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

Property Address:	901 L Street, NW	X	Agenda
Landmark/District:	Shaw Historic District		Consent Calendar
Meeting Date:	September 18, 2014	X	Concept Review
H.P.A. Number:	14-040	X	Alteration
Staff Reviewer:	Steve Callcott		New Construction
		X	Demolition
		X	Subdivision

Square 369 Hotel Associates LLC (represented by Robert Knopf of Quadrangle Development), with plans prepared by Cooper Carry architects (Bob Neal) and TVS Design (Peter Green), seeks on-going conceptual design review for construction of a 12-story Marriott hotel and residential building that would demolish two contributing buildings and incorporate retained portions of seven contributing buildings in the Shaw Historic District.

When reviewed in June, the Board made the following findings:

- a preservation and rehabilitation plan for the historic buildings needed to be developed;
- the base of the new construction should be further developed to improve the pedestrian experience and to be more consistent with the character of the streetscape of 9th Street as defined by the historic buildings;
- the designs for the hotel and the apartment building should be made entirely distinct from each other to break down the scale of the project and to be more compatible with the organic quality of development in the historic district;
- the sheer vertical plane of the hotel's 9th Street elevation rising directly behind the historic buildings should be broken down in scale so that it doesn't provide an overwhelming backdrop to those buildings;
- the top of the hotel's corner tower element should continue to be refined;
- the size of canopies on both buildings should be reduced in size;
- the apartment building should be developed to have a more residential character;

In a separate action, the Board also recommended to the Mayor's Agent that demolition of 911 and 913 L Street was inconsistent with the purposes of the preservation act. The Mayor's Agent has been scheduled for October 15th, 2014.

Revised Proposal

The applicants have worked closely with the HPO over the past few months to respond to the preservation and design compatibility issues raised by the Board. The preservation plan has been developed by EHT Tracerics and coordinated with the architectural team. It includes more precise historical documentation of each building, better justification for the removal of rear portions of the buildings, and specific plans for the reconstruction of each building and their storefronts based on the historic building permits, photographs and on-site evaluation. As previously approved by the Board, the floor and roof assemblies of all of the buildings

will be removed based on their advanced state of deterioration and/or collapse. The new assemblies will be reconstructed in fire-rated construction with some adjustment in their location so that they align with the floor plates of the hotel and with each other.

Taking its cues from buildings in the historic district, the apartment building has been substantially redesigned with a strong tripartite façade organization, and the prominent glass corner tower has been reduced to a smaller, more recessive element. The residential quality of the building has been enhanced by the use of balconies that would project slightly from within deeply set window openings. The building would be clad with terra cotta and crowned by a prominent projecting cornice to relate to the characteristics of traditional apartment buildings in the district.

On the hotel, shallow projections have been added to the east and north elevations in order to break down its scale as seen adjacent to the historic buildings. The north tower element has been redesigned to include a small glass corner to improve the appearance of the building from the north and more consistently spaced fenestration has been provided on the east facing elevation of that tower. The infill element on 9th Street, containing the garage entrance on the first floor, has also been redesigned with fenestration that relates to the scale and rhythm of openings on the adjacent historic buildings. On L Street, the projection of the hotel canopy has been reduced by approximately 8 feet. The ground level of the corner tower has been redesigned with expressed columns and a storefront that aligns in height with those on the historic buildings.

Evaluation

The preservation plan provides a more specific and detailed framework for the treatment of the 9th Street buildings, and the conservation of existing façade elements and replication of missing doors, windows and storefronts is consistent with the Board's standards. While relocating floor plates is typically not a preferred preservation solution, the need for wholesale replacement has been well documented and the changes have been calibrated to ensure that floors will not intersect windows. The changes in floor alignments at 1114, 1112 and 1108 are negligible and the original floor assemblies at 1110 9th were already substantially altered when the building was converted to commercial use in the early 20th century. However, the Board's guidance is sought on the treatment of 1106 and 1104: while the changes in the second story floor alignment in 1106 and 1104 are relatively minor, the proposal calls for openings within each floor to visually connect to the first floor lobby and the third floor assemblies are not proposed to be reinstalled at all. If reinstalled, these third floor spaces would not be accessible and would leave the third floor windows opening to a shuttered space; conversely, not recreating the original third floors significantly changes the perception of the building from one that had been a multi-level mixed-use building that which is comprised of a single open atrium space.

The changes in façade composition, fenestration, and materials in the apartment building are significantly improved in achieving the goals of differentiating it from the hotel and in relating it more compatibly to the historic district. The inset balconies and deeply set window openings will provide the desired residential character and the extent of texture and shadow proposed that the façade will provide is unusual for new construction. Similarly,

providing the same level of design and material use on the secondary elevations as on the street elevations – on both the apartment building and the hotel -- is to be commended.

On the hotel, the compatibility of the tower has been improved, with a stronger base and top, smaller-scaled vertically-oriented fenestration, and greater texture and shadow. The shallow projections on the east and north elevations are successful in providing a visual bridge between the low-scale historic buildings and the ultimate height of the building, while also helping to break down the hotel's scale. The modifications to the 9th Street infill element and the reduced size of the entrance canopy are also more compatible with the historic district. The implied storefront within the base of the corner tower improves its relationship with the row of historic buildings, although there may be additional opportunities for this corner that could simultaneously enliven it, serve as a visual beacon for those approaching from the south, and further demarcate this important entrance into the historic district. Lighting, sculpture, signage or some combination of those three should be considered. Further development of the first floor opening in the masonry portion of the building between the corner tower and 1104 9th Street (shown in far left of image on A518) may also provide an additional opportunity for relating the new construction to the historic retail storefronts.

Recommendations

The HPO recommends that the Review Board recommend to the Mayor's Agent that the revised concept is compatible with the character of the historic district. If the demolition of 911 and 913 L Street is approved by the Mayor's Agent for a project of special merit, the staff recommends final approval be delegated.