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

Property Address:	1108 16th Street, NW	X	Agenda
Landmark/District:	16th Street Historic District		Consent Calendar
Meeting Date:	October 23, 2014	X	Concept Review
H.P.A. Number:	14-638	X	Alteration
Staff Reviewer:	Steve Callcott		New Construction
			Demolition
			Subdivision

Architect Jane Nelson (Nelson Architects) and architectural historian Andi Adams (Goulston & Storrs), representing RED A&W I, LCC, seeks conceptual design review for partial demolition and an addition to a four-story office building in the 16th Street Historic District.

Property History and Description

The existing office building is the result of an unusual construction history that is not immediately evident from casual observation. It was originally constructed as three, bay-fronted rowhouses with raised entrances above English basements sometime between 1888-1903. Between 1920-1927, several remodeling permits were issued that resulted in the houses being combining into a single structure to serve as medical and professional offices. The remodeling was extensive, resulting in the removal of interior structural walls, the removal of the projecting bays, the first floor being dropped to grade, and the elevation on the first two floors being reclad in a stripped classical vocabulary of limestone piers enframing large wood framed plate glass windows.

The building continued to be used for medical and other office uses until it was again remodeled in 1954, when the wood windows on the first two floors were replaced with aluminum (presumably the existing windows) and the upper two floors were clad in a veneer of limestone (the appearance of the upper floors between the 1920s renovation and 1954 is not known, although presumably something was done when the full-height projecting bays were removed in the 1920s). The current interior is the result of much later remodeling and retains no discernable features of the former rowhouses or the 1920s office building.

Proposal

The project calls for retaining the two-story classical façade of the 1920 remodeling and removing the internal structure and upper two floors from the 1954 refacing. The retained façade would be used as the base of a classically-inspired, tripartite composition for an eight-story apartment and office building. A single story would be added flush with and immediately atop the retained façade and a four-story middle section above that would have projecting oriel bays flanking centered French doors with Juliette balconies. An attic story with an abstracted cornice would cap the building. The addition would be clad in brick with stone trim. The same brick would be used on the secondary elevations, portions of which would be visible above the shorter buildings to the south. The penthouse would be clad in EIFS.

Evaluation

When the 16th Street Historic District was expanded in 2007, 1108 16th Street was classified as a contributing building based on what was thought to be a 1920 date of construction. The more complicated history of alterations calls that classification into question. While it is not necessary for the Board to make a formal determination as to whether the building should remain classified as contributing or not, the extensive nature of its remodeling and alteration justifies providing substantial flexibility in its treatment and reuse. The concept has been developed on the supportable premise that the two-story 1920 portion of the façade is the only feature that contributes to the character of the historic district that merits retention.

The 16th Street Historic District is defined by its many mid- to late-nineteenth-century high-style single-family dwellings; imposing early- to mid-twentieth-century apartment buildings and luxury hotels, churches, embassies, and institutional buildings; and late-twentieth-century offices and association buildings. Perhaps more than any other L'Enfant avenue, its streetscape south of Scott Circle expresses the 90 foot maximum-allowable height limitation that was afforded to the corridor beginning in 1910. Commensurate with its importance as a grand avenue terminating at the White House, its buildings were typically designed by noteworthy architects in high styles with material richness.

The conceptual design is compatible with the character of the historic district in its residential apartment building form – one that is widespread in the district -- and its 90 foot height. Its tripartite façade composition, classical base, and vertical proportions are compatible and appropriate for a L'Enfant avenue that is typified by buildings with similar qualities. The use of light toned brick and limestone are commensurate with the high quality materials found in the district, and compatible with the many buildings that have the same materials and coloration. The use of the same high quality materials on all elevations of the building is commendable, and the rehabilitation plan for the retained façade would return its fenestration to an appearance compatible with its original character.

In arriving at the current solution, the architect developed a number of façade studies for review. One of the design issues discussed has been the treatment of the new third floor immediately above the two-story base. In the proposed solution, it is treated as an attic story to the retained base in an effort to provide some breathing room before the oriels commence on the fourth floor. Alternatively, it has been discussed whether bringing the oriels down to engage the third floor might be more appropriate for the classical proportions of the composition, and direction on the best of these two alternatives is welcomed.

As the design continues to be developed, alternative cladding materials to EIFS for the penthouse should also be considered. Designed at the full 18'6" height allowed, the penthouse will be visible from vantage points on 16th Street and should be of a commensurate level of materiality and design as the underlying building.

Recommendation

The HPO recommends that the Review Board find the concept design to be compatible with the character of the historic district, seeks the Board's direction on the third floor design as discussed above, and to delegate final approval to staff.