

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

Property Address:	1905-1917 14th Street, NW	X	Agenda
Landmark/District:	Greater U Street Historic District		Consent Calendar
		X	Concept Review
Meeting Date:	June 30, 2011	X	Alteration
H.P.A. Number:	11-323		New Construction
Staff Reviewer:	Steve Callcott		Demolition

Architect Eric Colbert, representing Level 2 Development, seeks conceptual review for a seven-story residential and retail building at the southwest corner of 14th Street and Wallach Place in the U Street Historic District. The site, measuring approximately 150' wide by 106' deep, is occupied by a non-contributing one-story retail building. The property abuts an historic two-story commercial building to the south; a three-story Victorian building is located on the opposite corner to the north. Wallach Place to the east is an extremely intact and unified block of two-story houses, most constructed by either builder James Robbins or architect/developer T.F. Schneider between 1885-1889.

Proposal

The proposal calls for a building with two cladding types – brick and metal panel – that would be used to visually break the size of the structure down into smaller components. Four five-story brick projecting bays are proposed on 14th Street; the metal panel system would be used for the upper two floors and for a recessed entrance piece that separates the corner bay from the three bays on the southern portion of the façade. The brick corner element would wrap around on Wallach, stepping down to four floors at the rear; the seventh floor would be set back about 12 feet from the street. The rear of the building (visible from Wallach) and the south elevation (visible over the two-story historic corner building) would be similarly designed to use the two different skin vocabularies to break the building down into smaller pieces.

Evaluation and Recommendation

The proposal has gone through several iterations in an effort to effectively break the massing of the building down and to visually step it down to relate to its context of smaller historic buildings. The projecting bays on the 14th Street elevation, the set back of the top floor on the north, the stepping down of the massing at the rear where it abuts the Wallach Place rowhouses, and the use of the two skin vocabularies collectively work together to break the mass of the building down into smaller building blocks that achieve a compatible relationship with the surrounding small scale historic buildings.

As the project continues to be refined, the fenestration and the detailing of the skin types should be developed with the goal of providing shadow and increasing the implied depth of the walls. Similarly, creating shadow and depth at the top of the building should also be evaluated. The south side elevation – visible above the two-story corner historic building -- should also continue to be studied; extending the brick vocabulary further back rather than simply stopping at the inside corner might be more successful.

The HPO recommends that the HPRB approve the project in concept as consistent with the purposes of the preservation act.