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

Property Address:	1333-43 H Street, NW	X	Agenda
Landmark/District:	Real Estate Trust Company		Consent Calendar
Meeting Date:	September 18, 2014	X	Concept Review
H.P.A. Number:	14-652	X	Alteration
Staff Reviewer:	Steve Callcott		New Construction
			Demolition

RP MRP 1333H LLC, with plans prepared by Gensler Architects, seeks concept design review for façade replacement of a 1980s office building addition to the Real Estate Trust Company. The Real Estate Trust Company is a pending landmark; the project would be subject to the Board’s review if the building is designated.

Property History and Description

The Real Estate Trust building is a twelve-story commercial office building at the northeast corner of H and 14th Streets. It was constructed in 1913-14, designed in a highly ornate Beaux Arts Renaissance Revival-style by the Washington-based firm Milburn, Heister & Company. The building is architecturally notable for its façade of ivory-colored terra cotta with polychrome accents.

The building is largely intact to its original appearance, with a few notable exceptions. The elaborately detailed concave attic story was originally capped by a pierced metal cornice that has been missing since at least the 1950s. The first two floors are clad in white marble that was installed in a 1980s renovation to replicate the general character of the original condition, but resulted in some changes to proportions and loss of detailing.

Concurrent with the 1980s renovation, a substantial 11-story addition was built to the east. Clad in horizontal bands of gray granite and dark tinted aluminum framed windows, it is an unremarkable speculative office building of its era and does not appear to have been designed with any intent of relating to the Real Estate Trust building. As it is located on the same lot and interconnected with the pending landmark, alterations to it are subject to review.

Proposal

The proposal calls for recladding the 1980s addition with a skin comprised primarily of butt jointed clear and spandrel glass with accents in stone and aluminum. The long H Street elevation would be broken down into a two-part façade, each of which have a tripartite composition that corresponds to the organization of the landmark, with a two story base, seven story midsection, and two story top. The façade closest to the landmark would have three four-foot projecting oriel bays in the midsection (zone C in the applicant’s submission); the top and bottom floors would be clad in butt joint curtain wall with glass spandrels (zone B2). The façade further east would have a continuous two-foot projection in the midsection with vertical breaks suggested by slightly recessed aluminum channels (zone A). Stone

detailing would be used as horizontal elements within the midsection projection and as piers in the top and base zones (zone B1).

One of the sets of entrance doors within the historic building would be replaced with a double door; the opening would be capped by a projecting metal marquee.

Evaluation

The proposal would be successful in breaking down the block-spanning horizontality of the existing addition and create a more sympathetic rhythm that would better relate and tie the Real Estate Trust to the buildings of similar widths to the east of the addition. The use of vertically-oriented projections, recessed channels and projecting metal fins would provide some depth and shadow -- important characteristics of the landmark -- and also be an improvement over the existing addition's sheer flatness.

Of the two projection types proposed, the narrow oriel projections in zone C are the more successful in breaking down the addition's mass and scale and relating to the verticality of the landmark. The continuous projection on the eastern portion of the addition in zone A has the counter effect of making this portion of the addition appear bigger and bulkier. The vertical breaks aren't strong or deep enough to provide enough depth to alleviate the projection's bulkiness, and the continuous nature of the projection across the entire width of this portion of the addition breaks the façade plane that is a basic unifying principle around which the landmark and the other surrounding buildings are organized. Breaking the projection down into smaller elements and balancing the extent of projection with a portion of wall surface that is pulled back to the building line should be studied. Alternatively, a façade for this portion of the addition that has no projection might also warrant consideration.

The proposed replacement doors are closely based on the original appearance of this opening, and are compatible in proportions and general appearance.

Recommendation

The HPO recommends that the Board approve the proposal in concept with the condition that the treatment of the projection in zone A be restudied as suggested above.