context that has evolved in use and building type. According to the *1874 Faetz and Pratt Real Estate Directory*, the earliest documented improvements on this property's square were twenty-three frame structures and two brick structures. By 1890, residential neighborhoods developed south of P Street and west of 10th Street as land-owners improved lots with contiguous rows of brick dwellings. However, this square and its neighbors to the east and northeast showed sporadic residential development within a dominant commercial and industrial context. Substantial residential development reached the square by 1916 as two story brick dwellings replaced many of the small commercial frame structures. By 1928 all of the remaining frame buildings were supplanted by brick buildings and the commercial presence was reduced. The current context reflects this somewhat disjointed development pattern with modern additions and alterations, historic buildings of various styles, and in-fill construction.

Proposal

The proposal calls for demolishing the non-contributing garage and removing a side and the rear wall of the building, as well as the rear portion of the roof that shows evidence of structural failure. The new building footprint would extend approximately 55 feet into the lot, and three additional floors added on top. The project would incorporate the architecturally-significant façade, structurally stable portions of the roof, and party walls as integral components of the design. The windows and transom will be retained and the existing door replicated. The new structure will rise to forty-six feet in height in the same plane as the historic façade. The addition's roof will have a deck enclosed by the building's parapet walls, accessed by a penthouse. The façade design will use traditional building materials found throughout the historic district such as brick, precast stone, decorative metal panels, and double hung windows with transoms. The classically-inspired design will create the appearance of monolithic brick pilasters enframing a bank of windows with spandrel panels, all set atop the existing building which would serve as the compositional base.

Evaluation

The proposal presents two primary preservation issues – the extent of demolition of the existing structure, and the addition of visible floors atop the building. Section 305.1 of DCMR 10A provides explicit language on what constitutes demolition, including “the removal or destruction of all or a substantial portion of the roof along with all or substantially all of one or more exterior walls” and “the removal or destruction of all or substantially all of an entire wing or appendage of the building, such as a rear ell, unless the wing lacks physical or historic integrity, or is not a character-defining feature.” However, Section 305.2 provides flexibility to the Board in determining “whether a proposal involves destruction of a building ‘in significant part.’” The level of destruction depends “on the extent to which character-defining historic features, historic or structural integrity, historic materials, or ability to convey historic significance would be lost. The decision shall depend on all the facts and circumstances of the case.” Using this holistic examination of the proposed project, the demolition is judiciously selective, including the structurally unsound roof and the rear wall, and not wholesale or indiscriminate. Extensive historic fabric and the most architecturally-significant features will be retained and incorporated into the new building’s program, allowing the historic structure to continue to convey its historic significance.

While the Board has typically found that visible rooftop additions are not compatible and are inconsistent with the purposes of the Act, a disjointed context, modest architectural character of the historic resource, and the complementary nature of the design are all factors that the Board has cited in the past on the rare instances where it has approved visible roof additions. Most immediately adjacent is the visible three-story rooftop addition atop the one story structure at 1513-1515 11th Street, NW, where the Board cited the context and modest industrial nature of the building as factors in its support for a roof addition. More recently, the Board also granted conceptual approval for a multi-story visible rear addition at 1433 11th Street.

In this instance, the addition will not diminish the character of the historic building or result in the loss of character-defining features, and its design has been developed to complement the historic structure’s classical proportions and details. While the historic building contributes to the historic district, the structure is not exemplary and is one of the lesser known Murphy and Olmstead buildings; the character and significance of the building are found in the building’s façade, which the proposal will not diminish or compromise. The height and scale of the one story building indicates that it will be an appropriate base of a much taller building, and the weighty stone cladding on the historic building will help it serve as the stabilizing feature of the new composition. The addition’s design, fenestration pattern, and proportions will relieve the façade of any perceived heaviness. The centered glazing flanked by brick pilasters will complement the solidly ordered fenestration of the historic building. The use of brick, instead of a more massive masonry unit, will lend a lighter presence to the finished building. The two components - new and historic – will relate to each other harmoniously, yet the components will be clearly differentiated in materials, height and scale.

In concept, the proposal is not inconsistent with the Act. The demolition will be selective and limited to those portions of the building which are not significant or have de-stabilized over time. The design will blend with the site’s context, and will complement the historic building by being deferential yet differentiated. As the proposal is further developed, the plans should address the following:

1. **Adding green space to the front yard.** The existing yard is paved with concrete which will not be consistent with the front yard of a residential building. A landscape plan should be prepared for appropriate treatment of the front yard.
2. **Continuing the brick cladding and precast stone on the side (north) elevation.** This side elevation will be visible from 11th Street and should be finished appropriately.

The HPO recommends that the Board approve the proposal in concept, that the applicant continue to develop the concept in coordination with staff, and that final approval be delegated to the staff.